

Detection of wild poliovirus in a polio-free country is a public health emergency. Importation of wild poliovirus cannot be prevented until global polio eradication is achieved, but the spread of wild poliovirus within and across countries can be controlled through preparedness and response.

The two main pillars for preparedness which will prevent spread are:

high-quality surveillance, which is the key for early detection of an importation of wild poliovirus; and

high-level population immunity achieved through both routine immunization programmes and supplementary immunization activities, if necessary.

Countries should pay special attention to high-risk subpopulations (e.g. minority groups, internally displaced persons, migrant workers), and geographic areas (e.g. border and security-compromised areas). High-risk subpopulations and geographic areas are traditionally underserved and often missed for surveillance and immunization activities leading to pools of susceptible children where circulation of wild poliovirus can go undetected.

In 2006, the polio eradication programme provided national programmes with [Guidelines for preparedness and response for wild poliovirus importation and format for national plans](#) and technical assistance to develop and implement these plans. All of the 20 polio-free countries in the Region, except Somalia, have developed national preparedness and response plans. Somalia has prepared a plan which will be reviewed by the Regional Certification Commission.

**Related Links:**

[Surveillance](#)

[Routine immunization](#)

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