



*Children in Africa give a thumbs up after being vaccinated against measles in 2008.*

## Members Assist with Measles Initiative

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Since the Church joined the Measles Initiative and Partnership in 2003, thousands of Church members have helped in the effort to eliminate the disease.

Approximately 56,000 Church members around the world have provided more than 600,000 hours of service in 32 countries in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America.

A group of humanitarian organizations—the American Red Cross, the United Nations Foundation, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization—founded the Measles Initiative and Partnership in 2001 with the goal of reducing the number of deaths due to measles worldwide by 90 percent by the end of 2010.

As part of the Church's commitment to the initiative, which included a \$3 million donation, the First Presidency invited Church members in affected countries, under the direction of local priesthood and Relief Society leaders, to participate in getting the word out and helping with the vaccinations.

More than 20 Church-service missionary couples support these campaigns. Working on-site from one to four months, these couples coordinate with priesthood and Relief Society leaders, ministries of health, and other partnering organizations to provide volunteer support for various aspects of the campaign.

Though Church members don't purchase or directly administer the vaccines, they canvass neighborhoods to hand out information sheets, hang street posters and banners, help at vaccination posts, and develop radio and TV spots. One young returned missionary composed a musical jingle for the campaign in Madagascar. This jingle has been translated and sung in 28 languages on dozens of radio stations in most countries where the campaign has taken place.

From the beginning of the initiative in 2001 to December 2008, 600 million children and youth have been vaccinated in the target countries, resulting in a 74 percent decrease in measles deaths around the world and an 89 percent decrease in Africa alone. Deaths due to measles

decreased from 750,000 in 2000 to 197,000 in 2007, bringing the world much closer to the United Nations' goal of fewer than 100,000 deaths worldwide by the end of 2010.

Though the efforts of the campaign have improved many lives, not all the benefits have been physical. Namibia resident Olavi Ndafediva's sister, who is a member of the Church, volunteered in the local campaign in 2006. One day she told Olavi she couldn't make it and asked him to go in her place. "After that day," he said, "I decided I had to find out more about a church that helped my people so much." After joining the Church, Brother Ndafediva participated in the 2009 campaign.

Cape Verde, a string of islands a few hundred miles off the coast of western Africa, is one of the many countries where Church members volunteered. In the March 2009 campaign, members helped make possible the vaccinations of more than 50,000 children. More than 600 members in Cape Verde volunteered 4,200 hours to promote the campaign door-to-door.

"We had a great involvement of people from the six islands where the Church has branches, especially the youth and young single adults," said Isias Barreto da Rosa, second counselor in the Cape Verde Praia Mission presidency. "This measles program has definitely broadened our view regarding what we can do to get involved in the resolution of problems in our communities."

Measles is a contagious illness that attacks the respiratory system and can cause rashes, pneumonia, inflammation of the brain, and other complications. It is often fatal. According to the Measles Initiative, an estimated 540 children a day died from the disease in 2007. Malnourished and unimmunized children are most at risk from measles. However, the disease can be easily prevented with a vaccine that costs less than US \$1 to treat each child. ■