

Syrian Arab Republic

Date: 9 January 2014

Situation Report No. 9

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 result.
- 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 preliminary result of January 2014 campaign shows 1.36 million children under 5 were vaccinated.
- Since the last Sit Rep, eleven new AFP cases from Aleppo, Edleb, Hama, Hasaka, Lattakia, Raqqa and Rural Damascus have been reported.
- During the period 4-8 January 2014, two senior WHO/Polio Eradication officers visited Damascus. The purpose was to lead a seminar with the Syrian pediatricians on polio outbreak response. The seminar has been organized on 5/1/2014.

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 9 January 2014.

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%	21	15%
12-23	9	53%	25	18%
24-35	1	6%	13	9%
36-47	2	12%	15	11%
48-59	0	0%	9	6%
60+	1	6%	57	41%
Total	17	100%	140	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

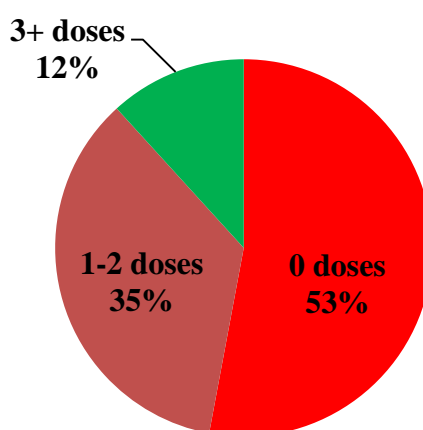
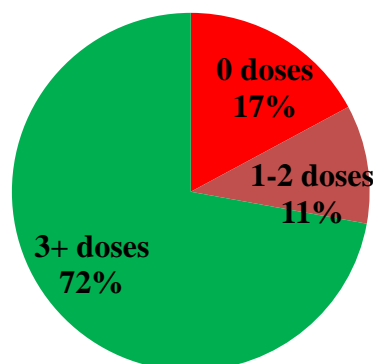
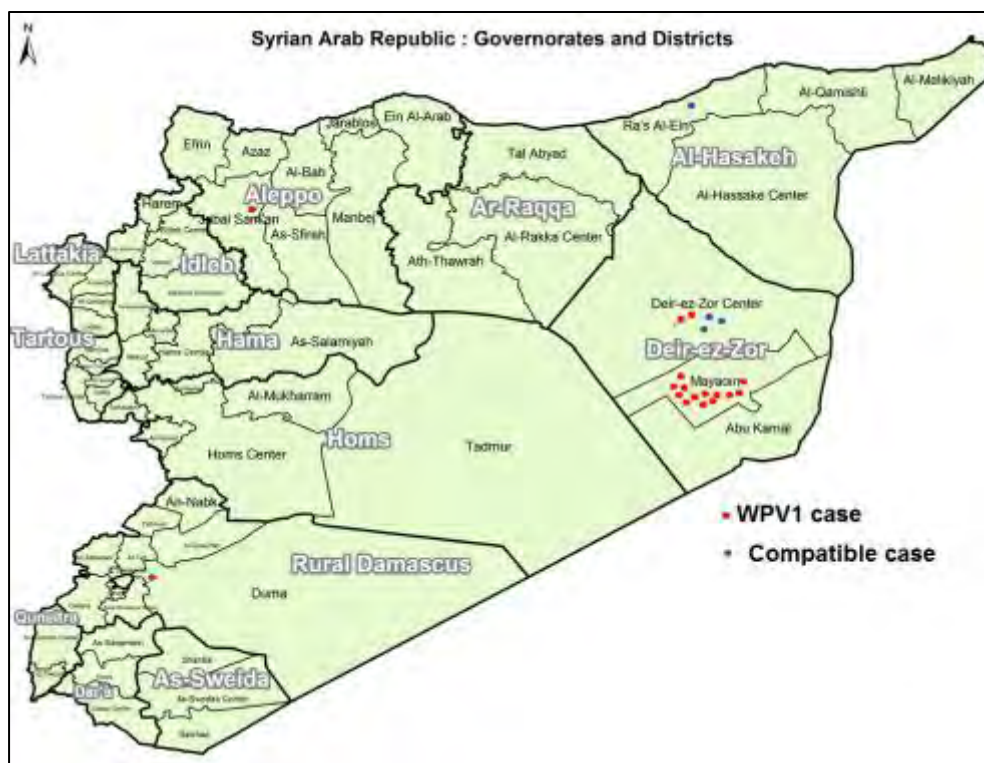


