



Polio News

Eradication

Issue 5 – September 1999



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A Newsletter for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative
Expanded Programme on Immunization
Department of Vaccines and Biologicals
World Health Organization

Over 80% of under-fives in DR Congo vaccinated

DESPITE fighting and electricity cuts, the campaign to vaccinate children against polio in the Democratic Republic of Congo reached 8.2 million of the country's 10 million children under five years – a major breakthrough for the global effort.

Seventy-five thousand vaccinators delivered polio vaccine to children over a three-day period (13–15 August) in the first of three rounds of National Immunization Days (NIDs). Fighting stopped in nine-tenths of the country, following a series of widely publicized statements by the UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan, urging all sides to observe Days of Tranquillity to facilitate the campaign.

"These vaccination campaigns are a platform for the peace-building process," said Mr Annan, in a joint statement with Director-General of WHO Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland and UNICEF Executive Director Ms Carol Bellamy. "They open windows of opportunity between the different sides."

In Kisangani, where fighting broke out on the third day, 70 percent of children were vaccinated. Mothers and children trapped in health centres were able to return to their homes the following day after a ceasefire was agreed to by the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda, at the request of Mr Annan. Vaccine stored in refrigerators in the area survived despite power cuts. A "catch-up" campaign to vaccinate children who were not reached is scheduled.

"This is a significant step that brings us closer to a polio-free world," said Dr Brundtland, Director-General of WHO. "War is one of the greatest hurdles that we now face in our effort to eradicate this disease. Through the joint efforts of the UN agencies, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rotary International and local authorities, we overcame this in the interests of the world's children."



The first round of National Immunization Days in DR Congo

Photo: ©Mark Schoofs/The Village Voice

Over 16,000 health stations were set up to vaccinate children during the campaign. Other donors included the UN Foundation, and the governments of Belgium, Canada and the US.

"We have been amazed at the turnout," said Dr Moudi, WHO representative in DRC. DR Congo has the most intense polio virus transmission in the world. ♦



Melita, 23, and her baby Johnny, one of a series of portraits of polio victims taken by Lord Snowdon in Angola.

(see New Partners page 2)

Photo: © Lord Snowdon

Acceleration in South-East Asia on track

REMARKABLE progress has been made in polio eradication in the South-East Asia region, according to the region's Technical Consultative Group meeting in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (26 - 27 August). In India alone, the number of reported cases to date in 1999 is one third of that reported for the same period in 1998.

Still transmission of wild virus in India is widespread and accounts for 70 percent of polio cases in the region. Minister for Health and Family Planning Ramapati



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New partners

NEW partners joined WHO in the polio eradication initiative to help accelerate progress in the final phase. The diamond mining and trading company De Beers became the first ever corporate sector partner to make a major financial donation to the polio eradication campaign at global level with its contribution through WHO of \$US 2.7 million to NIDs in Angola for 1999 and 2000. The world-renowned photographer Lord Snowdon, who had polio, travelled to Angola to photograph the outbreak and the emergency vaccination campaign.

These new partners were announced at a press conference in London on 7 July. In a broadcast statement, WHO Director-General Dr Brundtland said new partnerships were critical to the success of the campaign. "This partnership demonstrates the WHO we are striving for - a responsive and dynamic agency forging longterm private and public partnerships in the interests of better health."

Mr Nicky Oppenheimer, Chairman of De Beers, said "If anything were needed to bring home the urgency and the importance of the Polio Eradication Initiative, it is the fact of this outbreak. I am proud that WHO wants to use our partnership as an example for other companies to follow."

Among the press coverage, a Financial Times leader article reported De Beers' decision to back the campaign to eradicate polio as a "good example" of business leaders "recognizing that their responsibilities and their interests lie not only in how companies affect their shareholders but also in their impact on the societies in which they operate."

Lord Snowdon's pictures were exhibited at the press conference at the National Portrait Gallery. "I hope my pictures help send a strong message to governments and donors around the world so that future generations of children can grow up without the risk of polio," he said. The portraits will be on show at a retrospective at the gallery early next year. ◆



Left-right: Mr David Alnwick, UNICEF; Dr Bruce Aylward, WHO; Mr Nicky Oppenheimer, De Beers; Lord Snowdon
Photo ©Chris Alderman/De Beers



Above: Cipriano Justino, 19, who contracted polio as a small boy.

Photo: © Lord Snowdon



Top: Neza, 3, standing with the help of his mother, a few weeks after he contracted polio.

Above: Noenia Batista and son Menguê, 3, who recently contracted polio.

