

Tajikistan Polio Outbreak and Regional Response

Summary

As of 28 June 2010, Tajikistan has reported 334 laboratory-confirmed cases of wild poliovirus type 1. There have been 15 deaths. No new cases of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) had been reported since 12 June.

Four rounds of national immunization days (NIDs) in Tajikistan and two rounds in Uzbekistan had taken place. Uzbekistan will conduct a third round, beginning 5 July. Coverage was extremely high in both countries. Kyrgyzstan will begin two rounds of NIDs in July.

The WHO European Region has experienced the first importation of wild poliovirus since it was certified as poliomyelitis (polio) free in 2002.

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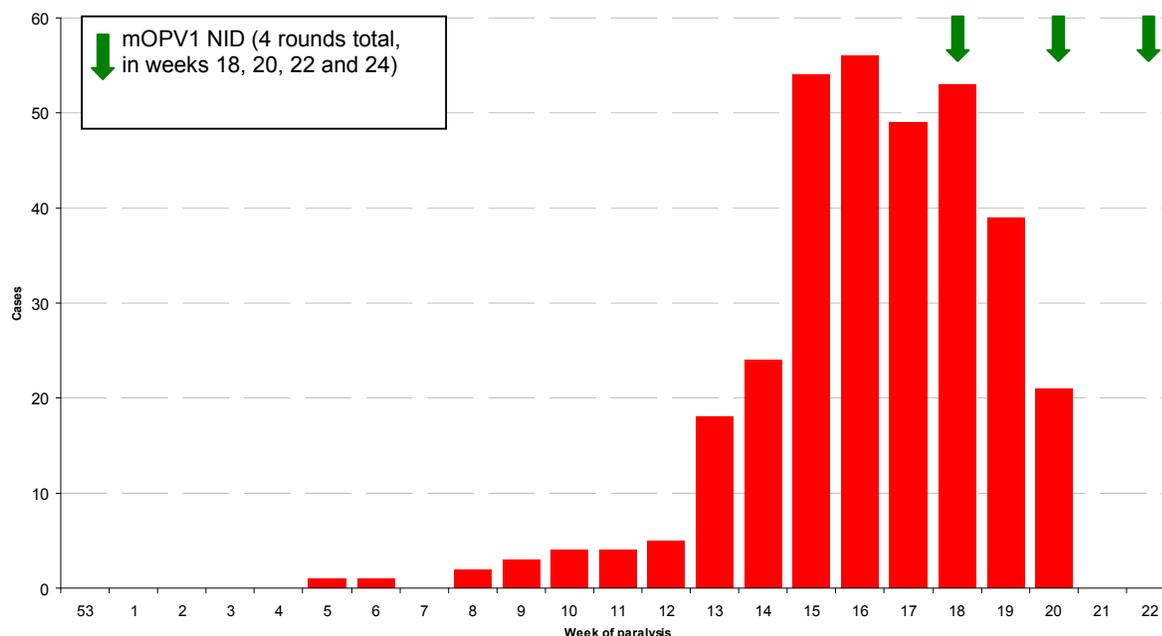
(Fig. 1). All these cases were from the south-western part of the country: Dushanbe City and surrounding provinces, Khatlon zone and the Kulyab zone of Kurgan-Tube oblast (Fig. 2). Confirmed cases had come from 28 of 61 administrative areas (58 districts and Dushanbe City, Khudjand City and Kurgan-Tube City); there was no evidence of transmission to Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous oblast (GBAO) and Sughd oblast. No AFP cases had been reported since 12 June.

Among the 334 laboratory-confirmed polio cases, there had been 15 deaths (4.49%); 4 were in infants, 5 in the group aged 1–5 years, 4 in the group aged 6–14 and 2 in people aged 15 years or more.

Of the confirmed cases, 69 (20.66%) were in infants, 176 (52.69%) in the group aged 1–5 years, 63 (18.86%) in the group aged 6–14 and 26 (7.78%) in people aged 15 years or more.

