



POLIO STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

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DECEMBER 2024



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To Our Valued Champions of polio, Friends, and Partners,

As the year draws to a close, we find ourselves filled with gratitude as we reflect on the remarkable strides we've made together in the journey to eradicate polio. This festive season, we extend our heartfelt thanks and warmest wishes to you—our cherished Rotarians, partners, and friends for your unwavering commitment, generosity, and dedication to this noble cause.

Your efforts have been instrumental in shaping the progress we've achieved this year. From raising awareness to providing critical funding, your contributions have been the lifeline of our mission. Every vaccine administered, every child protected, and every milestone reached is a testament to your steadfast support and belief in a polio-free world.

Festive is a season of giving, and you have given abundantly—your time, your resources, and your hearts. In a world often fraught with challenges, your unity and resolve have been a shining beacon of hope. Together, we have demonstrated that through collaboration and compassion, we can overcome even the toughest obstacles.

As we gather with our loved ones to celebrate the joy of the season, we also take a moment to honor the communities we serve. Their resilience inspires us, and their trust in our work fuels our determination. This festive period reminds us of the shared humanity that connects us all and the responsibility we hold to ensure a brighter future for every child.

Looking ahead to the New Year, we know the road to eradicating polio is not yet complete. We will need your continued support, commitment, and generosity more than ever. The challenges ahead are significant, but so are the opportunities for progress. Together, we can achieve breakthroughs that bring us closer to a world where polio is no longer a threat.

To our esteemed Rotarians, donors, and partners: thank you for standing with us every step of the way. Your dedication has been the cornerstone of our efforts, and we are deeply appreciative of all you have done. We look forward to working hand-in-hand with you in the coming year, building on our successes and embracing new possibilities.

As we celebrate this season of hope and renewal, may your homes be filled with laughter, love, and the joy of togetherness. May the New Year bring you personal growth, fulfillment, and the pride of knowing you are part of a global movement making a lasting impact.

With deepest gratitude and warm wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, let's prepare for greater work in the year ahead. Together, we will continue to transform lives and ensure a healthier, polio-free world. With heartfelt thanks,



FROM EDITOR'S DESK

Interrupting transmission of the circulating variant of the poliovirus in 2025

We had always known that as we approach the end of the battle against wild poliovirus (WPV) in the world, the circulating variant of the poliovirus would assume a more significant status. What we did not know and could not have conceived was how much of a concern it would be and how much of a struggle Nigeria would find kicking the last dregs of the virus out of the country. The country program set itself a target of interrupting all forms of transmission of the circulating variant of the poliovirus by December 2024 but for a while it has become clear to everyone within the program that this target would not be met. In spite of repeated vaccination rounds (5 Subnational rounds), there has not been any significant drop in the number of new cases or reports of isolates. For example, despite not having come to the end of the year yet, Nigeria has already reported 89 AFP cases of cVPV2 as against 87 for the entire 2023. Interestingly, the virus has also been detected in 15 States, the same number of states as 2023. So, clearly, despite much efforts and commitment of resources, not much can be said to have been achieved in 2024 by the country program.

Expanding insecurity, particularly in the northwest of the country has created an accessibility gap, making it impossible to reach many children with the polio vaccine. The displacement of millions of people has also not helped us in our cause. This is beside the damage to health infrastructure and attacks on health personnel, including vaccination teams. That has meant that accessibility to children in these security-compromised communities and settlements remains a challenge.

In 2024, we have witnessed increasing numbers of cases of vaccine rejection and noncompliance. The reasons for this have ranged from a lack of trust in the polio vaccine due to rumours and misconceptions to anger at non-provision of palliatives and amenities by the government to cushion the harsh economic realities and the sharp rise in cost of living. Some of these vaccine rejections are seen as a form of protest by the caregivers, conceived as a means to "embarrass" the authorities into providing them with some assistance. In reality, it creates a double jeopardy situation for the children because high number of noncompliance means that there are huge numbers of

children that remain unvaccinated and as such remain susceptible to infection from the poliovirus in addition to whatever deprivation they may also be facing at the same time.

The country program has worked really hard in 2024 to bridge the gaps that exist in terms of vaccination infrastructure but the reality is that these gaps continue to exist and remain a challenge. Rotary International through the NNPPC has tried to support by providing some equipment, including aprons, for vaccination teams but with many thousands of teams to support, it has been like drops in a bucket of need. Nevertheless, the country program remains committed to plugging the gaps in vaccination coverage and surveillance within the available resources.

