



POLIO STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

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Contribute Participate Change



**ADVOCACY VISIT TO HIS EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT BOLA TINUBU, BY THE ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT GORDON R. MCINALLY AND SOME ROTARY LEADERS**



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The recent visit of Rotary International President, Gordon McInally, to Nigeria has marked a significant milestone in the battle to assist polio eradication in Nigeria.

Rotary International has long been recognized as a driving force behind the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), leading with unwavering commitment and strategic vision. Ours has been a multifaceted role in the GPEI. Advocacy, financial support, partnership, community engagement—Rotary's contributions span across every aspect of the eradication initiative. With billions of dollars donated since 1985 and a steadfast commitment to mobilizing resources, Rotary has been instrumental in sustaining GPEI's operations and driving progress towards eradication.

But our impact goes beyond just making financial contributions. It's also about leadership—steering the course, rallying support, and inspiring action. President McInally's visit to Nigeria exemplifies this leadership in action, as he personally delivered a generous donation of another \$7 million towards disease eradication and prevention efforts to coincide with his visit to President Bola Tinubu. This infusion of support strengthens Nigeria's capacity to monitor, respond to, and

ultimately prevent the spread of polio. This underscores Rotary's unwavering commitment to global health and its pivotal role in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).³

This latest contribution adds to Rotary's long-standing support for Nigeria's healthcare system. Earlier this year, Rotary donated \$14 million through the World Health Organization (WHO) to Nigeria specifically for technical assistance on polio surveillance. These funds are crucial in bolstering the country's capacity to monitor and respond to potential outbreaks, ensuring that progress towards polio eradication is sustained.

Rotary International, as a leading non-governmental humanitarian service organization with a global membership of over 1.5 million, brings invaluable expertise and resources to support Nigeria's healthcare goals. Our involvement in Nigeria extends beyond financial contributions. Rotarians actively participate in the implementation of projects, collaborating closely with governmental and non-governmental partners at all levels.

Rotary's support for Nigeria exemplifies its broader commitment to the GPEI. By investing in polio surveillance, vaccination campaigns, and capacity building, Rotary International contributes to the collective effort to eradicate polio globally.

Rotary continues to be at the forefront of global health initiatives, bringing us closer to a world free from the threat of polio, the path seems clearer than ever before. It's a journey marked by challenges and triumphs, but with Rotary at the helm, the destination is within reach. Together, we stand on the brink of history, united in our resolve to end polio and build a healthier, more resilient world for generations to come.



Time to do it differently

Since the commencement of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1998, we have been able to achieve a lot. We have vaccinated well over 3 billion individuals, prevented nearly 20 million cases of paralysis, saved a lot of lives and restricted wild polio to just a couple of countries in a single epidemiological belt. We have done 99.9 percent of the job but the last mile has consistently proven to be the most difficult one. Ours is a story of great achievements but also one of missed opportunities and missed targets.

We already know that the target we set for ourselves that 2023 would be the year for us to interrupt the transmission of all forms of poliomyelitis has been missed. In 2023, there were 12 cases of wild polio globally with many more positive environmental samples from Afghanistan and Pakistan. There were also 525 cases of variant poliomyelitis globally with 87 cases coming from Nigeria. Already, in 2024 there have been 4 cases of wild polio in the world, two each coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan. There have also been 12 cases of variant polio in the world with Nigeria being responsible for 7 of them. So, clearly, the target of 2023 for interrupting transmission of all forms of polio has been missed.

We can either be sad about this, get discouraged and stop acting or we can get up, re-strategize and prepare to do things differently.

So, what are we doing differently? At the national level, the Nigeria programme has commenced the implementation of the Identify, Enumerate and Vaccinate (IEV) strategy in selected high-risk states with the greatest polio burden in the past few years. This strategy involves sending teams of enumerators into communities with high numbers of missed children, zero dose children or where cases of variant polio have been found, identifying all the vulnerable, children,

enumerating them and ensuring that none is missed for polio vaccinations while ensuring that they are also registered for routine immunization. The Nigeria programme is also ensuring that programme resources are identified and deployed ahead of campaigns with senior supervisors being deployed weeks ahead of implementation to support states in implementing quality campaigns. Efforts are also being made to improve the quality of social mobilization and demand creation activities in the states with special focus being placed on identifying, line-listing and resolving all cases of child absence and noncompliance during the rounds and in between the rounds. We already know that the reason for these cases of variant polio is that we have been implementing suboptimal polio campaigns even if the data from these campaigns has remained fantastic. The focus is henceforth shifting from just data to ensuring that we hold qualitative campaigns without missing children even as we continue to strengthen routine immunization in the country. We will be demanding more accountability from everyone involved including the government and development partners.

