



KABUL, 13 December 2021 - The fourth round of a national polio immunization campaign begins this week (13–16 December 2021), and will be synchronized with Pakistan to improve cross-border polio eradication efforts. The campaign targets 9.9 million children aged 0–59 months across the country and is scheduled to start later this month in some parts of the country, including in the south and east, and in the provinces of Paktia and Ghazni in the south-east, Ghor in the west, and Balkh in the north.

This is the second campaign this year to reach children in areas previously inaccessible to the polio programme. A campaign in November 2021 delivered polio vaccinations to 8.5 million

children under the age of five, including 2.4 million children who were vaccinated for the first time in over three years.

“We are intensifying efforts to reach the maximum number of children across the country, but we need sustained access to rapidly build immunity against polio, especially in areas we have not been able to reach in the last few years,” said Dr Dapeng Luo, WHO Representative in Afghanistan. “The November campaign was a massive leap forward and the upcoming campaign will further strengthen the progress we are making. Six more campaigns are planned for 2022 and we must ensure they are implemented in a timely fashion and reach all children,” he said.

To date, 2021 has been the year with the lowest polio transmission in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. This provides a great opportunity to interrupt transmission of wild poliovirus and achieve eradication.

Four wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases have been reported in the country so far this year. The first WPV1 case of 2021 was reported in January 2021 from Ghazni province in the south-east of the country, while the other three cases were reported in October and November from Kunduz province in the north-east.

The polio programme has put urgent measures in place to boost immunity in Kunduz and other high-risk areas to stop the polio outbreak and protect children from this crippling but preventable disease.

“Immunization is one of the most cost-effective public health interventions, saving children’s lives and contributing to a better future for Afghan children,” said Alice Akunga, UNICEF Representative a.i. “We must intensify our efforts to reach all children, especially those in greatest need, in order to bring polio disease under control,” she said.

Frontline workers are the pillar of successful vaccination drives. The polio programme is calling on all leaders, stakeholders and communities to ensure the safety of all frontline workers for the successful implementation of the campaign.

Monday 29th of April 2024 12:50:49 PM