

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

- [The Guardian](#): Polio campaign in Africa put on hold during coronavirus
- [Reuters](#): Children in South Asia at risk as coronavirus disrupts immunization drive: UNICEF
- [Devox](#): Polio eradication efforts under threat as vaccine campaigns halted
- [Telegraph](#): Pakistan braces for spike in polio cases as health workers shift focus to coronavirus
- [SciDev](#): Polio, measles outbreaks 'inevitable', say vaccine experts
- [Financial Times](#): Africa's scientists learn from past epidemics to fight COVID-19

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

- [Global Citizen](#): This Organization Is Fighting Polio and COVID-19 at the Same Time
- [WHO](#): Hard fought gains in immunization coverage at risk without critical health services, warns WHO

## LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

GPEI Continuity Planning and Facilitation Group (PFG): On 2 April 2020, the GPEI Strategy Committee (SC) proposed to form the *Continuity Planning and Facilitation Group* (PFG) for the COVID-19 context to spearhead a comprehensive, coordinated strategy that ensures ongoing effective polio eradication efforts, as well as full resumption of all aspects of polio eradication in the post-pandemic phase.

The PFG aims to facilitate the development and tracking of a comprehensive global level GPEI workplan, in support of regional and country polio-eradication activities, to adjust to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group will also work to identify and flag to the SC any long-term strategic adjustments required in the Polio Endgame Strategy 2019-2023 to ensure sustainable, effective programme operations in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Full resumption of polio eradication initiatives in the post-pandemic phase will require close collaboration with other public health programmes and essential health services, such as routine immunization. In line with WHO's COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, the PFG is committed to leveraging science, solutions and solidarity with other health stakeholders to ensure an integrated approach and effective return to the GPEI's polio eradication efforts.



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# POLIO ASSETS AND PERSONNEL SERVING

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

### ENDEMIC COUNTRIES

#### AFGHANISTAN

- The polio surveillance network is fully involved in surveillance efforts for COVID-19. So far, 100% of WHO contracted staff have been trained at regional, provincial and district levels. In addition, 45% of the polio surveillance network, over 22,000 health facility staff and more than 1,000 government and NGO workers have received training on COVID-19. Along with this, 23,000 health professionals and 34,000 community influencers have been sensitized.
- The immunization communication network (ICN) of the polio programme has distributed 1.2 million bars of soap to communities in the Eastern and Southern parts of the country.
- The UNICEF-supported polio communication network has distributed over 1.3 million information leaflets through the Ministry of Public Health and non-state parties.
- The polio programme continues supporting regular public service announcements through 120 radio stations and 50 television channels. The @PolioFreeAfghanistan and partner social media platforms are intensifying COVID-19 prevention messages reaching over 5 million social media users in the country.
- A rapid survey supported by the UNICEF Polio monitoring team

on risk perceptions and existing knowledge attitude and practices of COVID-19 in high-polio risk areas in South and Eastern regions has been completed, and the information is being utilized to promote infection prevention and control (IPC) practices and protection of health workers.

#### NIGERIA

- A network of over 7,000 community health agents on polio and other diseases has been leveraged in Nigeria for COVID-19 response. The community workers use Auto-Visual AFP Detection and Reporting – also known as AVADAR – a phone-based application with video clips in several local languages to educate families and help in the timely detection of polio. Now, these health agents are educating families on preventive measures for COVID-19, as well as helping with early detection and reporting of suspected cases to WHO.
- Existing polio partnerships supported by UNICEF with the Northern Traditional Leaders Council and religious leaders are being used to reach out to communities through social media, TV, radio and announcements from mosques and churches.

#### PAKISTAN

- Active polio surveillance in high priority sites have helped

confirm over 1,000 COVID-19 cases in Pakistan, over 4,400 suspected cases and nearly 500 probable cases.

- Polio surveillance staff have helped train and sensitize over 18,600 health care professionals, ranging from informal providers to medical personnel, as well as over 3,500 frontline health workers on COVID-19 preparedness and response.
- Following social distancing guidelines, UNICEF supported polio community outreach networks are using innovative approaches such as WhatsApp messaging, motorbikes, rickshaws equipped with PA systems, and mosque announcements, reaching over 1.2 million households.
- The polio communication network has engaged 7,000 religious leaders, and 26,000 local influencers at provincial, district & Union Council levels to promote social distancing and praying from home. In addition, the polio network is working with over 1,000 journalists and bloggers to help counter negative media and coronavirus myths.
- The national polio call centre supported by UNICEF, WHO and BMGF is currently serving as the national COVID-19 call centre and now has 200 call agents and 10 doctors deployed by the Government of Pakistan responding to over 70,000 calls a day.