So, what are you as a member of Rotary International going to do differently? Are you going to remain unresponsive to calls to come out and support immunization activities? Are you going to be passive or are you going to drive your Rotary Club to be more committed to polio eradication activities? Are you going to increase your financial commitment to polio eradication and improve your contribution to the Rotary Foundation's Polio Fund? What will you be doing differently to help us achieve our promise of a polio-free world?

These are the questions we need to answer as Rotarians, knowing very well that to continue acting in the same manner while expecting a different set of results is delusional. 2024 is the year to do things differently. Will you join us?

Rtn Olugbenga Olayiwole
Editor PolioStop



RtN Olugbenga Olayiwole
National Programme Coordinator

Identifying, Enumerating and Vaccinating Children to Improve Population Immunity

Nigeria was declared wild poliovirus (WPV) free in mid 2020. This led to the subsequent wild poliovirus-free certification of the Africa region by the Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) in August 2020. This was after Nigeria had completed 4 years without a case of WPV being found within its

borders and having certified other stringent requirements set out for achieving certification. The last cases of the wild poliovirus were found in the security-challenged state of Borno in the northeast of the country.

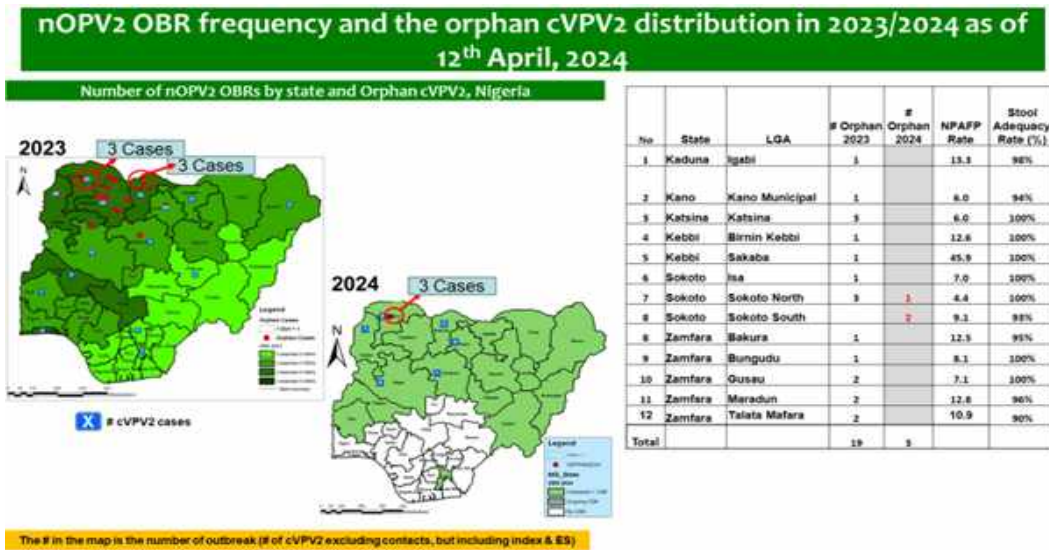
Regardless of this status, the country has been in the midst of sporadic outbreaks of circulating variant polio virus type 2 (cVPV2). The science tells us that if a population is fully immunized against polio, it will be protected against both the wild and vaccine strains of the virus. However, wherever there is an under-immunized population, there will be enough susceptible children for excreted polioviruses derived from the vaccine to begin circulating within the population. If these viruses are able to circulate for a prolonged period of time, they can mutate and reacquire neurovirulence. The lower the level of population immunity, the longer these viruses are able to circulate, mutate and spread within the population leaving children afflicted and families affected by the devastating effects of the virus.

The global coronavirus pandemic which led to the cessation of both routine and supplemental immunization activities in Nigeria coupled with increasing inaccessibility due to insecurity in many parts of the country and a global vaccine shortage which made us unable to respond to outbreaks in an expedited manner led to the creation of a large pool of susceptible children in several under-immunized populations across the country. As a result, the number of cases of circulating variant of poliomyelitis has increased significantly in recent years. In 2021 there were 419 cases of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) resulting from infection with circulating

variant poliovirus. In 2022 there were 48 of such cases and in 2023 there were 87 confirmed AFP cases resulting from cVPV2. Already in 2024 Nigeria has confirmed 8 AFP cases resulting from cVPV2 infection with the most recent date of onset on February 13 2024 from Safana LGA of Katsina State. In addition, the country has had 12 cVPV2 isolates from environmental samples with the most recent date of collection on February 20, 2024 from Sokoto North LGA of Sokoto State. These viruses are proof that the country is yet to interrupt the transmission of the virus within the country but more importantly they show us that children are still being infected and families devastated by the consequences of these infections.

