December 2015

Dear polio eradication supporter,

This year, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative celebrated several major milestones that have brought the world closer than ever to stopping polio. Fewer cases have been reported so far through the year than in any other year on record. This progress would not have been possible without the many polio workers who have dedicated their lives to stopping polio in some of the most challenging and remote communities. That's why, this December, the United Arab Emirates and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation honoured five individuals who have gone above and beyond to protect all children from the disease at the first-ever Heroes of Polio Eradication (HOPE) Awards. Thanks in large part to these polio workers, as well as innovative shifts in strategy, Pakistan and Afghanistan, the only two countries that have never stopped polio transmission, have also been able to make significant progress toward eradication.

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- Honouring Polio Workers with HOPE
- Progress in Afghanistan and Pakistan

LOOKING BACK, PLANNING AHEAD

At the end of 2015, we can reflect on a remarkable year. Nigeria was removed from the list of polio endemic countries, Africa marked an entire year without wild poliovirus for the first time in history and type 2 of wild poliovirus (WPV2) was declared eradicated. In addition, more than 80% of the world’s birth cohort will be routinely receiving a dose of the inactivated polio vaccine to boost their immunity against polio by the end of the year. These achievements provide a springboard for progress in 2016. Next year, in order to stop all types of poliovirus and boost children’s immunity against the disease, there will be a globally synchronised switch from the trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccine (OPV). Afghanistan and Pakistan will redouble efforts to stop transmission. All vulnerable countries will also aim to improve surveillance and reach more children, while ensuring that the infrastructure created to stop polio can also continue delivering public health benefits after the disease is eradicated. And the international community will need to support countries to protect progress, including through additional funding. It is now more important than ever to maintain this momentum and secure a lasting legacy of a polio-free world for generations to come. [Read more]  

HONOURING POLIO WORKERS WITH HOPE

Thousands of polio workers around the world have selflessly dedicated their lives to stopping polio. On 6 December, five of these extraordinary individuals were honoured with the first-ever Heroes of Polio Eradication (HOPE) Awards in Abu Dhabi. Award recipients received recognition in five categories: Humanitarian, Education, Advocacy, Innovation and Achievement. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and Bill Gates personally presented the awards, which marked a continuation of the

Making sure no child is forgotten in South Sudan

Keeping countries resilient against polio is an essential part of the work done towards a polio-free world. A series of photos from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shows how polio workers are delivering vaccines to children living in South Sudan’s highly populated refugee camps. [Read more]  

POLIO IN THE NEWS

Project Syndicate: The Polio Heroes
BBC (Media Action): Polio in State House

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild poliovirus in 2015
- Global Total: 66 (332) ↓
- Global WPV1: 66 (332) ↓
- Global WPV3: 0 (0)
Endemic: 66 (313) ↓
- Afghanistan: 17 (25) ↓
- Pakistan: 49 (282) ↓
Importation Countries: 0 (19) ↓

Vaccine derived poliovirus type 1:
17 (2) ↑
- Lao PDR: 5 (0) ↑
- Madagascar: 10 (2) ↑
- Ukraine: 2 (0) ↑

Vaccine derived poliovirus type 2:
6 (45) ↓
- Guinea: 1 (1)
- Myanmar: 2 (0) ↑
- Nigeria: 1 (24) ↓
- Pakistan: 2 (20) ↓

Data as of 15 December 2015. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2014.

Current case map
For the first time in history only two polio endemic countries remain: Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both have made important strides toward ending polio in 2015. Both countries shifted their focus to the children who are being missed on vaccination campaigns in order to bring this number down and remove the final hiding places of the virus. In Pakistan this has resulted in almost half a million children being protected against polio who were previously missed. Afghanistan has taken steps to improve its programme through strengthened political commitment and coordination, and large swaths of the country remain polio-free. In 2016, both countries must continue to focus their efforts on improving surveillance and routine immunisation systems as well as reaching children through campaigns, maintaining strong government commitment at all levels and increasing vaccination activities at transit points for mobile populations in order to stop polio transmission once and for all.

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