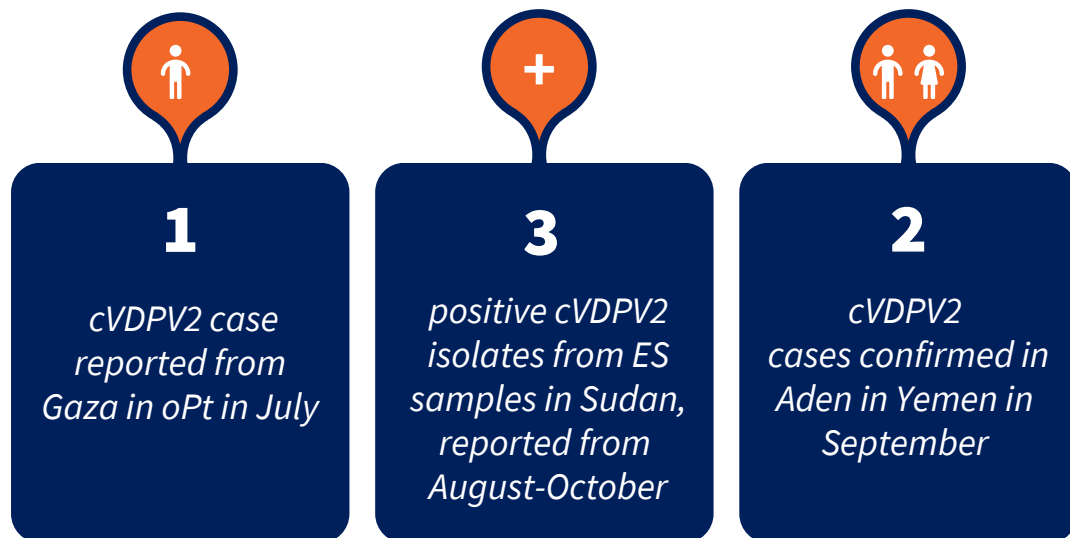


MENA EMR REGIONAL CVDPV OUTBREAKS

Issue #40 | Bumper issue: Week 25 2024 (21 June 2024) - Week 52 (ending 26 December 2024)

BY THE NUMBERS:



SITUATION UPDATE

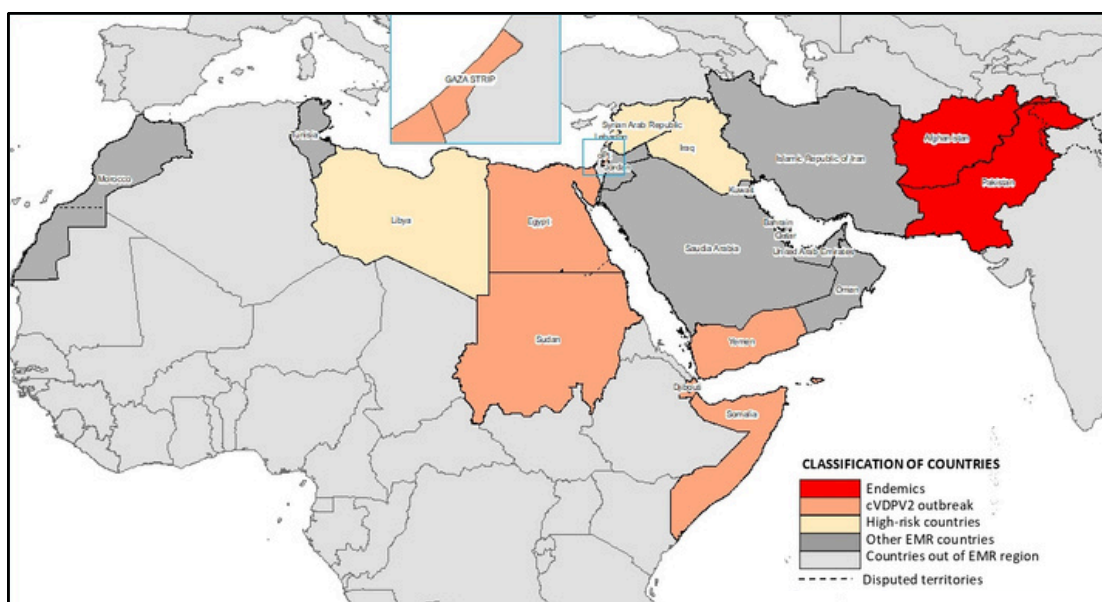
Occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) in focus

A new outbreak of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in the Region was confirmed in **Gaza**, oPt, on 16 July 2024, after cVDPV2 was detected in six environmental surveillance (ES) samples. These sewage samples were collected in Deir al Balah and Khan Younis governorates on 23 June 2024.