The Nigeria polio programme is currently in the process of implementing the second outbreak response round using the nOPV2 vaccine in 18 states of the Federation already. There were no breakthrough states in the 21 days following the first outbreak response campaign so there is optimism that we can finally get ahead of the virus with the implementation of a high quality second outbreak response round. In addition, the Nigeria Polio Programme is adopting a new strategy of identifying, enumerating and vaccinating (IEV) eligible children in the high-risk areas which have persisted as the sources of circulating variant poliovirus in the country. This strategy is already in its pilot stage in states of the northwest where the country has experienced intractable transmission. We expect that it will provide a database of children who had erstwhile been missed during vaccinations and as such remained unprotected and help us in reaching them and getting them vaccinated. This is the only way we can guarantee optimal herd immunity in these communities where the virus has persisted.

We are highly optimistic that with this new IEV strategy as well as other innovative and purposeful interventions in addressing issues of vaccine hesitancy and noncompliance, 2024 will be the year that we finally put a stop to the scourge of circulating variant polio in Nigeria.



Sultan of Sokoto, Gov Lawal Vow To End the Polio Virus



To address the recent rise in new cases of circulating variant poliovirus in Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi States, the Governor of Zamfara State, Alhaji Dauda Lawal and the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Saad Abubakar have vowed to rally round traditional rulers, religious leaders and other stakeholders to support the efforts of the Government and developmental partner agencies to end the deadly disease this year.

Governor Lawal and Sultan Abubakar made the vow during the renewed advocacy campaign against the poliovirus led by the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA), Dr Muyi Aina.

The Governor said his administration has embarked on the vigorous strengthening of the State Primary Healthcare system, blocking financial leakages and capacity building of healthcare personnel to ensure total eradication of poliovirus in the state.

Governor Lawal also stated that he was spearheading a strategic security meeting of the three State Governors of Kebbi, Zamfara and Sokoto and promised to use the platform to engineer collective action against the rising cases of circulating poliovirus in the three states.

He commended the concerted efforts of National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) and the development partners in their

concerted effort to rid Nigeria of the circulating variant poliovirus. He also used the visit to commission the newly constructed Polio Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Gusau which is dedicated to the war against the poliovirus.

During the visit of the advocacy team to His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, Sultan Abubakar emphasized the strategic role of traditional rulers and religious leaders and described them as the best institutions well-positioned to help win the war against the poliovirus because they are closer and more trusted by the people.

In his words, "We strongly commend your efforts NPHCDA Executive Director, Dr Muyi Aina and development partners. We assure you of our 100 per cent support. We just need a push and we will win the war against the poliovirus by the Grace of God with your total support and support from the state governments." "We are saying Polio pack your bags and go."

Earlier, the Executive Director of the NPHCDA, Dr Muyi Aina said his agency and development partners have put in place strategic plans such as enumeration of unvaccinated children, strengthening PHC System, supporting state governments to provide some basic amenities in vaccine-hesitant communities and vigorous sensitization campaigns to ensure that the poliovirus was completely eliminated from the country this year.

Dr Aina thanked Governor Lawal and Sultan Abubakar for their strong leadership roles and commitment towards the total eradication of the circulating variant poliovirus.

The 4-day advocacy campaign against the poliovirus embarked upon by NPHCDA and development partners including Rotary International, visited the three northwest states, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi, currently being ravaged by the circulating variant poliovirus.



FG, WHO, Rotary International synergise on polio eradication

Mr. McInally highlighted Nigeria's support for global polio eradication efforts and polio-free status, having been declared a polio-free nation in 2020.



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu says the Federal Government of Nigeria will continue to partner with reputable organizations such as Rotary International in ongoing efforts to eradicate all forms of polio and reduce the prevalence of maternal and infant mortality in the country.

President Tinubu, who received Rotary International President, Gordon McInally, his wife Heather, Rotary's Polio Ambassador to Nigeria, Sir Emeka Offor, and other notable Rotarians at the State House in Abuja, commended the organization for its various interventions in the country's health sector, including a new grant of 14 million dollars to enable the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide technical assistance to the government of Nigeria on polio surveillance.

The President said it was a national obligation for the government to prioritize the welfare of Nigerians, support their advancement, and ensure that they were not hindered by any form of disease.

"It is a joy to have the President of Rotary International, his wife, Sir Emeka Offor, and other Rotarians in our midst. Thank you for representing a great commitment to humanity. Thank you for the job you are doing. Rotary International has a good reputation for social commitment, not only for the leading role it played in the eradication of polio in Africa but also in addressing other diseases.

