

Syrian Arab Republic

Date: 5 December 2013

Situation Report No. 5

Highlights

- No new WPV1 cases were reported in the past week. Five cases and one contact are positive L20B.
- The updated polio vaccination result shows that 2,291,407 children were vaccinated during the October polio NIDs.
- AFP cases search is continued in all governors. The AFP surveillance indicators remained similar to the level mentioned in the last Sit Rep.
- Two million bOPV doses were received and distributed to Governorates.
- Preparations for the launching the NIDs on 8 December 2013 are ongoing.

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, Aleppo and Rural Damascus. So far, the total number of confirmed polio cases remained 17 cases.

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, 15 polio cases from Deir ez-Zor, one case from Rural Damascus and one case from 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%	16	14%
12-23	9	53%	19	17%
24-35	1	6%	11	10%
36-47	2	12%	10	8%
48-59	0	0%	5	4%
60+	1	6%	54	47%
Total	17	100%	113	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

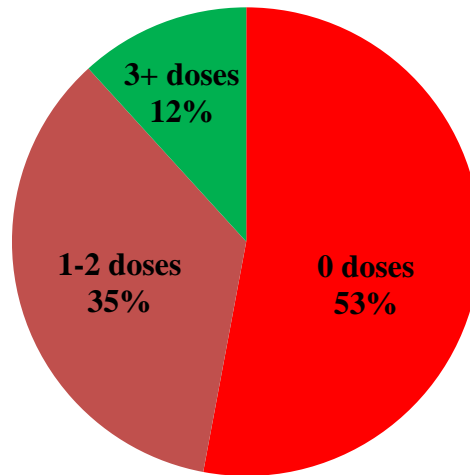
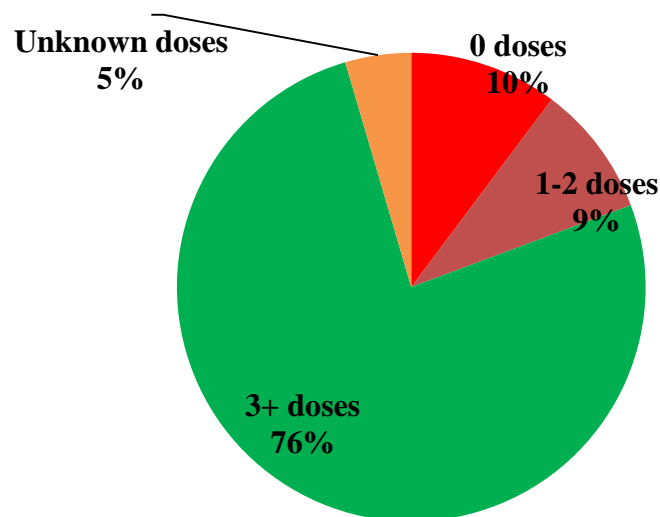
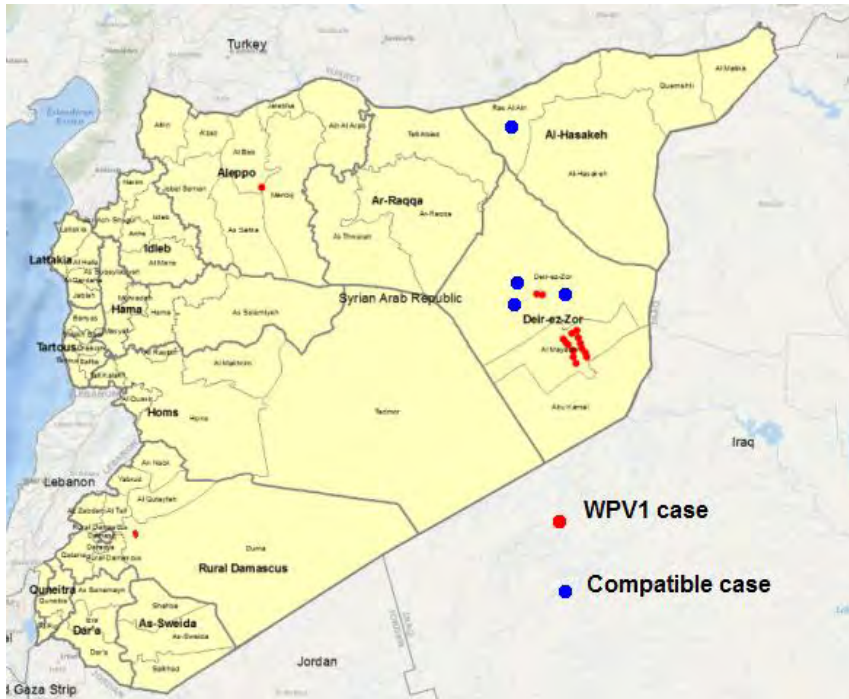


