

# POLIO STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

DECEMBER 2022

Contribute Participate Change



## 2022 WORLD POLIO DAY CELEBRATIONS

National PolioPlus Committee: PDG Joshua Hassan - 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, PDG Remi Bello - Treasurer, PDG Tolu Omatsola-Member, PDG Ijeoma Okoro- Member, PRIVP Yinka Babalola -Adviser, PDG Tunji Funsho-Adviser, PRIP Jon.B.Majiyagbe-Patron



## Thank you



This is the season when people take stock and account for what went on in the calendar year. You already know that in Rotary, we do not celebrate the New Year in the manner of others because our year runs from July to June. Still, as members of a global community, we are not shielded from the celebrations in our community as we approach the end of the calendar. So in the spirit of the season, we join others to also take stock- at our mid-year point, of the activities that went on in the calendar year as well as the challenges and successes we have had.

At this point of the year, the overwhelming feeling I have is one of gratitude. To you and everyone who has been part of helping us achieve the things we have achieved in 2022. Since the declaration of a polio-free Nigeria and the certification of a polio-free Africa, our programme has come under tremendous assault as the virus has attempted to make a comeback. Whilst grappling with the effects of the global pandemic and the resultant global recession, we have had to deal with the virus showing up in places where it has not been seen for decades. Not just as in Malawi and Mozambique but also in the US, the UK and Israel. We have had a surge in cases of the mutant vaccine derived form of the virus in many places especially in Africa and Nigeria in particular. In 2021 alone, there were 415 cases in Nigeria which is an astonishing figure given that we were just declared polio-free in 2020.

In spite of this, the programme has rallied and come back to attack the challenges head on and even with very limited resources achieve a lot of success against the virus. For one, despite the recent importation of the wild poliovirus into Africa with the outbreaks in Malawi and Mozambique, Nigeria has managed to keep the wild poliovirus out. We have also succeeded in reducing the number of cases by about 90 percent in just one year. That is something to be happy about.

We have achieved this because of you. Your support for the programme has been a major factor in helping us achieve what we have achieved this year. Your commitment to advocacy, to helping us create awareness in the field and your generous contributions of your time, talent and treasures have played a huge part in helping us to get to this point where it feels, once again, like we are moving forward. So on behalf of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee and the entire team at PolioPlus and PolioStop, I want to thank you most sincerely for your contributions and support thus far. We are indeed grateful to be able to count on you.

We must however be quick to reiterate that as long as there is polio in any form in our land, there will be families who are hurting. In 2022, there were still 42 cases of cVDPVs in Nigeria. And though this is significantly lower than the 415 we had in 2021, these are 42 families who are affected by polio for the rest of the life of these children. Let us use this knowledge as motivation and fuel for our fire. Let us recharge during this festive season and purpose to come back stronger, better and even more determined to keep polio in all its forms out of Nigeria. It is achievable if we all pull together and if we all keep rowing in the same direction. We have made a promise to the world to give the next generation a polio-free world. Let 2023 be the year that we achieve it.

I wish you happy celebrations and a prosperous 2023.



## When people Gather

We have come to yet another Christmas season. It's a time for celebrations and merry making. It's a season for travels and meeting friends and relatives we have not met in a long while. Invariably this is a season when people gather from different parts of the country and even the world to see loved ones and have a wonderful time.

But as we celebrate, let's not forget that when people gather, the conditions favourable for the spread of diseases also increase. In situations where the environment and hygiene is not properly taken care of and people are not vaccinated, diseases are likely to spread and thrive.

That is why it is important that as we travel this season and gather in festivities and celebrations that we remember to take care of our environments and our personal hygiene. It is also very important that we get our children vaccinated and other susceptible individuals vaccinated against vaccine childhood preventable diseases.

We already know that polio is transmitted through the faeco-oral route. That is through the contamination of food and water by the faecal matter of another who has been previously infected by the virus. We also know that our children under the age of 5 by the nature of their closeness to the ground and their activities are the most susceptible to polio infection. We also know that we have effective vaccines against the virus. So, it is important that we do all within our means to ensure that our children are protected by

vaccinating them against poliomyelitis and other childhood preventable diseases. These vaccines are free and always available at our primary health centers.

Also, in the next few weeks our vaccination teams will begin to go around houses seeking to vaccinate our kids against polio. They will be carrying the new oral polio vaccine which has been designed to be stable and not mutate as easily as the other forms of the oral polio vaccine and so help us in our fight against the circulating mutant form of the poliovirus. However, we must remember that polio anywhere is polio everywhere and the disease is capable of moving surreptitiously through populations undetected for a long time before maiming or killing vulnerable children. So, the only way we will succeed is if all our children are protected. We must therefore make efforts to protect ALL of our children.

