



Baghdad, 1 October 2019 – The Ministry of Health of Iraq, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, began the first phase of a polio national immunization days campaign on 29 September 2019 in Karbala in the south of Iraq.

Senior officials of the Ministry of Health, acting WHO Representative in Iraq Dr Adham R Ismail Abdel Moniem and UNICEF Representative Ms Hamida Lasseko officially launched the 5-day campaign, which aims to vaccinate more than 2.6 million children under the age of 5 in 10 governorates countrywide.

“Keeping Iraq polio-free remains a major priority for WHO and its partners. We continue to do everything we can to maintain this great achievement; this campaign is essential and critical to doing so, as well as to minimizing the risk of any potential importation of poliovirus in the country,” said Dr Adham Ismail.

Vaccines are the safest and most effective way to protect children against preventable killer diseases, and the campaign is a centerpiece of the Ministry of Health’s work to ensure that every Iraqi child is immunized and no child is left behind.



WHO is supporting health authorities with micro-planning, execution, supervision, and monitoring the vaccination exercise among communities in rural, urban and hard-to-reach areas. Special focus will be placed on children who missed their vaccination in the past. WHO will also support with the post-evaluation phase of the campaign.

In addition, WHO is supporting more than 13 000 vaccinators and over 1300 supervisors who are administering the vaccines door to door. WHO is also deploying 10 WHO polio/immunization surge staff to the field to monitor the campaign's roll out.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the vaccines are stored properly and in accordance with international standards. UNICEF provided high quality storage and a digital system that monitors the temperature of the vaccines 24 hours a day.

“Quality health care for every child, including immunization, is enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and we must ensure that every boy and girl is able to practise this right. The health care and nutrition that a child receives during his or her first 5 years is crucial to their lifelong development,” explained Ms Lasseko.

In the lead up to the campaign, UNICEF-supported field staff went house to house, tent to tent, to raise awareness among parents and caretakers on the importance of vaccinating their children in keeping them healthy and lowering the chances of disease outbreaks to parents and caretakers.

This phase of the campaign covers 81 districts in the 10 governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk, Ninawa, Kirkuk, Salahaddin, Anbar, Wassit, Kerbala and Najaf. The second phase of the campaign will take place in November 2019.

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