

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

- [New York Times](#): Could 'Innate Immunology' Save Us From the Coronavirus?
- [Deutsche Welle](#): Pakistan's fight against COVID-19 threatens polio, measles vaccine programs
- [Radio Free Europe](#): Pakistan's Fight Against Coronavirus Threatens Its Drive To Eradicate Polio
- [Voice of America](#): COVID Pandemic Blocking Shipments of Vaccines for Millions of Children
- [The National](#): Virus efforts jeopardise vaccines for millions of children in the Middle East, UN says

PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

- [UNICEF](#): 'Call 1166': The COVID-19 helpline centre in Pakistan
- [WHO](#): Somalia's polio teams help combat COVID-19
- [UK Government](#): UK leads global fight to protect up to 75 million children against deadly diseases

LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

2020 Outbreak Budget Monitoring Tool

The GPEI Finance Management Team (FMT) recently developed the 2020 [Outbreak Budget Monitoring Tool](#), now live on the GPEI website. This interactive budget tool shows the allocation of the GPEI outbreak response budget envelope in 2020 by implementing agency and by budget centre. This budget is part of the global GPEI 2020 budget. The team will continue to adapt projections and update financial requirements as outbreak costs are expected to rise given the pause on current campaigns due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

World Health Assembly COVID-19

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, both the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) and the 147th session of the Executive Board (EB) will be held virtually for the first time ever. Condensed into two days, WHA will be held from 18 to 19 May, and the EB on 22 May 2020. The focus will largely be on the COVID-19 pandemic response as well as discussions around suspending the Health Assembly until it can meet in a resumed session later in 2020. The abridged WHA agenda can be found [here](#). In the first provisional [agenda](#), item 13.5 focused on [polio eradication, transition planning and post-certification](#).



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Building trust and engaging with communities is essential for families and individuals to understand and practice handwashing, social distancing and other critical interventions in the response to COVID-19. One of GPEI's key areas of support to the COVID-19 response is the use of its vast community of engagement networks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria and many other polio-affected countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Moreover, a vast majority of polio community mobilizers in these countries are women.

Polio community engagement networks include community mobilizers, local leaders and religious clerics, other local influencers and the media. Working with national governments, UNICEF is the lead GPEI technical partner in this area, with support from Rotarians and local partners. Polio community mobilizers

are using experience and knowledge of their local areas and language to engage their communities, provide accurate information on COVID-19 prevention and care, distribute soap, support existing disease surveillance systems and dispel myths and rumors. Among the influencers engaged are religious leaders, who are provided with briefings and information by bodies such as the Islamic Advisory Group for polio eradication.

Polio community mobilizers have said that their role in the COVID-19 response has been accepted positively by parents and caregivers. At a time when there is widespread panic and concern, people trust polio community workers and are grateful for the information and services they are providing.



Sami and Umar, friends from Peshwar, Pakistan, view COVID-19 messages on their mobile phone.

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I POLIO ASSETS USED FOR COVID-19

AFGHANISTAN

- The immunization Communications Network (ICN) composed of more than 4,200 social mobilizers has now reached over 1.3 million people, 50% of whom are females, with proper hand hygiene practices through community outreach, WhatsApp and awareness sessions at health facilities. They have also reported over 560 suspected cases to the COVID-19 surveillance teams.
- In addition to COVID-19 messaging, during the pause of polio campaigns, ICN workers are continuing to promote the importance of polio and other vaccines through routine immunization.
- The polio programme continues to lead in engaging trusted voices on COVID-19, reaching and sensitizing 27,600 health professionals and over 70,000 community influencers and representatives to date.
- National Islamic Advisory Group members are actively advocating for health and preventive measures. They have held advocacy meetings

with 2,600 Islamic scholars and mosque imams, oriented more than 850 students of religious schools, translated guidelines, coordinated Ministries of Public Health and of Haj and Awqaf and the Shura Council of Ulama on COVID-19 response activities, as well as advised the Ministry on the production of alcohol for medical use from the Islamic perspective.

