

Current major event

Polio in the EMR

As of 02 November 2013, wild poliovirus has been confirmed in four countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) of WHO with 254 paralyzed children reported from these countries to date. In comparison, at the same period in 2012, there were only two countries in the region with wild poliovirus and 81 cases of paralyzed children were reported from these countries.

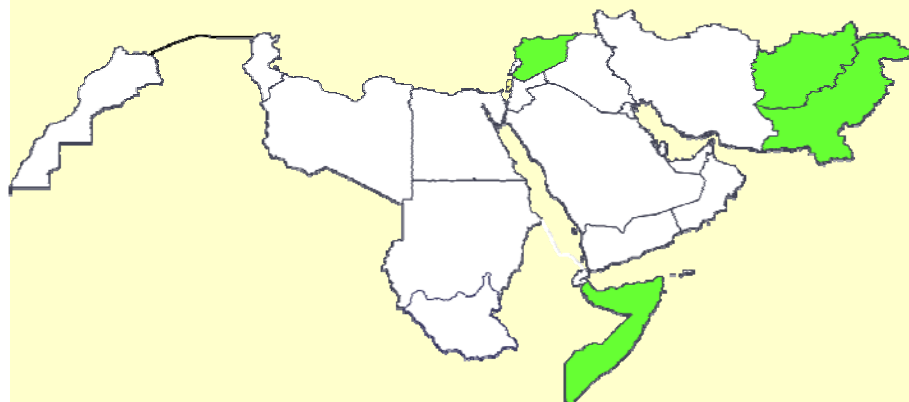
Editorial note

An escalating outbreak of Wild Polio Virus type one is now putting all Member States in the EMR of WHO at grave risk. This, also, puts the target for global eradication of polio at considerable risk.

In 2013, there has been 3-fold increase in polio cases in the region compared to 2012 and this is primarily the result of persistent endemic transmission in Pakistan (56 cases) and an explosive outbreak in Somalia (180 cases) following importation of a wild polio virus from West Africa. Poliovirus has also spread from Pakistan into the eastern part of Afghanistan this year resulting in 8 cases reported from the country to date. Recently, the ten wild poliovirus cases reported from Syria, a previously polio free country of the region, turns the whole region in danger owing to the risk of spread of the virus into the neighbouring countries that are also affected by the current Syrian crisis.

The present situation puts all the EMR Member States at markedly higher risk of polio importation and outbreaks due to ongoing large scale population movements and low routine immunization coverage for OPV in some countries. Urgent actions are, therefore, needed to conduct OPV vaccination campaigns, heighten surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases and strengthen routine immunization systems in these countries. Thus, by the end of 2013, all Member States should aim to achieve a minimum rate of 2 non-polio AFP cases per 100,000 population aged less than 15 years at the sub-national level.

Polio in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO,



● Polio infected country

Wild polio virus cases reported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO

Country	Reported cases	
	2012	2013
Afghanistan	30	8
Pakistan	51	56
Somalia	0	180
Syria	0	10
Total	81	254

In countries where outbreaks have been reported recently, extra-ordinary actions will be required to rapidly contain and stop the transmission using bOPV and conducting at least 6-8 vaccination mass campaigns, at short but rapid intervals.

Owing to the high risk of importation of polio in the neighbouring countries of Syria, a plan has now been put in place by the Regional Office to implement a two large scale synchronized mass OPV vaccination campaigns in November and December. It is expected that such synchronized campaign will boost immunity against possible virus importation from Syria to its neighbouring countries.

The urgent need, now, is to reverse the situation. This will require urgent and heightened (escalated) actions to stop transmission in endemic areas, to interrupt new outbreaks in previously polio-free areas and to reduce the vulnerability of the polio-free areas that remain at high risk of re-infection.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Novel Coronavirus in Qatar, Oman and Saudi Arabia; **Wild poliovirus** in Somalia and Syria.

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

Egypt	[173 (63), 36.4%]
Indonesia	[192 (160), 83.3 %]
Viet Nam	[125 (62), 49.6%]
Cambodia	[31 (27), 87.1%]
Global total	[629 (375), 59.6%]

Hepatitis E

South Sudan	[12,660 (251), 1.9%]#
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Novel Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

Saudi Arabia	[125 (53), 42%]
Oman	[1 (0)]
Qatar	[7 (2), 29%]
Tunisia	[3 (1), 33%]

Influenza A (H7N9) virus

China	[137 (45), 33%]
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Crimen-Congo haemorrhagic fever

Pakistan	[86 (18), 21%]
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Wild poliovirus

Syria	[10 (0)]
Somalia	[180 (0)]

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; # Suspected cases