

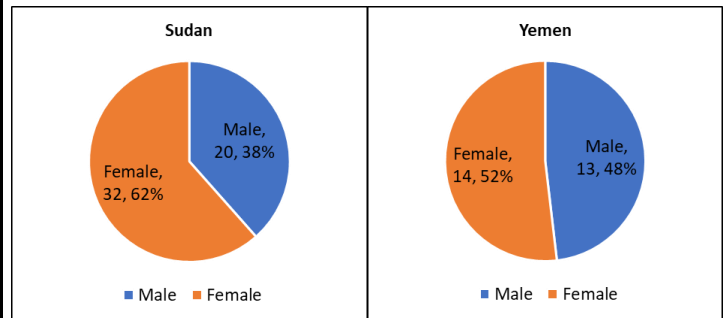


SITUATION UPDATE

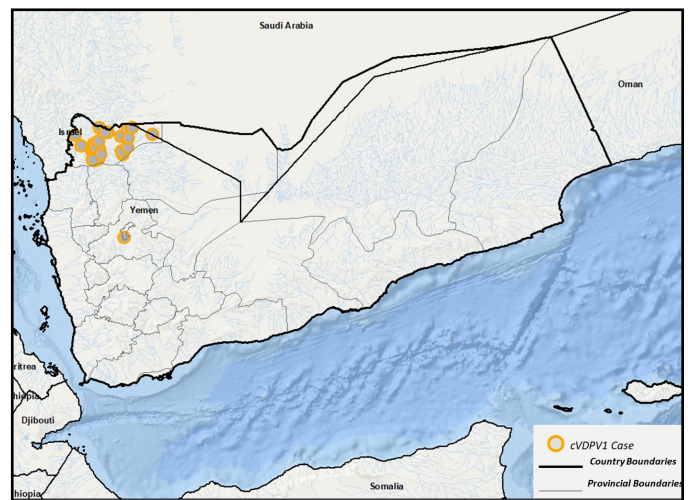
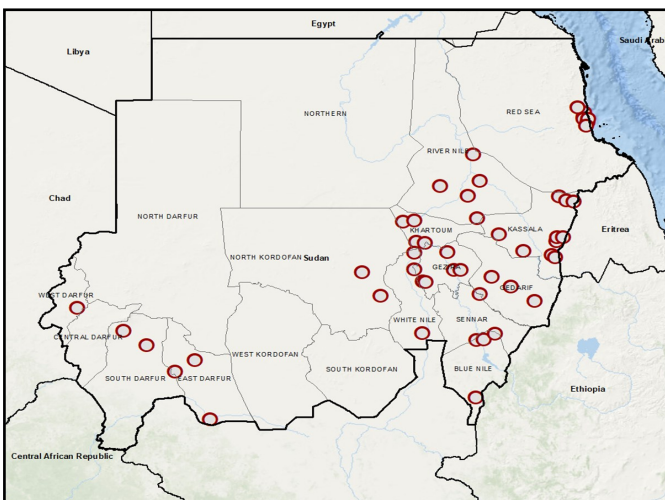
- The polio eradication programme continues to respond to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV) outbreaks in the EMR (WHO) – MENA (UNICEF) regions.
- Four new cases of cVDPV2 have been reported from **Sudan**, taking the total number of children paralysed in the outbreak to 52. The last situation report (week 51 2020, Issue 7) misreported the total number as 53 due to discrepancy in the data.
- Eight (8) new cases of cVDPV1 have been reported in **Yemen**, taking the total number of children paralysed in 2020 to 27. The newly confirmed cases have an onset of paralysis from June and July 2020.
- Both **Sudan** and **Yemen** have completed initial vaccination rounds in response to the outbreaks. Country programmes are preparing for continued vaccination activities in January 2021.
- In December 2020, **Iran** reported a VDPV2 positive environmental sample from Zahedan district, Sistan and Balochistan province. The isolate is genetically linked to ongoing transmission in **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan**. Genetic sequencing has confirmed that the new isolate is unrelated to an earlier VDPV2 that was detected in an environmental sample in neighboring Zabol district, reflecting separate importations. The GPEI's Advisory Group has approved the use of mOPV2 following the submission of a detailed risk analysis.

Details of the most recent cVDPV cases and sex distribution of cases in 2020

	Sudan: cVDPV2	Yemen: cVDPV1
Date of onset of paralysis	29 November	6 August
Location	Red Sea	Sa'adah governorate
Child age	27 months	144 months
Sex	Female	Female
Known immunization status	<u>Routine:</u> IPV and 3 doses of OPV <u>SIA:</u> 4 doses OPV	<u>Routine:</u> Zero OPV/ IPV <u>SIA:</u> 1 dose OPV



Distribution of cVDPV2 in Sudan and cVDPV1 in Yemen, 2020



Surveillance:

Sudan:

- Of the most recently reported cVDPV2 cases, one case has been reported from Red Sea, Blue Nile, Kassala and Khartoum states, with dates of onset of paralysis between 6 and 29 November.
- A total of 52 cases across 13 states have been confirmed as cVDPV2 since the start of the outbreak. Enhanced surveillance activities have detected positive contacts of AFP cases and healthy children with the virus.
- The National Polio Lab has reopened and is processing AFP and environmental samples following its closure in December due to lab personnel testing positive for COVID-19.
- No new detections have been confirmed from environmental samples from Khartoum; cVDPV2 has been confirmed in 11 samples collected up to September 2020. Samples are pending from three consecutive environmental sample collections in weeks 41, 46, 50.

