



## MONTHLY IMMUNIZATION UPDATE IN THE AFRICAN REGION

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Special issue on Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa (MCIA)

### Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa (MCIA): Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. 24-25 February 2016



MCIA opening ceremony: From left — Dr Ala Alwan (Regional Director EMRO); Mr Jakaya Kikwete (Former President of Tanzania); Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko (African Union representative), Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn (Prime Minister of Ethiopia) and Dr Matshidiso Moeti (Regional Director, AFRO)

Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa said in her opening remarks that, for Africa to achieve its full potential and secure a bright future, “we must unite to ensure that every child on the continent receives the vaccines he or she needs to survive” adding that “It is unacceptable that one in five African children lack access to life-saving vaccines”.

Delivering the keynote address, former president of Tanzania Mr Jakaya Kikwete called on Africa States to focus on promoting universal health access, beginning with a focus on Universal Immunization which he said is crucial to saving the lives of children across Africa and the world.

Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean in his speech noted that since vaccines were made available there has been a tremendous change in the healthcare systems of Africa at large. He commended Somalia for its success in controlling disease outbreaks and Libya on introducing new vaccines and routine immunization despite their political situation. He noted also that Egypt and Tunisia have maintained routine immunization coverage of 94% while Sudan has increased its immunization coverage.

In his welcome address, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn called on African Union Member States to give immunization the highest level of attention, adding that investing in immunization will protect the future of children in Africa, enabling them to grow up healthy and giving them the chance to become productive adults.

The two day conference succeeded in obtaining the commitment of African Governments and their partners to reach and sustain the required immunization quality and coverage as stipulated in the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GAVP) and the Regional Strategic Plan for Immunization 2014-2020 so as to eradicate, eliminate and control vaccine preventable diseases in Africa.

The conference ended with all stakeholders committing to placing health, especially the eradication, elimination and control of vaccine preventable diseases at the centre of their development processes; as well as allocate the required resources to reach and sustain the highest possible immunization coverage, including through empowerment of communities and inter sectorial actions.

1 IN 5 CHILDREN IN AFRICA DOES NOT RECEIVE THE VACCINES THEY NEED.

CLOSE THE GAP BY:



- STRENGTHENING SUPPLY CHAINS
- COLLECTING BETTER DATA
- MOBILIZING LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- SECURING SUSTAINABLE FINANCING
- BUILDING POLITICAL WILL



### Highlights

Addis Ababa 24-25 February 2016

African leaders, including ministers of health, finance, and other line ministries, have gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for the Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa – the first-ever ministerial-level convening with a singular focus on ensuring that people across the continent can get access to life-saving vaccines.

The conference – hosted by the World Health Organization Regional Offices for Africa (AFRO) and the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) in conjunction with the African Union Commission provided platform for African policymakers and advocates to celebrate progress toward expanding immunization coverage; discuss strategies for tackling the biggest challenges facing vaccine efforts; foster country ownership for sustainable financing for immunization; and advocate for greater engagement with all stakeholders to ensure sustainable demand for immunization.



**FULFILLING  
A PROMISE:  
ENSURING  
IMMUNIZATION  
FOR ALL IN  
AFRICA**



Official report of the ministerial conference to review the current state of immunization in Africa

## Highlights

The report highlights the achievements made in expanding access to vaccines and Immunization in Africa and discusses some of the remaining challenges to achieving universal access to vaccines. The timing of this report coincides with the halfway point of the implementation of the Decade of Vaccines, a 10-year vision of the global health community to expand access to vaccines and immunization services to all by 2020.

Great progress has been made but much more needs to be done to push us towards universal immunization coverage—the cornerstone for health and development in Africa.

### Section 1: Immunization in Africa: A time for action

Reaching all children, strengthening immunization systems and introducing new vaccines require strong political support and regular funding.

At this pivotal time, leaders from across Africa, including from government, civil society and communities, are convening to discuss the commitments and actions that will be necessary to ensure the future envisioned by the GVAP.

