

## PRESS RELEASE

### South Sudan Launches African Vaccination Week 2026, Urging Lifelong Immunization for All

**Juba, 28 April 2026** - The Ministry of Health of the Republic of South Sudan, in collaboration with partners, today marked African Vaccination Week (AVW) at Kimu Primary Health Centre in Central Equatoria State. Observed globally from 24 to 30 April, African Vaccination Week aims to promote the lifesaving benefits of immunization. This year's theme, *"For Every Generation, Vaccine Works,"* underscores the importance of vaccination across the life course.

This annual event is observed alongside World Immunization Week (WIW), a global initiative that provides an overarching framework for promoting vaccination across the life course. The campaign emphasizes the importance of ensuring universal access to vaccines for people of all ages and reinforces the need for sustained investment in immunization services.

South Sudan's National Immunization Programme has made steady progress over the years, expanding access to lifesaving vaccines. The programme began in 1976 with the introduction of vaccines against tuberculosis (BCG), polio (OPV), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTP), measles (first dose), and tetanus toxoid (TT). Since then, additional vaccines have been introduced, including the Pentavalent vaccine in 2015 and the Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) in 2016. In 2021, the tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster and a second dose of IPV were added.

More recently, in 2024, South Sudan introduced the malaria vaccine into its routine immunization schedule. In 2025, with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other partners, the country further expanded its immunization portfolio by introducing the Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV), Rotavirus vaccine, and the second dose of Measles-Containing Vaccine (MCV2). These vaccines are critical in protecting children from pneumonia, diarrhea, and measles.

The Ministry of Health has called on communities to actively participate in vaccination efforts. “As the government works to protect the population from vaccine-preventable diseases, we urge communities and individuals to take responsibility by ensuring they receive all recommended vaccines,” said Honorable Luke Thompson Thoan, Minister of Health.

The World Health Organization highlighted the indispensable role of immunization as one of the most effective and equitable public health interventions for reducing illness and saving lives. Vaccination not only protects individuals from life-threatening diseases but also strengthens communities by preventing outbreaks and reducing the burden on already strained health systems. “Vaccines have saved millions of lives globally and continue to do so in South Sudan. We have seen mothers and children survive and thrive because of vaccines,” said Dr. Humphrey Karamagi, WHO Representative for South Sudan. He further underscored that sustained investment in immunization programmes, strengthening routine services, and reaching underserved populations are essential to ensuring that every child is protected.

“Vaccinating children is one of the most effective ways to increase child survival. South Sudan has made great strides reducing under 5 mortalities from 300 per 1,000 births (1990) to just under 100 (2025). Now we need to maintain the momentum, by investing in health services including routine vaccines, and also taking time to engage mothers and caregivers who are so critical in safeguarding their children’s futures”, said UNICEF Representative Noala Skinner.

Despite these achievements, the immunization programme continues to face challenges, including outbreaks of measles, cholera, and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2). Additional pressures such as population movements due to the Sudan crisis, flooding, and internal displacement due to insecurity and extreme climate events have strained health services. Nevertheless, vaccination services continue to be delivered both within health facilities and through outreach efforts in affected communities.

**For further information, contact:**

Ministry of Health, Health Education and Promotion:

- Mary Denis Obat, [mobat43@gmail.com](mailto:mobat43@gmail.com) / +211924887006

WHO South Sudan, Communication Team:

- Alice Rutaremara, [rutaremaraa@who.int](mailto:rutaremaraa@who.int)/ +211921887748
- Atem John Ajang, [atema@who.int](mailto:atema@who.int)/ +211921736375

UNICEF South Sudan,

- Richard Ruati, [rruati@unicef.org](mailto:rruati@unicef.org)/ +211921359578.