



□ Sudan's outbreak of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) has been successfully stopped, according to experts from WHO in Khartoum, 18 September 2022
UNICEF and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Declared in 15 out of 18 states, the outbreak was caused by a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV2) strain imported from Chad, paralyzing 58 children. □

Today's announcement comes after virtual and in-country reviews of Sudan's response to the outbreak and its surveillance system by a team of experts in polio eradication, global public health, epidemiology, and vaccine management. The final Outbreak Response Assessment, held between 24 July and 1 August 2022, included interviews and reviews of reports and records with surveillance and immunization staff at state, locality, and health facility levels. The findings of the Outbreak Response Assessment, coupled with the absence of the cVDPV2 virus for more than 18 months in the presence of sustained high-quality poliovirus surveillance, make it possible to conclude that the cVDPV2 outbreak can now be declared closed. □

“The Federal Ministry of Health declared the cVDPV2 outbreak during a difficult time of multiple emergencies, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Economic downturn and political instability were additional challenges during the start of the outbreak. The Federal Ministry of Health worked with partners and implemented a robust outbreak response plan that included 2 rounds of high-quality campaigning. Sudan is an example of how an early, rapid and coordinated response can stop an outbreak,” said Dr Haitham Muhammad Ibrahim Awad Allah, Federal Minister of Health.□

“The closure of this outbreak speaks to the skill and diligence of health workers and public health officials in Sudan, and to the extraordinary commitment of the Government of Sudan demonstrated by allocation of significant domestic financial resources to the response, during one of the most challenging periods of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.□

Backed by UNICEF and WHO, the Federal Ministry of Health successfully organized 2 nationwide vaccination campaigns targeting children under-5 years of age to contain the spread of poliovirus, reaching over 95% of the target population. Community engagement and social mobilization efforts were stepped up to ensure information about the dangers of the disease and the need to immunize every eligible child reached every household.□



“Two nationwide campaigns using monovalent oral polio vaccine type 2 (mOPV2) covered all 18 states in November 2020 and January 2021, reaching over 8 million children under 5 in each of the 2 rounds. In every location, vaccinators took precautions against COVID-19, including using hand sanitizer and wearing masks. Despite the closure of the outbreak, the country remains vigilant for possible poliovirus importation,” said Dr Nima Saeed Abid, WHO Representative in Sudan. □

“The closure of the polio outbreak is a remarkable achievement for the children of Sudan. Community engagement has been at the heart of efforts to turn vaccines into vaccinations for over 8 million children. This success is a testament to the commitment of health workers, especially women, who continue to work selflessly and passionately to deliver vaccines. As we celebrate this achievement and the strong partnerships that made it possible, we must remain alert to protect Sudan from future outbreaks; there is no room for complacency,” said Mandeep O’Brien, UNICEF Representative in Sudan. “In addition to sensitive surveillance, improved coverage of routine vaccinations is important to protect children from poliomyelitis and other vaccine-preventable diseases,” she continued. □

Across the Eastern Mediterranean Region, cVDPV2 cases have increased in recent years, and the movement of people across borders underscores the risk of importation across and beyond the Region. □ The cVDPV2 strain that led to 58 cases in Sudan has been detected in 8 neighboring countries before and after Sudan’s outbreak. While the international spread is a reminder that polio anywhere is a risk to children everywhere, the closure of Sudan’s outbreak shows what can be achieved with strong national commitment and high-quality vaccination campaigns, on-the-ground leadership, sensitive surveillance measures, and essential immunizations.

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