

# THE CORE GROUP PARTNERS PROJECT ETHIOPIA SECRETARIAT QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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## **Cross-border coordination between Ethiopia and Kenya to harmonize interventions in the bordering areas**

CGPP Ethiopia organized a cross-border coordination meeting between Ethiopia and Kenya held in Hawassa Town of Ethiopia on July 18 – 19, 2023. The goal of the meeting was to reinforce the cross-border collaboration of the two countries in addressing the common implementation issues in the hard-to-reach areas. The meeting was attended by CGPP Ethiopia and Kenya representatives, human and animal health surveillance experts from Marsabit, Wajir, Turkana, and Mandera Counties in the Kenya side and Dawa zone, Moyale woreda, and Liban Zone and Dollo Ado woreda in Somali region and Borena Zone and Moyale woreda in Oromiya region from the Ethiopian side. Furthermore, from Ethiopia, experts from the Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute, and the Ministry of Agriculture attended. The meeting was attended by 41 people, and 16 of them were from Kenya.

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## »» EDITORIAL

### Human papillomavirus vaccination: CGPP's prospect to support women's cervical cancer prevention

BY FILIMONA BISLAT (MD, MPH),  
CGPP SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR AND SENIOR REGIONAL TECHNICAL ADVISOR

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a frequent sexually transmitted infection globally. Both men and women have a 50% chance of infection at least once in their lifetimes. The infection rate among women with normal cytology is between 11% and 12%, with sub-Saharan Africa having the highest rates (24%), followed by Eastern Europe (21%), and Latin America (16%). The probability of developing high-risk HPV is increased by factors including early sexual activity, especially before the age of 18, and having several sexual partners.

HPV is a typical sexually transmitted disease in Ethiopia. According to variables including age, geography, and socioeconomic status, HPV prevalence varies. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that between the ages of 15 and 49, approximately 24.4% of Ethiopian women have HPV.

To address this, Ethiopia included the HPV vaccination in its national immunization program in 2018. The vaccination is primarily intended for 14-year-old girls and is intended to prevent cervical cancer. Within Ethiopia, the coverage rate may range across various districts and areas. Two doses of the vaccination are given, with the second dosage being given six months following the first. The vaccine is often distributed via school-based vaccination programs.

Cervical cancer, the biggest cause of cancer-related mortality among Ethiopian women, can be prevented with HPV vaccination. Girls who receive the vaccine at a young age have a considerably lower chance of later acquiring cervical cancer. It primarily affects a woman's cervix, the entrance to the uterus. Almost all cases of cervical cancer (99%) are linked to high-risk HPV infection, a virus commonly transmitted through sexual contact. HPV vaccination is an effective primary approach to prevent cervical cancer.

Ethiopian women face numerous cultural burdens and economic discrimination, leaving them susceptible to a range of diseases. Among Ethiopian women, cervical cancer is the second most prevalent form of cancer and boasts the highest mortality rate. However, this can be prevented through vaccination, and young girls will not suffer from cervical cancer in their future lives. While the primary focus of CGPP is not the HPV vaccination, it can still offer support for relevant activities via the existing polio project, considering the potential future implications. During the campaign, CGPP should expand its efforts to raise awareness among schoolgirls, utilizing community volunteers' effective social mobilization to reach families and communities through targeted IEC interventions that encourage community participation. Technical assistance from national and field-level staff, as well as the transportation of vaccines, can be provided to support these endeavors.

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## THE INFECTION RATE OF HPV

sub-Saharan Africa having the highest rates (24%), followed by Eastern Europe (21%), and Latin America (16%).

# VOLUNTEERING: Dedicating time to fostering a better future

by **Mekit Ketema, CGPP/Amref**

Tamiru Gande is 35 years old, a father of two children living in the South Omo Zone. He received his diploma in animal health in 2022. Tamiru has been serving as a CGPP community volunteer in one of the Amref implementations areas, Malle district for the past four years. After receiving his diploma, it was a challenge for Tamiru to get a job. Due to that, he had a lot of time, so he decided to benefit himself and support his community. Tamiru said “After graduation, I was unable to get recruited. So that, I have a lot of free time on my hands, I decided to dedicate my time to something valuable i.e. serving the community.”



