



Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of *Measles Bulletin*, a publication of the EPI Unit of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. This bulletin is designed to communicate the progress towards measles elimination in the Region by incorporating information shared by the Member States.

In September 2003, the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific adopted resolution WPR/RC54.R3. The resolution noted that 95% population immunity is essential to achieve measles elimination and recognized that some countries have made significant progress towards achieving this level of immunity. The Regional Committee decided that, in the Western Pacific Region, measles elimination should be one of two new pillars to strengthen the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). The Regional Committee confirmed that measles elimination should be a regional goal and that the establishment of a target date should be made at the earliest opportunity and should be based on an annual review of progress. It also endorsed the Western Pacific Regional Plan of Action for Measles Elimination.

The Regional Committee urged Member States:

(1) to develop or strengthen national plans for measles

elimination as part of the overall plans for immunization services;

(2) to use measles elimination to strengthen EPI and other public health programmes, such as prevention of congenital rubella syndrome;

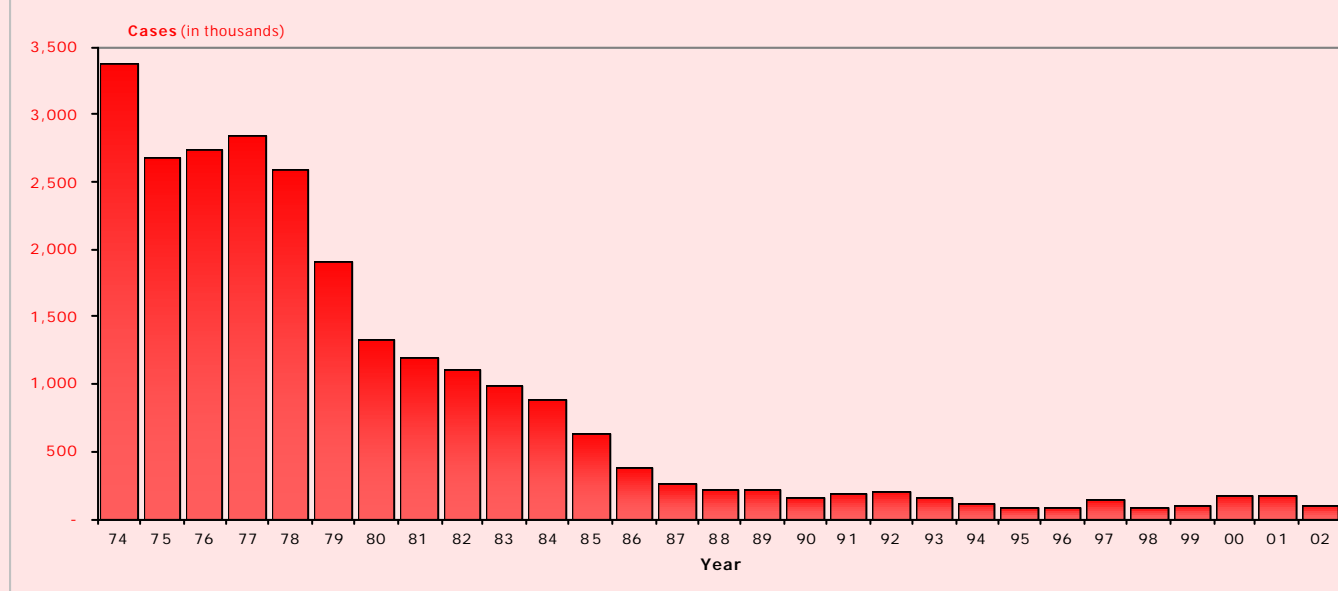
(3) to offer, in principle, all children two doses of measles vaccine, taking into account local situations, so that the 95% population immunity of each birth cohort can be achieved and maintained in every district; and

(4) to develop or strengthen measles surveillance systems and laboratory confirmation of cases.

The Regional Committee also requested the Regional Director to further strengthen technical cooperation with Member States, in particular the improvement of immunization coverage and surveillance and to strengthen laboratory capacity in the Region to achieve measles elimination. It also requested regular reports on progress and a proposed target date for regional measles elimination.