Let us remember that when people gather good things happen so let us use this opportunity to spread the good news of the imminence of polio being kicked out of our world. At the same time, when people gather, bad things happen so let's encourage our friends and members of our family to take advantage of the various vaccination opportunities to vaccinate and protect our children against polio and other vaccine-preventable childhood diseases.

May we always have reasons to celebrate and gather for good. Just as Rotary has been doing for over a century now. We wish you happy celebrations. May the year 2023 be good to us and be polio-free for us all.

Rtn 'Gbenga Olayiwole  
Editor



# Progress made in Nigeria's PEI in 2022

Nigeria achieved Wild Poliovirus (WPV) free status from the African Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) in June 2020. This historic development paved way for the African Region to be certified WPV-free by the ARCC in August 2020. The last case of WPV in the country was from the security challenged State of Borno and had a date of onset of paralysis on 21st August 2016. Nigeria interrupted the transmission of the Wild Polio Virus in August 2017 and Africa was certified Wild Polio Free in August 2020. However, Nigeria has been experiencing a series of circulating vaccine-derived polio type 2 (cVDPV2) outbreaks. In 2021, Progress has been made in 2022 thanks to multiple outbreak responses using nOPV2 in all states during 2021 and 2022. By the end of September 2022, Nigeria managed to reduce the cVDPV2 by 82% compared to the same period in 2021.

There were several cVPV2 outbreaks from 2021 which have been responded to comprehensively. More than 300 million doses of nOPV2 have been used in these responses; there have also been effective management of resources in the face of the ramp-down. The program has been strong on integration in order to curtail the challenges of other competing activities impeding the quality of the OBRs. There has also been

careful and measured public communication of cVPV2 outbreaks in a post-certification context. The cVPV2 detection in Nigeria significantly reduced by 85% as at week 45. cVPV2 outbreaks in 2022 as at week 45 involved 17 states in 50 LGAs compared to 29 states in 194 LGAs same period 2021.

The surveillance indicators at national and state level remained optimal. The cVPV2 lineages last year were seven and reduced to two this year (ZAS-1 and SOS-7) and currently only one is still circulating (ZAS-1).

Residual issues are election season, expanding insecurity and buildup of zero dose children.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative is focused on strengthening surveillance to find and respond to the virus, wherever it emerges, and closing immunity gaps to protect the population and stop the virus from circulating. The programme is also committed to advocating for sustained political commitment and ensuring necessary financial resources and technical support.

As at 21 November All 37 states and FCT have completed at least four nOPV2 OBRs: 8 nOPV2 OBRs, 6 states: 7 nOPV2 OBRs, 6 states: 6 nOPV2 OBRs, 2 states: 5 nOPV2 OBRs, 17 states: 4 nOPV2 OBRs while Lagos and Oyo are breakthrough states (BTS).

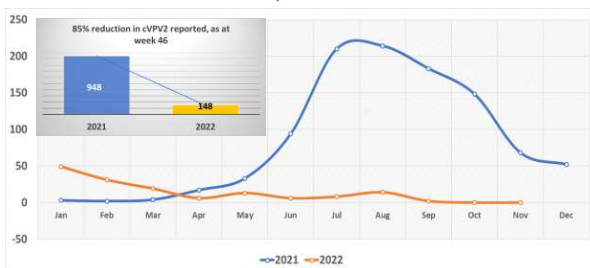
Nigeria experienced major challenges in 2022 like increased general insecurity across the states, competing activities Covax roll out, other outbreaks, Measles Yellow fever Vaccination, Seasonal Malaria Chemotherapy SMC, LLIN Mal-Distribution Non Compliance due to "no felt needs" and electioneering season leading to apathy on the part of the Political leadership.

The world is on the verge of interrupting WPV Type 1 but the current CVPD2 Transmission in Africa and Nigeria adds another burden to the effort needed to rid the world of polio. We therefore need to redouble efforts by summoning the remaining challenges in order to interrupt the spread and ensure a polio-free world.

