

Millions of children in Yemen vaccinated against polio through UN-backed campaign

10 April 2017 – Despite daunting challenges, United Nations agencies and partners in war-torn Yemen have completed a major nationwide polio inoculation campaign, vaccinating nearly five million children under the age of five against the paralyzing disease.

The UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#))-UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#))-World Bank supported campaign was launched in February and saw thousands of health workers, health educators, religious leaders and local council officials mobilize their communities to maximize the campaign’s reach, including in high-risk groups, such as internally displaced persons and refugees.

“Every minute, the situation of Yemen’s children gets worse. It is unacceptable that children in the country are dying of preventable diseases,” said the UNICEF Representative in Yemen, Meritxell Relaño, in a [news release](#) today.

“This is why, together with partners, we are sparing no effort to save more lives.”

Through the campaign, more than 369,000 children between the ages of six months and 15 years in the violence struck Sa’ada governorate were also inoculated against [measles](#) – a highly contagious and potentially fatal disease.

“WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, are working closely with health authorities to keep Yemen [polio](#)-free and curb the spread of measles,” [noted](#) Nevio Zagaria, the WHO Representative in Yemen.

This is why, together with partners, we are sparing no effort to save more lives
Meritxell Relaño, UNICEF Representative Yemen

Prior to 2006, measles was one of the leading causes of death in children under five in the country. But several vaccination campaigns have succeeded in drastically reducing child deaths from the disease.

“This partnership provides continuous support to national health authorities to increase vaccination coverage for vulnerable children across Yemen,” Dr. Zagaria added.

[Vaccinating children](#) is one of the safest and most cost effective health interventions to protect them from potentially fatal and debilitating diseases. Immunization campaigns are important, not only, to keep communities polio-free but also help minimize the risk of poliovirus coming into them.

“The World Bank is committed to investing in children’s health, which is a vital investment in the country’s future, through working with our UN partners in Yemen and strengthening the local health institutions” said Sandra Bloemenkamp, World Bank Country Manager for Yemen.

SEE RELATED: [Half of all health facilities in war-torn Yemen now closed; medicines urgently needed – UN](#)

The United Nations has been supporting Yemen’s health system, which has been hit hard by the ongoing conflict.

In addition to providing essential health services for children. During this campaign, UN agencies delivered fuel, generators and solar-powered refrigerators to keep vaccines at a constant cool temperature. They also helped transfer of vaccines from national and provincial cold rooms to local health facilities and vaccination teams.