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WHO stresses on effective immunization

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Singapore: Progress towards global vaccination targets for 2015 is far off-track with 1 in 5 children still missing out on routine life-saving immunizations that could avert 1.5 million deaths each year from preventable diseases, according to World Health oranization.

In 2013 nearly 22 million infants missed out on the required three doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis-containing vaccines (DTP3), many of them living in the world's poorest countries.

In 2012, all 194 WHO Member States at the World Health Assembly endorsed the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP), a commitment to ensure that no one misses out on vital immunization. However, a recent independent assessment report on GVAP progress rings an alarm bell, warning that vaccines are not being delivered equitably or reliably and that only 1 of the 6 key vaccination targets for 2015 is currently on track - the introduction of under-utilized vaccines.

Many countries worldwide have experienced large measles outbreaks in the past year, threatening efforts to achieve the GVAP target of eliminating measles in 3 WHO Regions by end-2015.

Dr Jean-Marie Okwo-BelÃ?Æ?Ã?Â©, director of immunization, vaccines and biologicals at WHO, said, the Organization will work to increase its support to all countries that are lagging behind in meeting immunization targets. In May this year, WHO will bring together high-level representatives of 34 countries with routine vaccination (three doses of DTP3) coverage of less

than 80 percent to discuss the challenges faced by countries and to explore solutions to overcome them.

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Although many countries are already vaccinating four out of five children with DTP3, a full one-third of countries are still struggling to reach the 'fifth child', meaning millions of children remain at risk of illness, disability or death because they are not getting the immunizations they need.

"There is no one centralized approach that can ensure vaccines are delivered and administered to each child. Vaccination plans on the ground need to be adapted not just to countries, but to districts and communities," said Dr Okwo-BelÃ?Æ?Ã?Â©."What is required is a truly concerted effort and much stronger accountability so that each one of the key players involved fulfills its mandate and helps close the immunization gap."