

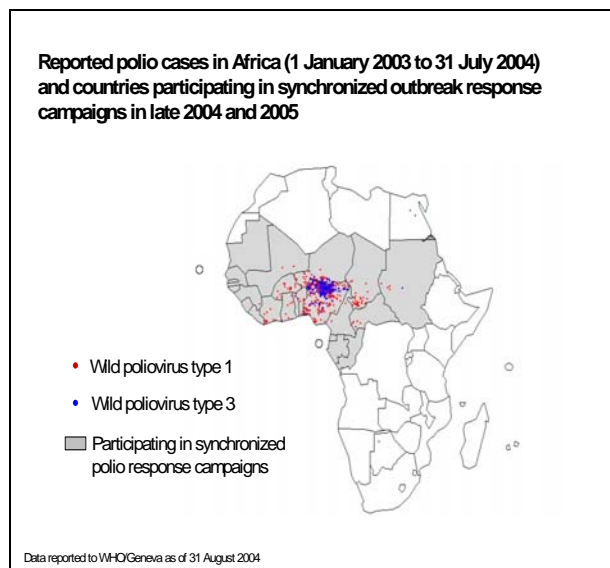
**INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
58th MEETING**

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Spread of Polio in Africa: Global Polio Eradication Initiative

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The number of cases of polio has fallen from an estimated 350,000 annually when the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was launched in 1988 to fewer than 700 in 2003. This success story, however, is now at risk due to an alarming spread of poliovirus in west and central Africa. In the past year, 12 previously polio-free countries have been reinfected with poliovirus. Today, 90% of all the world's polio cases (593 of 668) are found in Africa. That's why 23 countries¹ will be participating in the upcoming synchronized National Immunization Days, which will entail an extraordinary efforts to immunize 80 million children against polio and to demonstrate Africa's ability to take the steps necessary to help deliver a world free of polio to future generations.



Finishing the job of polio eradication is now about more than eradicating polio, it is also about the ability of the world, to set a shared goal and to work over many years -- setting aside political, religious and other differences -- to realize that goal. Extraordinary actions are needed now to ensure that our collective investment is protected and to set the stage for the world to tackle other important health and development initiatives.

¹ 23 countries conducting synchronized National Immunization Days in the coming months: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierre Leone, Sudan and Togo.

Proposed Action by the IASC-WG

- * Agree that communicable diseases are a major threat to survival during humanitarian emergencies.
- * In addition, agree that emerging crises contribute to the breakdown of disease control and eradication programmes, affecting neighbouring countries and endangering regional and global health security.
- * Agree that polio eradication has been adversely affected by a) lack of investment by the Authorities, reducing the intensity of immunization and b) the impact of emerging crisis in neighbouring countries, perhaps exacerbating the spread.
- * Critical attention should be given to National Immunization Days, which are needed also next year to curb the ongoing polio epidemic.
- * To ensure that polio transmission is rapidly stopped and the collective investment in the social capital of communities reaps dividends, IASC Principals and Field Representatives should advocate with Heads of State and Ministers for strong leadership and personal oversight of polio eradication programmes.
- * Ensure adequate funding, to include polio eradication project proposals in the 2005 Consolidated Appeals.

Prepared by: WHO and UNICEF, September 2004