

Syrian Arab Republic

Date: 21 November 2013

Situation Report No. 3

Highlights

- Since the last Sit Rep, four new polio cases were confirmed.
- Two additional governorates became infected (Aleppo and Rural Damascus).
- The current vaccination campaign is concluded. The preliminary coverage rate is 88%
- AFP cases search is continued in all governors.
- On 19/11/2013, the MOH in collaboration with WHO organized an orientation meeting for the national partners from other sectors.

Syria last confirmed polio case due to an imported wild poliovirus was in 1999. Since then Syria remained polio free till October 2013 during which wild poliovirus was confirmed in Deir ez-Zor. The number of confirmed polio cases is 13 cases until the 14th November 2013.

Before the current crisis, the immunization programme in Syria was one of the best programmes in the Region. The coverage rate of the OPV 3rd dose was above 90% until the year 2010 and then declined sharply to 68% in 2012 due to the current situation.

The Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF has taken the re-emerging polio cases in Syria seriously and has developed a rapid and effective response plan.

This report summarizes the situation till today.

Epidemiological situation:

Till the issuance of this report, 17 polio cases from Deir ez-Zor, Rural Damascus and Aleppo governorates are confirmed. Most of the cases are below 2 years of age and the male children are more than female children. The below table shows the comparison of the polio cases and AFP cases by age group.

Age group in months	Polio cases		Non-polio AFP cases	
	No.	%	No.	%
<12	4	24%	11	13%
12-23	9	53%	14	16%
24-35	1	6%	9	10%
36-47	2	12%	5	6%
48-59	0	0%	4	5%
60+	1	6%	45	51%
Total	17	100%	88	100%

All children, except two, had no vaccination or incomplete. The comparison of immunity profile (diagram 1 & 2) of the polio cases and non-polio AFP cases shows the clear effect of low OPV doses.

Diagram 1. Immunity profile of the polio AFP cases

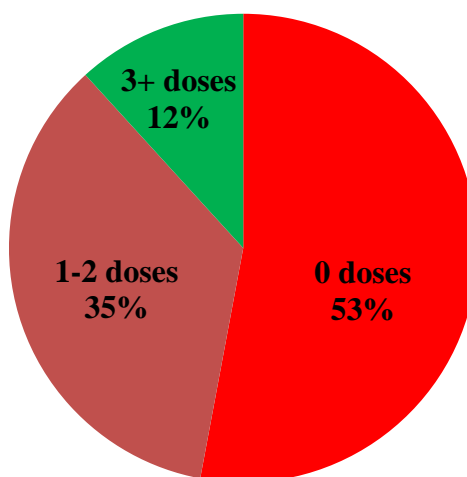
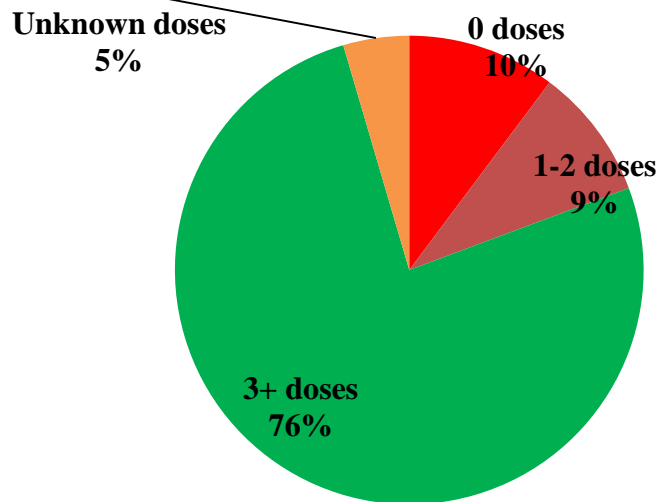
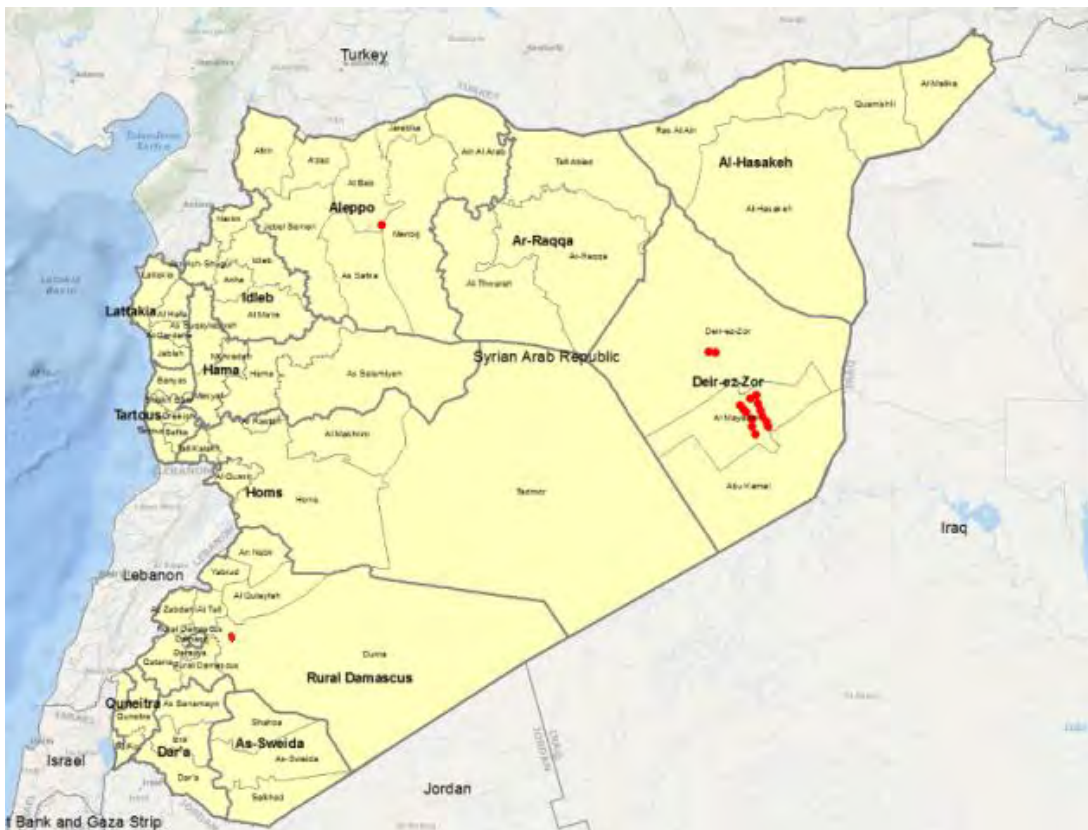


