

BOTTLENECKS TO UNIVERSAL IMMUNIZATION COVERAGE IN AFRICA

Edison Arwanire Mworosi and Joseph Rujumba

Makerere University, Uganda

Vaccination is a cornerstone of any program that aims at reducing morbidity and mortality due to preventable infectious diseases and is a cost-effective intervention. Despite efforts to reduce child mortality, 10 million children under 5 die annually mainly from developing countries, Africa inclusive. It is estimated that currently Africa contributes to over 50% of the global childhood deaths due to vaccine preventable diseases. Vaccine preventable diseases remain an important public health problem. Immunization is a key in attaining sustainable development goal 3 i.e. reducing under-five mortality globally but attaining universal childhood vaccination remains a challenge particularly in reaching the most vulnerable in Africa. Despite the availability of effective vaccines, immunization coverage remains low in most parts of Africa due to various bottlenecks including: inadequate and poorly motivated health workers (HWS), inadequate knowledge and skills by HWS, multiple languages, low education, cultural and religious beliefs, poor access to health facilities, social economic status, political instability, conflicts and social unrest, ever increasing refugees or internally displaced persons, mobile populations, inaccurate population and immunization data, negative messaging and anti-vaccine lobby, inadequate funding, social mobilization and vaccine safety concerns. These bottlenecks have led to minimal improvement or stagnation in immunization coverage rates in recent years in a number of African countries threatening to reverse the gains achieved in the past two decades. Achieving universal immunization coverage in Africa remains a daunting task, requires multiple strategies and partnerships.

Biography

A Ugandan Pediatrician with keen interest in infectious diseases and childhood immunization. Currently, he is a Senior Consultant Pediatrician at Mulago National Referral Hospital, Honorary Lecturer at the College of Health Sciences Makerere University and Professor of Pediatrics, St Augustine Internal University. Actively involved in the Uganda National Expanded Programme on Immunization and introduction of New Vaccines into routine immunization. He has published widely and is a Peer Reviewer for several journals. A member of several professional and technical bodies including: the Uganda Medical Association, Uganda Pediatric Association, International Society for Infectious Diseases, International Pediatric Association, Vienna Vaccine Safety Initiative, East African Rotavirus Advisory Board (GSK) and Institutional Biosafety committees for the Makerere University and Walter Reed Collaborative HIV Vaccine Trials; East African Centre for Vaccines and Immunization; External Expert Advisory group on Stronger Systems for Routine Immunization Project in Uganda and a Member of the East African Meningococcal Advisory Board (Pfizer).

emworosi@gmail.com