



13 March 2017 – The management team of the Expanded Programme on Immunization and national and provincial surveillance focal points of the Ministry of Health of Kuwait attended a 4-day workshop in Kuwait City between 6 and 9 March 2017 to review Kuwait's polio outbreak preparedness and response plan, according to the requirements for polio-free countries by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

The Director of Communicable Disease Control Dr Mussab Al Saleh, during his opening remarks, expressed the importance of the polio eradication efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. He highlighted the importance of implementation of a strategic plan which includes the testing of sewage to ensure that any poliovirus was detected in the case of importation and circulation, based on the WHO guidelines. Kuwait would start the screening of primary immune deficient patients to enhance another aspect of the acute flaccid paralysis surveillance system. Kuwait's surveillance system was sensitive enough to detect any emergence of vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 as per the plan of action of the communicable disease control department.

Kuwait has been polio free since 1984. A strong routine immunization system and functional sensitive surveillance system have sustained its status since then. Kuwait is not considered to be at high risk as per the detailed risk analysis conducted by the regional polio programme. However, population movements, including migrant workers from polio-endemic countries, requires vigilance against a potential importation of poliovirus, and wild and vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2.

During the workshop the outbreak preparedness and response plan was reviewed and updated. In addition, a strategic plan to start the screening of primary immune deficient children in Kuwait was developed, which brings to 10 the total number of countries in the Region undertaking such an important activity.

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