

July 17, 2024 › COVID › Global Threats › News

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Global childhood immunization rates stalled in 2023, leaving millions of children “vulnerable to preventable diseases,” according to a **new report** from the **World Health Organization** (WHO) and **UNICEF**.

The latest WHO-UNICEF estimates show that 14.5 million children missed all doses of “routine” **DTP vaccines** last year, an increase from 13.9 million in 2022. The report also laments the gaps in measles vaccinations, noting that outbreaks hit 103 countries.

Dr. Paul Thomas, a pediatrician and co-author of the upcoming book, “**Vax Facts: What to Consider Before Vaccinating at All Ages & All Stages of Life**,” told **The Defender** the the **global** vaccination programs continue to use the dangerous **whole-cell DTP formulation** instead of the less risky acellular version.

The whole-cell **vaccine**, which contains the entire **Bordetella pertussis organism** rather than just purified components, has since the 1930s resulted in widespread reports of neurological damage. It was phased out in the U.S. by 1997, but the formulation has continued to be used in low- and middle-income countries, potentially **killing millions of children**.

“The irony is that success, when it is measured by how well a country or region or doctor vaccinates, in reality rewards the pharmaceutical industry and all who profit from vaccine sales at the expense of the health of the individual and the community,” Thomas said.

Thomas, the author of a study comparing the health outcomes of **vaccinated versus unvaccinated** children, argued success should be measured on the overall health of the population, not on **vaccination rates**.

“The less we vaccinate, the healthier the population,” he said. “We need new metrics!”

The report comes as **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**, unveiled an ambitious **\$11.9 billion plan** — including \$9 billion in new funding — to vaccinate 500 million children by 2030, with existing and new vaccines.

The Vaccine Safety Project

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Key findings from WHO-UNICEF report

The **WHO-UNICEF report** states that the stagnation in global vaccination rates highlights ongoing challenges in the wake of the **COVID-19** pandemic, raising concerns about disease outbreaks, particularly measles, and the impact of climate change on vaccine-preventable diseases.

The report centers on the number of children who received three doses of the DTP vaccine — a key marker for global immunization coverage — which stalled at 84% (108 million) of children in 2023, a number the WHO nonetheless called “**impressive.**”

The global health agency blamed the data trends on poor access to health services during the pandemic that persists, and on fragile, conflict-ridden areas.

The increase of 600,000 “zero-dose” children was particularly concerning to the WHO in light of its **Immunization Agenda 2030** (IA2030) goals. IA2030 aims to “leave no one behind” by reducing the number of zero-dose children by 50% and with “500 vaccine introductions” of “new or under-utilized vaccines” in low- and middle-income countries by 2030.

Measles vaccination rates also remain a significant concern to the WHO. In 2023, only 83% of children worldwide received their first dose of the measles vaccine through routine health services, while just 74% received their second dose.

These figures fall short of the 95% coverage the WHO claims is needed to “prevent outbreaks, avert unnecessary disease and deaths and achieve measles elimination goals,” according to the **WHO-UNICEF press release**.

“Measles outbreaks are the canary in the coalmine, exposing and exploiting gaps in immunization and hitting the most vulnerable first,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Thomas disagreed with this take, stating that measles is not a threat to well-nourished, healthy children and that the focus on vaccines as a solution “is destroying the immune systems” of those who are highly vaccinated.

“The focus should be on making sure children of the world have adequate nutrition and adequate support of vitamins A, D and C,” he said.

Thomas emphasized the importance of comparing health outcomes for the vaccinated and unvaccinated. “The results will be shocking to all who are not informed,” he said.

Report notes ‘progress’ including HPV vax uptake

Despite the overall stagnation in global immunization rates, the WHO highlighted some areas of what it called “progress” and “resilience.”

The African region made notable strides in 2023, defying global trends by increasing routine immunization coverage. The number of zero-dose children in Africa fell from 7.3 million in 2022 to 6.7 million in 2023, with 1.5 million more children vaccinated with the DTP vaccine than in 2019, according to the report.

