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South Sudan introduces the second dose of the Measles-Containing Vaccine (MCV2)

Juba, 14 August 2025 – South Sudan is taking a significant step forward in protecting its children from Measles with the nationwide introduction of the second dose of the Measles Containing Vaccine (MCV2) into the routine immunisation schedule. The two-dose regimen is part of the 2017 recommendations by the World Health Organisation to all countries. As of 12 August 2025, South Sudan will be the 45th country in the African Region to introduce MCV2.

This milestone comes at a critical time, as the country continues to face recurrent Measles outbreaks. According to the 2025 Measles Risk Assessment, nearly 90% of counties in the country are classified as either high or very high risk for Measles outbreaks. This is due to a combination of factors, including low routine immunisation coverage, weak surveillance systems, and the absence of a second dose of the Measles vaccine in the national routine immunisation schedule.

The leadership of the Ministry of Health has expressed the country's determination to join the rest of the World in eliminating Measles: *"Adding MCV2 significantly strengthens Measles immunity among our children in South Sudan. To ensure high immunization coverage and sustained efforts towards the global goal of Measles elimination by 2030, routine immunization services will be delivered through fixed-post, outreach, and mobile strategies."* Said Hon. Sarah Cleto Rial, Minister of Health.

The Ministry of Health with the support of GAVI-the vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF are jointly driving efforts to tackle longstanding immunization gaps in the country. These efforts include training health workers, expanding cold chain infrastructure, improving data systems, and conducting targeted social mobilization campaigns.

The World Health Organization country Office in South Sudan commends the country's consistent efforts to strengthen its immunization programme: *"The introduction of MCV2 into South Sudan's routine immunization represents a milestone in strengthening child health and vaccine-preventable disease control. Sustaining progress will depend on continued community outreach, health worker training, and effective data recording. WHO will stand by South Sudan throughout this journey."* Said Dr Humphrey Karamagi, WHO South Sudan Representative.

In April 2025, South Sudan conducted a nationwide measles follow-up campaign targeting children aged 6 to 59 months. The campaign reached 73 out of 80 counties and achieved 85% coverage of the national target population. However, only 38% of counties reached the critical 95% coverage threshold required to interrupt Measles transmission. These results highlight the persistent immunity gaps and the urgent need for a second dose of the Measles vaccine to ensure full protection.

With this introduction, South Sudan's Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) will be able to vaccinate children against Measles at nine (9) and eighteen (18) months to boost their immunity levels. An estimated target population of 567,065 children will be eligible for the 2nd dose of MCV in 80 counties across the country. To address potential dropout rates between MCV1 and MCV2, the rollout will ensure no one is left behind, including hard-to-reach populations, displaced communities, returnees, nomadic groups, and areas affected by conflict and flooding.

UNICEF calls for full protection against Measles especially among malnourished children and those displaced by conflict and floods as one dose of the MCV2 does not give full protection. *“With the support received from Gavi, the introduction of the second dose of the measles vaccine into the national routine immunisation schedule, we are closing a critical gap in protecting children from one of the world’s most contagious and deadly diseases,”* said Noala Skinner, UNICEF Representative in South Sudan.

Measles remains one of the most contagious and deadly vaccine-preventable diseases, particularly affecting children under five. The launch of MCV2 is a landmark achievement for South Sudan. It reflects a strong commitment to protecting children, strengthening the health system, and preventing future outbreaks. The media and public are encouraged to support this initiative by raising awareness, promoting vaccine acceptance, and ensuring that every eligible child receives both doses of the measles vaccine.

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