



# POLIO STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

Contribute Participate Change

SEPTEMBER 2024



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## Rewarding our frontline Polio Workers



At Rotary International and especially through the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC) we have maintained our role as a founding and pivotal partner in the global fight against polio ever since the launch of Rotary's PolioPlus program in 1985 and the launch of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1988. We have supported surveillance activities, procured vaccines, adorned vaccination teams with aprons, and generally been a force for good within the partnership across the world. One of the ways we have also been very impactful, which usually does not get the recognition it deserves is in motivating and appreciating the dedicated teams and individuals working towards the eradication of poliomyelitis in every part of the world.

These workers, often in high-risk areas, are the backbone of the polio eradication effort. Rotary International and the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee recognizes their hard work and dedication and this is why we instituted the Polio Frontline Field Workers Awards which have been held annually except for the year when the COVID pandemic made it impossible to do so.

We constantly strive to recognize our Polio Eradication Champions who continuously strive to make significant efforts to polio eradication with their time, talent and treasure. We recognize those who go above and beyond the call of duty and strive harder than others to ensure that polio is kept far away from our children. We offer a small gift with a plaque to memorialize their contributions and to

encourage them to do even more. In addition, we continue to invest financial resources in supporting them with the necessary tools to continue their good work which has been critical in achieving and sustaining the many gains we have made in our eradication efforts. These awards have traditionally been held in our focal states and at the national level but this year, in spite of the security threats, we decided to take the awards to the critical high-risk states in Nigeria who have the highest burden of this disease. We were pleased to host these awards in Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina States and we are hopeful that these polio workers and others will be spurred to do even more.

We believe that rewarding polio workers motivates them to continue their vital work, acknowledging the challenges they face and the progress made towards a polio-free world.

We hope that our little efforts at recognizing them serve to inspire them to continue to deliver great service but also others to join the fight against polio, ultimately bringing us closer to a world where no child suffers from this debilitating disease.

We hope that their morale is boosted as a result and they are encouraged to continue their efforts in the face of daunting challenges and threats. We also recognize their sacrifice and those of others who may have paid the highest price.

We understand that the last mile is usually the hardest and loneliest one in any marathon race, we understand that there are others who may be tempted to abandon the fight as the pressures mount but when we gave our word to gift the next generation a world free of polio, we meant it. And we are Rotary International, we always keep our word. We are thankful to have partners who have also remained resolute and have even joined us in this effort to recognize the workers who have given and continue to give so much to polio eradication.

To everyone of you, on behalf of Rotary International and the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC), I say thank you.



## Honour well deserved

It was not meant to take this long to achieve Polio Eradication. The idea was that if we all worked together and everyone behaved the way they were supposed to, we would be done with Polio by 1995. That didn't happen. Then we targeted the dawn of the new century as the perfect time to achieve eradication. That also didn't happen. In 2025, it will be forty years since the PolioPlus program of Rotary International began and even though we have come a long way and achieved several important milestones along the way, we still have not been able to totally eradicate polio.

A lot has changed since Rotary first birthed this idea of a world without poliomyelitis. We have achieved regional elimination of the virus in all but one region. We have also eradicated 2 strains of the virus from natural existence. First with the successful eradication of type 2 wild poliovirus in 1999 and again with the eradication of type 3 wild poliovirus in 2020. We have successfully limited the virus to a single epidemic belt of endemicity in 2 countries, down from 125 countries at the commencement of the fight against polio. New partners like the Gates Foundation, Gavi the vaccine alliance, Dangote Foundation Sir Emeka Ofor Foundation and others have joined us while some other donors have grown tired and bailed on us but we soldier on. We have also suffered setbacks, such as is the case with the escalating crisis of the variant poliomyelitis in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. And some of our workers have made the supreme sacrifice with life and limb in this fight against Polio.

