Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Outbreak Response
Papua New Guinea
MEDIA RELEASE: 13 September 2018
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Polio vaccination in Papua New Guinea expanded to cover all children aged up to 15 years
National Capital District campaign starts 24 September; nationwide 1 October

13 SEPTEMBER 2018, PORT MORESBY – Papua New Guinea’s National Department of Health (NDOH) today announced that polio vaccination will be expanded to cover all children aged up to 15 years. The polio vaccination campaign targeting children in the National Capital District will begin on 24 September. It will be expanded to the rest of the country from 1 October 2018.

“In the next round of the polio vaccination campaign, we’re aiming to reach more than 3.3 million children aged 0 to 15 years across the country,” said Pasco Kase, Secretary of the National Department of Health. “Increasing the age of those eligible for vaccination will enable us to protect more children from polio, and help stop transmission of the virus.”

Since the start of the outbreak, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been supporting the NDOH in managing the response at both the national and provincial levels, including enhancing the surveillance system to rapidly detect and identify suspected polio cases.

“WHO has now deployed more than 50 international polio workers who are responding to the outbreak alongside Government counterparts,” said Dr Luo Dapeng, WHO Representative in Papua New Guinea. “To better manage the overall response operations, WHO has established an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the national level and similar EOCs are being established in the 22 provinces of the country. To date, 12 Provincial EOCs are already operational and 10 more are being set up in time for the nationwide campaign.”

On 11 September, two additional polio cases were reported from Eastern Highlands Province. As of 12 September, Papua New Guinea has confirmed a total of 12 cases of polio: four in Eastern Highlands, three in Morobe, two in Enga, two in Madang and one in the National Capital District.

“We are working closely with the health promotion team in the National Department of Health to support the provinces as they raise awareness among parents and community members,” said UNICEF Representative Mr David McLoughlin. “With support from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF is also procuring all the required vaccine doses for the ongoing polio outbreak response.”

The Government of Papua New Guinea declared a Public Health Emergency on 26 June 2018 after confirmation that poliovirus is circulating in the country. Two rounds of the polio vaccination campaign have been conducted; the first round in July targeted children under 5 years old in three provinces (Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands); the second round in August covered 9 provinces (Morobe, Madang, Eastern Highlands, Enga, Chimbu, Southern Highlands, Western Highlands, Jiwaka and Hela).
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, the Republic of Korea and Australia through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 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.

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