Editorial note

If the laboratory test currently being conducted now, in one of the WHO reference laboratories, turn out to be positive, this would be the second outbreak from YF in Sudan in last 2 years. This follows last year’s outbreak reported from Darfur, Sudan around the same time period. The last year’s outbreak was one of the worst in Africa in last two decades with 849 cases including 171 deaths reported from this YF outbreak in Sudan.

The preliminary investigation conducted by the FMOH indicate that the index case(s) were from the eastern states of Sudan who went to the West Kordofan state as seasonal workers for the gum Arabic plantation and might have acquired the infection there. Subsequently cases have also been reported amongst the local community of West Kordofan state. The entomological survey conducted in the affected areas found moderately high densities of Ae. aegypti mosquitoes signifying the presence of competent vectors for sustained transmission.

The current epidemiological situation, by looking at the epidemic curve, needs to be interpreted with caution. The sporadic occurrence of cases mean that the outbreak may just be evolving and owing to limitations in the surveillance system and in-accessibility, it is possible that many cases were also not detected. Active surveillance and case detection need to be strengthened and enhanced in the affected areas. As the areas remain in close proximity to South Sudan, cross-border surveillance also needs to be improved between the bordering areas of these two countries. It is also important to monitor the movement of the seasonal workers who are or would be going back to the eastern states of Sudan. Surveillance in these states need to be strengthened to early detect any sign of spread of YF in these states. The eastern states of Sudan are traditionally endemic to dengue fever. It is the same vectors of YF which also transmit dengue fever. It is the same vectors of YF which also transmit dengue fever. Therefore, the presence of same vectors in these states may increase the likelihood of spread of YF in these areas following movement of these seasonal workers.

Currently in addition to strengthening the surveillance system, the country should immediately plan for a mass vaccination campaign against YF with possible different scenarios in order to contain the outbreak and prevent its further spread.