

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The measles and rubella data from 2022 paint a multifaceted picture: one where our **successes** in increasing vaccination coverage are met with constant **challenges**. Due to significant disruptions in health services driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, millions more children missed doses of life-saving vaccines.

According to the WHO/UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization Coverage (WUENIC), the recovery of measles vaccinations from COVID-19's disruption has lagged other benchmark immunizations such as the 3rd dose of diphtheria, tetanus toxoid, and pertussis (DTP3), leaving nearly 33 million children missing one or both doses of the measles vaccine.

INEQUITIES IN VACCINES ACCESS

Despite four million more children receiving routine vaccines in 2022 than in 2021, progress has not been equal among the different vaccines, countries, and regions. This calls attention to the persistent inequities in accessing life-saving vaccines.

One-quarter of the world's infants—almost 25 million annually—still lack access to rubella vaccines. In addition, from 2019 to 2022, the percentage of children who received their first dose of a measles vaccine declined from 86% to 83%. In 2022, 21.9 million children missed their first measles vaccine dose, while 11 million missed their second measles vaccine dose. Many of these children live in low-income countries with health systems that face persistent challenges in reaching all children with vaccines.

Dr. Kate O'Brien, the director of immunization at the WHO refers to the lack of measles vaccine coverage as an alarm bell for action, adding, "Children everywhere have the right to be protected by the lifesaving measles vaccine, no matter where they live."

Without concerted efforts across countries, the risk of measles spreading remains high, placing children everywhere at risk of joining the estimated 136,200 people—mostly children—who died from the respiratory virus in 2022.

MEASLES OUTBREAKS INCREASE AS VACCINE GAPS WIDEN

Due to the significant number of children missing measles vaccinations in the last two years, the number of large or disruptive measles outbreaks increased by 68% between 2021 and 2022. According to Dr. John Vertefeuille, director of the Global Immunization Division at the CDC, "the increase in measles outbreaks and deaths is staggering, but unfortunately, not unexpected given the declining vaccination rates we've seen in the past few years."

Thirty-seven countries in four WHO regions were affected by large or disruptive outbreaks. In low-income or hard-to-reach countries—where the threat of measles mortality is greatest—vaccination rates remain critically low at 66%. Because measles outbreaks most often occur in un- or under-vaccinated communities, outbreaks point to weaknesses and inequities in immunization programs and other essential health services.

Institutional and security-related barriers contribute to low coverage rates of migrant, refugee, or other displaced communities. These barriers present a large and growing challenge for preventing and responding to measles outbreaks. "Viruses like measles do not recognize borders," said Ms. Catherine Russell, executive director of UNICEF. Immunization efforts must be strengthened to prevent outbreaks and ensure all children receive life-saving vaccines.

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ERADICATING RUBELLA AND ENDING CRS IS POSSIBLE

Rubella-containing vaccines have been introduced in 90% of countries throughout the world. Despite this progress, there are still an estimated 32,000 children born each year with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). We must do more to ensure no child is born with CRS.

Rubella elimination and ending CRS are only possible when all countries provide access to rubella vaccines. Currently, 19 countries—most in the WHO African Region—have yet to include the rubella-containing vaccine in immunization programs. It is up to the international community to advocate for and support these countries to make rubella immunizations part of routine healthcare.

INNOVATING IMMUNIZATIONS

While countries continue to work tirelessly to reach all children with vaccines, this remains a challenge. Measles and rubella vaccines require continuous refrigeration—no small feat in rural communities without consistent electricity. These vaccines also require an injection with needle and syringe only administered by trained health workers. Our partners are working on innovations to improve methods of delivery that aim to improve vaccination accessibility, coverage, and equity.

For example, for the last decade partners have been developing a new injection-free vaccine delivery technology—supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the CDC. The measles-rubella vaccine microarray patch is showing promising results.

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In a recent interview with NPR, Dr. David Robinson, deputy director of vaccine development and surveillance at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said, "For many reasons, we think the vaccine patch really has the potential to help us reach more children and to accomplish our mission, which is to save lives."

FROM INITIATIVE TO PARTNERSHIP

In 2022, the Measles & Rubella Initiative transformed into the Measles & Rubella Partnership (M&RP) and expanded to include Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as core partners. "The M&RP stands ready to support countries, working in collaboration to ensure every child receives life-saving vaccines," said Dr. Mary Agocs, director of the Measles & Rubella Partnership at the American Red Cross and M&RP co-chair.

Reflecting on the increase in measles cases and deaths, Ms. Lori Sloate, senior director of global health at the United Nations Foundation, reminds us that there have been tremendous strides. "Before a measles vaccine was available globally, 2.6 million people, mostly children, were dying every year from this deadly disease. We've made immense progress...and we cannot let it stop now."

M&RP is driving elimination efforts through support for the planning and implementation of high-quality immunization services, innovating vaccine technologies, coordinating vaccination campaigns, strengthening surveillance and laboratory capacity, and providing timely resources and support to respond to outbreaks.

In 2022, the M&RP provided support for outbreak response in 10 countries, vaccinating more than 11 million children. The speed of support is critical. Recognizing this, the M&RP is committed to defining and supporting an approach to outbreak support that best meets country needs and provides resources and assistance in a timely and effective manner.

The M&RP, in collaboration with committed countries, is forging a path towards a measles- and rubella-free future. Through improving access to life-saving vaccines for all children, and addressing systemic health inequities, the Partnership is making progress toward a world where every child is protected from measles and rubella, regardless of where they live.

We've made immense progress...and we cannot let it stop now

MEASLES & RUBELLA PARTNERSHIP

2022 ANNUAL SUMMARY



THE GOAL

Disease elimination requires greater than or equal to

95% coverage

for both doses of the measles and rubella-containing vaccine

Global vaccination coverage rates for 2022

FIRST MEASLES VACCINE DOSE

83%

SECOND MEASLES VACCINE DOSE

74%

RUBELLA VACCINE

68%

OUT OF 194 COUNTRIES, ONLY

38

ACHIEVED $\geq 95\%$ COVERAGE FOR BOTH MEASLES VACCINE DOSES



Measles vaccinations have saved **57 million lives** globally from 2000 to 2022

Since 2000, the number of children born with congenital rubella syndrome has decreased by

70%



90% of countries now include rubella vaccines as part of their national immunization programs

We've made progress

The threat of dying from measles or being born with congenital rubella syndrome depends on where you live

There were **37** large and disruptive measles outbreaks in 2022 **> 86%** were in low- and lower-middle-income countries

In low-income countries where the threat of measles mortality is greatest, vaccination rates are only **66%**

18 of the **19** countries that have not introduced the rubella-containing vaccine are in sub-Saharan Africa

Children pay the price when communities lack immunity



In 2022, **21.9 million children** missed their first dose of the measles vaccine, while 11 million missed their second dose.



In 2022, an estimated **136,200 people died of measles complications**—most of them children.



25% of the world's children lack access to the rubella vaccine.



Each year, an estimated **32,000 children are born with congenital rubella syndrome**, a leading cause of vaccine-preventable birth defects.



Working toward our goals



19 countries have yet to introduce the rubella-containing vaccine in their routine immunization programs. M&RP is working with countries to include this vaccine as part of basic healthcare.

M&RP partnered with **44 countries** to run vaccination campaigns in 2022.

As a result, **115 million children** received vaccinations



M&RP deployed 16.2 million USD for **outbreak response campaigns in 10 countries**, vaccinating 11.3 million children in 2022