

Dear polio eradication partner,

I'm pleased to write to you to share a few updates and highlights of recent activities and progress from across the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), including the Polio Oversight Board's (POB) recent engagements.

From November 22-26, I traveled to Pakistan with a delegation from the POB, to meet with national, provincial, and district leadership and see firsthand the work being done to stop polio transmission. With only one reported wild poliovirus case this year, Pakistan has an incredible opportunity to wipe out the virus and I was encouraged by the steadfast commitment of the officials we met to get the job done. I was also encouraged by the strong level of cooperation and coordination between the polio and EPI programs to carry out one of Pakistan's biggest ever vaccination campaigns, which combined measles and rubella, and polio immunization.

While we remain extremely concerned about the vulnerable health systems in Afghanistan, it was a positive step to see [the country conduct a polio vaccination campaign](#) on November 8, the first nationwide campaign in nearly four years and one that also delivered vitamin A to children. This effort aimed to reach roughly 3.3 million previously inaccessible children. With the recent detection of additional wild polio cases in the country — expanded access to polio vaccination is crucial and Afghanistan is set to conduct a second nationwide polio campaign in December, this time synchronized with Pakistan.

On October 27, the POB met to discuss several issues, including important programmatic updates related to both endemic and outbreak countries, as well as the program budget and funding. I'm pleased to report that the POB approved a 2022 budget of USD \$932 million to support implementation of the new [GPEI Strategy 2022-2026](#), which will focus on interrupting wild poliovirus transmission, aggressive cVDPV2 outbreak response, and strengthened surveillance for all forms of poliovirus. This decision was made after a careful evaluation of tradeoffs and risk management. The GPEI Resource Mobilization Group is actively fundraising to ensure the resources are in place to implement this plan.

The POB also discussed the continued rollout of the novel Oral Polio Vaccine type 2 (nOPV2). In October, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) endorsed a [move to the next use phase](#) for nOPV2 after finding no major safety concerns in a review of safety and genetic stability data from campaigns using over 65 million doses of nOPV2 earlier this year. Although COVID-19-related disruptions and demand have created a short-term supply constraint on nOPV2, countries are still able to respond to cVDPV2 outbreaks quickly with mOPV2, which has a successful history of stopping outbreaks. In the meantime, the program is working to increase nOPV2 supply so that more countries can roll out the vaccine within the next year.

Closing out the year, I want to thank senior and long-serving GPEI partners who have recently moved on from their roles or will be at the end of the year. Fellow POB member, Henrietta Fore, and Strategy Committee member, Akhil Iyer, and CDC's Rebecca Martin and Steve Cochi have all been

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critical to the progress we've made against polio. I'm immensely grateful for their contributions and I know they will continue to be champions for polio eradication.

With the past months' positive developments, a new strategy and budget to execute upon, the polio program has much to do in 2022 and beyond. Surrounded by committed country and health leaders, partners, donors, and supporters, I'm looking to the year ahead, ready and energized to do the work needed to achieve a polio-free world, alongside all of you.

Best regards,



Christopher J. Elias, MD, MPH
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Chair, Polio Oversight Board, Global Polio Eradication Initiative

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