We also have challenges in conducting effective community mobilization and engagement. Our reliance on generic historical approaches to social mobilization and community engagement has meant that we haven't been able to adequately address the real issues at the subnational levels. These approaches have clearly proved insufficient to address the growing numbers of cases of vaccine rejection and noncompliance that we have witnessed from across the states. The good thing for the country program is that these cases used to be concealed. We did not have a true idea of the magnitude of vaccine rejection that existed. Coupled with the phenomenon called "fake finger marking" in which members of a vaccination team collude with a caregiver to finger mark children without vaccinating them, it was impossible to have a true understanding of the nature and magnitude of noncompliance that we faced. However, in recent times, we have had more reports of noncompliance and the nature of the fake finger marking phenomenon is being more clearly understood. Our hope is that with the onboarding of new accountability measures within the country program, including new tools for monitoring and reporting, we can begin to get a grasp of these issues and provide appropriate social mobilization solutions to them going forward.

The year 2025 offers us another chance to begin again and do better. The country program is determined to do things differently and do them better in the new year. Starting with outbreak responses in three states and the IEV Household based micro-plan, we hope to start the process of finally interrupting all forms of transmission of the circulating variant of the poliovirus by December 2025. We hope that we can count on your support throughout the year to help us achieve it.

2024 National World Polio Day Celebration

The 2024 National World Polio Day Celebration in Port Harcourt, hosted by Rotary International District 9141 Nigeria, was a vibrant and inspiring three-day event that brought together Rotarians, Rotaractors, and friends of Rotary to reaffirm their commitment to a polio-free world. The event showcased a seamless blend of advocacy, awareness, and fundraising activities, highlighting the collective power of Rotary's fight against polio.

The celebration began with the thrilling End Polio Now-branded Boat Regatta, which made waves across Port Harcourt's waters. This visually striking display captivated participants and onlookers alike, sending a powerful message about Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio. Adding to the excitement was a bike race, where dedicated riders journeyed from Benin City to Port Harcourt, symbolizing determination and endurance in the fight against this preventable disease.

As part of the celebration, a new billboard was unveiled, serving as a lasting symbol of Rotary's mission to eradicate polio and its commitment to spreading awareness. The polio walk, another key activity, brought together a diverse group of participants who walked through the streets of Port Harcourt to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination. Each step taken was a reminder of the progress made and the work that remains in ending polio.

The event concluded with a grand fundraising dinner for the Rotary Foundation, where Rotarians and guests came together in an atmosphere of generosity and solidarity. The dinner underscored Rotary's commitment to raising the necessary resources to sustain the fight against polio.

Among the notable attendees were Rotary leaders, including Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee members PRIVP Yinka Babalola, PDG Joshua Hassan, PDG Yomi Adewumi, and PDG Kazeem Mustapha. District Governor Chinedu Ikegwuani, District Secretary Nkeiru Enyia, and Assistant Governor Chidinma Diala also graced the occasion. Their presence, alongside Rotarians, Rotaractors, and other supporters, emphasized the unity and shared purpose driving Rotary's polio eradication efforts.

This year's National World Polio Day Celebration was a testament to the unwavering dedication of Rotary International and its partners. Each event, from the

regatta to the fundraising dinner, highlighted the importance of collective action in achieving a polio-free world. It was not just a celebration but a call to action, inspiring everyone to continue the journey toward making history.

Olamide Adekoya



Global leaders undaunted in face of rising polio cases



The year 2024 has not been an easy one for polio eradication, with an increase in wild poliovirus transmission in the remaining two endemic countries and new and high-profile outbreaks including in Gaza. And yet global commitment to polio eradication remains as high as ever.¹

From community groups to G7 leaders, the determination to complete polio eradication goes beyond the health sector. Political, multi-lateral fora including the Leaders and Health Ministers from the G7 and G20, and the Commonwealth, all underscored the opportunity we have in ridding the world of polio once and for all. Countries, bilateral institutions and oversight and advisory groups, ranging from the World Health Assembly, to Regional Committees and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks, to the African Regional Certification Committee for Poliomyelitis Eradication, all continue to voice their support to the global eradication effort. Such support is echoed by civil society and communities, led by Rotary International and Rotarians from around the world. Youth delegates at the inaugural in-person meeting of the Model

WHO brought new generations to this quest. There were powerful declarations and statements such as these:

G7 Leaders: “We recommit to ending neglected tropical diseases and polio as public health threats...”

