



25 January 2021 – Khartoum | As the world is gearing up for mass vaccination for their populations to slow the global COVID-19 pandemic, Sudan launched a different, yet equally important, nationwide vaccination campaign against polio targeting more than 8 million children.

The second vaccination round, led by the Federal Ministry of Health and supported by WHO and UNICEF, aims to give all children under the age of 5 additional protection to fight off the disease. During the first round, implemented in November, health workers and polio vaccinators administered polio vaccines to more than 8.2 million children.

“We must build on the successes of the first campaign to ensure we reach even more children in this new round campaign,” Dr Nima Saeed Abid, the WHO Representative in Sudan.

“It is unacceptable that children suffer life-long disability due to an absolutely avoidable cause (polio), while there is a safe, effective and available vaccine.”

During this mass immunization campaigns, vaccinators aim to reach more than 95% of children in order to build population immunity and halt the spread of the poliovirus. Parents are also being encouraged to get their children vaccinated with inactivated polio vaccine through routine immunization.

“We know that children will only have full immunity once they have been vaccinated multiple times. I urge all parents to continue to support our efforts during the second vaccination campaign, so we can protect every child and defeat this outbreak.”

After being polio-free country for 11 years, disease detectives in Sudan confirmed an outbreak of [circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 \(cVDPV2\)](#) in August 2020. cVDPV2 is a type of the poliovirus that emerges in communities with low immunity to polio.

Across the country* this week vaccinators are heading out onto city streets, along dusty rural roads, and visiting health facilities and internally displaced persons camps to ensure that no child is missed. In addition to oral polio vaccines, vitamin A will be delivered during the four-day campaign. Vaccinators will follow strict COVID-19 precaution measures, including mask wearing, hand hygiene and no touch vaccination methods.

Building on round one: reaching vulnerable populations

In the first round the programme worked closely to ensure marginalized and underserved communities as well as children of Ethiopian refugees settled in east Sudan, were included in microplans. For the first time in ten years, children were reached in Gorlangbang, in South Jebel Marra, a mountainous area in the south west of the country which has been frequently affected by conflict, as well as in Ulu of Baw locality in Blue Nile state.

Additional routine immunization services were provided at the camps for new arrivals, to ensure that all children are fully vaccinated against preventable diseases including measles and polio. Children were also reached by routine immunization acceleration campaigns in November and December 2020.

“The first round of the vaccination campaign was a test of the field staff’s tenacity to ensure no child was left behind,” Dr Nima said. “We are completely focused on our mission: to ensure that every child is reached with polio vaccine.”

** The campaign will start later in West Dafur state due to ongoing conflict.*

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