

Sierra Leone Launches 2nd Round Polio National Immunization Campaign 2012



Mr Hemore delivering the launch statement



A child being vaccinated after the launch



Community member



A community leader addressing the gathering

Sierra Leone launched the 2nd round Polio National Immunization Days (NIDs) 2012 campaign on 19 October. The four days campaign is targeting to administer Oral Polio Vaccine to 1.3 million under five children nationwide. The campaign is being synchronised with 9 other Western African Countries to protect all children under the age of 5 years against the wild polio virus and to interrupt circulation of the virus in the region. The campaign will use mainly the house to house strategy but will also be administered at health facilities. National Supervisors, Independent Monitors and vaccinators were trained prior to the campaign, to enhance effective implementation.

The campaign was launched in Freetown by the Manager of Health Education Division of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Mr Sahr Hemore, on behalf of the Acting Minister of Health. According to Mr Hemore, the main reason for the frequent campaign in the last few years is to boost the immunity of the targeted children against polio. He also reiterated that polio is not caused by witchcraft which until recently has been one of the major misconceptions but by a virus preventable by vaccination. The District Medical Officer of the Western Area Dr Joseph Kandeh on his part encouraged parents and care givers to *"show appreciation to the Ministry and development partners by making their children available for the service during the campaign and using the routine immunization services effectively"*.

The function was attended by health officials, local partners, UN family, religious leaders, as well as the civil society and other partners. Statements of commitment for advocacy and support for the eradication of polio were made by local authorities, the civil society and WHO. Speaking on behalf of the UN Country Team, Dr Pamela Mitula, WHO EPI Team Leader informed the gathering that despite the progress in many countries on polio eradication, over one hundred new cases have been reported in the region in 2012. She said this put countries in the sub region including Sierra Leone at high risk of transmission. She noted that this is a concern for national authorities and WHO. *"It is therefore important that all children are reached and immunized during this campaign and with routine services"*, she added.

The last case of polio was reported in the country in February 2010. Significant progress has also been made in the implementation of quality Polio National Immunization campaigns. However independent monitors report and districts monthly immunization reports show that some children are still being missed out with the services.



Drama to raise awareness on the campaign and to demystify polio