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# GAZA POLIO CAMPAIGN UPDATE

## ROUND 2 – OUTBREAK RESPONSE SUMMARY

### HIGHLIGHTS:

Amid ongoing conflict and attacks in the Gaza Strip, the second round of the polio outbreak response campaign was completed successfully on 5 November 2024 despite unparalleled operational and security challenges. A total of 556 774 children under the age of 10 were vaccinated with a second dose of novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2), and 448 425 children between 2 and 10 years old received vitamin A to boost overall immunity.

This achievement would not have been possible without the tremendous dedication, engagement and courage of parents, children, community members and health workers.

### BY THE NUMBERS:



Total number of children vaccinated against polio in Round 2: 556 774



Total number of children who received vitamin A in Round 2: 448 425



Independent post-campaign monitoring (PCM) coverage results for Round 2 (based on caregivers' recall):

- Overall coverage reached: 94% of the target population under the age of 10 years



Administrative coverage:

- Central Gaza: 103%
- Southern Gaza: 91%
- Northern Gaza: 88% (where an estimated 7000-10 000 children were missed because access to children was compromised)



Number of teams supporting Round 2:

- Phase 1: 374
- Phase 2: 596
- Phase 3: 204



Number of Intra-campaign Monitors supporting Round 2:

- Phase 1 (central Gaza): 16
- Phase 2 (southern Gaza): 15
- Phase 3 (Gaza City): 10 (trained by WHO)



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## OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES:

- On the first day of the campaign in Gaza City (phase 3), an explosion at El Sheikh Redwan Primary Health Care Centre injured six people, including four children, affecting hospital patients, staff and polio workers. Due to security constraints ahead of the phase 3, formal training for vitamin A administration could not be completed in the northern Gaza area of the Strip.
- The third phase in northern Gaza had to be temporarily [postponed](#) on 23 October 2024 because of intense bombardments, mass displacements, lack of assured humanitarian pauses and access. When the campaign did resume, the area under the assured humanitarian pauses was substantially reduced, with access limited to Gaza City. The campaign was partially extended on 5 November 2024 to cover any missed children and vaccination was offered at four health facilities. An estimated 7000-10 000 children have been missed in areas outside Gaza City.

## LESSONS LEARNED:



Shifting the balance of teams from fixed sites to mobile teams enhanced reach in all phases of the campaign, allowing greater coverage in busy streets and remote areas where families might face barriers accessing health facilities. Pairing this with intensified awareness efforts from town announcers also supported greater coverage.



At large health facilities, multiple fixed site teams were placed to fully implement the campaign, where the volume of visitors remained high. This highlighted the ongoing demand for vaccination services in densely populated areas.



SMS messages, radio spots, and social media influencers were useful in engaging communities.

The second round was completed over three phases under area-specific humanitarian pauses, each consisting of three days of vaccination, and one catch-up day to ensure maximum vaccination coverage of eligible children.

- Phase 1: Central area of Gaza Strip (14-17 October 2024);
- Phase 2: Southern Gaza Strip (19-22 October 2024);
- Phase 3: Gaza City (northern Gaza Strip) (2-5 Nov 2024).

## ONGOING ACTIVITIES:



The Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for Gaza City, with guidance from the Gaza Technical Committee, have started to conduct mop-up operations in Gaza City through four health facilities. This aims to provide polio vaccine to children migrating from North Gaza. These vaccination centres will be operational until 21 November 2024. The EOC will explore the feasibility of extending these dates based on the coverage and need for vaccine.



Efforts will now continue to boost immunity levels through routine immunization services offered at functional health facilities and to strengthen disease surveillance to rapidly detect any further poliovirus transmission (either in affected children or in environmental samples).



The evolving epidemiology will determine if further outbreak response activities may be necessary.

## POLIOVIRUS SURVEILLANCE:

Since July 2024, ten children with acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) have been detected, and their stool samples have been tested. The results of eight cases are available – one of which was a ten-month-old child from Deir al Balah who was confirmed to have cVDPV2, with a date of onset of 25 July 2024. The remaining samples tested negative for cVDPV2. The pending samples from two children with AFP have recently reached a WHO-accredited polio laboratory for testing.

Efforts are underway to recover environmental surveillance (ES). So far, 11 ES samples collected from Deir al Balah and Khan Younis have been confirmed to have cVDPV2. Recently, four more samples were collected (two from Deir al Balah, one from Khan Younis and one from Gaza City) and have been sent to the polio laboratory for testing.

### NOTE:

The **first round** was successfully implemented from 1-12 September 2024, and vaccinated **559 161** children, or an estimated 95% of eligible children at governorate level, according to independently conducted post-campaign monitoring.

To fully implement surveillance and routine immunization services, for polio and all vaccine-preventable diseases, WHO and UNICEF continue to call for a ceasefire. The two rounds of the polio vaccination campaign underscores what can be achieved with humanitarian pauses. These actions must be systematically applied beyond the polio emergency response efforts to other health and humanitarian interventions to respond to dire needs.

Thanks to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners, donors, and Member States of the Region for their support, and to the **UAE for their allocation of critical funding** of US\$ 5m towards the polio vaccination campaign.