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Partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative

All data as of 21 June 2006

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Headlines

- **Outbreak of polio in adults in Namibia:** government prepares nationwide immunization for all ages in response to an outbreak of polio in Namibia, primarily among adults, due to importation of poliovirus of Indian origin via Angola.
- **World Health Assembly (WHA) resolves to support final stages of polio eradication:** policy-setting body passes resolution calling for increased focus on interrupting transmission in polio endemic areas, adherence to rapid response standards in case of importation of poliovirus and technical advice on planning for a post-eradication world.

Country Focus

Nigeria

- In 2006, 467 cases have been reported to date, compared to 168 cases for the same period in 2005.
- Five states – Bauchi, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Katsina – account for 86% of the national caseload.
- The first round of Immunization Plus Days (IPDs) took place starting 25 May, in 11 northern states. A 6 June review concluded that although coverage was marginally higher than the most recent Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs), 25% - 35% of children were still missed. Although vaccination teams were composed of older women and trained health workers, social mobilization and vaccinator training both require improvement. The review group recommended formal engagement of traditional and religious leaders in order to increase awareness of the campaigns.

India

- 53 cases have been reported in 2006 (compared with 18 for the same period in 2005). Two of the cases are from Madhya Pradesh (first case since 8 November 2003) and Jharkhand (first case since 9 October 2005). However, since the beginning of the year, polio transmission is increasingly restricted compared with the previous year, to key districts of western Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Sub-National Immunization Days took place on 21 May in Uttar Pradesh and 28 May in Bihar. The next SIAs are scheduled for 25 June in those states as well as Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- Moradabad District in Uttar Pradesh accounts for 22 of the 53 cases nationwide this year. Administration of a birth-dose of mOPV1, one of the recommendations of a review in April, is due to start this month.

Pakistan and Afghanistan

- In Pakistan, 6 cases have been reported this year, compared with 10 for the same period last year.
- In Afghanistan, 13 cases have been reported this year, compared with 3 for the same period last year. Two of the cases are in the Provinces of Uruzgan and Zabul, previously unaffected by polio.
- On 4 and 6 June, synchronized activities were carried out in both countries, except for the southern region of Afghanistan, which postponed its immunization activities to 18 June for security reasons. Initial reports indicate good coverage in North West Frontier Province but some missed pockets in Karachi and in Quetta City. Polio teams in both countries faced increasing difficulties in accessing children and implementing high-quality SIAs in a number of insecure areas.

Namibia

- Four cases of an outbreak of acute flaccid paralysis in Namibia were virologically confirmed to be wild poliovirus type-1. Genetic sequencing has determined that the virus is of Indian origin and was imported from Angola, which reported 10 cases in 2005 (most recent case November 2005).
- An international and regional rapid response team is assisting the government and a response activity using mOPV1 started on 21 June, the first of three nationwide rounds.
- The majority of the more than 100 suspected cases are adults, and 15 have died. Namibia began routine immunization for polio in 1990; the cause of the largely adult outbreak is yet to be determined. The paralysis-to-infection rate of poliovirus is higher among adults than in children, as is the fatality rate. The first two of the three vaccination campaigns will target the entire population across all ages.

Nepal

- Mop-up immunization campaigns were held on 17 June in the areas around the recent importations (most recent case 18 March 2006).

Bangladesh

- An additional two cases were reported in Bangladesh (onset of paralysis on 23 January and 14 April, i.e. prior to the NIDs), bringing the total since the initial importation of polio to three. The new cases are in the centre of the country and on the western border with India.
- Bangladesh carried out a third NID on 8 June, in a rapid response to the initial importation, to reach 22 million children under the age of five years.

Myanmar

- A polio case originally reported as wild poliovirus has been genetically found to be a vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV). No further cases have been reported, despite strengthened disease surveillance.
- The Government of Myanmar is currently planning an immunization response of two National Immunization Days (NIDs). The primary reason for this response is to strengthen immunization levels against polio throughout Myanmar; routine coverage for polio vaccination is reported to be 70%.

Somalia and Ethiopia

- In Somalia, 25 cases have been reported in 2006. Polio appears to be on the decline in Mogadishu, formerly the epicentre of the outbreak. The risk of further spread across the Horn of Africa remains high.
- In Ethiopia, 3 cases have been reported this year, in Somali and Amhara regions. A cross-border meeting took place in order to improve coverage and coordinate with Somalia and Kenya. Strategies were agreed for accessing areas on both sides of the borders between the countries and for coordinating national and sub-national immunization activities.
- The first such synchronized campaign between Somalia and Ethiopia took place starting 11 June.

The state of polio eradication

In 2005, the world moved several critical milestones closer to polio eradication, including the successful introduction of the monovalent oral polio vaccines, visible progress in the hardest endemic areas and an end to west and central Africa's epidemic (outside Nigeria).

Only 4 countries are still polio-endemic - an all-time low: Nigeria, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In addition to the endemic countries, nine countries have reported polio cases in 2006 due to importations (Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Namibia, Niger, Nepal and DRC).

The necessary tools to eradicate polio are in place. Stopping polio transmission can be completed rapidly, except in Nigeria, where at least an additional 12 months will be required to finish the job, due to intense transmission in key states.

The remaining challenges to a polio-free world are:

- Curbing the intense transmission in the high-priority states in northern Nigeria
- Sustaining campaigns to break the final polio chains in the other three endemic countries.
- Rapidly stopping polio outbreaks in previously polio-free countries.
- Addressing low routine immunization rates and surveillance gaps in polio-free areas
- Maintaining funding and political commitment

Polio eradication will only succeed if the necessary funds are made available, and with strong political commitment in polio-affected countries. More than 10 million children will be paralysed in the next 40 years if the world fails to capitalize on its US\$4 billion global investment in eradication.