Summary of Progress in cVPV2 interruption as at week 46 2022 compared to 2021 same period

Description	2021	2022	% Reduction
# cVPV2	948	148	84.4%
# cVPV2 from AFP	403	41	89.8%
# cVPV2 from Contact + HC	295	37	87.5%
# cVPV2 from ES	250	70	72.0%
# LGAs with cVPV2	196	55	71.9%
# states with cVPV2	30	17	43.3%

There is 85% reduction cVPV2 as of week 46 in 2022 compared to 2021 same period



Number of nOPV2 OBRs by state and Orphan cVPV2, Week 46



No	State	LGA	# ORPHAN	NPAFP Rate	Adequacy rate
	BAUCHI	BAUCHI			
	BAUCHI	GARUWA			
	KADUNA	SABON GARI			
	KADUNA	Zaria			
	KATSINA	Katsina			
	Plateau	Bassa			
	Sokoto	Sokoto North			
	TARABA	BALI			
	TARABA	Gassol			
	Zamfara	Kaura Namoda			
	Borno	Bayo			

# Rotary visits Imo State

One of the most impactful things we have done as Rotary International is to mobilize resources by getting Governments and other stakeholders onboard the polio eradication train. The tool we have deployed in achieving this is advocacy and as part of activities to mark the World Polio Day 2022, the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee visited Owerri, the Imo State Capital city and paid advocacy visits to His Excellency, the Deputy Governor of Imo State Professor Placid Njoku and the Speaker of the Imo State House of Assembly, the Rt. Hon. Anthony Emeka Nduka. The Rotary team was led by the Chair, Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee, PDG Joshua Hassan. He was accompanied on the visit by the Rotary PolioPlus Ambassador Rtn David Kunle Adeyanju, the Imo State PolioPlus Representative PAG Chukwuemeka Ohajunwa, All Rotary Club Presidents in Owerri and other senior Rotarians.



*Rotary Leaders with the Speaker of the Imo State House of Assembly Rt.Hon. Anthony Emeka Nduka*

The team met the Speaker of the House of Assembly at the impressive House of Assembly Complex in Owerri and were well received. Speaking on behalf of Rotary, the Chair of the NNPPC PDG Joshua Hassan thanked the State Government for the warm welcome and also expressed appreciation for the State Government's support for primary healthcare in the state, especially immunization services. He noted that even though the state had not really been affected by the outbreaks of mutant poliovirus which had ravaged the country, there was a need to increase vigilance and improve vaccine uptake among the most vulnerable children in the State. He therefore sought the support the state's legislators in ensuring that sufficient resources were allocated in support of primary healthcare and most especially immunization services in the state. In his response, the Speaker thanked Rotary for the visit especially with the presence of the PolioPlus Ambassador Rtn Kunle Adeyanju of the famous London-Lagos motorcycle ride. He noted that Rotary is known across the world for doing good and with the courage shown by Kunle Adeyanju is proof that polio eradication is a serious business which the state government through the legislative arm would be very happy to support.



*His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Imo State Prof. Placid Njoku welcoming the Chair Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee PDG Joshua Hassan to his office*

At his office, His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Imo State Prof. Placid Njoku thanked the Rotary team for the visit and noted the stellar contributions over the years, particularly in helping to reduce the scourge of polio in the world and helping Africa become polio-free. He promised the support of the State Government for Rotary's activities in the State and instructed that the State Government be represented at the subsequent activities for marking World Polio Day by the Honourable Commissioner for Health Dr. Prosper Success Obinna. He also promised that the state Government would do everything to ensure that the state remains Polio-Free. In his brief introduction at the meeting the State Polio Representative PAG Chukwuemeka Ohajunwa thanked the state Government for its efforts in healthcare and particularly primary healthcare and went on to list the areas of cooperation which exist between Rotary and the State Government. In particular, he mentioned the many water projects that Rotary had undertaken in the state and the health center being built by Rotary that would soon be commissioned in the State. The team shared a photographs session with the Deputy Governor before departing his office.



*His Excellency the Deputy Governor of Imo State Prof. Placid Njoku welcoming Polio Ambassador Kunle Adeyanju of the London-Lagos bike ride fame to his office in Owerri*

It is clear that with the good relationship which exists between the State Government and Rotary Clubs in the State, the effort to keep polio at bay will continue to be strong and contribute to the overall wellbeing of children in Imo State.



*Rotary leaders with the Deputy Governor of Imo State at his office in Owerri*

# Reaching every child with vaccines in communities at risk of polio



As the traditional head of Gagi community, Sokoto State, Northwest Nigeria, Alhaji Sani Umar Jabbi (Sarkin Yakin Gagi), insists that every child in his district must be vaccinated with the life-saving polio vaccine.

Leveraging his position, he has taken it upon himself to sensitize residents of the community about the importance of participating in immunization activities.

Alhaji Sani says he is supporting the immunization campaign because people have seen first-hand how the vaccines prevent children from being maimed or killed by polio.

"As a district head, I have the responsibility of sensitizing and mobilizing my community for immunization activities," he says.

"It is said that prevention is better than cure. Unlike other childhood diseases, that can be treated and cured, polio, either kills or paralyzes a child for life. Parents and guardians must always take advantage of immunization campaigns to vaccinate their children against childhood-killer diseases."

