



SUCCESS STORY

Outstanding Coverage of Vitamin A: A Life Saving Work



A 7 month infant receiving 2 drops of vitamin A

In 1990, the World Children Summit set an objective to eliminate Vitamin A deficiencies by 2000. In 1994, the WHO integrated Vitamin A supplementation as part of an Expanded Programme for Immunization (EPI). Vitamin A is an important micronutrient required for proper growth and protection against infections. It is therefore an important element for reducing infant and child mortality. Vitamin A can also be found in food such as milk, eggs, fish, liver, carrots, vegetables, palm oil and other fruits. DRC is blessed with a variety of foods but because of poor methods of cooking and storage, most part of this nutrient is destroyed during food preparation and cooking. Therefore, Vitamin A deficiency is a serious public health problem in the country.

Vitamin A supplementation combined with mebendazole administration was launched in DRC in 2001. This year the campaign was planned in May 2007. The objective was to reach 100% of children from 6 to 59 months with Vitamin A. In Kolwezi District where AXxes is implementing an integrated health project under USAID funding, the coverage has increased tremendously this year. A hundred and four percent (104 %) of children between 6 and 59 months have received drops of Vitamin A compared to 90.7% of last campaign carried out in November 2007. *"This coverage is special for the Provincial Health Inspection of Katanga"*, said Nyembo Michel, the PRONANUT Coordinator in Katanga Province.

The campaign organized by PRONANUT, a Ministry of Health body dealing with nutrition, was funded mainly by UNICEF and HKI in collaboration with other partners including World Vision, Medicin du Monde, Association pour la Sante Familial, WHO and MSF. This year, the preparation for the campaign was well organized. The main problems that were identified in the last campaign were addressed. Several meetings were held by vaccination coordination board for putting up a plan of action to be supported by all partners. Transportation of vaccination materials was done timely and communication improved. World Vision AXxes provided transportation in Kolwezi District and organized the mass media using radios and IEC materials.



The vitamin A campaign launching ceremony: the team