Polio Transition – Update March 2019

Introduction

In May 2018, the World Health Assembly noted the Strategic Action Plan on Polio Transition (2018-2023), including road map, milestones, detailed costing of essential functions and the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The Strategic Action Plan has three key objectives:

1. Sustaining a polio-free world after eradication of polio virus;
2. Strengthening immunization systems, including surveillance for vaccine-preventable diseases, in order to achieve the goals of WHO’s Global Vaccine Action Plan;
3. Strengthening emergency preparedness, detection and response capacity in countries in order to fully implement the International Health Regulations (2005).

The Context – What is Polio Transition?

For more than 30 years, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has financially supported the WHO global polio eradication programme. With the foreseeable closure of GPEI when eradication of poliomyelitis is declared, GPEI funding will stop.

Many countries have benefitted from continuous GPEI support. In some countries, despite the elimination of polio and the reduction of associated polio activities in the areas of surveillance, laboratory services, immunization, and emergency response, several polio functions and associated WHO staff have continued and have even been expanded to support related national programmes, beyond the focus on polio.

Maintaining these critical polio functions post-eradication will not only sustain a polio-free world, but also continue the strengthening of immunization systems and emergency preparedness, detection and response capacities.

Anticipating GPEI’s sunset, WHO now needs to seek clarity from GPEI in terms of what portions of the identified functions and activities GPEI will continue to fundraise for, given its recent extension to 2023. WHO must find alternative ways to raise the necessary funds to support essential non-polio functions.

Options include national governments to support national programmes where possible, and ensuring that internal WHO stakeholder programmes like UHC, IVB and WHE engage in taking over full ownership of these functions, including their financial support.

The mapping and costing of key functions is ongoing, with focus on 20 priority countries. This is critical to clarify what GPEI-supported polio-functions need to be sustained and transition to new WHO/other hosts, with clear indications of expected transition timelines.

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1 Polio transition and post-certification. Draft strategic action plan on polio transition (WHA A71/9)
Discussions with stakeholders began in Montreux in November 2018. Next steps include the organization of four independent meetings addressing the four thematic areas of immunization, surveillance, emergency response and containment.

This document provides an overview of progress on transition since May 2018, with particular focus on the work of the Polio Transition Team (PTT), established in September 2018. It provides up-to-date information on the following:

1) Stakeholders’ meetings and strategic consultations
2) Country support visits and their results
3) Transition workplans for 2019

WHO established in July 2018 the Steering Committee for Polio Transition to oversee the work of the PTT and other relevant departments, confirming the highest commitment of its leadership to the transition process.

Stakeholders’ Meeting – Montreux, Switzerland, 13-14 November 2018

In accordance with its commitments under the strategic action plan, WHO convened a high-level meeting of key stakeholders in November 2018. The meetings objective’s included: clarifying the implications of the new 5-year GPEI Strategy on polio transition; identifying existing and potential financing options for polio transition; evaluating ways of achieving a smooth transition; and discussing options for governance of the polio transition and post-certification process.

Key conclusions:

a) While transition priority countries have progressed well in transition planning, funding to sustain polio assets remains problematic for many fragile or low-resource countries, which will require consideration of a separate continuation of funding;

b) The GPEI extension gives breathing space to implement transition more strategically, but cannot be taken as an opportunity to let up on efforts to transition polio assets;

c) Transition planning can not only strengthen eradication efforts, but can also make an important contribution to strengthening health systems and building emergency response capacity;

d) Transition support must consider the differences between countries’ situations and capacities. Countries fall within three broad categories:

1. Highly vulnerable, fragile/conflict-affected countries, where some progress with transition planning may be possible, but continued technical, external and WHO financial support will be required in the medium to long term;

2. Lower risk countries, where a faster pace is possible for transitioning, capacity-building support will be needed while enhancing routine immunization and emergency response capability;

3. Countries with stronger health systems, with a sufficiently large trained workforce and stronger economic capabilities, will gradually be able to fully integrate and fund the polio assets and capacities needed to meet their health priorities.
e) sustainability.

The full list of conclusions of the meeting can be found in the Summary Report.

To lead the transition process forward, WHO committed to:

- Take the lead to convene follow-up discussions in the coming months on the pragmatic implications of polio transition, across the four thematic priorities identified, to support decision-making in those areas;
- Organize discussions on governance at the next polio key stakeholder consultations, which will be held prior to the 2019 World Health Assembly;
- Make contributions to the GPEI Strategy design;
- Work closely with GPEI on detailed analyses of country transition budgets to ensure there is no overlap or duplication between GPEI and WHO transition budgets;
- Continue to organize joint country visits to review national transition plans to ensure that they meet the objectives of the WHO strategic action plan.

Transition Activities and Workplan for 2019

The following strategic consultations are planned:

1. **Integrated Disease Surveillance**, hosted by CDC in Atlanta, USA, 27-28 March 2019
2. **Consultation on emergency preparedness, detection and response**, hosted by WHO/WHE in Geneva, 2-3 April
3. **Polio containment consultation**, hosted by WHO/PTT in Geneva, 10-11 April 2019

**Montreux II**: The conclusions and recommendations of the four strategic consultations will be presented to a second polio key stakeholder high-level event, organized by WHO/Polio Transition Team in Geneva, during June 2019. The Montreux II event will also consider future governance issues.

**WHA**: Discussions are ongoing with the U.S. permanent mission to host a formal side-event on polio transition at the WHA 2019.

**Joint Country Support Visits**

Since its establishment in September 2018, the Polio Transition Team has visited Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Myanmar, South Sudan, Cameroon and Angola in coordination with country, regional and headquarters colleagues from polio (POL), immunization (IVB), emergencies (WHE) and other departments, with the following objectives:

1. Review and update key elements of national polio transition plans.
2. Discuss progress and timelines for the implementation of polio transition plans.
3. Review country-level financing opportunities and financing gaps.

