



WHO supports GHS' malaria vaccine programme

BY ABIGAIL ANNOH

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) yesterday provided logistical support to the Ghana Health Service (GHS) for the implementation of the Malaria Vaccine Introduction Programme (MVIP) in the country.

The programme is estimated at GH¢1,130,000, and WHO has released two 4x4 pickup vehicles, 39 motorcycles and 39 desk top computers to accelerate data compilation and analysis, supervision and follow-ups on the programme.

Speaking at the handing over ceremony, the Director-General of GHS, Dr Anthony Nsiah-Asare, said that the new malaria vaccine was safe, registered and had been approved by WHO for use.

He said various precautionary steps would be taken to ensure that children who received the vaccines were monitored for possible reactions, adding that "the vaccine is going to reduce the burden of malaria in the country."

Dr Nsiah-Asare indicated that the vaccine was not replacing any malaria control interventions in the country, but a complement to existing ones.



The vehicles and motorcycles presented

ed, and we are hopeful that we shall reduce the malaria fatality which is about 1.6 per cent now to about zero per cent," he stated.

Dr Owen Kaluwa, the WHO Country Representative, said the introduction of the malaria vaccine had started well with very high acceptance rates in all the six regions

and other stakeholders involved in the programme at the districts, regional and national levels.

Dr Kaluwa said "You are indeed committed to a good cause aimed at protecting our children from one of the oldest and most devastating diseases in human history,

the WHO alongside two other African countries; Kenya and Malawi, to implement the world's first ever RTS,S /AS01 malaria vaccine.

It followed a national response in 2016 to the health organisation's call on the various ministries of health worldwide to express interest in the MVIP, leading to a clinical trial of the vaccine in two research centres in Ghana; Agogo and Kintampo in the Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions respectively.

Following a completion of relevant trials, a pilot of the vaccine is being undertaken in 33 districts in the country for children aged between six months and two years.

Available statistics show that four per cent of the world's total malaria cases in 2017 were from Ghana and was among the top 20 countries with the disease prevalence in the same year globally.

Of the nearly 600,000 annual deaths caused by malaria across the globe, about 90 per cent of the cases are in sub-Saharan Africa with 83 per cent of the figure being children under the age of five.

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites transmitted through the bite of an infective female anopheles mosquito.

Its symptoms may include fever, headaches, a sensation of cold with shivering,