### Section 2: Routine Immunization Coverage

Routine immunization coverage has increased considerably across Africa— average DTP3 coverage increased from 57% in 2000 to 80% in 2014. However, progress in recent years has slowed. Fewer than half of African countries met the GVAP target to increase DTP3 coverage nationally above 90% in 2014. Meeting coverage targets requires equitable access to lifesaving vaccinations

### Section 3: Immunization and the Potential for Disease Elimination

Immunization is a powerful intervention for the elimination and, in some cases, eradication of disease. The world is on the brink of eradicating polio; however, several challenges remain, including conducting high quality immunization campaigns, improving routine immunization, introducing the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), and addressing security challenges to reach every child.

### Section 4: New and underutilized Vaccines

The introduction of new vaccines in Africa has been a major success. The GVAP target of at least 90 low- and middle-income countries introducing one or more new or underutilized vaccines is on track to be met globally, in large part due to successes across Africa driven by African leaders in partnership with GAVI. Many countries in Africa have introduced multiple new vaccines, such as pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and rotavirus vaccine, at the same time. Countries will need to continue improving routine immunization coverage to achieve the full promise of these vaccines.

### Section 5: Immunization and the Importance of Strong Health Systems

Immunization systems and health systems are closely linked. A weak health system will result in poor immunization coverage. Introducing new vaccines can sometimes help to improve immunization and health systems.

### Section 6: Financing Immunization in Africa

Vaccines provide benefits to families, communities and countries in the form of improved health outcomes and economic growth. Government funding for immunization in African countries has increased in recent years, complemented by other donor funds. In many countries across Africa, additional funding is required to ensure that vaccines are delivered to every child.

## Technical Ministerial briefs

### Highlights

Technical Ministerial briefs were developed on the 5 key topics of the conference, which included:

- ⇒ Building Better Systems: improving Delivery of immunization Services in the Context of Universal Health Coverage
- ⇒ Improving Immunization Coverage and Equity
- ⇒ Ensuring Sustainability: Immunization Financing in an Era of Transition
- ⇒ Polio Legacy Transition Planning
- ⇒ Role of Communities in Coverage and Demand.

Some of the key messages called for :

- \* Identification of underserved populations and developing effective plans for improving coverage and strengthening collaboration among sectors
- \* The need to address challenges, such as how to communicate the value of vaccines in communities, where the value is traditionally recognized
- \* The need to ensure sustainable resources for immunization across Africa.

### Key barriers to demand include:

- Inadequate knowledge about the number of times a child needs to be vaccinated
- Fear of side effects
- Poor reception from health workers
- Religious beliefs
- Traditional practices
- Distance to health facilities

To meet and sustain demand, responsive and efficient supply delivery mechanisms are equally important.

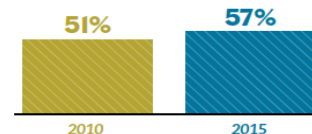
### Supply side barriers include:

- Irregular vaccine supplies and resources
- Health workers not opening vials unless there are 10 children for some vaccines
- Absent vaccinators
- Vaccinators not providing information or engaging with parents and families cautiously
- Long wait times

**Polio-funded personnel in Africa report spending up to 35% of their time supporting immunization goals aside from polio.**

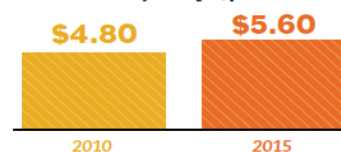
### THE SHARE OF VACCINE EXPENDITURES FINANCED BY GOVERNMENT

In the WHO African region



### GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

In the WHO African region, per live birth



**In 2014, 7.4 MILLION INFANTS in the WHO African Region DID NOT RECEIVE THE THIRD DOSE OF DTP VACCINE, out of an annual birth cohort of 32.7 million: approximately 23%.**



## Side events organized at the MCIA



Representatives of religious leaders and parliamentarians delivering their statement

### Highlights

There were 5 side events during the conference, comprising of civil society organizations, parliamentarians and religious leaders. Others included a pre-satellite meeting on Meningitis Vaccine Project and building next generation of immunization supply chain

