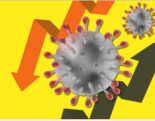


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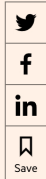


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# Letter: Vaccination against measles must be allowed to continue

From Professor Debarati Guha-Sapir, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, University of Louvain, Brussels, Belgium



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Nearly 120m children in 40 countries ([FT View](#), May 4) are at risk of missing their measles and rubella shots this year as preventive campaigns and outbreak response are postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic response.

Many of these countries are in conflict and the children there are almost all undernourished, as are their mothers — a condition that nearly guarantees death if infected by measles. Nearly a million of these will not be vaccinated in the war-affected regions of Ituri and North Kivu in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo alone — a zone where there was a measles epidemic less than a year ago, killing over 6,000 children in a matter of months.

This estimate says nothing of the children who would have received their shots as part of the routine services in their country. Strict measures such as lockdowns and travel restrictions have left primary care centres in many of the poorest areas vacant and outreach services have stopped. In some countries, the Covid-19 preventive measures have been applied with violence and brutality — used as an opportunity for cracking down on hapless citizens who are unable to take their infants for immunisation.

Death or even severe illness rates as a result of the Covid-19 virus are vanishingly small among children — anywhere in the world. In contrast, measles ravages whole cohorts of small children, spiking up the mortality rate in a matter of days. And measles is an ever present threat.

We need to have a rational approach in poorer countries balancing the risks of Covid-19 against those of life-threatening issues such as poor measles vaccination coverage, which may leave whole cohorts of children unprotected for life.

**Professor Debarati Guha-Sapir**

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