**Tamiru (right) with a health extension worker, kebele leader, and another CV during a house-to-house visit**

Volunteering gave Tamiru a better understanding of immunization and vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs) including COVID-19. He said that, after being trained by Amref at the Woreda Health Center on immunization, the COVID-19 pandemic, community-based surveillance (CBS), VDPs, and priority zoonotic diseases (PZDs), he learned to look at things from a new angle, he said: “The training and volunteering make me valuable, and helps me bring a real impact and be part of a positive change in my community.”

After the training, Tamiru became an active role player in the CGPP/Amref COVID-19 prevention activities; play as a role model by taking full doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and searching for cases of VPDs and PZDs. Tamiru is working closely with the health extension workers, youth association leaders, and health development armies on human and animal health activities in his community.

Mekit Ketema, who is serving as a CGPP/Amref field officer said that “during my supportive supervision to the health facility in Malle District the health extension workers as well as the community members testified that Tamiru’s contribution in changing the behaviors of the community towards immunization and COVID-19 is enormous. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, he played a great role in breaking wrong perceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine. They also appreciated his selfless dedication to supporting the community. Mekit added “I admired Tamiru’s aspiration that having a diploma in animal health and having no permanent job doesn’t prevent him from serving the community as a community volunteer.”

# POLIO CORNER

## THE LATEST ON THE BATTLE TO ERADICATE POLIO

Summary of AFP Surveillance indicators by Region , Ethiopia Jan 01 – Oct 06, 2023												
Regions	Expect ed Cases (2023)	Report ed (this period 2023)	Reporte d (same period 2022)	Reporte d this Week	NP- AFP Rate (annua lized) 2023	NP-AFP Rate (annua lized) 2022	Stool Adequac y (%)	Stool Cond. (%)	NPENT (%)	Compati bles	VDPV Cases	WPV Cases
A ABABA	21	29	23	2	3.6	3	90	96	7.1	0	0	0
AFAR	21	13	9	1	1.6	1.1	85	100	8.3	0	0	0
AMHARA	211	172	254	2	2.1	3.2	96	100	8.3	0	0	0
B/GUMUZ	11	14	22	0	3.3	5.2	100	100	0.0	0	0	0
D/DAWA	4	4	6	0	2.6	3.9	75	100	0.0	0	0	0
GAMBELLA	8	6	7	0	2.0	2.6	67	100	0.0	0	0	0
HARERI	2	0	3	0	0	3.9	0	0	0	0	0	0
OROMIA	436	445	436	6	2.7	2.7	95	98	8.0	0	0	0
Sidama	60	59	61	0	2.6	2.8	95	100	5.0	0	0	0
SNNPR	147	141	215	1	2.5	4	95	96	7.9	0	0	0
SOMALI	69	85	89	3	3.2	3.4	96	98	15.7	0	0	0
South West	36	58	66	1	4.2	4.8	97	100	3.6	0	0	0
TIGRAY	53	38	2	0	1.9	0.1	97	100	18.9	0	0	0
<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>1079</b>	<b>1064</b>	<b>1193</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

