



27.01.2016 – To date, an estimated 18.7 million infants – nearly 1 in 5 children – worldwide are still missing routine immunizations for preventable diseases, such as diphtheria, pertussis (also known as whooping cough) and tetanus.

Immunization saves millions of lives and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions. World Immunization Week – celebrated in the last week of April – aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.

This will be the second year of the [Close the Immunization Gap](#) campaign, which celebrates the enormous successes to date in reaching children all over the world with life-saving vaccines while also stressing the challenges ahead. The 2016 campaign highlights the need for immunization among adolescents and adults, and seeks to draw the world's attention to the critical importance of reaching vulnerable people living in conflict situations or in the wake of emergencies.

“Last year immunization led to some notable wins in the fight against polio, rubella and maternal and neonatal tetanus,” says Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General. “But they were isolated wins. Polio was eliminated in 1 country, tetanus in 3, and rubella in 1 geographical region. The challenge now is to make gains like this the norm.”

To improve vaccination coverage, WHO is calling on countries to reach more children missed by routine delivery systems. More than 60% of children who are unvaccinated live in 10 countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Uganda and South Africa.

Last year, the [Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization](#) (SAGE) identified 5 factors to achieving significant results in immunization coverage:

- quality and use of data
- community involvement
- better access to immunization services for marginalized and displaced populations
- strong health systems
- access to vaccines in all places at all times

Many of the successes achieved last year resulted from strengthened leadership and accountability at all levels—national, regional and global. “When countries and partners establish and enforce clear accountability systems, measure results and take corrective action when results are not achieved, gaps in immunization can be closed,” said Dr Okwo-Bele, Director of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals at WHO.

UNRICs Related Links

- [WHO](#)
- [World Immunization Week](#)
- [Quiz: How much do you know about immunization?](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

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