Yemen:

- All eight (8) of the new cVDPV1 cases reported in **Yemen** are from Sa'adah governorate. These newly confirmed cases have an onset of paralysis in June and July 2020. The total number of children paralysed since the outbreak was detected is 28, including one case from 2019.
- On 1 January, 346 AFP samples were delivered to the Central Public Health Laboratory in Muscat. These samples are pending testing in the lab.
- WHO continues to work towards initiating environmental surveillance in Yemen in Sana'a, Aden, Hudaidah and Sa'adah governorates.

Iran:

- On 27 December a VDPV2 isolate was confirmed from an environmental sample from Zahidan district, Sistan and Balochistan province, **Iran**. Sequencing data reflects that this isolate is genetically linked to ongoing transmission in **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan**.
- This recent VDPV2 isolate is unrelated to an earlier VDPV2 that was detected in an environmental sample in neighboring Zabol district.
- Available data shows that although the confirmed VDPV2 isolates are from the same emergence (PAK-GB-1), the isolates are from different lineages (chains), and reflect separate importations. Therefore, the situation does not meet the definition of local circulation of cVDPV2 isolates.
- Enhanced surveillance activities are ongoing.

Case Response Preparedness and Implementation update:

Sudan:

- The first nationwide vaccination campaign was conducted in November 2020 in response to the outbreak. According to post-campaign monitoring data, 8,280,411 children were reached with mOPV2 (98% of the target).
- During the round children under five were reached in previously inaccessible areas of the country, including 2,799 children under five who were reached in the Ulu area in Blue Nile state after 11 years of inaccessibility.
- Newly arrived refugees from Ethiopia were reached during the campaign. A total of 5,418 children under five were reached in Gedarif (3,757) and Kassala (1,661) states. Intensified routine immunization campaigns continue to target these populations.
- Preparations continue for the second nationwide campaign which is tentatively scheduled to begin on 18 January.
- Funds are available in-country and some pre-campaign activities are underway. Vaccines and other logistics were received at the central level in December.

Yemen:

- The first case response vaccination activities were completed in November and December 2020. This includes an Integrated Health Services Outreach Campaign in Sa'adah governate, the epicentre for the outbreak, and a standard house to house bOPV campaign in the remaining 22 governorates.
- Over 5 million children under the age of five years (86% of the target) were vaccinated in the house to house campaign in Yemen's 22 governorates.

- In the Integrated Outreach in Sa'adah 79% coverage was achieved (of the 1,228,360 children under the age of 15) for OPV, while 74% coverage for the measles vaccine.
- The next vaccination opportunity for children in Yemen will be a sub-national house to house immunization round in January, planned in 14 northern governorates. Integrated outreach activities are also planned in Sa'adah governorate. Dates of these rounds are yet to be confirmed.
- A source of funding for the subsequent integrated outreach rounds is being finalized in-country.

Iran

- In response to the detection of VDPV2, the GPEI's Advisory Group has approved the use of mOPV2 for two vaccination response rounds in 19 districts across Sistan & Balochistan province and eight contiguous districts in two neighbouring provinces.
- The total number of children under five years targeted for the activity is 515,587.
- The rounds are tentatively scheduled for February and March.

Vaccine logistics:

Sudan:

- Almost 10 million doses of mOPV2 have been received in the National Cold Store in Sudan in December. Vaccines have been kept safely in freezer rooms and under restricted access ahead of the next nationwide round.
- Vaccine management supplies have been procured by UNICEF and dispatched to the EPI national cold store, ready to be distributed to the states.
- UNICEF has also secured the full bundle of vitamin A supplies (Vitamin A, plastic bags and scissors), which will be added to the second round of the campaign; UNICEF is planning for additional teams required to ensure the quality of campaign with this additional workload.
- The logistic plan is in place to distribute campaign supplies to all states from 11 January. Supply dispatch will start with Darfur states.
- Guidelines, training, tally sheets and related materials have been reviewed and updated to reflect the added interventions and also to overcome the weakness related to the first-round implementation.
- Eight freezers are available at the central level to address any emerging gaps in cold chain capacity at the state level for round 2.
- Personal protective equipment has been released to the Federal Ministry of Health and is in the process of being cleared from the airport ahead of the next round.

Yemen:

- A shipment of 3.52 million doses of OPV arrived in Yemen on 6 January ahead of the January sub-national immunization days that are planned in northern governorates. More than 783,100 doses of MR vaccine for routine immunization were part of the same shipment.
- WHO is providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for the January sub-national round. Local procurement is under process and will be directly delivered by the supplier to the relevant northern governorates.
- UNICEF is working to ensure the appropriate provision/distribution of PPE for those engaged in social mobilization activities in subsequent rounds.



