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**Topic:** Community health and nutrition programs

**Title:** Community Based Vitamin A Supplementation Pilot for Improved Coverage in Buhera and Mutasa Districts, Zimbabwe

**Presentation Type:** Oral

Annually, Zimbabwe loses nearly US\$24 million in GDP to vitamin and mineral deficiencies. Over one-third of preschool aged children and 1 in 5 pregnant women are deficient in vitamin A. Supplementation of young children and dietary diversification can eliminate this deficiency. Vitamin A supplementation for children 6 to 59 months was launched in 2001. The programme is currently implemented at health facility level. However, Low coverage for routine Vitamin A supplementation (less than 20%) has been reported especially in children 12 to 59 months at most health facilities. A community based approach to use community based Village Health Workers (VHW) was piloted in two districts (Buhera and Mutasa) of Manicaland province, Zimbabwe. In both districts, 543 VHW out of the planned 557 VHW were trained and implemented the programme with support from the health facilities. VHW were given all the necessary programme supplies including Vitamin A capsules, Scissors, tally sheets and registers as well as monthly return forms. As a result of this pilot, Vitamin A coverage in children 12 to 59 months significantly increased in Buhera and Mutasa from 18% to 50.8% and 23% to 66% respectively. The results of the pilot showed that with adequate planning and implementation, community based Vitamin A supplementation using VHWs can be implemented successfully