Despite the availability of a safe, effective and inexpensive vaccine for more than 40 years, measles remains a leading vaccine-preventable cause of childhood deaths.

THE MEASLES INITIATIVE:

- The Measles Initiative, launched in 2001, is a partnership committed to reducing measles deaths globally, with the goal of cutting measles deaths by 90 percent by 2010 compared with estimates from 2000. During its first five years (2001-2005), the Initiative was the main international supporter of mass measles immunization campaigns that led to the vaccination of more than 360 million children, predominantly in Africa. Building on its success in Africa, the Initiative has expanded into Asia. The Initiative increasingly provides additional life-saving health interventions in its campaigns, including Vitamin A, de-worming medicine and insecticide-treated bed nets for malaria prevention. The Measles Initiative has mobilized more than $308 million through 2006 to support campaigns in more than 43 countries in Africa and Asia. In 2007, for the first time, the Measles Initiative will support vaccination campaigns in each of the six WHO regions of the world. This will be made possible by new funding from the International Finance Facility for Immunization. Leading the Measles Initiative efforts are the American Red Cross, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United Nations Foundation, UNICEF and the World Health Organization. For more information or to make a donation, log on to www.measlesinitiative.org.

THE WORLD'S PROBLEM:

- Measles is a leading cause of vaccine-preventable death among children. In 1999, measles killed an estimated 873,000 people globally. The vast majority of measles deaths – 791,000 – were among children under five.
- Measles can cause severe health complications, including pneumonia, diarrhea, encephalitis, and corneal scarring, which can lead to blindness.
- In developing countries, measles death rates range from 1-5 percent, but in populations with high levels of malnutrition and poor access to health care, the death rate may reach 10-30 percent.
- Spread through the air, measles is one of the most contagious diseases known.
- Millions of children still remain at risk from measles. Malnourished and un-immunized children under five years of age, especially infants, are at high risk of contracting measles and are most vulnerable to dying from the disease.
- The primary reason for the ongoing high number of measles deaths is the failure to deliver at least one dose of measles vaccine to all infants.
- Measles vaccination is one of the most cost-effective child health interventions available today for preventing deaths. It costs less than US $1 to vaccinate a child against measles.
- Vaccination campaigns sometimes provide the only contact with healthcare services that children receive in their early years of life. Vaccinations are essential for child survival.

PROGRESS SO FAR:

- When the Measles Initiative formed in 2001, its goal was to reduce global measles deaths by 50% by 2005 (compared with 1999 figures).
- In 1999, measles caused an estimated 873,000 deaths worldwide. By 2005, global measles deaths had fallen to an estimated 345,000, a 60% reduction. Thus, the global goal was not just achieved, but was surpassed.

www.measlesinitiative.org
• During this period, measles deaths in Africa dropped by 75%, from 506,000 to 126,000, largely due to the support provided by the Measles Initiative and the commitment of African governments.
• Supplemental vaccination campaigns and improved routine immunization between 1999 and 2005 prevented 2.3 million measles deaths.
• The Initiative’s strategy of reaching more than 90 percent of targeted children in a short period of time through vaccination campaigns has been so successful that other health interventions such as insecticide-treated bed nets for malaria prevention, Vitamin A supplements, and de-worming medicine have been included in these campaigns.

PARTNERS:

**American Red Cross**  The American Red Cross helps vulnerable people around the world to prevent, prepare for, and respond to disasters, complex humanitarian emergencies, and life-threatening health conditions. The American Red Cross accomplishes this goal by working within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement—the world’s largest humanitarian network with more than 180 Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies and 93 million volunteers and members. In all our work, we abide by the seven fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity, and universality.

American Red Cross coordinates the Measles Initiative and provides substantial funding and communication support. It also provides technical and financial assistance to national Red Cross societies to mobilize mothers and caretakers to vaccinate their children during immunization campaigns. More than 100,000 Red Cross national society volunteers assist with measles campaigns each year. In addition, the American Red Cross supports community education programs and operations research around the integration of insecticide treated nets in measles campaigns. Between 2001 and 2006, the American Red Cross contributed $118 million to the Initiative.

**United Nations Foundation**  The UN Foundation was created in 1998 with entrepreneur and philanthropist Ted Turner’s historic $1 billion gift to support UN causes and activities. The UN Foundation builds and implements public-private partnerships to address the world’s most pressing problems, and also works to broaden support for the UN through advocacy and public outreach. The UN Foundation is a public charity. For the Measles Initiative, the UN Foundation and its partners, including the American Red Cross and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have raised $308 million in funds as of December 2006. The UN Foundation disburses and accounts for these funds through the UN financial system. The UN Foundation also contributes communication and fundraising resources in support of the Measles Initiative.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  CDC is at the forefront of public health efforts to prevent and control infectious and chronic diseases, injuries, workplace hazards, disabilities, and environmental health threats. Today, CDC is globally recognized for conducting research and investigations and for its action oriented approach. CDC provides technical assistance for epidemiological and laboratory surveillance including outbreak investigations, planning, implementation, and evaluation of immunization programs including operations research. In addition, CDC provides funding for bundled measles vaccine and safe immunization practices.

**United Nations Children’s Fund**  UNICEF is the premier global institution for child health and has been active in childhood vaccination for many years. It is also a world leader in leveraging its uniquely large, on the ground global network of communication and social mobilization staff and alliances in support of health strategies. UNICEF will use its logistical and procurement capacity to provide all the logistics in procuring and delivering the syringes, the vaccine, and other commodities to the vaccination sites. UNICEF’s New York headquarters and country offices allow for the efficient movement of funds and strict accountability. UNICEF is the only organization allowed to import the vaccine into most developing countries and has a sophisticated logistics capacity as well as great stature in each country.

**World Health Organization**  WHO has a leading role in strategy development, consensus building, and program monitoring. WHO provides the overall technical leadership and strategic planning for the management, coordination and monitoring of global measles control activities. WHO is also responsible for ensuring that all components of the measles mortality reduction strategy are technically sound and successfully implemented. Visit the Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals page at [http://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/en/](http://www.who.int/immunization/newsroom/en/).