Alhaji Sani insists that every child under five must receive the vaccination against circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVPVD2) to safeguard them from being disabled and to stop the transmission of polio disease in Nigeria.

The Government of Nigeria, with the support of World Health Organization (WHO), and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) as well as partners, have finalized the second round of the polio vaccination campaign in Sokoto state.

The Supplementary Immunization Activity (SIA) is an outbreak response following the cVPVD2 cases detected in Sokoto and Zamfara states.

The mass campaign aims to interrupt the circulation of poliovirus by immunizing every child under five years of age with two doses of the oral polio vaccine.

The SIAs are one of the four pillars of eradicating the disease. However, supplementary immunization is intended to complement, not replace, routine immunizations (RI).

Furthermore, the campaign was extended to Kebbi state because it shares boundaries with Sokoto and Zamfara and forms part of the national borders of Benin Republic and Niger.

The SIA campaigns were conducted in the three states from 5 to 8 November 2022 and targeted to vaccinate about 5 million under-five children with the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2).

In Sokoto State, more than 1.7 million children were intended to be covered with the life-saving vaccine.

Heeding the call, a young mother of two, Mrs Zalihatu Abubakar, residing in Gagi community, says she always takes action whenever there is a call for immunization campaigns.

"I know the importance of immunization, I present my children to the vaccinators whenever they come knocking on my door during the house-to-house vaccination campaigns. I also ensure I take them to the health facility for their routine immunization when due.

My children are now protected against polio and I am happy because I don't want them deformed. Vaccination has helped our children to remain healthy, the vaccine is very good as it has strengthened our children and given the children strong protection against sickness" she says.

Buttressing the importance of the SIA campaign, the Incident Manager, Sokoto State Emergency Operation Center (EOC), Dr Abdulrahman Ahmad, says, "We conducted the vaccination drive to strengthen the immunity of the children to stop transmission of cVPVD2 in the state and country at large.

He noted that the state had detected 21 cVPVD2 cases.

"The SIA plays a vital role in interrupting the spread of cVPVD2 cases in the state and Nigeria. Sokoto state need to mount two quality outbreak responses within two months to stop the cVDPV2 transmission."

Additionally, the WHO State coordinator, Mr Ibrahim Sani, said community participation has been a vital strategy employed by WHO and partners to ensure no child is being missed during the campaign.

He says deploying the "vaccinating every missed opportunity" tag as a driver for the campaign highlights the WHO innovative approach to engage mature, influential women from the community, and community leaders who will have the responsibility of tracking and ensuring vaccination of children missed either due to none compliance or child absenteeism.

In security-compromised settlements in the state, government is engaging the local vigilantes to ensure the safety of vaccinators in reaching eligible children, he said.

Although Nigeria has eliminated the Wild PolioVirus (WPV), the country is still saddled with the cVPVD2. To interrupt the transmission of the disease, WHO with funding from GPEI partners, has been supporting the government in carrying out SIA campaigns across the country.

*Source: WHO*

# Lagos Bikers roar for Polio Eradication on World Polio Day



In May 2022 Rotarian Kunle Adeyanju completed a historic ride from London to Lagos. The journey took him 41 days to complete and took him through 31 cities in 11 countries. One of his reasons for undertaking the journey was the desire to raise awareness and funds for polio eradication. Since then he has led a team of bikers all over the west coast of Africa in support of polio eradication.



*A biker waits for the Flag-Off of the ride at the Palms Mall ay Victoria Island*

On the occasion of World Polio Day 2022, he and a team of other riders undertook yet another ride through major streets in Lagos Nigeria in support of polio eradication. As early as 7.30 am on Saturday October 22 the bikers gathered at the Palms Mall Oniru, Victoria Island Lagos. They were joined by Rotarians and friends from across Lagos who also met to participate in an awareness trek in support of polio eradication. Representatives from the Partners such as the WHO and the Lagos State Primary Healthcare Board were also at the event.



*Chair NNPPC Joshua Hassan at the Flag-off of the World Polio Day Ride in Victoria Island Lagos*

The ride was flagged off by the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC) Chair PDG Joshua Hassan and he was supported by the District Governor Rotary International District 9110 Omotunde Lawson, her immediate predecessor and Treasurer of the NNPPC PDG Ismaila Remi Bello and the immediate past Chair of the NNPPC and member of the International PolioPlus Committee (IPPC) PDG Tunji Funsho.



*PDG Remi Bello, PDG Joshua Hassan, PDG Tunji Funsho, PDG Matthias Shoga and Kunle Adeyanju at the Flag-off of the Bike Ride in Victoria Island Lagos*

Supported by members of the Federal Road Safety Corps, the ride took them through many of the streets of Victoria Island, Lekki and Ajah. They also rode through Ahmadu Bello way, Bonny Camp, Ozumba Mbadiwe and Lekki-Epe Expressway making a lot of noise and plenty of memories along the way.