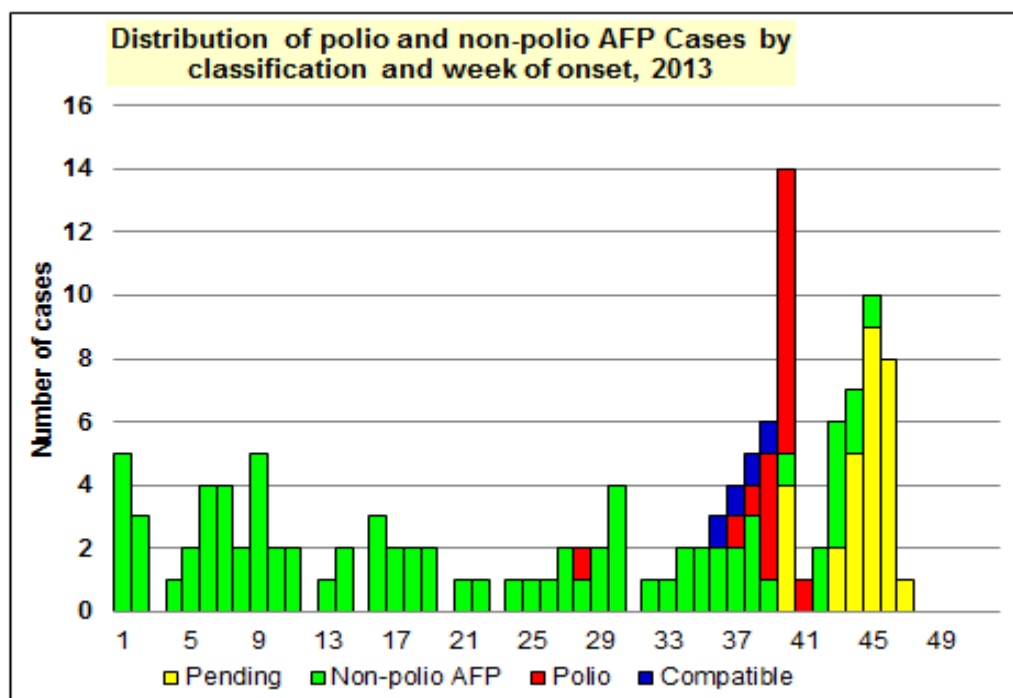
Diagram 2. Immunity profile of the non-polio AFP cases



- 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 14/7/2013 and 8/10/2013 (see epidemic curve). The samples of the case (Aleppo) with the onset of paralysis in week 28 was negative, but because her contact was positive; the case is classified as polio case.
- Last week, the National Expert Group (NEG) met and discussed the pending cases. The NEG classified 4 AFP cases as compatible cases. Three compatible cases are present in DZ and one compatible case is in Ras Al-ien district in Hasakeh Governorate (see the above map).



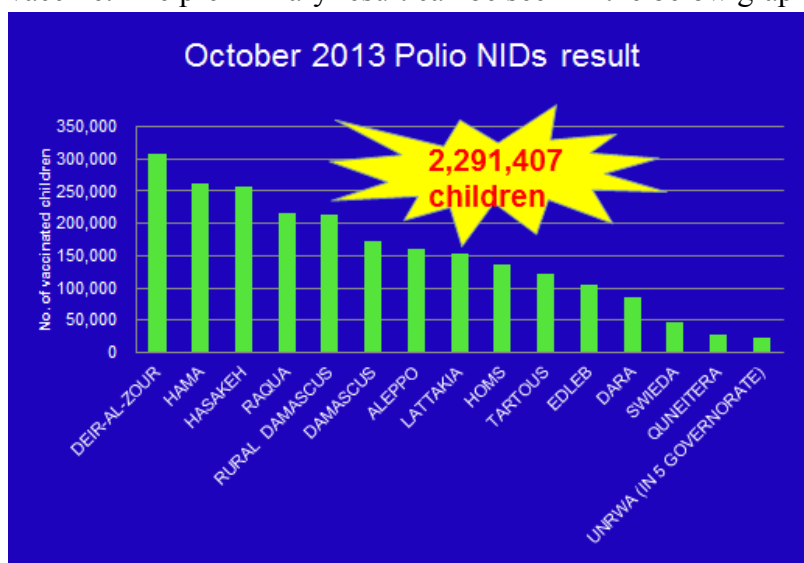
Actions taken so far:

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.
- Last week, HE the Minister of Health convened a press conference in the presence of WR and UNICEF communication officer. HE announced officially the confirmation of the last 4 polio cases. HE also announced that Syria will conduct 6 NIDs round in addition to the last month round.

