



National Polio Plus Committee: PDG Tunji Funsho - Chairman, PDG Yomi Adewunmi - Vice Chairman, PDG Charles Femi Lawani - Vice Chairman, PDG Kazeem Mustapha - Vice Chairman, PAG Yakubu Ndanusa - Vice Chairman, PDG Obafunso Ogunkeye - Secretary, DGE Remi Bello - Treasurer, PDG Joshua Hassan - PR Adviser, PDG Tolu Omatsola, PDG Ijeoma Okoro, Ogiemudia Ikponmwosa
PRIVP Yinka Babalola - Special Representative, DG Bola Oyebade, DG Jumoke Bamigboye, DG Virginia Major, DG Ndukwe Chukwu



Chairman's Address

Dr John Sever- The unsung Hero of Polio Eradication

Most of us in Rotary know the vision of our polio eradication efforts was that of the President of Rotary International in 1978/79; Clem Renouf who died just a few days short of the announcement by WHO certifying Nigeria as a polio-free Country on June 18, 2020. However, if there is someone who has been instrumental to choosing polio as the project to embark on, it was Dr. John Sever. It was him that Clem Renouf came to for advice as to which project to pursue on a scale beyond Rotary clubs and Rotary districts. Until President Clem Renouf got his proposal for the Health Hunger and Humanity 3-H programme approved by the board of directors of Rotary International, Rotary projects were confined to clubs and districts. Rotary International did not fund any international projects.

For Dr Sever, the decision to propose polio eradication came very naturally. He came into the medical profession as a physician when polio was killing and paralyzing children in large numbers around the world. His father was a practicing physician in the Chicago area at the time and he had a cousin who had her legs paralyzed by the polio virus. Added to this was the fact that he was also working on a PhD in microbiology and was an MD at Northwestern Medical School in the 1950s. It is therefore not surprising that he would suggest polio eradication as the preferred programme to pursue to President Clem Renouf.

These are Dr Sever's words from an interview he granted Mary McKenna in 2015 for Rotary International....

"In 1979 I got to meet the president of Rotary International, Clem Renouf, from Australia. He was interested in developing a new activity for Rotary that would involve the entire organization, and thought it ought to be a humanitarian project, perhaps hunger or immunization. He knew I was at NIH (National Institute of health), so he asked my opinion of what we could do, and I wrote him: "If a single vaccine were to be selected, I would recommend

poliomyelitis." At the time, less than half the children in the world were receiving any vaccine."

Dr John Sever was uniquely placed to play the role of influencing both Rotary leaders and other partners in global health to adopt polio eradication as a project of choice. He was a district governor of Rotary International at the time and was also well known in the scientific circles. He was friends with Dr Salk who led the invention of the injectable polio vaccine and Dr Sabin who invented the oral polio vaccine and they regularly exchanged ideas on polio eradication.



John Sever
Rotary District 7620 Governor 1978-79

Because he was highly regarded in the scientific community and also by the Rotary leadership of the time, his role was crucial in getting Rotary to adopt the polio eradication programme as a corporate project and to convince WHO to partner with Rotary leading to the world Health assembly adopting polio eradication as a global priority in 1988. This is what President Clem Renouf Had to say about Dr Sever's role (culled from an article in the Rotarian magazine Jan 2014 by Peter Ross Range)

"Most would have dismissed it as an impossible dream, beyond our capacity financially or organizationally, as did many former leaders," Renouf says. "But here was a Rotarian uniquely qualified – a senior scientist with an appreciation of Rotary's potential, who by virtue of his reputation personally and professionally

was able to persuade the 1979-80 Board to adopt the goal of a polio-free world as the major emphasis of the 3-H program."

In my view the most unique thing about Dr Sever with regards to polio eradication is that even long after retirement, he remains intimately connected with the polio eradication programme both within the scientific community and Rotary International. He is the longest serving member of the international PolioPlus committee (IPPC) of Rotary International; the committee that oversees our polio eradication efforts around the world. He has been serving as the vice chairman of the committee for several years and heads the research subcommittee.

Dr Sever is 87 years old; he has been on the IPPC continuously since 1994 and is reputed not to have missed any meeting except the first one. The IPPC currently meets three times a year at different locations across the world and he is always there to guide and give advice. I have had the honour and privilege of serving on this committee with this legend for the past three years now.

