



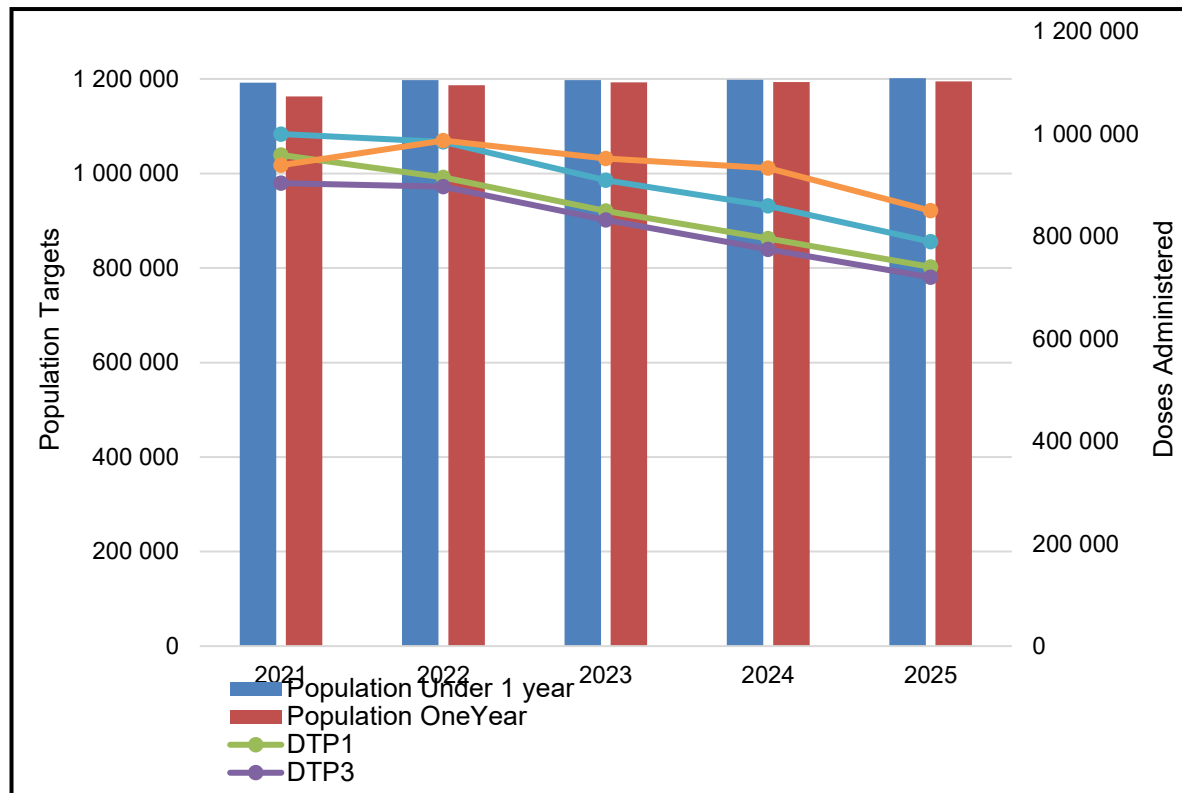
Africa Vaccination Week 2026 Recovering Routine Immunisation & Closing the Immunity Gaps in South Africa

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Why this matters now: A critical turning point for immunisation in South Africa



400,000 children were un-or under-vaccinated in 2025, over 200,000 more than in 2021.

