



**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY RT. HON. SAARA KUUGONGELWA-AMADHILA,**

**PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA,**

**ON THE**

**OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED**

**VACCINATION CAMPAIGN.**

**WEDNESDAY, 03 AUGUST 2022, WINDHOEK**

**Director of Ceremonies,**

Hon. Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, Minister of Health and Social Services;

Hon. Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region;

Your Excellency Mr. Nishimaki Hisao, Ambassador of Japan to Namibia;

Dr. Charles Sagoe-Moses, WHO Country Representative;

Dr. Lul Pout Riek, Africa CDC Representative;

Senior Government Officials;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am very pleased to join you today for the launching of the two weeks National Integrated Immunization Campaign. The aim of this campaign is to ensure that the Namibian child is vaccinated and protected from childhood diseases and to prevent COVID-19 disease. The Ministry of Health and Social Services revised the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP) in order to respond to new scientific developments and advancements in technology.

2. Immunization is one of the most successful public health interventions in the world, as it has played a pivotal role in reducing infant mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases. It is through vaccination that diseases such as polio, measles and neonatal tetanus are now on the verge of being eliminated.
  
3. I am pleased to note that, during the two-week country-wide immunization campaign, a wide range of health services will be offered including:
  - Measles and Rubella immunization for children under five;
  - COVID-19 vaccination;
  - Screening and immunization for children who missed other routine immunization doses;
  - Assessment and treatment of severe malnutrition for children;
  - Providing iron supplements for pregnant women.
  
4. Others services will include the registration of child births and the registration of vulnerable children for social grants.

All the services will be offered at Clinics and health facilities across the country. Mobile teams will also visit identified sites in communities. Sites to be visited in each region will be communicated through local radio stations, churches, schools and other platforms. I am urging the nation to participate in this exercise.

5. In Namibia, immunization is a human right. Immunization provides opportunities to promote integrated services and improve the overall health of recipients.

According to the Child Care and Protection Act, Act No 3 of 2015, 6. (1) “A child has the right to conditions of living necessary for his or her development, including adequate Care and protection, which includes adequate health care and immunization”. Childhood vaccines protect children from a variety of serious or potentially fatal diseases.

6. The success of the immunization programme depends on the commitment of all partners and stakeholders involved. Thus, coordination among stakeholders is of utmost importance. The Government urges all health workers both in the public and private sector; development partners; civil society organizations; religious and faith-based organizations and community-based organizations to keep up the joint efforts towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal three, namely “ensure health and well-being for all, at every stage of life”.

7. **Director of Ceremonies,**

A natural infection might provide better immunity than vaccination, but there are serious risks. For example, a natural chickenpox infection could lead to pneumonia. A natural polio infection could cause permanent paralysis.

Vaccination can help prevent these diseases and their potentially serious complications.

8. A recent Measles outbreak in Omusati region in April 2022 proved our vulnerability to the vaccine-preventable diseases.

Outbreaks, occurs every few years in areas with low vaccines coverage and where there is an accumulation of persons who have never been infected or vaccinated.

Measles, I am told, is the fourth leading cause of death in children less than 5 years of age in many African countries. It is urgent therefore, that Namibia has a Measles vaccination campaign to mitigate further spread, in order to avoid similar outbreaks from happening.

We would not have had an outbreak such as the one in Omusati, had we have our Measles vaccination coverage of above 95% for the first and second doses.

9. The current outbreak of Wild Polio Virus in Malawi and Mozambique is another testimony as to how vulnerable we are. Our country will be best served if we achieve immunization of our most vulnerable population. We, therefore, encourage the nation to take vaccination seriously and to ensure that children are also vaccinated on time and on schedule.

10. The world is still grappling with the effect of COVID-19. Many lives were lost and some individuals are yet to recover from complications of COVID-19. The economy also took a major hit due to lockdowns, and many people have lost their jobs.

The COVID-19 Vaccines offers protection from Covid infections. However, it was not easy to roll-out the vaccines across Namibia and vaccinate the target population of 60-70% of the Namibian population due to many reasons, including vaccine hesitancy.

11. Since the Covid-19 pandemic is still with us and we still record cases on a daily basis, although at lower rates, it is important that we continue to curb and prevent further Covid spread.

Of course, the basic prevention measures of hand washing, physical distancing and wearing of face masks are important. However, having a protected nation is the ultimate solution. This can only happen when we take a collective decision to get vaccinated. Hence, Government's decision to conduct a nationwide integrated vaccination campaign.

12. In closing, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to stress that we should all do our part to make a success of this nation-wide campaign. Let us bring our children and ourselves to the vaccination sites to get vaccinated. It is the right thing to do.

With these words, it is now my honor to declare the Integrated National Vaccination Campaign officially launched.

**I thank you.**