Photo: © Lord Snowdon

'Progress of Nations' highlights polio

Joining UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy at the 1999 New York launch of the 'Progress of Nations' report were the US Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala; the President of Rotary International Carol Ravizza; the actress Mia Farrow who had polio as a child, and her son Thaddeus who is disabled from the disease, and Heloisa Sabin, wife of Dr Albert Sabin who developed the oral polio vaccine. 'Progress of Nations' which monitors countries' achievements towards the goals established at the 1990 World Summit for Children, this year focused the world's attention on polio and AIDS as key issues affecting child health.

The report carried an essay on polio and vitamin A

by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, H.E, Sheikh Hasina.

A massive international push was needed to ensure that the six billionth baby, wherever he or she was born, will grow up in a world free of polio, said Ms Bellamy. War and funding were identified as the biggest challenges. "We cannot waver in these final, critical stages."

The report includes supplementary analysis, statistical information and league tables that provide country and regional assessments of the situation of children. 'Progress of Nations' is available at <http://www.unicef.org>. ◆



NIDs calendar: August to December 1999

Month of 1st round	Country	Type of Activity	Date 1st round	Date 2nd round	Date 3rd round
AUGUST	DR Congo	NIDs	13-Aug-99	17-Sept-99 ♣	22-Oct-99 *
	Malawi	SNIDs	Aug-99	Sept-99	
	Mozambique	NIDs		30-Aug-99	
	Rwanda	NIDs	10-Aug-99	14-Sept-99 ♣	
	Somalia	NIDs	Aug-99	Sept-99	
	Tanzania	SNIDs	21-Aug-99	25-Sept-99 *	
	Uganda	NIDs	07-Aug-99	11-Sept-99 ♣	
SEPTEMBER	Burundi	NIDs	14-Sept 99	14-Nov 99 ♣	
	Lesotho	NIDs	27-Sept 99 ♣*	Oct 99	
	Madagascar	NIDs	08-Sept 99	13-Oct 99 ♣	
	Sri Lanka	NIDs	11-Sept 99	16-Oct 99	
	Togo	Mopup	03-Sept 99	01-Oct 99	
OCTOBER	Bahrain	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Benin	NIDs	15-Oct 99 ♣	12-Nov 99	
	Congo	NIDs	08-Oct 99	12-Nov 99 ♣	10-Dec 99
	DPRK	NIDs	20-Oct 99	20-Nov 99	
	Guinea	NIDs	24-Oct 99 ♣	28-Nov 99	
	Guinea Bissau	NIDs	30-Oct 99	27-Nov 99	
	India	NIDs	24-Oct 99	21-Nov 99	19-Dec 99 (23-Jan: 4th)
	Kuwait	NIDs	23-Oct 99	27-Nov 99	
	Kenya	NIDs	23-Oct 99 ♣*	27-Nov 99	
	Lybia	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Morocco	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Niger	NIDs	20-Oct 99	20-Nov 99	1-Dec 99 ♣
	Nigeria	NIDs	09-Oct 99	20-Nov 99	15-Jan 2000
	Oman	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Papua New Guinea	SNIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Qatar	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Saudi Arabia	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
	Sierra Leone	NIDs	02-Oct 99	06-Nov 99 ♣	11-Dec 99
	Tunisia	NIDs	14-Oct 99	18-Nov 99	
	UAE	NIDs	Oct 99	Nov 99	
Yemen	NIDs	24-Oct 99	21-Nov 99		
NOVEMBER	Afghanistan	NIDs		Nov 99	(01-Dec: 4th round)
	Bangladesh	NIDs	02-Nov 99	07-Dec 99	
	Burkina Faso	NIDs	05-Nov 99 ♣	09-Dec 99 *	
	Cameroon	NIDs	02-Nov 99 *	02-Dec 99 ♣	
	Cen African Rep	NIDs	02-Nov 99	02-Dec 99 ♣	
	Chad	NIDs	02-Nov 99	01-Dec 99 ♣	11-Jan 2000 *
	Egypt	NIDs	Nov 99	Dec 99	
	Equatorial Guinea	NIDs	02-Nov 99	02-Dec 99	
	Eritrea	NIDs	06-Nov 99 ♣	04-Dec 99	
	Ethiopia	NIDs	05-Nov 99 ♣	03-Dec 99*	
	Gabon	NIDs	02-Nov 99	02-Dec 99	
	Ghana	NIDs	06-Nov 99 ♣	11-Dec 99	
	Mali	NIDs	06-Nov 99 ♣	04-Dec 99	
	Nepal	SNIDs	21-Nov 99		
	Senegal	NIDs	12-Nov 99 ♣	10-Dec 99	
	Togo	NIDs	03-Nov 99	08-Dec 99	
DECEMBER	China	SNIDs	5-Dec 99	05-Jan 2000	
	Myanmar	NIDs	12-Dec 99	16-Jan 2000	
	Nepal	NIDs	19-Dec 99	23-Jan 2000	
	Pakistan	NIDs	01-Dec 99	18-Jan 2000	

This calendar reflects information known to WHO/HQ at the time of print. Some NID dates are preliminary and may change; please contact WHO/HQ for up-to-date information.

