

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Japan verified as achieving measles elimination
*Western Pacific Region achieves progress towards measles elimination,
but challenges remain*

MACAO SAR (CHINA), 27 MARCH 2015 – Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Japan have been verified as having achieved measles elimination by the Measles Regional Verification Commission. The three countries join Australia, Macao SAR (China), Mongolia and the Republic of Korea as countries and areas in the Western Pacific Region that have successfully eliminated measles.

The Region has made substantial progress, with measles deaths dropping to 1500 in 2013 from 10 400 in 2000. Measles cases also dropped dramatically to 31 706 cases in 2013 from 177 052 cases in 2000.

“Measles elimination is achievable in the Western Pacific Region. Increased commitment, funding and advocacy are all urgently required to immunize all children against measles, especially the most vulnerable in the hardest to reach communities,” said Dr Shin Young-soo, World Health Organization Regional Director for the Western Pacific. “Recent progress is impressive, but we must do more to ensure that immunization programmes reach everyone and measles elimination continues to be a priority.”

Measles elimination in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia and Japan was made possible because each of the three countries was able to achieve high coverage with two doses of measles vaccine either through routine immunization or immunization campaigns.

Worldwide, measles kills 400 people a day—or about 16 deaths every hour, most of whom are children under the age of five. “Measles is the most highly infectious disease known, and it is easily prevented with just two doses of measles vaccine,” said Dr Sergey Diorditsa, Coordinator, Expanded Programme on Immunization for the WHO Western Pacific Region.

While measles mortality and morbidity have decreased substantially, the Region faced challenges in 2014 with outbreaks in several countries that had experienced prolonged periods with little or no measles transmission.

At its sixty-first session in 2010, the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific urged the Regional Director to establish an independent regional verification mechanisms for measles elimination. The regional verification mechanism enables acknowledgment of countries and areas that have eliminated measles. Commission members also provide guidance to countries working towards measles elimination.

Note to Editors

In 2014, measles-rubella mass campaigns were conducted in the Federated States of Micronesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Viet Nam. Globally, more than 1.8 billion people have been reached since 2000 with the support of the Measles & Rubella Initiative through routine immunization and mass campaigns.

The Measles & Rubella Initiative

Launched in 2001, the Measles & Rubella Initiative is a global partnership led by the American Red Cross, United Nations Foundation, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF and WHO.

The Measles & Rubella Initiative is committed to ensuring that no child dies from measles or is born with congenital rubella syndrome; reducing measles deaths by 95% by 2015; and achieving measles and rubella elimination in at least five WHO regions by 2020. The Region of the Americas has sustained measles elimination since 2002 and the Western Pacific Region is on track to reach its goal. All six regions have established measles elimination goals.

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Related links:

Health topic: Measles

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs286/en/>

Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020

http://www.who.int/immunization/global_vaccine_action_plan/GVAP_doc_2011_2020/en/

Q&A: Measles verification

http://www.wpro.who.int/mediacentre/releases/2014/FINAL_RVCQA11Mar.pdf?ua=1