

# EPI update

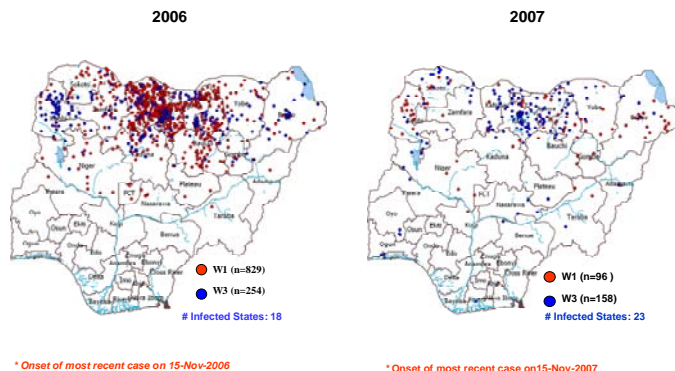
Nigeria – UNICEF Country Office EPI Update

July-December 2007

## POLIO EPIDEMIOLOGY

### 2006 – 2007 Wild poliovirus Distribution

Onset Nov 15, 2006/2007



\* Onset of most recent case on 15-Nov-2006

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- As at December 7, 2007 and with latest onset 15-Nov-2007 Nigeria has 254 cases of wild poliovirus in 23 states in 2007, compared to 1083 for the same period in 2006 in 18 states.
- In 2007, Nigeria accounts for 32% of the global wild poliovirus cases.
- Nigeria accounts for 81% of the cases in Africa.

## PEI UPDATE

In July-December, 2007, three rounds of Immunization plus Days (IPDs) were conducted. The campaign was conducted in 13 high risk states in July, in 12 high risk states in September and in 16 high risk states in November. In these 3 rounds, more than 49 million (49,128,783) children were immunized against polio.

Supplemental immunization activities are reaching more children than ever before. So far in 2007, seven rounds of Immunization Plus Days (IPDs) campaigns offering multiple antigens were carried out. There has been a steady and consistent increase in the number of children vaccinated during each subsequent round. In the 12 highest risk states, 12.6 million children were vaccinated during the January 2007 IPDs. This figure has increased to 14.5 million children in September, meaning an additional 1.9 million children were reached during the September round. Most states remain polio-free; and the "IPD approach" has shown a significant reduction of WPV trends.

### Key Issues/Challenges

- Routine immunization is low, particularly in high risk states. Still there are many missed children in high risk states. Over 20 % of LGAs in high risk states were not able to achieve 90 % coverage during the 5 rounds of IPDs since January.
- Still, many children are missed because they are un-reached by vaccinators as they live in remote rural

areas or because they are away from their homes, either on the farm, in the playgrounds, or off to market with their mothers. Non-compliance as a reason for missed children is still the primary reason for missed children especially in pockets in the 6 most high-risk states.

- Persistent population immunity gaps in several high risk LGAs
- Low or reduced commitment amongst key programme stakeholders in some states, particularly at the State and Local Government levels.
- The knowledge of the circulating vaccine derived wild polio virus poses a threat to efforts to eradicate polio in Nigeria by mid 2008
- Funding gap is a threat to effective and smooth planning and implementation of the programme, especially in view of the high operational cost for about 8 rounds per annum in the very high risk states.

### Way Forward

- Sustain high level of programme ownership and commitment
- Continue to improve quality of IPDs
- Intensify immunization activities in-between campaigns, including localized catch up campaigns
- Strengthen routine immunization activities (Data management training, Reach Every Ward and general Ward Health Services (REW/ WHS), human resource development, including IPC skills for health educators during static and outreach sessions, improved vaccine security, cold chain/ logistics, and creation of outreach services) within the overall context of PHC
- Sustain high quality AFP surveillance

## SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

### First Lady and Governors' Wives Task Women on Polio Immunisation



First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua, delivering her speech during September IPDs flag-off ceremony in Kebbi State

One of the recent developments in the mobilisation of communities is the involvement of the First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua and wives of state governors in campaigns prior to Immunisation Plus Days (IPDs). Between July and September 2007, the wives of chief executives of Kano, Bauchi, and Katsina states have taken the campaign for the eradication of polio to local governments. These are among the highest-risk states in Nigeria. In Katsina State for instance, Hajiya Fatima Shema, during a dialogue with wives of local government chairmen in August, tasked them to use their offices to promote and educate their communities on the benefits of immunising their children against polio. Also, the wife of the Kano State Governor personally addressed women groups before the September 2007 IPDs, charging them to mobilise families to bring out their children for immunisation.