Nigeria owes him a depth of gratitude for our polio-free status and the world owes him an enormous gratitude for getting us almost polio-free.



DR. TUNJI FUNSHO
Chairman NNPPC

FROM EDITOR'S DESK

What next for a polio-free Africa

I remember exactly where I was when the news came that after going over 2 years without a case of wild poliovirus, a case had been found in Borno State. My initial reaction was that of disbelief and over the next 48 hours, as I frantically reached out to my contacts at WHO and UNICEF, I went through the classical 5 stages of grief. Almost immediately, we were in response mode and a team from Rotary was headed to Maiduguri to support in whatever way we could. Fortunately, that response was effective, leading to almost 4 years of freedom from the wild poliovirus in Nigeria and the reality of a polio-free Nigeria.

The acceptance of the documentation for our polio-free status didn't exactly hit me as a surprise. I was expecting it. We had gone over 3 years without a case, our surveillance system is sensitive (picking up VDPVs without WPVs), our cooperation with the military had yielded significant results with the number of inaccessible areas and people caught in those areas declining significantly while the visit of the ARCC team had gone really well. It had seemed inevitable for a while. I was actually more relieved than elated that what we had

been working at for so long finally came to pass. Almost immediately however, my mind switched to the implications of what had just happened and what impact it may have on our programme going forward. I couldn't really enjoy the celebrations that had broken out within the PEI community because I was worried.

I have done this for a while now and I have come to know how my people think. Someone was bound to ask, "Now that we are polio-free, why should we continue to vaccinate our children against polio?" Someone might even ask "Why are you asking me to donate to the Rotary Foundation's polio fund when Nigeria no longer has polio?" I began to worry about how our celebration might be construed to mean that we were totally done and free from polio. We were met with similar queries in the two years we went without a case of polio between 2014 and 2016. I began to feel an immediate need for us to focus on developing suitable messages that will express the position and status of our programme going forward. So I will attempt to do that by asking and answering one simple question, "Now that Africa is polio-free, what comes next." My answer to you is that nothing changes

for now. We will continue to immunize children and maintain our emergency posture for a few more years at the least. We will continue to maintain a strong surveillance system and reinforce our routine immunization services. We won't stop because polio is still out there in the world. Africa is still responding to a vaccine-derived polio outbreak while Pakistan and Afghanistan are still dealing with large wild poliovirus outbreaks. Until these are over, we aren't truly free. So, we should celebrate but let's celebrate with caution because the world isn't polio-free yet and the virus is just a plane, bus or train ride away. Africa might be polio-free but our fight isn't over. We still need you to support us as we continue to fight for a polio-free world.



ROTN. OLUGBENGA OLAYIWOLE
Editor PolioStop

Congratulations to Nigeria for overcoming the wild polio virus. Now let's work to keep Polio at zero

Nigeria has now gone over 58 months without a case of Wild Polio Virus (WPV 1) detected anywhere in the country. However, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions imposed on the country, the 25th Meeting of the African Regional Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis eradication (ARCC) began on 15th June 2020, through virtual conferencing. At this meeting, Nigeria presented her complete documentation for certification of wild poliovirus eradication.

The documents were accepted by the ARCC and Nigeria declared wild poliovirus free on the 18th of June 2020. The Presentation for the Nigeria delegation was presented by NCC Chair Prof. Iliyasu with a conclusion that:

“Nigeria surveillance system is sensitive, reliable, representative, simple and flexible.”

“We members of the NCC believe that the indigenous transmission of WPV1 has been interrupted in Nigeria.”

He also noted the personal engagement of His Excellency President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari through presidential Task force on Polio

eradication and the leadership of the Minister for health and the Executive Director, NPHCDA.

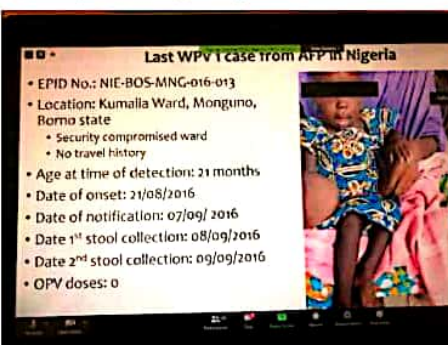
It is an amazing moment in history to have had Nigeria Polio eradication documentation accepted by the African Regional Certification Committee (ARCC). The Nigeria team led by NPHCDA and partners demonstrated evidence of our polio-free status. This was accepted and will be officially announced next month at a meeting of Ministers of Health.