Teams in Sudan recount and validate vials of mOPV2 following the first outbreak response vaccination round. Photo: UNICEF/Sudan



bOPV and ice packs pictured inside a vaccine carrier in Yemen during the first outbreak response vaccination round in November 2020. Photo: WHO/Yemen

Risk Communication and Community Engagement:

Sudan:

- UNICEF, together with the Health Promotion Directorate has updated the Health Promoters training manual, terms of reference and selection criteria have been updated in preparation for the second round.
- Two Health Promoters will be deployed in all the 585 administrative unit across Sudan and will lead social mobilization activities, namely engaging with the community and religious leaders, informing public on the polio vaccination campaign and report on and address rumors. Refresher training will be organized to enhance Health Promoters' interpersonal communication and reporting skills.
- Fifty-four (54) loudspeakers are being distributed in the states with low coverage in round 1, to ensure better message dissemination throughout the second campaign.
- Social mobilization micro-plans have been received from states. Each is being reviewed and will be endorsed by the technical committee during the next meeting.
- The programme has again partnered with the three largest mobile phone operators in Sudan (Zain, Sudani and MTN) to disseminate SMS messages to their over 31 million subscribers on the polio vaccination campaign. The messages will be sent on daily bases for 8 consecutive days, providing basic information on the polio risk and encouraging families to vaccinate their children.
- Communication materials for the campaign are being updated and new materials developed based on feedback from the first round. These materials include banners and radio and TV promotion materials, all of which will be aired by the national and local radio and TVs and played via roving megaphones and mobile cinema.

Yemen:

- The social data collection on Polio vaccination is ongoing in the eight low performing districts in four governorates (Sa'adah, Hajjah, Amran, Aljawf) through FGDs, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews.
- The Communication for Development (C4D) team is analyzing refusal cases for top 20 refusal districts that have a 1% or more refusal rate from the December 2020 round. Lessons learned will help inform the January campaign.
- Social mobilization plan for the second round is being finalized based on the feedback from Third Party Monitoring. The plan will be equipped with a specific part to address the refusal/hesitancy.
- Training for the data collectors and focus group discussions (FGDs) facilitators have been conducted with the aim of building the implementing partners capacity in conducting research.

Regional Coordination

- The regional polio IMST (WHO/UNICEF) continues to convene coordination calls with the GPEI Outbreak Preparedness and Response Task Team (OPRTT) and with country counterparts from GPEI agencies and the Ministries of Health to provide technical support and guidance.
- Staff and consultants from WHO and UNICEF's regional offices spent a total of 142 days in-country supporting the Sudan and Yemen outbreaks since September 2020. Significant time and resources have been channeled into supporting country teams remotely.

Health and Humanitarian Context

- Since fighting began in Tigray state, **Ethiopia** on 4 November, UNHCR and the Sudanese Government's Commissioner for Refugees has registered over 50,000 Ethiopian refugees entering East **Sudan**. In late 2020, the UN released \$36.6 million for humanitarian efforts, specifically secure water, sanitation, and life-saving medical supplies to support civilians caught up in the conflict.
- A fuel crisis continues in both **Yemen** and **Sudan**, with significant implications for humanitarian operations, including securing the fuel required to implement vaccination campaigns.
- COVID-19 continues to disrupt health services in the region. **Sudan** has reported over 23,000 cases as of January 10. **Yemen** continues to report low numbers of COVID-19 cases, however, this is likely to reflect under-reporting. The Health Cluster believes that an uptick in cases is likely as the country enters the winter months.

REGIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT

- Falling immunity to type 2 polioviruses, weak routine immunization, disruptions to health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, access challenges and population movement are named as key contributing factors for the rising risk of cVDPV spread in the region in the post Switch era.
- With an increasing number of countries experiencing cVDPV2 outbreak, ensuring the provision of type-2 containing vaccine is becoming increasingly difficult. Its release from the global stockpile must meet a high standard of quality investigation to define the scope of possible response and quality implementation of SIAs.
- The cVDPV1 outbreak is currently limited to **Yemen**, yet there is a risk of spread to countries and/or populations having persistent low routine immunization.
- There has been no detection of cVDPV3 since September 2018 in Somalia. In areas having no or insufficient access and low routine immunization like **Somalia**, the emergence of polio due to VDPV3 remains a risk, nonetheless.
- Endemic countries, **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan**, continue to manage the dual challenge of transmission of wild poliovirus and expanding cVDPV2 outbreak.

Other cVDPV2 outbreaks in the EMR:



PICTURES FROM THE FIELD



WHO National Medical Officer Dr Fath-Elrahman and collectors visit an environmental surveillance site in Khartoum, Sudan, on January 10 for monthly sample collection. Photo: WHO/Sudan



Teams routinely collect samples from five sites in Khartoum as part of environmental surveillance for polioviruses. Sudan is working towards the expansion of environmental surveillance in 2021. Photo: WHO/Sudan



WHO colleagues monitor the bOPV campaign in Aden, Yemen in December 2020. Photo: WHO/Yemen



A female vaccinator speaks with a caregiver during the bOPV campaign in Aden, Yemen. Photo: WHO/Yemen