You have saved countless mothers and children. You are also contributing to the growth of local economies by helping nations combat unforeseen diseases and deaths. You are doing a great job in the protection of the environment and other areas of humanitarian commitment," President Tinubu said.

The President of Rotary International, Gordon McInally, while lauding President Tinubu's longstanding reputation for supporting healthcare interventions for disadvantaged Nigerians throughout his public service career, offered honorary Rotary membership to him in recognition of his past and present efforts to rapidly enhance Nigeria's health sector.

"The polio eradication campaign has been our flagship programme for many years. Over the years, we have been working on it, and we saw Nigeria declared polio-free a few years ago.

We have reduced the incidence from over 350,000 cases of polio worldwide every year to only 12 cases last year, on the Afghan-Pakistan border. So, we are on the verge of eradicating polio from the world, but we could not have achieved this without the active support of Nigeria. We thank you very much for everything that you have done.

We must remain vigilant and continue our efforts in this field. Rotarians here in Nigeria are tirelessly working to ensure that children worldwide do not suffer from any crippling disease that can even take their lives," he said.

Mr. McInally further pledged that the organisation would continue to collaborate with the Nigerian government on programmes to reduce infant and maternal mortality.

Nigeria has been making giant strides in the fight against wild polio, thereby attracting the commendation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) for the implementation of auto-visual acute flaccid paralysis detection and reporting.

Nigeria earned three different awards for facing the disease head-on.

Rotary International also donated \$14 million in grants to the WHO to support surveillance activities in the efforts to eradicate polio in Nigeria. This grant has recently been supported by yet another grant of \$7.5 million to UNICEF to support the deployment of technical capacity for outbreak responses in Nigeria.



I don't want children to be affected by poliovirus like I was

My name is Farid, and I am 35 years old. I live in the Bati Kot district of Nangarhar province in Afghanistan. I contracted polio when I was three years old. The symptoms started with a fever, then a weakness in my left leg and weakness in my left hand. While strength eventually returned to my hand, my leg remained weak. My parents took me to the doctor. After medical examinations, the doctors said that I had polio and there is no cure. When my parents heard that I could not be treated, they took me home.

Growing up with a paralyzed leg created many challenges for me. I couldn't play with other children but I never lost hope. I fought to live my life like other children in my community. I started attending school, then completed my studies in computer science. My parents were always supportive, especially in my studies and building my career.

In my personal life, I also encountered challenges. When I wanted to get married, I faced rejection four times from different families. They did not want to marry their daughters to me because they said I have a disability and cannot work. I'm happy my wife's family accepted me and I now have four beautiful children. I make sure to vaccinate my children at every opportunity. I don't want them to be affected by poliovirus like I was. I also encourage my neighbors to vaccinate their children whenever they have the opportunity.

My daily life is challenging and I face many obstacles. There are certain tasks and jobs that my relatives, friends, and neighbors can

do, but I cannot. I have some land in my village where I grow things like wheat and corn to help feed my family. Because my paralysed leg prevents me from cultivating my land, I pay someone to do this for me. This often brings me disappointment.

Because I know firsthand the danger of poliovirus and how it can affect the lives of children and their families, I joined the polio eradication programme in 2017. I work as a supervisor, and my job is to train vaccination teams under my supervision. I prepare them for vaccination campaigns, make sure they receive enough vaccines and equipment, monitor their work and report their achievements at the end of each day during the campaign. On campaign days, I go out and make sure all is working well for the teams, that they have everything they need and that all children in my area receive the polio vaccine.

For those who do not want to vaccinate their children, I go to their houses and tell them that the only way to protect their children from poliovirus is by vaccinating them with two drops of polio vaccine. I also tell them that if you don't vaccinate your children, they could be paralysed like me. I share my personal story with them and challenges that I face in daily life. In our village, we used to have many vaccine refusals, but now they are few because I take the time to talk with parents and carers and explain my situation.

Even when we are not having vaccination campaigns, I talk with people and raise awareness about poliovirus and the importance of polio vaccine. We must vaccinate our children against polio at every opportunity. Polio is a terrible, crippling disease and we cannot let any child be paralysed.

Source: Polioeradication.org

VISIT OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL



Arrival of the RI President Gordon and his Spouse Heather McInally to the Polio Office, Abuja



RI President Gordon McInally presenting the book SO THEY CAN WALK to President Bola Tinubu



Trustee Elect Past District Governor Ijeoma Pearl vaccinating a child



RI President's interaction with the Rotary Leaders at the Polio Office



RI President Gordon McInally Vaccinating a child during the symbolic immunization in Abuja.



RI President's spouse, Heather McInally vaccinating a child during the symbolic immunization in Abuja.