*Rotarians from across Lagos were also part of the activity for World Polio Day 2022*

# 2022 WORLD POLIO



At the "kick off" of the Walk Against Polio in Lagos - Left DG Omotunde Lawson, DGE Ify Ejezie, PDG Joshua Hassan (NNPPC Chair) PDG Remi Bello and Dr Tunji Funsho



Advocacy visit to HRH Alh. Haruna Abubakar, Sarkin Hausawa of Idi-araba of Mushin, Lagos. Right - Dr Tunji Funsho left - PDG Joshua Hassan



Donation of Tricycles to polio survivors by Jos Rotarians



Commissioning of Polio billboard courtesy of Rotary Clubs in Rivers State, D9141



Kaduna mega rally



Immunization exercise by Rotary Club of Ibeju to commemorate the World Polio Day



# DAY CELEBRATION



Susan Paget, NNPPC Chairman PDG Joshua Hassan, Andre Thompson and Bill and Melinda Gates Program Coordinator Elyjoy Kankua at District 9110 World Polio Day Walk.



Walk against polio in Lagos



Rotarian Olapeju Agunbiade vaccinating a baby to commemorate the world polio day.



Ride Against Polio by Rotn. Kunle Adeyanju #Lionheart and his fellow riders in Lagos



Presentation of wheel chairs to some polio survivors in Owerri, courtesy Owerri Rotarians



World Polio Day Dinner organised by Rotary Clubs in Owerri, D9142



## My Rotary End Polio Now Experience- Olapeju Agunbiade

Polio Eradication is Rotary's number one Global Project. Every Rotarian knows this on the first day they come into Rotary. It is on record that Rotary first conceived the idea of eradicating poliomyelitis from the world and raised the initial seed funding for the establishment of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. However, it is not every day that one has the opportunity to meet a Rotarian like Peju Agunbiade. Her passion and dedication to polio eradication is exemplary so PolioStop thought it would be interesting to meet her and find out what motivates her in the hope that she might inspire the same drive in others. Her responses to our questions are summarized below. We hope you will find it interesting.

I am Olapeju Agunbiade. I am a trained nurse, fertility and midwifery consultant. I am based in UK but I started shuttling UK/Nigeria since 2017 when I inherited and started managing a maternity center at Oke-Ado in Ibadan which my mother established in 1976. Service is my lifestyle. It is my second nature.

In spite of this and the fact that I have always had friends and family member who belong to Rotary, I never really considered joining Rotary until one day in 2019 when I met a Rotarian who persuaded me and insisted that I had to join Rotary and I agreed. That was how I became a member of Rotary Club of Ibadan- Elebu Metro in Rotary International's District 9125. Even then I wasn't a spectacular member, mainly because I shuttled between Nigeria and the UK.

That was until I decided to attend the District 9125 Conference in Abuja in May 2022. I learnt so much about Rotary and made so many friends in Abuja. I invested so much time online trying to learn as much as I could about Rotary. Rotary is not a child's play. You must be genuinely passionate about helping the less privileged in all the ways you can. The MyRotary website became my companion. I started learning so much about Rotary online. And there is no way that you'll log into MyRotary that you won't spot END POLIO. I read so much online about how Rotary is committed and passionate about it and other areas of focus including Maternal and Child Health. I made up my mind to do everything within my power to contribute to the effort to eradicate polio. Fortunately, the World Polio Day 2022 came along and this was an opportunity to help project and promote Polio Eradication within my community in Ibadan. I was planning to just wear my End Polio branded Tee shirt and Cap and join other Rotarians in the celebrations but the problems was I had no cap! That

was when the idea to paint my head came to me. I thought to myself, "kids paint their faces during celebrations, why can't I paint my head?" I began to make phone calls for people to connect me with face painters in Ibadan. Two artists turned up on that Monday morning but neither of them had ever painted bald head before. One of them was however enthusiastic about it and willing to try so I showed him the End Polio Now Image from the Rotary Brand Center and the rest is now history! I also printed End Polio Now on the pair of earring that I made and on that day as



World Polio Day 2022 was fun. I took more pictures than I did on my wedding day. I became a spectacle and even my fellow Rotarians looked at my head in awe! It was an awesome experience. The pictures went viral which was interesting since this was a last minute idea.

I went to bed that day with so much passion and determination to End Polio Now. This passion has now become another "baby" of mine and I intend to give it my best. I am not waiting for anyone to encourage me. I am going to encourage myself and give it my best shot.