At the center of our fight has been the thousands of frontline workers and administrators who have been dogged and persistent in trying to ensure that polio vaccines are made available and accessible to

children in every part of the world. In Nigeria, doing this has become more fraught with danger as the country has experienced expanding insecurity in many parts of the country, particularly in Northern Nigeria. We already know how devious and insidious a virus the poliovirus is, seeking easy targets of opportunity, particularly with vulnerable children in security compromised and inaccessible areas and in recent years, this has manifested, first in the BAY (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) States and lately in the AIT states (Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina) plus Kano States we have come to call Axis of Intractable Transmission- states where we have had almost continuous isolation of the virus in humans and in the environment. It is our frontline workers who have taken the fight of the poliovirus in these parts and helped to ensure that the country is not overwhelmed. Indeed, in Zamfara State we have now witnessed almost a full year without the isolation of variant poliomyelitis. To appreciate the contribution of gallant and exceptional field workers, Rotary International, through the NNPPC recently organized award ceremonies in the AIT states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara and Katsina where we appreciated and gave special prizes to encourage those who have demonstrated a higher sense of duty and gone above the call of duty. Even as we continue to demand improved performances from our frontline workers, including volunteer community mobilizers, ward focal persons, field volunteers, town announcers and others, we will not also fail to identify and reward those who go above and beyond in the delivery and execution of their duty. That is our commitment as Rotary and as a national PolioPlus committee.

We therefore thank them and dedicate this edition of our newsletter to them. We know that working together, we will achieve our target of interrupting all forms of transmission of the poliovirus in Nigeria and usher in a new world, a world without the scourge of polio.

# From Polio Survivor to Advocate: The Inspiring Journey of Umaima Idris



“Polio isn't just a disease; it's a thief of dreams,” Umaima says. “Parents don't always understand that the few minutes it takes to vaccinate a child can save them from a lifetime of pain and regret.”

Umaima Idris remembers a time when she could run and play like every other child in Gusau town in Zamfara State. She was not born with a disability. Yet, one summer when she was just seven years old, she began to feel a strange weakness in her legs. Days later, her legs would not move at all. The diagnosis was swift and cruel—poliomyelitis.

The pain of losing her ability to walk was one thing; the weight of seeing her dreams shatter was another. Growing up with polio was a difficult road, but Umaima's spirit remained unbroken. She never blamed anyone, but she also never forgot the cost of missing a single vaccine that could have protected her from a lifetime of struggles.

Years later, Umaima, now a mother of seven, made a vow. “None of my children will ever suffer what I went through,” she declared. True to her word, all her children were vaccinated, and fully protected from the disease that altered the course of her life.

Recently, Umaima turned her personal experience into a powerful voice for change during the Polio Outbreak Response campaign in Zamfara State. As part of the house-to-house direct vaccination team, Umaima was a force to be reckoned with, her presence embodying a message of hope and perseverance. She navigated dusty, narrow paths and knocked on countless doors, using her own story to persuade hesitant parents to vaccinate their children.

“Every time I shared my story, I could see the change in their eyes,” Umaima recalls. “It's not just statistics and data that matter. Sometimes, people need to hear from someone who has lived through it.”

For Umaima, being out in the field wasn't just about preventing new cases of polio. It was about breaking down barriers and correcting misconceptions that keep some parents from protecting their children. She knows the devastating impact of refusing the vaccine, and she urges families not to make the same mistake her parents did so many years ago.

Umaima's dedication and passion for the course did not go unnoticed. Her peers, team leaders, and even community members saw her as a symbol of resilience and a testament to the power of second chances. During the campaign, she was often found comforting crying toddlers, explaining to anxious mothers, or sharing her journey with elders who remembered her early years before the disease took hold.

Her involvement in the campaign also underscores the importance of local champions in global health efforts. As someone who understands the cultural and social nuances of the region, Umaima could connect with people in ways that no outsider could. Her presence brought a personal touch to the campaign, making the fight against polio feel like a shared responsibility.

“Seeing Umaima so active in the field was nothing short of inspiring,” noted one of the campaign coordinators. “She turned her personal tragedy into a powerful call to action. It's a reminder of why we do what we do.”

Umaima Idris's story is one of resilience, courage, and transformation. From a child crippled by polio to a fierce advocate on the frontlines of eradication, she embodies the spirit of overcoming adversity and turning pain into purpose.

