Global Picture on Measles Elimination

Why in the news?

World Health Organization has declared that Sri Lanka has eliminated Measles.

What is Measles?

- Measles is a serious and highly contagious disease.
- It can cause debilitating or fatal complications, including encephalitis, severe diarrhoea and dehydration, pneumonia, ear infections and permanent vision loss.
- The disease is preventable through two doses of a safe and effective vaccine.
- In 2017, over 109,000 deaths occurred from measles all around the world.
- **Rubella**, more commonly known as German measles, can have severe consequences during pregnancy.
- An infection just before conception and in early pregnancy may result in miscarriage, foetal death or congenital defects known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).
- A woman infected with the rubella virus early in pregnancy has a 90% chance of passing the virus to the foetus.

What is the status of global measles vaccination?

- A global report by WHO says since 2000, over 21 million lives have been saved through measles immunisation.
- For several years, the global coverage with the first dose of measles vaccine has stalled at 85%.
- This is far short of the 95% needed to prevent outbreaks, and leaves many people, in many communities, susceptible to the disease.
- Second dose coverage stands at 67%.
- Globally, there are concerns about vaccination gaps that are allowing the disease to resurface in areas where it is not very common.

What is the case with Sri Lanka?

- Sri Lanka is the fifth country in WHO’s Southeast Asia region to eliminate

measles.

- The other four countries are Bhutan, Maldives, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste.
- Sri Lanka's success follows its persistent efforts to ensure maximum coverage with two doses of measles and rubella vaccines being provided in the childhood immunisation programme.
- The vaccination coverage in the country has been consistently high – over 95% with both the first and second doses provided to children under the routine immunisation programme.
- Additionally, mass vaccination campaigns with a measles-rubella vaccine have been held periodically to plug immunisation gaps, the last one in 2014.
- The country has a strong surveillance system and all vaccine-preventable diseases are an integral part of the communicable disease surveillance system.

What is the performance of India in this regard?

- India currently gives a measles rubella vaccine in its universal immunisation programme to tackle both measles and rubella.
- The latest Global Measles and Rubella Update, says India reported 47,056 measles cases and 1,263 rubella cases during April 2018- April 2019.
- India, as part of the global initiative, has targeted elimination of measles and control of rubella by 2020.
- Rubella control is achieved when a country reduces the number of rubella cases by 95% as compared to the number of cases in 2008.
- India has initiated the world's largest Measles-Rubella (MR) Campaign targeting vaccination of 410 million children and adolescents aged between 9 months and 15 years.
- The MR campaign began in February 2017, and as of November 2018, 135 million children have been vaccinated in 28 states/UTs.
- Under the programme, two doses of measles and rubella vaccines are to be given at ages 9-12 months and 16-24 months.

Source: Indian Express

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