

October 2009

Global Polio Eradication Initiative

## West Africa outbreak response

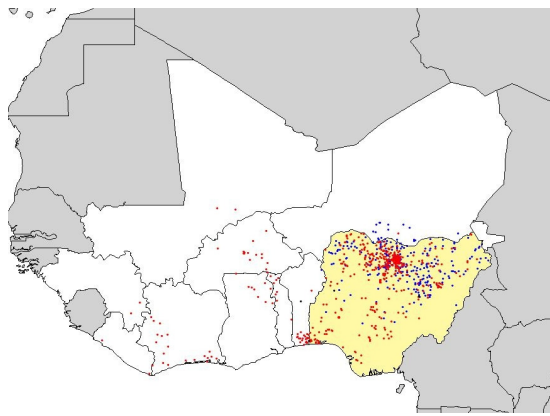
### Situation analysis

- Since the second half of 2008, a polio outbreak originating in northern Nigeria has been spreading in west Africa.
- In 2009, 108 polio cases have been confirmed from nine countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo.
- Emergency outbreak response activities are continuing. On 2-5 October, a synchronized cross-border immunization campaign will be conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- These activities follow similar campaigns in February/March, May/June and July/August.

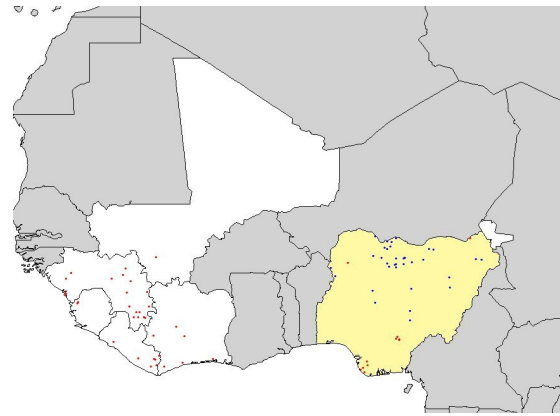
### KEY FACTS

- West Africa is experiencing a polio outbreak originating in northern Nigeria.
- In 2009, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo have been affected. 108 cases have been reported from these countries.
- Synchronized, multi-country immunization campaigns across the region are ongoing. This response strategy successfully stopped a similar outbreak in the region in 2004-2005.

Country	Target population, children <5 years	Vaccinators	OPV doses
Benin	2.8 million	15,500	3.4 million
Burkina Faso	4.5 million	25,000	5.4 million
Côte d'Ivoire	5.8 million	32,200	7.0 million
Guinea	2.1 million	11,600	2.6 million
Liberia	760,000	4,200	920,000
Mali	4.5 million	25,000	5.4 million
Niger	4.2 million	23,000	5 million
Sierra Leone	970,000	5,400	1.2 million
Togo	1.5 million	8,300	1.8 million
<b>Total</b>	<b>27.13 million</b>	<b>150,200</b>	<b>32.72 million</b>



**First wave of outbreak:  
June 2008 - May 2009**



**Second wave of outbreak:  
Since June 2009**

## Background

- From 2003-2005, a polio outbreak originating in northern Nigeria spread across west Africa, causing outbreaks resulting in 159 cases. A series of six synchronized multi-country campaigns conducted across west Africa in 2004 and 2005 succeeded in stopping these outbreaks.
- Experience since then has clearly shown that west Africa will remain at high-risk of recurrent spread of polio, until endemic transmission of the polio in Nigeria has been interrupted.
- In 2006, international outbreak response guidelines were adopted by the World Health Assembly, based largely on the experience from 2003-2005. Full and rapid implementation of these outbreak response guidelines have been shown to markedly reduce the scale of outbreaks (in terms of time, geographic spread and number of associated cases).

## Impact of current response in west Africa

- The outbreak in west Africa has effectively occurred in two waves, the first affecting Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Togo in mid-2008/early 2009; and, the second affecting Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- While it is too early to assess the full impact of outbreak response so far, the first wave of the outbreak is showing signs of stopping. The most recent case occurring in this block of countries had onset of paralysis in May (Burkina Faso; an August case in Mali is currently under investigation to determine its origin).
- The countries affected by the second wave continue to experience significant transmission, and transmission is likely to continue through the third quarter of 2009.

Country	Most recent polio case	Most recent campaigns
Benin	19 April 2009	24 July 2009
Burkina Faso	20 May 2009	24 July 2009
Côte d'Ivoire	11 July 2009	14 August 2009
Guinea	5 August 2009	14 August 2009

Liberia	27 July 2009	14 August 2009
Mali	2 August 2009	4 September 2009
Niger	28 May 2009	29 May 2009
Sierra Leone	28 July 2009	14 August 2009
Togo	28 March 2009	29 May 2009

- At least four doses of OPV are necessary to protect a child from polio paralysis. While the overall quality of outbreak response in west Africa has been high (with estimated upward of 90% national coverage achieved in most of the re-infected countries), subnational coverage gaps have been noted.
- Any missed child is not just at personal risk of contracting the disease, but allows the poliovirus the chance to continue to spread. This unforgiving virus easily finds pockets of susceptible children. That is why every child must be reached during every immunization campaign.
- Outbreak response campaigns will need to continue until the outbreak has been confirmed as successfully stopped.

### **Tactics to limit the international spread of polio**

- In 2009, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is introducing additional activities to minimize the risk and consequences of international spread of polio and to stop outbreaks:
- To improve the proportion of children immunized during future immunization campaigns, a rolling 24-month supplementary immunization activity (SIA) plan is being institutionalized. While most high-risk countries have conducted at least two immunization campaigns in the past five years, the quality has frequently been sub-optimal, in part due to the short timeframes for planning such campaigns.
- Independent, international assessments are being introduced to monitor the quality of outbreak response activities, and assess compliance with the internationally-agreed outbreak response guidelines.
- All countries at high risk of recurrent spread of polio are being requested to update national outbreak response readiness plans.
- To reduce the risk of international spread of polio, new OPV immunization recommendations for residents travelling from polio-infected areas have been published in WHO's *International Travel and Health*.

### **The Global Polio Eradication Initiative**

- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is spearheaded by national governments, the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and UNICEF.
- Since 1988 - the year the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was launched - the incidence of polio has been reduced by more than 99%. At the time, more than 350,000 children were paralysed every year in more than 125 countries. To date in 2009, 1,020 cases have been reported worldwide (as of 22 September 2009). Four countries remain endemic: Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Outbreaks in previously polio-free areas are ongoing in west Africa, central Africa and the Horn of Africa.
- For more information, please visit [www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org).