

Summary report on the

Follow-up meeting of national poliovirus containment coordinators on implementation of GAPIII

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Beirut, Lebanon
13–14 October 2015



**World Health
Organization**

Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

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1. Introduction

The first global action plan (GAP) for containment of wild poliovirus (WPV) was developed in 1999 with the recognition that containment of the poliovirus needed to be addressed in advance of the certification of its eradication. With the recognition of vaccine-derived poliovirus, the plan was updated and revised to include containment of vaccine-derived poliovirus in addition to WPV and renamed GAPII. The third edition of the plan (GAPIII) was developed to minimize the post-eradication facility-associated risks. Phase I of GAPIII emphasizes minimizing the post-eradication poliovirus facility-associated risks and outlines relevant biosafety levels and safeguards for the handling of wild poliovirus type 2 (WPV2) since its global eradication in 1999.

An intercountry meeting of national polio containment coordinators for follow-up of the implementation of Phase I activities of the WHO global action plan to minimize poliovirus facility-associated risk (GAPIII) was held in Beirut, Lebanon on 13–14 October 2015. The meeting was attended by national managers of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and containment coordinators from 15 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. Also in attendance were representatives from poliovirus vaccine production facilities in the Razi Institute, Islamic Republic of Iran and the National Institute of Health, Pakistan along with representatives from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and WHO staff from headquarters and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- review the progress made in all countries on implementation of Phase I of GAPIII (inventory, destruction or containment of

infectious or potentially infectious wild poliovirus type 2 and vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 materials);

- identify, discuss and resolve any outstanding issues for the implementation of the regional action plan for containment; and
- discuss the preparation of final reports and the timelines for submission.

The meeting started with a review of the recommendations of the previous meeting of national poliovirus containment coordinators held in Tunis in May 2015. Participants were asked to identify, discuss and resolve any outstanding issues for the completion of Phase I of GAPIII completion and to devise a Phase I reporting mechanism. They were reminded that the deadline to complete Phase I of GAPIII was end December 2015.

2. Summary of discussions

The WHO global and regional coordinators discussed the details of the wild poliovirus type 2 and vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2) containment and certification process as a part of the polio eradication and endgame strategic Plan 2013–2018. Briefly, the participants were made aware of the safe handling and containment of poliovirus type 2 (WPV2 and VDPV2) infectious and potentially infectious materials in the laboratory and vaccine production facilities that are essential to minimize the risk of reintroducing WPV into the population. A reintroduction of WPV from a poliovirus facility would risk the potentially serious consequences of re-establishing poliomyelitis. Therefore, most facility-associated poliovirus risks can be eliminated through the destruction of WPV and potentially infectious materials.

As per the recommendations of the last meeting of containment coordinators in May 2015, all countries in the Region were expected

to develop and implement a national action plan to complete Phase I of GAPIII for WPV2 and VDPV2 by end October 2015 and for OPV2/Sabin2 by end July 2016. In addition, the countries were assigned to collect, collate and enter the Phase I survey and inventory data and share with WHO.

In Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine and United Arab Emirates, no laboratory or vaccine production facility was identified containing WPV2 stocks. These countries are submitting the formal documentation required for certification through national containment committee and respective authorities.

Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Oman have completed the laboratory surveys and inventories with a few laboratories identified to contain potentially infectious material. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the only country in the Region with a poliovirus vaccine production facility that maintains WPV2 stocks. Follow-up meetings with the national authorities are in progress in each of these countries in order to destroy or contain the stocks as per the standard guidelines to ensure that the global containment standards are met.

Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic still need to complete the Phase I/GAPIII activities. The national coordinators of these countries highlighted several issues which have delayed the completion of Phase I such as lack of legislation for laboratory registration and/or deteriorated political and government structures in some areas. These issues were discussed with WHO regional and global containment coordinators who assured participants of WHO's full support and commitment. These countries were also guided in the development of action plans to conduct and complete the Phase I survey and laboratory activities.

3. Recommendations for countries

1. Complete and document the inventory of laboratories storing WPV2 and VDPV2 materials.
2. Ensure the appropriate authorities formally decide either: 1) to destroy; or 2) to contain identified WPV2 and VDPV2 materials.
 - 2.1 In the case of destruction, provide documented evidence that appropriate destruction of all unneeded WPV2 and VDPV2 materials has taken place before the end of 2015.
 - 2.2 In the case of envisaged containment, take the following steps:
 - establish a national authority for containment that will be responsible for the national oversight of poliovirus containment;
 - designate poliovirus-essential facilities and ensure they implement containment requirements described in GAPIII;
 - certify poliovirus-essential facilities against GAPIII; and
 - ensure all needed WPV2 and VDPV2 material is transferred to certified poliovirus-essential facilities.
 - 2.3 In the case of envisaged containment of needed WPV2 and VDPV2 materials in facilities *outside* the country, ensure appropriate transfer to certified poliovirus essential facilities in other country/ies.
3. Submit a formal report on the completion of the above-listed Phase I activities through the national certification committee to the Regional Commission for Certification of Polio Eradication by the end of December 2015.



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