

Dear polio eradication supporter,

This month, we celebrated those who lead polio eradication efforts around the world, and took note of the steps that still need to be taken to cross the finish line. On International Women’s Day, we honoured the female vaccinators who dedicate their lives to reaching every last child in their communities. Pakistan, one of the two remaining endemic countries, has demonstrated significant progress toward eradication, and is now working to sustain this momentum and strengthen coordination with Afghanistan. Finally, the international spread of polio remains a global health concern, reflecting the urgent need to overcome the final challenges to achieving a polio-free world.

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LESS THAN THREE WEEKS TO GO: THE TRIVALENT TO BIVALENT OPV SWITCH

In April, the world will take a critical step closer to eradication through a globally synchronised switch from the trivalent to bivalent oral polio vaccine. This represents the largest and fastest globally synchronised project in the history of vaccines. Watch [this series of videos](#) to understand more about the switch.

In the last weeks, the focus is on:

- Distributing shipments of bivalent OPV to service points
- Training monitors to ensure the switch is effectively overseen
- Introducing the inactivated polio vaccine into the remaining countries.

[\[Read more\]](#)

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild poliovirus in 2016

- Global Total: **9 (21)** ↓
- Global WPV1: **9 (21)** ↓
- Global WPV3: **0 (0)**

Endemic: 9 (21) ↓

- Afghanistan: **2 (1)** ↑
- Pakistan: **7 (20)** ↓

Importation Countries: 0 (0)

Data as of **29 March 2016**. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2015.

[Current case map](#)

FEMALE VACCINATORS HONOURED FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

On International Women’s Day (8 March), partners honoured the women who go above and beyond to protect their children and communities from polio. One such woman is Binta Kanduwa, the mother of the last child to be paralysed by wild poliovirus in Nigeria. Despite the challenges of bringing up a child with polio, she serves as a powerful advocate to persuade other mothers of the importance of



Binta Kanduwa knows first-hand the importance of vaccines, and helps to ensure other mothers protect their children against vaccine-preventable diseases. © WHO/L. Dore

polio vaccination and routine immunisation. We could not have come so far towards eradicating polio without the thousands of women who work all over the world to finish the job. So this International Women’s Day, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative wants to say thank you to them, and all the other vaccinators, community mobilizers, parents, polio survivors, surveillance officers, strategists, politicians and donors, who go above and beyond for children around the world. [\[Read more\]](#)

INNOVATIONS FOR PROGRESS IN PAKISTAN

In a March 2016 letter, the Polio Oversight Board (POB) noted the impressive progress made against polio, particularly in Pakistan. The commitment at all levels of government to high-quality performance and the engagement of political, religious and community leaders are helping to strengthen polio eradication efforts, as well as other health programmes in the country. In Pakistan, the innovative community-protected vaccination



In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the community-protected vaccination strategy has led to a 50% reduction in missed children in recent months. © GPEI

strategy, which uses vaccinators from the communities that most need vaccinations, is key to reaching every last child in high-risk areas. This has been so successful that the programme is being expanded to polio reservoirs in Peshawar-Khyber, Quetta, and Karachi this month. This momentum must be sustained, along with increased cross-border coordination between Pakistan and Afghanistan, in order to interrupt transmission in Pakistan. [\[Read More\]](#)

BROADER BENEFITS OF POLIO ERADICATION IN AFRICA



A new [short film](#) with captivating footage from Ethiopia and Nigeria illustrates how the polio programme infrastructure has helped countries reach more children with lifesaving vaccines and other health services.

[\[Watch here\]](#)

Investments made in eradicating polio go much further than one single disease. © WHO/R. Youngblood

TEMPORARY RECOMMENDATIONS EXTENDED FOR POLIO

Earlier this month, the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations issued a statement commending the strong progress made toward ending polio in recent months, but noting that international spread of polioviruses remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As a result, the Committee's recommendations for countries with wild poliovirus, as well as those still seeing cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV), were extended for another three months. Additionally, the Committee highlighted the need to tackle the challenges of emergencies and conflict in these final stages of global polio eradication. [\[Read more\]](#)



Dr Margaret Chan, Director General of the WHO, extended the Temporary Recommendations under the International Health Regulations for polio this month.
© WHO

every last child

PROTECTING PROGRESS IN SUDAN

Despite its challenging terrain, Sudan maintains a highly sensitive disease surveillance system with real-time epidemiological data. Robust surveillance of acute flaccid paralysis, a major indicator for polio, is a cornerstone of the polio eradication strategy. [\[Read more\]](#)

POLIO IN THE NEWS

AllAfrica: [Ending Polio Will Bring Wider Benefits](#)

Mail & Guardian: [Five lessons Nigeria learnt when it clamped down on polio](#)

The Wall Street Journal: [India Sets Major Offensive Against Deadly Rotavirus](#)

FUNDING UPDATES

The **United Arab Emirates**, through its Pakistan Assistance Program, provided US\$ 7.5 million to WHO for operations costs.

Monaco continues to strongly support the GPEI, not only through co-chairing the Polio Partners Group, but also through its latest grant of €150 000 for polio activities in Niger.

In February, **Japan** provided US\$ 9.2 million to UNICEF for Afghanistan as part of a larger grant for vaccine-preventable diseases. In March, Japan continued its strong support of polio eradication activities in Pakistan with a grant of US\$ 3.2 million to UNICEF.

