Rolling out this powerful supplementary surveillance tool to more of the country has enhanced capacity in Sudan to detect and respond to poliovirus.

30 November 2021 – Until last year, environmental surveillance for polioviruses in Sudan was confined to Khartoum State, the country's capital. In the context of a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) outbreak that has paralysed 58 children, collaboration between Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health, the National Polio Laboratory and WHO colleagues across the Region has expanded the practice from five sites in this one state, to 14 sites in seven states.

A Federal Ministry of Health employee collects wastewater samples from one of the environmental surveillance sites in Khartoum

Environmental surveillance is the practice of testing sewage runoff for the presence of viruses and other pathogens. Depending on the immunity levels of children in any given community, poliovirus can circulate for a long time without paralysing a child, making environmental surveillance one of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's most important surveillance tools.

Sudan's environmental surveillance expansion plan has brought the practice to West Darfur, North Darfur, East Darfur, Red Sea, White Nile and Gezira states – all areas with frequent mass population movement. With polio outbreaks in multiple neighbouring countries, it is crucial to enhance the surveillance measures in place to detect any importation and respond to it as quickly as possible.