

# MEASLES

## INITIATIVE



**The Measles Initiative** is a partnership committed to reducing measles deaths globally. Launched in 2001, the Measles Initiative—led by the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF and the World Health Organization—provides technical and financial support to governments and communities on vaccination campaigns worldwide. To date, the Initiative has supported the vaccination of more than 372 million children helping to reduce measles deaths by 60% globally (compared to 1999). To learn more or make a donation, visit [www.measlesinitiative.org](http://www.measlesinitiative.org).

### ABOUT MEASLES:

- Measles remains a leading cause of death among young children. In 2005, an estimated 345,000 people, mostly children under five years of age, died from measles. This translates to about 945 deaths every day.
- Measles is one of the most contagious diseases known and causes severe health complications, such as pneumonia, blindness, diarrhea, encephalitis, corneal scarring and respiratory problems.
- Millions of children are at risk from measles. Malnourished and un-immunized children under five years of age are most vulnerable of dying from this disease.
- It costs less than US \$1 to vaccinate a child against measles. This is one of the most cost-effective health interventions available.

### PROGRESS TO DATE:

- From 1999 to 2005, measles deaths fell by 60% globally, from 873,000 deaths to 345,000. During this period, measles deaths in Africa dropped by 75%, from 506,000 to 126,000.
- The Measles Initiative has supported vaccination campaigns in more than 49 countries, mostly in Africa and Asia. Since 2001, more than 372 million children received measles vaccines in Measles Initiative supported campaigns. Between 1999 – 2005, routine measles coverage rates rose from 71 - 77%.
- Mass measles vaccination campaigns increasingly include additional health interventions. Since 2001, the Measles Initiative with other partners has supported the distribution of more than 29 million insecticide-treated bed nets for malaria prevention, 30 million doses of de-worming medicine, and more than 87 million doses of vitamin A.

### WHAT'S NEXT:

- The partnership is now focused on the global goal of reducing measles deaths by 90% by 2010 (compared to 2000).
- To achieve this goal, the Initiative is supporting the full implementation of measles mortality reduction activities in remaining large countries with a high measles burden, such as India and Pakistan.
- Despite the drop in measles deaths since 1999, there is more work to be done to ensure that children are protected. In 2005, more than 9 million children in Africa—and a total of 29 million worldwide—did not receive a dose of measles through routine immunization. The Initiative will work with governments in Africa and other regions to carry out campaigns and strengthen routine immunization until health systems are able to assure that at least 90% of children are fully vaccinated against measles.