Nigeria and her partners will channel the vast polio infrastructure and resources to address other public health concerns which already started with Covid19 Pandemic where the polio infrastructure and resources are currently being used to address the challenges

The Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC) wish to congratulate the Nigerian Government and all partners for this success and urge us all to remember that the reward for hard work is more work especially given that we still have challenges of cVDPV2 and low routine immunization coverage. As such we need to redouble our efforts to ensure revitalization of the whole PHC system and improve routine immunization in the country.



President Muhammadu Buhari and his wife showed their commitment to polio eradication by immunizing their grand children



The Last Polio case from AFP Monguno LGA Kumalia Ward Borno state

Polio Field Report from Katsina State.

Katsina state is in the northwestern Nigeria and is bordered by the Republic of Niger to the north and by the Nigerian states of Jigawa and Kano to the east, Kaduna to the south, and Zamfara to the west with an area mass of 9,341 square miles (24,192 square km), and a Population of 8,8,761,794 (Projected from 2016 figure), less than 1 year = 350,472, Under 5 year = 1,752,359.

Katsina State has been wild polio virus free since 2012 but the state has a record of 59 cVDPV at the end of May 2020

the state level down to the local government and ward levels

- Maintained a strong EOC drive with coordination and close monitoring of programme performance
- Implementation of several technical and programmatic innovative approaches to improving quality of PEI activities in the state
- Improvement in the quality of IPDs with 74% of the LGAs estimated by LQAS to have reached at least 90+% coverage in 2020 compared to 67% in 2012

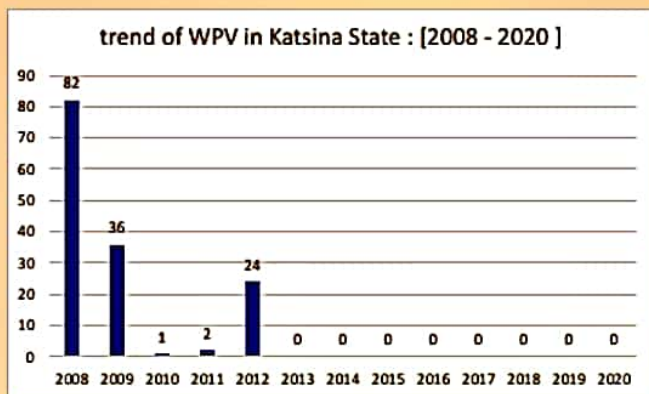
preparedness and control committee (EPR) this committee is also use as a medium for the control of all possible out-break response of epidemic prompt diseases in the state.

At the lower levels of LGAs and wards all the LGAs and partners working for the Polio eradication are the capacities being use in the covid19 prevention and control. The VCMs and other community mobilizers are the front liners in community transmission control in the state. The disease surveillance and notification officers (DSNOs) are the lead in each rapid response team (RRTs) in their respectively LGAs and the state level has 9 RRTs that do argument and support the LGAs contact tracing and active case search in the state.

Future plans for polio eradication in the state

The state is buying in to the recent recommendation by the African regional certification committee (ARCC) to the Federal Government of Nigeria as follows:

- The state will continue with all measures planned to Stop the ongoing cVDPV2 outbreak transmissions
- Addressing Immunization gaps so as to stop further spread within the state.
- The state will continue with the implementation of special interventions to reach all children with immunization when scheduled by the national government and surveillance activities in inaccessible and hard to reach areas in the state will be continue including all the 34 LGAs and their wards.
- Continue to sustain the gains in surveillance and increase routine immunization particularly in security compromised and hard to access areas
- The state government's promise to continue and sustain the financing of immunization and surveillance activities.



State support for the programme.

