

# ENDING POLIO: A GLOBAL MOVEMENT CORNERS THE VIRUS

The polio eradication program, bolstered by programmatic improvements and unprecedented global commitment, is moving the world closer than ever to becoming polio-free. In 2013, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) launched the **Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan**, a comprehensive roadmap to end polio by 2018. More than **450 scientists voiced their support for the GPEI's plan**, and **more than US\$4 billion** was pledged toward its implementation from new and existing donors.

With the Strategic Plan and country-level National Emergency Action Plans launched, the three countries that have yet to end endemic polio transmission have restricted the virus to fewer areas than ever before. At the same time, outbreaks in previously polio-free regions reinforce the urgency of ending transmission.

## REDUCING POLIO IN ENDEMIC COUNTRIES

Most polio cases in endemic countries are isolated to north-western Pakistan, with some cases in northern Nigeria.



Source: WHO

Investments in high-quality vaccination campaigns are driving significant polio reductions in Afghanistan and Nigeria.

### AFGHANISTAN

POLIO CASES IN 2013: **62%** ↓

**CASE STATUS:** Afghanistan had just 14 cases of polio in 2013, compared to 37 in 2012. Most cases in Afghanistan were linked to cross-border transmission from Pakistan and there was just one case in the country's traditionally endemic Southern Region.

**CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:** Improvements in program operations and intensive community outreach to encourage vaccination

### NIGERIA

POLIO CASES IN 2013: **57%** ↓

**CASE STATUS:** Nigeria continued to steadily reduce its number of polio cases last year, with 53 cases reported in 2013, compared to 122 in 2012.

**CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:** Surge in field personnel and use of highly accurate mapping to locate children previously missed by vaccinators

However, difficulties in reaching children with vaccines pose serious challenges to polio eradication in Pakistan.

### PAKISTAN

POLIO CASES IN 2013: **60%** ↑

**CASE STATUS:** Pakistan is the only endemic country where cases rose last year, with 93 cases in 2013 compared to 58 in 2012.

**CONTRIBUTING FACTORS:** Violence affecting health workers and restricted access to children needing vaccines, including a ban on immunizations imposed by local leaders in North Waziristan

In response to continued challenges, community and religious leaders in Pakistan have voiced support for polio campaigns.

- On 27 February 2014, the **Global Islamic Advisory Group**, led by the Grand Imam of the Holy Mosque of Mecca, issued a declaration and six-month Plan of Action to support vaccination and address challenges in the remaining polio-endemic parts of the Islamic world.
- On 13 December 2013, **provincial political leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa** spearheaded a new polio vaccination campaign.

## CONTROLLING OUTBREAKS

Outbreaks in previously polio-free regions, fueled in part by conflict that interrupted vaccination campaigns, represented 60% of all polio cases in 2013.

### MIDDLE EAST

**SITUATION:** In October 2013, Syria reported its first cases of polio since 1999. By March 2014, the outbreak resulted in 36 cases in Syria and one case in Baghdad, Iraq, the first polio case in the country since 2000.

**RESPONSE:** An urgent outbreak response is ongoing. Health authorities have been implementing the largest-ever coordinated immunization response across the Middle East, aiming to reach an estimated 22 million children.

Polio outbreaks in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa were most closely linked to strains of the virus circulating in Pakistan and Nigeria respectively.

### CAMEROON & EQUATORIAL GUINEA

**SITUATION:** Cameroon has reported seven new polio cases since October 2013. Three cases have been reported in Equatorial Guinea.

**RESPONSE:** Cameroon mobilized four nationwide immunization campaigns between October 2013 and March 2014.

### HORN OF AFRICA

**SITUATION:** An outbreak of polio in the Horn of Africa was reported in May 2013. There were a total of 218 cases in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia reported by March 2014.

**RESPONSE:** Within six months, an aggressive vaccination campaign resulted in a significant decrease in the number of new cases.

## STRENGTHENING ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

The polio program is building the immunization services necessary to achieve and sustain a polio-free world.

Improving immunization services globally is vital to ending polio and reducing child mortality. Strong immunization services are also essential to ensuring the success of the phased withdrawal of the oral polio vaccine (OPV) and the introduction of the inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), key steps toward eradication. The Strategic Plan calls for IPV to be introduced into 126 countries by the end of 2015.

In 2013, the GAVI Alliance Board agreed to play a lead role in the IPV rollout and support its introduction in the world's 73 poorest countries. In early 2014, UNICEF concluded a tender process to make available sufficient quantities of affordable IPV for country introductions, with new prices as low as EUR 0.75 per dose.

### CHAD

As part of the GPEI Strategic Plan's focus on strengthening routine immunization in 10 focus countries, polio field workers in Chad are dedicating as much as 60% of their time to improving immunization systems. By September 2013, Chad had reached 35% more children with vaccines compared to the same point in 2011.

The GPEI has invested in motorbikes to allow health workers to immunize children in hard-to-reach areas.



## RECENT POLIO MILESTONES

### APRIL 2013

More than 450 international scientists sign the Scientific Declaration on Polio Eradication, supporting the GPEI's Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013-2018 and confirming that eradication is possible.

### APRIL 2013

Global leaders and philanthropists pledge US\$4 billion toward the Strategic Plan's implementation at the Global Vaccine Summit.

### MAY 2013

The GPEI officially launches the Strategic Plan to end polio by 2018.

### JUNE 2013

The GAVI Alliance Board agrees to play a lead role in the introduction of IPV.

### NOVEMBER 2013

One year passes without a recorded case of wild poliovirus type 3, one of the two remaining polio types.

### February 2014

UNICEF announces a new low price of IPV, making affordable IPV available for country introductions.

### March 2014

WHO's South-East Asia Region of 11 countries is officially certified polio-free.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The polio program continues efforts to support **immunization systems strengthening** in 10 priority countries, and by the end of 2015, 126 countries will be expected to **introduce IPV**. At the same time, the program will continue its intense focus on ending transmission in endemic countries and stopping polio outbreaks.

A number of countries will also continue developing comprehensive plans for transferring and mainstreaming knowledge, capacities, processes and assets created by the polio program. The infrastructure and lessons learned from more than 25 years of eradication efforts will create a lasting blueprint that will improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable children long after polio is gone.