

The Bottom Line

An investment in Scouting is an Investment in the Future

www.scout.org



“Hi, I’m a Scout ...”



“Hi, my name’s Isa. I’m a Scout”, says the smiling, teenage girl to the woman with her young daughter wrapped around her back. A large, plastic blue bowl is balanced on her head, to be filled with goods from the market. “Have you heard about polio? Do you know that this weekend all Angolan children under 5 years old are being vaccinated for free against polio?”

The woman looks at her quizzically. “Who are you?”, she says. “My name’s Isa. I’m a Scout and I want to tell you how to make sure your baby grows up healthy.” It’s Saturday morning, 22 June 2002. The bustling Sao Paulo market in Luanda is not the easiest place to have a conversation. It’s hot, dusty and crowds of people are talking, bartering and making their way along the narrow rows of market women sitting on the ground, selling their vegetables, chickens, dried fish, second-hand clothes, soap, charcoal, knives, lamps, watches, whiskey – you name it, you can find it in the market.

The woman has taken the large bowl off her head and sits down on the ground and readjusts her daughter to her side. A few curious women gather behind the woman to listen in as Isa kneels down to explain. “Polio is a disease that can cripple your child”, says Isa patiently. “But, if she gets 2 drops in her mouth this weekend and again in July and August, she’ll be protected against polio for life”.

“Oh, this disease making people crippled, you mean? I don’t want my baby to have that”, says the mother, squinting in the bright sunlight. “How much is it?”

“It’s free!”, says Isa. “We’re doing vaccinations all weekend at people’s houses. Be sure you’re at home tomorrow morning with your child and the vaccinators will come and give your baby the drops to protect her against polio.”

“You’re sure it’s free?”, the woman says. “There’s not much free in this world.”

“Absolutely, Mae (mother) – just stay at home tomorrow morning until the vaccinators come, alright? I promise you the vaccines are free.”

“Well, okay. I’ll wait for them tomorrow. Thanks for the information”, she says, standing and wrapping her daughter to her back. She adjusts the bowl on her head, “Now, I have to buy some food for my family.”

Isabel who is 18 years of age, is accompanied on her social mobilisation Needs to Know About Polio & How to Prevent It”. Usually, after we’ve left, the women talk amongst themselves and the word passes quickly, especially here in the market. Sometimes, the women that can read gather those that can’t read around them and explain to them what the pamphlet says.”

Carlos is 12 years old and is the youngest of this group of four Scout social mobilizers. But he and the others have had Scout social mobilisation training, supported by UNICEF, which has taught him about polio and how to talk to people about it. He’s determined to make every contact convincing.

(continued)



World Scout Foundation
Fondation du Scoutisme Mondial

continued ...



"Hi, I'm a Scout ..."



Squatting down beside a woman protected from the sun by an old, faded, green umbrella, he begins to speak. She listens patiently and attentively and when he's done – she smiles and pats him on the cheek. "You're a good boy", she says. "But you don't need to tell me – my child was vaccinated this morning before I came to the market. Now, go and tell the other women – maybe they don't know."

For the first time in years, the signing of the cease-fire agreement in April 2002 has opened up areas throughout Angola previously inaccessible for polio NID campaigns due to conflict. This weekend, 30,000 volunteers, including vaccinators, Scout mobilizers, traditional leaders and others will be ensuring that hundreds of

The World Scout Foundation helps the growth and development of Scouting worldwide by providing the financial support for the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

Some priorities include: Improving child health. Helping marginalized youth. Actively protecting nature and the environment. Assisting in the development of Scouting in newly emerging countries. Helping Scouts address community needs in developing and industrialized countries.

thousands of children in newly accessible areas and in quartering & family areas in Angola will be vaccinated – children who for years have been unreachable. To ensure that these newly reachable children – and every Angolan child under 5 is reached – the campaign focuses on a door-to-door vaccination strategy.

Carlos smiles, gets up and makes a move to join up with Isa, who's met some resistance. "No, no, no. No vaccines! I give my baby traditional medicine – that's enough!", says the woman to Isa. She also has a baby wrapped around her back. Isa is still smiling and is determined not to give up. "But, Mae – he needs the vaccines to stop him from getting polio ... it will make him strong ... "

"No, no! Only traditional medicine!" Just then, a young man passes by on crutches, his left leg withered and hanging in the air. "You see, he didn't take the traditional medicine", the woman whispers after he's gone by. Again, a small crowd of women has gathered around Isa and they join in to support her. Laughing and smiling, they all noisily explain to the woman that the drops will help her child, not hurt him. "My baby got the drops this morning", says one. "Listen to us – we're trying to help your baby!", says another. "The Girl Scout is right – the vaccines are what will work", says a third. But all the chatter seems to make the woman seem even more defensive about her position.

Then Carlos, who's been listening in and is by far the smallest of the group, joins in. He touches the woman on the

elbow. She looks down at him sternly. "Mae", he says with a friendly, determined voice, looking straight up into her eyes. "Maybe you could give your baby both the traditional medicine and the drops ... they don't cost anything ..."

Everyone pauses and looks at Carlos. He keeps looking straight into the woman's eyes ... then raises his eyebrows and shrugs his shoulders slightly. She continues to look at him, then after a few moments, looks around at the others who are silently waiting for her reaction. Then she smiles and says proudly, "I've just decided to make sure my baby gets both the traditional medicine and the drops. Then he'll be even stronger!" She turns and starts to make her way through the crowd, her dignity intact.

"Good work, Carlos!" says Isa, giving the Ministry of Health, along with cold chain equipment.

Other partners supporting the Ministry of Health's polio NIDs include: WHO, Rotary International, USAID, CDC-Atlanta and CORE, amongst others. Financial support is also provided by the Governments of the United Kingdom, Japan, United States, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Portugal, the Netherlands and private sector companies. Working together, this coalition is making a tremendous joint effort to interrupt transmission of the wild polio-virus in Angola by the end of 2002 and to finally eradicate polio from Angola by 2005.

Text/Photos: Kent Page, Communication Officer, UNICEF Angola.

World Scout Foundation

Geneva, Switzerland Tel: (+41 22) 705 10 10 Fax: (+41 22) 705 10 99
worldfoundation@world.scout.org www.scout.org