

NOW, MORE THAN EVER: STOP POLIO FOREVER.



Polio Eradication Situation update – 2 November 2004

Latest Events & Headlines – Campaigns in Africa and Asia are encouraging

- During the week of 11 October, governments in Africa and Asia - supported by the partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative - conducted polio immunization campaigns to immunize more than 300 million children, including 80 million in 23 countries across west and central Africa.
- The Africa campaign was the largest immunization campaign ever conducted on the continent, and is part of urgent efforts to stop an ongoing epidemic in the region.
- The Africa campaign was formally launched in Kano, Nigeria, by President Olusegun Obasanjo, Professor Alpha Oumar Konaré (Chairperson of the African Union Commission) and Jonathan Majiyagbe, past President of Rotary International.
- Political engagement throughout the region was strong. In the Sudan, Sudan's and Chad's Ministers of Health launched the campaign. Similar high-level launches were held in most of the 23 countries.
- In Nigeria, high level political commitment and the support of key religious & traditional leaders helped to engage all communities. There was widespread acceptance of oral polio vaccine (OPV), particularly in Kano, but some orchestrated resistance was reported in other states.
- While final coverage data is not yet available, several countries including Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Mali, Senegal and Togo, have reported reaching more than 90% coverage.

Key Messages

- Strong progress towards stopping transmission of poliovirus is being made in Asia, but a final global victory is being threatened by the resurgence of the virus in Africa where children are facing the threat of an epidemic.
- Early results from the October synchronized campaigns in Africa – the largest immunization campaign ever conducted in Africa – are encouraging but to stop the virus, higher coverage will be needed in poor or remote communities during the November rounds.
- Priorities¹ for the Initiative throughout the next year are:
 - a. stopping transmission in Asia through supplementary immunization activities every six weeks;
 - b. expanding synchronized NIDs in Africa with additional rounds in 2004 and in 2005;
 - c. revising and expanding SIAs in Egypt plus accelerated introduction of monovalent OPV type 1 (*please see further details in 'Egypt' section below*);
 - d. enhancing surveillance in west and central Africa and the Horn of Africa.
- The greatest threats to a polio-free world are:
 1. *Persistently inadequate population immunity in key areas and populations*, as a consequence of low routine immunization coverage across Africa and Asia particularly among specific, individual population sub-groups in a number of key districts of Asia and Egypt.
 2. *A funding gap of US\$ 200 million* which must be filled to ensure that activities through 2004-2005 can go ahead. US\$35 million is urgently needed by end-November 2004.
- Success now depends on reaching the most marginalised communities. At stake is a US \$3 billion, 15 year investment and proof that we can work together to reach common development goals.

Call to action:

Governments of the world need to:

1. Reach every child in India and Pakistan during immunization activities, particularly in individual population sub-groups. In India, particular focus is required to reach young, Muslim children in western Uttar Pradesh.
2. Reach every child during November rounds in Africa.
3. Take special care to reach specific, individual population sub-groups in a number of key districts in Asia and Egypt.
4. Fund the November Africa operations (US\$ 35 million)
5. Build grassroots participation and support including religious & traditional leaders

¹ These strategic priorities for 2004-2005 were endorsed by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Polio Eradication (AACPE) at its consultation in Geneva on 21 September

6. Improve routine immunization and basic health services to the poorest families

Global

- 885 cases so far vs 491 in 2003.

Africa – overview

- Transmission in west & central Africa is more than 3 times higher this year than for the same period last year (768 cases reported to date compared to 231).
- Transmission of wild poliovirus has been re-established in Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan.
- The second round of the mass, synchronized polio campaigns across 23 countries in west and central Africa starts 18 November.
- Polio can be stopped in Africa by end 2005. Similar campaigns in 2000, 2001 and 2002 stopped polio in all countries across the region, except in Nigeria and Niger. More efforts are needed in Nigeria and Niger, to improve the quality of the immunization campaigns.

Nigeria (655 cases vs 217 in 2003)

Next NID: 20 November

- Nigeria accounts for 74% of the total number of poliovirus cases reported globally in 2004.
- A concerted effort to rebuild public trust around the safety of polio immunization is critical to ensuring all Nigerian children are immunized.
- Massive immunity gaps remain in Nigeria, particularly in the northern band of states. All children must be reached during multiple immunization campaigns to close this gap.

Niger (20 cases)

Next NID: 19 November

- The quality of the planned NIDs in November and December must improve to halt the spread of poliovirus in Niger. Massive immunity gaps remain in Niger, comparable only to those in Nigeria.

Egypt (1 case)

Next NID: 2 December

- Egypt has confirmed 1 case of polio, and 11 positive environmental samples
- In Egypt, improvements in environmental sampling demonstrate continuing virus transmission in key areas of Assiut and Minya, and Cairo and Giza, requiring an increase in the quantity and quality of nationwide immunization campaigns.
- At the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on 16-17 October, revised eradication strategies were discussed, including: increased focus on reaching very young children (<1 years of age), conducting four rounds of NIDs between January and May 2005, and accelerated access to monovalent OPV (mOPV) type 1 for immunization activities. Because polio type 1 is the only type of poliovirus still circulating in Egypt (for the past 3 years), monovalent OPV offers higher protection than trivalent OPV, and Egypt has high routine coverage with trivalent OPV, replacing trivalent OPV with monovalent OPV type 1 in immunization campaigns could more rapidly interrupt transmission.

Asia - overview

- Strong progress continues to be achieved in Asia (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan) – with 116 cases in 2004 compared to 258 year-to-date 2003.

India (77 cases)

Next NID: 21 November

- India could stop poliovirus transmission by end-2004, if all children can be reached during NIDs.
- Despite un-seasonal rains in the north of the country, the NIDs on 10 October proceeded as scheduled. The campaign was officially launched by the President of India, further confirming the government's commitment to attaining a polio-free India.
- High coverage during the NIDs in 2004, has reduced transmission, but particular focus is required to reach young, Muslim children in 12 key districts in western Uttar Pradesh.
- Sustaining political will, oversight and accountability, especially at the district level, is required to access all children during upcoming activities, particularly in western Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Pakistan (36 cases)

Next NID: 30 November

- If all children can be reached during NIDs, Pakistan could stop polio transmission by end-2004. Maintaining high-level political commitment will be essential to the success of immunization activities in 2004 and 2005.
- Particular focus is required to reach all children in key districts of northern Sindh, south-central Punjab and North West Frontier Province.
- Recent improvements in NID coverage are consistent with the reduction of transmission in key areas. Focus must be on effective mop-up campaigns starting in early 2005, coordinated with Afghanistan.

Afghanistan (3 cases)

Next NID: 30 November

- Focus must be on effective mop-up campaigns starting in early 2005, coordinated with Pakistan.