- ◆ Side Forum of Eminent African Traditional and Religious Leaders and Scholars with the general objective of renewing the Dakar Declaration commitment by additional traditional and religious leaders and scholars.
- ◆ Side meeting of the parliamentarians with the objective of renewing their commitment to immunization

- ◆ The Meningitis Vaccine Project Closure Conference: Ending and New Beginnings organized 22-23 February 2016 as a pre-satellite meeting. All partners of the Meningitis Vaccine Project (MVP) and representatives of the 26 countries of the meningitis belt attended both the MVP Closure Conference and the Ministerial Conference
- ◆ A Civil Society Organization (CSO) Side Event was held on 23 February 2016 to discuss their role to improving vaccine access and coverage in Africa in line with the Global Vaccine Action Plan, review current and best practices in community-level immunization advocacy and outreach work and identify ways CSOs can best work together following the conference.
- ◆ Building next-generation immunization supply chains to close the immunization gap on 25 February to highlight the work that several African countries are doing today to strengthen their supply chains and improve immunization coverage and equity. The event was co-hosted by WHO, UNICEF, PATH, John Snow Inc, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

These side events culminated in declarations on ultimately improving equitable access to immunization for health and economic development of the continent.

## Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa (MCIA): Conference declaration



African health ministers and high-level officials after signing the declaration to improve access to vaccines

### Highlights

- ◆ The 1st ever Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa ended on 25 February 2016 at the African Union Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The conference was attended by close to 900 people to include, political leaders, technical experts and advocates from across Africa and globally. Conference events included several panel sessions, a poster display, and an awards ceremony.

- ◆ The conference offered African policymakers and advocates a platform to celebrate progress toward expanding immunization coverage; discuss strategies for tackling the biggest challenges facing vaccine efforts; foster country ownership for sustainable financing for immunization; and advocate for greater engagement with all stakeholders to ensure sustainable demand for immunization.
- ◆ According to Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa, "The Ministerial Conference achieved its goal of uniting leaders from across Africa behind the single goal of reaching every child with the vaccines they need. Now, we will carry this momentum forward from Addis Ababa, stay accountable to our commitments and close the immunization gap once and for all."
- ◆ Dr. Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, noted that, "With the right mix of political will, financial resources and technical acumen, Africa is positioned to make an incredible leap in immunization coverage. Today is a first step in a journey that will take us to the last mile to reach every child with the vaccines they need."
- ◆ At the closure of the conference, 42 African countries in attendance signed a historic ministerial declaration promoting the use of vaccines.
- ◆ For more information, visit the event website at: [www.immunizationinAfrica2016.org](http://www.immunizationinAfrica2016.org)

# Addis Ababa, 25 February 2016 : Conference declaration on “Universal Access to Immunization as a Cornerstone for Health and Development in Africa”

**We**, African Ministers of Health, Finance, Education, Social Affairs, Local Governments attending the Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa, which took place from 24 to 25 February 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and convened by the World Health Organization in collaboration with the African Union Commission, are committed to continued investment in immunization programs and a healthy future for all people of the African continent.

**Recognizing** the tremendous advances that are improving the health of Africa’s citizens, including:

- ◆ A 50% decline in child death rates, and ever-growing numbers of children attending school;
- ◆ Widespread access to vaccines that were not available to African children and adults just a decade ago;
- ◆ Higher vaccine coverage rates across the continent in each five-year periods between 1999-2014;
- ◆ The remarkable achievement of the Africa continent for interrupting wild poliovirus transmission for more than one year; achieving near elimination of Meningococcal meningitis A epidemics, and the significant reduction in disease burden and mortality due to measles.