week 40, 2023



### MOH holds the EPI partners' performance review meeting: CGPP takes part in it

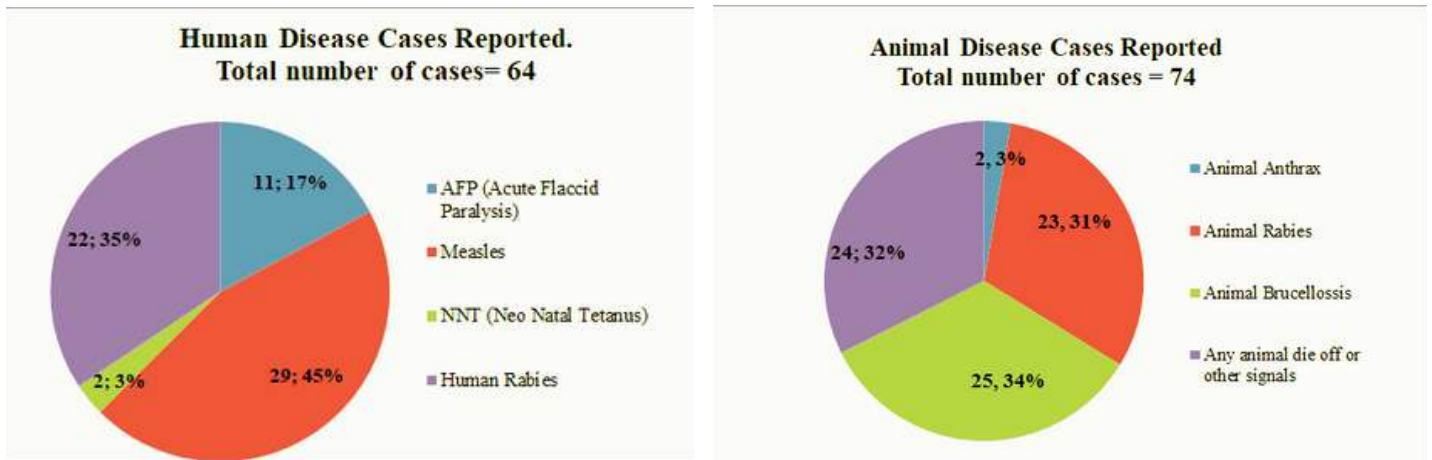
The Ministry of Health Ethiopia (MOH) organized the annual EPI partners performance review meeting on July 25 – 26, 2023. The CGPP Secretariat Deputy Director Legesse Kidane and Gavi project coordinator Dr. Melaku Tsehay participated. At the review meeting, the CGPP key progress report was presented by Legesse. CGPP covered hall rent, refreshments, and lunch expenses for the review meeting.



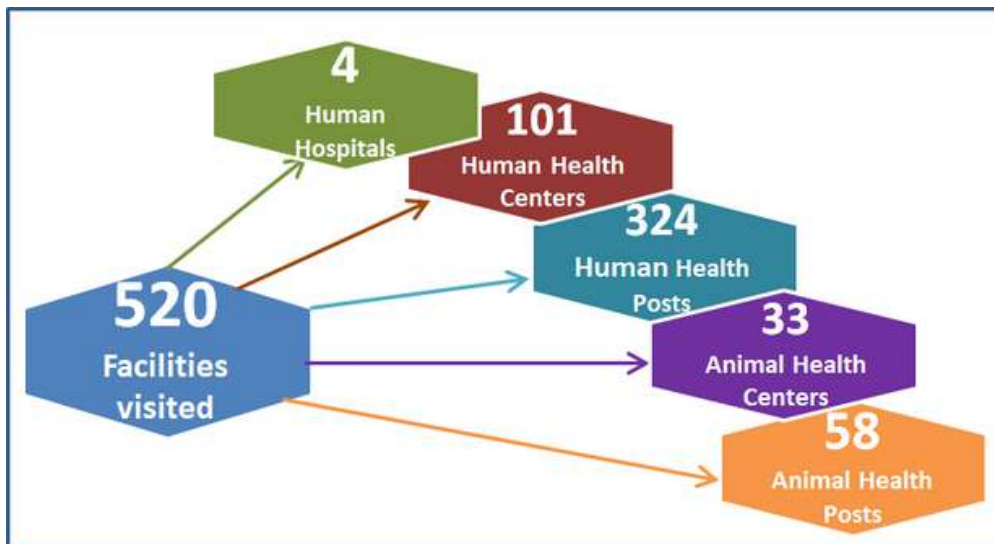
participants of the MOH Arm

# SURVEILLANCE AND SUPERVISION UPDATES

Human and Animal Disease Cases Reported through ODK from CGPP implementation Areas (July 1 to September 30, 2023)



Facility-level supportive supervision conducted by CGPP Secretariat and implementing partners (July 1 to September 30, 2023)



Zero-dose children identified



Geospatial map of children with zero-dose

# LESSON LEARNED: ZERO-DOSE INITIATIVE BY CGPP ETHIOPIA

Sr. Alemnesh Teka, Program Officer, CGPP Ethiopia

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 18 million children worldwide have not received any vaccination doses. Ethiopia is one of the countries with a high number of zero-dose children. In response, the CGPP launched the Zero Dose initiative in January 2023 to identify and map regions with a significant number of unvaccinated children. The program aims to improve immunization coverage through community-based surveillance in six regions of Ethiopia, covering 14 zones and 69 woredas.

## PROCESS OF INTERVENTION

The zero-dose initiative used referral slip cards and a color-coding system to identify community volunteers who made referrals for pregnant mothers, newborns, and vaccine defaulters. Locally made 'tickler box' served as a repository for the referral slips. Implementing partners were oriented on the initiative and tasked with educating others. Community volunteers registered zero-dose children through house-to-house visits, and project officers gathered information using a web-based system. Monthly review meetings and joint supervision were conducted, and data collected using ODK was important for the initiative.

