



Media release

11 December 2019

Save the Children deploys team of health workers to support Samoa measles response

A team of midwives and a doctor from Save the Children's Emergency Health Unit arrived in Samoa on Sunday to support the government's response to the measles outbreak.

The outbreak has infected 4,357 people - mostly children - since the beginning of October this year. At least 63 people have died from measles-related complications, of whom 55 are children under five years old.^[1]

Dr Louisa Baxter, who is leading Save the Children's medical team deployed to the response, said:

"The situation in Samoa is very serious. There are many critically unwell children in hospital and more are being admitted every day. In addition, routine services such as care to pregnant women have been interrupted leaving them without the support they need at a crucial time.

"Save the Children's team of clinical staff are working in the main hospital in Samoa to support the healthcare of women and small children. We are supporting Samoan Ministry of Health staff who have been fighting this outbreak tirelessly for months and other emergency medical teams from across the world who are responding.

"We are extremely concerned because of the potentially lethal implications measles has for young children in particular.

"One of the challenges we are facing is that vaccination rates are extremely low in much of the Pacific and measles is one of the most infectious viruses in the world, spreading via airborne droplets through coughing and sneezing. The measles vaccine is highly effective - after the first dose, up to 95%^[2] percent of individuals will be protected. It is crucial to encourage uptake of the measles vaccine, particularly as there is no specific treatment for measles infection. Key measures to address it focus on the management of complications such as pneumonia and meningitis."

Save the Children's response team is part of the organisation's Emergency Health Unit and will carry out a needs assessment and offer support to the Ministry of Health. Our team offer pre- and post-natal care for women experiencing complications related to measles.

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Spokespeople are available. For more information or to arrange an interview contact:

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^[1] Samoa's Ministry of Health, November 2019

^[2] World Health

Organization: https://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/initiative/detection/immunization_misconceptions/en/index2.html