G7 Health Ministers: “We recommit to ending... polio. We also commend the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's efforts to eradicate polio and call for keeping the efforts strong in order to reach eradication before 2030.”

Commonwealth Summit: “Heads urged for increased global and national efforts... to eradicate polio...”

G20 Leaders: “We also reaffirm our commitment to ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and for polio eradication. G20 Health Ministers: “We also reaffirm our commitment to ending the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and for polio eradication.”

Such political support across all levels is critical to securing success, as the challenges to global eradication are now primarily a geopolitical. Medically and technically, everything is in place to achieve success. The key lies in reaching all remaining children who have not yet been fully vaccinated, and the answer to those challenges lies squarely in political will. As one delegate at the recently-held Model WHO said: “Rain does not fall on a single house alone. If we can reach children in Gaza given the current situation, we can reach children anywhere.”

Source: Polioeradication.org

Poliovirus detections in European Region underscore importance of vaccination and vigilance



In the past 3 months, circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2) was detected in sewage samples in Barcelona, Spain; Warsaw, Poland; Cologne, Bonn, Dresden, Duesseldorf, Mainz, Hamburg and Munich, Germany; Tampere, Finland; and, Leeds and London and Worthing, UK. The detected virus is genetically linked to a strain that emerged in Nigeria. This strain is circulating in several countries outside the Region, most widely in North and West Africa.

In all five countries in the European Region, the virus was isolated from environmental (sewage) samples only – no associated paralytic cases of polio have been detected. In none of the five countries is there confirmed local circulation of the virus at this time.

“WHO continues to support national and local public health authorities in their investigations and monitoring of the situation, including identification of any potential subnational immunity gaps that may need to be addressed,” added Robb Butler. “Vaccination of every vulnerable child is essential to ensure that the virus cannot lead to lifelong paralysis or even death.”

All five countries where the virus was detected maintain strong disease surveillance and high levels of routine immunization coverage, estimated at 85–95% nationally with 3 doses of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), which provides excellent protection from paralysis caused by poliovirus.

However, pockets of undervaccination exist in every country. In response to the detections, investigations are ongoing, including through continued disease surveillance. Subnational immunity levels have been examined to identify any potential gaps and immunization of unvaccinated children has been initiated.

Polio is a highly infectious disease that travels easily and silently across wide geographic areas, not respecting national borders. These detections are a further reminder of the urgent need to eradicate all forms of poliovirus.

WHO/Europe, together with other Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners, is continuing to support national and local public health authorities in their investigations and monitoring of the situation, as well as in rapid response to detections of the virus to prevent it from spreading.

Poliovirus has been detected through routine surveillance of wastewater systems in five countries in the WHO European Region (Finland, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) since September this year. While no cases have been detected to date, the presence of the virus underscores the importance of vaccination and surveillance, as well as the ongoing risk that any form of poliovirus poses to all countries everywhere.

“These countries are to be commended for their strong vigilance, which enabled them to detect and quickly respond to this public health threat,” said Robb Butler, Director of the Division of Communicable Diseases, Environment and Health at WHO/Europe. “While investigation of these detections is ongoing, WHO will continue to work with all countries in the Region to strengthen poliovirus surveillance and ensure high immunization rates.”

The Region has been free of endemic poliomyelitis (polio) since 2002. However, as long as any form of poliovirus is spreading anywhere in the world, it can be imported. Such importations can lead to outbreaks if the virus finds its way to unvaccinated individuals, as occurred in Tajikistan and Ukraine in 2021, and Israel and the United Kingdom in 2022.

All countries in the Region are on alert for such importations and many conduct routine surveillance of sewage systems to ensure early detection. Consistently high rates of vaccination are vital to prevent the virus from re-establishing a foothold in any community.

Detections in 2024

Source: polioeradication.org



Insecurity, population movement fuelling polio variant in Nigeria, others — WHO

Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director WHO Africa Region

The World Health Organisation's Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, has said that despite significant efforts, the continued spread of Circulating Variant Polio Type 2 is primarily fuelled by insecurity, restricted healthcare access, and heightened population mobility in specific countries across the region.

