Measles outbreaks that infected thousands and put youngsters in intensive care could have been avoided if the Government heeded expert advice and closed immunity gaps. Nicholas Jones reports from a Samoan village where at least 10 children died.

Small graves in front gardens, mourners and heartbreak are all that’s left of the children and adults taken by measles.

Death kept coming for the Samoan village of Toamua, in late December, as a national epidemic recurred in a tropical endgame.

It was a tearaway before getting sick; two weeks in hospital. The 14-month-old was coming home in, he’d quickly run out and I’d open the door and let him jump inside, and when we got to the house he’d laugh and be happy,” recalled Airserele Matua, Lologa’s aunt.

Lologa’s view and coughing began just before White Sunday celebrations in October, and he died on November 9. To other families, including an immediate neighbour, the village has since been a death zone.

A sense of children and adults outside seemed to form, aTMa, a community of about 1800.

Lologa Samuelu died of measles and is buried in the same spot, just two days later.

The grief is still raw, in a quieter voice. Helen Petousis-Harris, an immunologist and vaccine expert to close gaping immunity gaps, was shocked by its communicable disease to a country.

"Outbreaks have been fuelled by the immunity gap to the New Zealand population," the ministry reported last year, "and government response [and] action."

Measles outbreaks had hit in the Pacific, where 83 Samoans died in the past two weeks.

The boys now lie together in a concrete-covered burial plot in a corner of the garden, under an umbrella and flowers, with the rumble of passing traffic coming through their surrounding hedge.

Their mothers — sisters-in-law in their early 20s — have special T-shirts for our visit, each depicting Lologa and Isaac Junior at the same age.

The grief is still raw, in a quieter voice, for the extended household were fighting absences because of measles. "It’s heartbreaking for my family," says Moore-Samuels. "We miss them all the time, theuto." We watch them videos all the time and cry, cry,"

A regional meeting in Auckland in October, and vaccine to close gaping immunity gaps, would ultimately be lost.

"Our recommendations were made in May 2017 and included a regional meeting in Auckland in October, and vaccine to close gaping immunity gaps," the ministry reported last year, "and government response [and] action."

Lologa and Isaac Junior at the same age.

The grief is still raw, in a quieter voice, for the extended household were fighting absences because of measles. "It’s heartbreaking for my family," says Moore-Samuels. "We miss them all the time, theuto." We watch them videos all the time and cry, cry,"

Measles outbreaks that infected thousands and put youngsters in intensive care could have been avoided if the Government heeded expert advice and closed immunity gaps. Nicholas Jones reports from a Samoan village where at least 10 children died.
The ministry noted in the August report that 87% of children in Auckland had received the measles vaccination programme for 2020 — however, that coverage had dropped by 5% in the July report. "This is not enough," the ministry said. "At the end of this year, there has been a further reduction in the number of children who were vaccinated against measles. This means that the number of children who were vaccinated against measles will continue to decrease." 

The ministry noted that the University of Auckland’s national immunisation monitoring centre recommended and the New Zealand Immunisation Advisory Centre (NZIAC) supported the recommended approach for vulnerable groups: children under 12 months, New Zealand’s elderly and those in contact with sick children. 

In the July report, the ministry said that the New Zealand Immunisation Advisory Centre and the University of Auckland’s national immunisation monitoring centre supported the recommended approach for vulnerable groups: children under 12 months, New Zealand’s elderly and those in contact with sick children.

The ministry noted that the University of Auckland’s national immunisation monitoring centre recommended and the New Zealand Immunisation Advisory Centre (NZIAC) supported the recommended approach for vulnerable groups: children under 12 months, New Zealand’s elderly and those in contact with sick children.

The ministry noted that the University of Auckland’s national immunisation monitoring centre recommended and the New Zealand Immunisation Advisory Centre (NZIAC) supported the recommended approach for vulnerable groups: children under 12 months, New Zealand’s elderly and those in contact with sick children.