PRESIDENT TO NIGERIA



From Right: PDG Joshua Hassan, RI President Gordon, Sir Emeka Ofor, Heather McInally, RI Director Patrick Chisang and Rotarian Victor Umeh



NNPPC Chairman PDG Joshua Hassan giving Polio Update



RI President's spouse, Heather McInally giving pluses to a child during the symbolic immunization in Abuja



Traditional dancers crew welcoming the RI President



RI President Gordon McInally cross section with Rotarians



RI President Gordon and his spouse Heather McInally with Rotarian Khadijat Yusuf.

Rotary International donates \$14 million to sustain Polio Eradication efforts in Nigeria



Committed to ensuring that every child is safe from the paralysis caused by poliovirus, Rotary International has donated a \$14 million grant to the government of Nigeria to support polio surveillance activities and halt the spread of all forms of poliovirus across the country.

The grant which will be executed through the World Health Organization (WHO) will help to keep the country's foot on the pedal through polio surveillance activities to sustain the gains achieved on wild poliovirus eradication and work towards eradicating the Circulating Variant Poliovirus (cVPV2) from Nigeria.

Welcoming the new grant, WHO Country Representative, Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo, affirmed that "Surveillance is key to achieving health security".

Dr Mulombo appreciated the minister for the confidence put in WHO to work alongside the government, other stakeholders and partners to achieve the health agenda as depicted in the renewed hope and the new health sector, renewal, and investment initiative which has health security as one of its key components.

Expressing gratitude to Rotary International for the grant, he said the eradication of all forms of poliovirus in Nigeria is key when discussing health security in the country. He said "I commit the organization to making the best use of this funding and ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability and safeguard

that the use of the funds do not give rise to any form of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse against the community we serve.

The grant will boost work on polio surveillance until Nigeria is through the goal of eradicating all forms of poliovirus. Work is going on to get rid of CVPVD2, and surveillance is a key component of the intervention".

Speaking in Abuja, during the symbolic presentation of the grant the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Professor Muhammad Ali Pate, said the support for polio surveillance will improve health security and strengthen Nigeria's ability to timely detect and respond to other infectious diseases that could threaten national and global security.

The minister commended Rotary International for their consistent and amazing show of solidarity in Nigeria and globally.

He noted that their contribution, support and partnership and those of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners, including WHO was instrumental to Nigeria successfully interrupting the transmission of wild polio virus in the country.

"The polio success story in Nigeria is one thing we can collectively say we have done as a country. This serves as a backdrop for Nigeria's effort to reinvigorate the health sector to deliver what is key to the health and well-being of our population that is why the President in December launched the health sector renewal investment initiative to save lives, to use physical and financial gains to produce health for all Nigerians and improve health outcomes.



Polio resources strengthening health systems through integration

Integration involves using polio tools, staff, expertise, and other resources to deliver important health interventions alongside polio vaccines – from measles vaccines and other essential immunizations to birth registration, counselling on breastfeeding, hand soap and more. It also includes incorporating polio vaccines into other planned health interventions when possible, delivering more services with fewer resources.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to integration. From the remaining endemic countries to countries affected by variant poliovirus outbreaks, activities must be country-driven and adapted to fit the unique challenges and needs of different communities.

In Afghanistan, supplementary immunization activities are essential to vaccinating children. However, in the context of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and extremely fragile health system, integrating polio efforts with other health services has helped the program reach even more children.

Endemic transmission of WPV1 in Afghanistan has been restricted to the east region. Remaining pockets of inaccessible, unvaccinated children amid a broader humanitarian crisis pose challenges to stopping the virus for good. Today, more than two-thirds of the country's population is in serious need of food, clean water, functioning sanitation facilities, and basic health services.

Building upon a strategy that has been in place for several years, ongoing collaboration with humanitarian organizations has demonstrated the value of integrating polio efforts with other health needs in the country. In 2023, the program began engagement with ten humanitarian partners operating in 12 high-risk provinces for polio across Afghanistan. Through these collaborations, the program and its partners have mapped and supported communities that lack basic health services, which has helped better identify and reach children still vulnerable to polio.

Between January and October 2023, more than 1 million polio vaccinations have been delivered through the engagement with humanitarian partners. Through this effort, it's estimated that more than 30,000 children have been vaccinated who would have otherwise remained inaccessible to the polio program during its standard campaigns¹.

WHO has done a great job in the area of surveillance, and can do more with the resources you have provided," he said. Recount that Nigeria was certified wild poliovirus-free in August 2020, however, the country is still facing the challenge of cVDPV2. Poliovirus is very contagious; a single case constitutes an outbreak of international concern.

Despite this progress, the poliovirus surveillance data has also shown that the virus continues to circulate in some states of the North-West zone, notably Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi and Katsina which are now referred to as the Axis of Intractable Transmission.