**Bearing in mind** the recently ratified Sustainable Development Goal target of Universal Health Coverage which calls for access to immunization for all (New York, September 2015); and that health is fundamental to social and economic development;

**Acknowledging** that, broad-based, inclusive growth in Africa is dependent on a healthy population; and that strong immunization programs are a cornerstone of robust systems that help achieving universal health coverage, which is critical to helping national leaders achieve their economic and development goals;

**Reaffirming** the economic imperative and benefits of reducing vaccine-preventable diseases and consequential deaths, which will improve overall health, empower our future generation and allow every person to achieve his or her full potential;

**Recalling** the Heads of State Declaration on Polio Eradication in Africa: “Our Historic Legacy to Future Generations” (Johannesburg, June 2015); the World Health Assembly resolution (WHA68.6) on the Global Vaccine Action Plan (Geneva, May 2015), the commitment made by African Ministers of Health on Universal Health Coverage in Africa (Luanda, April 2014); the Immunize Africa 2020 Declaration (Abuja, May 2014) endorsed by African Heads of State; the World Health Assembly resolution that commits all 194 Member States to apply the vision and strategies of the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) (Geneva, May 2012), and the African Heads of State endorsement of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan in 2012 as the framework for African people to have access to essential, quality, safe and effective medical products and technologies.

**Recognizing** that despite progress, universal access to immunization by 2020, as endorsed under the GVAP, is largely off track in Africa as indicated by the 2014 GVAP report; but that with resolve we can still achieve the GVAP target of at least 90% coverage in our countries and at least 80% coverage in every district for all nationally available vaccines;

**Admitting** that to sustain the progress made in vaccine introduction and coverage – and achieve the full potential to save children’s and adult’s lives – current national budgetary allocations to vaccination programmes within the context of national health systems financing will need to be further increased;

## **We hereby collectively and individually commit ourselves to:**

- ◆ Keeping universal access to immunization at the forefront of our efforts to reduce child mortality, morbidity and disability, and in doing so help our countries achieve their long-term health, economic and development goals;
- ◆ Increasing and sustaining our domestic investments and funding allocations, including innovative financing mechanisms, to meet the cost of traditional vaccines, fulfil our new vaccine financing requirements, and providing financial support for the operational implementation of immunization activities by EPI programs;
- ◆ Addressing the persistent barriers in our vaccine and healthcare delivery systems, especially in the poorest, vulnerable and most marginalized communities, including the strengthening of data collection, reporting and use at all levels as well as building effective and efficient supply chains and integrated procurement systems;
- ◆ Increasing the effectiveness and efficiency, as well as changing the approaches as needed, of our immunization delivery systems as an integrated part of strong and sustainable primary health care systems;
- ◆ Attaining and maintaining high quality surveillance for targeted vaccine preventable diseases.
- ◆ Monitoring progress towards achieving the goals of the global and regional immunization plans
- ◆ Ensuring polio legacy transition plans are in place by end-2016 that will allow future health programs to benefit from the knowledge and expertise the polio program has generated through the eradication initiative;
- ◆ Developing a capacitated African research sector to enhance immunization implementation and uptake;
- ◆ Building broad political will, working with communities, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, health professional associations and parliamentarians, for the right of every child and every community to have universal access to life-saving vaccines, and by extension the best possible chance for a healthy future;
- ◆ Promoting and investing in regional capacity for the development and production of vaccines in line with the African Union Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan including the strengthening of national regulatory authorities.

## **We call upon:**

- ◆ Member states and partners, including African development banks and African regional economic communities, to support the implementation of this Declaration, and to increase their efforts to mobilize resources and secure new investments to strengthen national immunization programmes to achieve the GVAP goals and overall health care delivery systems in the Member States;
- ◆ Member states and partners, to negotiate with vaccine manufacturers to facilitate access to available vaccines at affordable prices, and in increasing price transparency as well as developing price databases in line with resolution WHA68.6;
- ◆ Gavi, the vaccine alliance to consider refugees and internally displaced populations as eligible recipients of Gavi support for vaccines and operational costs;
- ◆ The World Health Organization and the African Union Commission to support member states to share experiences, strengthen capacity, and establish mechanisms for monitoring progress towards the fulfilment of these commitments.
- ◆ **We thank** his Excellency Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and host country for this Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa, for agreeing to champion this declaration and further request him to present it to the African Heads of States at the 26th Summit of the African Union, to be held in June 2016.