

Syrian Arab Republic

Date: 26 December 2013

Situation Report No. 8

Highlights

- No new WPV1 cases were reported in the past week. Two out of ten L20B positive specimens have been reported by the Regional Reference Polio Lab as Sabin Like polioviruses (SL1+SL2+SL3). The other isolates are still pending at the Regional Reference Polio Lab.
- Syria immunization response includes six NIDs rounds. The total vaccinated children during the first round (October-November 2013) and the second round (December 2013) is 2.3 and 2.2 million respectively. The result of the last campaign has been announced by the Minister of Health in a Press Conference on 23/12/2013.
- Five new AFP cases from Aleppo, Hama and Raqa have been reported.
- During the period 22-24 December 2013, the central EPI unit in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF organized a review workshop for the EPI staff, chiefs of Child Health sections and Directors of PHC from all governorates.

Prior to the current outbreak, Syria's last confirmed polio case (due to an imported wild poliovirus) was in 1999. Syria remained polio free till October 2013 when wild poliovirus was confirmed in Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo and Rural Damascus, following importation of wild poliovirus closely related to strains currently circulating in Pakistan. So far, the total number of confirmed polio cases is 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 crisis. 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 as of 26 December.

Epidemiological situation:

Fifteen polio cases from Deir ez-Zor, one case from Rural Damascus and one case from Aleppo governorates are confirmed to date. Most of the cases are below 2 years of age and the male children are more than female children. The table below shows the comparison of the polio cases and non-polio AFP cases by age group.

Age group in months	Polio cases		Non-polio AFP cases	
	No.	%	No.	%
<12	4	24%	20	16%
12-23	9	53%	23	18%
24-35	1	6%	12	9%
36-47	2	12%	13	10%
48-59	0	0%	7	5%
60+	1	6%	54	42%
Total	17	100%	124	100%

All children, except two, had no vaccination or incomplete vaccination. 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

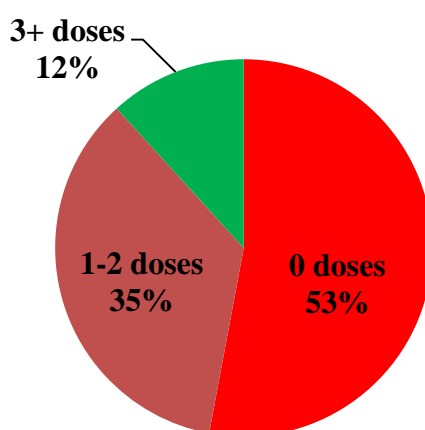
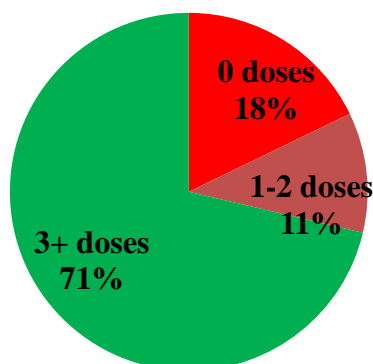
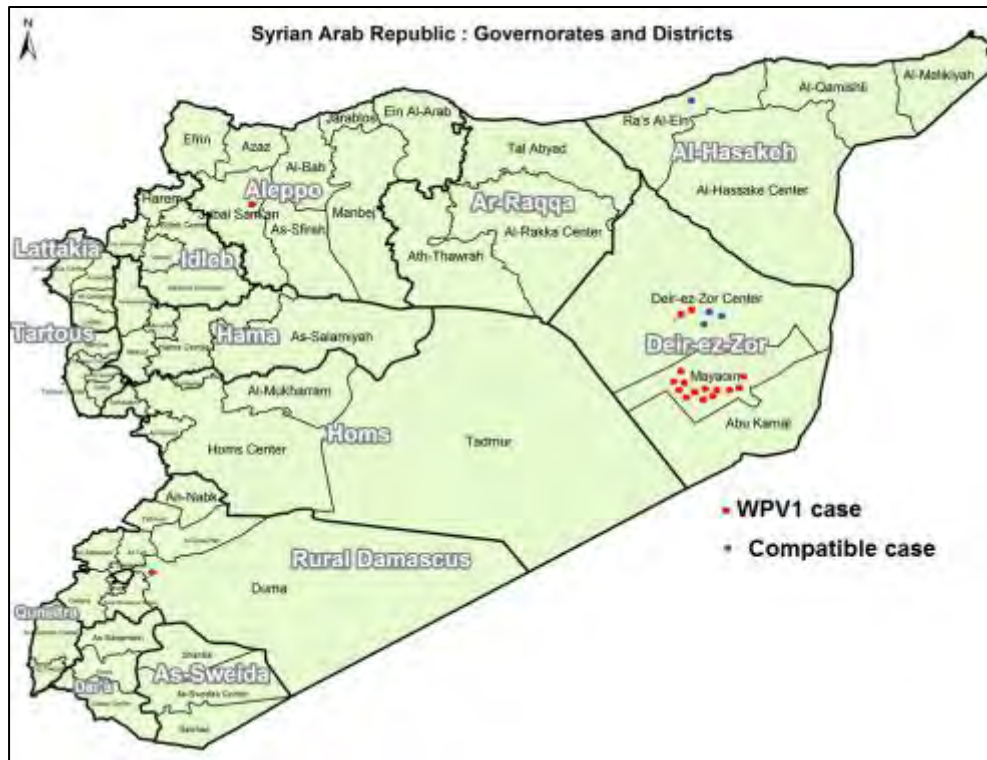