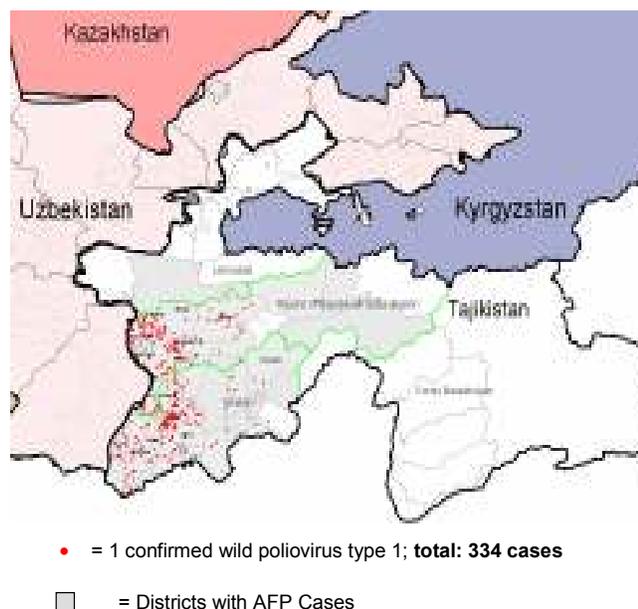
In neighbouring countries, 6 cases of AFP had been laboratory confirmed for wild poliovirus type 1 in the

Fig. 1. Laboratory-confirmed polio cases by week of paralysis onset, Tajikistan, as of 28 June 2010



Russian Federation, the only country outside Tajikistan to confirm such cases. To date, 4 of the 6 cases were imported. Molecular sequencing of the viruses showed that they were all related.

Fig. 2. Tajikistan: areas affected by AFP and polio



NIDs

The fourth round of NIDs in Tajikistan took place on 15–19 June (Fig. 1). According to the available information, countrywide coverage was 98.6% (data on coverage by age cohorts and territory are not yet available). The need for further rounds of vaccination with monovalent oral polio vaccine type 1 (mOPV1) will be assessed at the end of June 2010.

In Uzbekistan, national coverage during the second round of supplemental immunization activity (SIA) on 13 June was 100.4% (2 895 946 people immunized).^a Coverage at the regional level was 99.7–104.3%. Independent monitoring data show similar results; analysis of such data on the second round is under way. The third round will be conducted during 5–9 July.

Kyrgyzstan unrest and refugees in Uzbekistan

The security situation in southern Kyrgyzstan remains volatile, but has stabilized somewhat in recent days. Many refugees are returning from

^a Coverage over 100% means that more people were vaccinated than were thought to be in the catchment area. This is usually due to either underestimation or migration of the population.

Uzbekistan. According to the Government of Uzbekistan, only about 15 000 people remain in the refugee camps; 100 000 fled Kyrgyzstan during the civil unrest. The number of internally displaced persons in Kyrgyzstan is estimated at about 300 000.

The WHO Regional Office for Europe is working with the health ministries of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to limit the potential impact of the security situation and the displacement on the SIAs being conducted following the polio outbreak in Tajikistan. The first round of NIDs in Kyrgyzstan has been postponed to 19–23 July. Training in preparation for the SIAs will start soon in the northern part of the country.

Measles and rubella immunization activities in the camps (if required) are planned in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In addition to providing priority medical supplies (health kits) to health facilities caring for the affected populations, WHO is coordinating all health-related assistance in both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Regional Certification Commission meeting, 28–29 June 2010

The 23rd Meeting of the European Regional Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication is being held at the WHO Regional Office for Europe. During its annual meeting, this independent panel of international public health experts is briefed on the global and regional status of polio eradication and national action plans to sustain the Region's polio-free status. The Commission is responsible for reviewing annual updated certification documentation on polio in all Member States in the WHO European Region.

The next issue of *Epidemiological Brief* will present some of the key discussion points and conclusions from the Meeting.

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