



# A Killer NAILED

A reconstruction of Maldives' triumph over measles



**World Health  
Organization**

Regional Office for South-East Asia





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“Immunization is a basic right of children in the Republic of Maldives. The government regards children as one of the most important assets of the nation and therefore every effort should be made, without discrimination of a person’s gender and socioeconomic status, to promote welfare and full development of their potential.”

-from the Immunization  
Policy Statement of Maldives



# FOREWORD

Maldives has once more shown us that when dedicated men and women come together under committed leadership, they can achieve their goals, surely and convincingly. Through visionary leadership and strategic planning, the country has built a strong edifice of immunization against measles, far in advance of the targets set in September 2013, when Member States of the South-East Asia Regional Committee, during the Sixty-sixth Meeting of the Committee, resolved to eliminate measles by 2020.

Close to four decades ago, Maldives, in collaboration with WHO, started its programme of immunization, with the introduction of MCV 1 as part of the Expanded Programme on Immunization. At that time, people would hide in the jungles to escape from being immunized. Today, Maldives has over 95% immunization coverage, with an informed population that understands the need for and benefits of immunization. This journey itself is a tribute to the sustained efforts made at country and local levels to establish effective health systems, gain the confidence of the people, and make initiatives such as the elimination of measles a success. But this is not the end of the tale. Maldives has sharpened its surveillance and response systems to ensure that every suspected case of measles is reported within 48 hours of presentation. In any situation, this would be commendable but, given the challenges of a dispersed population spread over close to 200 inhabited islands, it is truly a testament to the visionary leadership and passionate, well-trained and hard-working health staff that have overcome such odds. Maldives has not seen a case of endemic measles since 2009 and in April 2017, the WHO South-East Asia Regional Verification Commission was convinced that endemic measles transmission has been interrupted throughout the country, making Maldives one of the first two countries of the Region to achieve this success.

Certainly, it is a time to celebrate and I extend my hearty congratulations to the people of Maldives on this remarkable achievement.

**Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh**  
Regional Director  
WHO South-East Asia Region

Population  
**340 000**

Islands  
**1192**

Administrative atolls  
**20**

Became a republic in  
**1968**



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