♣ Includes vitamin A supplementation * Includes measles vaccination



News and Announcements



Polio outbreaks

A polio outbreak has occurred among a nomadic group in Iraq, not reached by previous vaccination campaigns. Almost half of the governorates in the country are affected. Immunization of between 500 and 1 000 children at risk of infection was immediately carried out and an NID is being scheduled. Seven cases have already been confirmed as wild poliovirus type 1; an additional 12 AFP cases are being tested.

In Kunduz province, northern Afghanistan, a polio outbreak occurred on the border with Tajikistan, once again threatening the Europe region with polio. A widescale emergency house-to-house campaign carried out by the Ministry of Public Health, WHO, UNICEF and NGOs in July targeted more than 130 000 children in the province. Efforts are complicated by large numbers of displaced people entering the areas to escape renewed fighting north of Kabul. Since May, 26 AFP cases have been reported; six have been confirmed as polio.

Wild poliovirus may again be circulating in Myanmar following confirmation of four cases

from three widely disparate parts of the country. Markedly improved surveillance identified two cases in unimmunized children on the area bordering Bangladesh; one near the border with Yunnan province, China and one in the river delta area south-west of Yangon. A massive response is planned which will include extensive mopping up in October/November, followed by NIDs. ♦

Vitamin A

A new WHO field guide, 'Distribution of Vitamin A During National Immunization Days' is available in English on the V&B website (<http://www.who.ch/gpv-documents>). To request hard copies please contact WHO Department of Vaccines & Biologicals (Geneva) or WHO Regional Offices.

Vitamin A, now widely distributed during NIDs, may have an important role in malaria control alongside bednets and future vaccines, according to scientists from the Johns Hopkins School of Health and the Papua New

Guinea Institute of Medical Research. Results published in the Lancet (July 17, 1999), showed that when young children between 6-60 months of age were given quarterly high-dose vitamin A supplements, incidence was reduced by 30 percent and the number of malaria parasites in their blood dropped by 36 percent. ♦

Ambush in Angola

TWO humanitarian staff were killed and their two colleagues wounded, in an ambush in Bengo province in Angola on 12 June 1999. The four were working for the Portuguese non-governmental organization Instituto Português de Medicina Preventiva (IPMP) and were taking part in the NIDs.

The Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Sérgio Vieira de Mello, urged the Government of Angola and UNITA to take immediate and concrete measures to avoid such acts and improve the security and protection of humanitarian workers. ♦

Polio eradication partners

UN Foundation

During June and July, the UN Foundation provided \$30 million to WHO and UNICEF to support polio eradication activities in 16 countries in the WHO Regions of AFRO, EMRO, EURO, and SEARO, primarily for operational costs of delivering supplementary vaccine (e.g. social mobilization of communities and planning for NIDs), strengthening surveillance, and enhancing the UN's capacity by technical and laboratory capacity building.

Global Coalition

In August 1999, UNICEF hosted the first meeting of the Global Coalition for Polio Eradication Advocacy and Resource Mobilization in New York. Ms Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF emphasized the importance of the polio eradication initiative, Rotary International's

role, and UNICEF's commitment to work closely with its partners to achieve the goals of polio eradication. Rotary, UNF, UNICEF and WHO are core members of the coalition, set up primarily to coordinate fundraising strategies for polio, as well as to provide a forum for information sharing and communication in the area of resource mobilization among coalition members.

Rotary International

The IPPC meeting held in June recommended support of social mobilization activities in Pakistan and inter-regional acceleration of polio eradication activities, to be coordinated by HQ, to Rotary's Board of Trustees. The next meeting in October will consider major grants for AFRO, EMRO and SEARO. Former WHO Director-General, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima this year received Rotary International's Polio Eradication Champion Award.

Millions2000

The Millennium Fund has given US\$ 50,000 to the Polio Eradication Initiative in DR Congo for immunization activities targeting hard-to-reach children living in Equateur and Mbandaka provinces.

CIDA

The Canadian government has donated US\$ 5 million to the Polio Eradication Initiative in the Africa region, especially for surveillance activities in Ghana.

CDC

The US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) has donated US\$ 10.2 million to operational support for the Polio Eradication Initiative as well as a donation to measles eradication and elimination, and to UNICEF for polio vaccine. ♦

Time out for polio



Dikembe Mutombo

Photo ©Scott Cunningham

DIKEMBE MUTOMBO, star basketball player with the Atlanta Hawks team of the NBA, will take part in social mobilization for polio eradication in his native DR Congo. During the three rounds of NIDs in DR Congo, from August, Voice of America (VoA) is airing a series of public service announcements recorded by Mr Mutombo on the polio campaign. The spots will publicize the dates of the NIDs and urge mothers to take their children to be immunized. A major partner in the eradication initiative, VoA (and Worldnet TV) airs year-round broadcasts on the global campaign with dramas, listener contests, public service announcements, news items to increase participation in polio campaigns.