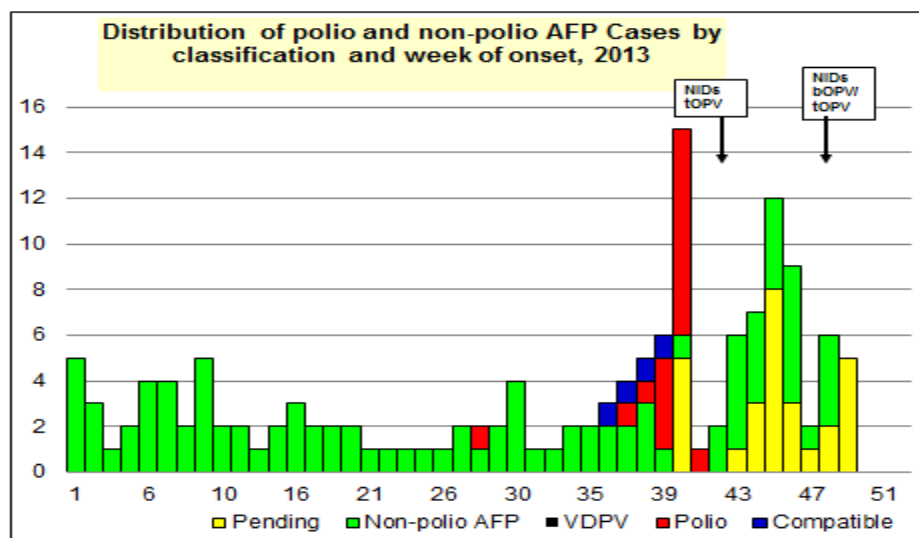
Diagram 2. Immunity profile of the non-polio AFP cases



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



- The earliest onset of the cases detected to date is 14/7/2013 (the case from Aleppo confirmed due to positive contact samples), and the most recent case onset is 8/10/2013 from Mayadeen district, Deir ez-Zor Governorate (see epidemic curve).
- Four compatible cases are classified by the National Expert Committee (3 cases from DZ and one case from Hasakeh) (see the above map). So far, more than two months have passed from the last polio case.