For now, the streets of Zamfara are a little quieter, the recent campaign having come to a close. But Umaima's voice still echoes in the hearts of those she touched. Her message is simple but powerful: Don't let your child's future be stolen by polio. Vaccinate today.

With local heroes like Umaima Idris leading the way, the dream of a polio-free world feels closer than ever.

by Olamide Adekoya

## Personal tragedy turns a polio vaccine refusal into a vaccine advocate



My name is Lalgul, and I am the father of Ghafar. We live in south-eastern Afghanistan. I was away from home when my son got sick. I returned and found Ghafar paralysed. He was one and a half years old.

It started with a high fever, then his right leg became paralysed. My wife and I took him to the district hospital, and he underwent various treatments, but he did not recover. I am a farmer, and I didn't have enough money to take my child to Kabul for further treatments. Doctors at the provincial hospital diagnosed him with polio and told me that this virus has no cure, so we stopped visiting doctors and my son remained at home.

I have 7 children – Ghafar is the fourth. Raising a child paralysed by polio is difficult, and as parents, we must constantly take care of him. With a paralysed leg, we are always keeping an eye on him to make sure he doesn't fall. Ghafar is in first grade now and getting to school can sometimes be challenging, especially on snowy and rainy days, when he struggles to walk through the mud with his crutches. I always feel sad when I see my son unable to walk while my other children can. It hurts when people ask questions about Ghafar's condition,

especially when I am asked why I didn't vaccinate my child.

I worry about his future and how he will cope with life's challenges. Sometimes he comes home from school and tells me children were bullying him and calling him "paralysed". When I ask him to do certain tasks around the house, he struggles. Sometimes he gives up and tells me he can't, "because I am crippled".

I keep encouraging Ghafar to go to school. I want to see him go to university and complete his education. Because he is paralysed and cannot do physical work, as I do, I want Ghafar to become an educated man, have a salary and earn money with his knowledge.

My advice to parents caring for a child with polio is to be kind and understanding, fulfil their child's needs and educate their other children to be understanding.

I didn't vaccinate my son during polio vaccination campaigns or when the polio vaccine was available at the clinic. After polio paralysed Ghafar, I understood how important it is to vaccinate our children against this terrible disease. Now, I vaccinate my other children against polio at every opportunity.

I also talk to people in our village, especially those who refuse the vaccine, and tell them about the importance of the polio vaccine. I tell them that if they don't vaccinate their children, those children might be paralysed like my son.

Source: GPEI



## Canada pledges CAN \$151 million to achieve global eradication of polio and build stronger health systems worldwide

The Government of Canada continues to demonstrate its commitment and leadership in the fight to eradicate polio, announcing a new contribution of CAN \$151 million over the next three years to support the work of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). Canada's Minister of International Development, the Hon. Ahmed Hussen, formally announced Canada's next pledge to the GPEI at a Rotary regional conference in Toronto, Ontario on 20 September to an audience of Rotary club members and civic leaders from across Canada and the United States.

Canada has been a leading supporter of the global polio eradication effort since its inception and across successive governments, helping the GPEI reduce cases globally by over 99% and prevent more than 20 million cases of paralysis from polio. This most recent funding, which brings Canada's total contributions to the GPEI to more than CAN \$1 billion, will support the GPEI's ongoing efforts in immunizing 370 million children annually. Canada's overall contribution has also helped build and will ensure the continuation of increasingly important health infrastructure in some of the most vulnerable regions of the world. In addition to vaccinating children against polio, this infrastructure also delivers other essential health services, including critical surveillance and tracking systems.

"Building on Canada's leadership in global health, today's investment will strengthen our partnership with the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. By protecting children who are most at risk from this preventable disease and providing support for health workers at the forefront of this effort, we will be one step closer to eradicating polio," said Ahmed Hussen PC MP, Minister of International Development for the Government of Canada.

"Rotary members in Canada and throughout the world are thrilled to welcome this new investment to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative," said Jennifer Jones, a Canadian citizen who served as the President of Rotary International in 2022-23. "As a founding member of the GPEI, ending polio has been Rotary's top priority since the very beginning, and the Canadian government has been with us every step of the way.

With the finish line so close, every contribution to the global effort is a critical step towards a world without polio for children everywhere."