In response, two emergency rounds of a polio campaign were mounted in Gaza to deliver novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2). Over 560 000 children below ten years of age received vaccine during each round. The campaigns were implemented in phases, in central, southern and northern Gaza. Independent post-campaign monitoring (PCM) found over 95% coverage across Gaza, despite the unparalleled conflict conditions.

However, the third phase of the second round, targeting northern Gaza, was restricted to Gaza City due to escalating violence, intense bombardment, mass displacement orders in North Gaza governorate.

Consequently, approximately 7000-10 000 children below ten years in North Gaza missed their second dose of nOPV2 vaccine. To address this, a mop-up campaign was conducted in Gaza City from 11 to 21 November 2024, to target unvaccinated children entering from North Gaza. This campaign provided 1329 children their second dose of nOPV2.



Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type (cVDPV) isolates

Country	Date of first isolate	Date of last isolate	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		TOTAL	
			AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES	AFP	ES
cVDPV2 outbreaks																				
Djibouti	3/10/2021	20/10/2024									5		12				3	0	20	
Egypt	12/7/2023	1/8/2024													11		2	0	13	
oPt (Gaza)	23/06/2024	4/11/2024															1	17	1	17
Somalia	22/10/2017	5/6/2024		2	6	19	3	5	14	26	1	1	5	6	8	9	3	3	40	71
Sudan	31/10/2022	24/01/2024											1	1		5		2	1	8
Yemen	20/07/2021	16/09/2024									66	13	162	26	8	14	35	7	271	60
cVDPV1 outbreak																				
Yemen	18/09/2019	27/03/2021					1		31		3								35	0

HIGHLIGHTS

- In **Somalia**, cVDPV2 has been detected in three children and three ES samples as of 31 December 2024. All the cVDPV2 isolates belong to the SOM-BAN-1 emergence. The date of onset for the most recent cVDPV2 case is 5 June 2024 and date of collection of the most recent positive ES sample is 14 May 2024. In 2023, Somalia reported cVDPV2 in eight children and nine ES samples.
- In **Sudan**, following genetic sequencing, VDPV2 was confirmed in three environmental samples collected from the ES site of Kashafa Internally Displaced Camp and Kosti Teaching Hospital in White Nile State. The samples had been collected on 15 August, 25 September and 25 October 2024 respectively.
- In **Yemen***, cVDPV2 has been reported in 35 cases, 33 of which were from the northern governorates. One positive environmental sample has been reported from Aden between June and 31 December 2024 and six positive environmental samples were confirmed in the northern governorates between January and May 2024. The most recent virus isolation was from an acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) case reported from Al Hudaydah governorate. The outbreak in the northern governorates of Yemen has been the source of multiple virus exportations out of Yemen to other countries in the Region.

*Note: Sample shipments from the northern governorates of Yemen have stalled since June 2024.



SITUATION UPDATE CONTD.

EGYPT

- Following the cVDPV2 outbreak related to novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) — cVDPV2-n—in North Sinai, the most recent isolate of which was detected on 30 December 2023, 27 additional samples were collected over the last 12 months from the ES site in North Sinai. None of these samples showed cVDPV2-n.
- Four subnational immunization days (SNIDs) were conducted in August, October and December 2023, and January 2024 in response to this outbreak. This outbreak appears to have been contained.
- On 26 August 2024, the polio laboratory in Egypt reported the isolation of cVDPV2 from sewage water collected from an ES site in Cairo governorate on 1 August 2024. Genetic sequencing showed 34 nt changes from standard SABIN2 and links to the YEM-TAI-1 emergence. The field investigation did not show any evidence of local circulation and an importation event was declared. Vaccine-derived poliovirus type 1 (VDPV1) was isolated from a sample of sewage water in Luxor governorate, collected on 21 September 2024. There has been no evidence of circulation and the isolate was classified as ambiguous vaccine-derived poliovirus type 1 (aVDPV1).

