

In 1997, the 22 countries in the World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) had resolved to eliminate measles from their region by 2010 (EM/RC44/R.6).

The Eastern Mediterranean Regional strategy to eliminate measles calls for:

Achieve and sustain >95% coverage with measles containing vaccine through high-quality routine immunization services at National and district level;

Provide a second opportunity for measles immunization to susceptible groups;

Strong case-base surveillance with laboratory confirmation; and

Clinical management of measles cases.

Since then the Region has made substantial progress towards achieving measles elimination and reducing the burden of Measles disease. By 2008, measles deaths had decreased to 7000 deaths from 96 000 in 2000 a reduction of 93%. The number of confirmed measles cases decreased from about 88 000 in 1998 to 11 295 in 2011. The goal of the WHO–UNICEF Global Immunization Vision and Strategy (GIVS), achieving 90% reduction of measles mortality by 2010 compared to 2000 levels, was achieved three years before the target date.

All countries have implemented the nationwide catch-up campaign. The regional average of measles-containing vaccine (MCV1) coverage, increased from 79% in 2000 to 88% in 2010. Approximately 400 million people in the Region have been vaccinated through supplementary immunization activities since the elimination target was established. Maintaining immunity through high vaccination coverage levels is essential to eliminate measles and limit the spread of measles from imported cases.

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