Katsina state in her effort to to mitigate and provide final solutions to issues observed during the implementation of SIAs agreed to be approving / releasing of funds to state and the 34 LGAs as follows: state : N1,695,000:00k and the 34 LGAs N11,750,811:00k totaling to N13,355,811:00k during every round of the IPDs. These funds are usually released to the state task-force ably chaired by His Excellency the Deputy Governor Alh. Manir Yakubu. The State task-force on immunization has a membership of 25 persons drawn from MDAs and partners working in the state. Under the able and dynamic leadership of the Deputy Governor the taskforce has been able to achieve the following:

- Engagement and commitment of key Political, traditional and religious leaders from

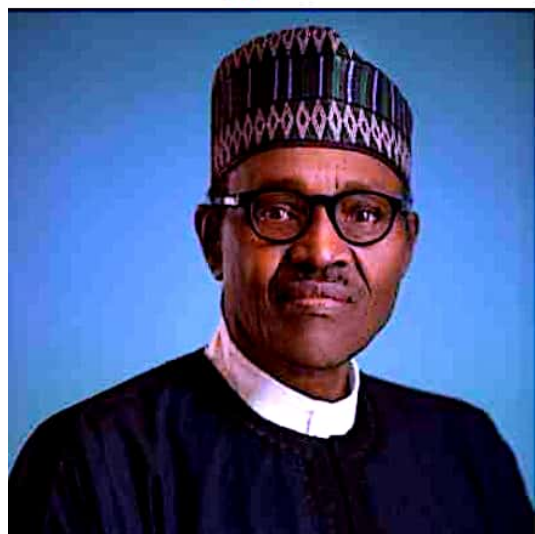
state

Using PEI resources for Covid-19 outbreak control

The structures of the polio eradication in the state has been deployed to handle the COVID-19 pandemic in the state. The State EOC has been adapted to respond to the pandemic with additional members from development partners and other donor agencies operating within the state. This body has been tasked with the 5 pillars of the response mainly coordination, surveillance, infection prevention control (IPC) case management and Risk communication pillars with meetings being held based on the different pillars daily while the general EOC meets 3 times a week.

Another committee in the state that is used for the covid'19 pandemic control is the state Emergency

President Buhari thanks partners for helping Nigeria win the war against the Wild Polio Virus



President Muhammadu Buhari GCFR

President Muhammadu Buhari congratulates fellow citizens on the joyous and historic occasion as *Nigeria becomes Wild Polio Virus free. While appreciating all partners, local and international, for their relentless efforts in ensuring the clean health bill. This achievement, the President says, reflects the resilient spirit of Nigerians, particularly the capacity of hardworking men and women in the health industry, who drew resources and support from multiple sectors to deal a final blow to the deadly virus. "This achievement is not only one of the great successes of this generation of Nigerians but also one of the obvious dividends of this administration, which is consistent with our progressive investment in the health of our people since 2015.



President Muhammadu Buhari vaccinating a child in Daura, Katsina State

"This landmark achievement is also a promise kept to all Nigerians. As you will recall that in August 2015, barely three months after we assumed office, I promised Nigerians that: 'My government shall provide the necessary resources and commitment required to strengthen the health system, routine immunization and ensure the country is certified polio-free.'"

The President notes that in 2016 the country suffered a major setback in the polio eradication efforts with the outbreak of the Wild Polio Virus in Borno State, after about two years without any case, and he promptly directed the immediate release of N9.8billion to the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) to contain the outbreak. "Subsequently, we have been meeting all our financial obligations to bilateral and multilateral agreements, and also provided the moral support and leadership required at all levels to motivate the men and women in the frontline of polio eradication. In addition, we sincerely appreciate our donors and development partners who stood by the country during those trying times.

"This achievement of Polio free status is a hard-won battle spanning over three decades of hard work and dedication by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), the Federal, States and Local Governments, polio eradication team at all levels, our donors and development partners, both local and international. "As we recall, the Polio eradication structures were used when Nigeria successfully confronted the Ebola virus outbreak within the shortest

possible time in 2014. I am glad that these same human, material and technological resources have been deployed to steadily increase routine immunization coverage and are being organized to implement the fight against community transmission of the Covid-19 pandemic. "This big battle would not have been won without the support of our donors and development partners including Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Aliko Dangote Foundation, Rotary International, United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, USAID, Sir Emeka Ofori Foundation, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), European Union, Global Health Canada, German Development Bank (KfW), WHO, UNICEF, Nigeria Governor's Forum, Polio Survivors Group, the media, faith-based and other non-governmental organizations." President Buhari acknowledges the immense contribution of traditional and religious leaders who mobilized communities to accept immunization and other government programmes.

