



A target of 4.5 million children in Sudan administered with the oral polio vaccine in November's subnational immunization campaign

Khartoum, 14 November 2018 – Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has launched a three-day subnational immunization days campaign, taking place on 12–14 November 2018, to maintain the country's polio-free status.

The campaign aimed to administer the oral polio vaccine to 4.5 million children under five years of age in addition to 2 million doses of vitamin A to children of 6–59 months of age to strengthen their immune system and prevent blindness in the long term. The campaign covered 133 localities in 16 out of Sudan's 18 states.

“Keeping Sudan polio-free has been a major strategic priority for WHO, the Government, and health partners,” said Dr. Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO Representative in Sudan. “Our biggest challenge now, in addition to sustaining sensitivity of the surveillance system, is the sub-optimal immunity among children moving across the borders, particularly given the outbreaks in the Horn of Africa. 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% of targeted children annually since 2009”, Dr Naeema added.



WHO checks the polio vaccine and storage temperature with one mobile vaccination team in east Nile locality in Khartoum. WHO Photo “Every girl and boy in Sudan should have the right to equal protection from this crippling and sometimes fatal disease”, said Mr Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Sudan. “We are certainly moving towards a polio-free world for children. In Sudan we have to keep going until not a single child remains unvaccinated anywhere in the country. We call on all partners to work together to increase the community awareness, and to encourage families to actively seek vaccination for their children through campaigns and most importantly through routine immunization”, Mr Fadil added.

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’ countries due to vulnerable populations living in many parts of the country.

WHO and UNICEF, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Health and other partners, remain committed to maintaining Sudan as a polio-free country, and will continue to ensure oral polio vaccine is available for every child in the country and to enhance cross-border coordination.

All polio health partners in Sudan acknowledge the generous donor support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Rotary International, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as support from the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Supporting the polio transition in Sudan is a shared responsibility and needs to mobilize domestic resources. However, critical immediate and longer-term funding gaps continue to exist. The Federal Ministry of Health, alongside 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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Sunday 19th of May 2024 09:52:56 PM