



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 Program
- ◆ Unit: Polio & Immunization Department

OBJECTIVES

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 involved four phases as follow:

Phase 1 - Preparation: 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 2 - Implementation: Developed case investigation and response guidelines and forms for fever and rash surveillance. Conducted one Community Based Surveillance review meeting. Supported conducting one 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. Conducted sub-national training workshops for community volunteers and PHCs focal points in the selected provinces

Phase 3 – Supported a limited scale active search for fever & rash and support conduct micro vaccination coverage surveys to identify and address immunization gaps.

Phase 4 - Monitoring and Evaluation: Conducted supervisory provincial monitoring visit to monitor and supervise project activity. 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.

Phase 5- Closing: Conducted end of project meeting.

BENEFICIARIES

The targeted beneficiaries were 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 10/1/2019 – 03/31/2021
and End Date

Partner **Iraqi Ministry of Health (MoH)**
Organizations

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will strengthen the routine immunization coverage in the identified low immunization pockets, to achieve and sustain high population immunity against Measles/Rubella, strengthen measles and rubella surveillance, and sustaining 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 targeted 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, utilized 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	12	+ 590	23
EPI and Surveillance health staff at provincial level trained on	Health Center EPI focal persons trained on detection, reporting of AFP.	Community volunteers trained on detection, reporting of AFP,	Provincial Supervisory follow-up visits conducted	Surveyed Children	Limited Scale coverage survey

GHD|EMPHNET Information: Global Health Development (GHD) and Eastern Mediterranean Public Health Network (EMPHNET) works at achieving its mission by responding to public health needs with deliberate efforts that allow for health promotion and disease prevention.

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