



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### *NID Combines Polio Eradication and Vitamin A Plus for 22 million children*

**Dhaka, June 8, 2006:** This Sunday June 11th is the final day of the three rounds of National Immunization Days (NIDs) in Bangladesh aiming to immunize 22 million children of 0-5 years of age against polio. The three consecutive NIDs on April 16th, May 13th and June 11th were sparked as a rapid response to the confirmation of a polio case in March. This was the first case of polio in Bangladesh in more than five years.

The Government of Bangladesh along with support from UNICEF, WHO, Rotary International and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) decided to immunize all children nationwide under the age of five years as a precaution as it was uncertain how the 9 year old girl had contracted the virus or where the virus was circulating. Thirty million doses of polio vaccines have been procured by the Government of Bangladesh for the NID.

The Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain will address a press conference on Friday the June 9 on the occasion of the National Immunization Day and National Vitamin A Plus Campaign.

The two previous NIDs rounds saw an impressive 96% turnout. A similar response is expected this time from families and communities in bringing their young children to immunisation sites for the polio drops, Vitamin A capsules and de-worming tablets.

The third round of NID is particularly important as it combines polio vaccines with Vitamin A capsules for children between 1 and 5 years and de-worming tablets for children 2 to 5 years of age. Vitamin A supplementation provides a highly cost-effective way to protect children from vitamin A deficiency that can cause serious health and growth hazards and increases vulnerability for contracting several other diseases. One vitamin A capsule costing only one taka (TK 1) can increase a child's chances of survival by up to 25%.

“We are happy at the prompt and effective response that was mounted in order to counter the threat of polio re-emergence in Bangladesh. With this level of responsiveness and the strong alliance between the Government of Bangladesh and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, I am optimistic of a highly successful campaign,” said Louis-Georges Arsenault, UNICEF Bangladesh Representative. He added, “Furthermore, by combining Vitamin A capsules with polio vaccines for the upcoming NID will make the most of the opportunity of reaching all children under-5 years of age in Bangladesh.”

The NID will also focus on the search for AFP (acute flaccid paralysis) cases, and effective management and prevention of the spread of reported polio virus cases. The campaign will target the hard-to-reach and will administer vaccines at airports and at land borders.

“The Government of Bangladesh through the Ministry of Health has engaged in a timely and appropriate response which is in line with WHO recommendations for polio eradication. The Government's excellent surveillance system and quick action means Bangladesh is on the right track to limit the spread of the virus,” said Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Bangladesh.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) works with governments around the world to reduce the incidence of polio and is spearheaded by WHO, Rotary International, the US Center for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC) and UNICEF. The GPEI has reduced the incidence of polio by more than 99% since its launch in 1988, from 350,000 annual cases to 1,950 cases in 2005.

An extensive social mobilization and media campaign preceded each NID to ensure that the maximum number of children were vaccinated.

*For more information:*

UNICEF contact:

Kirsty McIvor

Communication Officer, UNICEF Dhaka

+8802 9335807

+8801713043478

[kmcivor@unicef.org](mailto:kmcivor@unicef.org)

WHO contact:

Dr. Serguei Diorditsa

Team Leader IVD and Medical Officer, WHO

Bangladesh

+8802 989 9540

+8802 881 3410

[diorditsas@whoban.org](mailto:diorditsas@whoban.org)