To share information and keep abreast of the progress towards measles elimination, WHO Western Pacific Regional Office requests National Immunization Programmes of Member States to send its case-based measles data on a regular basis. The data shared can only be as good as the data received.

Figure 1. Reported measles cases, Western Pacific Region (1974-2002)



The leopard can't get rid of its spots - but our kids can!

Measles remains the leading cause of vaccine-preventable death among children. In the Western Pacific Region, it is estimated that over 32 000 children die each year of this disease. Despite major progress during the past few years, it is estimated that 30-40 million cases of measles still occur worldwide every year, leading to over 770 000 deaths per year. Yet controlling measles is well within our power. Measles is totally preventable. We have a highly effective, safe and inexpensive vaccine that can halt the transmission of the virus when individuals receive two doses. We have not yet achieved the necessary levels of measles immunization coverage to interrupt transmission throughout the Region.

Most countries and areas of the Region have developed national plans of action for measles control and elimination. Australia and New Zealand have targeted measles for elimination and have probably succeeded, although this has

not been formally certified. It is likely that many Pacific island countries and areas have also interrupted the transmission of the virus. Other countries that have set target dates for measles elimination include the Republic of Korea - 2005, Malaysia - 2005, the Philippines - 2008 and Viet Nam - 2010.

To work towards the regional measles elimination goal, many countries are offering two doses measles vaccine to attain 95% population immunity. The method generally adopted for implementing the second dose is supplementary measles immunization activities (SIAs). In 2004 and 2005, countries such as Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines are planning SIAs (nationally and/or sub-nationally).

It is now up to us to make it happen - a Region free of measles!

Figure 2. Measles incidence in the Western Pacific Region (average 1998-2002)

