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## Immunization

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### Expanding immunization coverage

GOAL: By 2010, ensure routine immunization of children under one year of age reaches 90 per cent nationally and at least 80 per cent coverage in every district or equivalent administrative unit. Extend the benefits of new and improved vaccines to countries in need and provide twice-annual vitamin A supplementation or food fortification where necessary.

#### The Challenge

When the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) was launched in 1974, less than five per cent of the world's children were immunized during their first year of life against six killer diseases — polio, diphtheria, tuberculosis, pertussis (whooping cough), measles and tetanus. Today, nearly 79 per cent of children receive these life-saving vaccinations and increasing numbers are also protected by new and under-used vaccines, like Hepatitis B.

However, a quarter of the world's children – about 26 million infants – are not immunized against these killer diseases. The deadlines for eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus and certification of global polio eradication by 2005 were not met.

#### The Solution

Sustainability is the key for the next phase of the drive towards full immunization. UNICEF is a leading partner in the [Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization](#) (GAVI), a far-reaching public-private partnership dedicated to increasing children's access to vaccines in poor countries. The Alliance works to strengthen and expand routine immunization services and support the introduction of new and under-used vaccines, including those that protect against hepatitis B and Hib disease. The ultimate objective: establish immunization programmes that will function smoothly year after year as part of solid primary health care systems.

UNICEF works with governments and other partners including the [World Health Organization](#), the [World Bank](#), the [Gates Foundation](#), the vaccine industry, civil society groups, and research and technical health institutes to make full immunization a part of every child's life. Priority is given to about 40 nations where routine immunization coverage is lowest, and to the districts within those countries where children are least protected. These priority nations range from Indonesia and Sudan to India and Afghanistan.

In these countries, UNICEF helps local health managers to improve the planning and supervision of immunization activities and ensure a regular supply of vaccines, supports training for health workers and works with local leaders and media to educate communities and promote immunization. Special efforts are made to continue routine immunization in regions with poor health infrastructure, inaccessibility or conflict.

#### Progress

- Immunization has saved over 20 million lives in the last two decades.
- More than 100 million infants are immunized each year, saving more than 3 million lives annually.
- Global mortality attributed to measles declined by 78% from an estimated 733,000 deaths in 2000, to 164,000 in 2008.
- The prevalence of polio has declined dramatically since 1990: the number of polio cases worldwide as of 2009 was 1606, and as of May 2010 just 115 (Source: WHO).
- Immunization coverage against HepB and Hib has been increasing since 1990 – more than 160 countries now included HepB and Hib into infant immunization schedules.

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Updated: 7 May 2010

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