



World Health
Organization



Polio transition in a snapshot: Sudan



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Background

DEMOGRAPHICS¹



Total population, 2022:
47 million



Birth rate (per 1000 people),
2021: **34**



Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live
births), 2021: **39**



Under-5 mortality rate (per 1000
live births), 2021: **99**

FINANCIALS²



GDP per capita, 2022:
US\$ 1102



Universal Health Coverage Index,
2021: **44**

KEY RESOURCES

- Sudan Polio Transition Plan 2019 – 2025
- Sudan Strategic Plan on Polio Transition: Integrated Public Health Teams, 2021 - 2023
- Sudan Polio Transition Plan: Build up on Integrated Public Health Teams 2024 - 2025
- Eastern Mediterranean Regional Strategic Plan for Polio Transition

¹ World Bank Data (<https://data.worldbank.org/>)

² World Bank Data (<https://data.worldbank.org/>)



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History of polio eradication and transition in Sudan

The Republic of Sudan has been wild polio-free since 2009. However, the country experiences sporadic outbreaks of cVDPV and is considered vulnerable to further outbreaks or importations. Approximately 94% of the under-5 population received a first dose of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) through routine immunization in 2022³, but this is likely to have been impacted by the onset of conflict in 2023.

The Sudan Polio Transition Plan summarizes key actions required to enable the Ministry of Health to take on ultimate responsibility for key polio functions. In the interim period, Sudan has introduced Integrated Public Health Teams (IPHT) to ensure that polio functions are sustained at quality. The IPHT builds on the polio programme footprint, by merging members of the WHO polio and immunization, health emergencies, and health system strengthening teams into one 'public health team', which is equipped to respond to a wide range of public health priorities. Since its inception, the IPHT in Sudan has been instrumental in responding to many health emergencies, such as measles, malaria, dengue fever, COVID-19 and more recently the humanitarian emergency resulting from conflict in the country.

3 <https://immunizationdata.who.int/>, Inactivated polio-containing vaccine (IPV) vaccination coverage, 1st dose, Sudan 2022

Polio transition in Sudan

Objectives

Polio transition in Sudan is focused on using the tools and knowledge from the polio eradication programme to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, with a focus on women, child and adolescent health, communicable diseases, surveillance, and immunization activities. The aim is to ensure that the investments made to eradicate polio contribute to strengthened health systems and progression towards universal health coverage, through a programme of work to systematically transition the knowledge, lessons learned and assets of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The objectives outlined in the polio transition plan include:

- Sustaining the country's polio-free status and maintaining essential functions, especially in fragile states in Sudan;
- Strengthening national capacity for public health surveillance;
- Integrating essential functions to strengthen essential immunization, disease surveillance and emergency response.



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Journey to transition

For many years, polio programme personnel in Sudan have worked in an integrated manner, contributing to essential immunization, broader disease surveillance and emergency response alongside their work to eradicate polio. Their accumulative experiences in different public health activities have made them a critical asset for the health system. In addition, polio resources, such as vehicles, have long supported broader health activities.

The Sudan Polio Transition Plan focuses on putting in place the mechanisms to enable the long-term transition to country ownership of essential public health functions previously carried out by the polio eradication programme and mobilizing resources to sustain these functions. The plan was envisaged as a component of the national comprehensive multi-year strategic plan (cMYP), with responsibility for implementation placed at the national and sub-national level.

Since the development of the plan the context has dramatically changed. The operationalization of the Integrated Public Health Teams approach in Sudan is an interim measure to sustain the support of WHO for essential polio and other public health functions.



Integrated public health teams

A key milestone for Sudan was the full merging of WHO polio staff into essential immunization, disease surveillance and emergency response teams. This was a success story, with the first IPHTs operationalized through 2022.

Integration was undertaken in a consultative manner to ensure that the IPHTs are contributing strategically to programmatic priorities focused on the following key areas:

- Integrating and strengthening VPD, routine and early warning surveillance and response
- Strengthening outbreak preparedness and response capacities
- Strengthening immunization delivery

During the operationalization of the IPHT, the functions of the technical field staff of the polio and immunization, health emergencies, health system strengthening and other programmes were broadened so that each technical staff covers all the priority public health functions defined by the country. The WHO Field Technical Officers Network was transformed into a network of around 50 Public Health Officers, with uniform terms of reference and functions based on Sudan's priorities.

The IPHTs have delivered notable programmatic benefits, including more strategic support to routine immunization, greater geographical reach (especially to remote communities), and the potential for more timely detection of outbreaks. They can also be quickly mobilized to respond to health emergencies. It is envisaged that the IPHT will provide a reliable platform for sustaining essential polio functions until they fully transition to the national health system.

Financial sustainability

The costs of the IPHTs are co-shared by various programmes within the WHO Country Office. In the longer term, it is vital that sustainable financing is secured to enable the full transition of functions to the national health system. A planned output of the Sudan Polio Transition Plan was the development of a detailed costing analysis, outlining the funding needs to sustain the polio essential functions in the longer term.

Monitoring and evaluation

The global Polio Transition Monitoring and Evaluation framework consists of two sets of indicators to measure health system performance in relation to the polio essential functions, and the polio transition process. The framework aims to guide decision-making, facilitate progress, and enable the monitoring of the quality of performance of the polio essential functions.

The datasets related to Sudan can be accessed at <https://www.who.int/teams/polio-transition-programme>.

Risks/challenges

- High turnover of staff, necessitating ongoing onboarding to retain capacity.
- The complex humanitarian situation exacerbates the risk of outbreaks and poses challenges to effective response.
- Limited geographical access in some areas.

Next steps

- Mobilizing secure resources to sustain polio essential functions at quality through the IPHTs.
- Ongoing efforts to build national health system capacity to enable the ultimate handover of the polio essential functions to the national government.