NIGERIA

- The 20,000 UNICEF-supported polio Volunteer Community Mobilizers (VCM), 90% of whom are women, continue collaborating with religious focal points, local leaders and social media influencers in promoting hygiene practices and social distancing. The polio VCM network is active in more than 16,000 settlements, serving over 22 million people including 4.7 million under-five children across the 15 states of Northern Nigeria.

PAKISTAN

- Since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, polio eradication

social mobilizers and frontline workers have been actively raising awareness in the community. For example, over 25,000 religious leaders and 200,000 influencers have been engaged to promote social distancing, hygiene and praying at home during Ramadan.

- The UNICEF supported polio social media platforms have reached more than 23 million people with accurate health information, while trusted voices in the media and online forums are actively helping dispel COVID-19 related misinformation.
- NIAG scholars have been mobilized at different levels to support COVID-19 response in Pakistan; they have recorded more than 2,500 video religious messages on COVID-19 prevention, handwashing, physical distancing and safe burial practices that were shared on social media and WhatsApp groups. They have also delivered over 5,000 Friday sermons advising the local communities on best health practices and physical distancing.

POLIO ASSETS USED FOR COVID-19

DRC

- Thanks to the polio programme, over 2,000 community workers and 620 healthcare providers have been trained on COVID-19 messaging, and over 470 community leaders have been sensitized on COVID-19. Moreover, the COVID-19 Hot line has responded to over 13,000 calls, and a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey on COVID-19 has been initiated. UNICEF polio personnel also supported the dissemination of 1 million leaflets and 250,000 posters and broadcast of COVID-19 prevention and care messages through 100 radio and 30 TV stations.

A mobile community

worker in Togo displays a

COVID-19 poster promoting

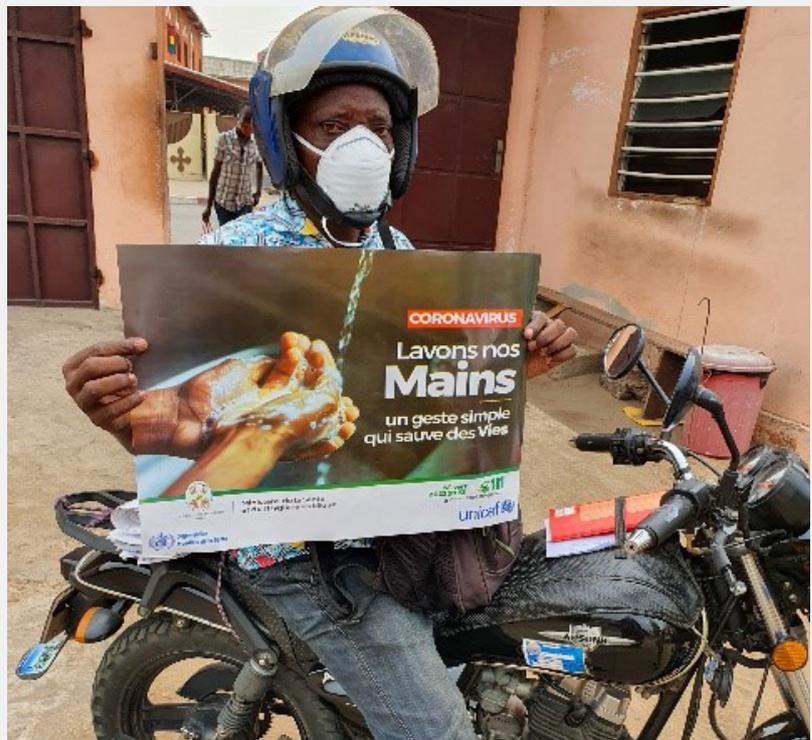
handwashing.

SOMALIA

- Polio community leaders, the associations network, and the polio Social Mobilization Network (SOMNET) have been repurposed to support COVID 19 response. UNICEF Polio personnel are also managing COVID-19 social mobilization, community engagement, case detection and reporting, in addition to ongoing health and immunization activities.

TOGO

- UNICEF Polio staff supported training of 6,500 social mobilizers who are now promoting prevention & care messages in communities and at health centres during routine immunization sessions. UNICEF polio personnel also supported the COVID-19 awareness caravans on the streets of 11 Medical districts and markets.



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