OPT (GAZA)

- A total of 11 AFP cases have been reported in Gaza and investigated so far this year. Out of the six AFP cases reported from Deir al Balah governorate, cVDPV2 was detected in stool specimen of a 10-month-old child whose date of onset of paralysis is 25 July 2024. The remaining AFP cases tested negative for cVDPV2. Additionally, AFP cases from Khan Younis, North Gaza and Rafah governorates were confirmed to be negative.
- While the AFP surveillance system has rapidly improved since July 2024, the overall sensitivity of the AFP surveillance system remains sub-optimal in the oPt and does not meet the recommended target. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen the AFP and ES surveillance systems. A total of 20 ES samples from Deir al Balah and Khan Younis have been tested so far in Gaza. Of these, 17 have been confirmed to have cVDPV2.

SOMALIA

- As of Epi Week 52 in 2024, a total of 443 cases of AFP cases (182 female, 261 male) were reported. Of these, 429 AFP cases have lab results available, while 14 are awaiting processing.
- Of the tested ones, three tested positive for cVDPV2, one PV2 tested positive for nOPV2, 17 tested positive for Sabin-like (SL)/nOPV2, 56 tested positive for non-polio enterovirus (NPEV), and 352 tested negative.
- The annualized non polio AFP (NP-AFP) rate is 4.9 across Somalia. There is no silent district; however, five districts have a NP-AFP rate of less than 2. The annualized NP-AFP in the accessible areas in Somalia is 5.5 compared to 3.9 in partially inaccessible areas. Overall, stool adequacy in the country is 92%, with 90% in accessible areas and 97% in the partially inaccessible areas.
- A total of 221 ES samples have been collected in 2024. Of the 211 ES samples with lab results available:
 - o three have detected cVDPV2
 - o two PV2 tested positive for nOPV2
 - o 11 tested positive for SL/nOPV2
 - o 84 tested for NPEV
 - o 111 tested negative

SUDAN

- VDPV2 was detected from three samples of sewage water in White Nile State, collected on 15 August, 25 September and 25 October 2024. The samples are not genetically linked to any previously sequenced viruses.
- A total of seven cVDPV2 isolates have been reported from Sudan between 18 September 2023 and 29 December 2024, six of which were from the ES site in Port Sudan and one from Kosti of White Nile State. The viruses detected in Port Sudan are linked to the SUD-RED-1 emergence from Red Sea State, collected from the same site in Port Sudan. The virus detected in Kosti was genetically linked to an emergence in South Sudan.
- The fourteenth shipment of AFP and ES samples was transported across Sudan and delivered to the VACSERA Regional Lab in Egypt on 15 December 2024.

YEMEN

- A total of 275 vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2) cases, 271 of which are cVDPV2 cases, have been reported among children since the start of the outbreak in 2021. Of these, 35 were confirmed in 2024. In total, 33 have been reported from the northern governorates. The most recent case had onset of paralysis on 16 September 2024. *Note: stool samples of more than 830 AFP cases have not been shipped to the polio lab yet, since June 2024.*
- From week 1 to week 52 2024, Yemen reported 1442 AFP cases. Of these:
 - o 574 cases were discarded as they were negative for poliovirus
 - o 35 were confirmed as cVDPV2
 - o The remaining AFPs are pending classification.
- As of Week 52 of 2024, 31 samples have been collected from six ES sites in Sanaa City, Aden, Al Hudaydah, Al-Muklaa, Amran, and Ibb governorates. Over the year, seven specimens reported positive for cVDPV2: six in Sanaa city and Al Hudaydah in the northern governorates and one in Aden in the southern governorate. One of the ES samples from Sanaa city isolated both cVDPV2 and VDPV1.

DJIBOUTI

- cVDPV2 was detected from three samples of sewage water in Djibouti. Two were collected from two different sites, reported on 5 December 2024. Sequencing results showed that the first one has 23 and 47 nt change and is genetically linked to two emergences ETH-TIG-1 and YEM-TAI-1 respectively. The link to the cVDPV2 from Ethiopia is considered to be an orphan virus by the US CDC laboratory, which indicates the possibility of missed circulation outside or inside Djibouti. The second isolate has 20 nt changes and genetically linked to ETH-TIG-1 emergence and is considered orphan.
- Due to the multiple high-risk importation events, an immunization response would be required in Djibouti.

Note: cVDPV2 was isolated from a cross-notified AFP case from Ethiopia and initially registered in Djibouti. However, it was confirmed as a case for Ethiopia, related to an Ethiopian emergence.



OUTBREAK RESPONSE UPDATE

OPT/GAZA

- Following the detection of variant poliovirus in Gaza in July 2024, despite the complex insecurity and conflict, multi-agency teams in the occupied Palestinian territory supported the Ministry of Health in the planning and implementation of two rounds of an emergency polio vaccination campaign with nOPV2.
- The first round, conducted from 1-12 September 2024, vaccinated 559 161 children below ten years with nOPV2. A second round, implemented from 14 October – 5 November 2024, vaccinated 556 774 children with nOPV2. Independent monitoring found that 95% of children were covered during each round, according to their families' recall.
- During the second round, Vitamin A was provided to 448 425 children between 2 and 10 years to boost their immunity.