In his remark, Joshua Hassan, Chairman, Nigeria Rotary Polio Plus Committee said the organization is ready to support Nigeria to eradicate all forms of poliovirus in the country. Mr Hassan while presenting the cheques to the Coordinating Minister explained that the grants, facilitated through WHO are intended for surveillance and to offer technical assistance to the ministry in its polio eradication initiatives.

Mr Hassan said Rotary Foundation Trustees, approved in July 2023 a grant of US\$2,675,000.00 to support Polio eradication in Nigeria through WHO Nigeria for Surveillance to track CVPV2.

"An additional grant of US\$ 4,514,785 dated October 2023 was again approved by Rotary Foundation Trustees for surveillance by WHO and finally on the 10 of January 2024 yet another grant was approved to the sum of US\$ 6,848,002 for technical assistance making a total of US\$ 14,037,787

Additionally, Rotary is committed through the Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee to support polio eradication and routine immunization in Nigeria, he said.

In Somalia, children are at high risk of encountering and spreading the poliovirus due to longstanding security challenges and a lack of health infrastructure, particularly in the south-central part of the country. As a result, the country has historically low routine immunization levels and faces the world's longest-running outbreak of type 2 variant poliovirus.

To help address these challenges, in October 2022, the GPEI partnered with the World Food Program Innovation Hub, Save the Children, Acasus, and World Vision's CORE group, amongst others, to launch the Far-Reaching Integrated Delivery (FARID) partnership. The partnership's primary goal is to stop poliovirus transmission and reduce deaths from preventable diseases and malnutrition.

To do this, the polio program and its partners have established a series of health camps across 20 districts in the country that provide families with vaccinations for polio and other infectious diseases, maternal health services, nutrition screening and supplements, and primary health consultations². These camps are tailored to address each community's specific needs and aim to re-establish sustainable health systems that will continue providing primary health services on a routine basis.

Between October 2022 and June 2023, FARID partners have visited 136 high-risk communities in Somalia, reaching almost 30,000 people; vaccinating more than 8,000 children, 6,000 of which had never received any kind of vaccine; and conducting over 10,000 maternal health and 4,000 nutrition consultations³.

In Pakistan, during the first two phases of the new Reaching the Unreached (RUR) initiative in July and September 2023, almost 27,000 children received previously missed routine vaccinations across 69 high risk areas of southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while 269,000 children received the oral polio vaccine (OPV) at the same time. Protection against other vaccine-preventable diseases also received a boost – from a 17% increase in coverage for the anti-tuberculosis BCG vaccine to a 55% rise for the second dose of the measles-rubella vaccine.

Nigeria has experienced some of the largest outbreaks of type 2 variant poliovirus (cVDPV2), making up almost two-thirds of all global cVDPV2 cases in 2021. The northern part of the country is also the largest exporter of the virus, accounting

for 27% of all global detections. However, thanks to incredible efforts from the Nigerian health authorities, supported by the GPEI, polio cases have dropped by 85% since 2021. Yet, insecurity in the North, parents refusing to vaccinate their children, and the more than 2.2 million children who have never received a vaccine of any kind all pose serious challenges to protecting every child from polio in Nigeria. In Nigeria, routine immunization services are often incorporated into the polio program's vaccination activities, and where possible, polio vaccines have been included in the country's plans to intensify its routine immunization services. In August 2023, the polio program and the Government of Nigeria decided to intensify routine immunization efforts through a mass vaccination campaign in the northern state of Niger. Alongside polio vaccines, nearly 43,000 zero-dose children were reached for the first time with the pentavalent vaccine, which protects children from five life-threatening diseases – Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Hepatitis B and Hib. The program's volunteer community mobilizers also promote the importance of routine immunization and other healthcare to each household they visit, including educating pregnant women about prenatal care and facilitating the registration of new births. Vaccinators also commonly deliver other lifesaving interventions during polio campaigns. During nationwide campaigns in May and June 2023, nearly 3 million children received vitamin A supplements and more than 200,000 children were checked for malnutrition across the country thanks to the polio program and its workforce. It is also common for polio workers in Nigeria to distribute long-lasting insecticide treated nets to families during campaigns to protect against mosquito-borne diseases like malaria. Outside of campaigns, the program has helped the Vaccine Network for Disease Control (VNDC) pilot test the Whole Family Approach at multiple primary healthcare centers in the country. This approach means giving everyone in the family everything they need in one visit, from COVID-19 vaccines and chronic disease screenings to essential immunizations and nutrition check-ups. These combined services incentivize families to visit health centers and receive vaccines for diseases like polio by addressing multiple health issues at once to protect children and their caregivers.

