



Liberia Bolsters its Efforts Against Malaria: Launches RTS,S Vaccine in Rivercess County on World Malaria Day

Rivercess, Liberia, April 25, 2024 - Liberia marks a monumental milestone in its battle against malaria as it launches the highly anticipated RTS,S malaria vaccine today, coinciding with World Malaria Day, commemorated under the theme: Health Equity, Gender, and Human Rights: Accelerating the Fight Against Malaria for a More Equitable World. The launch ceremony, held in Rivercess County, signals a significant step forward in the nation's commitment to safeguarding the health of its children and communities.

In January of this year, Liberia received a shipment of 112,000 doses of the RTS,S malaria vaccine, a groundbreaking intervention expected to reach 45,000 children across the six counties of the south-east in Liberia. With malaria prevalence among children under five years estimated at 10 percent in Liberia, the vaccine holds the promise of saving countless lives and reducing the burden of this deadly disease.

The administration of the vaccine will focus on the six counties identified as having high malaria prevalence according to the 2022 Malaria Indicators Survey, namely Rivercess, Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland and Rivergee in the southeast region of Liberia. These targeted efforts align with the country's strategy to prioritize areas most affected by malaria and ensure equitable access to life-saving interventions.

The RTS,S malaria vaccine has undergone successful pilot programs in Ghana, Malawi, and Kenya whose results indicate a 22% reduction in hospitalisation for severe clinical malaria in children eligible for the vaccine, demonstrating its safety and efficacy. Now, Liberia joins these nations in integrating the vaccine into its Expanded Program on Immunization, marking a significant advancement in preventive healthcare.

Crucial to the preparation and execution of this landmark initiative are the collaborative efforts of key partners including GAVI, the Global Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), USAID, Jhpiego, and other stakeholders. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in navigating the complexities of vaccine introduction and ensuring its successful rollout.

Speaking during the malaria vaccine launch at Rivercess District Hospital, the Honourable Minister of Health thanked partners for the strong collaboration in taking steps towards ensuring a malaria free future for Liberian children.

“Special thanks to GAVI the vaccine alliance, WHO, UNICEF for the strong collaboration to get these malaria vaccine doses available in Liberia. As we all know malaria even though its prevention remains a formidable health challenge in Liberia impacting our entire population, with children aged 6-59 months bearing the biggest burden,” declared the Honourable Minister of Health Dr. Louise Kpoto. *“Today’s launch of the anti-malaria vaccine targeting children aged 5 to 23 months presents a crucial advancement in our national immunization program- as it represents collaboration to safeguard the health of our children, paving the way for a healthy and malaria free future in Liberia.”*

“Today marks an historic moment in Liberia's public health journey,” remarked Andy Brooks, UNICEF Representative in Liberia. *“The introduction of the RTS,S malaria vaccine represents a game-changer in our fight against this deadly disease, and we commend the government's commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of its children.”*

Echoing these sentiments, The WHO Liberia OIC Dr. Musu Duworko emphasized, *“The World Health Organization stands in solidarity with Liberia as it embarks on this transformative journey. The RTS,S malaria vaccine holds immense potential to reduce the burden of malaria and accelerate progress towards achieving our shared goal of a malaria-free world.”*

As Liberia joins Benin and Sierra Leone in this simultaneous launch, the collective efforts of African nations to accelerate malaria vaccine introduction and rollout are poised to drive significant impact in the global fight against malaria, reaffirming our commitment to advancing health equity, gender equality, and human rights for a more equitable and resilient world.

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