

Background

2.1 On 26 May 2012, the World Health Assembly called for the development of a comprehensive polio endgame strategy.⁵ This *Polio Eradication & Endgame Strategic Plan 2013-2018* (the Plan), developed in consultation with national health authorities, scientific experts, global health initiatives (e.g. the GAVI Alliance), donors and other stakeholders, outlines the strategic approach to the eradication of all remaining polio disease – due to both wild and vaccine-related polioviruses – the management of poliovirus risks in the post-eradication era and the development of a process for transitioning the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) infrastructure as the initiative comes to completion. The consultations included, among others, the global Polio Partners Group (PPG), national and international technical advisory groups (TAGs) and the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) of the GPEI. In November 2012, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) reviewed the Plan and endorsed its major components. In January 2013, the Executive Board of the World Health Organization reviewed the document and provided further guidance for its finalization.

With full implementation of the Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan, polio will become the first disease of humans to be eradicated in the twenty-first century.

2.2 This Plan supersedes the *GPEI Emergency Action Plan 2012-2013*⁶ and incorporates elements of the emergency/national action plans of the three remaining endemic countries, which outline specific activities to complete WPV eradication in specific geographies. The Plan is based on the epidemiology of polio globally at the end of 2012, the recent rate of oral polio vaccine (OPV) campaign quality improvements in the remaining polio-infected areas, new understanding of the risks posed by vaccine-related polioviruses, and the recent development of new strategies and tools for managing post-eradication risks. In recognition of the urgency of strengthening immunization systems, particular attention has been given to aligning this Plan with the goals, objectives and major activities of the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP).⁷

2.3 Beyond 2014, this Plan will be complemented by new biannual operational plans that will outline the specific activities and tactics needed to achieve the Plan's objectives, based on the evolving epidemiology of polio, the priorities for managing the vaccine-related and post-eradication risks, and the agreed priorities of the polio legacy work. To allow flexibility and modifications in approach, the Plan and its implementation will be formally reviewed on an annual basis. With full implementation of this Plan, polio will be the first disease of humans to be eradicated from the earth in the 21st century.

2.4 This document is intended for use by individuals and organizations involved in polio eradication efforts. Potential users of the document include:

- National polio and immunization programme managers and staff;
- Partners supporting the GPEI;
- WHO and UNICEF country and regional focal points for polio eradication and immunization efforts and UNICEF health staff;
- National Interagency Coordinating Committees (ICCs);
- Polio eradication oversight and management bodies;
- Polio eradication and immunization technical advisory bodies.

⁵ Resolution WHA65.5, "Polioeradication: intensification of the global eradication initiative".

⁶ The Emergency Action Plan is available at <http://www.polioeradication.org/resource/library/strategyandwork/emergencyactionplan.aspx>.

⁷ Resolution WHA65.17, "Global vaccine action plan".