# GLOBAL SNAPSHOTS

## BURKINA FASO

The polio programme has helped train medical school student representatives on how to involve students and volunteers for COVID-19 response in communities, develop training modules for community influencers, and design communications materials for community-based surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and other events in the context of COVID-19.

## INDIA

The National Polio Surveillance Project and WHO field staff have been initiated for the COVID-19 pandemic response across more than 1,000 sites throughout India, working on surveillance, contact tracing and containment activities.

## NIGER

Polio staff have supported Zinder's Governor and Regional health officer on media outreach and COVID-19 education sessions for caregivers continuing in health facilities; promoted the active use of WhatsApp groups to disseminate information and clarify doubts and misinformation, and have worked with youth student groups in praying activities and information dissemination.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Established during polio campaigns, the programme is supporting activation of national and provincial Emergency Operation Centres to coordinate the COVID-19 response throughout the country. The UNICEF polio-EPI team was also

deployed to support COVID-19 response in provinces.

## PHILIPPINES

UNICEF staff and Communication for Development (C4D) consultants assisting the Department of Health on the communications and social mobilization component of the polio outbreak response are now providing support to COVID-19 activities, such as developing key messages for the public to contain the spread of the virus.

## SOUTH SUDAN

The polio programme has supported training of health workers and community mobilizers, dissemination of informational materials on hygiene and healthy practices in the communities.

## GLOBAL: THE STOP TRANSMISSION OF POLIO (STOP) PROGRAMME

STOP personnel surveyed across 33 countries reported spending an average of 40% of their time on COVID-19 response.



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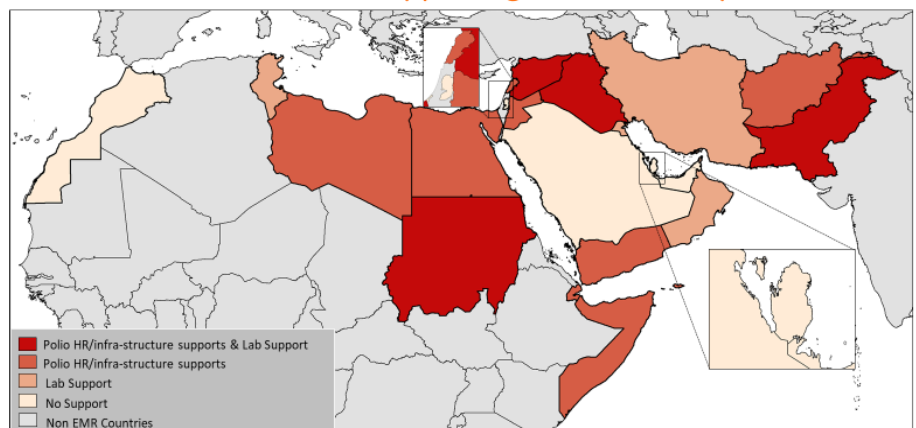
## WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR AFRICA

The polio programme's GIS Center is developing four applications that support contact tracing and health care resource assessments at a district level throughout 44 countries in WHO AFRO region. Digital solutions are also being used to reach nomadic communities.

## WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

WHO EMRO is exploring all available opportunities for collaboration with COVID-19 teams for further integration of surveillance system support. The below map depicts varying types of support provided throughout the region, also being used to reach nomadic communities.

### Polio surveillance network supporting COVID-19 Response - EMR



# SNAPSHOT: POLIO ERADICATION PROGRAMME CONTINUITY PLANNING

## KEY AREAS OF THE PLAN

WHAT ?	Measures and guidance to ensure continuity of polio eradication programme operations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.	1. Programme management and coordination
WHY ?	The COVID-19 pandemic will have serious implications for a range of public health interventions and essential health services, including polio eradication. Within this context, the polio eradication programme is strategically planning and repurposing GPEI assets to effectively contribute to the control of COVID-19, while also maintaining critical GPEI functions and enabling the full-scale resumption of its activities as soon as the COVID-19 situation abates.	2. Support to the COVID-19 response
WHO?	The plan's intended users are polio programme planners and managers in the GPEI target countries and regional offices. It also provides some recommendations for the areas of work relevant to global level planning.	3. Poliovirus surveillance and laboratory capacity
WHEN?	Continuity measures are planned initially up to the end of June 2020. This planning horizon will be regularly assessed and adjusted to align with the global COVID-19 pandemic response.	4. Supplementary Immunization Activities
		5. Vaccine supply (global)
		6. Novel mOPV2 introduction (global)
		7. Risk communications, public and donor engagement
		8. Protecting polio eradication programme personnel and communities
		9. Certification of the poliovirus eradication
		10. Poliovirus containment
		11. Resumption of full-scale polio eradication activities

