

Immunisation

Every child everywhere deserves access to life-saving vaccines. During the 1980s, worldwide immunisation efforts saw a great deal of success, and developing countries made substantial progress toward their goals. By 1990, the increased coverage had caused a dramatic drop in the incidence of vaccine-preventable disease, saving the lives of millions of children each year.

Despite this progress, between 1990 and 2000, immunisation coverage declined in many developing countries as international actors shifted their attention and resources to other health priorities. This shift was exacerbated by armed conflict, increased economic instability and natural disasters in many of the poorest countries and the increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS. As a result, many developing countries struggled to improve or even maintain their vaccination rates during the 1990s, and the end of the decade saw an overall decline in global immunisation and vaccine production, compared to the start of the decade.

In response to mounting international concern at low vaccine coverage, the growing inequalities in immunisation, and the

unacceptable toll of infectious disease in developing countries, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (now the GAVI Alliance) was launched in 2000. This innovative public-private partnership enables the major stakeholders in immunisation to combine a broad range of skills, coordinate their programs, and set common priorities. In order to finance these collaborative efforts, the GAVI partners established The GAVI Fund to raise new and additional resources—providing funds to strengthen health systems, improve immunisation delivery services, and introduce new and under-used vaccines.



Millions lack access to immunisation

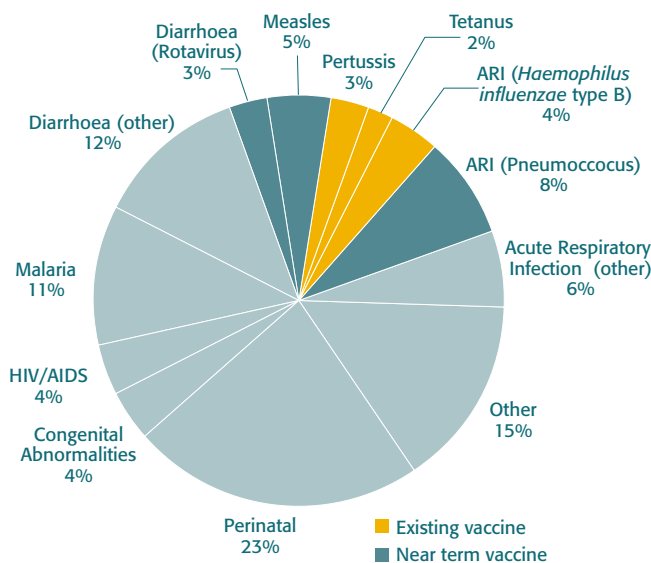
Millions of lives are saved every year because of vaccines. The virtual disappearance of diseases that once plagued populations and communities leads some to forget that this fragile peace depends on continued universal vaccination.

However, in many poor countries the fear remains. Every year, 27 million infants are not vaccinated against the most common childhood diseases, such as measles and tetanus. As a result, between two and three million children will die annually from easily preventable diseases, and many more will fall sick, missing school and becoming part of the vicious cycle that links poor health to continued poverty in adulthood.

Childhood immunisation is the best value in health care, providing tremendous benefit at very low cost. A child can be immunised fully for only US\$30. In addition to their effectiveness and relatively low cost, immunisations are available and easily administered. Vaccines already exist for many of the diseases that drive children and their families into poverty, such as measles, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, pneumococcal, hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae type B, and yellow fever.

Routine immunisation is a cornerstone of basic health care and an essential first step on the path to development. Increasing access to immunisation is a proven and cost-effective way to safeguard the health of children and families. And the benefits of immunisation reach far beyond children and families to create healthier and more prosperous communities and countries.

11M Annual Child Deaths



UNICEF/042/Thomas L. Kelly





Immunisation and the Millennium Development Goals

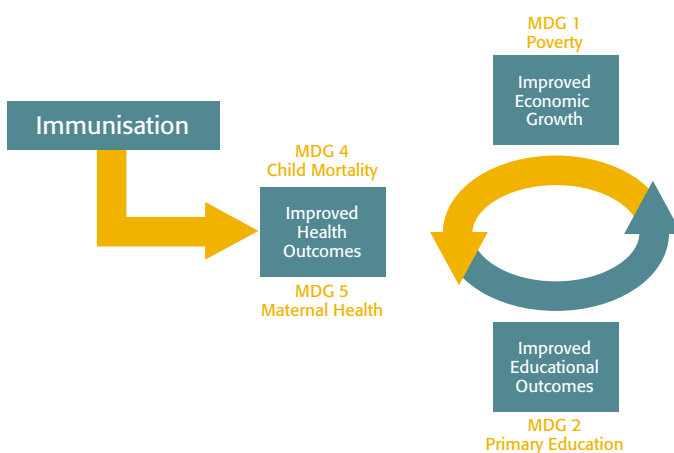
Improving immunisation rates and ensuring the world's children have access to all available vaccines will be essential to achieve the child mortality target included in the Millennium Development Goals—namely, a 2/3 reduction of the under-5 mortality rate by 2015. Progress toward this goal will be measured by such indicators as 1) the under-5 mortality rate, 2) the infant mortality rate, and 3) the proportion of 1-year-old children immunised against measles.

The positive impact of immunisation goes beyond child survival. Strengthening immunisation programs helps to build up entire health care delivery systems. A health care delivery system that is able to reach all of a country's children is a stronger system and one that is better able to meet other health challenges. Well-designed initiatives can play a

particularly effective role in assisting countries make rapid improvements by raising awareness of the importance of health improvements, enhancing partner coordination, and increasing funding.

Research also shows that a nation's health has a major influence on its citizens' income, development, and educational opportunities. According to David Bloom and David Canning of Harvard University, this influence can be seen first and foremost in productivity. Good health leads to higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and heightened job satisfaction. People with good health also live longer and are more interested in developing their skills and educating themselves and their children. Finally, improved health shows up in a lower mortality rate; this leads to a lower birth rate and better control over population trends, both of which are critical to fighting poverty.

Immunisation and the MDGs



Where Children Remain Unvaccinated

Source: WHO, 2004