"The final theatre of the Polio eradication fight was particularly championed by the Northern Traditional Leaders Committee on Polio Eradication and Primary Health Care (NTLC) under the guidance of His Eminence, Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Saad Abubakar, and strategic leadership of late Shehu of Bama, Alh. Kyari Ibn Umar El-Kanemi.

"We thank you all for the leadership and partnership over the years,"

POLIO-FREE STATUS: PRESIDENT BUHARI PRAISES MERKEL, OSINBAJO, SULTAN OF SOKOTO, ROTARY INTERNATIONAL, OTHERS FOR JOB WELL DONE, PLEDGES TO REVITALIZE NIGERIA'S PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM



"Please be assured that my Government will remain committed and focused to ensuring the needed resources will be provided to sustain the momentum and strengthen the primary health care system of our great Country," the President said in his letter to Chancellor Merkel.

President Buhari also thanked traditional and religious leaders, who through their leadership built community trust for the polio programme thereby increasing acceptance and ensuring all eligible children are reached with the polio vaccine.

Specifically, he wrote Alhaji Muhammad Saad III, Sultan of Sokoto, the leadership of Jama'atul-Nasirul Islam (JNI) and the President, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).

The President also wrote separate letters of appreciation to Bill Gates, the European Union, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization, Dr. Robert R. Redfield, Director, U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund, David Malpass, President, World Bank Group and John Barsa, Acting Administrator, United States Agency for International Development.

Others are, Global Affairs Canada, Professor Shinichi Kitaoka, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the International President, Rotary International.

President Buhari also appreciated the support of Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Chairman Aliko Dangote Foundation, Sir (Dr) Emeka Ofor and Governor Kayode Fayemi, in his capacity as the Chairman, Nigerian Governors Forum.

President Muhammadu Buhari has written world leaders and partners to appreciate their support towards helping Nigeria attain a Wild Polio Virus (WPV) free status, pledging that his administration would sustain the momentum and strengthen the primary health care system.

The President also commended Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, Chairman Presidential Taskforce on Polio Eradication, and his team, for making Nigeria proud and saving her children from the scourge of poliomyelitis.

"This is to express our profound appreciation for your leadership of the Presidential Taskforce on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization.

"The declaration of Nigeria as a Wild Polio free country is the result of your effective coordination of the Nigerian Polio eradication program through the Presidential Taskforce on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization, Federal Ministry of Health and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency.

"Please extend my personal appreciation to all members of the Presidential Taskforce on Polio Eradication for making Nigeria proud and saving her children from the scourge of Poliomyelitis.

"I urge the Taskforce under your leadership to sustain this coordination especially in mobilizing State Governors to provide the needed oversight and resources to sustain the momentum and strengthen the primary health care system by improving routine immunization, maternal, newborn and child health services.

"I urge you to sustain the momentum as I look forward to us leveraging on the polio infrastructure and experience to drive other health interventions," the President wrote in the letter to Prof Osinbajo.

The President also wrote a separate letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, thanking the European country for decades of financial support to Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) programme in Nigeria through KfW.

AFENET congratulates Nigeria on the acceptance of the documentation for a polio-free status



Dr. Ndakilnasiya Waziri,
National Coordinator AFENET NSTOP Nigeria

AFENET Nigeria rejoices with the Federal Government and the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) on acceptance of Nigeria's Wild-Polio Free Status by the African Regional Certification Commission.

As one of the Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) partners, we are excited to be part of this laudable, well-deserved and landmark achievement. Indeed, we are extremely delighted to be part of this success story.

We say well done to all those who have contributed in one way or the other to this outstanding feat, just as we salute the heroes that paid the ultimate price in this fight. No contribution was too little!

AFENET Nigeria, with the support of the US CDC, will continue to support the Government to enhance the delivery of immunization and other PHC services in a bid to ensure a healthier Africa.

Congratulations Nigeria!
Congratulations the Nigerian child!



Dr. ND Waziri vaccinating a child in a rural community in Nigeria

The African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET) was established in 2005 as a non-profit organization and networking alliance of African Field Epidemiology (and Laboratory) Training Programs (FELTPs), and other applied epidemiology training programs.

Nigerian Senate Wants Immunization of Children Sustained



The Nigerian Senate has called on governments at the federal and state levels, as well as relevant ministries and agencies, to sustain the immunization of infants and children in the country.

