



Launching of the vaccination campaign against meningitis A on 6 October 2012 in Khartoum  
10 October 2012 - A massive vaccination campaign against meningococcal A meningitis has been launched targeting 16.9 million children and adults, ranging from 1 to 29 years, in five Darfur states, Blue Nile, Khartoum, Gezira, Sennar and Gedaref from 7 October to 18 October 2012.

This year's campaign is phase one of a two-phase campaign. The rest of Sudan will be vaccinated during the first quarter of 2013.

With the launch of the new vaccine in Sudan, Sudan has joined a larger African initiative (meningitis belt) that has already conducted campaigns in 6 countries comprising of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Mali and Niger) and has vaccinated more than 55 million people aged 1–29 years, the same target group as for Sudan.

Federal Minister of Health Bahar Iddris Abu Garda said, “This vaccine is considered as a turning point in the history of Meningitis in Sudan, so I encourage everyone to go to the nearest health facility and have yourself vaccinated. By doing this, you do not just protect yourself and your family – you protect as well the whole of Sudan.”

The vaccine protects children as young as one year of age and young adults, and confers immunity that may last a decade. It reduces transmission and contributes to herd immunity, meaning that even people who were not vaccinated receive some protection.

“I hope that the implementation of the recent Tripartite Initiative with Sudan and SPLM/N will

allow to reach all populations in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, not only for this campaign but also with polio vaccine in the near future in order to safeguard the Sudanese population,” said World Health Organization (WHO) Representative Anshu Banerjee during the launching of the campaign held at the Friendship Hall in Khartoum on 6 October.

Dr Banerjee reiterated WHO’s commitment to support the Sudan in its continuous fight against diseases and disability.



Federal Minister of Health Bahar Iddris Abu Garda and WHO Representative Dr Anshu Banerjee during the launching of the vaccination campaign against meningitis A in Sudan. The launch of the campaign was highlighted by a march along Nile Avenue participated by hundreds of young and old people from different schools and organizations, and was led by the Federal Minister of Health, WHO Representative in Sudan, acting Minister of Sports and Youth as well as Technical Officers from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports and Youth, and agencies supporting the campaign.

## **Meningitis epidemics**

Epidemics of meningitis occurring every 8–12 years and affecting mainly children and young adults are among the most feared of all diseases due to its sudden onset followed by the rapid progression to death in 5-10% of cases and disability such as mental disorders or hearing loss in another 20% of the survivors. The large scale hospitalization and disability result in high costs to both the government and families.

WHO estimates that the vaccine is expected to reduce cases of meningitis A between 80% and 85%, and this is valid for Sudan as well, and will save nearly 150 000 young lives in the Meningitis belt countries by 2015.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the GAVI Alliance, along with the World Health Organization, UNICEF and health partners are supporting the Government of Sudan in this

vaccination campaign.

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