

Despite progress, hundreds of children still die of measles every day

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WHO and health partners helped vaccinate more than 10, 000 children against measles in 2 days in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the conflict-affected Borno State. Credit: WHO/P. Ajello

A United Nations-backed report issued today has revealed that despite a

79 per cent worldwide decrease in measles deaths between 2000 and 2015, nearly 400 children still die from the disease every day.

"Making [measles](#) history is not mission impossible," said Robin Nandy, chief of immunization at the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), in a joint news release on the report, which was authored and released by UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"We have the tools and the knowledge to do it; what we lack is the political will to reach every single child, no matter how far. Without this commitment, children will continue to die from a disease that is easy and cheap to prevent," Mr. Nandy added.

According to the report, mass measles vaccination campaigns and a global increase in routine measles vaccination coverage saved an estimated 20.3 million young lives between 2000 and 2015.

But progress has been uneven. In 2015, about 20 million infants missed their measles shots and an estimated 134,000 children died from the disease. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan account for half of the unvaccinated infants and 75 per cent of the measles deaths.



A boy who fled a village south of Mosul, Iraq, receives a measles vaccination from a UNICEF-supported government health worker at an aid distribution in Ibrahim Khalil. Credit: UNICEF/Lindsay Mackenzie

"It is not acceptable that millions of children miss their vaccines every year. We have a safe and highly effective vaccine to stop the spread of measles and save lives," said Dr. Jean-Marie Okwo-Bele, Director of WHO's Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals.

"This year, the region of the Americas was declared free of measles – proof that elimination is possible. Now, we must stop measles in the rest of the world. It starts with vaccination," he said.

The news release said that measles, a highly contagious viral disease that

spreads through direct contact and through the air, is one of the leading causes of death among young children globally. It can be prevented with two doses of a safe and effective vaccine.

Measles outbreaks continue to be a serious challenge in numerous countries – caused by gaps in routine immunization and in [mass vaccination campaigns](#). In 2015, large outbreaks were reported in Egypt, Ethiopia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. The outbreaks in Germany and Mongolia affected adolescents and young adults as well.

Measles also tends to flare up in countries in conflict or humanitarian emergencies due to the challenges of vaccinating every child. Last year, outbreaks were reported in Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan.

More information: WHO-CDC-UNICEF-GAVI joint report: [weshare.unicef.org/C.aspx?VP3= ... _M_Details_NoToolTip](http://weshare.unicef.org/C.aspx?VP3=..._M_Details_NoToolTip)

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