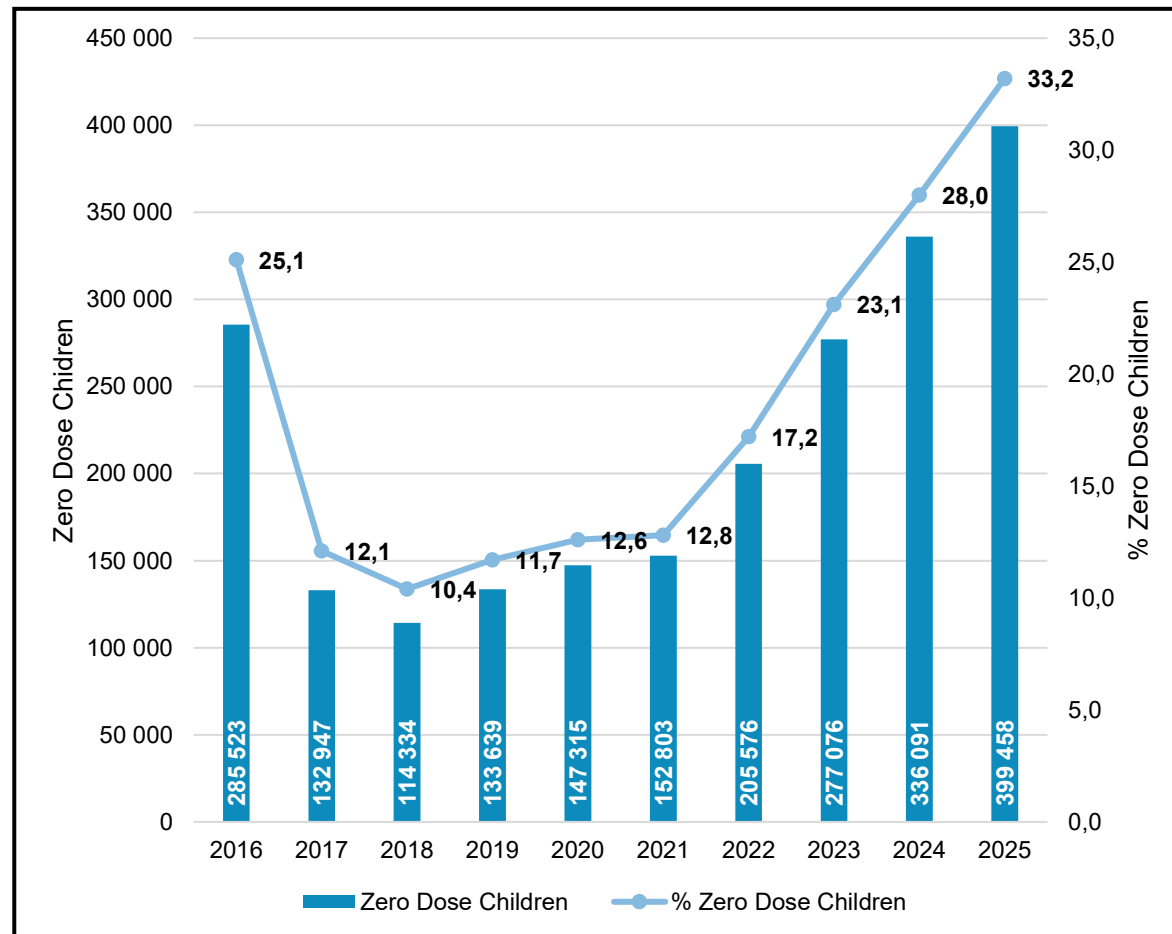
Coverage of the third dose of diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (DTP-3) dropped a further 5% compared 2024, to 64.9% in 2025, the lowest since 2015.

This left thousand of children vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Declining routine immunisation since 2021
- Recurrent outbreaks
- Rising zero-dose children
- Increasing system strain on PHC and outbreak response

Data source: NDOH DHIS2 Routine Immunisation Data (2021-2025)