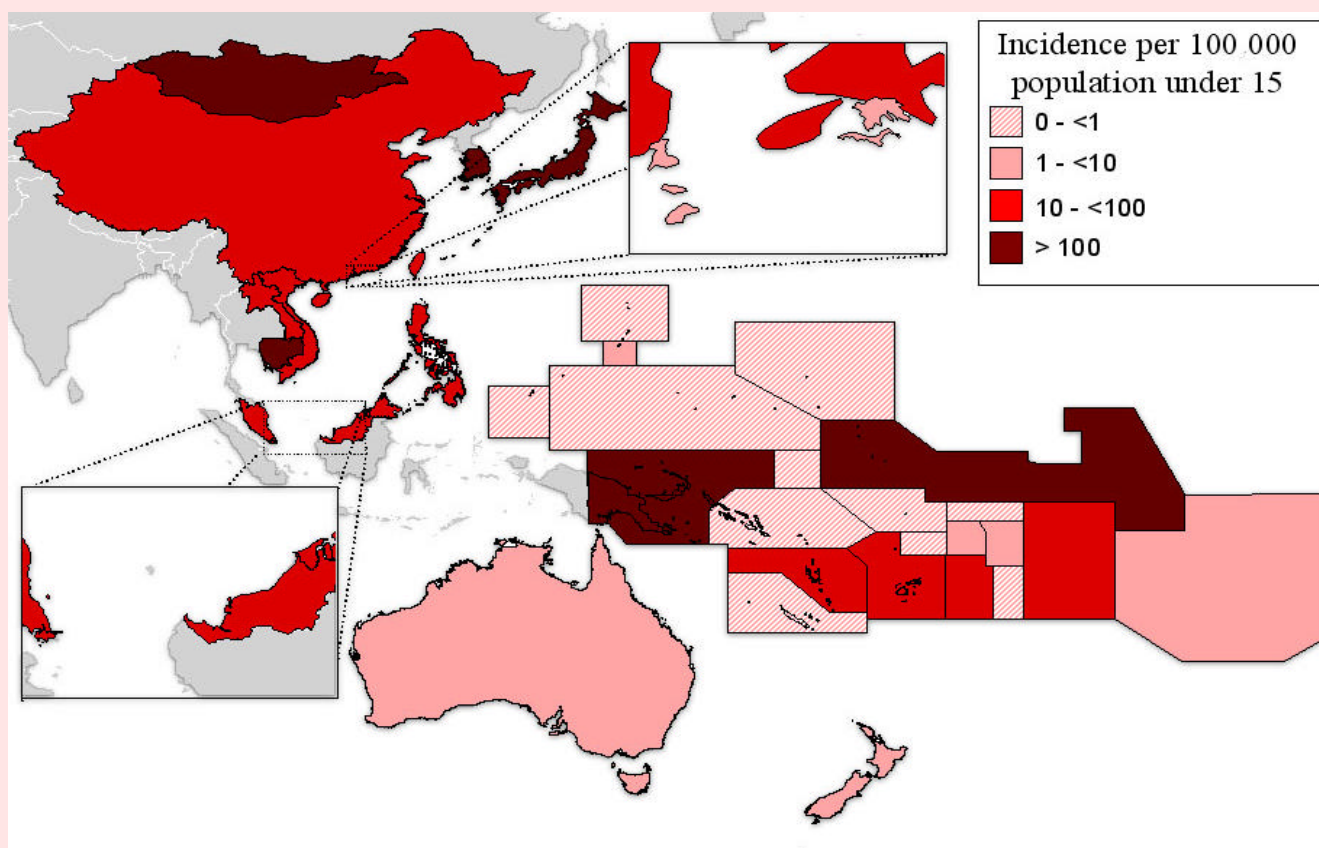


Table 1. Reported measles cases, vaccination status and deaths (2003)

| Country/area | Total number of reported cases | Incidence per 100,000 population | Vaccination status | | | Lab confirmed cases | Number of deaths | Date of last report |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| | | | Immunized | Unimmunized | Unknown Immunization Status | | | |
| Australia | | | | | | | | |
| Brunei Darussalam | | | | | | | | |
| Cambodia | 364 | 2.81 | 144 | 220 | 0 | 74 | 0 | 23/01/2004 |
| China | | | | | | | | |
| Hong Kong (China) | | | | | | | | |
| Japan | | | | | | | | |
| Lao People's Democratic Republic | 811 | 21.72 | 149 | 657 | 5 | 73 | 10 | 02/12/2003 |
| Macao (China) | | | | | | | | |
| Malaysia | | | | | | | | |
| Mongolia | 86 | 4.41 | ... | ... | ... | 6 | ... | 25/11/2003 |
| New Zealand | | | | | | | | |
| Papua New Guinea | | | | | | | | |
| Philippines | 8440* | 14.07 | 1547 | 5149 | 1744 | 82 | 230 | 27/11/2003 |
| Republic of Korea | | | | | | | | |
| Singapore | | | | | | | | |
| Viet Nam | 788 | 1.43 | 433 | 366 | 19 | 243 | 0 | 10/11/2003 |
| Western Pacific Region | 10 489 | 5.71 | 2273 | 6392 | 1768 | 478 | 240 | |

* 11% tested for laboratory confirmation, of that 89% was positive.

Regional Measles Laboratory Network

Considerable progress has been made on the Regional Measles Laboratory Network.

- Most of the countries in the Region have identified National Measles Laboratories (NML).

- A laboratory network covering Pacific island countries (LABNET) and another covering surveillance (EPINET) has been established with four laboratories (Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam and New Caledonia).

- Three Regional Reference Laboratories in Australia, Japan and China have been proposed.

- An on-site review for accreditation of the Regional Reference Laboratory in China was carried out in November.

- Since April 2003, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, the Philippines and Viet Nam have started sending case-based reports to the EPI Informatics Assistant at bersondad@wpro.who.int.

Accreditation procedures of NMLs, including provision of proficiency test panels and first accreditation visits, will be in place in due course. A training course mainly for national laboratories in need of assistance is being planned.



