



IMMUNIZATION SENSITIZATION MESSAGES TAKE ROOT IN THE COMMUNITIES

As the countdown towards the polio eradication from Uganda and across the globe continues; there are signs indicating the possibility of achieving the complete eradication and containment of all wild and sabin polioviruses given some of the community voices captured. This was during the second phase of the mass polio campaign that took place from 1st – 3rd April, 2016. Similar to the first campaign, RICE-WN also supported Arua District by availing a Vehicle to ease supervision and coordination of the activity and staff to monitor the exercise in Arivu Sub County.

When asked about how she came to learn about the campaign, Ajikia Joyce, a mother of five aged 35years in Adua village Eceko parish, who brought her children for immunization against polio had this to say; “I learned about the mass polio immunization campaign from the VHTs, LCs, the Parish chiefs and the Health Assistant of Arivu sub-county as well as the Nurses from Bondo Health Centre III.” She continued to say that ever since she became a mother, she has been immunizing her children against polio and other communicable diseases hence her children have never caught any of these diseases. According to her, adherence to immunization schedules has saved her unnecessary Hospital visits, time wastage, and psychological trauma of seeing a paralyzed or lame or crippled child at home let alone in the neighborhood.

Joyce attributed her knowledge and appreciation of immunization to the training received from the health workers during Antenatal Care and routine immunization visits.

Based on her positive attitude towards immunization, she has also been able to enlighten other women in her neighborhood about the importance of immunization. “To affirm my point, you saw how my colleagues and I rushed from our gardens to your team just to immunize our children against polio. Remember this is a busy planting season for annual crops where one need not waste time but just concentrate on garden work seriously.”

Joyce’s experience implies that with a concerted effort by the different stakeholders, right from the Village level up to the Ministry in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, it is possible to transform all negative beliefs about immunization through continuous sensitizations into positives and achieve a Polio free Uganda by 2018.

This phase of the campaign saw the team immunize a total of 5841 children; surpassing the earlier total of 5423.



Figure 1: A health worker immunizing children near the garden where Joyce and the other mothers were working



Figure 2: A Staff of RICE-WN (squatting) interviewing Joyce about her experience with immunization



Figure 3: A child being immunized by the roadside as the team was moving



Figure 4: Nursery school children being immunized during the campaign