

## Continue to Fight Polio in Myanmar

A joint UNICEF-WHO Press Release

YANGON, January 10, 2009 – As a series of immunization activities in response to the outbreak of polio in 2007, National Immunization Days will again be carried out nationwide in January and February this year, including the areas where Cyclone Nargis caused a serious damage and the surveillance and immunization activities were temporarily interrupted.

More than 7 million children under the age of five will be given two drops of oral poliomyelitis vaccine (OPV) in two rounds of National Immunization Days (NIDs) regardless of their previous immunization status.

The Ministry of Health has trained more than 16,000 health workers and has mobilized 32,000 volunteers who will work for the NIDs through designated immunizations sites, and also through the community outreach.

The first round of polio immunization will be from 10 to 12 January and the second round will be conducted from 7 to 9 February to raise the population immunity and to boost the OPV coverage level which will protect the children from polio and subsequent permanent disability.

The two rounds of NIDs are organized by the Myanmar Ministry of Health, with the support from UNICEF, WHO and Japan Committee Vaccines for the World's Children.

"Supplementary immunization Activities (SIAs) conducted in 2007 and 2008 have stopped the circulation of wild poliomyelitis viruses and this year National Immunization Days activity is the continuation of these efforts to ensure polio free status in Myanmar" said Professor Adik Wibowo, WHO Representative to Myanmar.

"High level of community participation will be required to reach all target children. Parents are requested to bring every child in 0-5 year's age group to the nearest vaccination facility on the day of the immunization," said Professor Wibowo.

Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and other partner agencies is committed to implement all polio eradication activities, which include: high coverage of the routine Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI); National Immunization Days (NIDs); mop-up immunization and high standard of Surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis cases in Myanmar.

"Myanmar has good experience of successfully conducting mass immunization campaign for eradication of poliomyelitis. The Ministry of Health has provided the necessary leadership through campaigns and through routine EPI activities. " said Mr. Ramesh Shrestha, UNICEF Representative in Myanmar.

"UNICEF will continue to support the Ministry of Health in strengthening the immunization activities so that all children are reached by immunization and protected from polio and other vaccine preventable diseases," said Mr. Ramesh Shrestha.

Teams from the WHO, UNICEF, other UN agencies, National and International NGOs are deployed to different parts of the country to monitor and supervise both rounds of NID as joint efforts to ensure the success of the campaign.

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