I have made two End Polio Now boxes. One of them is always in my car. I intend to use these to raise funds for Rotary Foundation's Polio Fund at every opportunity that I have. I am also actively connecting with opportunities offered by Rotary NNPPC to learn more and do more about polio eradication. We have to do more than just talk, we also have to walk the talk. Vive La Rotary!

For more information on how you can be a part of this historic effort to rid the world of Polio, please visit us at Polio House, No 8 Ladoke Akintola Street, GRA Ikeja Lagos or log on to our website: <https://polioplus.org.ng/en/> and social media handles at Facebook: PolioPlusNigeria Instagram: polioplus\_nigeria Twitter: PolioPlusNG

# Nigeria, Yemen, DR Congo account for more than 85% of vaccine-derived polio cases in 2022

A World Health Organisation (WHO) committee on polio, said Northern Yemen, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Nigeria continue to account for more than 85 per cent of the global circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Viruses (cVDPV2) caseload.

A vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV) is a strain related to the weakened live poliovirus contained in oral polio vaccine (OPV). If allowed to circulate in under or unimmunised populations for long enough, or replicate in an immuno-deficient individual, the weakened virus can revert to a form that causes illness and paralysis.

The thirty-third meeting of the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) on the international spread of poliovirus convened by the WHO Director-General, in a statement, said there have been four new countries reporting cVDPV2 – Algeria, Israel, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. It said the viruses detected in the latter three countries are genetically linked indicating long-distance international spread through air travel has occurred.

The Emergency Committee reviewed the data on wild poliovirus (WPV1) and cVDPV in the context of global eradication of WPV and cessation of outbreaks of cVDPV2 by end of 2023.

The committee said the virus in Algeria is genetically linked to viruses circulating in Nigeria and is therefore an importation due to international spread. "Furthermore, the detection of cVDPV2 in Benin, as has been seen in Ghana, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire appears to have resulted from reinfection caused by new international spread from Nigeria," it noted.

The WHO committee said three new countries have reported cVDPV1 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi and Mozambique.

The committee noted that much of the risk for cVDPV outbreaks could be linked to a combination of inaccessibility, insecurity, a high concentration of zero dose children and population displacement. These, it said, have been most clearly evidenced in northern Yemen, northern Nigeria, south central Somalia and eastern DRC. Despite the ongoing decline in the number of cases and lineages circulating, the recent episodes of international spread of cVDPV2 indicate the risk remains high.

Although encouraged by the reported progress, the Committee unanimously agreed that the risk of international spread of poliovirus remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and recommended the extension of Temporary Recommendations for a further three months. The Committee recognised the concerns regarding the lengthy duration of the polio PHEIC and the importance of exploring alternative IHR measures in the future but concluded that there are still significant risks as exemplified by the importation and continued transmission of virus in Malawi and Mozambique.

The Committee recognises that border vaccination may not be feasible at very porous borders in Africa but was concerned by the lack of synchronisation and cross border coordination in response to the WPV1 importation in southeast Africa. Outbreak response assessments are being carried out currently and urged the countries most directly involved in the response – Malawi and Mozambique – to facilitate these assessments. The committee also noted with concern that most AFP cases were being detected during campaigns and more systematic surveillance efforts are required including training of clinicians to identify and respond to AFP cases. Noting the acute humanitarian crisis still unfolding in Afghanistan, the committee urged that polio campaigns be integrated with other public health measures wherever possible including malnutrition screening, vitamin A administration and measles vaccination. The committee also strongly encouraged house to house campaigns be implemented wherever feasible as these campaigns enhance identification and coverage of zero dose and under-immunised children.

In Pakistan, the opportunity to interrupt polio transmission in the coming low season, noting that the reported cases are geographically limited to south KP with positive environment isolates detected elsewhere in KP, Punjab and Sindh. The committee urged Pakistan to grasp the upcoming opportunity.

The committee noted the situation in northern Yemen with concern where it is estimated several million children have still not been accessed for immunization. The committee strongly encouraged more urgent dialogue with all relevant stakeholders to enable children to be vaccinated and protected.

The cVDPV2 outbreaks in Jerusalem, London and New York highlight the importance of sensitive polio surveillance, including environmental surveillance, in all areas where there are high risk sub-populations, and the committee urges all countries to take heed of the lesson learnt through this event and take steps to improve polio surveillance everywhere that such risks exist.

