

Kabul, January 29, 2018

The Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan, together with WHO and UNICEF, launched a Sub-National Immunization Days (SNID) campaign today to vaccinate over 6.1 million children under the age of 5 against polio, in high-risk districts in 21 provinces of Afghanistan.

The campaign will be conducted in all provinces of Southern and South-eastern regions, most districts in the Eastern region as well as selected high-risk districts across the country, including Kabul city. The campaign will also be carried out in two districts of Baghlan Province - Baghlan-Jadid and Khost-Fering – which were inaccessible during a vaccination round held in last December. In those two districts 87,000 children will be vaccinated.

“The fact that we have intense circulation of polio wild virus, particularly in southern and eastern regions of the country, highlights the urgency of making sure that every single child under the age of 5 is vaccinated during every campaign. We must all play our part in ensuring that our children are healthy and stay protected from polio,” said Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz.

During the campaign, over 50,000 trained polio workers will go from house to house in their communities to vaccinate children. On Friday, polio teams will re-visit households where children were missed the first time the vaccinators visited to ensure that all children are vaccinated and protected.

The polio vaccine is safe and it does not have any side effects, even for sleeping or sick children and newborns. Polio vaccine has also been strongly endorsed by national and global Islamic scholars.

So far in 2018, Afghanistan has already seen one case of polio, in Kama District of Nangarhar Province, where a 16-month-old girl was affected by the disease. The campaign beginning today is the first of about 10 national and sub-national vaccination campaigns that will occur throughout 2018. The goal of these efforts is to completely eradicate polio from Afghanistan this year.

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