

# Africa – Polio Outbreak

## Disaster Response Report 1

May 21, 2009

### Background

Wild poliovirus outbreaks have been confirmed in 15 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. This outbreak is viewed as an emergency situation by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners. Unless immediate action is taken, there is a high risk of wild poliovirus spreading to additional countries, undermining progress made to eradicate polio over the last two decades.

### Key Developments

- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which includes the World Health Organization, Rotary International, U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and UNICEF, is supporting national ministries of health in affected countries in implementing synchronized emergency polio vaccination campaigns.
- WHO has asked the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) to involve national Red Cross societies in mass social mobilization activities, and other support to existing campaigns, with the International Federation itself providing coordination, supervision, monitoring and logistics support.
- The International Federation has issued an Emergency Appeal which will provide financial support for these activities across the zones of West Africa, Central Africa and the Horn of Africa.
- The American Red Cross has pledged US \$200,000 to the International Federation Emergency Appeal for mass social mobilization activities related to emergency polio vaccination campaigns.

### Numbers at a Glance

<b>Number of Reported Cases Globally<sup>1</sup></b>	436	World Health Organization – 5/20/09
<b>Number of Reported Cases in Africa<sup>1</sup></b>	374	World Health Organization – 5/20/09
<b>Number of African Countries Affected<sup>1</sup></b>	15	World Health Organization – 5/20/09
<b>International Federation Response: Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) Emergency Appeal</b>	US \$315,628 US \$2,300,000	International Federation – 5/14/09
<b>American Red Cross Pledged Contribution</b>	US \$200,000	American Red Cross – 5/21/09

<sup>1</sup>Year 2009 to date

### Current Situation

- The location of the outbreak has shifted from traditionally endemic to non-endemic countries where wild poliovirus was previously eradicated. As of May 20, there were 374 wild poliovirus cases reported in Africa for 2009. Of those, 256 cases were in Nigeria, where wild poliovirus has never been eradicated, 57 cases in seven other West African countries, and 61 cases in eight Central and East African countries, where it had been previously eradicated.
- The number of countries with reported cases of wild poliovirus is at its highest level in eight years.
- The polio outbreak is seen to be moving westward in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa. Contingency plans are being made by the WHO for the spread of the disease into Guinea,

Sierra Leone and Liberia, and these countries have been added to the emergency vaccination campaign plan.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Response**

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation)
  - The International Federation has launched an emergency appeal for US \$ 2.1 million to support Red Cross and Red Crescent response activities in 15 countries in Africa to respond to the wild poliovirus outbreaks across the continent.
  - The International Federation is partnering with WHO, GPEI, and other partners to coordinate response efforts and the Red Cross role in the response. The International Federation's involvement is entirely focused on complementing planned activities already identified by WHO and supplementing the operation in process by other partners.
  - Through its zone offices, the International Federation is helping coordinate activities and specific support to Red Cross national societies as they implement social mobilization activities.
  - On the country level, Red Cross national societies have been asked by national ministries of health to take an active part in the response. As a result, they are partnering with national ministries of health, WHO, and other partners to perform social mobilization activities using volunteers during synchronized national emergency vaccination campaigns.
- American Red Cross
  - The American Red Cross has pledged US \$200,000 to the International Federation to support polio outbreak response efforts through the emergency appeal.
  - The American Red Cross will continue to monitor the situation and communicate with the International Federation, and stands ready to provide additional assistance if requested.

### **United Nations and Other NGO Response**

- United Nations
  - The World Health Organization (WHO) is the lead agency for the response. It continues to monitor outbreaks and provide assessment information of the situation, has developed the plan of action for the response, and is working with national ministries of health through its zonal offices to implement the plan.
- Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)
  - The Global Polio Eradication Initiative – which is a coalition of organizations which includes the WHO, Rotary International, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and UNICEF – identified the outbreak and is coordinating the response. It is working with national ministries of health in affected countries to implement synchronized emergency polio vaccination campaigns.

*The information in this report is compiled from a number of sources including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the U.S. Agency for International Development and involved national Red Cross/Red Crescent societies. The American Red Cross strives to provide the most accurate and timely information possible; however, all information should be considered conditional until a final report has been issued.*