

Dear polio eradication supporter,

As 2014 draws to a close, we reflect on substantial progress in the fight to end polio. The year began with confirmation that India, and therefore the whole of South East Asia, is polio-free after three years without a case. Dangerous outbreaks in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and central Africa appear to have been brought under control. No child has been reported as infected with wild poliovirus anywhere in Africa since August; the continent is closer than ever to being polio-free. The year has not been without challenges for the programme: above all, the continued spread of polio in Pakistan, which has 85% of the world's cases. However, the national programme in Pakistan is now more geared up than at any point in the last two years; it is essential that this level of commitment is rolled out across all levels through the upcoming polio low season to ensure every child is reached with polio vaccine.

In this issue:

- **Looking towards 2015**
- **Approaching a polio-free Africa**
- **Making the most of the low season in Pakistan**

LOOKING TOWARDS 2015

With Africa on the verge of stopping polio, 2015 will see the programme make important steps towards the complete eradication of poliovirus. Focus will be aimed at several key initiatives to stop transmission of the virus and to prepare for a polio-free world. Work to stop transmission includes protecting the gains made in Africa, ensuring the outbreaks in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and central Africa are fully stopped, scaling up support to Afghanistan and Pakistan, making sure surveillance systems are effective, and sustaining the current high level of demand for polio vaccine while targeting the remaining pockets of resistance, so we can be confident in our progress and identify any undetected virus transmission. At the same time, work continues to ensure the eradication programme helps support child health long after polio has been eradicated: by helping to strengthen routine immunisation systems and deliver other health interventions, including Ebola response in West Africa, and supporting the 126 countries on track to introduce the inactivated polio vaccine in 2015 and thereby prepare for the phased cessation of oral polio vaccines.

[Read more](#)

APPROACHING A POLIO-FREE AFRICA

No cases of wild poliovirus in Africa have been reported in more than four months – since a child in Somalia had onset of paralysis on August 11. This is the first time the continent has gone this long without a single case. Nigeria, the only country in Africa never to have stopped polio transmission, has gone nearly five months without a case, having strengthened its programme enormously in the past year. At the same time, efforts must be strengthened to stop a persistent circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus outbreak affecting Nigeria. However, governments must remain vigilant: there are still major gaps in vaccination coverage across the continent, including in countries at high risk of importing polio. With continued commitment, a polio-free Africa is in sight.

[Read more](#)

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild poliovirus in 2014

- Global Total: **333 (360)** ↓
- Global WPV1: **333 (360)** ↓
- Global WPV3: **0 (0)**

Endemic: 314 (136) ↑

- Afghanistan: **25 (11)** ↑
- Nigeria: **6 (50)** ↓
- Pakistan: **283 (75)** ↑

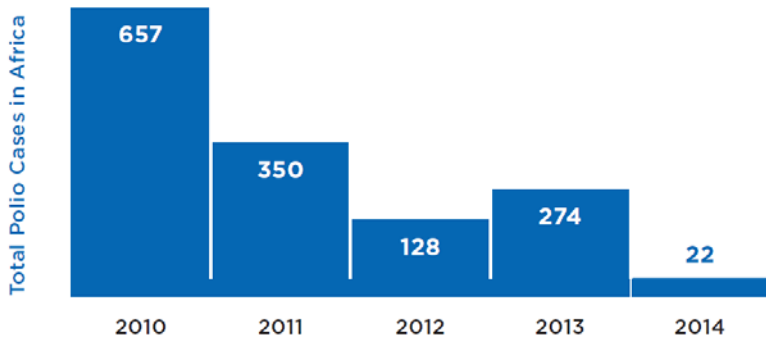
Importation Countries: 19 (224) ↓

- Cameroon: **5 (4)** ↑
- Equatorial Guinea: **5 (0)** ↑
- Ethiopia: **1 (6)** ↓
- Iraq: **2 (0)** ↑
- Kenya: **0 (14)** ↓
- Somalia: **5 (183)** ↓
- Syria: **1 (17)** ↓

As of 17 December 2014. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2013.

[Current case map](#)

POLIO-FREE AFRICA IN SIGHT



MAKING THE MOST OF THE LOW SEASON IN PAKISTAN

The polio epidemic in Pakistan remains the largest obstacle to achieving global eradication. Pakistan is the only country to have caused international spread of the disease in the last 5 months, and accounted for the vast majority of cases worldwide in 2014. However, military campaigns in North Waziristan this year enabled over [850 000 people](#) from inaccessible areas to be vaccinated in the past months and polio's natural low season, when transmission slows and cases are less frequent, has commenced. The programme aims to reach 34 million children multiple times from December 2014 until June 2015. This provides an opportunity to conduct high-quality, carefully planned vaccination campaigns across the country and make a real impact on transmission of the virus. For the first time vaccination campaigns will be run from a joint Emergency Operations Center, which will ensure operations, communications and social mobilization, are well coordinated.

[Read more](#)



Children in Pakistan are reached with the crucial polio vaccine. © UNICEF/NYHQ2012-1306/Zaidi

every  last  child

POLIO IN THE NEWS

Newsweek: [Eradicating the Last 1% of Polio is Deadly but Essential](#)

Huffington Post: [We're Getting Closer to Defeating Polio for Good](#)

FUNDING UPDATES

This month, Germany provided US\$ 10 million to polio eradication efforts in Afghanistan.

Luxembourg contributed €300 000 for polio operations in Syria.

Liechtenstein gave 25 000 Swiss francs to polio eradication efforts to the World Health Organization.

The Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, was presented with Rotary's [Polio Eradication Champion Award](#) on the 9 December in recognition of his leadership and support of the Australian Government in their polio eradication efforts.

None of the strides made against polio over many years of the initiative would have been possible without the heroic efforts of frontline health workers, who often operate in conflict and insecure environments to enable children to grow up polio-free. The Bob Keegan Polio Eradication Heroes Fund honors health workers and volunteers who incur serious injury or lose their lives as a direct consequence of their participation in polio eradication activities. Please join us in paying tribute to their work by making a contribution to the fund [here](#).

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