

Yemen's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) uses routine immunization to protect children under one year of age from life-threatening diseases, including diphtheria, cholera and polio.

Supplementary immunization activities are being implemented to mitigate a host of complexities brought on by the ongoing conflict, such as malnutrition, healthcare access challenges, population movements, and changes in the transmission patterns of vaccine-preventable diseases. In the past few months, additional immunization activities have been held to protect people at particular risk of diphtheria and cholera.

With the support of local health authorities, WHO continues to remain vigilant through the disease detection and alert activities carried out by Health Rapid Response Teams. These mobile teams work to detect, assess, alert and respond to potential public health threats by investigating the situation and quickly supplying the appropriate public health response to reduce the risk of an outbreak.

Diphtheria vaccination update: Between 28 July and 5 September, Yemen concluded a diphtheria campaign in 6 governorates. Penta vaccine was administered to 1 215 771 children between the ages of 6 weeks and 5 years. At the same time, 2 190 423 children between the ages of 5 and 15 years received Td (tetanus and diphtheria) vaccine. This was the second campaign to protect children from this deadly disease.

Cholera vaccination update: On 14 September, local health authorities along with WHO and UNICEF launched the second round of the oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaign in 3 districts in the capital of Sana'a deemed at highest risk for cholera. The campaign will last until 23 September. During this house-to-house campaign, 1.4 million doses will be delivered by approximately 1500 mobile teams to families living in the priority areas. An additional 224 teams will work from health centres to serve those who prefer to go to their local health facility to receive OCV. People one year of age should receive OCV.

Polio update: Yemen is considered to be polio-free, and has not seen a case of wild or vaccine-derived polio for several years. All cases of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) tested from 2018 to 2019 in the country were negative for polioviruses. In Taiz governorate, WHO is currently investigating the cause of 3 cases of paralysis reported in local media, including by

taking stool samples and speaking to the families of the children affected to determine their health history. This is routine practice for the poliovirus surveillance system, with hundreds of suspected cases investigated by the polio team in Yemen every year.

In the coming months, WHO will be conducting an EPI review to evaluate the current status of the programme and strengthen existing systems for the purpose of optimizing health service delivery. Immunization, along with a robust and integrated approach focused on disease prevention activities, is a proven means of reducing the burden of vaccine-preventable diseases in Yemen.

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