

WHO: Nearly 1 in 5 babies still missed by vaccines

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(AP) -- A record 106 million infants were vaccinated last year against life-threatening diseases, but nearly 1 in 5 babies still aren't fully protected, global health authorities reported Wednesday.

To get the full round of first-year vaccinations to children in the poorest countries will take another \$1 billion a year, says the report from the [World Health Organization](#), UNICEF and World Bank.

Most of the unprotected babies are in Asia and Africa, particularly in rural or strife-torn areas that are difficult for aid workers to reach.

It's a good investment, the report argued. Vaccination is preventing 2.5 million child deaths a year. But if 90 percent of the world's children under age 5 got the vaccinations that are routine in wealthy countries, another 2 million deaths a year could be prevented by 2015.

"We must overcome the divide that separates rich from poor, between those who get lifesaving vaccines and those who don't," said Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the WHO.

The report suggests that overcoming that gap may be a bigger challenge in coming years: In 2000, the world was spending, on average, \$6 per live birth on vaccinations in [developing countries](#). That's expected to be \$18 by next year and could rise above \$30 as newer, more expensive vaccines become available.

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