Moeti made this statement in her message on the occasion of the 2024 World Polio Day to raise awareness and resources for the global effort to eradicate polio.

She, however, noted that the region is closer than ever to achieving a polio-free Africa.

"This year, our region has reached significant milestones, including the notable success of Madagascar, which has now gone a full year without detecting Circulating Variant Poliovirus Type 1. In Southern Africa, we marked the closure of the imported Wild Poliovirus Type 1 outbreak that was declared in 2022.

The swift and coordinated efforts of Malawi, Mozambique, and neighbouring countries—Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—also inspire optimism. These achievements highlight the strength of joint action, the resilience of our communities, and the unwavering dedication of frontline health workers.

"Data equally bear out these results. Comparing data from 2023 and 2024 detections of cVDPV1 have decreased by 96 per cent, while detections of cVDPV2 have dropped by 65 per cent in the African Region.

"It is important to recognise that countries in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel have also united to tackle a new and pressing challenge: the continued transmission of Circulating Variant Polio Type 2. Despite substantial efforts, the virus persists in these regions, driven by factors such as insecurity, limited access to healthcare, and high levels of population movement.

"In 2024 alone, 134 detections of polio type 2 (both in the environment and in affected people, as of 5th September) have been reported jointly in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria," she disclosed.

She stressed that strong political commitment is crucial in the fight against polio.

Acknowledging the urgent need for renewed collaboration, particularly along borders, government leaders, WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund, and other partners came together in July and August 2024 to develop a coordinated plan aimed at eradicating the variant poliovirus in the aforementioned countries.

"As a result, nearly 70 million children in high-risk areas in those countries have been vaccinated since the beginning of the year.

"Vigilance is also critical. We need to enhance surveillance, especially in underserved areas, and accelerate our response to any new detections. Equally important is the need to scale up high-quality vaccination campaigns.

"The latest Independent Monitoring Board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative report also underscores the need for enhanced community engagement. In many regions, particularly those affected by insecurity or social mistrust, it is community health workers who make the difference between success and failure. We must continue to support these local heroes, ensuring they have the resources and training required to reach every child with life-saving vaccines," she said.

She highlighted the rapid advancement of polio diagnostics and sequencing technologies as another significant step forward in eradication efforts and beyond.

"Thanks to ongoing training across Africa, particularly in South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, and Kenya, laboratory capacity has expanded. This allows for faster identification and response to outbreaks. I would like to commend these improvements, while urging us to maintain this momentum, particularly by adapting new methods to detect poliovirus earlier and more efficiently.

"Our goals are clear. We must remain vigilant through robust surveillance systems, respond rapidly with high-quality vaccination campaigns, improve routine immunisation coverage, and ensure that the polio programme's infrastructure continues to benefit other public health priorities. Progress is real, but setbacks can occur when we lose vigilance.

"As I transition, I call on all governments, partners, and communities to recommit to this cause. Let us honour the sacrifices and dedication of the health workers, community leaders, and families who make this progress possible. Our success is not just Africa's—it is the world's. With sustained momentum, strong leadership, and global solidarity, a polio-free future is within our reach. Together, we can attain a polio-free world," she said.

Lara Adejoro for punchng.com



Rotary Clubs in Warri celebrating world Polio day



Kaduna Rotarians celebrating World Polio Day



The Hon. Commissioner for Health in Rivers State, Dr. Adaeze Chidinma Oreh, took a powerful stand today, personally vaccinating children against polio at Port Johnson Health



Past District Governor Grace Okaro decorating Abia's First Lady, Mrs. Priscilla Chidinma Otti



Members of Oyo State District 9126 came together to celebrate World Polio Day



Commissioning of End Polio Now Billboard by R.C. Port Harcourt Blue Ocean



D9112 Polio Chair, Rotn. Nike Abdul-Azeez addressing participants at the take off of WPD walk in Ijebu Ode, Ogun state



Anambra Frist lady Her Excellency, Dr. Nonye Soludo, immunizing children at Amawbia PHC

Polio Day



The Hon. Minister of Health Dr Ali Pate immunising children during the 2024 World Polio Day in Abuja



Sir Emeka Ofor, Founder of SEOF and Rotary International PolioPlus Ambassador, decorating the Hon. Minister of Health Dr Ali Pate with End Polio Now Pin



The pioneer District Governor, Rotary International District 9111, Rtn (Dr) Oluwole Kukoyi, also the Chief Medical Director of Ace Medicare Clinics Ltd, Ota immunizing a child to commemorate the world polio day



Rotary International District 9112 Organizes Polio Awareness Walk in Ijebu Ode.