*By Chukwuma Muanya for guardian.ng*

# Polio: There is opportunity but at a cost



Nigeria was declared wild poliovirus free on the 25th August 2020. The news was met with a lot of celebration. The long-fought battle towards a wild polio free status had been won in Africa. Nigeria was the final country in which this was achieved on the continent. As this news came in the midst of the pandemic, it provided some much-needed good news against the background of uncertainty, as COVID-19 infections and deaths continued to escalate globally. The only countries at the time that had not yet eliminated wild poliovirus were Pakistan and Afghanistan where the wild poliovirus was still circulating. However, despite the wild poliovirus-free status in Nigeria, children still remain at risk from circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV), due to low immunisation rates, exacerbated by COVID-19 which disrupted routine immunisation programmes.

The recent re-emergence of wild polio in Malawi and Mozambique, detection in waste water in London and New York and persistence of circulating vaccine-derived polio viruses in a few countries has been a wakeup call for the global community, as the challenge of eradicating polio worldwide becomes more evident. In February 2022, Malawi reported an outbreak of wild poliovirus type 1, as a 3-year-old child in the capital city, Lilongwe was left paralysed in late 2021. The resurgence of wild poliovirus in Malawi came 30 years after the last case was reported in 1992. The new cases of wild poliovirus show how the fragile progress in the eradication effort can be hampered and provides further evidence that eradication efforts have to be sustained, until we achieve our target worldwide. This calls for continued global solidarity and collaboration.

The World Health Summit in Berlin, between the 16th -- 18th October 2022 provided an opportunity for a recommitment to the polio eradication effort. As Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development for Germany reminded the delegates, "no place is safe until polio has been eradicated everywhere". The recommitment efforts kicked off when Bill Gates, during the prestigious Virchow Prize for Global Health award ceremony for Ambassador John Nkengasong made the announcement that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation would commit \$1.2 billion to support the GPEI's 2022-2026 Polio Eradication Strategy. During the pledging event co-hosted by the GPEI and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), global leaders pledged \$2.6 billion to fund the eradication efforts. In addition, Dr. Chris Elias,

President, Global Development at the Bill & Melinda announced that the Foundation would be extending their two to one funding match with Rotary International for a further three years.

There is a window of opportunity to end polio and ensuring there is sustained funding for the polio eradication effort is a political choice. The commitments made by global partners reaffirm the global commitment to a polio-free future.



During the pledging event at the World Health Summit, the audience heard from Minda Dentler, a Polio survivor and advocate. In a very moving session, she shared her lived experience of contracting polio as baby in India, as her birth mother did not have access to the polio vaccine. She became paralysed and is now in a wheelchair. However despite this initial challenge, she has since graduated from university, earned an MBA and is now the proud mother of a daughter.

Minda's experience and that of her birth mother are very similar to that of many women and children in Nigeria who do not have easy access to the life-saving polio vaccines, despite the efforts of government and partners. This emphasises the need for sustained funding to reach women and children, especially zero-dose children in remote areas and internally-displaced camps in Nigeria. These populations are especially vulnerable, as the children have been left out of routine immunisation programmes and mothers do not have access to basic maternal health services. The GAVI Zero-Dose Immunization Programme (ZIP) in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee and World Vision aims to reach children in displaced and hard to reach communities or immunisation "blind-spots".

The continued efforts to eradicate polio comes at a significant cost but make business sense. According to Dr Chris Elias, eradication is a good investment because it will "by economic projections save the world about \$33 billion in this century" when compared to the cost of controlling the disease. The eradication effort also directs the focus and resources dedicated to health programmes at the elimination efforts. In Nigeria, our basic health systems, especially primary health care, remain weak and severely underfunded. Strengthening the primary health care system, especially in the most affected communities will ensure a stronger response to public health threats in addition to meeting the basic health needs of communities, especially the most vulnerable which includes women and children.

*Adapted from the writing of Vivianne Ihekweazu for Nigeria Healthwatch*

# Gates Foundation pledges \$1.2 billion to eradicate polio



The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has announced plans to commit \$1.2 billion to eradicate polio globally.

According to the foundation, the money will be used to implement the Global Polio Eradication Initiative through 2026 to end the polio virus in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the last two endemic countries.

The announcement was made by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation CEO, Mark Suzman, at the opening ceremony of the 2022 World Health Summit (WHS) in Berlin. Mr Suzman said: "Our foundation is dedicated to fighting infectious diseases that disproportionately affect people who already face the most significant challenges.

"Polio remains a constant threat to children's health. Of course, it is not just a threat to individual children and families. Polio also stands in the way of creating more equitable, resilient health systems.

"If we do not all step up and meet the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's \$4.8 billion goal, Polio will spread again. And that is why today, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is proud to be pledging \$1.2 billion to Global Polio Eradication."

He added that alongside partners like the government of Germany, Rotary International, the World Health Organisation, the US Centres for Disease Control, Gavi, and UNICEF, "we will intensify the lessons learned from successful vaccination campaigns until we reach a world completely free from polio".

