Vaccination for Measles

What is the issue?

- There is a 59% decrease in the number of reported measles cases globally during 2000 to 2018, but there has been a spike since 2016.
- Because of this, there is a need to increase the public awareness of vaccine importance and reduce Vaccine Hesitancy.

What is the situation worldwide?

- **Globally** - Compared with over 1,32,000 reported measles cases in 2016, the numbers shot up to over 3,53,000 in 2018.
- While the numbers in 2018 were more than double the previous year, the numbers in 2019 have already surpassed those of 2018.
- By mid-November 2019, over 4,00,000 cases were reported globally.
- Since measles surveillance is generally weak, WHO and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention resorted to estimating the number of measles cases and deaths.
- Based on an updated estimation model, there have been nearly 10 million cases and over 1,42,000 measles deaths in 2018.
- **Most affected nations** - In 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Madagascar, Somalia, and Ukraine accounted for 45% of all reported cases.
- The situation in Ukraine is grim with a sharp increase in reported cases.
- But, there has been a decline in the other three countries mentioned that reported the most number of cases in 2018.
- **Vaccine hesitancy** - This has been highlighted for the staggering spread in cases globally.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) in a report held that Vaccine hesitancy is among the top 10 threats to global health in 2019.
- The WHO defines Vaccine hesitancy as a delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite the availability of vaccination services.

Why is there a spread of Vaccine hesitancy?

- In DR Congo, there is **low institutional trust**, **misinformation**, **vaccine shortage** and even **attacks** on health-care centres and workers leading to the spread of both measles and Ebola.

- The Philippines and the small Pacific island of Samoa serve as a textbook case of the sudden emergence of vaccine hesitancy.
- In Philippines, usage of a **newly approved vaccine with the risks** associated with it already known, lowered the public trust in vaccines; so low vaccine coverage led to measles and polio outbreaks.
- In Samoa, an **error in preparing** the MMR injection (MMR - Measles, Mumps, and Rubella injection) led to the death of two infants.
- **Fear-mongering** led to a fall in vaccine uptake, leading to an outbreak of measles.
- In many European countries and the U.S., vaccine hesitancy has been on **religious grounds** and primarily due to **anti-vaccination campaigns** spreading fake news about vaccine safety.

What could be done to counter vaccine hesitancy?

- To counter rising hesitancy, about a dozen European countries have already introduced **laws making vaccination mandatory**.
- New York City too introduced such a law when the U.S. nearly lost its measles elimination status.
- Such laws may prove counterproductive in the long run, and the only way to increase vaccine uptake is by **educating the public**.
- With 2.3 million children not vaccinated against measles in 2018, India has much to do to protect its young citizens.

Source: The Hindu

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