

***LIBREVILLE, January 22 (Infosplusgabon) - Following a successful pilot programme, today the world's first WHO-recommended malaria vaccines are being administered through routine immunisation programmes across Africa, beginning with Cameroon. Vaccinations are taking place across 42 health districts, chosen in order to give the most vulnerable children with the highest transmission and mortality rates in the country an opportunity to be protected from the devastating disease.***

Aurélia Nguyen, Chief Programme Officer at Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance comments on this milestone:

“Malaria claims too many lives each year, more than half a million children under 5 in Africa alone. Today represents a historic milestone as we will finally be able to offer a new tool in the fight against a disease that has impacted the African continent most of all, accounting for 95% of all deaths globally.

Today, Cameroon will become the first country in the world to begin routine malaria vaccinations. It will introduce the RTS,S vaccine in 42 districts, those with populations at highest risk. The shots will be available to all eligible children who come into clinics.

In a country where malaria cases and deaths have been rising since 2017, and nearly 30% of all hospital consultations are malaria-related, this is significant: vaccination will save lives, and provide major relief to families and the country's health system.

Across the continent, around 20 countries have plans to introduce this year to reach a total of over 3 million children. Some have already received shipments of doses.

Introducing the vaccine in that many countries in 2024 will depend on when the second WHO-prequalified malaria vaccine is available and countries' levels of preparedness.

Overall, more than 30 African countries have expressed interest in a routine malaria vaccination program.

Malaria vaccination has been a long time coming. As an Alliance, we have invested in studies and pilots, and sent powerful market signals to manufacturers, all to expedite this moment: approved vaccines available, and getting to those who need them most.

Alongside supplying vaccines and supporting vaccination activities, we have also worked with partners including the Global Fund to make sure vaccination is delivered as part of a package of essential interventions such as bednets.

Finally, I will say: while Gavi is fully funded for its current strategic period, which ends in 2025, we must make sure financing is in place for our next 5-year period, from 2026-2030 – so that this vital work can continue in the future.”

More than 331, 000 doses of RTS,S malaria vaccine landed in Yaoundé on Tuesday 22nd November. This was the first time doses were shipped to an African country outside of the three pilot countries (Kenya, Ghana, Malawi) that were part of the Malaria Vaccine Implementation Programme (MVIP), which ran from 2019 to 2023 and saw the RTS,S vaccine administered to more than 2 million children.

The arrival of the doses on the ground meant Cameroon could undertake the final preparations for malaria vaccine introduction into routine immunisation programmes. Introducing a new vaccine means many pieces have to be put into place: training of healthcare workers, investing in infrastructure, technical capacity, vaccine storage, community engagement and demand generation, and sequencing and integrating the rollout of malaria vaccine alongside the delivery of other vaccines and health interventions.

Overall, Cameroon is aiming to reach half a million children with the malaria vaccine in 2024 and 2025 (approximately 250,000 each year).

The RTS,S malaria vaccine, also known as Mosquirix, was developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in partnership with the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative and is designed to target the *Plasmodium falciparum* parasite that causes malaria, which is spread by anopheles mosquitoes. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the vaccine is given to children living in malaria-endemic areas, prioritising areas of moderate and high transmission.

WHO recommends that RTS,S should be given to children from the age of five months in a schedule of four doses.

Malaria is a serious public health issue in Cameroon, which is one of the 11 countries that together bear nearly 70% of the total disease burden.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate more than half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organisations that fund Gavi's work [here](#).

Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 1 billion children – and prevented more than 17.3 million future deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 78 lower-income countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningococcal and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation, above all the zero-dose children who have not received even a single vaccine shot. The Vaccine Alliance employs innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency.

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