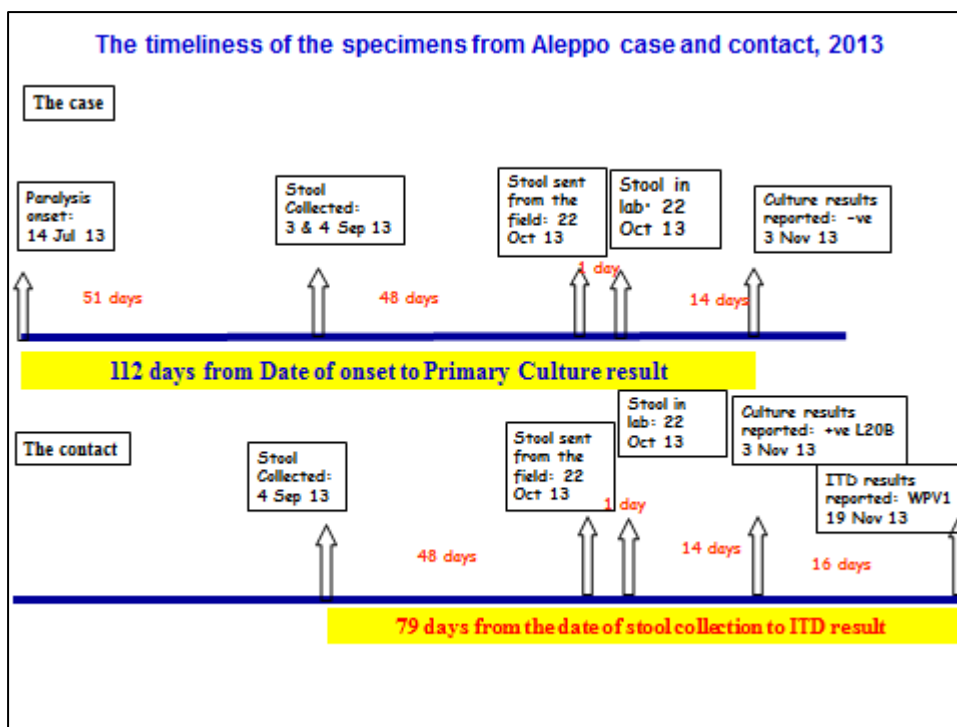
Diagram 2. Immunity profile of the non-polio AFP cases



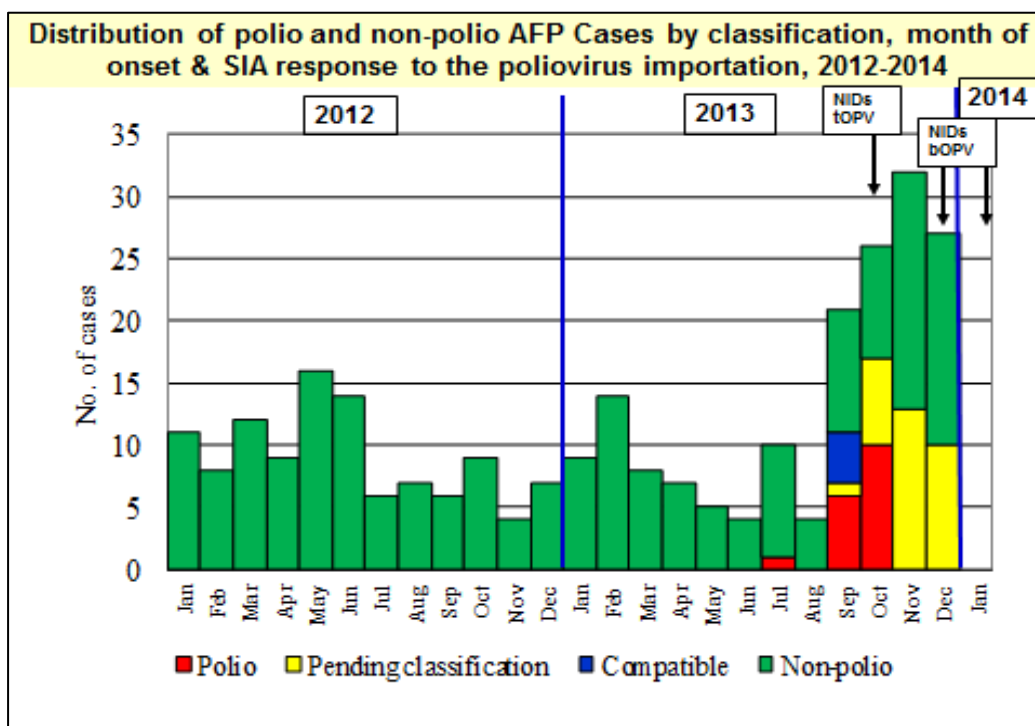
- The 17 polio cases occurred in 4 districts. These are Mayadeen, Deir ez-Zor, Douma and Fardous districts (see the below spot map).



