

KHARTOUM, 22 December 2022 – On 16 December 2022, a case of a variant type 2 poliovirus (cVDPV2) was confirmed in a young boy aged four years in West Darfur, Sudan. The virus detected is most closely related to a strain circulating in Borno, Nigeria, in 2021, and is unrelated to the poliovirus variant that affected Sudan in 2020 and which was successfully closed in September 2022.

Within 24 hours of the new confirmed case, the Sudan Federal Ministry of Health, with the support of World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other partners, led field investigations to assess the extent of circulation of the virus and started preparations for the appropriate outbreak response. Per international guidance and experience, response vaccination campaigns are being planned, along with the strengthening of surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and suspected poliomyelitis to ensure rapid detection of any transmission.

“In 2020, during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sudan reported its first few cases of variant type 2 poliovirus. At that time, despite multiple health emergencies, we mobilized all our resources to reach children with polio vaccine in nationwide campaigns to successfully stop the outbreak. We have complete confidence in our health workers and health systems to stop this outbreak, as well,” says Dr Dalya Eltayeb, Director General for Primary Health Care, Federal Ministry of Health, Sudan.

Sudan successfully mounted a robust response to the 2020 poliovirus outbreak with two high-quality campaigns across all 18 states, vaccinating more than 8 million children under five. Efforts were made at district, state and federal level to improve surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis. Sudan’s environmental surveillance programme, the testing of wastewater for poliovirus, was also expanded to 14 sites.

The presence of just one infected child places children across the country at incredible risk. Given the ongoing population movement within the country and across international borders, active polio outbreaks in neighbouring countries and low immunity to type 2 poliovirus, there is a high risk of transmission and international spread. This new outbreak underlines the importance of strong routine immunization systems, in addition to supplementary vaccination activities, to protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Sudan can protect all its children from preventable diseases by immunizing all its children.

More details on the upcoming vaccination campaigns will be communicated by the Federal Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF.

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