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## **Progress towards measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome-elimination: Oman experience**

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Oman has committed to the goal of eliminating measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) by 2015 year. Elimination is defined as the absence of endemic measles and rubella transmission in a defined geographical area (e.g. region or country) for  $\geq 12$  months in the presence of a well-performing surveillance system and for rubella without the occurrence of Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) cases associated with endemic transmission in the presence of high-quality surveillance system. Strategies to reach this goal included: a) vaccination supplemental activities with the goal of achieving high rates of vaccination coverage; and maintenance of coverage in order to increase population-wide and maintaining high vaccination coverage to increase population-wide immunity; b) syndromic surveillance programs to monitor fever and rash illness syndromes for effective detection of cases and serological surveillance; c) integrating these strategies into measles surveillance system; and d) high-quality surveillance system, and sensitive for CRS. Measles and rubella was a leading cause of infant and child morbidity and mortality in Oman before the introduction of measles vaccine by 1975 and thereafter until 1994. With the introduction of a second dose of measles and first rubella vaccines (measles- rubella) in 1994, coverage for first and second doses of measles and rubella vaccines increased more than 95% in 1996 and has been sustained at a level greater than >95% since then. A national measles and rubella (MR) immunization catch-up campaign targeting children ages 15 months to 18 years was conducted in 1994 that achieved 94% coverage. As a result, the incidence of measles and rubella have declined markedly in recent years, to  $\leq 1$  case per million persons in 2012 and to zero cases for measles and rubella in 2013 and onward. Similarly, no case of CRS has been notified since 2007. Oman has made significant progress toward measles and rubella elimination and has met the regional elimination goals. However, new challenges faced by Oman, for instance with increased globalization, has led to issues such as outbreaks from imported cases. Additional challenges still remain with regard to increasing identification and immunization of unvaccinated non-Omani workers and their families.

### **Biography**

Salah Thabit Al Awaidy is a Communicable Diseases Adviser in Health Affairs, Ministry of Health, Oman. He is a medical doctor and holds a Master's in Epidemiology. He is currently the adviser of Communicable Disease Surveillance, Elimination and Eradication of Communicable Diseases of Public Health Importance, EPI, vaccine supply chain system and IHR at the Ministry of Health, Oman. He was the Director of Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control at MoH, HQ, Oman between 1997-2011, IHR national focal point 2002-2013 and was a member in several of the professional committees namely: Strategic Advisory Group on Immunization (SAGE), WHO Geneva (2005-2007); Strategic Advisor Group on Vaccine and Store Management Training Courses (2005-2008), WHO Geneva; Strategic TB Advisory Board (STAG) 2007-2011 2014- till date.

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