

Measles biggest killer of under-fives

Contributed by Donna Collins
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MEASLES, which infected close to 230 children country-wide last year with five from the Erongo Region, continues to be the biggest killer of under-five children.

This was said here by Erongo Regional Governor Samuel Nuuyoma when he launched the region's Polio and Measles Immunisation Campaign at Tamariskia Clinic in Swakopmund.

The region's campaign coincided with the national campaign that started on Tuesday this week and will run until June 19. Health teams will spread out across the country vaccinating each and every child aged from 0 – 5 years. The children will be given oral Polio drops whilst those from nine months to five years will receive measles vaccination as well as vitamin A supplements.

He said that Namibian children receive measles vaccine as a routine immunisation when they are nine months old, but the importance of the second measles vaccination opportunity is important because it boosts immunity.

Nuuyoma said that these campaigns require a sustained political commitment, resources and personnel which are usually done every three to four years to ensure children born after the last campaign are vaccinated before any possible outbreak.

The Governor called upon everyone to render assistance in order to make this campaign a huge success by spreading the message to all households and ensuring that children are immunised against measles, polio and receive vitamin A supplements.

“We want everyone to provide assistance during the national campaign to bring those who have no transport to the immunisation points. Farm owners and the community – assist the teams where possible so they can do their job efficiently,” he said.

He called on fathers, mothers and caretakers of children to participate in this event by bringing their children to the vaccination points at hospitals, clinics, churches, shops and schools.

“In the long run the success of these activities will depend on the efforts of each individual, caretaker, village head, health worker, community and region,” Nuuyoma explained.

The Governor also referred to polio as a highly contagious disease, with again more than three quarters of its victims children under five years old.

“Polio knows no boundaries and there is no cure, therefore eradicating it is everyone's business.

“Namibia already witnessed a setback caused by a polio outbreak in 2006 after being polio free for almost 10 years, so we must continue to immunise because as long as poliovirus is present somewhere, it is a threat everywhere.”

Previous experiences have demonstrated that national immunisation days are one of the most effective strategies in the elimination of diseases such as polio and measles, as worldwide it is estimated that nearly 11 million children in the sub-Saharan Africa die before they reach the age of five mostly from preventable causes.