

Dear polio eradication supporter,

This month, we look towards the future: at what still needs to be done to stop polio transmission in Afghanistan and Pakistan, how to secure a polio-free world and how the polio infrastructure and lessons learned have the potential to make a long-lasting difference for other global health needs. Pakistan is on track to interrupt transmission, and can remain so with continued dedication and improvements in programme quality. With the first stage of the phased removal of the oral polio vaccine approaching in April, the GPEI released a series of videos explaining why this is so important to stop vaccine-derived polioviruses. And leaders gathered at the Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa to discuss the importance of routine vaccination and the role the polio programme can play to achieve immunization goals.

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## PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN [TAG]

The Technical Advisory Group on Poliomyelitis Eradication (TAG) convened this month to review Pakistan's progress against polio. The group focused on assessing specific initiatives, such as the use of new standards to rigorously measure a vaccination



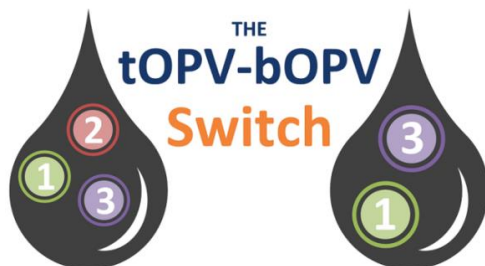
Vaccinating children at a railway station in Quetta. © UNICEF/PAK2015/Waseem Niaz

campaign's performance and Continuous Community Protected Vaccination, a novel strategy to reach children in high-risk areas using trusted community members. The TAG concluded that with dedication from the Government of Pakistan, a high level of commitment from communities, and increased coordination with Afghanistan, the country can end transmission. [\[Read more\]](#)

## SECURING A POLIO-FREE FUTURE

We have never been closer to achieving our goal; but there is much still to be done to secure a polio-free world. Once wild polio has been eradicated, the only risks of the virus returning would be from rare strains of circulating vaccine derived polioviruses, and from potential leaks of the virus from laboratories or vaccine

manufacturers. [This series of short videos](#) explains the work being done to address these risks: from the vaccines that are being used to stop polio; to how the oral polio vaccine is being phased out from April 2016 to remove any risk of vaccine-derived polioviruses, starting with the switch from trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccine in April 2016; and how securely containing polioviruses within laboratories and vaccine manufacturing sites will keep every last child protected, long into the future.



## Explaining Environmental Surveillance

As long as the polio virus exists anywhere in the world, it has the potential to spread and infect vulnerable children. In this [photo series](#), Dr Ousmane Diop who coordinates the Global Polio Laboratory Network at WHO, describes how innovative environmental surveillance strategies are being used to find every last virus and stop it in its tracks.

## Overcoming the Final Hurdles in Nigeria

At a recent review in Nigeria, the [Expert Review Committee](#) assessed the remaining risks to keeping Nigeria polio-free and discussed plans to transition the polio infrastructure to other health programmes after eradication so that the investments made continue to pay dividends for years to come.

## POLIO IN NUMBERS

### Wild poliovirus in 2016

- Global Total: **2 (10)** ↓
- Global WPV1: **2 (10)** ↓
- Global WPV3: **0 (0)**

### Endemic: **2 (10)** ↓

- Afghanistan: **0 (1)**
- Pakistan: **2 (9)** ↓

### Importation Countries: **0 (0)**

Data as of **23 February 2016**. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2015.

[Current case map](#)

## LEADERS GATHER AT THE FIRST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON IMMUNIZATION IN AFRICA

More than 800 leaders gathered on 24 – 25 February at the first-ever [Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa](#) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to reaffirm their commitment to immunization. Building on the successes of 18 months with no case of wild poliovirus across the continent, the participants discussed how the lessons of the past can help to strengthen child health in the future at a session on the legacy of the polio programme. A short film shown at the conference illustrated the opportunity facing the global health community to use the polio infrastructure more broadly in the future, including routine immunization.

You can help ensure every child has access to life saving vaccines: individuals and organizations interested in supporting the conference's call to increase immunization access are encouraged to sign [this Civil Society Declaration](#).

[\[Read more\]](#)

1 IN 5 CHILDREN IN AFRICA DOES NOT RECEIVE THE VACCINES THEY NEED.



IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE GAP.

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
ON IMMUNIZATION  
IN AFRICA

24-25 FEBRUARY 2016  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

IMMUNIZATIONINAFRICA2016.ORG

every last child

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE SWITCH ACCELERATE: EIGHT WEEKS TO GO

Preparations are in full swing for [the switch from trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccine \(tOPV and bOPV\)](#) in April 2016. The focus is now on:

- Getting bOPV stocks to health care centres
- Planning for the removal of tOPV
- Communications and training for stakeholders
- Introducing the inactivated polio vaccine into the remaining countries.

[\[Read more\]](#)

## POLIO IN THE NEWS

*Tech Insider:* [The world is about to make a bold move that could finally wipe out polio](#)

*HowStuffWorks:* [We're So Close to Eradicating Polio! Here's Why The Last Few Hurdles Are Tricky](#)

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