

Goal

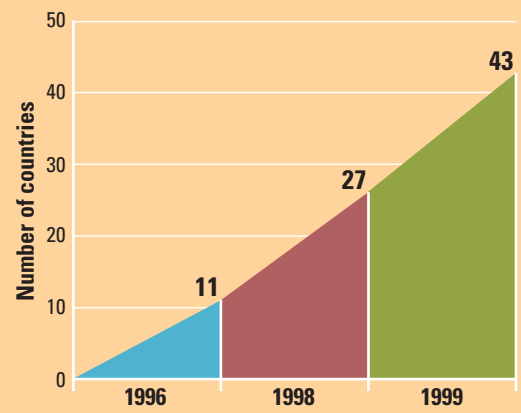
Elimination of vitamin A deficiency

» Vitamin A Deficiency



RAPID PROGRESS

Increase in number of countries with high supplementation coverage*



* Where 70% or more of children received at least one vitamin A supplement. Source: UNICEF, 2001.

Success with National Immunization Days (NIDs)

Vitamin A capsules have been widely distributed through NIDs. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 29 countries combined vitamin A supplementation with NIDs in 1999. NIDs will be ending as polio nears eradication, and mechanisms such as Micronutrient Days, Vitamin A Days and Child Health Days – already being successfully used in some countries – need to be expanded.

Food fortification

Several countries are fortifying staple foods with vitamin A. Although fortification cannot reach all vulnerable groups, it can provide the foundation to make supplementation programmes more effective and sustainable.

Result

Most children in more than 40 countries are receiving at least one vitamin A supplement yearly, a remarkable achievement as only a handful of countries were reaching children with one vitamin A supplement in the mid-1990s. Between 1998 and 2000, UNICEF estimates that about 1 million child deaths may have been prevented through vitamin A supplementation.

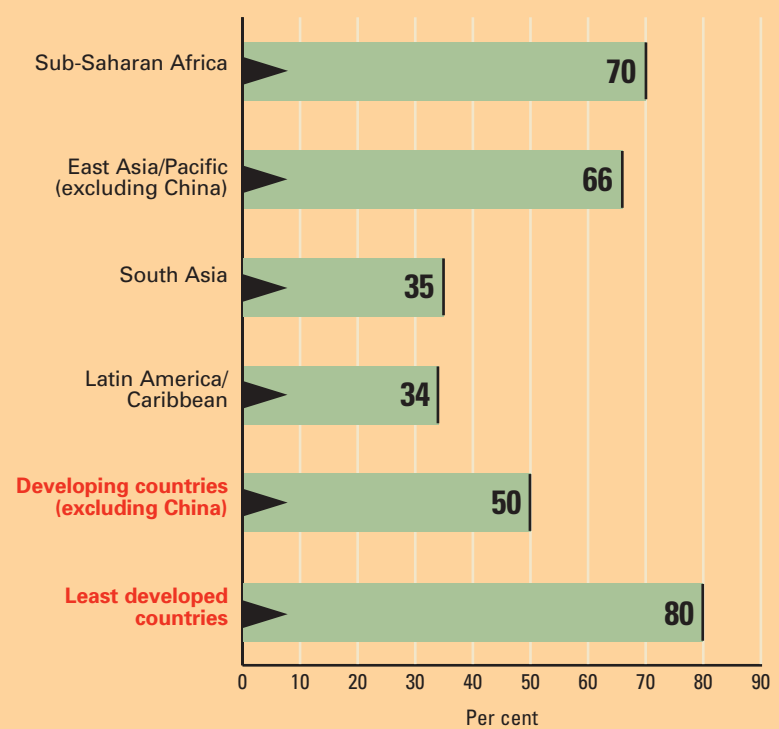
Issue

Lack of vitamin A – essential for the functioning of the immune system – can lead to irreversible blindness. But before that, a child deficient in vitamin A faces a 25 per cent greater risk of dying from common ailments, such as measles, malaria or diarrhoea. Delivery of two high-dose vitamin A capsules a year to children under five prevents vitamin A deficiency.