Diagram 2. Immunity profile of the non-polio AFP cases

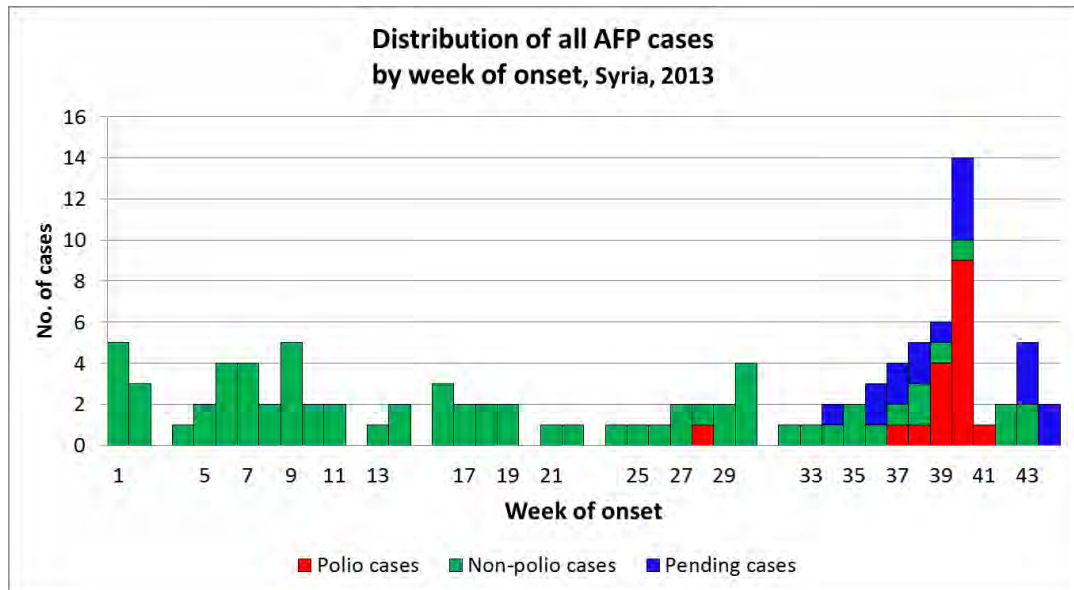


- The 17 polio cases occurred in 4 districts. These are Mayadeen, Deir ez-Zor, Douma and Fardous districts (see the below spot map).



- So far, the cases appeared between 10/9/2013 and 6/10/2013 (see epidemic curve). The samples of the case (Aleppo) with the onset of paralysis in week 28 was negative, but because her contact positive, the case is classified as polio case.

- The sample from the contact was collected on 4/9/2013 and arrived at the polio lab in Damascus on 22/10/2013.