France's public service radio station, Radio France International will broadcast a series of radio spots in August, September and October on the theme of 'Kick Polio out of Africa'. ♦

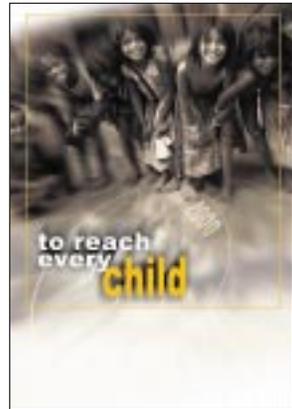
BBC backs polio eradication in India

TWO consultants recruited by the BBC Marshall Plan of the Mind Trust (MPM) will travel to India to work with state authorities and partner agencies on social mobilization and communications. Working with the state committees for social mobilization, they will focus on two high-risk northern states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. MPM has been instrumental in the acquisition of a digital studio by local broadcasters in the two states, which it is hoped will have long-term benefits on EPI.

The consultants will produce television and radio programmes to raise public awareness, and carry out an evaluation of existing strategies to help improve their quality and increase access to populations which are difficult to reach. MPM is a charitable organisation that operates as part of the BBC's World Service and provides technical advice and support to local broadcasters around the world. MPM has worked closely with WHO over the past two years, especially in the evaluation of communication strategies for polio eradication and routine immunization. ♦

The development of a regional social mobilization strategy for South-East Asia was agreed to at a meeting of key polio eradication partners in Lucknow (25 August).

Poster design: WHO/SEARO



5,000 of these posters were printed and distributed in North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan to be posted in health centres until the end of the year 2000. They are designed to motivate parents to vaccinate their children routinely and in NIDs, and to remind doctors in particular to report AFP cases.

Please send stories of social mobilization successes for publication in Polio News:

e-mail: polioepi@who.ch

AFP surveillance in conflict countries

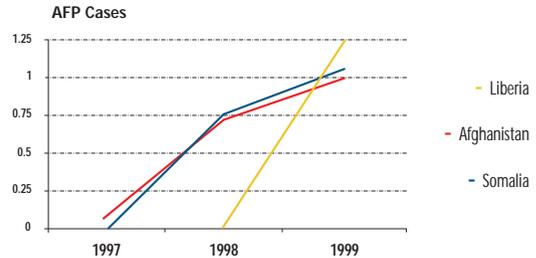
It is possible to have a functioning surveillance system to detect and investigate cases of paralysis for polio in children under 15, even in countries affected by conflict. There have been major improvements in several countries recently, amid fears that it could not be done.

Afghanistan is a good example where AFP surveillance has been established and was key to the timely detection of the recent polio outbreak there (see page 4). The country has 85 sentinel sites, ranging from hospitals to health centres, rehabilitation centres, and private physicians. Cases are identified, specimens collected and sent for laboratory analysis.

Cambodia showed it could be done when a system was established in difficult terrain along the Mekong river – the last focus of poliovirus in the Western Pacific region. Characteristically, this required substantial external support, sometimes the donation of cars and bicycles, in order to find cases.

In Liberia, it is now possible to rapidly detect AFP cases and polio transmission. As of June, a newly established system had detected, reported and investi-

Surveillance in conflict-affected areas



gated 35 AFP cases. In South Sudan, AFP cases are being detected and specimens collected for testing. In Somalia, where infrastructure has been destroyed by war, wild poliovirus is being found. Areas which still have minimal surveillance are DR Congo and Sierra Leone. Angola, Somalia and South Sudan need to be improved. AFP surveillance is needed to target immunization activities to the areas that have been identified with wild poliovirus transmission, and will eventually provide the basis for certification of eradication. ♦

Continued from front page

Shastri said that efforts were now under way to ensure high-risk states were polio-free by end of year 2000. Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Mr Suraj Bhan said that political and administrative will and active involvement of NGOs were now coming together to finish the job.

Two hundred and fifty delegates heard how four NIDs will be carried out in four months in India, followed by two months of campaigns in the eight high-risk states. House-to-house immunization will be added which, experience in Bangladesh and Pakistan has shown, can increase overall immunization coverage by 10-15 percent.

The TCG applauded the efforts of India and Nepal for developing and maintaining AFP surveillance standards that meet global standards; Bangladesh, DPR Korea and Myanmar would require special attention to improve their surveillance, it said.

Also speaking at the meeting were Dr Uton Mughtar Rafei, Regional Director WHO South-East Asia office, and Mr Nigel Fisher, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia. Rotary International, USAID, DFID and DANIDA were also represented. ♦



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