UNICEF PRESS RELEASE

Over 20 million children worldwide missed out on measles vaccine annually in past 8 years, creating a pathway to current global outbreaks - UNICEF

NEW YORK, 25 April 2019 – An estimated 169 million children missed out on the first dose of the measles vaccine between 2010 and 2017, or 21.1 million children a year on average, UNICEF said today.

Widening pockets of unvaccinated children have created a pathway to the measles outbreaks hitting several countries around the world today.

“The ground for the global measles outbreaks we are witnessing today was laid years ago,” said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. “The measles virus will always find unvaccinated children. If we are serious about averting the spread of this dangerous but preventable disease, we need to vaccinate every child, in rich and poor countries alike.”

In the first three months of 2019, more than 110,000 measles cases were reported worldwide – up nearly 300 per cent from the same period last year. An estimated 110,000 people, most of them children, died from measles in 2017, a 22 per cent increase from the year before.

Two doses of the measles vaccine are essential to protect children from the disease. However, due to lack of access, poor health systems, complacency, and in some cases fear or skepticism about vaccines, the global coverage of the first dose of the measles vaccine was reported at 85 per cent in 2017, a figure that has remained relatively constant over the last decade despite population growth. Global coverage for the second dose is much lower, at 67 per cent. The World Health Organization recommends a threshold of 95 per cent immunization coverage to achieve so-called ‘herd immunity’.
In high income countries, while coverage with the first dose is 94 per cent, coverage for the second dose drops to 91 per cent, according to the latest data.

The United States tops the list of high-income countries with the most children not receiving the first dose of the vaccine between 2010 and 2017, at more than 2.5 million. It is followed by France and the United Kingdom, with over 600,000 and 500,000 unvaccinated infants, respectively, during the same period.

In low- and middle-income countries, the situation is critical. In 2017, for example, Nigeria had the highest number of children under one year of age who missed out on the first dose, at nearly 4 million. It was followed by India (2.9 million), Pakistan and Indonesia (1.2 million each), and Ethiopia (1.1 million).

Worldwide coverage levels of the second dose of the measles vaccines are even more alarming. Of the top 20 countries with the largest number of unvaccinated children in 2017, 9 have not introduced the second dose. Twenty-countries in sub-Saharan Africa have not introduced the necessary second dose in the national vaccination schedule, putting over 17 million infants a year at higher risk of measles during their childhood.

UNICEF, with partners such as the Measles and Rubella Initiative and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is helping address this measles crisis by:

- Negotiating vaccine prices: the cost of the measles vaccine is now at an all-time low;
- Helping countries identify underserved areas and unreached children;
- Procuring vaccines and other immunization supplies;
- Supporting supplementary vaccination campaigns to address gaps in routine immunization coverage;
- Working with relevant countries to introduce the second dose of the measles vaccine in the national immunization schedule. Cameroon, Liberia and Nigeria are on track to do so in 2019.
Introducing innovations like the use of solar power and mobile technologies to maintain vaccines at the right temperature.

“Measles is far too contagious,” said Fore. “It is critical not only to increase coverage but also to sustain vaccination rates at the right doses to create an umbrella of immunity for everyone.”

Notes to editors
Download photos and broll here.

About the Analysis
The analysis is based on UNICEF and WHO's estimation of national immunization coverage of 194 countries for 2017. Provisional measles and rubella data is based on monthly data reported to WHO Geneva in April 2019. For high income countries, follow the World Bank country classification by income in July 2018.

About World Immunization Week
Celebrated in the last week of April, World Immunization Week aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease. Find more details about UNICEF’s WIW efforts, click here.

About Measles and Rubella Initiative
UNICEF is part of the Measles and Rubella Initiative, a private-public partnership including WHO, CDC, United Nations Foundation and American Red Cross that spearheads a global push towards measles and rubella elimination and control.

About UNICEF
UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. More than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org. Follow UNICEF on Twitter and Facebook

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Karachi, 24 April 2019: The Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah discussed with United Nations Resident Coordinator for Pakistan Mr. Neil Buhne, the work of the United Nations in Sindh and how cooperation with the Government can be strengthened to benefit more people. They focused on ways to provide more urgent assistance to those affected by drought, and how to reduce their vulnerability to future droughts.

Mr Buhne highlighted the opportunities to consolidate Sindh’s food security and agriculture productivity, especially through improved land tenancy governance for all stakeholders. The Chief Minister also took note of the UN’s efforts to support Sindh’s transition to a climate-resilient food system including through transformations in water management.

Mr. Buhne complimented the Chief Minister on excellent work done in some localities in Sindh on reducing the high prevalence of stunted growth, and on the need to expand that work to reach all vulnerable children. Mr. Buhne appreciated the leadership of the Chief Minister on the strong support to the polio eradication drive in Sindh, discussed the importance of eradicating the Wild Polio Virus, especially from urban areas, and the challenges of doing this.

They discussed programmes to improve reproductive health of women and to slow population growth, to expand the reach and quality of education for children, efforts to reduce rural poverty, to improve water management, and actions to reduce the effects of climate change on people. Mr. Buhne appreciated the work of the Chief Minister to have Sindh meet the Sustainable Development Goals and offered UN support to link this closer to the policies and programmes of the provincial government to promote and implement pro-poor policies. He was joined at the meeting by members of the United Nations Sindh team.
“Zero malaria starts with me”

After more than a decade of steady advances in fighting malaria, progress has levelled off. According to WHO’s latest World malaria report, no significant gains were made in reducing malaria cases in the period 2015 to 2017. The estimated number of malaria deaths in 2017, at 435,000, remained virtually unchanged over the previous year.

Urgent action is needed to get the global response to malaria back on track – and ownership of the challenge lies in the hands of countries most affected by malaria. On World Malaria Day 2019, WHO joins the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, the African Union Commission and other partner organizations in promoting “Zero malaria starts with me,” a grassroots campaign that aims to keep malaria high on the political agenda, mobilize additional resources, and empower communities to take ownership of malaria prevention and care.

For more information: https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-malaria-day/world-malaria-day-2019

Video message from Dr Tedros, Director-General of WHO: https://youtu.be/g9WIfT2-AU4

http://youtube.com/watch?v=vnsoTPE_PUC
http://www.who.int/campaigns/malaria-day/2018/en