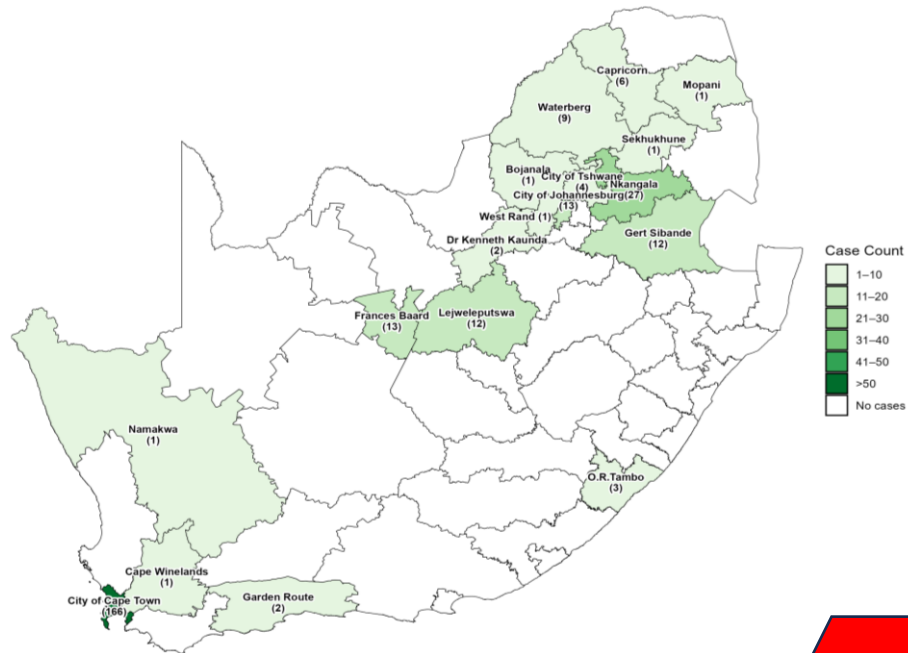
Explosion of zero-dose children



Access is the core problem:

- 2018: 114,334
- 2025: 399,458
- More than tripled proportion
- Indicates failure to reach children at all

Outbreak Reality



We are seeing
the
consequences of
declining
coverage in real
time

Immunity gaps are already translating into outbreaks:

- Measles outbreaks in all provinces
- 2,755 confirmed measles cases in 2025
- Increasing diphtheria and rubella cases

What the data tells us: Root causes

- Systemic weaknesses in the Expanded Immunization Programme
 - Frequent vaccine stock-outs and supply chain disruptions at facility level (>50% of facilities reported at least one stock-out in past 3 months)
 - Misalignment between national targets and provincial procurement/planning (Procurement ranged from approx. 61% to 150% of estimated need across vaccines)
- Access problem driven by misinformation and misconceptions
 - Misinformation and vaccine hesitancy
 - Service availability does not translate to utilisation
- Declining vaccination coverage confirms growing vulnerabilities
 - Increasing number of zero-dose and under-immunized children
 - Missed opportunities for vaccination (PHC services not integrated)
- Recurring outbreaks over the past 3–4 years (measles, diphtheria) signal declining system performance

Insights from the “Barriers to childhood immunisation in selected zero-dose communities in Gauteng Province” study



The study provides critical insights into why children are not being vaccinated, reinforcing the trends we see in the coverage and zero-dose data.



Access barriers

- Long distances to facilities and high transport costs
- Clinic operating hours not aligned with caregivers' schedules
- Stock-outs & disruptions
- Geographic & Infrastructure challenges



Demand and perceptions

- Vaccine hesitancy & misinformation
- Low risk perception of VPDs
- Preference for traditional alternative medicine
- Stock-outs
- Religious and cultural beliefs influencing decisions



Health system factors

- Negative caregiver experiences at facilities
- Inadequate communication by health workers
- Limited follow-up and defaulter tracking
- Fragmented outreach and referral systems



Socio-economic barriers

- Poverty & competing household priorities
- Caregiver work commitments
- Low maternal education and health literacy



Information and data barriers

- Suboptimal immunisation data quality
- Weak use of data for identifying and tracking of zero-dose children



Governance and accountability

- Limited community engagement in planning & monitoring
- Low accountability for immunisation performance
- Insufficient resources and supervision at PHC level