Abia First Lady, Mrs. Priscilla Chidinma Otti, led a polio immunization drive in Umuahia to mark World Polio Day 2024



Advocacy visit to President Olusegun Obasanjo, by District Governor, RI District 9111, Dr Oluwole Kukoyi and the District Polio Committee members.



World Polio Day Walk in Sokoto! Spreading awareness and taking steps toward a polio-free world together



Advocacy visit to the Honourable Commissioner for Health, Ogun State, Dr. Mrs Tomi Coker, by D9111 team

Rotary Lounge at Zurich Airport: Building Friendships and Fighting Polio



It began with an idea: “A lounge for Rotary members at the Zurich Airport.” As a long-time Rotarian and founding member of the Rotary Club Zurich Circle International, with over 59 years of experience with the Zurich Airport in Switzerland, I envisioned providing Rotary members with a comfortable place during transit or before departure—a space where they can wait while experiencing spontaneous Rotary connections.

Our club believes there's a need for more informal Rotary meeting spots, and airports are places where people often spend a lot of time. Why not use this time to forge new Rotary friendships and do good? The idea sounded far-fetched to some, but the aviation enthusiasts among our members were thrilled.

While the lounge itself would provide the opportunity for new friendships, a portion of each entry fee would go to support Rotary's polio eradication initiative. With every lounge entry of 30 CHF, 50 children can be vaccinated against polio! This embodies the true Rotary spirit, which is why the lounge is also open to accompanying family members and business.

The creation of the lounge was a collaborative effort. The idea first emerged in 2019, shortly after the founding of the Rotary Club Zurich Circle International. In February 2022, with the support of Rotary member Thomas Brodbeck, Aspire Lounges, an independent airport lounge operator, joined us as a partner.

On 1 July 2023, the Aspire Lounges in the Airside Center and Terminal E at Zurich Airport officially welcomed Rotary members. It was memorable moment when we walked through the completed lounge for the first time—it was inspiring to see our idea turned into reality

Since the opening, we have received numerous positive responses from Rotary members who have used the lounge. To date, the entry fees have helped provide polio vaccines for over 6,000 children.

With our original idea complete, we have turned our attention to a larger vision: “Rotary lounges at airports worldwide.” In the coming years, we aim to expand the lounge offerings for Rotary members. Discussions are already underway for lounges at airports in Basel, France, and Geneva, Switzerland, and if those are successful, additional locations across Europe could follow. These lounges would provide even more meeting spaces for Rotary members on their travels, fostering additional opportunities for exchange in a relaxed airport setting.

How to Access the Rotary Lounge at Zurich Airport

We warmly invite all Rotary members to visit the lounge at Zurich Airport and share the experience with others. Every visit contributes to the fight against polio and supports Rotary's worldwide commitment to a polio-free future.

Location: Aspire Lounge in the Airside Center and Terminal

E

Directions: Follow the signs for “Aspire Lounge” on the 2nd floor in the Airside Center or in Terminal E (Non-Schengen)

Admission: Rotary members and their accompanying guests (family or business partners)
Admission Code: Provide the name of your Rotary club

Entry Fee: 30 CHF per person, with 8 CHF of the fee donated to Rotary's PolioPlus fund

Hermann Delliehausen for endpolio.org

Unity in Action: Rotarians and ALGON Join Forces for World Polio Day in Gombe State

In Gombe State, the fight against polio reached new heights thanks to an inspiring partnership between the state's Rotarians and the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) – Gombe chapter. Driven by a shared commitment to eradicate polio and raise awareness across the region, Rotarians and ALGON members created a remarkable event that would make a lasting impact.

With an extraordinary gesture, each of the 11 Local Government Area (LGA) chairmen sponsored over a thousand specially branded T-shirts for the event, each bearing the Governor of Gombe State's image on the front, accompanied by the Rotary logo and the name of each LGA chairman on the back. This thoughtful design highlighted the unity and determination of local leaders and community members alike to see a polio-free future.