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2 Polio transition and post-certification. [Draft strategic action plan on polio transition](#) (WHA A71/9)
4. Discuss and align national M&E frameworks to the global M&E framework of the WHO Strategic Action Plan on Polio Transition\(^1\) and review progress towards meeting output indicators.
5. Consult with stakeholders, including donors and development agencies, to raise awareness of transition funding requirements.
6. Identify areas requiring WHO support.

**Summary of key outcomes and expected challenges.**

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar – October 2018</td>
<td>The polio transition plan drafted with technical assistance provided by WHO was reviewed. In particular, MOHS would like to broaden the scope of the analysis provided in the document by including key functions required at state/region and township level.</td>
<td>MOH needs to decide on RSO network within its organizational structure.</td>
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<td>Bangladesh – November 2018</td>
<td>The Bangladesh national polio transition plan is well structured and laid out with clear action points and deliverables for each of the three planned phases of implementation. Planned activities under Phase 1 (2016-2019) are well on track. Support provided to GoB to showcase its polio eradication and transition success story at the Montreux High Level Stakeholder Meeting on Polio Transition (13-14 November 2018).</td>
<td>Timely creation of government posts and incorporating the budget within HNPSP (2022-2026) for Phase 3 activities.</td>
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<td>India – November 2018</td>
<td>Transition plan implemented according to plans. GoI provided the agreed funding. NPSP currently mobilized to maintain India polio-free and to support non-polio vaccination campaigns. Plans to transition NPSP management from WHO to GoI will be reviewed in 2020.</td>
<td>Additional resources may be identified through domestic/international resource mobilization.</td>
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<td>Ethiopia – December 2018</td>
<td>To prepare an Addendum to the National Transition Plan to address long term vision and strategies for polio transition, with specifics on how essential functions will be transitioned to government, with timelines and how WHO and partners can support this crucial phase.</td>
<td>Addendum is needed to include clear vision and strategy for advocacy; specifics on how essential functions will be transitioned to government, with timelines and how WHO and partners can support this crucial phase.</td>
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partners can support this crucial phase. The document will be the basis for consultations with donors (advocacy meeting) along with advocacy materials. Support from WHO: Hire a consultant to assist in drafting addendum to transition plan and in preparing advocacy material.
To provide funds to RO/CO for recruitment of NPO to be polio transition focal point in CO.

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<td>South Sudan – February 2019</td>
<td>The draft transition plan dated May 2018 is well presented.</td>
<td>Need to facilitate dialogue between PHEM (Emergencies branch of GoE) and MOH/EPI.</td>
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<td>Cameroon – February 2019</td>
<td>The Cameroon plan is out of date but is quite well presented with activities to be implemented and budgets that show a ramp-down over time as the country becomes less dependent on external funding.</td>
<td>There are discrepancies between the costing and likely available funds. Actions proposed: Review the human resources plan with a view to sustain the essential staff who are already carrying out essential functions. Provide advice on management of human resources with respect to any new structures that will be created. Output should be an updated transition plan which can be presented for funding.</td>
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<td>Angola – March 2019</td>
<td>The Angola plan is comprehensive with activities listed and costed for implementation. The Government is exploring options for the recruitment of Public Health Officers to sustain Integrated Surveillance. Financial support provided by GAVI (agreement signed in Feb 2019) and possibly by World Bank in addition to WHO Base budget 2020-21.</td>
<td>Action: The country office will coordinate the preparation of an addendum including updated timeline, cost estimates and expected sources of financing for the biennium 2020-21.</td>
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Implementation of the Plan delayed because of pending ICC endorsement and MOH approval. In a meeting held on 15 March 2019, the Secretary of State ensured follow up with MoH for approval of the Plan.

Detailed reports of these visits with all actions planned and executed are available from the Polio Transition Team.

Planned/Ongoing Joint Country Support Visits 2019

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Status of transition plan</th>
<th>Challenges/Objectives/Actions</th>
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<td>Chad — March 2019</td>
<td>The Chad plan is out of date and lacks clarity on implementation and realistic cost estimates and human resource planning. A draft framework for transition plan implementation has been provided to AFRO to request further information on transition implementation. It is likely that the transition plan will need updating in-country before the joint country visit.</td>
<td>Action: Review actual WHO expenditure for 2018 for a more realistic cost estimate. Request a human resource plan that will support essential functions.</td>
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<td>Somalia — April/May 2019</td>
<td>Draft transition plan needs to be finalized.</td>
<td>Action: A note to MoH with list of what is required to complete the plan. Prepare workplan of action required to finalize transition plan.</td>
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Planned Transition Activities for 2019 beyond WHA

Visits to the other priority transition countries will continue, including to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Iraq, Libya, Nepal, Nigeria and Sudan.

Countries where polio is still endemic will continue to focus on eradication. Visits to discuss polio transition plans in these countries will be organized at a later stage.

Options for the future governance of polio transition are a key issue for discussion, with a range of models put forward for consideration. The major concern of governance is the sustainability of progress made in eradication after the Global Polio Eradication Initiative comes to an end with the declaration of polio eradication. Further consultations will be organized to ensure optimal contributions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and universal health coverage, while sustaining a polio-free world.
A full update of the transition website is being prepared and will be complete in the first half of 2019. A set of communication and advocacy materials will be produced to support Member States in the second half of 2019.

The Polio Transition Team is updating a results-based monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress towards the achievement of the objectives described in the Strategic Action Plan on Polio Transition. A potential role for Executive Board members in transition countries will also be explored.