The call was made against the backdrop of a motion considered to commemorate the declaration of Nigeria as a poliovirus free nation by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday, 11th June 2020. The upper chamber, while congratulating the Federal Government on the feat, urged the Federal Ministry of Health to adopt guidelines and other measures to prevent the transmission of polio into Nigeria by foreign tourists or Nigerian travellers.

Sponsor of the motion, Senator Chukwuka Utazi (PDP – Enugu North), said, "The attainment of polio virus-free status by Nigeria is historic and remarkable not only to Nigeria but for the entire continent of Africa considering the contagious nature of the virus. "This achievement also serves as a major boost to the realization of the goal of eradicating polio globally for good. "Since 1998 when the World Health Organization first declared the poliovirus a disease of international concern that must be eradicated by the year 2000, more than 350,000 children were reportedly paralyzed on account of the virus in more than 125 countries. As recent as 2012, Nigeria accounted for more than half of the reported cases globally. "Nigeria in the recent past successfully contained and defeated the dreaded Ebola virus and also moved on to contain the spread of Lassa fever and monkey pox. "However, the recent declaration of Nigeria as a polio-free nation calls for a special tribute to health workers, health administrators and other stakeholders and further activities such as immunization to forestall a reversal of this success."

Source: saharareporters.com

Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee on behalf of Rotary International Commissions Water Project in Abuja Karshi Community



Rotary International through the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC) recently commissioned a borehole water project at Kasaki Jeje, Karshi-Abuja.

Dr. Kazeem Mustapha, Vice Chairman of the Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee (NNPPC) said that the gesture was part of Rotary's continued assistance to the people and in support of government's efforts to cushion effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The importance of maintain proper hygiene has become more apparent in this pandemic and water is essential to maintaining a good level of hygiene and sanitation Dr. Kazeem Mustapha said.

He advised the community to maintain the borehole properly so that if other opportunities for development arise, they may be considered worthy mentioning that the community was lucky to have been adopted by a club committed to helping the people.

The President of the Rotary Club of Abuja Metro which adopted the site, Rotarian Omotunde Balogun,

said the gesture was part of activities to reach out to the needy especially during this COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have come to assist families as a way to show support and make life better for the people," Balogun said.

She further said that the water was important as the community residents usually went quite a distance to fetch it.

"We need to take good care of ourselves, COVID-19 is dangerous and it kills. Always wash your hands with soap or use sanitiser, observe social distancing, among others," she said.

The Rotarian also advised the community to maintain the borehole, noting that the Rotary Community Corps would also assist.

She said that Rotarians had passion for helping the less privileged which is why the club had adopted the community.

Alhaji Tanko Gorobe, the Village Head of Kasaki Jeje, Karshi, said the club members had done a lot for the community.

"We are grateful for the water project, we used to go a long distance to fetch water before now. I will also make sure we maintain the water well," Gorobe said.

A resident of the community, Mrs Charity Bako, commended Rotary International for its constant support and appealed to the government to construct more boreholes as there were many people living in the area



(From Right) PDG Kazeem Mustapha (NNPPC Vice Chairman) and PDG Joshua Hassan (NNPPC PR Adviser) at the water project site

Gender-responsive leadership is central to End Polio



Dr Fiona Braka holds one of the highest-stake roles in the African regional polio programme – supporting the Government of Nigeria in their fight to defeat wild poliovirus.

She is the first woman to hold her position in Nigeria, and before that was the first female polio team lead in Ethiopia.

Dr Braka's work involves leading the country team to strengthen routine immunization and maintain high-quality disease surveillance systems in Nigeria. She is also heavily involved in the COVID-19 response, lending expertise established over decades of fighting polio.

In 2016, the detection of the wild virus in Nigeria after nearly two years without cases was a devastating setback. "When the outbreak broke out, I was in Uganda on a break with my family. I was having lunch with a friend and my phone was ringing, persistently ringing – a Geneva number. When I picked up the phone it never crossed my mind it would be a wild virus," Dr Braka remembers. "A good proportion of Borno state was inaccessible due to armed conflict. Delivering vaccination services and conducting surveillance in that area had not been easy. With interventions going on to address the conflict by the Nigerian Government, some ground was gained, and people trapped for over three years were able to move out of the liberated areas to internally displaced persons' camps. With population movement, a wild polio case was detected in an internally displaced child."

