



A young Sudanese boy is vaccinated against polio on 28 November 2020 during the first vaccination campaign of Sudan's polio outbreak response. Copyright WHO

Khartoum, 26 January 2022 – Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) declared an outbreak of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) on 8 August 2020. The outbreak affected 58 children in 15 states across Sudan. No new cases of poliovirus have been isolated from human or sewage water since 18 December 2020.

Two rounds of nationwide outbreak response campaigns were implemented to respond to the cVDPV2 outbreak with monovalent Oral Polio Vaccine type-2 (mOPV2). The outbreak response campaigns covered 18 states and 184 localities in November 2020 and January 2021, respectively, resulting in vaccinating over 8 million children under five in Sudan in each round.

The FMOH led the outbreak response with the technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partners.

Despite the impressive response, partners are urging continued vigilance, stating that strong disease surveillance and continued vaccination are the only ways to ensure that Sudan can confidently maintain polio-free status.

To ensure that children under-5 years old have optimal immunity against the virus, effective social mobilization and communication activities played a vital role in generating information and acceptance for polio vaccines. The activities were implemented in both rounds across 18 states to ensure the communities were aware and the polio vaccine could reach every child. The campaign resulted in high acceptance for the vaccine and low levels of resistance.

The polio campaign was possible thanks to the thousands of frontline workers and volunteers who effectively responded to the outbreak during a very difficult and critical time in Sudan and prevented further spread of the virus.

Moreover, the technical and financial support from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a consortium that includes Rotary International, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF led to a swift response to the outbreak to protect children at risk of polio and prevent further spread of the virus.

Sudan's last wild polio case was reported in March 2009 and the country was announced polio-free in 2015 by WHO. Yet it has been considered at high risk for importation of polioviruses for several years due to a decline in population immunity resulting from insecurity and conflict conditions in certain areas, as well as population movement from neighbouring countries experiencing outbreaks.

The FMOH, alongside its partners WHO and UNICEF, are working to implement recommendations from an interim Poliovirus Outbreak Response Assessment (OBRA), conducted in September and October 2021, which are focused on maintaining the level of surveillance required to rapidly detect any new emergence of the virus.

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