SENDA GHANA
(A Subsidiary of SEND Foundation of West Africa)

Press Statement: World Immunization Week 2021: #Vaccines Bring Us Closer
26th April, 2021

The World Immunization Week is celebrated annually during the last week of April as a global campaign to raise awareness on the importance of vaccines and immunization in protecting people against vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization is essential to the wellbeing of everyone; therefore, its importance cannot be overemphasized. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF note that immunization and vaccines save millions of lives every year.

This year’s World Immunization Week theme, “Vaccine Brings Us Closer”, among others, urges greater engagements and conversation around immunization globally and emphasizes how vaccination connects people, helping improve the health of everyone, including ways that promote growth, development, and wellbeing.

To give meaning to the theme, the Ghana Immunization Advocacy Initiative (IAI) Network, comprising SEND GHANA, Hope for Future Generations (HFFG), and Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health (GCNH) plan to hold series of campaign activities. These include engagement sessions with health system decision-makers on immunization financing at all levels of government, raising awareness on the importance of routine immunization at the community level, and building confidence and trust among citizens, leading to increased vaccine acceptance.

The Network holds the view that the government’s commitment to immunization financing is low. Presently, the government is utilizing an unspecified portion of the National Health Fund (NHF) to support the procurement of vaccines and routine immunization activities. This may not be sustainable and could present serious challenges for securing vaccines for immunizing children under 5. The outbreak of COVID-19 and Cerebrospinal Meningitis (CSM) in 2020 brought additional challenges to the health sector, further exposing the existential financial gaps faced by the sector. Despite this, the budgetary allocation as its percentage share of the National Budget experienced a marginal decline from 7.66% in 2020 to 7.5% in 2021.

Against this background and further to the IAI intended actions, the network makes the following recommendations for consideration by the government and the African Union (AU).

Vision: A Ghana where people’s rights and well being are guaranteed.
The Mission of SEND is to promote good governance and the equality of women and men in Ghana.
1. Find the fiscal space to sustain an increase in budgetary allocation to the health sector, and increasing budget support for the expanded programme on immunization. Revenue realized from COVID-19 levy and any potential revenue influx should be broadened to cover all vaccines and immunization related services.

2. Set aside a dedicated budget to finance Epidemic Preparedness and implementation of the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS), as well as the Ghana Centre for Disease Control to respond to the threat of epidemics.

3. Expedite procurement of the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and increase public awareness to ensure that the progress made in addressing vaccine hesitancy within the period is not eroded. Additionally, people living within the meningitis belt must be vaccinated against CSM, and children from the age of 0-2 years received all 13 vaccines to protect them against preventable diseases.

4. Invest in research and development, build the capacity of local pharmaceutical companies to respond to Ghana’s immunization needs and future pandemics through local vaccine manufacturing and development programs.

5. The AU should explore ways to harness the potential of Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to promote continent-based solutions to the health needs of the people. As a medium to long-term approach, the AU could begin to produce vaccines within, to increase vaccine security and reduce procurement from outside the continent.

Signed

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