On October 28, Gombe State witnessed something extraordinary—a synchronized World Polio Day walk in all 11 LGAs. Each LGA chairman led their community in the

walk, proudly wearing their branded shirts and standing shoulder to shoulder with Rotary members and the people of Gombe. It was a visual testament to the power of collaboration, as citizens across the state moved as one in support of a polio-free world.

The walk was more than just symbolic. Each chairman generously donated 50,000 Naira (\$30) to the Polio Foundation, further supporting the cause. These contributions reflected their dedication to a mission that touches the lives of so many, and it demonstrated how much can be achieved when local leaders join hands with global organizations like Rotary.

This united effort in Gombe State has left an inspiring mark on the hearts of those who participated and everyone who witnessed it. Through this collaboration, Gombe State showed that no matter where we come from, when we work together with determination and purpose, we are unstoppable.

Olamide Adekoya



When Polio Vaccine Won Against Polio Virus 4 Goals to 3



organising a series of social mobilisation events to encourage parents to overcome vaccine hesitancy and increase vaccine uptake, in addition to conducting extensive vaccination campaigns.



Mukhtar S. Doki, captain of the winning Polio Vaccine Team, receiving the Para-Soccer Tournament trophy in Sokoto.

To commemorate 2024 International Day of Persons with Disabilities, polio survivors came together to highlight the urgent need for continued efforts to respond to polio outbreaks and improve routine immunisation in Nigeria.

It is half-time, and the polio vaccine team is tied 2-2 with the polio virus team in the final of the para-soccer match at the Giginya Memorial Stadium in the extreme northwestern Nigerian state of Sokoto.

The final match culminates a three-week-long tournament of para-soccer, a fast-paced and highly competitive game played among polio survivors—individuals who were struck and left paralysed by the poliomyelitis virus in childhood.

In the final minutes of the game, the Polio Vaccine Team scores a decisive goal against the Polio Virus Team. This winning goal symbolises the triumph of vaccinations against deadly childhood diseases in Sokoto.

Abdullahi Abubakar, popularly known as “Dagangang,” the star player of the winning team, echoed similar sentiments: “We are living testimonies that polio is real, and the trusted protection you can give your child against this dreaded virus is vaccination.”

Nigeria is a nation marked by significant divisions along ethnic and religious lines, but football unites everyone. From time immemorial, football has been a powerful unifying force and a unique source of joy for Africans and Nigerians in particular. The Para-Soccer Tournament was organised as part of a strategy to enlighten youth and adults about polio and its effects on children.

Sokoto, much like the rest of northern Nigeria, has been plagued by low levels of routine immunisation and ongoing polio outbreaks. Supported by partners, the State Government of Sokoto has been

Earlier, during a rally to commemorate the 2024 World Polio Day, Sokoto State Commissioner of Health Hajiya Asabe Balarabe reaffirmed the state government's commitment to collaborating with partners to eradicate polio in Sokoto State. Balarabe commended UNICEF and other partners working tirelessly to ensure every child in Sokoto is vaccinated, stating,

Partnerships include all tiers of government and organisations such as AFENET, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Chigari Foundation, CGPP Nigeria, eHealth, the Dangote Foundation, the Gates Foundation, Rotary, Solina, the Sultan Foundation for Peace and Development, UNICEF, and the World Health Organisation.

Dr. Shamina Sharmin, UNICEF Acting Chief of Field Office, noted that the match serves as a powerful reminder that the fight against the polio virus is far from over. We are not yet there, and we should not focus solely on the polio campaign; we must also emphasize routine immunization, strengthen healthcare systems, and other interventions. We need to work hand in hand through a multisectoral approach, combining our efforts to reach eligible children,” she advised.

“I am sure the skills of these polio survivors entertained us all,” she continued. However, if they had received immunization and protection from the virus, their lives might have been different.

Priyanka Khanna and Philip Yatai for Unicef.org



85 per cent of children affected by polio live in fragile and conflict-affected countries

Of the 541 children affected by polio globally in 2023, 85 per cent live in the 31 fragile, conflict-affected, and vulnerable countries, according to a new UNICEF analysis on World Polio Day.

