

MOMENTUM

Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity



April 2024

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Strengthening Routine Immunization and Polio Eradication

MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity in DRC		
<p>■ - Currently supported province ■ - Historically supported province</p>	<p>Where we work</p> <p>Country level: Ministry of Health, Expanded Program on Immunization, Polio Emergency Operations Center, National Agency for Clinical Engineering and Digital Health</p> <p>Provinces: Haut Katanga, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Kinshasa, Lualaba</p> <p>Health zones: 41</p>	<p>Population</p> <p>Country: 99 million (World Bank, 2022)</p> <p>Project-supported areas: 20 million</p>

BACKGROUND

MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity (the project) applies best practices and explores innovations to increase equitable immunization coverage in USAID-supported countries. The project is USAID's flagship technical assistance mechanism for immunization in 18 countries around the world. It builds countries' capacity to identify and overcome barriers to reaching zero-dose and under-immunized children and older populations with life-saving vaccines and other integrated health services, including rebuilding immunization systems adversely affected by the pandemic. It also supports COVID-19 vaccine rollout across countries with a wide range of circumstances and needs.

Despite significant gains in vaccination coverage, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) still faces periodic outbreaks of poliomyelitis¹ and other vaccine-preventable diseases, declining or stagnant vaccination coverage, and a persistence of zero-dose and under-vaccinated children.² Since November 2020, the project co-creates locally-relevant solutions with communities, clients, and health systems professionals to overcome entrenched obstacles. These solutions have included: capacity building, gender and equity approaches, partnership strengthening, data management, and community-based surveillance.

¹ <https://polioeradication.org/where-we-work/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

² Immunization coverage survey conducted by the Kinshasa Public Health School in 2022.



AREAS OF SUPPORT

CAPACITY BUILDING

The project provides supportive supervision, activity coordination and workshop support to strengthen capacity and improve vaccine supply and demand at national, provincial, and health zone levels. The project brings best practices from around the world to address the needs of DRC's health professionals, including nontraditional partner approaches; interpersonal communication; human-centered solutions; finance accountability mechanisms; and integration of vaccination services in private health care settings.

GENDER AND EQUITY

The project works to reduce rates of zero-dose and under-vaccinated children by including local and non-health actors, organizations, and female health workers in initial phases of microplanning in 170 health areas to identify gender-related barriers and co-design gender-sensitive solutions. It works with the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), women's associations, and community coordination units to organize vaccination services at locations where caregivers spend much of their time, such as markets, intersections, and transportation hubs. The project supports male involvement by educating fathers on the importance of vaccines and their attendance at their children's vaccination appointments.

PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENING

The project improves vaccination service supply and increases demand by conducting co-creation workshops with religious leaders, traditional healers, civil society organizations, and other nontraditional partners. The project facilitates partnerships between the central health zone offices and the nontraditional partners, who agree on a collaborative way forward to support vaccine services in their communities. The health zone administration, the project, and the partner monitor progress.

DATA QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

The project trains, coaches, and establishes peer learning networks for real-time learning and information sharing between health zone management teams on DHIS2 immunization data entry, management, reporting, and interpretation for public and private health facilities. It supports EPI's annual census efforts and ensures data quality through monthly immunization performance review meetings in the EPI branches.

POLIO

The project advises on the national polio outbreak response, facilitates international learning exchanges, and builds the Ministry of Health's polio eradication capacity. At the provincial level, it builds health team capacity to identify and notify acute flaccid paralysis cases using community-based surveillance.