

Utilize Polio Program Assets to Reach the Targets for Measles/Rubella Elimination and Strengthening the Routine Immunization Program in Iraq

Project Information

- ◆ Department: Public Health Programs
- ◆ Unit: Polio & Routine Immunization

OBJECTIVES

This project aims to transition the Polio Eradication Program experience, knowledge gained, and investments on the existing human resources towards accelerating Measles/Rubella elimination and strengthening the routine immunization in high-risk areas, while sustaining polio essential functions.

PROJECT PHASES

This project involves four phases as follow:

Phase I – Preparations: Preparatory Meeting with Iraq MOH and representatives from WHO and UNICEF country offices to support establishing the governing committee at national and provincial levels. A desk review and situational analysis to identify pockets of low immunization coverage for measles in the three targeted provinces.

Phase II – Implementation: Develop case investigation and response guidelines and forms for fever and rash surveillance. Three review meetings for Community Based Surveillance (CBS) activities to be conducted. Support conducting implementation review meetings in 43 districts in the four high-risk DoHs. Conduct provincial-level trainings (DOH) for districts surveillance officers and EPI focal points. Conduct sub-national training workshops for community volunteers and PHCs focal points in the selected provinces

Phase III – Assessment: Support a limited scale active search for fever & rash and support conduct micro vaccination coverage surveys to identify and address immunization gaps.

Phase IV – Monitoring and Evaluation: Conduct supervisory follow-up field visit to monitor and supervise project activity for each selected district on quarterly basis by central and provincial MoH visit. Support MOH in data collection and analysis to identify and address immunization gaps to decrease the number of silent districts for AFP and fever and rash.

BENEFICIARIES

The targeted beneficiaries are the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and communicable disease surveillance focal points, health centers' focal points, community volunteers, and children in the targeted provinces.

REGIONS OF WORK

Four high-risk Directorates of Health (DOH) in three high risk provinces in Iraq. These are Baghdad Al-Kerkh, Baghdad Rasafa, Anbar, and Ninewa.

Project Start and End Date	October 1st, 2019 – April 30th, 2021
Partner Organizations	Ministry of Health, Iraq (MoH)
Funded by	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will strengthen the routine immunization coverage in the identified low immunization pockets, achieve and sustain high population immunity against Measles/Rubella, strengthen measles and rubella surveillance, and sustain polio essential functions and performance indicators in the selected provinces. The project is complementing previous years support to EPI to ensure a holistic approach towards strengthening the immunization system. This project will target four provinces including their 43 districts that considered as high-risk districts for importation to Polio, Measles and Rubella viruses due to displacement and conflict related security concerns, such as provinces retaken from ISIS control, bordering Syria, hard-to-reach pockets, and urban slum areas with low immunization coverage.

Currently . . .

The last reported endogenous wild Poliovirus in Iraq was in January 2000. The country was removed from the list of Polio infected countries by developing and implementing an intensified outbreak response plan where successive Polio immunization campaigns and strengthening AFP surveillance were successfully carried out. Thus, Iraq gained experience in program management, social mobilization, micro planning, and enhanced capabilities to identify and reach the missed and hard to reach communities in addition to improved surveillance system skills.

What's next . . .

This project is in line with the Polio Endgame Strategy 2019-2023 that lays out the roadmap to achieving and sustaining a world free of all polioviruses. Among its key goals is “Integration” where knowledge and expertise made to eradicate polio can be channeled to protect populations by supporting immunization, health systems and emergency response. Hence, this project, through transition planning, will utilize the investments made to eradicate polio to contribute towards measles/Rubella elimination and strengthening the overall immunization program performance needed to achieve vaccination coverage targets, especially in the most vulnerable and low performing provinces.

By the Numbers

119	+ 300	+ 100	+ 40
EPI and Surveillance health staff at provincial level trained on Polio Assets utilization	Health Center EPI focal persons trained on detection, reporting of AFP, suspected measles cases and vaccine demand creation	Community volunteers trained on detection, reporting of AFP, suspected measles cases and vaccine demand creation	Supervisory visits conducted to the targeted districts

GHD and EMPHNET: Working together for better health

Global Health Development (GHD) is a regional initiative created to support countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region strengthen their health systems in response to public health challenges and threats. GHD was initiated to advance the work of the Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) by building coordination mechanisms with Ministries of Health, International Organizations, and other institutions to improve population health outcomes. As an implementing arm to EMPHNET, GHD aligns its strategies with national policies and directions, while serving as a collaborative platform dedicated to support national efforts in promoting public health policies, strategic planning, sustainable financing, resource mobilization, public health programs, and other related services.

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