

Tuesday, November 23, 1965

OFFICE OF WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY -- Austin, Texas

Plans for campaigns to protect 105 million people from smallpox and measles in 18 African countries were announced by the White House.

The plans result from President Johnson's pledge of May 18, 1965; "This government is ready to work with other interested countries to see to it that smallpox is a thing of the past by 1975."

AID and the PHS staff are beginning consultations with African and WHO officials on plans for the campaign, its acceptability to African countries and their willingness to contribute to the program.

The smallpox eradication program is being designed to fit within plans of the World Health Organization (WHO) to eradicate smallpox throughout Africa and the rest of the world within 10 years.

The eradication program would help prevent reintroduction of smallpox into the United States and other smallpox-free countries. The smallpox activity would run concurrently with a measles control program in the same area.

The AID contributions would consist of technical assistance, vaccines, and jet injectors, which can inoculate 1,000 persons an hour. Vehicles, field supplies, freezers, and refrigerating equipment would also be provided under the AID plan.

Local costs and operational personnel would be supplied by the individual countries cooperating in the program.

Operational responsibility for the project would be assumed by the U.S. Public Health Service in cooperation with AID.

A measles control program has already been implemented by AID in 11 African countries, all of which are included in the 18 to be covered in the smallpox project. The 18 countries are Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Dahomey, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, ~~of~~ Togo and Upper Volta.

Africa is one of the world's major areas of smallpox incidence. Approximately 25% of those stricken by the disease there become fatalities. According to WHO, the 18 African countries are among the 45 countries that are the principal sources from which smallpox infections are spread to other parts of the world..

Measles is also one of the principal causes of death and disability in African children. A death rate of 20% is not unusual and rates have run as high as 50%. In the area concerned, around 21 million children under the age of 6 are susceptible to measles.

End of White House release