EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concerted global action needed to beat back measles outbreaks

In 2019, reported measles cases worldwide increased to 20.7 million, the highest number since 2006 and deaths surged almost 50 percent since 2016. Measles killed nearly 150,000 people, most of them children. Across the globe, measles infections and deaths rose to the highest levels seen in the past quarter century and four European countries lost measles-free certification. Progress toward rubella elimination, meanwhile, remained steady and was being made country-by-country, with more babies protected in low to middle-income countries than ever before.

Challenges for wasting and maintaining progress for both diseases targeted for elimination emerged as the SARS-CoV-2 virus crossed borders late in the year and spread as a global pandemic. While the Measles & Rubella Initiative (M&RI) and its global partners face challenges, there are sound reasons to believe that gains lost can be recovered, momentum regained, unmet goals achieved and lives and livelihoods saved.

Measles Elimination Targets Slipped in 2019

In 2019, reported measles cases worldwide increased to 20.7 million, the highest number since 2006 and deaths surged almost 50 percent since 2016. Measles killed nearly 150,000 people, most of them children, each day in 2019, and one of those deaths was preventable. The World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC) estimate that the number of measles deaths reached 207,000 globally.

A half-century of hard-won gains were seriously threatened. No region of the world escaped the danger of measles outbreaks; even countries with robust immunization programmes and certified measles-free status experienced outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted globally.

In 2019, outbreaks emerged in wealthier countries, as well. Five/Uni00A0countries disrupted globally.

• One of the M&RI founding partners, the American Red Cross, mobilized 6,960 volunteers to reach 2,569,904 households in six countries.

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2019 IN NUMBERS

Nine countries accounted for 73% of all reported cases in 2019.

Estimated 207,000 people, mostly children, died due to measles in 2019, as deaths surged by nearly 50% annually worldwide compared to 2018.

870,000 measles cases in 2019, the highest number reported since 1996.

116 million children received the 1st dose of the measles vaccine in 194 countries for 85% global coverage.

289,435 specimens were tested for measles.

214,281 specimens were tested for rubella.

113 countries had >90% immunization coverage for the 1st dose of the measles vaccine.

177 countries (91%) have introduced a 2nd dose of the measles vaccine in their immunization schedule.

173 countries (89%) provided rubella vaccines in their immunization schedule.

Over 35 million doses were supplied specifically in response to measles outbreaks in 22 countries.

113 countries had >90% immunization coverage for the 1st dose of the measles vaccine.

53 countries vaccinated nearly 203 million children during 62 supplemental immunization activities (SIAs) with M&RI support.

60.7 million children vaccinated against measles using Gavi funds during outbreak response (2012 - 2019).

The Region of the Americas maintained rubella and congenital rubella syndrome elimination.

25 countries delivered additional health interventions including deworming, polio and Vitamin A during measles campaigns.

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