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Provisional agenda item 9

SHARING BEST PRACTICES IN IMPROVING ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE

Panel discussion

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BACKGROUND

1. In the 1990s immunization coverage either stagnated or declined in most countries in the African Region. The coverage for the third dose of diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus (DPT3) vaccine at national level, an indicator used for tracking immunization performance, was below 50% across the Region. Furthermore, in 2001, 20 of the 46 WHO Member countries in the Region reported decline in DPT3 coverage compared to the preceding year.
2. In 2002, key immunization partners launched the Reaching Every District (RED) approach as a strategy to address this situation in the African Region. This strategy was made up of five components, namely: re-establishing outreach activities, linking services with communities, supportive supervision, planning and resource management, and monitoring for action at the district level. By the end of 2007, 94% of the districts in the Region were implementing all components of the RED approach.
3. As of 2006, significant improvements in DPT3 and measles vaccination coverage were documented at national level in 33 and 38 countries, respectively. At regional level, DPT3 coverage rose to 82% in 2006 compared to 57% in 2002. This success has, however, varied between countries. Despite these improvements, 8.7 million infants in the African Region still remain un-reached with the six basic antigens in the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). The exchange of experiences in implementing the RED strategy will help Member countries improve implementation.

OBJECTIVES

4. The objectives of the panel discussion are:
 - (a) to present and identify best practices in addressing managerial and technical challenges in the implementation of the RED approach;
 - (b) to identify strategic and operational approaches that help to optimize the impact of the RED approach;
 - (c) to identify complementary approaches to raise immunization coverage.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

5. There will be a report to the Regional Committee that will address the following topics:
 - (a) best practices in addressing managerial and technical challenges to the implementation of the RED approach;
 - (b) strategic and operational approaches that help to optimize the impact of the RED approach;
 - (c) complementary approaches that help maintain and sustain high immunization coverage.

PANELISTS

6. The panelists are:

- (a) Chairperson: Honourable Minister of Health of (to be determined)
- (b) Alternative Chairperson: Honourable Minister of Health of (to be determined)
- (c) Rapporteur: EPI manager from Cameroon
- (d) Presenters: EPI managers from Benin, Burkina Faso, Rwanda and Uganda.

7. The agenda will be as follows:

- (a) Opening remarks, introduction of the panelists and topic for discussion by the Chairperson (10 minutes)
- (b) Best practices and challenges in strengthening planning and resource management for RED implementation: Benin (15 minutes)
- (c) Best practices and challenges in strengthening supportive supervision for RED implementation and in conducting child health weeks: Uganda (15 minutes)
- (d) Best practices and challenges in strengthening outreach services for RED implementation: Burkina Faso (15 minutes)
- (e) Best practices and challenges in strengthening monitoring and community linkages for RED implementation: Rwanda (15 minutes)
- (f) Discussions (60 minutes)
- (g) Summary and conclusions (15 minutes).