Actions taken so far:

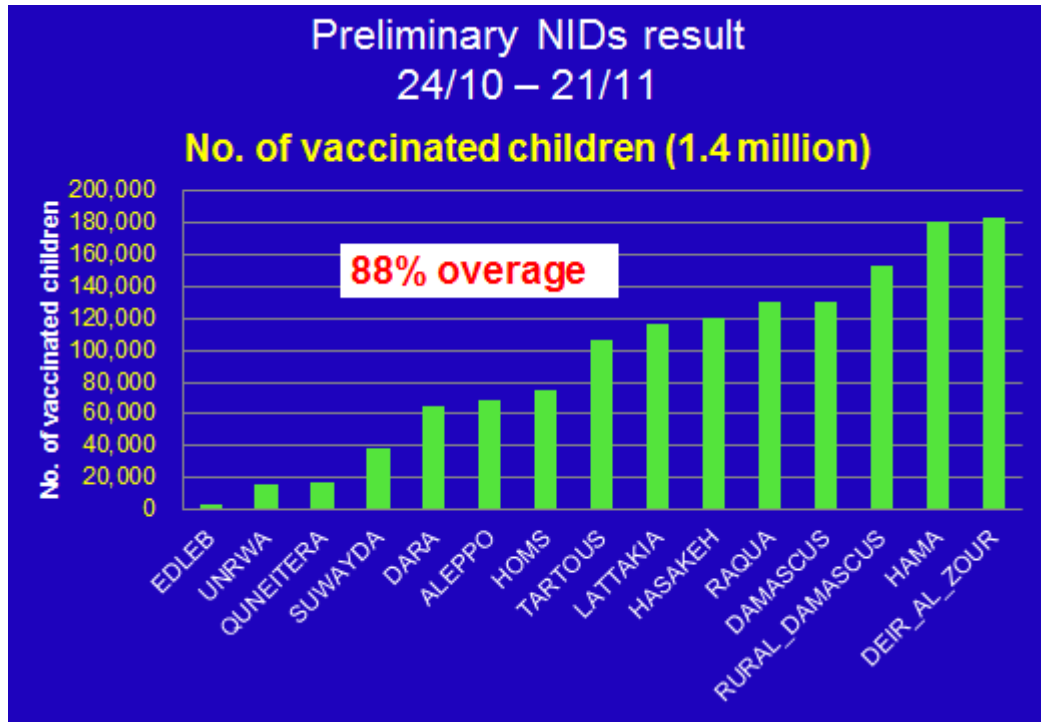
As a response to the re-appearance of the polio cases firstly in Deir ez-Zor province, the programme undertook the following activities:

- The information was immediately disseminated to the MOH officials, EPI staff and partners. An urgent meeting was conducted in EPI with the support of the Dir PHC to discuss the situation and outline on the immediate activities to be done in response to this outbreak.
- All provinces were informed to be vigilant and enhance the already prepared plan of immunization campaign in October 2013.
- Coordination with national and international partners has been taken in order to prepare a consolidated response plan.
- Partners especially WHO and UNICEF were requested to mobilize additional resources to meet the response plan.
- Advocacy activities: MOH issued a statement for the media representatives of the NGOs, explaining the current situation of polio outbreak in Syria.
- A meeting with national partners from other governmental sectors was convened in Damascus on 19/11/2013. The purpose of the meeting was to mobilize all other sectors to support the polio eradication activities in order to curb the outbreak very fast.

Immunization response:

- The EPI has already prepared a plan to conduct immunization campaign against polio and measles before the confirmation of the polio cases. The plan is targeting

1.6 million children under 5 for OPV and 0.9 million children under 15 for measles vaccine. The preliminary result is seen in the below graph.



- The future supplementary immunization activity (SIA) plan includes 5 NIDs rounds in the coming 5 months. The first round (which is considered as the second round after the confirmation of polio cases in Syria) will commence on 8 December 2013. Syria will use bOPV for the first time in order to boost immunity of children very fast and interrupt the poliovirus transmission as soon as possible.
- During the 12-13 November 2013, the immunization programme conducted a planning workshop for the provincial immunization/surveillance personnel. The provincial EPI/surveillance officer with the support of the National EPI staff prepared the outline of the microplans for each province.

Surveillance response:

- All the clustered AFP cases were considered as “Hot cases” and actions taken before the arrival of the lab result. The actions included the vaccination of 2666 children in El Meyadien.
- Active surveillance has been established in governorates through WHO focal points in the different governorates and MOH surveillance officers as well daily zero reporting is activated in Deir ez-Zor.
- Sensitization of the public and private clinicians was done in order to immediately report any AFP cases to the EPI team in their area.
- Coordination with different parties has been initiated to facilitated the collection and shipment of the stool samples to the reference lab in Damascus
- Sending the National AFP investigation forms to the areas of hard to reach through the partners who have access to those to those areas.