Today, polio continues to spread in some of the most challenging places in the world to deliver health services, like Gaza, where variant poliovirus recently paralyzed a child for the first time in 25 years. The final two countries where the wild poliovirus remains endemic are Afghanistan and Pakistan. The GPEI is continuing to adapt its approach to reach every child with polio vaccines and other essential health services in these and other affected countries that are challenged by setbacks in routine immunization, security threats and climate catastrophes.

"We welcome this generous contribution from the Government of Canada towards our efforts to deliver a polio-free future," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization. "These funds will help the GPEI reach communities with polio vaccines, including in some of the most marginalized populations of the world, and bring us closer to our goal of eradicating this disease once and for all."

"Canada's support to GPEI is instrumental in protecting the lives of millions of children around the world against polio," said Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF. "With the continuing commitment of our donors, and all partners in the polio program, we can deliver a world where no child has to live in fear of this disease."

Ramesh Ferris, a polio survivor, Rotary member, Global Citizen, endurance athlete, and international immunization advocate, thanked Minister Hussen with a show of appreciation from [Team End Polio](#)—a world-class roster of athletes, global leaders, and polio eradication supporters united for a polio-free future. "As a Canadian, I am thrilled to welcome Minister Hussen as a key supporter of Team End Polio," Ferris said. "Teamwork makes the dream work. By continuing to work together on the same team to end polio, our global community will see the dream of a polio-free world become a reality."

Source: GPEI

# Sokoto State and UNICEF cooperate for child health and Polio Eradication



The recent visit of the UNICEF Country Representative for Nigeria, Ms Cristian Muduante to the Governor of Sokoto State, His Excellency Alhaji Ahmed Aliyu and the First Lady, Hajia Fatima Ahmed Aliyu has led to an agreement for increased support to child nutrition in Sokoto State.

The Governor announced Sokoto State's commitment to the Child Nutrition Fund. This fund, which will be used to procure essential nutrition supplies for children emphasizing his administration's commitment to safeguarding the future of children in the state. The contribution will be matched by UNICEF, doubling the impact of the initiative. Ms. Munduate, impressed by the commitment, praised the Governor's resolve, stating, "UNICEF is proud to stand alongside Sokoto State in this critical fight against malnutrition. By combining our resources and efforts, we can make a lasting impact on the lives of children who need it the most."

In addition, the First Lady of Sokoto, Hajia Fatima Ahmed Aliyu, also expressed her deep commitment to addressing the region's polio outbreak. While meeting with Ms. Munduate, she emphasized her office's readiness to work closely with UNICEF to ensure every child is vaccinated against the debilitating disease. She reaffirmed her dedication to mobilizing religious leaders and women's groups to generate demand for birth registration, another critical issue for child welfare.

Significantly, during the visit, there was a historic gathering of Local Government Area (LGA) Chairpersons from Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States where they jointly signed a declaration to prioritize polio eradication, ensuring close monitoring of eradication activities and embedding polio prevention into their daily operations. They also promised to address the issues of noncompliance and appropriate allocation of resources to the fight against polio.

## Declaration of Commitment to Polio Eradication and the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)

We, the undersigned LGA Chairmen/Sole Administrators of Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States, commit to the following result-driven actions to support polio eradication and the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) in our LGAs:

