

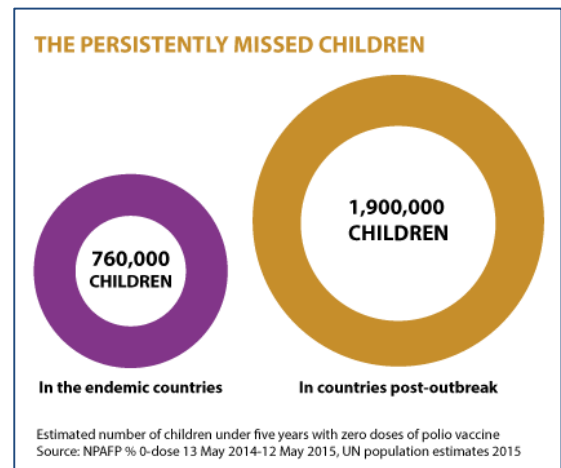
Dear Colleagues,

Last week, the Polio Independent Monitoring Board* (IMB) released its [11th Report](#). The report noted recent gains toward polio eradication—no wild polio virus cases in Nigeria since July 2014; the apparent end of the large outbreaks in the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and Central Africa; and the organizational improvements in Pakistan. However, the IMB cautions that these gains should not be a source of complacency and warns that unless major systematic, transformative changes at the global and country levels are implemented, success will not be achieved. Many aspects of polio eradication efforts have improved in the past 12 months, but this is not a time to coast.

I want to highlight two themes from the report: the critical importance of surveillance (as mentioned [previously](#)), and the need to reduce the number of consistently missed children. There continues to be far too many missed children (see figure). These missed children are often accessible but may also live in areas of insecurity, providing the polio virus an opportunity to re-establish itself by exportation from Pakistan or Afghanistan as occurred in 2013 and 2014. It is tempting to focus all the attention on places where polio is actively circulating, but if all countries want to remain polio-free, they must maintain high-quality surveillance and immunization services.

Solutions to the problem of missed children are most effective when developed locally. Finding the best people to implement an effective, locally tailored approach to reach every child is vital. GPEI has made strides in this area, but more can be done. The IMB emphasized the need for continuous quality improvement, and this is particularly important to efforts to reach missed children. Countries and communities can use creative ways to find and vaccinate chronically missed children as Nigeria has done with health camps and improved microplanning, and as India has done with microplanning, transit vaccination, and more.

The IMB also underscored the need to plan based on what is needed to achieve eradication, not limited by what funds are available. Funding for the surge cannot be ended too soon. Even after the last wild polio virus case is reported, there will still be a need for high-quality surveillance, supplemental immunization activities, certification, and containment—all requiring secure and continued financing. This will be further discussed at the upcoming Finance and Accountability Committee meeting in Geneva in June.



* The Independent Monitoring Board was established in 2010 at the request of the WHO Executive Board and the World Health Assembly. Its mission is to assess progress toward polio eradication and is comprised of global experts from fields relevant to the work of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

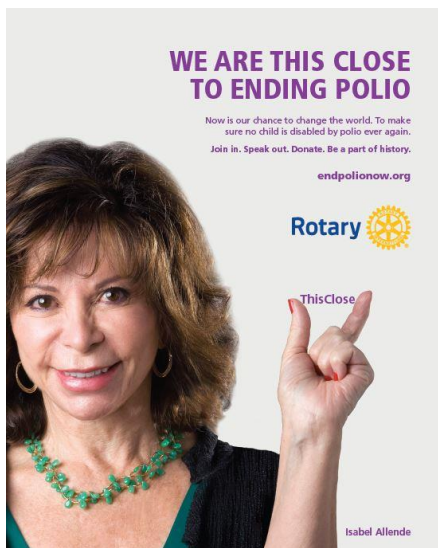
The Polio Oversight Board will review the IMB report carefully and discuss ways to address the recommendations. The upcoming Technical Advisory Group meetings in Pakistan and Afghanistan in June are another important opportunity to assess how the IMB recommendations can be implemented and complement existing national emergency plans.

Over the past five years, recommendations from the IMB have been important for accountability of polio eradication efforts. The observations of the IMB are keen and challenge us to not settle for anything less than the eradication of polio. I have excerpted highlights of the recent [report](#) here. All GPEI levels will continue to work to support the efforts of governments and communities to implement the most effective eradication strategies.

As always, thank you for your contributions to protecting the world's children.



Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Chairman, Polio Oversight Board



IMB Report Highlights: May 2015

“The most important factors in Nigeria’s progress to date seem to have been: firstly, the establishment of Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) that have transformed the quality of planning, decision-making, coordination and inter-agency working; secondly, embracing an approach of innovation and rapid scale-up; and, thirdly, addressing poor individual performance.” p. 8

“Six months on, a positive difference is evident. The signs of improvement are early but clear.... The Pakistan programme is still moving through the foothills of a very high mountain that is still to be climbed.” p. 10

“[T]here is great unrealized potential to better motivate front line workers.... [W]hen victories occur along the path to eradication, these need to be recognized and celebrated as victories of the people whose hard work brought them about.” p. 16

“These persistently missed children are being failed by the programme, and are the key to stopping polio transmission worldwide.” p. 17

“Strong surveillance has always been a cornerstone of polio eradication, but never has it been more vital than at this late stage in the global eradication effort.” p.19

“Polio eradication is long overdue, and every passing day is a day too long. All efforts must be focused totally and urgently on finishing the job.” p. 20

“The IMB recommends that programme officials from the Southern and Eastern regions of Afghanistan visit the Emergency Operations Centres of Pakistan at once, and return with lessons that can be appropriately applied in Afghanistan with urgency.” p. 23