These efforts are paying off, as cases of WPV have taken a downward trend. In addition, cases of rejection and non-compliance have also reduced. In Katsina state for instance, the cases of WPV were 152 in 2006, but as at September 2007, the cases recorded were 15. Also, in Kano State, the cases of WPV have dropped significantly, just as efforts at tackling rejection and non-compliance are yielding fruits. As at August 2007, the cases of WPV in Kano were 44, as against 315 WPV recorded during the same period in 2006.

**Emirs, District Heads Boost Immunization Campaign**



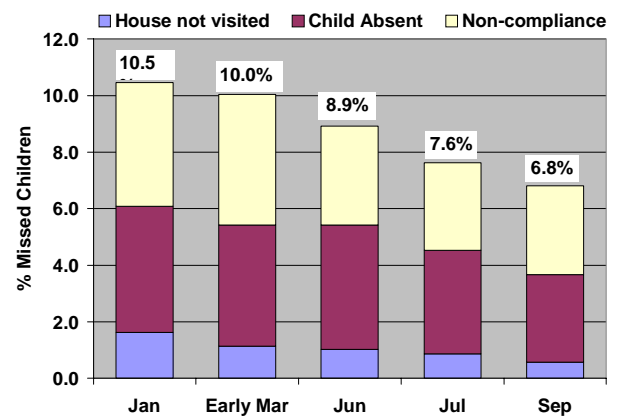
Alhaji Yunusa Abdullahi with Alhaji Abdulkarim Kadar Usman, District Head, Kaita LGA immunising a child during the IPDs in Katsina State

Traditional rulers are taking more than a passing interest in the immunisation of children in their communities and this has helped considerably in tackling cases of rejection and non-compliance in Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Jigawa and Sokoto States. Apart from conducting sensitisation meetings with religious leaders in their palaces, they engage in dialogues with individuals whose activities might pose as obstacles to the successful conduct of the IPDs.

Some traditional rulers go to the field to immunise children. An example is Alhaji Abdulkarim Kadar

Usman, district head of Kaita Local Government Area of Katsina State. He doubles as the Local Government Chairman of the Social Mobilisation Committee. During the September IPDs, he personally entered into the field to immunise children, going from house-to-house. In Zamfara also, the Emirs of Anka and Birnin Magaji LGAs attached representatives to each vaccination team during the IPDs and mandated them to help resolve non-compliance. These Emirs encouraged traditional rulers in their constituencies to follow their footsteps by ensuring that all children between the ages of zero and five years are immunised against polio.

Reduction in Missed Children in States implementing IPDs (January – September 2007)



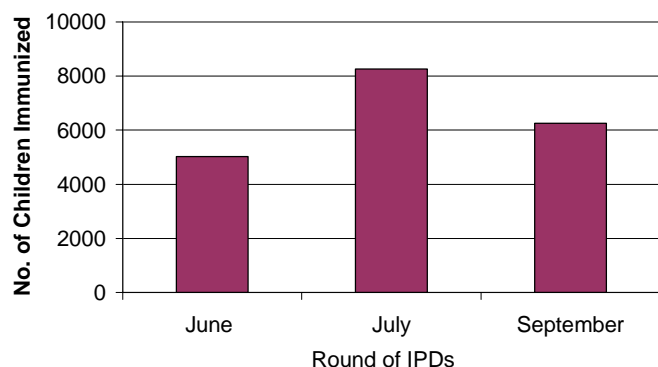
The increased support by the Traditional Rulers has significantly contributed to the reduction in missed children across the 12 states that conducted IPDs between January and September. There has been a 12% reduction in the children missed due to non-compliance in this period as shown in the chart above.

**Partnership with Fulani Herdsmen Yielding Fruits**

Until recently, vaccinators have found it very difficult to effectively immunise children of nomadic Fulani communities in most parts of the northern states. However, with the involvement of leaders of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) and the Fulani Development Associations of Nigeria (FULDAN), the trend is changing. In most of the high-risk states, social mobilizers have been raised from among the nomadic communities and they participate in vaccinating children in their communities. In Katsina for instance, about 4,800 nomadic children were immunised during the September 2007 IPDs, out of eligible 5,000 under five year old children. In Kano, the figure is



quite higher. Between June and September, 61,103 nomadic children were immunised. At least, 250 Fulanis were sensitised and they actively engaged in the micro-planning and implementation of strategies on how to reach transit areas and other communities. After identifying the transit points, massive mobilisation is carried out, with Fulani leaders in active participation. In Katsina, broadcasting vans are used to air polio songs and the announcement of dates of the IPDs in Fulani settlements and markets. No doubt, these strategies have helped in bringing down the rate of WPVs in Kano, Katsina, Zamfara and Jigawa states, compared to the same time last year.



