18 November 2016, Juba, South Sudan – Despite the ongoing violence sweeping much of the country, the third round of the National Immunization Days of 2016 campaign is being implemented across South Sudan to ensure the continuation of immunization activities targeting more than 3.5 million children aged 0 – 59 months.

The four-day campaign from 15 to 18 November 2016 was organized and led by the Ministry of Health with support from WHO and UNICEF using both house to house and facility-based services to reach all eligible children no matter where they live. The campaign continues beyond the planned four days, due to challenges in assessing children in conflict affected states.

Delivering polio vaccines in South Sudan has never been harder, however insecurity, ongoing clashes and displacement made the logistical arrangement overwhelming. Vaccinators struggled with impossible burdens to find every child of the displaced families scattered in hard-to-reach areas, including besieged locations.

Although insecurity and displacement prevents access to families and children, as of 18 November 2016, vaccinators made special efforts to be able to reach approximately 300 000 children; including 40 000 internally displaced children with vaccines against polio as well as provide them with vitamin A supplements and deworming tablets.

“The achievement of this successful campaign brings hope to the humanitarian community” said the WHO Representative to South Sudan Dr Abdulmumini Usman. “The commitment of health teams to reach as many children as possible in difficult circumstances is really to be commended”.

WHO, together with the Ministry of Health and health partners, □□□□□ has scaled-up its support to immunization programmes by providing financial and logistical support. Besides, independent supervisors from different units of WHO have also been deployed in all the states to monitor the campaign and to ensure all areas are covered.

The fight to end polio led by the Government of South Sudan is highly commended, as well as the contributions of donors and partners, including Rotary International, USAID, WHO, UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and governments of the world, with the support of many others partners.

http://www.afro.who.int/en/ssd/news/item/9190-amidst-insecurity-who-and-partners-have-reached-an-estimated-11-million-south-sudanese-children-with-oral-polio-vaccines.html