- Facilitating swift response to polio in our LGA:**  
We commit to taking a leading role in our state's response to polio by **convening LGA Executive Council meeting within 72 hours of notification of a confirmed case**, personally chairing weekly meetings on outbreak response and endeavoring to end an outbreak within 6 months.
- Strong Leadership for Polio Eradication:**  
We will ensure the success of all polio eradication campaigns by exercising robust leadership in our LGAs, aiming for measurable results:
  - Organize **monthly community forums** with at least 80% attendance from community and religious leaders to promote awareness and commitment to immunization.
  - Dispel myths and misinformation** by organizing **polio coordination forums** to provide accurate health information through partnerships with 100% of local religious and community leaders.
  - Set up a task force** in each LGA for continuous monitoring of zero-dose cases and timely intervention.
- Lead and Drive Polio Campaigns:**  
We will take ownership of polio campaigns in our wards, ensuring full coverage and visible leadership:
  - We will **support Volunteer Community Mobilizers** in accessing access hard to reach areas in our wards and mobilize 100% households to bring the under 5 children for Polio vaccination
  - Mobilize communities** to ensure that 100% of eligible children in each ward are vaccinated during every campaign.
  - Lead polio campaign flag-offs** in person in every ward and ensure that 100% of children under 5 are reached by the end of each round.
  - Ensure 100% active participation** from ward chiefs and religious leaders in mobilization efforts before every campaign.
- Provide Actionable Feedback and Drive Solutions:**  
We commit to regularly reviewing progress, offering feedback, and implementing solutions that target zero-dose children and non-compliance:
  - Coordinate specialized outreach teams** in low-coverage wards on a monthly basis to address specific barriers to immunization.
- Overcome Non-Compliance through Targeted Community Engagement:**  
We will address vaccine hesitancy and non-compliance through direct and sustained engagement:
  - Conduct town hall meetings** in high non-compliance areas with the goal of reducing non-compliance cases by 90% within six months.
  - Work with community influencers and religious leaders** to address and resolve at least 90% of non-compliance cases within the first two quarters.

Together, we reaffirm our commitment to eradicating polio, maintaining a polio free State and ensuring every child across Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States receives life-saving polio vaccines. Our actions will contribute to a future where vaccine-preventable diseases are eliminated, and every child has access to essential health services.

### Signatures:

[Signatories for Sokoto LGAs (23 spaces)]  
 [Signatories for Kebbi LGAs (21 spaces)]  
 [Signatories for Zamfara LGAs (14 spaces)]

KEBBI STATE ALGON CHAIRMAN  
 MUHAMMAD ISMAIL AHMAD  
 AMBASSA  
 10/09/2024

SOKOTO STATE ALGON VICE CHAIRMAN  
 SA'IDU KAWALI GUMBI  
 10/09/2024

ZAMFARA STATE ALGON SECRETARY  
 Dr. ARIYU ADAMU TSUKI (PHD)  
 10/09/2024

Dr. Larai Abayn Timbwal  
 Executive Secretary  
 SSPHEDA  
 10/09/2024

MICHAEL JUNA  
 CFO  
 10/09/2024

CRISTIAN MUNDUANTE  
 UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE  
 NIGERIA

# 2024 STATE POLIO FIELD WORKERS AWARD



Kebbi State Polio Field Workers Award



Sokoto State Polio Field Workers Award



Katsina State Polio Field Workers Award



Zamfara State Polio Field Workers Award



NNPPC advocacy visit to General Manager Zumar Bakari at NTA Katsina.



NNPPC advocacy to the Commissioner for Health Kebbi State Hon Jafaru Muhammad after the Award Ceremony in Birnin Kebbi



# POLIO SEMINARS



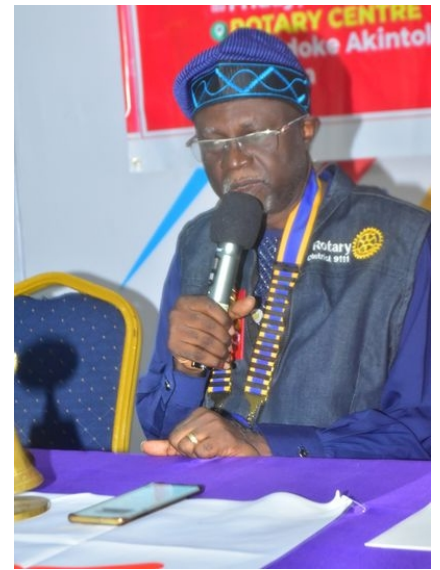
DG Olufemi Adenekan giving a brief remarks at Distict 9112 PolioPlus Seminar



Cross Section at District 9112 PolioPlus Seminar



Cross Section at District 9111 PolioPlus Seminar



The District Governor, Dr Oluwole Kukoyi giving a brief remarks at Distict 9111 PolioPlus Seminar



PDG Obafunsho Ogunkeye Training Rotarians at the Seminar



Cross Section at District 9126 PolioPlus Seminar



From (L-R) NNPPC Chairman PDG Joshua Hassan and District Governor 9126 Kayode Olowolagba

## 2.1m Children Currently Unvaccinated in Nigeria, Says WHO



Nigeria still has over 2.1 million zero-dose children who are yet to receive any form of vaccination.