In a recorded video played at the summit, Bill Gates confirmed the funding from his foundation, noting that the number of annual polio cases has fallen from 350,000 a year in 1988 to less than 1000 a year today.

"It's horrifying to see children paralysed by a disease that is totally preventable. Polio is a stark illustration of health inequity. There is something incredibly unjust about kids facing a disease that has been nearly wiped out in every part of the world, except in their country.

"The campaign to end polio also means so much to me, because it shows what we can achieve when we work together. Eradication is very close," he said.

He added that "the tools designed to combat polio have proved vital to fighting other diseases, including COVID-19 and investing in the fight against polio means stronger health systems for everyone".

According to a statement on its website, the Gates Foundation has contributed nearly \$5 billion to the polio eradication initiative.

*Source: premiumtimes.ng*



## Pakistan is working with Rotary to eradicate polio

He says that in Pakistan the programme works closely with the national government to improve the management and operation of polio vaccination campaigns, to better reach high-risk populations through targeted community engagement. It also works to integrate polio activities with other health services and social programmes, as well as helping female health workers and religious leaders in building community trust and improving vaccine acceptance. Rotary's polio programme has established nine resource centres, 15 team support centres and 51 Permanent Transit Points (PTP) across the country to target missed children. Two hundred thousand vaccine transport units have been provided to the government's Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) and 23 Permanent Immunisation Centres (PIC) set up to improve routine immunisation.

"We regularly hold religious workshops in which we work with religious scholars to build community trust and convey vaccine safety and efficacy in communities around Pakistan," he says.

Talking about Rotary's work since the recent polio cases were reported, Aziz Memon says that the National Emergency Operations Centres of Afghanistan and Pakistan are working together to implement a strategy to vaccinate all children under ten at major transit points/border areas in southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as this area is home to some of the more high-risk mobile populations. "We have the strategy and the tools necessary to eradicate polio, and it is critical that we ensure it is well funded. The cost of the initiative is US\$ 4.8 billion," says Memon.

Memon says that, at the Global Citizen Festival on 24 September, Rotary committed \$150 million to the GPEI to help fund the strategy, and world leaders gathered to re-commit to the GPEI at the World Health Summit in Berlin on 18 October. He remains optimistic because despite the challenges, all of which were exacerbated by the pandemic, wild polio cases in the country remain lower than those recorded in 2020. "We have a window of opportunity to stop transmission of wild polio for good and so, ultimately, we must redouble our commitment to deliver on our promise of a polio-free world," he says. Pakistan's Federal Minister for the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel, has reaffirmed the government's commitment to the eradication of polio in the country, noting that despite the recent floods, polio vaccination campaigns in the country continued. "We are close to our mission of ending polio. We want the world to stand with us," Minister Patel says.

Rahul Basharat for gavi.org

Shahzeb Khan, a frontline polio worker in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, dreams of polio eradication. But, according to Pakistan's Polio Eradication Programme (PPEP), after a gap of 15 months the country has reported 20 wild poliovirus cases in 2022, all in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sudden surge of cases has alarmed the national and international institutions working to end the spread of the virus in the country. Khan says that, despite the availability of vaccines, there are serious challenges due to the remote and ultra-conservative populations in the province. "People are still sceptical about the poliovirus vaccine and continuous migration, along with the porous border with Afghanistan, are becoming major causes behind resurgence of the virus," he says. He adds that, during door-to-door campaigns in ultra-conservative areas people do not always cooperate. Changing people's behaviour regarding the polio vaccine is not easy. "Behind the administration of every polio drop there is a lot of effort at national and international level, including religious clergy and international organisations," he says.

Rotary International is one such organisation that has been working for decades to end polio in Pakistan. Rotary is one of the founding partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), established in 1988, and has contributed more than US\$ 2.6 billion to end polio with a focus on fundraising, advocacy and mobilising volunteers.

Chair of Rotary Pakistan's National PolioPlus Committee Aziz Memon explains that GPEI's strategy is focused on stopping transmission of all polioviruses – wild poliovirus (WPV) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV) – in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and stopping transmission of cVDPV in outbreak countries.





Kick Start of ParaSoccer match by Polio Survivors in Kaduna State



Donation of 20 tricycles to Polio Survivors by Rotary Club of Naraguta, Jos



Rotary Club of Port Harcourt South Keep at zero awareness



Imo State Roctartors walked against polio to commemorate 2022 World Polio Day



Radio enlightenment programme by members R.C. Ibadan Oritamefa



Participants at the District 9142 PolioPlus Seminar



Polio Beauty Contest, Courtesy Rotaract Club of Omole Golden, D9110

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WE WISH YOU A

**MERRY  
CHRISTMAS**

AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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