Children Immunized in Fulani Communities in Jigawa State  
June – September 2007

### Islamic Preacher Takes Message of Vaccination Against Polio to Local Governments in Bauchi State



Mallam Allarama Bashar

Mallam Allarama Bashar is a renowned Islamic preacher in Matsagu, Katagum Local Government Area of Bauchi State. At his home, a house built of mud, his level of intellectual involvement in the religion is manifest in the volumes of books in his living room.

In Bauchi State, Muslim preachers like Mallam Bashar have become very important to the campaign to eradicate polio. Their messages help to shape the opinion of the people. Until recently, some Muslim preachers in the State spoke against the immunisation of children against polio, citing religious reasons. The outcome was non-compliance and massive rejection recorded by vaccinators.

Mallam Bashar is usually involved in the campaign against polio before Immunisation Plus Days (IPDs). At a local mosque in Matsagu, he preaches to his audience on the need to secure the future of their children from attack of the wild polio virus by ensuring that those

under the age of five are vaccinated. As an example to his followers, Mallam Bashar ensures that his own children, who fall into the age bracket of zero to five years, receive the OPV in the full glare of his people. He said he decided to embark on the campaign after thinking deeply on the danger of preaching error to his followers.

He said, “Over time, we have seen a lot of changes. For instance, when bicycles came, we were told that Islamic preachers said it was the devil’s horse and that a good Muslim must not ride on bicycles. But, you know, today everybody uses bicycle.” He told them that infectious diseases like smallpox has been eradicated and leprosy has drastically reduced because the people were immunized against these infectious diseases; but that paralysis due to polio is still prevalent among children because not all parents have fully embraced immunisation against poliomyelitis.

As a result of this Imam’s commitment to the campaign against polio, the Primary Health Care and Disease Control section of Katagum Local Government would not embark on social mobilisation in the area without Mallam Bashar. Also, at the state level, he is a preferred choice when there is need to take an Islamic preacher to any community where there is high level of non-compliance and rejection. He has been on a campaign train to Zaki, Itas/Gadaw, Gyade, Dambam, and Misau Local Government Areas, all high-risk LGAs in Bauchi State, three times each this year.

### NGO Intervention Halts Intended Divorce over Polio Immunization in Katsina State



Hajiya Fatima Kilichi Yari

Hajiya Fatima Kilichi Yari was shocked beyond expression when she received a call from a woman in Angwar Yari, Katsina Local Government Area (LGA), asking for assistance to save her marriage from collapse. The caller wanted her children immunized during the

July 2007 Immunisation Plus Days (IPDs), but her husband was opposed to it.

Hajiya Yari, in her 50s, is founder of New Era for Social Development, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) formed in 2003 to tackle the problems of poor healthcare delivery, lack of access to education and poverty among women in Katsina State. The NGO is actively involved in house-to-house mobilisation of families for the immunisation of children below the age of five against polio.

According to Hajiya Yari, “the woman sent a message to me that I should come to her house and help her because

vaccinators had come, but her husband said she should not immunise the children. He threatened that if she did, he would divorce her..." In this particular case, Hajiya Yari rushed to the woman's house to intervene in the disagreement and to raise the issue with the woman's husband. "I told him I was there for the sake of 'our children' who should be immunised against a disease that could give them permanent disability – the polio virus. The husband said there was no problem, except that he was personally against the immunisation." Further discussions between Hajiya Yari and the man revealed that he had heard a sermon alluding to the vaccines as containing anti-fertility contaminants designed to reduce the population of Muslims.

