

October 2009

Global Polio Eradication Initiative

Horn of Africa: Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia

Situation analysis

- The Horn of Africa is affected by a persistent outbreak, where circulation of imported virus has persisted for >12 months. In 2008, wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) reappeared in the border area of southern Sudan and Ethiopia. This outbreak spread to Kenya, Uganda and northern Sudan in 2009.
- A rigorous immunization response was undertaken: in 2009 to date, Sudan has completed nine Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs), Kenya seven and Uganda six.
- It was crucial that the spread of polio from the outbreak's epicentre in southern Sudan to northern Sudan (Khartoum and Port Sudan) was quickly halted, as it was from this area that, from 2004 to 2006, polio spread to re-infect several countries including Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Yemen and Indonesia, causing outbreaks resulting in more than 1,200 cases and over US\$ 150 million in international emergency outbreak response costs. The World Health Organization (WHO) notified its Member States of this risk through the International Health Regulations (2005) and assisted the countries in undertaking a swift and thorough immunization response, immunizing 6.6 million children in February, March, April and May. No further spread has been reported.
- While the number of polio cases in **Sudan** has fallen dramatically in recent months, quality issues clearly persist in immunization activities, and until a longer period of surveillance data is available, southern Sudan should continue to be regarded as an active outbreak area.
- When **Kenya** first reported polio this year, the International Outbreak Response Guidelines were not fully implemented. Fixed-post vaccination points were set up instead of the recommended mass house-to-house immunization campaigns and polio transmission continued. This situation was rectified in July, with the infected Turkana districts and surrounding districts in the Rift Valley Province conducting two rounds of Short-Interval Additional Dose (SIAD) immunization activities. A subsequent round of two SIADs will be conducted on 14-18 and 21-25 October, meaning this area will have received four rounds of vaccine since the last case was reported on 30 July. If, as expected, these rounds are high-quality house-to-house campaigns, this response should be sufficient to stop transmission.
- While **Ethiopia** has not reported any polio in 2009, surveillance gaps in the difficult-to-access Gambella region (the cross-border area with southern Sudan), along with doubts over operational quality during immunization activities, mean that undetected circulation can not be ruled out. Gambella is undertaking an SIA from 22-26 October.

KEY FACTS

- Sudan has experienced a persistent outbreak of wild poliovirus, which in 2009 spread into Kenya (first case since 2006) and Uganda (first case since 1996).
- In 2009, Sudan has recorded 45 cases of wild poliovirus, Kenya 18 cases and Uganda 8 (as of 6 October). The epicentre of the outbreak, and from which international spread originates, is southern Sudan.
- Following concerted outbreak response activities, the outbreaks appear to be waning, with Kenya's last case reported on 30 July, Sudan on 27 June and Uganda on 10 May.
- The quality of immunization activities and surveillance levels in southern Sudan must improve to ensure wild poliovirus circulation is halted.

Key challenges

- In southern Sudan, the logistical difficulties of reaching every child in this difficult-to-reach terrain have marred the quality of outbreak response efforts, with limited access during the wet season and a shortage of skilled staff. However, Sudan has previously stopped polio transmission throughout the country and also halted an outbreak in 2004-2005. Experience shows that where polio transmission has been stopped before, it can be stopped again.

Solutions

- In southern Sudan, urgent and systematic improvements are required in campaign quality (in terms of operations, training of personnel, planning and supervision) and in capacity for service delivery (trucks, boats, protective rain gear).
- Comprehensive political support must be harnessed. To this end, the President of the Government of Southern Sudan, His Excellency General Salva Kiir Mayardit, has issued a personal directive to all state governors, requesting they take specific action, including:
 - engaging all ministries of their state governments to ensure a cross-sectoral approach;
 - securing the support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active on the ground, as well as the support of traditional and religious leaders; and,
 - instructing all County and Payam Executive Officers (district heads) to personally oversee the quality of outbreak operations in their areas.
- Countries across the Horn of Africa must strengthen disease surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis (AFP), in order to rapidly detect any poliovirus importations and facilitate a rapid response. Countries should also continue to boost routine immunization coverage against polio to minimize the consequences of any introduction.

Country	Most recent case	Most recent campaigns	# of campaigns, 2009
Sudan	27 June 2009	23 September 2009	9
Kenya	30 July 2009	19 September 2009	7
Uganda	10 May 2009	15 August 2009	6
Ethiopia	27 April 2008	20 July 2009	5

Wild Poliovirus Type 1 cases

(Rolling 12 months - 07 Oct 2008 – 06 Oct 2009)

