

## UNICEF WCAR FAST FACTS: POLIO IN WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

### Global Polio Eradication Initiative:

- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, the world's largest public health initiative, has decreased the annual number of global polio cases by more than 99%: from ~1,000 cases per day in 1988, to less than 800 cases in all of 2003.
- Today, however, the Initiative - a unique public-private partnership between WHO, UNICEF, Centre for Disease Control and Rotary International - is at a critical point: failure to conduct additional polio immunization activities in 22 West & Central African countries could jeopardize the tremendous success achieved globally over the past 15 years.

### West & Central Africa – A Region at Risk:

- West & Central Africa is a region of major concern because the majority of the world's polio cases are found in Nigeria and, of the 6 polio-endemic countries in the world (Nigeria, Niger, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan & Egypt), 2 are found in the West & Central Africa region.
- Of the 630 polio cases confirmed globally from 1 Jan-31 Aug 2004, 563 cases are found in sub-Saharan Africa (491 cases in Nigeria; 19 cases in Niger; 53 cases: neighboring countries).
- In addition, the polio virus found in Nigeria has already been exported to 12 countries.
- For each confirmed polio case, up to 200 polio virus carriers may exhibit no symptoms.

### Accelerated Polio Immunization Plan:

- As a result, an accelerated polio immunization plan has been developed to prevent the risk of the largest outbreak of polio in recent history. The campaign calls for synchronized Polio National Immunization Days in 22 West & Central African countries:

Polio-Endemic Countries: Nigeria, Niger.

Re-Infected Countries: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Togo.

High-Risk Countries: Congo-Brazza, DRC, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Senegal, Sierra Leone.

- In 2003, for the first time in history, the number of countries with polio importations (9), outnumbered polio-endemic countries (6).

### Examples of Polio Cases in West & Central Africa So Far in 2004:

Nigeria had a total of 355 confirmed polio cases in 2003.

Niger had a total of 40 confirmed cases of polio in 2003.

Chad had a total of 25 confirmed polio cases in 2003.

Cote d'Ivoire had 1 confirmed polio case in 2003.

Burkina-Faso had 11 confirmed polio cases in 2003.

Benin had a total of 2 confirmed polio cases in 2003.

CAR had a total of 1 confirmed polio cases in 2003.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, Nigeria already has 491 confirmed cases.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, Niger already has 19 confirmed cases.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, Chad already has 14 confirmed cases.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, Cote d'Ivoire already has 10 confirmed cases.

Yet from 1 Jan –31 Aug 2004, Burkina-Faso already has 6 confirmed cases.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, Benin already has 6 confirmed polio cases.

Yet, from 1 Jan–31 Aug 2004, CAR already has 6 confirmed polio cases.

### Synchronized Polio National Immunization Days:

- The next rounds of synchronized, door-to-door Polio National Immunization Days will target 22 countries in West & Central Africa with an objective of immunizing ~74 million children under-5 years of age. The first door-to-door round will be conducted from 8-12 Oct; the second door-to-door round from 18-22 Nov (including Vitamin A supplementation); and, a third round will be conducted during a synchronized measles campaign at fixed health post centers from 13-19 Dec in Burkina-Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Togo.



Urgent funding of \$50 million is urgently needed to conduct emergency polio immunization activities from Oct–Dec 2004 in 22 West & Central African countries. The synchronized polio campaigns will immunize some 74 million children under 5 years in the region. Photo: UNICEF WCAR/Kent Page