Three additional polio cases reported in Papua New Guinea

Polio vaccination intensifies in nine high risk provinces

04 SEPTEMBER 2018, PORT MORESBY – The National Department of Health of Papua New Guinea announces today that three additional polio cases have been confirmed in Morobe, Madang and Enga provinces.

The case from Morobe is a four-year-old girl from Markham District. Her paralysis, including muscle pain and weakness in her right leg, started on 16 July 2018. The girl has no record of receiving polio vaccine and no history of travelling outside of the province. A case in Madang District is a 22-month-old boy who had an onset of weakness in both legs on 15 July 2018. The boy has no record of polio vaccination and no history of travel. The case from Enga is a nine-year-old boy from Wabag District. His paralysis, including weakness in his right arm and both legs, started on 2 August 2018. The boy’s polio vaccination history is unknown and he has travelled within the province. To date, this case is the oldest child confirmed with polio.

The confirmation of these three cases was made on Friday, 31 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 three cases are linked to the ongoing polio outbreak in the country.

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

The Government of Papua New Guinea declared a Public Health Emergency on 26 June 2018 after confirmation that poliovirus is circulating in the country. A polio vaccination campaign is currently ongoing to vaccinate children under five years old in high risk provinces of Morobe, Madang, Eastern Highlands, Enga, Chimbu, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Jiwaka and Hela. Vaccination teams are intensifying efforts particularly in densely populated areas such as settlements, mining communities and areas where there is significant movement of people to ensure that all children are vaccinated and protected against polio.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to bring their children under 5 to be vaccinated each time there is a campaign in their local area and to also help spread the word to others in the community.

Nationwide polio vaccination campaigns are planned for October and November.

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Media Contacts

To request for media interview, please contact:

Maureen Gerawa/Daoni Esorom  
National Department of Health  
Email: maureengerawa@gmail.com; daoniesorom@gmail.com  
Phone: 71010422/72313983

Renagi Taukarai  
WHO Papua New Guinea  
Email: taukarair@who.int  
Phone: +675 75437337

Noreen Chambers  
UNICEF Papua New Guinea  
Email: nchambers@unicef.org  
Phone: 7115 5296