**Position Paper**

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**Country :** Democratic Republic of Congo

**Committee :** World Health Organisation (WHO)

**Agenda :** Improving Access to Immunization and Halting the Spread of Vaccine-preventable diseases.

**Delegate :** Rumish Ali Saif

**Topic Background**

Immunization is among the most effective public health interventions available. In recent decades, vaccines have contributed to substantial reductions in childhood disease burden globally, saving millions of lives. Immunization was the fundamental strategy for the eradication of smallpox– one of the greatest achievements in the history of public health.

Despite the longstanding benefits, low immunization levels persist. Some 20 million children miss out on life-saving vaccines annually. The most poor and marginalized children – often most in need of vaccines – continue to be the least likely to get them.

The Improvement in Access to Immunization and Halting the Spread of Vaccine-preventable diseases is a necessity in world scenarios as it's the best possible way to curb the exponential outburst of disease causing deaths and leading to a successful establishment of health services and healthy world citizens.

**Cause**

The Democratic Republic of Congo believes that effective immunization and vaccination can lead to global stability in healthcare. During the past 25 years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has made progress in improving the health of women and children. Thanks to government commitments and many policies that prioritize

maternal, newborn, and child health, mortality rates

have declined and more people are accessing important health services, including immunization.

However, many Congolese families still lack access to high-quality essential health services that could prevent and treat major causes of death. Inadequate resources for health remain one of the largest obstacles to further mortality reductions.

**Current Policy**

Following decades of conflict, the DRC has made significant progress in rebuilding its collapsed health care system. Immunization is a key political priority, with commitments to strengthen immunization programs and increase financing emanating from the highest levels of the government. More specifically, the government committed to improving access to immunization to reduce child mortality and morbidity; increasing and sustaining domestic investments and funding allocations; and achieving high-quality surveillance for targeted vaccine-preventable diseases in the DRC.

*Annual Operating Plan :* The EPI prepares an annual operational work plan each year to guide and inform immunization activities at the national and provincial levels.

*Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) Strategy* :

The HSS Strategy focuses on building the capacity of health workers to administer vaccines, adhere to injection safety procedures, and collect surveillance data. It also seeks to improve the efficiency of cold chain equipment.

*National Health Development Plan (NHDP) 2016–2020* : This plan aims to improve the quality and accessibility of health services and outlines objectives for achieving universal health coverage. The NHDP seeks to increase the national child immunization rate from 45.5 to 80 percent, with increased prioritization for zones with the hardest to reach communities.

*National Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy* : Through increased investments in health, the government aims to spur economic growth and reduce inequality among women and children. The plan contains immunization coverage targets similar to those in the NHDP.

*Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) Improvement Plan* : The plan outlines key actions the government will adopt to strengthen the immunization supply chain, including implementing a cold chain temperature monitoring system and vaccine inventory protocols. This plan is informed by the recommendations set forth in the WHO/UNICEF EVM assessment document.

**Solutions**

There are certain steps that can be put forth globally to increase access to vaccines and immunization.

It is important that communities not only support immunization services, but that they actively desire and request them. This contributes to ongoing political advocacy and allocation of resources for immunization programmes.

Inequalities in immunization coverage by geography, urban-rural, and socio-economic status jeopardize the achievement of global immunization goals and call for renewed immunization strategies. These should take into account emerging opportunities for building better immunization systems and services, as well as the development of new vaccines.

The participation of communities, a better understanding of vaccine acceptance and hesitancy, the expansion of vaccination across the life course, approaches to improve immunization in middle-income countries, enhanced use of data and possible financial and non-financial incentives can help ameliorate the spread of vaccine and immunity.