



Dear polio eradication supporter,

We start by extending our thoughts to Polio News readers around the world. We hope that you are safe. To those working on the frontlines of COVID-19 response: our thoughts are with you. This edition contains an update on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on polio eradication, but also features some of the incredible work that women are doing for polio eradication around the world. Our aim is to recognise the exceptional contributions of health workers and remind us all of our ongoing determination to end polio.

As the world battles the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is offering support, expertise and resources to help curb the spread of the virus, adapting skills developed during polio eradication activities. We have a moral imperative to do all we can to help countries overcome this extraordinary emergency.

On 24 March, the [Polio Oversight Board took the difficult decision](#) to temporarily pause some parts of our operations, including vaccination campaigns. Other key activities will continue, including sustaining surveillance for the poliovirus and accelerating progress towards roll out of the novel oral polio vaccine. There remain thousands of children worldwide who are vulnerable to the poliovirus, and we are committed to rapidly restarting vaccination activities as soon as we are able to do so.

Supporting COVID-19 response efforts

The polio programme possesses one of the strongest disease tracking networks in the world. This infrastructure is now being deployed to help countries battle COVID-19, lending vital contact tracing, surveillance and communications support to the pandemic response. [\[More\]](#)



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Outsmarting polio at every turn



©Faten Kamel

From tracking down wild polio cases in a remote Sudanese village to launching a Rapid Response Unit responsible for identifying polioviruses in Pakistan, WHO Senior Global Expert Dr Faten Kamel has built a storied career. Now she is supporting COVID-19 response in northern Syria on behalf of the polio programme. Read more about Dr Faten's relentless dedication to defeat the poliovirus and create a polio-free world for her grandchildren. [\[More\]](#)

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild Poliovirus in 2020 (2019)*

Global Total: 39 (9)

Circulating Vaccine Derived Poliovirus in 2020 (2019)*

Global Total: 73 (4)

*Data as of 1 April 2020. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2019.

Breakdown by country
[Polio this week](#)

Top programme expert pushes for gender equality

Polio Eradication Director for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, Dr Hamid Jafari, is calling for more female vaccinators in Afghanistan, praising the critical role they play in strengthening community acceptance, opening lines of dialogue with parents and increasing immunization coverage. In this interview, find out what it will take to end polio in the last countries still reporting cases of wild poliovirus. [\[More\]](#)



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POLIO IN THE NEWS

[Science](#): 'We have no choice.' Pandemic forces polio eradication group to halt campaigns

[The Telegraph](#): Measles and polio may come 'roaring back' as global vaccination programmes shut down

[Toronto Sun](#): More than 18-million people walking today thanks to polio vaccine: WHO Director

[JSTOR Daily](#): Two Drops of Life: India's Path to End Polio

Spotlighting women in Pakistan's polio programme



On International Women's Day, female polio eradicators in Pakistan shared their experiences and discussed the importance of gender equality. Meet some of the talented health workers now fighting COVID-19 alongside polio. [\[More\]](#)

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Picture of the Month



Polio staff conduct COVID-19 awareness training in Gadap, Pakistan. ©WHO Pakistan

DONOR UPDATES

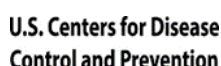
- Thank you to the Government of **Monaco**, who have announced a generous €50 000 contribution to polio eradication operations. Continuing their longstanding commitment to Niger, Monaco is providing €20 000 for polio eradication activities in the country. The remainder of the contribution will be used for worldwide polio eradication activities.
- The Global Polio Eradication Initiative extends immense gratitude to the people of **Malta** for fully honouring their €30 000 contribution to the programme, with a final payment of €20 000 to WHO.
- Thank you to the **UAE Pakistan Assistance Program** for the release of a first tranche of funds in 2020 totaling US\$ 4.26 million. These funds will support national immunization days in the highest risk provinces in Pakistan.
- Thank you to the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** for contributing US\$ 5.5 million in supplementary funding to WHO's 'No Regrets' Outbreak Fund, providing US\$ 2.7 million for technical and management staff and support for the Afghanistan and Pakistan Hub, and generously contributing US\$ 27.2 million in supplemental funding to support mOPV2 stockpile maintenance. UNICEF wishes to further thank the Foundation for their contribution of US\$ 9 million to support outbreak response.
- UNICEF expresses gratitude to **Rotary International** for their significant contribution of US\$ 18 671 247 to the programme, as part of their January IPPC award.
- The programme would like to contextualize the contribution of US\$ 3 million by the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, for the Stop Transmission of Polio (STOP) program, by noting that this generous donation forms part of US CDC's overall US\$ 17.5 million contributions to the STOP program in 2020 to date. This latest contribution was previously reported in the February edition of Polio News.
- The programme would like to thank all countries and donors who have invested in polio infrastructure, which is now serving us in good stead as we support COVID-19 response.



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