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AFRICA/SOUTH SUDAN - Alarm measles for 10 counties in the Country

Yirol (Agenzia Fides) - A serious outbreak of measles is endangering the lives of many children in Yirol, a town on the southern border of the newborn South Sudan. There are 10 counties throughout the Country that have epidemic outbreaks, in addition to the refugee camp in Maban. In each of these there is an ongoing vaccination campaign for children under 5 years of age. The most affected are young children under 9 months. In Yirol the campaign began in past days with the coordination of the NGO Doctors with Africa Cuamm (CUAMM), which has been active in the County hospital since 2006, and covers all 7 units. In the government hospital there have been over 200 cases since the beginning of the year, but the situation is getting worse also due to the arrival of the rainy season. Most do not arrive at the hospital. The Dinka, the semi-nomadic tribe that lives in the area in fact consider measles a disease that can be treated at home with traditional infusion. Moreover, the rains bring mosquitoes and malaria. Within a month, the two epidemics may coincide and the situation will be unmanageable. In 2012, more than 35 thousand outpatient visits, 738 deliveries, 1,089 prenatal visits and more than 3,500 pediatric hospitalizations were carried out. The program of mobile clinics to reach the more peripheral areas of the county has guaranteed more than 15 thousand vaccinations, 1,463 prenatal visits and 1,218 pediatric visits. The goal is to reach 25,000 vaccinated children to be able to cover the entire population of children under 5 in the County of Yirol West. This intervention started in South Sudan in 2006, with the renovation and reopening of Yirol hospital in the Lakes State, CUAMM then expanded the range also intervening in the hospital in Liu, in Western Equatoria. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 01/07/2013)

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