From zero-dose to fully vaccinated

	Key barriers	Proposed interventions
Governance & Finance	Fragmented immunization program	A national standard system
	Treasury allocated funds may not be used for the purpose	Advocate for conditional grant for vaccines
Service Delivery	Limited access to services	Strengthen PHC
	No uniform effective reminder and recall system	Strengthen linkage of PHC and community health system
	Mobile services are dysfunctional	Revive mobile services
Health Information System	Data not linked to vaccine stock and to patients ID	Develop a single digital information system to record an individual's vaccination history
Vaccine Supply and Logistics	Vaccine stock outs due to poor stock management and budget issues	Training and support of vaccinators and supervisors on effective vaccine management
	No cold chain maintenance plans and limited budget	Develop budgeted Cold Chain maintenance plan at district level
Human Resources	Low capacity, limited in-service training	Capacity building, mentoring and support for health care workers, supervisors and programme managers
Demand Generation	No costed demand generation plan	Develop plan and budgeted
	Limited community involvement	Collaborate with private sector and partners

National Immunization Recovery Plan development informed by:



A coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to stop outbreaks, close immunity gaps, and rebuild routine immunisation towards IA2030 targets.

1



Governance & Strategic Coordination

- Activate Incident Management Team (IMT) for VPD response
- Establish unified national roadmap and coordination structure
- Drive high-level political commitment and accountability across sectors
- Strengthen provincial and district oversight and coordination

2



Evidence-Based Planning & Data Systems

- Conduct comprehensive EPI review and EVM assessment
- Strengthen data quality and correct population denominators
- Use epidemiological data for risk profiling, priority setting and outbreak forecasting
- Expand use of tools (e.g., REC, dashboards) for data-driven action

3



Outbreak Response & Immunisation Delivery

- Implement targeted SIAs in high-risk and zero-dose areas
- Strengthen hotspot identification and microplanning at facility and community level
- Review and optimise MR vaccination schedule based on outbreak dynamics
- Ensure reliable supply of quality vaccines and logistics

4



Community Engagement & Demand Generation

- Roll out national RCCE strategy to address vaccine hesitancy and misinformation
- Activate Vaccine Confidence Working Group
- Engage communities through trusted leaders, CHWs and community platforms
- Promote positive norms and increase demand for vaccination

5



Workforce Capacity & Surge Support

- Deploy surge vaccinators and technical staff to priority areas
- Strengthen supervision, mentorship and programme management capacity
- Address critical HR gaps at national, provincial and district levels
- Invest in ongoing training and retention of EPI workforce

6



Resource Mobilisation

- Develop Gavi investment case and catalytic funding proposals
- Align partner contributions under the national roadmap
- Mobilise domestic resources for sustainable implementation
- Ensure efficient use of resources and delivery at scale



Goal: Protect every child from vaccine-preventable diseases by strengthening systems, reaching zero-dose children, and achieving IA2030 targets.



Role of stakeholders: A coordinated, country-led response



A coordinated, country-led response

Success depends on strong leadership, clear roles, and collaboration at all levels to reach every child, everywhere.



National Department of Health (Lead)

- Overall leadership and coordination of immunisation recovery
- Policy direction, technical guidance and national planning
- Oversight of Incident Management Team (IMT) and recovery implementation
- Mobilise resources and ensure accountability for results
- Monitor progress and remove implementation bottlenecks



Provide leadership, set direction, and drive accountability



Provinces and Districts

- Lead implementation of SIAs and strengthening of routine services
- Conduct microplanning and identify hotspots and zero-dose communities
- Strengthen outreach, defaulter tracing and community engagement
- Ensure vaccine availability and reduce stock-outs at facility level
- Strengthen supervision, data use and quality improvement



Deliver services, reach communities, and drive performance



Partners (WHO, UNICEF, others)

- Provide technical assistance (EPI review, data systems, RCCE, supply chain, monitoring)
- Support implementation in priority districts and populations
- Mobilise and align resources to support the national roadmap
- Facilitate knowledge sharing, innovation and best practices
- Support monitoring, learning and course correction



Strengthen systems, provide support, and align resources

Africa Vaccination Week- Call to Action

A Critical Moment to Act

- Rebuild **routine immunisation** as a **national priority**
- Reach **zero-dose children** and **underserved communities** first
- Fix **the system**, not just the symptoms
- Restore **community trust** and demand
- Sustain **leadership, political and partner commitment**



Thank You