

Rubella elimination verified in Japan, and measles and rubella elimination verified in Pacific island countries and areas

26 September 2025 News release Manila, Philippines

The World Health Organization (WHO) today announced that the 21 Pacific island countries and areas that are part of the WHO Western Pacific Region have collectively been verified as having eliminated measles and rubella. Japan too has achieved rubella elimination after it succeeded in eliminating measles. These significant achievements mark meaningful progress in protecting children and communities across the Region from these preventable diseases.

Verification of these achievements was carried out through a rigorous, globally standardized WHO process conducted by the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Western Pacific.

Working together to eliminate measles and rubella

In the Pacific, countries and areas worked together across vast distances and with limited resources to deliver life-saving vaccines to island communities. The elimination of measles and rubella reflects the strong commitment and great efforts that have been made in overcoming challenging geographic and logistical barriers. However, recent [measles resurgences](#) in parts of the Western Pacific highlight persistent risks. Measles continues to pose a threat to children who have not been immunized, and cases linked to international travel remain a constant risk. Countries and areas with lower vaccination coverage must continue to strengthen their immunization efforts and remain ever vigilant, ensuring that hard-won gains are not lost.

Japan achieved elimination of rubella by building on its earlier success in eliminating measles in 2015. Achievement of this milestone reflects the country's robust health system, driven by evidence-based policies and innovative strategies that maintain consistently high population immunity. Japan's achievement underscores its ongoing contribution to regional and global health security.

“I congratulate the Pacific island countries and areas and Japan for these important achievements,” said Dr Saia Ma’u Piukala, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific. “However, elimination is not the end – it is a call for continued action. For the Pacific, this verification highlights the need for sustained commitment to maintain adequate population immunity across all communities. With continued solidarity and dedication, a measles- and rubella-free future for the entire Region is achievable.”

These achievements demonstrate that elimination is attainable, but maintaining it will require sustained political will, robust investment in health systems and proactive measures to address coverage gaps.

Addressing inequities

Measles is an equity marker; when cases rise it signals that vulnerable groups are being missed by essential health services such as vaccination. Verification of elimination is therefore more than a technical success – it is also a reminder of the ongoing need to address inequities in essential health services.

“The path forward is clear,” said Dr Tran Thi Giang Huong, Director, Division of Programmes for Disease Control, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. “We must strengthen routine immunization, maintain vigilant surveillance systems, and enhance outbreak prevention and response. This means continuing to close immunization gaps in underserved areas while safeguarding strong, equitable coverage across all communities. By acting with solidarity, we can ensure no child or community is left behind, bringing the Region closer to a future free of measles and rubella.”

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