

9 December 2011 – In a final push to eradicate poliomyelitis (polio) from South Sudan, the Ministry of Health and its partners, UNICEF and WHO, have launched the first of four rounds of a polio national immunization campaign. The "Kick polio out of South Sudan" campaign will take place from 13 to 16 December.

Dr Makur Maker Karion, Undersecretary of Health, thanked the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), UNICEF, USAID, Rotary International and WHO for their support to immunization campaigns. These had ensured that no cases were reported in the past 31 months, paving the way for South Sudan to become a polio-free.

He noted that while significant progress had been made in the effort to eradicate polio from South Sudan, population movements, low routine immunization coverage and limited access to conflict areas continued to pose challenges to the eradication process.

Dr Abdi Mohammed, WHO Head of Office, said that South Sudan had experienced a wild polio virus outbreak in 2008/2009 which left 64 children paralyzed by the polio virus nationwide. This had triggered a vigorous response from the Ministry of Health and WHO. Since the last outbreak in 2008, WHO has supported the Ministry of Health in conducting 22 national immunization days and 5 state national immunization days.

Dr Abdi noted that the current campaign was the first of four rounds taking place in all 10 states of South Sudan. House-to-house immunization will target over 3.2 million children under the age of five.

As a result of these joint efforts, South Sudan has not reported any case of wild polio virus for more than 31 continuous months, with the last case being reported from Aweil West county, Northern Bahr El Ghazal state, in June 2009.

Dr Abdi stated that in order to maintain this remarkable achievement, efforts must be made to ensure that no polio virus is allowed into the country. This can be achieved by maintaining a high immunity profile among all children less than five years of age in South Sudan.

WHO is committed to eradicating polio from South Sudan, and is concerned at ongoing polio transmission, which it views as a global public health emergency. Eradication requires full implementation of eradication strategies with strong national oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Saturday 11th of May 2024 08:25:32 AM