



American Red Cross



World Health Organization



MEASLES INITIATIVE: MEASLES CASES AND DEATHS FALL BY 60% IN AFRICA SINCE 1999

Ted Turner Announces \$20 million Commitment from UN Foundation to Measles Initiative Over the Next Four Years

BD Expands Partnership with the American Red Cross in Support of the Measles Initiative

NEW YORK, NY – The Measles Initiative partners gathered at the TIME Magazine Global Health Summit in New York this week to announce that tremendous progress has been made in Africa in the fight against measles. Largely due to the technical and financial support of the Measles Initiative and commitment from African governments, more than 200 million children in Africa have been vaccinated against measles and one million lives have been saved since 1999. Measles cases and deaths have dropped by 60%, thanks to improvements in routine and supplementary immunization activities in Africa. The founding partners of the Measles Initiative are the American Red Cross, UN Foundation, World Health Organization, UNICEF and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This is a major public health achievement," said Dr. LEE Jong-wook, WHO Director-General. "It is the result of the hard work and dedication of the governments of priority countries with high measles deaths and all our Measles Initiative partners to achieve a common goal – to reduce measles deaths. Let us continue to build on this momentum."

UN Foundation Chairman Ted Turner also announced a \$20 million commitment from the UN Foundation to the Measles Initiative over the next four years, bringing the UN Foundation's support for the Measles Initiative to more than \$57 million since 2001. The UN Foundation began its work in global health with the effort to eradicate polio and then helped build the Measles Initiative based on that partnership infrastructure.

"Although it's virtually forgotten in America, measles continues to be a leading childhood killer in Africa," said UN Foundation Chairman Ted Turner. "That is why the UN Foundation is committing \$20 million to the Measles Initiative over the next four years. We hope these funds will mobilize more partners and supporters to help in this cause. The Measles Initiative has had tremendous success in reducing measles deaths and we can't stop now. Going forward we must build upon the Initiative's accomplishments in Africa, use these campaigns to distribute malaria bed nets, and expand our activities into other measles-ravaged areas such as Asia."

Measles is one of the leading vaccine-preventable childhood killers in the world. In 2003, more than 500,000 people – 470,000 of them children under age 5 – died from the disease. Half of these deaths were in Africa alone. A safe and highly effective vaccine has been available for over forty years, and it costs less than US \$1 to protect a child against measles. Despite this, millions of children still remain at risk from measles.

UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman said that the Initiative's extraordinary success against measles has brought the world closer to reaching the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on child mortality. The

results in Africa can now be replicated in Asia, the region that accounts for more than 180,000 deaths worldwide.

“Fighting measles is key to reducing child deaths,” Veneman said. “By expanding this Initiative to reach more children and using measles campaigns to deliver other lifesaving health services, we can save many more lives in the years ahead.”

Since 2001, the Measles Initiative has mobilized more than \$144 million and supported over 40 African countries in implementing high-quality measles vaccination campaigns. A measles immunization campaign is a coordinated effort of national governments, health workers, volunteers, and communities to ensure that, within a few days or weeks, every target-aged child in that community is vaccinated against measles.

“The American Red Cross is proud to be part of the Measles Initiative and to collaborate with our fine partners who each play an important role in ensuring that each at-risk child has the chance to be vaccinated. The American Red Cross mission is to save lives whether from natural disasters, famine or infectious disease. I truly believe that with the Measles Initiative, we are doing just that. We sincerely thank our supporters, including Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD), which has contributed to our mission in so many unique ways. The Measles Initiative has been able to provide vaccinations for less than a dollar per child. In a world where things are not perfect, we are under budget, exceeding our targets and are ahead of schedule,” said Marsha J. Evans, President and CEO, American Red Cross

Additionally, global medical technology company BD announced its expanded collaboration with the American Red Cross to support the Measles initiative, valued at \$1.7 million. “We are proud to expand our relationship with the American Red Cross for the Measles Initiative,” said Edward J. Ludwig, BD Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer. “We share the same passion of saving children's lives by providing safe immunization. Our collaboration with the American Red Cross will leverage our core competencies to provide general support for the campaign, as well as the much needed education and training for healthcare workers and the community at large.”

“The Measles Initiative and other investments in immunization not only save lives, they build economies,” said Bo Stenson of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI). “In fact, a new study out of the Harvard School of Public Health demonstrates that in the past, development experts have generally underestimated the economic value of immunization. Investing in the health of children is not only the compassionate thing to do, it is the smart thing to do and will pay off for future generations in their educational attainment, labor productivity, income and savings.”

Next steps for the Measles Initiative include additional ‘follow-up’ vaccination campaigns in Africa, expanding vaccination campaigns into Asia and continuing the successful “integrated child health campaigns” in which health workers provide not only measles vaccines, but also insecticide-treated bed-nets (for malaria prevention), vitamin A, de-worming medication, and polio vaccines.

While integrated campaigns have been piloted in parts of Ghana and Zambia in the past, Togo held the first nationwide integrated campaign in December 2004. A post-campaign evaluation revealed that more than 90% of eligible children received measles and polio vaccines, de-worming medicine and bed-nets. “An immunization campaign provides the perfect opportunity to deliver additional life-saving interventions,” said Dr. Julie Gerberding, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “The Togo campaign demonstrates that innovative thinking can be turned into field-level success. Campaigns that use multiple approaches, such as medicines, bed nets, and health education, should be implemented in many countries to prevent the unnecessary deaths of millions of children.”

In addition to supporting governments in Africa, the Initiative is also expanding its activities to high measles burden countries in Asia.

The Measles Initiative will host a media tour to Benin during its measles vaccination campaign, Dec. 12-18, 2005. The Benin campaign will mark the culmination and success of our original five-year program goal of reducing measles deaths by vaccinating 200 million children, saving 1.2 million lives. Media will have the opportunity to travel with Measles Initiative partners to meet doctors, mothers and children who have all known someone who has had measles and many who have seen loved ones die. Media will visit temporary vaccination posts around the country; students will put on skits and sing their 'measles' songs; vitamin A drops will be delivered to children under five years of age; and media will also see the thousands of Benin Red Cross Society volunteers going house to house, throughout markets and down long dirt roads, delivering the news of a free vaccine. Contact Julie Irby at 202.439.0722 or irbyj@usa.redcross.org for more information on the media tour.

For more information, please contact:

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Launched in February 2001, the Measles Initiative (www.measlesinitiative.org) is a partnership formed to reduce and control measles deaths. The Initiative is led by the United Nations Foundation, American Red Cross, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF and the World Health Organization. The Measles Initiative (MI) bases its success on its far-reaching partnership between public and private institutions, including key players such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Becton, Dickinson and Company, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and countries and governments affected by measles. While the Measles Initiative is focused in Africa where the majority of measles-related deaths occur, partners also work on a wide-range of health initiatives around the world, including measles control and other vaccination services outside of Africa.