Polio Outbreak Response in Papua New Guinea
MEDIA RELEASE: 7 September 2018

Polio case confirmed in Port Moresby
First case reported in the capital city; emergency vaccination starts 24 September in NCD

07 SEPTEMBER 2018, PORT MORESBY – One new case of polio has been confirmed in a 6-year old boy from 5-Mile Settlement. This is the first case reported from Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea.

The National Department of Health (NDOH) announced the finding after laboratory tests conducted by the Victorian Infectious Disease Reference Laboratory, a World Health Organization (WHO) Polio Regional Reference Laboratory in Australia. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that this case is linked to the ongoing polio outbreak in the country.

“This is very concerning—every new case of polio isn’t just a statistic. Each represents a child that will be permanently paralyzed,” said Pasco Kase, Secretary of the National Department of Health. “In response to this recent case in Port Moresby, the NDOH and partners will start an emergency polio vaccination campaign on 24 September in the National Capital District. A nationwide polio campaign will commence on 1 October.”

WHO Representative in Papua New Guinea, Dr Luo Dapeng said, “the confirmation of polio in an urban area is very worrisome, and WHO and partners are working together to support the Government to continue to actively search for all possible polio cases, rapidly scale up the response in Port Moresby with the emergency vaccination and embark on a nationwide vaccination in the succeeding rounds of the campaign.”

The NDOH and WHO have jointly deployed experts to conduct surveillance and are working with partners to engage with communities on polio prevention and reporting of suspected cases.

"We are working closely with health promotion colleagues in implementing social mobilisation and community engagement activities” said UNICEF Representative Mr David McLoughlin. "We appeal to community and church leaders to support the health promotion and vaccination teams to gain access and effectively deliver the essential health service,” he added.

As of 6 September, Papua New Guinea has confirmed a total of 10 polio cases: three in Morobe, two in Eastern Highlands, two in Enga, two in Madang and one in the National Capital District.

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 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.
In response to the polio outbreak in the country, an outbreak response plan has been developed and includes four sub-national and national vaccination rounds as well as enhanced surveillance activities. The total estimated budget for the plan is US$ 15.4 million, against which the Government has committed approximately US$ 2.2 million (PNG Kina 6.6 million), releasing PNG Kina 2 million for the first and second rounds.

Financial support for the outbreak response includes the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Canada and the Republic of Korea. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners, in partnership with the Government, will continue to work with donors to secure the urgently required outbreak response funding.

--o0o--

Media Contacts

To request for media interview, please contact:

**Daoni Esorom**  
National Department of Health  
Email: daoniesorom@gmail.com  
Phone: 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