Immunization response:

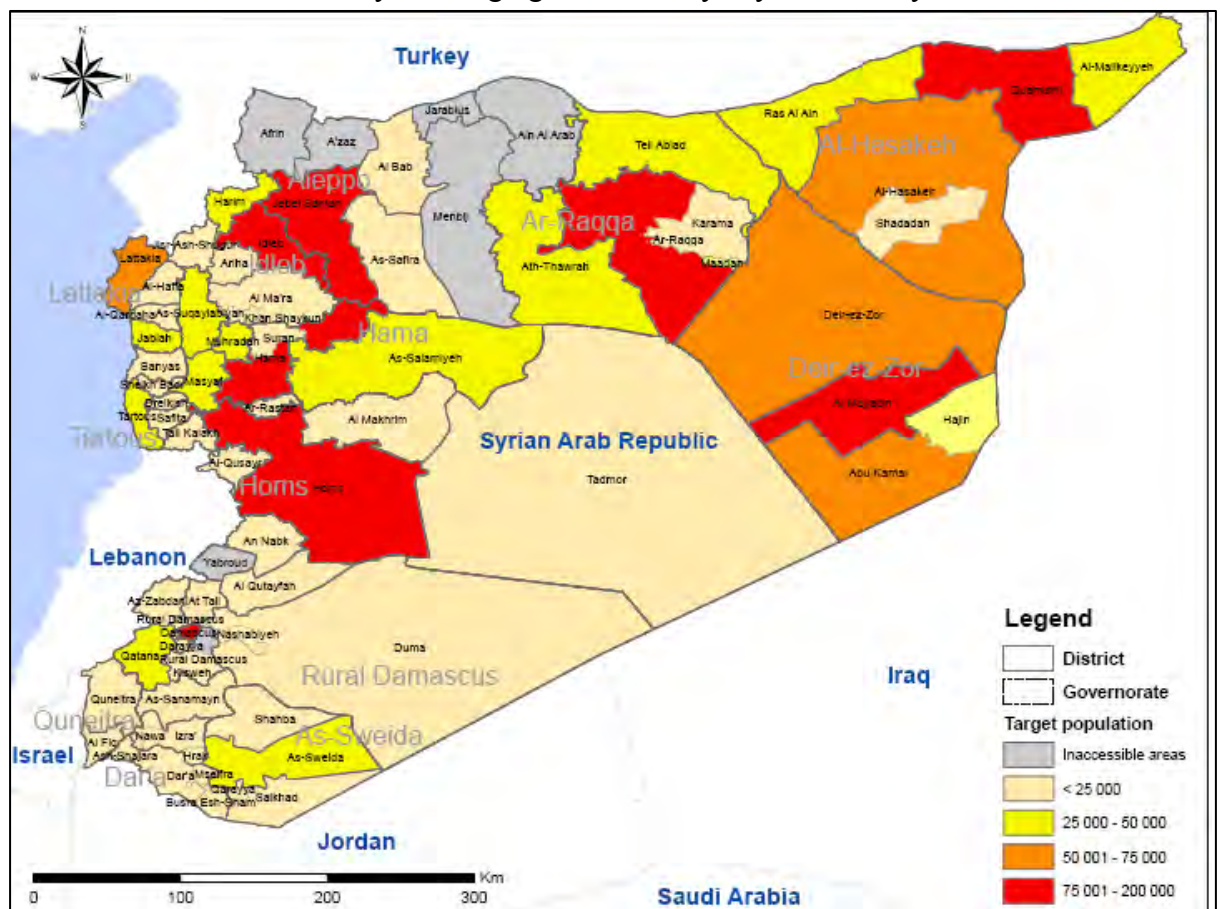
- The EPI had already prepared a plan to conduct immunization campaign against polio and measles before the confirmation of the polio cases. The plan is targeted 1.6 million children under 5 for OPV and 0.8 million children under 15 for MMR vaccine. The preliminary result can be seen in the below graph.



- The future supplementary immunization activity (SIA) plan includes 6 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. Based on the October NIDs result the MOH increased the number of targeted children to 2.2 million.

December NIDs:

- The Governorates have prepared their micro-plans.
- Training and social mobilization activities were delegated to governorates and districts.
- Financial support distributed to governorates.
- Two million bOPV doses were received on 29/11/2013 and distributed to 12 governorates up to 5/12/2013. The remaining two governorates (DZ and Haskeh) will receive their quota of bOPV on 6/12/2013.
- The below map shows the target by district and inaccessible districts as per today information. The accessibility is changing almost every day if not every hour.



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 all governorates by the WHO focal points and MOH surveillance officers and daily reporting is activated in Deir ez-Zor.
- Sensitization of the public and private clinicians was done to ensure the immediate reporting of any additional AFP cases to the EPI team in their area.
- Coordination with different parties has been initiated to facilitate 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 areas.
- The AFP surveillance indicators during the last week remained at the same level as for the previous week.
- A coordination meeting was held last week in Beirut. MOH, UNICEF and WHO concerned staff met and discussed the polio outbreak response. The group agreed on several action points to improve the response. These include the enhancement of the upcoming NIDs quality and also the AFP surveillance. The EPI is advised to collect samples from contacts to all AFP cases regardless the adequacy of the samples.

Technical assistance:

As per the Syria outbreak response plan, the following technical assistance is considered.

Purpose	WHO	UNICEF	Status
Overall technical, managerial input and international coordination	1. International Medical Officer for 3 months		In place
For rapid implementation of active AFP surveillance, materials development, training and facilitation of field operations	One international to support the AFP surveillance and coordinate with EWARN system for 3 months		Under recruitment
Planning and implementation of NIDs	One International Technical Officer for 3 months		Under recruitment
Social Mobilization		1 Consultant for 6 months	Under recruitment