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Table 2. Reported measles cases in countries and areas in the Western Pacific Region (1990 - 2002).

| Country/area | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| American Samoa | 498 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Australia | 880 | 1380 | 1425 | 4536 | 4895 | 1198 | 498 | 853 | 327 | 235 | 108 | 141 | 32 |
| Brunei Darussalam | 12 | | 51 | 50 | | | | 13 | 12 | 23 | 42 | 11 | |
| Cambodia | 2473 | 2186 | 2759 | 1262 | 946 | 2038 | 2814 | 3826 | 1993 | 13827 | 12327 | 3761 | 1361 |
| China | 85 705 | 123 428 | 140 048 | 117 851 | 76 204 | 53 232 | 68 404 | 82 687 | 53 030 | 61 840 | 71 093 | 88 962 | 58 341 |
| Cook Islands | 36 | 61 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 9 | 194 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Federated St. of Micronesia | 1 | 0 | 46 | 0 | 930 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fiji | 32 | | 969 | 425 | 39 | 414 | 39 | 828 | | 20 | | 17 | 304 |
| French Polynesia | 30 | 31 | 22 | 21 | 95 | 7 | 387 | 518 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Guam | 1 | 62 | 4 | 25 | 228 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Hong Kong (China) | 48 | 278 | 329 | 29 | 210 | 33 | 110 | 318 | 56 | 32 | 60 | 179 | 61 |
| Japan | 3259 | 5452 | | 2002 | | | 1640 | | 899 | | 22 497 | 22 552 | 33 812 |
| Kiribati | 30 | 8 | 4357 | 114 | 292 | 4 | 13 | 25 | 355 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lao People's Democratic Republic | 2168 | 1400 | 520 | 1083 | 984 | 3174 | 917 | 671 | 4613 | 2302 | 332 | 94 | 2070 |
| Macao (China) | 19 | 1 | 35 | 21 | 52 | 3 | | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Malaysia | 563 | 345 | 363 | 542 | 346 | 654 | 460 | 627 | 483 | 2576 | 6187 | 2198 | 408 |
| Marshall Islands | 14 | 19 | 10 | 9 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mongolia | 296 | 656 | 1069 | 71 | 177 | 558 | 128 | 4 | 8 | 10 | 925 | 10 677 | 1205 |
| Nauru | 300 | | | | | 0 | | 58 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| New Caledonia | 18 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 2 | | 0 | | 1 | | 0 | |
| New Zealand | | 9239 | | 69 | 33 | | | 2041 | 164 | 106 | 65 | 65 | 21 |
| Niue | | 121 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Northern Mariana Islands | 35 | | 7 | 116 | 29 | 0 | | 1 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Palau | 0 | 0 | 0 | 93 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Papua New Guinea | 4575 | 2740 | 6634 | 8212 | 6821 | 3578 | 2879 | 2717 | 1148 | 6304 | 7135 | 4023 | 17 620 |
| Philippines | 42 938 | 29 037 | 39 304 | 7541 | 3006 | 4051 | | 36 465 | 1984 | 2981 | 7120 | 7360 | 7003 |
| Republic of Korea | 3415 | | | | 7883 | 71 | 71 | 2 | 4 | | 32 088 | 23 044 | 41 |
| Samoa | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 87 | 0 | 8 | ND | NA | ND | 0 |
| Singapore | 143 | 216 | 606 | 0 | 159 | 185 | | 1413 | 114 | 65 | 141 | 408 | 211 |
| Solomon Islands | 343 | 45 | 86 | 1527 | 640 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ND | | 0 | 0 |
| Tokelau | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 336 | 287 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tonga | 65 | 18 | 16 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 1081 | 36 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Tuvalu | | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 51 | 14 | 0 | 0 | ND | 0 | 0 |
| Vanuatu | 67 | 541 | 171 | 91 | 27 | 27 | 4 | 113 | | 12 | 52 | 7 | 101 |
| Viet Nam | 8175 | 9874 | 11 830 | 12 015 | 11 853 | 6171 | 5156 | 6507 | 11 690 | 14 134 | 16 512 | 12 058 | 6755 |
| Wallis and Futuna | | | 0 | 9 | 9 | 13 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Western Pacific Region | 156 139 | 187 162 | 210 678 | 157 730 | 115 866 | 75 425 | 84 003 | 141 278 | 76 936 | 104 492 | 176 692 | 175 567 | 129 361 |

* Source: Reported number of cases for 2002 in Cambodia, Mongolia, Philippines and Viet Nam from WHO/WPRO Regional Measles Database. All other countries from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form data.

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