Bangladesh, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria and Ukraine made notable strides in recovering post-pandemic vaccination rates, according to **Dr. Katherine O'Brien**, WHO director of the Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals, and **Dr. Ephrem T. Lemango**, UNICEF's associate director of immunization, who both spoke at a **CNN news briefing**.

The report also noted that global human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage in girls increased from 20% in 2022 to 27% in 2023, returning to near pre-pandemic levels.

Dr. Sania Nishtar, CEO of Gavi, said in the **press release**, “The **HPV vaccine** is one of the most impactful vaccines in Gavi's portfolio, and it is incredibly heartening that it is now reaching more girls than ever before.”



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Thomas called the HPV shot “the most dangerous vaccine on the planet other than COVID,” and argued that it “should have been removed from the market long ago.”

“The push to increase vaccine uptake is all about money,” Thomas said. “What do you think is causing the continued ‘**vaccine hesitancy**’?”

The **WHO also announced** a call for proposals for a tuberculosis (**TB**) **vaccine accelerator program** “to fast-track the development, approval, and use of innovative” TB vaccines for adolescents and adults, and a **call for experts** to develop novel TB vaccines.

In its coverage of the WHO-UNICEF report, **Axios** noted that a new **malaria vaccine** began being distributed to children in the Ivory Coast. Health workers hope this will usher in a “**new era**” for **controlling malaria** in Africa.

Gavi and its ambitious plan 'a big part of the problem'

The WHO report highlighted Gavi's "**2026-2030 Investment Opportunity**" unveiled at the **Global Forum for Vaccine Sovereignty and Innovation** on June 20 in Paris.

The plan aims to vaccinate 500 million children by 2030 — which Gavi claims will avert up to 9 million deaths. Gavi is seeking \$9 billion in new pledges of the \$11.9 billion needed for the strategic period.

The proposal includes plans to vaccinate 50 million children against malaria and **protect 120 million girls** from cervical cancer through **HPV vaccination**.

The investment plan includes the "**Day Zero Financing Facility for Pandemics**" designed to provide a \$2.5 billion "surge financing capacity to support a rapid vaccine response during major public health emergencies."

Gavi also launched the **African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator**, a \$1 billion initiative to boost vaccine production in Africa.

French President Emmanuel Macron, hosting the forum, emphasized the importance of **global vaccination efforts** and local production:

"This tough period has also reminded us all that every nation needed to be assured that it had the means to protect its citizens: this is what we have been calling 'health sovereignty,' which starts with access to the essential health products that are vaccines, which implies much more local production."

The proposal received initial support, with \$2.4 billion in new pledges announced at the launch event, including \$1.58 billion from the U.S., according to the **WHO press release**.

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Thomas said that Gavi and others involved in financing and increasing vaccine distribution are "a big part of the problem" and called for "a total paradigm shift."

"Imagine the health and freedom and happiness that could be enjoyed worldwide if we focused on healthy nutrition, and assessed health by looking at all health outcomes when we do an intervention," he said.

Thomas said:

"People are waking up to the truth; vaccines are destroying our health. COVID vaccines helped this awakening, but those who research the childhood vaccines will find a similar challenge. What we have been told is false.

"Vaccines are not **safe and effective**. Vaccine serious **side effects** are not one in a million but rather in the 5-10% range.

"Vaccines are not providing **herd immunity** but instead are creating a population more vulnerable to infections of all kinds and increasing chronic diseases including **neurodevelopmental** and **autoimmune disorders, allergies** and **cancer**, to name just a few.

"The WHO and all who partner with it to bring us pandemics and more immunizations need to be exposed."



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John-Michael Dumais is a news editor for The Defender. He has been a writer and community organizer on a variety of issues, including the death penalty, war, health freedom and all things related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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