



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

IRAQ

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROJECT

SUCCESS STORY

USAID/PHCPI Helps Iraq Address Polio



The Translation for PHCPI's AFP Surveillance Guide reads: "Field Guide to the epidemiological surveillance activities for acute flaccid paralysis epidemiological surveillance- for workers in the monitoring and control of CDC Units."

In March 2014, Iraq confirmed its first case of polio (poliomyelitis) in more than a decade. For USAID's Primary Health Care Project in Iraq (PHCPI), awareness and improvement of vaccination coverage has been a key element in addressing the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4, which calls for the reduction of child mortality.

PHCPI specifically addresses this goal with activities providing training to health care providers, traditional birth attendants, and community partners on the importance of proper nutrition and vaccinations in the healthy development of infants and young children. Furthermore, the project has provided guidance on the identification and management of childhood illnesses, how to measure growth progress, and the importance of food hygiene and safety. Finally, PHCPI has developed clinic-level outreach strategies to reach underserved rural communities in order to provide increased access to vaccinations, as well as information on nutrition and treatments of communicable diseases afflicting children under five. The expected outcome of these interventions is an increased number of children receiving the necessary vaccinations to keep them healthy - a key indicator for MDG 4.

USAID/PHCPI'S RESPONSE TO DATE

PHCPI has developed polio-related technical support through the development of an Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Field Manual. AFP is the most common sign of polio and is used as a surveillance indicator during polio outbreaks. This manual is used by communicable disease surveillance staff to assist primary health care workers to better diagnose, manage and report cases of AFP.

In addition:

- PHCPI has provided training to primary health care staff on vaccination and AFP guidelines, and conducted provincial-level workshops in all governorates except for Anbar Province.
- PHCPI has developed and distributed over 5,000 posters and 225,000 flyers to PHCPI target clinics on the importance of polio vaccination.
- PHCPI has conducted vaccination-focused awareness workshops to communities living in areas covered by the project, including vulnerable groups (e.g. internally displaced persons and refugees).



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Photo: USAID Field Monitor

Medical worker transporting vaccines to rural areas.

Re-Emergence of Polio and MoH Support

Given that Iraq has been polio free for over 10 years, even one case constitutes a crisis. The problem, however, is bigger than this recent outbreak extending to the entire public health care sector. The unstable security environment has led many to stay away from public health care facilities and to avoid getting vaccinated. In addition, many health care workers lack the necessary tools and knowledge to communicate effectively with the general public about this emergency.

On May 6th, 2014, the Ministry of Health (MoH) requested assistance from USAID to urgently support its polio response efforts. To adequately respond to this crisis, the MoH has developed a multimedia campaign to deliver messages targeting health and medical professionals, as well as the general public in order to raise awareness about the importance of vaccinations and the need for increased surveillance in the field. This campaign seeks to alert communities on how to enroll their children in the national vaccination program as a precautionary measure to contain the disease and prevent the emergence of more polio cases.

PHCPI provided \$2.9 million in funding for six television spots developed by the MoH to educate the general public about polio and to encourage parents to get their children vaccinated. These television spots represent a central element of the MoH's polio response campaign. The television spots will air from May 9 – June 22, 2014 on nine popular Iraqi channels that will ensure nationwide coverage.

IRAQI TV STATIONS

Al Sharqiyah

Al Sumariyah

Al Masar Al ula

Al Anbar

Bilady

Al Furat

Dijlah

Gali Kurdistan

Salahadin

The MoH also plans to rollout a second phase of its media campaign with the development of six new television spots to run for three months beginning in July 2014. The channels these short programs will broadcast on were selected based on the ethnic and sectarian distribution of the population to ensure a uniform delivery of media messages to the entire target audience.



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USAID/PHCPI has supported the MoH's multimedia polio campaign with both funding and technical support.

PHCPI Behavior Change Communication Campaign

PHCPI plans to launch its Behavior Change Communication (BCC) mass media campaign focused on reducing maternal and child mortality on June 22, 2014. This multimedia campaign includes television, radio, print, press, and outdoor components. The key objectives of this effort will be to increase awareness about specific maternal and child health issues, including the importance of timely and complete vaccinations.

PHCPI's mass media campaign and the MoH's polio awareness campaign will be mutually reinforcing, leveraging the work done by the MoH in the field related to vaccinations and polio response.

PHCPI, however, has closely reviewed all materials directly developed by the MoH and those developed by the project in an effort to reduce any replications in coverage. Work developed by the MoH and supported by USAID underwent a thorough technical review to ensure its quality and its support of the broader themes of the PHCPI BCC campaign.

Impact

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