



Dear polio eradication supporter,

In celebration of International Women’s Day this month, people from across the partnership recognized the essential role of women in the fight against polio. Dr Hanan Balkhy (WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean) penned an op-ed for [Arab News](#) (published in Arabic in [CNBC Arabia](#)) on the continued need to invest in gender equity as we work to end polio everywhere. The piece also announced her newly assumed role of GPEI Gender Champion and reaffirmed her commitment to stand with female health workers in the Region. On social media, [Gavi](#), [Rotary](#), [Gates Health](#), [WHO](#), and UNICEF’s [UInfluence](#) all shared a new video, highlighting some of the women across the program who are paving the way toward a polio-free world. Additionally, [WHO African Region](#) showcased women behind the region’s polio eradication efforts and [UNICEF Africa](#) spotlighted Teresa, a disability inclusion officer and polio champion for her community in Angola.

Dr Jamal Ahmed Tapped to Lead Global Polio Eradication Efforts



Dr Jamal Ahmed, a long-time polio eradicator, was officially appointed WHO Director for Polio Eradication and Chair of the GPEI Strategy Committee. With extensive experience in polio eradication

efforts, including roles at WHO’s Africa Regional Office and the CDC in Nairobi, Dr Ahmed’s leadership is expected to drive the global effort towards a polio-free world. His vision includes strengthening surveillance, laboratory capacity, country ownership, and community engagement, with a particular focus on the inclusion of youth and women in health initiatives. Dr Ahmed steps into this role following the tragic passing of previous director Aidan O’Leary in late 2024. [\[More\]](#).

GPEI Delegation Visits Nigeria to Strengthen Polio Eradication Efforts

A high-level GPEI delegation visited Abuja, Nigeria, 27-28 February 2025, to assess progress and tackle challenges in the fight against type 2 variant poliovirus. Led by Dr Chris Elias (Chair of the GPEI Polio Oversight Board) and joined by representatives from donors

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild Poliovirus in 2025 (2024)*

Global Total: 7 (2)

Circulating Vaccine Derived Poliovirus in 2025 (2024)*

Global Total: 15 (9)

*Data as of 26 March 2025. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2024.

Breakdown by country
[Polio this week](#)

POLIO IN THE NEWS

STAT: [‘Polio, bad’: Bill Nye the Science Guy rebukes RFK Jr. over vaccine views](#)

Science: [Global withdrawal of Sabin oral poliovirus type 2 vaccine in 2016](#)

and GPEI partners such as Mr Mike McGovern (Chair of Rotary International PolioPlus Committee) and Mr Massimo De Luca (Head of Cooperation at the Delegation of the European Union to the Federal Republic of Nigeria), the delegation engaged with Nigerian government officials, traditional leaders, and partners to

emphasize the importance of renewed leadership and ownership at all levels. The visit included meetings with the Coordinating Minister of Health, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate, and the Sultan of Sokoto, both of whom reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to polio eradication and routine immunization. [\[More\]](#).



Afghanistan's Immunization Drive Strengthened by New Cold Chain Measures



In Afghanistan, UNICEF, with support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is ensuring the safe storage and distribution of vaccines to women and children through a new cold chain initiative. Thirteen hospitals across the country have been equipped with generators to maintain vaccine potency, crucial for immunization efforts in areas where polio remains endemic. Thanks to these efforts, Khatera, a dedicated vaccinator at Farah Provincial Hospital, can vaccinate around 50 children daily and educate mothers about the importance of immunization. The provincial storage facility in Farah can now

store up to 1 million vaccine doses, supporting both routine and polio-specific vaccination campaigns. Learn more about how UNICEF is keeping the lights on for immunization [here](#).

DONOR UPDATES

WHO is grateful to the Board of Trustees of the **Rotary Foundation** for the approval of US\$ 33 million in new grants at their February 2025 meeting. Funding will ensure technical assistance in the African Region, Afghanistan and Pakistan, global outbreak response, research activities and operational support to the Polio Research Committee.

WHO extends its gratitude to the Government of **Luxembourg** for the contribution of €720 000 to support global polio eradication efforts in 2025.

WHO thanks the **Gates Foundation** for the contribution of US\$ 11.5 million to support polio outbreak response campaigns in 2025.

UNICEF thanks the Government of **Canada** for their contribution of Can\$ 2.25 million to support polio eradication initiatives in Afghanistan.

UNICEF thanks the Board of Trustees of the **Rotary Foundation** for the US\$ 17 million of new grants received. These grants will support our work in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the global outbreak response.

Photo of the Month



Vaccinator Khatera is setting up to vaccinate two and a half-year old Salima at Farah Provincial Hospital in western Afghanistan. ©UNICEF/UNI758297/Khayyam