- 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). The delay of confirmation of the index case was due to insecurity that prevented the surveillance staff in Aleppo to send the samples to the polio lab in Damascus. The timeliness of the samples from the case and the contact is seen the graph below:



- 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 and two NIDs rounds using bOPV were implemented after the last polio case (see graph below).



Actions taken so far:

As a response to the initial detection of cases due to wild poliovirus in 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.
- 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.
- UNICEF provided 25 cold rooms with generators, 200 cold box, 50,000 safety box, 500 Vaccine carriers, 2,000 thermometer and freeze tags to strengthen cold chain system.
- Two senior officers from the Global WHO Polio Eradication Initiative (Chris Maher and Rudi Tangerman) visited Syria during the period 4-8 January 2014. This visit came as a response to an invitation from Syrian MOH. The main purpose of the visit was to lead a seminar on polio outbreak response in Syria. The target audiences were the Syrian pediatricians. The seminar was conveyed on 5/1/2014. Additional advocacy visits and interviews with the local media were also undertaken by the both officers.

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.

- On December, 23rd 2013, the Minister of Health has convened a Press Conference in which he announced the final NIDs result. HE the Minister announced that 2.177 million children under 5 years of age have been vaccinated in the 14 governorates.
- The last NIDs campaign has been implemented during the period 5-9 January 2014. The supervisors observed the improvement of the campaign quality in comparison to the December round. The total number of vaccinated children is 1.36 million children as per the preliminary result of the campaign.

Communication response:

A communication plan was developed in consultation with MoH, UNICEF and WHO. The key strategies included:

- Advocacy
- Mass communication (mass media and social media)
- Community mobilization
- IEC
- Capacity building
- Monitoring, research and documentation

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 facilitated 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.
- The Regional Reference Polio Lab reported Sabin-Like polioviruses in two out of ten positive L20B specimens. The remaining specimens are still pending for ITD analysis.
- A weekly AFP surveillance update is produced separately from this report. The below table shows the main AFP surveillance indicators by governorate for 2013. The AFP

rate reached more than 2 in 7 governorates, 1-1.9 in 4 governorates and 3 governorates are still below 1 per 100,000 children below 15 years of age. The national AFP rate is 1.7 per 100,000 children below 15 years of age. The adequacy rate hit the target (80%+) in 4 governorates while ten governorates failed to reach 80%.

Major AFP surveillance performance indicators, up to 2013

Governorate	U 15 yrs population	Total reported AFP cases	Polio	Pending classification	Compatible cases	Non-polio AFP cases	% Adequate stools	Annualized AFP rate	% NPEV
ALEPPO	1,900,576	14	1	6	0	7	36%	0.7	21%
DAMASCUS	541,662	13	0	1	0	12	77%	2.4	0%
DARA	477,277	4	0	0	0	4	75%	0.8	0%
DEIR AL ZOUR	624,822	46	15	8	3	20	70%	5.0	14%
EDLEB	654,621	10	0	2	0	8	90%	1.5	11%
HAMA	615,257	7	0	1	0	6	100%	1.1	0%
HASAKEH	591,022	13	0	4	1	8	77%	2.2	8%
HOMS	627,555	7	0	2	0	5	43%	1.12	0%
LATAKIA	285,110	14	0	2	0	12	100%	4.9	7%
QUNEITERA	38,751	1	0	0	0	1	100%	2.6	0%
RAQUA	449,073	11	0	2	0	9	73%	2.4	9%
RURAL DAMASCUS	1,061,892	12	1	3	0	8	75%	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	157	17	31	4	105	73%	1.7	10%

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	One international technical expert 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	One International Technical Officer	Under recruitment

Social mobilization		1 international officer for 6 months	Under recruitment
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