This is one of the reasons why there have been 70 cases of circulating Variant Polio Virus type 2 (cVPV2) reported in Nigeria in 2024. In addition to this, many pregnant women are still not delivering at health facilities. This is according to the WHO Representative to Nigeria Dr. Walter Kazadi Mulombo.

In his speech at the 2-day engagement meeting with religious leaders from Northern Nigeria in Abuja by the Sultan Foundation for Peace and Development with support from National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) which was recently held in Abuja, Dr. Mulombo, urged the Federal Government to ensure that its collaboration with the traditional institution continues to be nurtured and sustained.

“Your continued advocacy is crucial in reducing immunity gaps, support in crashing the maternal and under-five mortality rate, decreasing disease occurrence, and improving overall well-being, in line with the Government's renewed commitment through the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative (HSRII)” he said.

“We still face the issue of many pregnant women not delivering at the health facilities, zero-dose children, with 2.1 million children currently unvaccinated in Nigeria, according to the WUNEIC 2024 report.”

Molombo also urged the traditional and religious leaders to continue to promote increase in antenatal services uptake and health facility deliveries, as well as the ongoing zero-dose mapping and immunization recovery efforts through the planned routine

immunization Big Catch-Up campaign.

He said: “The response to the circulating Variant Polio Virus type 2 (cVPV2) outbreak is progressing steadily with 70 cases reported as of 13 September 2024 in 14 states.

“The Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) Surveillance system has remained sensitive (NP-AFP rate 11.8/100000U15 and Stool 98%) through the implementation of enhanced surveillance improvement plans.

“The quality of vaccination activities improved from 87% in March to 95% in April 2024. Amidst constraints of global vaccine supply, the program continues implementing innovative interventions including Identify Enumerate and Vaccinate (IEV), Targeted Local Response, and In-between Rounds activities to reach chronically missed and under-vaccinated populations”. In his remarks, the Executive Director of NPHCDA, Dr. Muyi Aina lamented the avoidable deaths being suffered by the country as a result of poor vaccination.

He said: “Every day, Nigeria loses about 2,300 under five years old children and 145 women of child bearing age. Most of these deaths are occurring in northern Nigeria.

“Also, Nigeria is currently witnessing intense transmission of the circulating variant poliovirus type 2(cVPV2), with a total of 70 cVPV2 from 46 LGAs across 14 Northern states.

“This is an indication of continuous transmission of the virus due to low routine immunization, and refusal of vaccines during polio campaigns.

“This must change. We must ensure that every woman has access to antenatal care, that every pregnancy is delivered by trained and skilled midwives, and that every child completes their routine Immunization according to the National schedule and get vaccinated every time vaccination teams visit their homes.”

While addressing participants at the meeting, the Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar urged Nigerians to unite and support efforts to tackle various diseases affecting the people.

The Sultan used the opportunity to dispel false notion about vaccination, saying that vaccines have been of immense health benefit to the people over the years.

“So many of us have been vaccinated one way or the other, and we are still on our feet strong. Some people are 90 and 95 and so on. 100. They didn't die, they didn't lose their sights, they didn't leave their memory.

“So, what wrong with vaccine? So, let's talk to ourselves.

# Taking a stand at interrupting community transmission of all forms of poliovirus in Nigeria



“Before today, my child never received any form of vaccination,” says 27 years old Fatima Abubakar, while presenting her eight-months-old son, Adamu, to the team of vaccinators who had visited the remote Gadare settlements in Batsari Local Government Area (LGA), Katsina State, where she resides.

Having given birth at home, Fatima explained that her non-compliance with the routine immunisation schedule was due to her residence being far from a primary healthcare facility and her being unaware of any previous visit by a mobile vaccination team to her village.

“It is my first time witnessing a vaccination team go from house to house to vaccinate all eligible children in this village. Many children in this settlement have never received any vaccine since birth”, Fatima added.