Polio cases in these settings have more than doubled in the past five years, while routine childhood immunization has dropped from 75 to 70 per cent – well below the 95 per cent needed for community immunity.

The data issue a stark warning that the life-threatening disease continues to thrive in areas where life is most precarious, and where conflict, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, other destabilizing factors make it difficult to deliver critical healthcare.

“In conflict, children face more than bombs and bullets; they are at risk of deadly diseases that should no longer exist,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “In many countries, we are witnessing the collapse of healthcare systems, destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, and the displacement of families, triggering a resurgence of diseases like polio. Children are being left paralyzed, unable to walk, play, or attend school.” A global decline in childhood immunization has also led to an increase in polio outbreaks, including in countries that had been polio-free for decades. Nowhere is this more evident than in conflict-affected areas, with 15 out of 21 such countries – including Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen – currently battling polio.

In recent months, UNICEF and partners have intensified emergency responses to surges in polio outbreaks. In Gaza, for example, UNICEF, in partnership with WHO, reached nearly 600,000 children under 10 years during the first round of a polio vaccination campaign in mid-September. The second and final round has been successfully implemented in south and central Gaza, but renewed mass displacement and bombings have delayed the process in the north. The campaign follows the return of polio to Gaza for the first time in 25 years.

In Sudan, national childhood vaccination coverage plummeted from 85 per cent before the war to 53 per cent in 2023, while in active conflict zones, the coverage has dropped to just 30 per cent. In response, UNICEF and partners have led two emergency polio campaigns in recent months, reaching 2.9 million children under 5 years through house-to-house vaccinations.

Successful polio vaccination campaigns in fragile, conflict-affected, and vulnerable countries are critical to stopping further cases and protecting children who are already vulnerable. Humanitarian pauses are essential to ensure healthcare workers can reach children and deliver vaccines safely.

The battle against polio is hardest in the most challenging places, but eradication is within reach. UNICEF, which delivers over 1 billion doses of polio vaccines annually – the largest share of its global vaccine deliveries – urges governments, partners, and donors to:

Prioritize vaccination of all children against polio, especially in conflict and humanitarian settings and in countries with low immunization coverage across Africa and parts of Asia.

Strengthen immunization systems to ensure all children receive essential, lifesaving vaccines. Protect humanitarian and healthcare workers delivering vaccines, and respect essential humanitarian pauses needed for campaign success. Provide critical resources to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to quickly halt outbreaks and ensure children are vaccinated.

Elevate polio eradication on political agendas at all levels, prioritizing innovative solutions and coordinated actions to enhance immunization campaign quality.

“The spread of polio not only puts children in affected countries at immediate risk but also poses a growing threat to neighbouring countries,” added Russell. “The final push is the hardest, but now is the time to act. We cannot rest until every child, in every corner of the world, is safe from polio – once and for all.”

Source: [unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org)

CBN Ogbogbo | Rotary 

PRESENTS

SO THEY CAN WALK

*The Story of Polio Eradication in Nigeria
The Rotary Perspective*



AVAILABLE AS: EBOOK | PAPERBACK | HARDCOVER

AVAILABLE ON:



Field Activities



Kastina LIO Mr Babagida Shaibu addressing the parents at the health camp in Kastina, sponsored by Rotary International.



Kastina LGA immunization officer Mr Babagida Shaibu immunizing a child at the health camp in Kastina



Polio outbreak response campaign flag-off in Kwaya, Kwaya Kusar LGA, Southern Borno State. The event was honored by the presence of the Emir of Biu, Alh. Uar Mai Mustapha, the Emir of Shani, partners, and other dignitaries.



Alhaji Saliyu Adamu Yanga, Chairman Kwaya Kusar LGA of Borno State, giving a goodwill speech at the Borno State polio outbreak flag-off



Donation of 300 aprons to the Katsina State health team at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)



A member of the vaccination team giving pluses to caregiver



Rotary Field Coordinator Hauwau hands over essential medication to a parent at the IBRA Health Camp in Kastina State



Rotary International Vice President Yinka Babalola paid advocacy visit to Gombe State Deputy Governor Dr Manasseh Daniel Jatau

POLIO STOP



We are wishing you a
Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year

PolioStop is published by the NNPPC 8, Ladoke Akintola Street Ikeja GRA, Lagos.

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