Source: polioeradication.org



WHO grants prequalification to innovative polio vaccine, nOPV2

In late December 2023, the World Health Organization issued its first-ever prequalification approval for a vaccine being used under its Emergency Use Listing (EUL) regulatory pathway – novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2). Since rollout of this next-generation vaccine began in March 2021, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) has administered nearly 1 billion doses of nOPV2 across 35 countries, protecting millions of children against illness and paralysis. Prequalification will enable additional countries to access the vaccine more easily for more sustainable response to outbreaks of type 2 variant poliovirus (cVDPV2).

“This is a historic milestone for polio eradication and for public health,” said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. “Novel oral polio vaccine type 2 has blazed a trail for other new vaccines that address critical health emergencies, and its use demonstrates the utility of the EUL mechanism in helping to rapidly get new products to where they're needed most.”

WHO EUL is reserved for the use of yet-to-be-licensed vaccines, medicines and diagnostic tools during public health emergencies like polio outbreaks. Following rigorous assessments of existing quality, safety and efficacy data from completed clinical trials, the pathway enables expedited availability of products to the places impacted by these emergencies. The vaccine's manufacturer, Bio Farma Indonesia, has been instrumental in ensuring supply and enabling nOPV2 to earn full licensure from the Indonesian regulatory authority, Badan POM. WHO Prequalification (PQ) is the final step of the process, allowing for streamlined regulatory approval for nOPV2 use in countries that need it.

“This key step illustrates how innovation can help protect children against the variant poliovirus type 2, with thanks to the support of donors and partners, and the commitment of governments and community health workers,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “UNICEF is committed to helping ensure the safe and adequate supply of vaccines to countries, while working with communities to build trust in vaccines. We need to keep going till we reach every child, and eradicate polio once and for all.”

To date, nOPV2 has been used in 35 countries under EUL, predominantly in the African region which is most affected by cVDPV2 outbreaks. Throughout its clinical development and field use, nOPV2 has proven to be as safe to use and effective at stopping outbreaks as its predecessor, monovalent type 2 oral vaccine (mOPV2), but, importantly, is more genetically stable. After nearly

three years of use, estimates show that nOPV2 is 80% less likely to seed new variant polio outbreaks, making it the tool of choice to stop these outbreaks for good.

Nigeria has played an outsized role in nOPV2 rollout in the leadup to WHO Prequalification, administering nearly half a billion doses to children across the country to date. The vaccine has helped bring about an 85% reduction in variant poliovirus cases in Nigeria since 2021.

Development of the vaccine began in 2011 through a consortium of experts led by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, including the UK National Institute for Biological Standards and Controls (NIBSC), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US-CDC), the US Food and Drug Administration, PATH and the University of California at San Francisco.

“Supporting the development of new vaccines is one of the most important investments we can make to protect people against preventable diseases like polio,” said Mark Suzman, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “With easier access to nOPV2 for more countries, this vaccine will keep even more children safe in areas still grappling with poliovirus. We look forward to working with partners across sectors to support more ground-breaking innovations.”

While nOPV2 has played a key part in rapidly reducing the number of new cases of variant poliomyelitis, its success, like any polio vaccine, depends on the ability to rapidly implement high-quality immunization campaigns that reach every child.

To overcome the final challenges that remain in polio eradication, the GPEI is finding new ways to access children living in hard-to-reach areas, promote community acceptance of vaccines, and improve early detection and response to outbreaks. These efforts are being prioritized in the places where children are at the highest risk of encountering and spreading the virus.

“It is critical to protect all children against polio with timely administration of vaccines. Along with our global partners, CDC is committed to ensuring rapid detection of type 2 polio outbreaks and response with the novel oral vaccine,” said Dr. Mandy Cohen, Director of the US-CDC.

A prequalified nOPV2 will help to make important headway against cVDPV2 outbreaks, and with renewed support from global partners, donors and leaders of polio-affected countries to fully implement the program's strategy, we can stop all forms of polio for good.

Source: polioeradication.org



Fire guts Gombe Central Medical Store

the urgency of revitalizing the facility in view of its historical role as a key distribution centre for medical supplies in the region.

Commissioner for Health, Dr Habu Dahiru, while conducting the governor round, revealed that the inferno obliterated vaccines valued at over five billion naira, including 2 million doses recently received from UNICEF and Rotary International for distribution across the state's local government areas.

The extensive damage also included polio vaccine, routine immunization supplies, cold rooms, ultra-cold chain equipment for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, maternal and child health equipment, nutritional items, family planning commodities, and special equipment for primary healthcare centres and maternity.

Refrigerators, cylinders, air conditioners, and motorcycles were among the numerous items consumed by the fire.