Countries with under-five mortality rates of more than 70 per 1,000 live births are regarded as having a vitamin A deficiency problem.

Vitamin A supplementation, 1999*

Least developed countries achieve 80 per cent coverage



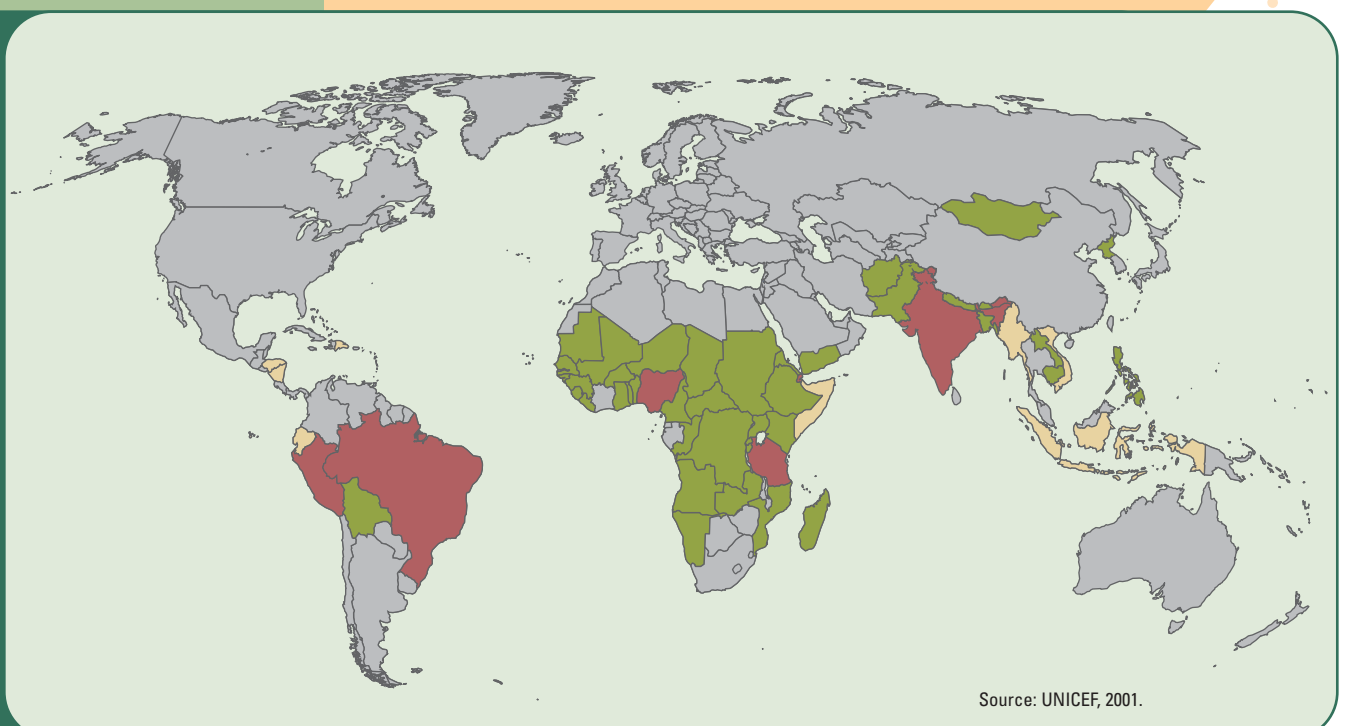
*Regional averages for the Middle East and North Africa and for CEE/CIS were not calculated because the available country data cover less than half of each region's births.

Source: UNICEF, 2001.

Vitamin A supplementation: Over 40 countries achieve high coverage, 1999

Per cent of children 6-59 months receiving at least one vitamin A supplement

- 70% or more
- 30 to 69%
- Less than 30%
- No data



Source: UNICEF, 2001.