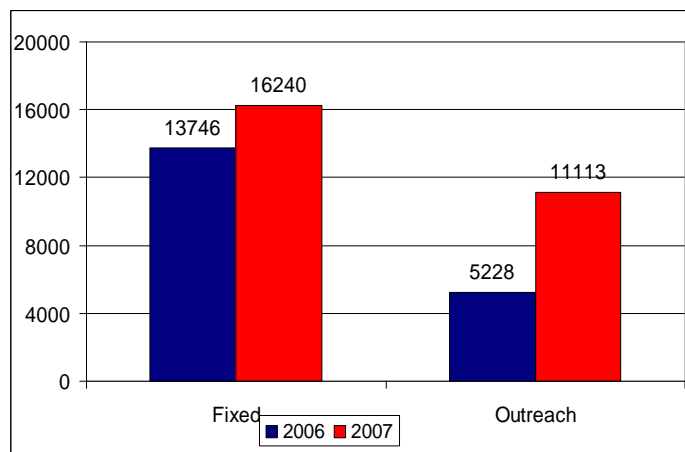
To Hajiya Yari, a former Vice President of the Nigerian National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), the case here was as intricate as it was familiar, because it had to do with religion. She explained that in order to enlighten the husband, she had to use her household as an example by, telling them that "My daughter, who is a medical doctor, was immunised against polio when she was a baby. Now she is married with two children. And she will still have more. If it were all about family planning the way you think, she wouldn't have children." She also took time to explain the importance of the vaccine to the man, and at the end of the enlightenment, he allowed his children to be immunised.

In Katsina State, a deliberate attempt is being made to counter the arguments of some renowned anti-immunisation personalities. A key initiative is the involvement of Islamic preachers in the mobilisation effort.

## UPDATE ON ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

There is a renewed focus amongst government and major immunization partners to strengthen routine immunization programme, not only to consolidate the gains in polio eradication efforts but as a sustainable strategy contributing effectively to child survival interventions. The national coverage from administrative report for DPT 3 compared to last year declined slightly from 72% to 66%. This is probably due to the validation

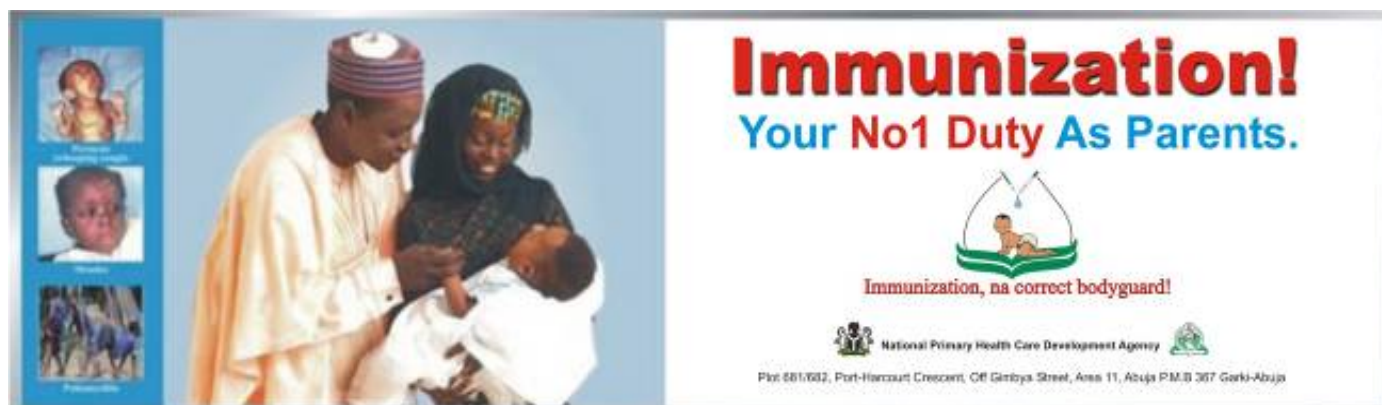
in the quality of data management. What is encouraging is the increase in number of states that moved from the under 50% DPT 3 coverage to the 50 – 79% bracket. This shows a progressive improvement in EPI activities in general. In the focus LGAs, the emphasis is on improving service delivery in the catchment communities. There is increase in the number of centres providing fixed post and outreach immunization



services, and reducing the un-immunized children.

No. of States with DPT3	2006	2007
<50%	11	3
50-79.9%	16	30
=>80%	10	4

The national Mid-level Management (MLM) ToT was successfully held in September 2007. Major objectives include strengthening management competencies of programme officers as well as encouraging the spirit of ownership. Plans are on to revise the training modules and presentations before cascading to sub-national level during first and second quarters of 2008. Inter-personal Communication (IPC) modules and Facilitators' Guides would be some of the important components of the revised MLM package. The revision will provide comprehensive tools for national, state and LGA levels to continue improvement and build-up of RI coverage in Nigeria.



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