The over 60-year-old cold store, previously used to house COVID-19 vaccines in 2020, played a significant role as a holding place for vaccines destined for onward distribution to other Northeastern states.

Remarkably, the Gombe State health team working with the NPHCDA, the National Polio Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) was able to implement a success outbreak response in the weeks following this incident. The Cold Store has since been rebuilt and restored with vaccine cold rooms donated by development partners currently being test run.

An early morning inferno recently gutted the Gombe Central Medical Store, a critical healthcare facility housing over two million doses of polio vaccine and various essential medical consumables and equipment.

The fire incident which occurred just before the commencement of the March outbreak response round destroyed vaccines and consumables which were valued at over N5 billion and was a serious setback ahead of the house to house campaign.

The Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, who immediately inspected the charred remains of the State Mega Medical Cold Store facility, stressed the urgent need to address the catastrophic aftermath of the fire outbreak.

Governor Inuwa appealed to donor agencies and health sector stakeholders to come to the aid of Gombe, emphasizing the facility's role in supporting healthcare not only in the state but across the entire Northeastern subregion.

The governor stated, "This facility was at some point the center for drugs distribution to the entire northeast region, not only Gombe State.

"Prompt intervention by the Federal government, development partners such as WHO, UNICEF and other critical stakeholders will make a significant impact in strengthening our healthcare system."

He directed the Commissioner for works and transport to swiftly move his technical team and provide immediate recommendations, stressing



Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Seaport Makes Generous Donation of Mobile Aids to Polio Survivors on its 4th Anniversary Celebration



Polio Survivors Sokoto state, takes to the streets, in support of the OBR



His Royal Highness Alhaji (DR) Halliru Ndanusa Yahaya OON Emir of Shonga, Kwara State administered a polio vaccine to a child, emphasizing the importance of immunization against polio.



Past District Governor Joshua Hassan, decorating Professor Ali Pate, the Coordinating Minister of Finance and Social Welfare with the End Polio Pin



Flag-off ceremony held at the Palace of Oloko of Oko, Irepodun LGA, Kwara State, His Royal highness Oba Victor Olaoye personally vaccinated a child, emphasizing the critical importance of polio immunization

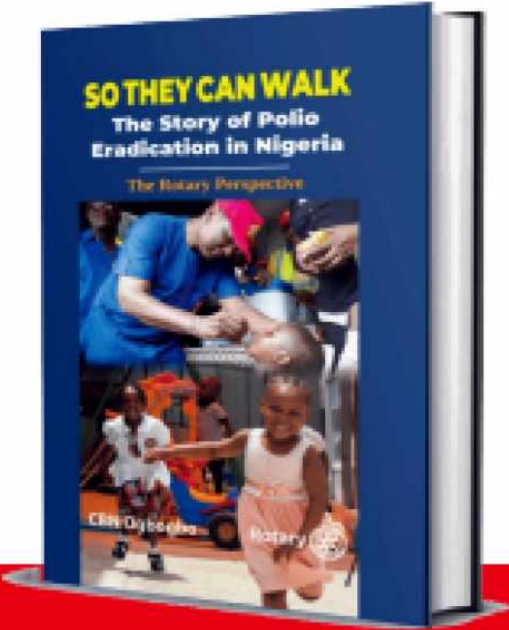


Professor Aliyu Junaidu Wazirin, ceremoniously hosted Sokoto State flag to mark the commencement of march 2024 Outbreak response

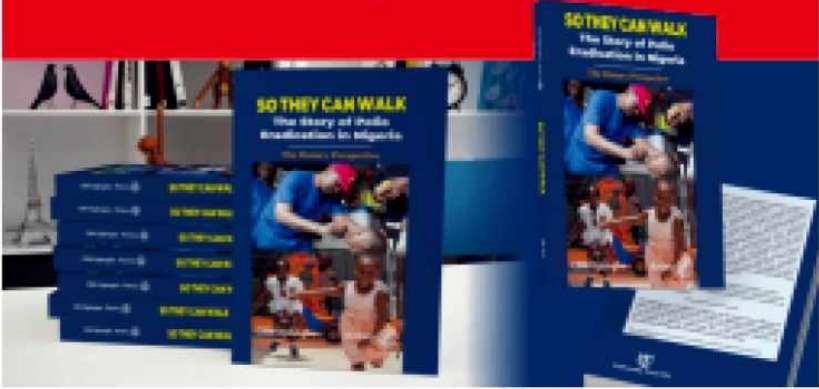


The Chairman of Ibadan north West Local Government Area Alh. Abdulrahman O. Adepoju and the health Local Govt. Authority (HLGA) visited Ajoke International School to administer polio vaccinations to children, highlighting the critical importance of polio immunization

POLIO STOP



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