SOMALIA

- The country successfully implemented two NIDs with nOPV2 in September and October 2024. Additionally, two SNIDs with nOPV2 were conducted in January and March 2024.
- One of the main accomplishments of the Somalia Emergency Action Plan (SEAP) III, rolled out in 2024, was the constitution of the National Task Force led by the Prime Minister that demonstrated strong political will, and fostered government ownership and participation towards improving the quality of the outbreak response initiatives, particularly the nOPV2 campaigns.
- The country polio team proactively enhanced cross-border coordination activities with the neighbouring countries, including by developing a Joint Outbreak Response Action Plan with Kenya and Ethiopia and aligning towards synchronized supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) planned for the first quarter of 2025.
- Despite consistent quality improvement efforts in Somalia and improved cVDPV2 epidemiology (no human case or ES positive cVDPV2 has been reported in the country since July 2024), the inaccessibility in the south and central parts of Somalia continues to be the main challenge in achieving the expected level of outbreak response interventions. Of the 81 districts in south and central Somalia, 22 districts are partially accessible and one district is completely inaccessible. As a result, around 472 743 under-five children living in these locations do not receive quality interventions due to inaccessibility challenges.

SUDAN

- From 23-25 August 2024, Sudan implemented a second round of SIAs in response to the SUD-RED-1 outbreak. At the time, the round could only be implemented in five out of eight targeted states. Blue Nile, Sennar and White Nile States could not be covered due to the ongoing conflict. According to independent monitoring (IM), 97% of the targeted children received nOPV2.
- In November 2024, however, Sudan implemented the pending round in White Nile State. The Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) conducted to determine the quality of the campaign showed that 50% of LOTS failed.
- From 17-20 December 2024, Sudan rolled out the second round of polio vaccination campaign in Blue Nile State, targeting 277 037 children aged below five years in all seven localities and 16 administrative units of the state.

YEMEN

- The health authorities in Sana'a are working with partners on finalizing the Health Emergency Extension Response (HEER) plan, a comprehensive three-year plan to strengthen routine services, deliver an integrated response to ongoing outbreaks and develop a roadmap for the rehabilitation of Yemen's damaged health infrastructure. To this end, a consultation meeting convened from 3-5 November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt, brought together donors and partners to refine the HEER plan.
- Plans are underway to launch the HEER in 2025.

DJIBOUTI

- The last polio campaign was conducted in December 2022 in Djibouti, in response to the isolation of 12 samples of ES testing positive for cVDPV2.
- In 2024, three isolates of cVDPV2 were confirmed. There are plans to implement two national immunization campaigns in Djibouti in 2025 - synchronized with neighbouring countries where feasible- in response to the high-risk importation events of cVDPV2.



REGIONAL COORDINATION

Cross-border meetings – Uganda and Kenya

At a Horn of Africa Cross-border Coordination Meeting conducted in Kampala in September, representatives from the ministries of health from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda; WHO and UNICEF country, regional and headquarters teams; the Gates Foundation; US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners met to discuss ways to enhance cross-border coordination and jointly end poliovirus circulation in the Horn of Africa. As a result, a comprehensive joint action plan is being finalized for the Horn of Africa for 2025.

During the GPEI review meeting for AFRO, conducted in December in Kenya, there were further deliberations on the HOA and Lake Chad Basin countries to continue to strengthen partnerships and collaboration between EMRO and AFRO countries, and review cross-border coordination progress. Delegates discussed SIAs synchronization, campaign quality, advocacy and surveillance strengthen mechanisms and the sharing of data. In 2025, both regions will strive to conduct synchronized polio vaccination campaigns and share information regularly to strengthen cross-border poliovirus surveillance and communication.

Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks

- The [12th meeting of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks](#) was convened during the 71st session of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region's Regional Committee (RC 71) in October 2024. A large number of interventions from Member States and members of the Regional Subcommittee demonstrated their clear and unwavering commitment to eradicate polio despite the challenges being faced.
- During the session, participants acknowledged that while significant progress has been made in the fight against polio, with countries continuously adapting and responding to the highly complex contexts they face, more work needs to be done to move the needle on polio eradication.
- At the RC71, the polio eradication programme launched a regional advocacy campaign titled 'United to End Polio: Showcasing Regional Solidarity for a Lasting Polio-Free World' to highlight the actions Member States are taking to accelerate progress towards polio eradication.