Actions taken so far:

As a response to the initial detection of cases due to wild poliovirus in Deir ez-Zor province and the confirmation of the outbreak on 17 October 2013, the programme undertook the following steps:

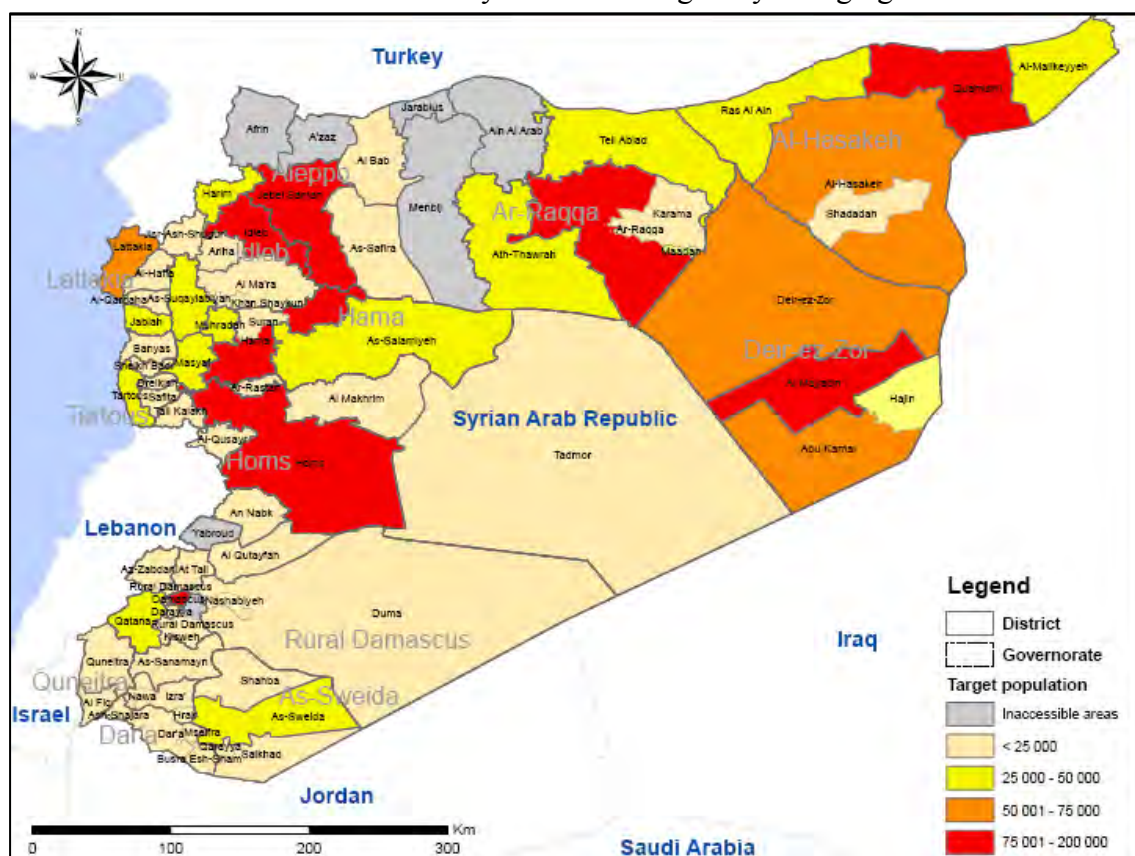
- The information was immediately disseminated to the MOH officials, EPI staff and partners. An urgent meeting was conducted by the EPI Unit with the support of the Director PHC to discuss the situation and identify the immediate activities to be done in response to this outbreak.
- All provinces were informed to be vigilant and enhance the already prepared plan for an immunization campaign in October 2013.
- Coordination with national and international partners has been undertaken 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.
- On 20th November 2013, 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:

- An already planned national immunization campaign using trivalent OPV (tOPV) and measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) was carried out from 24 October to 21 November.
- The total number of the vaccinated children in this first immunization campaign using tOPV was 2.3 million children.
- The second national round using bivalent OPV (bOPV and tOPV) started on 8 December 2013. The plan was to finish on 12 December, but due to heavy snow in several governorates the campaign has been prolonged for additional 3 days.
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- On December, 23rd 2013, the Minister of Health has convened a Press Conference in which he announced the final NIDs result.
- The final result is seen in the below table:

Governorate	Trget	<1 year	% proportion	1-5 yrs	% proportion	Total	% coverage rate
Aleppo	135,318	24,067	24%	74,173	76%	98,240	73%
Al-Hassakeh	241,204	60,161	24%	187,636	76%	247,797	103%
Ar-Raqqa	239,100	51,947	28%	136,229	72%	188,176	79%
As-Sweida	43,260	8,950	19%	38,514	81%	47,464	110%
Damascus	192,157	22,402	23%	76,097	77%	98,499	51%
Dara	93,000	-	0%	-	0%	80,061	86%
Deir-ez-Zor	240,090	-	0%	-	0%	294,360	123%
Hama	279,000	44,196	14%	263,750	86%	307,946	110%
Homs	155,487	28,021	20%	111,322	80%	139,343	90%
Idleb	193,900	51,213	25%	149,787	75%	201,000	104%
Lattakia	122,329	33,513	18%	147,705	82%	181,218	148%
Quneitra	38,000	7,887	21%	29,436	79%	37,323	98%
Rural Damascus	146,570	44,196	22%	158,301	78%	202,497	138%
Tartous	101,813	21,160	19%	90,974	81%	112,134	110%
ANRWA*		2,470	23%	8,234	77%	10,704	
TOTAL	2,221,228	400,183	18%	1,472,158	66%	2,246,762	101%
* Palastenian children							

- Because Dara and DZ governorates received the new tally sheet very late they used the old one which has no age breakdown.
- The achievement above the target could be due to population movement and older children who have been added to the under 5 vaccinated children.
- The estimated target is the accessible target.
- The below map shows the target by district and inaccessible districts as per current information. The accessibility situation is regularly changing.



Surveillance response:

- Active surveillance has been strengthened in all governorates by MOH surveillance officers with the support of the WHO focal points. Daily zero reporting is re-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
- Standard National AFP investigation forms have been sent to hard to reach areas through the partners who have access to those areas.
- The AFP surveillance indicators during this week remained at the same level as for the previous week.
- A coordination meeting was held on 30/11/2013 for two days 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 AFP surveillance. The EPI is advised to collect samples from contacts to all AFP cases regardless the adequacy of the samples.
- Last week, the surveillance system received 5 new AFP cases from Aleppo, Hama and Raqa governorates.
- The Regional Reference Polio Lab reported Sabin-Like polioviruses in two out of ten positive L20B specimens. The remaining specimens are still pending at the Regional Reference Polio Lab.
- A weekly AFP surveillance update is produced separately from this report. The below table shows the main AFP surveillance indicators by governorate up to week 51. The AFP rate reached more than 2 in 7 governorates, 1-1.9 in 2 governorates and 5 governorates are still below 1 per 100,000 children below 15 years of age. The national AFP rate is 1.6 per 100,000 children below 15 years of age. The adequacy rate hit the target (80%+) in 5 governorates while nine governorates failed to reach 80%.

Major AFP surveillance performance indicators, up to W51, 2013

Governorate	U 15 yrs population	Total reported AFP cases	Non-polio AFP cases	Pending classification	Polio	Compatible cases	% Adequate stools	Annualized AFP rate	% NPEV
ALEPPO	1,900,576	13	1	5	0	7	38%	0.6	15%
DAMA SCUS	541,662	13	0	2	0	11	77%	2.4	0%
DARA	477,277	4	0	0	0	4	75%	0.9	0%
DEIR_AL_ZOUR	624,822	46	15	9	3	19	70%	5.1	14%
EDLEB	654,621	8	0	1	0	7	88%	1.2	0%
HAMA	615,257	5	0	1	0	4	100%	0.8	0%
HA SAKEH	591,022	12	0	4	1	7	83%	2.1	8%
HOMS	627,555	7	0	2	0	5	43%	1.14	0%
LATTAKIA	285,110	11	0	0	0	11	100%	3.9	9%
QUNEITERA	38,751	1	0	0	0	1	100%	2.6	0%
RAQUA	449,073	10	0	2	0	8	70%	2.3	0%
RURAL_DAMA SCUS	1,061,892	11	1	2	0	8	73%	1.0	0%
SUWAYDA	106,082	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0.0	0%
TARTOUS	218,871	5	0	0	0	5	60%	2.3	20%
Total	8,192,571	146	17	28	4	97	72%	1.6	9%

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	One 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