Cutting short her family holiday, Dr Braka raced to Borno to help launch a truly innovative outbreak response with the government and partners. Adapting strategies for polio response to an insecure setting, the programme started settlement-based microplanning guided

by local security assessments, innovative surveillance approaches, and the use of GIS and satellite imagery to estimate trapped populations. The estimated number of children inaccessible to vaccinators has dropped from over 400,000 in September 2016 to less than 30,000 in May 2020 – an enormous achievement for the programme.



Dr. Braka has led passionately from the front to help Nigeria overcome the wild polio virus

The challenges were very different when Dr Braka was working on the 2013 Horn of Africa outbreak in Ethiopia's Somali region. Cases of polio were occurring among pastoral communities and the programme had to rethink tactics to ensure the children of nomadic populations could be reached with vaccines. To maintain the cold chain, polio teams travelled on donkeys or on foot through the bushes. Community leaders among the nomads were employed to help vaccination teams reach families on the move.

"I recall the advice of a parent of a nomadic child who had contracted polio. He said, 'We follow where the clouds and rain go – unless the polio programme also moves with the clouds and the rains as we do, you will never reach us and our children will never get the vaccine'. This became a guiding quote for us," Dr Braka remembers. This was also a time of personal challenge, as Dr Braka's youngest daughter was less than a year old. On one occasion, Dr Braka brought her baby with her to a vital cross-border collaboration meeting in Somali region between the Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia teams. She recalls, "I had to stay in the same hotel as the meeting so I could run upstairs during the break to breastfeed. That moment really stands out as an example of the tough decisions you must make as a parent."

Dr Braka praises steps taken so far to promote women's professional

development in public health and leadership, whilst noting there is more to do.

"The WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, has provided opportunities for capacity building for women. There has been the first training this year for senior women leaders in the African region – I am proud to be part of this."

Part of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative Gender Strategy 2019-23 commits to promoting a gender-responsive organizational culture. By placing gender at the heart of operations, the strategy closely aligns with the policies of major donors to polio eradication including Canada, Germany, Australia and the United Kingdom. Explaining why she is a strong supporter of gender equality at all levels of public health, Dr Braka finds, "Even occupying leadership roles you have to have gender in mind – you have to be prepared to prove yourself a bit more." "It remains our responsibility to create a policy environment that gives opportunities for men and women."

Dr Braka emphasizes that many people forget how damaging the disease is. "Whilst we have polio anywhere in the world, we are all at risk of cross-border virus spread. Until polio is eradicated globally, we must be on our toes with robust surveillance systems and infrastructure to deliver vaccines." Dr Braka has been able to sustain her demanding job in part thanks to the support of her family. She explains, "I have a very supportive spouse...He knows the polio programme as well as I do!" "My late father was also very supportive of my career. My mother has been more than a mother – a strong pillar of support, mothering her grandchildren when I am not there and providing moral support in the background."

She explains that she can't imagine the next-generation suffering from polio when a vaccine is available. "Vaccines are a powerful tool and the evidence is clear for saving lives. They reduce the burden on families, economically, emotionally, and they prevent the suffering of children." "We have a duty to secure children's future to be healthy citizens."

Source: afro.who.int

ROTARY CLUB OF LEKKI PHASE 1, WITH SUPPORT FROM NNPPC, DONATES PALLIATIVES TO STREET SWEEPERS IN LEKKI AXIS OF LAGOS



KATSINA ROTARIANS WITH SUPPORT FROM NNPPC DISTRIBUTES PALLIATIVES TO VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN ZANGO COMMUNITY, KATSINA STATE



Rotary



Thank You
ROTARIANS!!

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)
PRONOUNCES
NIGERIA A POLIO-FREE COUNTRY**

On behalf of the Nigerian National Polio Committee of Rotary International, I wish to thank all Rotarians all over the country for your steadfast support in the eradication of the Polio endemic in Nigeria.

It is indeed remarkable that Rotarians have consistently been on the frontline of the battle against Polio since 1988 and still continue to be resolute in Keeping Polio Out in the future.

I enjoin each and every one of you to keep the momentum going until Polio is wiped off the face of the earth.

I thank you all.

DR. TUNJI FUNSHO

Chairman, Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee



#PeopleofAction