Besides residing in a hard-to-reach area, many children in the locality were not privileged to get vaccinated due to the security situation in the region, which negatively impacted their protection against vaccine-preventable diseases, including the circulating Variant Poliovirus type 2 (cVPV2).

This year, Katsina state has reported 16 cases of cVPV2 in five LGAs, with Batsari LGA reporting 98% of the cases.

To interrupt the spread of the virus, the Katsina State Government, in collaboration with the GPEI partners including WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International, US CDC and Gates Foundation,

revised its immunisation strategies to ensure all vulnerable children receive life-saving vaccines. The state adopted the engagement with community gatekeepers”, which included high-level advocacy for society gatekeepers and local volunteers' identification, training, and deployment through traditional leaders to serve as vaccinators and champions in high-risk communities.

With testimonies from mothers like Fatima, the devised strategy yields the desired result.

“I was comfortable presenting my son for vaccination because the vaccinator is someone from my settlement. He educated me of the benefits of immunisation and assured me that it is safe and at no cost,” she added.

As of June 2024, the local response team in Katsina had reached 253,006 children out of the 326,069 targeted children across 11 local government areas in the state with live-saving vaccines.

In Nigeria, interrupting the cVPV2 virus, particularly in the Axis of Intractable transmission (AIT) states (Katsina, Kano, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi), is of utmost importance for the country to achieve its polio eradication goals.

Appreciating the GPEI partners' continual support, Katsina State Governor Dr Dikko Umaru Radda said, “The State Government will continue to work closely with the partners to sustain the improvements.”

Dr Radda said, “they are playing a critical role in supporting the state in its quest to interrupt the spread of the virus. The continual support received from them is very timely and commendable. Despite the challenges, we've recorded immense progress in ensuring vulnerable and exposed children are reached with vaccines, thus contributing to interrupting the virus.”

Source: WHO

## Rotary Mourns Aidan O'Leary



We mourn the loss of a great friend to Rotary — Aidan O'Leary, Director for polio eradication at the World Health Organization, whose sudden and untimely death has shocked us all.

Aidan was a visionary leader with a deep sense of humanity and purpose. He was an inspiration to all those trying to create a polio-free world and worked tirelessly to achieve that goal.

He made himself readily available to engage with Rotary members at events both large and small, and he was known for his friendly manner and enduring commitment to ending polio.

Aidan was in Nigeria in May 2024 for the 41st meeting of the Expert Review Committee (ERC) on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization where he gave very insightful remarks and his passion for polio eradication could be clearly seen. He also took time to engage with representatives from Rotary International and thank them for their contributions to polio eradication.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues. We will remember him always for his extraordinary dedication to making the world a better place and for his sincere appreciation of our organization.

As members of Rotary, we can best honor Aidan's memory by achieving what we set out to do: Protect all children everywhere from this devastating disease.

# First case of polio reported in Gaza Strip



Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah has recorded the first case of polio in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry made this announcement on Friday, saying that the infected individual is said to be an unvaccinated, 10-month-old infant in Deir al-Balah in the center of the area.

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres called for a pause in hostilities in the isolated and largely destroyed coastal strip to allow for the polio vaccination of hundreds of thousands of children. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN children's agency UNICEF also pushed for a seven-day ceasefire for this purpose. The WHO had earlier reported that three children in the Gaza Strip are suspected of having acute paralysis symptoms typical of polio.

Polio is a contagious infectious disease that can cause permanent paralysis and death, especially in young children. The virus is often spread through contaminated water.

Around 560 000 children under ten years old have since been vaccinated against polio during the first round of an emergency vaccination campaign conducted in three phases from 1-12 September 2024 in the Gaza Strip.

The 12-day campaign provided novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) to 558,963 children, following meticulous planning and coordination.

This involved the use of an extensive network of teams, vaccinating at selected fixed sites at health facilities and outreach posts. Mobile and transit teams actively reached out to families living in shelter homes, tents, and camps for the displaced, alongside community workers engaging families to raise awareness ahead of and during the campaign. For each phase, an area-specific humanitarian pause of nine hours daily was agreed to ensure the safety of communities and health workers, and enable vaccination efforts.

