State of the World’s Children – For Every Child, Vaccination

# What is Happening to Children’s Right to grow up healthy?

Every child should be able to grow up healthy (Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)[[1]](#footnote-1). However, access to basic immunisation services against preventable, potentially life-threatening diseases – such as measles and yellow fever – has deteriorated significantly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report published by UNICEF’s report *State of the World’s Children – For Every Child, Vaccination*.

* **67 million children** **have missed out on vaccinations between 2019-2021**, with 48 million children having not received any vaccines at all (also known as ‘zero-dose children’).
* **7 in 8 girls are unprotected against HPV**, putting millions of girls at risk of cervical cancer.
* **Immunisation rates are at their lowest levels since** **2008**.

The UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) is therefore calling on the UK Government to:

1. **FUND** immunisation services, including disbursing in full pre-existing commitments to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.
2. **PRIORITISE** immunisation and child health in plans, commitments, and conversations the UK Government has internationally. This includes advocating for prioritisation of child health, health systems strengthening, and strengthening global health workforce, at major global health and international development platforms.
3. **IMPLEMENT** plans that prioritise the expansion of children’s health services. This includes the operationalisation of the Ending Preventable Deaths Strategy and health systems strengthening strategies.

# How ARE Children BEING IMPACTED and What needs to be done?

COVID-19 has set back immunisation services to the lowest levels since 2008 which has in turn led to outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases. In addition, many countries are facing economic constraints, making funding immunisation and other essential health services in their countries difficult and putting children’s futures at risk. However, immunisation has significant benefits for both children and wider society. Each year, **4.4 million** lives are saved thanks to vaccines, and every **$1** invested in immunisation yields a return on investment of **$26**. More than ever, support for immunisation from countries like the UK remains critical.

Children missing out on vaccinations are also more likely to miss out on other lifesaving essential services. Immunisation is a crucial entry point to the health system for children in remote, marginalised, and refugee communities – communities that are typically most at risk and have the highest proportion of zero-dose children. We need to optimise resources by integrating immunisation into wider primary healthcare services to ensure that children have access to a range of essential and lifesaving health services.

In addition, there is evidence suggesting that there has been a decline in confidence surrounding the effectiveness of vaccines. Building trust in immunisation will require us to talk to communities and support health workers to address their concerns, deliver tailored communications strategies to increase confidence, and develop more resilient health systems.

The UK Government can play a pivotal role in supporting countries to restore immunisation services to pre-pandemic levels and enable children everywhere to attain their right to vaccination. The UK Government is a leading donor to immunisation, with governance positions on many global health institutions, and diplomatic influence in many countries with the highest levels of backsliding and numbers of zero-dose children. Through investing in immunisation services, prioritising immunisation in its diplomatic influence internationally, and working with the most affected, the UK Government can demonstrate its commitment to ending preventable deaths.

# Steps You can take

As a Member of Parliament, you can support children around the world to get access to vaccinations they need by:

* 1. **Writing to the Secretary of State and Chancellor** to ask that immunisation services are funded, and that the FCDO prioritises supporting countries immunisation recovery, and implements their commitments to strengthening health systems and ending preventable deaths.
	2. **Tabling a Parliamentary question** for the next FCDO question time on 2nd May to ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office what steps his Department are taking to restore access to immunisation services around the world.
	3. **Applying for a Westminster Hall debate** to generate support amongst your Parliamentary colleagues and help develop policy solutions.

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| Get in touchIf you would like more information, please get in touch with Faiyaz Amin, Senior Political Affairs Adviser FaiyazA@unicef.org.uk to arrange a suitable time to meet and discuss how you can support our campaign to protect children’s futures around the world.  |

1. <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)