



Congo boosts Extended Programme on Immunization

Congo is boosting its national disease prevention policy with the introduction of Pentavalent in the Extended Programme on Immunization (EPI) and the official launch of the new vaccine Wednesday in Ignie, 45 km north of Brazzaville.

"The vaccine is free and available in all fixed immunization centres across the country. Our will is to provide children and the whole population with all the necessary vaccines so that the fight against preventable diseases through immunization (can) be crowned with victory," said Emilienne Raoul, Congolese Minister of Health, Social and Family Affairs.

She said that the performance of the EPI so far was satisfactory, with immunization cover improving over the years.

The percentage of children immunised against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and poliomyelitis (DTCP3) has risen from 50 per cent in 2003 to more than 85 per cent in 2008.

Meanwhile, Congo is among African countries providing EPI vaccines from their own funds and financing new vaccines jointly with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI).

Pentavalent has the advantage of grouping five antigens, thus protecting children against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B and haemophilus influenzae, the Health Minister explained.

As part of the health ministry's plans for disease prevention, the people of Congo will be provided with the vaccine against pneumococcus infections in 2010.

In the same vein, the department is planning to introduce the vaccine against severe forms of diarrhea, as well as the vaccine against cervical cancer.

Commending the Congolese government's efforts in improving the health conditions of the people, Dr. Mamadou D. Bali, representative of the World Health Organisation

(WHO) in Congo, said that well implemented immunization programmes could reduce mortality by nearly 25 per cent and contribute to the achievement of the 4th Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

"The benchmark of 2015 is approaching and we must intensify our efforts to meet the challenge of achieving the MDGs. We should therefore take up several challenges together in the health system as a whole. In this effort, the WHO and all other partners will be by your side," he promised.

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