Data were collected by using two WHO data quality assessment tools (Verification Factor and quality index) at the Woreda health office and health facilities levels through a desk review of immunization data reported in the past 6 months following core indicators of Measles and Penta 3. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0 and the WHO accuracy ratio and quality index analysis dashboard.

## RESULTS

As of January 9th, 2023, the zero-dose initiative has identified a total of 2294 children who have not received any vaccinations. Out of 2294 unvaccinated children, half were identified by Community Volunteers/Health Development Army Leaders (CVs/HDALs) and the other half by Health Extension Workers (HEWs). Most of these children are male and come from the Somalia and Benishangul Gumuz regions.



*Geospatial map of zero-dose children identified*

# LESSON LEARNED: ZERO-DOSE INITIATIVE BY CGPP ETHIOPIA

Sr. Alemnesh Teka, Program Officer, CGPP Ethiopia

## RESULTS

The main reasons for not receiving vaccinations include the lack of health facilities and outreach services and a lack of awareness about the importance of vaccination. Home deliveries are more common than deliveries at health facilities. Female CVs were more involved in identifying unvaccinated children. Regular visits by CVs/HDALs to caretakers are not common. The majority of mothers are housewives, and most have lived in the area for over 25 years. While most communities have access to nearby health facilities, the quality of roads may hinder some mothers from reaching vaccination sites.

## LESSON LEARNED

The zero-dose initiative aimed to improve immunization coverage by identifying and mapping areas with high numbers of zero-dose and under-immunized children. Over 3,700 zero-dose children were vaccinated, but network irregularities hindered registration through the ODK system. Tailored mechanisms are needed to increase the demand for immunization, especially in stagnant communities and among visitors. It is important to examine the underlying causes of high zero-dose rates and involve communities in finding solutions. Data analytics, such as the ODK, can provide real-time insights and validate community-led initiatives. A holistic and sustainable approach is necessary to effectively address the issue of zero-dose locations.

## CONCLUSION

The CGPP data collected through ODK revealed a high proportion of zero-dose children in implementation areas. Lack of awareness, limited access to health workers, and absence of health facilities are the main contributors to this issue. Empowering communities through knowledge-based vaccination sessions and supporting health workers is crucial. CGPP will intensify efforts to address this problem and conduct further investigations into root causes. The goal is to achieve zero tolerance for zero-dose children by expanding home visits and addressing underlying issues.

*Thank you for your contribution*

*Your contribution to this newsletter is highly appreciated. Without your valuable contribution, it is hard to reach our audiences with messages that are worth reading. We need to collaborate and exert more efforts together.*

## Cross-border coordination between Ethiopia and Kenya to harmonize interventions in the bordering areas

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Discussed at the meeting were harmonization and strengthening the cross-border coordination mechanism between the two countries, improving prevention of cross-border disease transmission, and harmonizing disease surveillance. At the end of the coordination meeting, participants reached a consensus on the need to develop terms of reference for cross-border collaboration, establish standardized data reporting, sharing, and communication mechanisms for cross-border

vaccination, including the administration sectors during the cross-border collaboration meeting, initiate research on community perception of VPDs and PZDs and initiate the cross-border communication between bordering districts of the two countries.

## CGPP organizes its annual review and planning meeting, and staff retreat programs

CGPP secretariat organized the CGPP partners' Annual Review and Planning (ARPM) meeting from August 10 to 12/2023 in Oromiya region Adama town. Sixty CGPP secretariat staff and zonal, regional, and national level technical and finance staff from the government and implementing partners' offices participated in the ARPM. At the event, CGPP partners presented their nine-month progress update and prepared the FY2024 Polio and GHSA activities and budget plan.



*The CGPP ARPM in progress*

Moreover, the CGPP secretariat organized its staff annual retreat program from August 28 to Sep 1/2023 in Bishoftu town of Oromia Region and all the secretariat staff attended the staff retreat program. At the retreat, the CGPP partners' FY2024 activities and budget plans were reviewed, orientation was given on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), updates were given on USAID financial regulation and potential research areas were discussed.



*Group picture of CGPP secretariat staff at the retreat*