GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Health Ministry Advances Cervical Cancer Elimination Efforts

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The Ministry of Health and Social Development continues to build a successful vaccination programme in its efforts to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem.

The Territory has maintained vaccination coverage above 90 percent for at least two consecutive years, an achievement recognised by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) during Vaccination Week in the Americas 2026, when the Virgin Islands was highlighted as a regional best-practice example.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, said the achievement demonstrates the effectiveness of sustained investment in preventive healthcare and the collective efforts of healthcare professionals, parents, educators and the wider community.

“HPV vaccination is cancer prevention! It is one of the most important long-term investments we can make in the health and well-being of our people, protecting future generations from cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases,” Honourable Wheatley stated.

The Minister noted that while the Territory has made significant progress in vaccination, eliminating cervical cancer requires a comprehensive approach that includes screening, early diagnosis, timely treatment and continued follow-up care.

To advance these efforts, the Ministry, in collaboration with PAHO, recently hosted a technical consultancy and national stakeholder consultation to support the development of the Virgin Islands' National Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy.

The initiative assessed existing services, identified gaps and opportunities, and gathered recommendations to guide the development of a coordinated national response.

As part of the consultancy, PAHO technical experts visited selected primary healthcare facilities and the National Laboratory at the Dr. D. Orlando Smith Hospital to assess existing capacities. A multi-sectoral consultation also brought together healthcare professionals, policymakers, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to identify priorities for strengthening cervical cancer

prevention and care.

The national strategy will align with the World Health Organization's 2030 targets, which call for 90 percent of girls to be fully vaccinated against HPV by age 15, 70 percent of women to be screened using high-performance tests by ages 35 and 45, and 90 percent of women identified with cervical disease to receive appropriate treatment.

The Ministry will continue working with PAHO, the BVI Health Services Authority and national partners to strengthen screening, diagnostic and treatment services, improve follow-up care and enhance coordination across the healthcare system.

Honourable Wheatley emphasised that the next phase of the Territory's efforts must build on the strong foundation established through the national HPV vaccination programme.

“Having successfully established a strong foundation in prevention, we must now build upon that success by strengthening screening, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up services so that no woman is left behind in our efforts to eliminate cervical cancer,” the Minister stated.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to protecting and promoting the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands through effective policies, sustainable programmes, and strategic partnerships that support a safe, healthy, and resilient society.

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