

Dear Colleagues,

December 2016

In 2016, the world made important progress toward polio eradication.

- There were fewer polio cases than any year in history.
- Afghanistan has had only 12 diagnosed cases year-to-date, all limited to the eastern and northeastern regions.
- Pakistan has made progress immunizing previously missed children in the country's most challenging areas. Pakistan has so far reported 19 wild polio virus cases this year, a 63 percent decrease from 51 cases in 2015.
- The world succeeded in "the switch," eliminating trivalent oral polio vaccine (tOPV) and switching to bivalent OPV. One hundred fifty-five countries that continue to use OPV in their immunization programs discontinued tOPV in mid-April 2016, reducing the likelihood of vaccine-derived polio.



While we celebrate the progress made this year, we also acknowledge setbacks.

- After two years with no reported cases, Nigeria reported polio cases in Borno, where access has been limited due to insecurity. Nigeria cases demonstrated the need for high-quality polio surveillance throughout every country. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is working with partners and ministers of health in the sub-region and beyond to close surveillance gaps and improve vaccination. [As Bill Gates aptly stated, "While we are disappointed, we are not discouraged."](#)
- Manufacturers did not meet their projections for production of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), leading to large shortfalls and delayed introduction of IPV in many countries. As a result, supply will remain limited at least through 2017. Supplying vaccine to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and outbreak areas in or near Borno, Nigeria, will continue to be a priority.

To end polio transmission forever, we must work together and strengthen the groundwork for further progress.

- We must improve surveillance so we can know with certainty that polio is not present in an area. This means using current and innovative techniques, particularly in conflict-affected areas.
- We must vaccinate all children, especially in high-risk and conflict-affected areas.
- We must make certain that the world continues to benefit from polio assets for decades to come. This means ensuring that surveillance for other diseases of public health importance improves, in addition to comprehensive everyday vaccination programs. The legacy of polio eradication should not only be a world free from polio, but also a world with stronger public health systems.

I wish you a safe and happy new year. Many thanks for your hard work throughout this year protecting the world's children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas R. Frieden".

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