“Health and community workers have shown incredible resilience, carrying out this campaign at unprecedented scale and speed under the toughest conditions in Gaza. Swift action by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative—from the moment the virus was detected to the launch of the vaccination campaign—speaks to the effectiveness of the polio programme. In areas where humanitarian pauses took place, the campaign brought not just vaccines, but moments of calm. As we prepare for the next round in four weeks, we're hopeful these pauses will hold, because this campaign has clearly shown the world what's possible when peace is given a chance,” said Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Representative for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

“It was critical this ambitious campaign was carried out quickly, safely and effectively to protect children in the Gaza Strip and neighbouring countries from the life-altering poliovirus,” said Jean Gough, UNICEF Special Representative in the State of Palestine. “The progress made in this first round is encouraging, but the job is far from done. We are poised to finish the task and call on all involved to ensure we can do so in the next round in four weeks' time, for the sake of children everywhere.”



of circulating variant poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Gaza, which was found in the environment in July 2024, and in a 10-month-old child in August 2024. It was conducted by the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MOH), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and partners. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) members, donors, WHO Member States and partners in oPt, including as part of the Health Cluster, played a key role in facilitating the campaign.

Partners at all levels recognize common operational challenges faced during these efforts, including devastated infrastructure, from health facilities to roads, limited trained healthcare workers, access issues due to insecurity, limited fuel for generators used to safely store vaccines and freeze ice packs, and constant population movements. However, these issues were addressed in a timely manner, with the key support of the Palestinian Ministry of Health and UNRWA, to enable planned vaccination activities.

The original target for the campaign was 640 000 children, estimated in the absence of an accurate survey, which may have been an over-estimate, as the population continues to move from place to place, and people are fleeing and being killed due to the ongoing hostilities. During the campaign, trained monitoring teams were deployed to oversee vaccination efforts. As next steps, an additional 65 independent monitors are being deployed to cross-check the proportion of children vaccinated across the Gaza Strip to independently assess the level of coverage achieved in the first round. A second round of the campaign will follow, ideally within four weeks, to provide a second dose of nOPV2 to children in Gaza to stop the outbreak and prevent its international spread.

The campaign was implemented as part of an urgent and robust response to the confirmation

The campaign kicked off using 473 teams, including 230 mobile teams, and 143 vaccination sites, in central Gaza, followed by 91 fixed sites, complemented by 384 mobile teams in southern Gaza. It concluded in northern Gaza, reaching children through 127 teams at fixed sites and 104 mobile teams. Fixed sites comprised hospitals, medical points, primary health centres, temporary learning spaces, schools, and food and water distribution points. Additionally, 749 social mobilizers were trained and deployed to engage communities, before and during the campaign to nudge families to vaccinate their children and address concerns.

Novel oral polio vaccine (nOPV2) is a polio vaccine being used to stop transmission of variant poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2), currently the most prevalent form of the variant poliovirus. nOPV2 is safe and effective and offers protection against paralysis and community transmission. It is the vaccine globally recommended for variant type 2 poliovirus outbreaks – the type that has been found in Gaza.

# FIELD ACTIVITIES



His Excellency, the Deputy Governor of Katsina State, Honorable Farouk Lawal Jobe (right) at Polio Flag Off ceremony in Kastina



NNPPC Vice Chairman HRH Alh Ndanusa Yakubu, presented So They Can Walk Book, to the Deputy Governor of Katsina State His Excellency, Honour Farouk Lawal Jobe



Polio flag off Ceremony at Old Maiduguri, Jere LGA by the District Heads Alhaji Abubakar Garabai E-kanemi, and Damboa, Alhaji Abba Abubakar Garbai E- Kanemi.



The District Head of Maiduguri, Jere LGA Alhaji Abubakar Garabai E-kanemi vaccinating a child at the Polio Flag off ceremony



Rotary's Representative at Sotoko State Flag Off



Outbreak supervision in Borno State



Outbreak supervision in Zamfara State



Outbreak supervision in Sokoto State



Polio Team heading out to bring hope to children house-to-house implementation.

**POLIO STOP**

**WORLD  
POLIO DAY  
24 OCTOBER**



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