

Mr. Bruno Maes, UNICEF Officer In-Charge
Opening Remarks
At Orientation Workshop on New Vaccines
February 28, 2006 at Global Hotel, Addis Ababa

Your Excellency Dr. Tedors Adhanom,
Minister of Health of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi
World Health Organization Ethiopia Country Office Representative,

Distinguished Government Officials,

Head and Members of Addis Ababa City Administration Health Bureau

Representative of Glaxosmith Kline

Heads of Regional Health Bureaus

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the UNICEF-Ethiopia and myself, I would like to congratulate the Addis Ababa City Administration Health Bureau for preparing this important timely orientation workshop in collaboration with Glaxosmith Kline.

As you know, the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) started in Ethiopia in 1980 with the goal of reducing mortality and morbidity of children from six vaccine preventable deadly diseases. Recently, since 2000, the programme has shown significant improvement in immunization coverage. Currently, the country's DPT3 coverage is estimated to be 69% and measles 57%.

Ethiopia has also shown increasing achievement in polio eradication, measles control and maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination through conducting supplementary immunization campaigns. One key to these successes has been the existence of strong partnerships.

It is with commitment and concern that UNICEF has been supporting immunization since the inception of EPI by providing vaccine, injection materials, and cold chain equipment, and providing financial and technical support to the Federal Ministry of Health and Regional Health

Bureaux. But as the statistics show we have some serious work to do to expand coverage even more.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Child survival interventions which includes the immunization programme faces many challenges due to the vast size of the country, the poor infrastructure, the difficult terrain affecting access and the limited human resource capacity. Currently, Immunization partners are working closely to overcome these challenges so as to meet the country's commitment to the Millennium Development Goal. There is an ever increasing partnership in Ethiopia for child survival intervention especially for the immunization programme.

One key aspect of child survival is the community-based health extension programme. Health Service Extension workers are being trained and deployed to health posts to strengthen the peripheral health services. These health extension workers will work closely with the community to work on basic health problems and improve the performance of child survival programs, such as immunization.

Dear Guests,

We must not forget that today vaccines prevent millions of deaths a year globally. Since child survival is a major determinant of a country's prosperity, immunization is also a key to economic development and poverty reduction. But vaccine – preventable diseases still claim three million lives every year globally, and cause immeasurable suffering to children, families, and communities, simply because all infants do not receive the vaccine that are available today.

Thanks to The Global Alliance for vaccine and Immunization (GAVI), is seeking to address three challenges: one, that every year, 30 million children are still not receiving any vaccinations that as new life-saving vaccines are developed. Two, only children in the richer countries are receiving them. Three, the current market forces don't encourage the development of vaccines against disease most prevalent in poorer countries including pneumonia, diarrhoea, HIV/AIDs, malaria and tuberculosis.

In line with this, GAVI is supporting developing countries in strengthening immunization services and in the introduction of new vaccines. GAVI has been supporting Ethiopia since 2002 to strengthen immunization services. Ethiopia also received injection safety support for three years (2002-2004) for immunization.

Currently, GAVI has approved the introduction of hepatitis B and Hib vaccines for Ethiopia and promised to supply these vaccines in the form of DTP-HepB+Hib vaccine combination by mid 2006. The total support from GAVI for the introduction of these new vaccines to Ethiopia is estimated to be US\$ 132,965,000.00 for five years.

Thanks again to GAVI, this is a very high support for Ethiopian children, we will be able to decrease the child morbidity and mortality further by introducing these vaccine to the country.

As some studies conducted in Ethiopia indicated that both Hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenza are public health problems. It is with this regard Ethiopia applied for support from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) for the introduction of Hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenza type B vaccines.

Ethiopia has started preparation for the new vaccine introduction, including cold chain storage expansion, training, revision of formats and orientation has started in most of the regions. This orientation workshop is part of the preparation for the introduction of these vaccines.

Your Excellency, Dr Tedros,

UNICEF has been supporting the immunization programme since the inception of EPI in this country. Now with the preparation for the introduction of these vaccines UNICEF has increased its support in assisting the Ethiopian government in procuring cold chain equipments, spare parts, and printing the revised EPI formats and providing technical assistance for the regions.

Thanks to the Addis Ababa City Administration Health Bureau and Glaxosmith Kline, this orientation workshop is very important for the new initiative. Further orientation to the community, training of health workers and service providers should be conducted at all levels before the introduction of these vaccines to ensure proper utilization of these expensive life-saving vaccines. To this effect, UNICEF will remain assisting the Federal Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Bureaux, and continue playing its roles in the strong Immunization partners and alliances.

I wish you all the very best in this workshop and in the future vital immunization campaigns.

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Thank you.