Papua New Guinea announces two new polio cases
Six polio cases confirmed since June 2018; risk of further spread within the country is high

26 AUGUST 2018, PORT MORESBY – Two new polio cases were reported today by the National Department of Health of Papua New Guinea from Madang and Eastern Highlands Province.

The case in Madang is a four-year old boy who had an onset of paralysis on 11 July 2018. His symptoms were fever, muscle weakness on right leg and left arm. The case in Eastern Highlands, on the other hand, is a two and half year old boy who had weakness on both of his legs that started on 23 June 2018.

The confirmation was made on Friday, 24 August 2018, by the Victorian Infectious Disease Reference Laboratory, a WHO Polio Regional Reference Laboratory in Australia. Further genetic analysis made by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that these two cases are linked to the ongoing polio outbreak in Papua New Guinea.

The identification of the cases highlights the risk of polio in children under 5 years of age. Children can be protected from polio only with vaccination. Given substantial vaccination coverage gaps across the country, the risk of further spread of polio within the country continues to be high.

To date, Papua New Guinea has a total of six polio cases since the announcement of the outbreak in June 2018: two in Morobe, two in Eastern Highlands, one in Enga and one in Madang.

In response to the polio outbreak, the Government of Papua New Guinea declared a Public Health Emergency in June 2018. A polio vaccination campaign is currently ongoing to vaccinate children under 5 years old in high risk provinces. The first round of the campaign was conducted in July 2018 in three provinces of Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands.

The second round of the polio campaign is from 20 August to 2 September in Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands; while in Enga, Chimbu, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Jiwaka and Hela, the polio campaign will be from 27 August until 9 September.

A nationwide polio vaccination campaign is planned for September and October targeting 1 265 000 children under 5 years old.

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