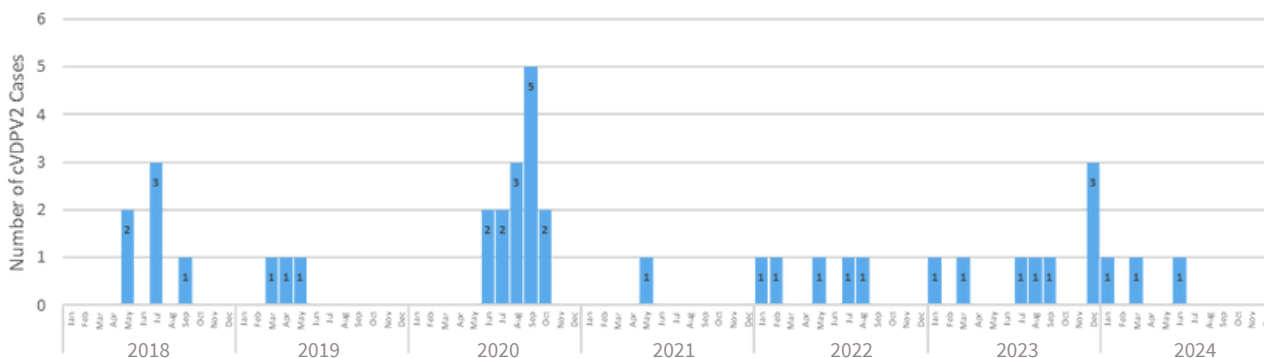
Yemen HEER meeting

- During a consultation meeting on the HEER, convened from 3-5 November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt, the Sana'a Ministry of Public Health and Population (MOHP), GPEI partners and other stakeholders met with a view to having a cohesive understanding of the HEER plan, mobilizing partner support and establishing a collaborative framework for accountability and monitoring of the HEER plan.
- Delegates at the meeting agreed to strengthen commitment to the HEER plan by conducting a launch event, and build out other key parts of the plan, among other priorities.

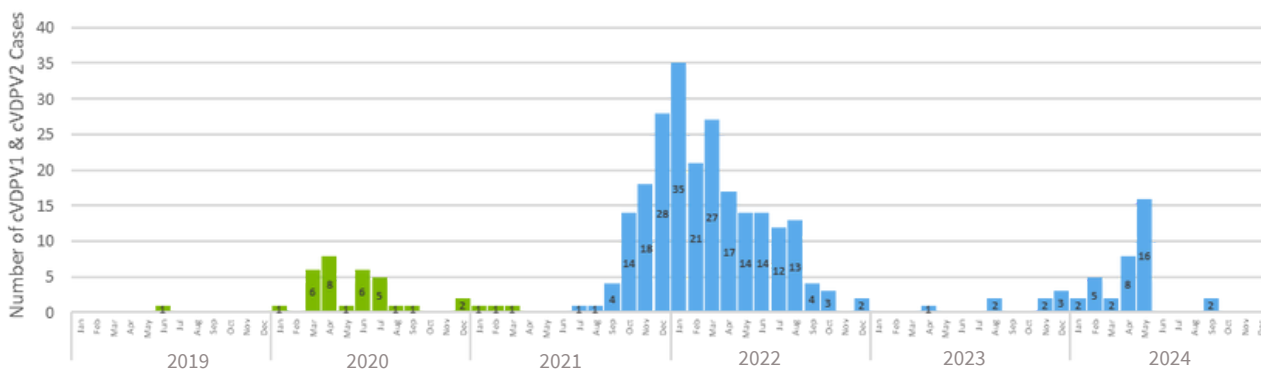


OUTBREAK EPI CURVES

cVDPV2-Somalia (2018-2024)



cVDPV1 & cVDPV2-Yemen (2020-2024)



Send questions to:

WHO:

Regional Outbreaks Coordinator: akbari@who.int
 Regional Polio Advocacy and Communications Team Lead:
biernata@who.int

UNICEF:

Regional Polio Coordinator: atsega@unicef.org
 Regional Chief of Communications: aamar@unicef.org

Relevant links:

- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\) website](#)
- [Polio Eradication Strategy 2022–2026](#)
- [Regional Subcommittee on Polio Eradication](#)
- [GPEI factsheet—VDPV](#)
- [Vaccine-derived polioviruses animation](#)