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### Immunisation Plus



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In the past few years, Mozambique's Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) has made considerable progress immunising children and childbearing women against potentially fatal diseases.

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between 1997 and 2003. The coverage for polio rose from 55% to 70% in the same six-year period.

Yet, the Ministry of Health's goal to fully immunise 80% of all infants every year has many hurdles to overcome. A large number of children are not brought back after the first dose and do not complete the full set of vaccinations. This lowers their immunity to disease. And many children in remote rural areas are missed.

Routine supplementation with iron is not yet common practice and 75% of children aged 6-59 months are anaemic.

#### Major Activities Supported by UNICEF

For the past four years, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have helped strengthen routine immunisation services as well as supplementary mass vaccination campaigns to reduce vaccine-preventable child and maternal deaths, and prevent and respond to disease outbreaks.

UNICEF supports

- developing policy at national level;
- supplying equipment and technical assistance to the cold chain;
- implementing "Monthly Health Days";
- training and supervision of district health workers;
- and in close collaboration with WHO, providing technical expertise and financial support for polio eradication, measles control and neonatal tetanus elimination.

The "Monthly Health Days" are implemented in remote rural settings where the communities themselves decide on a day and time each month when a team from district level can vaccinate children and childbearing women and also offer other basic preventive medicine and basic treatment for illnesses.

The national EPI programme was recently bolstered by the introduction of the DPT-HepB vaccine (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B). Mozambique is a ([GAVI](#)) recipient country for the DPT-HepB vaccine, supplies and financing for operational costs, worth US\$4 million a year. However, GAVI will phase out its support to Mozambique by the end of 2005.

Around 68% of children aged 6-59 months suffer from Vitamin A deficiency, a condition that can cause blindness and can weaken the immune system, increasing the risk of contracting a fatal illness. After Mozambique introduced Vitamin A supplementation as a routine activity in 2002, coverage with at least one dose increased

from 44% in 2003 to 57% in 2004.

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