



Khartoum, Sudan, 17 July 2018 - Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched a national immunization campaign to maintain the country's polio-free status.

The National Immunization Days (NID) will be conducted over two phases, with a target of reaching a total of 4.2 million children under five years of age.

The first phase, which aims to reach every child under five with the vaccine, will take place from 16-18 July 2018, covering ten states and approximately three million children in 79 localities with oral polio vaccine (OPV).

"The Government of Sudan has committed itself to keep Sudan polio-free meeting the international community goal. This is part of ensuring overall health security," said His Excellency Ustad Bahar Idris Abu Garda, the Federal Minister of Health. "Our deep appreciation goes to the thousands of Sudanese health volunteers, the UN and other health partners, as well as the international community, for continuing their support for immunization services in Sudan. Their additional assistance during this important polio campaign is key to ensuring children in Sudan have access to these life-saving vaccines."

"Keeping Sudan polio-free has been a major strategic priority for WHO, the Government, and health partners," says Dr. Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO Representative in Sudan. "Our biggest challenge now is to ensure sensitive surveillance system is in place to detect and effectively respond to any potential circulation of polio, particularly given the outbreaks in the Horn of Africa. Hence with the support of WHO, we are establishing environmental surveillance to

supplement the existing system. So far, with the committed leadership of the Government, support from donors and strong collaboration among partners, we have been able to consistently reach over 90 percent of targeted children annually since 2009”.

During this polio campaign, approximately 23,490 health workers will step-up efforts to conduct house-to-house visits to administer more than 4 million doses of the vaccine to children under five to re-enforce their immunity against wild poliovirus.

“Every child in Sudan has the right to equal protection from this dreadful disease,” says Mr. Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Sudan. “UNICEF remains committed to actively contributing towards maintaining Sudan a polio-free country and we are confident that under the continued leadership of the Ministry of Health, the engagement of donor partners, the commitment of health actors and everyday heroes in the field, Sudan can continue contributing to the global efforts to attain a polio-free world.”

Sudan was announced polio-free in 2015 by WHO and has reported no cases of polio since March 2009. However, it continues to be among the region’s polio ‘high risk’ due to vulnerable populations living in many parts of the country.

WHO, UNICEF and non-governmental health partners continue to provide a range of support functions to the Ministry of Health to combat polio within Sudan’s borders and increase vaccination coverage in the country.

All polio health partners in Sudan acknowledge the generous donor support already received, notably from the Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation, Rotary International, GAVI, as well as support from the Department for International Development (DFID)-United Kingdom, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation. However, critical immediate and longer-term funding gaps continue to exist. The Federal Ministry of Health, the WHO, and UNICEF appeal to the wider international community to support their efforts to ensure millions of children in Sudan receive life-saving interventions, including polio and routine immunization.

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WHO is a specialized public health organization mandated to provide the most reliable and evidence-based technical assistance, strategic and operational guidance to countries worldwide.

WHO works closely with Sudan's Ministry of Health and related sectors on daily bases to identify priorities and guide the health sector on preparedness, effective and efficient response to health and health care requirements.

For more information on WHO and its work in Sudan, visit: <http://www.emro.who.int/countries/sdn/index.html>

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UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with

our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

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