

Dear polio eradication supporter,

The last few months have featured unfortunate developments that serve as stark reminders that so long as polio is anywhere, it will remain a threat everywhere. In June, wastewater detections of variant poliovirus type 2 (VDPV2) were reported in London and in July, a case of paralytic polio caused by VDPV2 was confirmed in New York State. It has been heartening to see both the UK and the US launch rapid public health responses, using strong surveillance networks and emergency vaccination efforts to keep at-risk communities safe. The [Global Polio Eradication Initiative \(GPEI\)](#) will continue to support both countries with ongoing investigations – both genetic and epidemiological – to determine the extent of spread and prevent additional cases of paralysis.

At the same time, fellow GPEI leaders and I are extremely concerned about the devastating flooding crisis in Pakistan, leaving more than [three million children](#) in urgent need of lifesaving support and at heightened risk of malnutrition, drowning and preventable diseases like polio. GPEI is supporting immediate relief aid efforts, ensuring that essential health services and emergency aid reach those in need. GPEI will continue to support national and provincial governments to immunize children against vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles, polio, and typhoid.

Achieving polio eradication in the last two endemic countries remains an urgent priority for the entire world as evidenced by the detection this year of importation of wild poliovirus from Sindh Province into East Africa. Last month, as part of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Regional Committee Meeting for Africa in Lomé, Togo, I had the [opportunity](#) to speak with Ministers of Health from Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe to discuss ongoing response activities in the region. Alongside [Dr. Matshidiso Moeti](#) (Director, WHO AFRO), regional and country leaders recommitted to strengthening surveillance systems to detect poliovirus and improving vaccination campaigns to stop further spread. On the [two-year anniversary](#) of declaring the entire WHO Africa Region free of indigenous wild poliovirus, I am encouraged that African leaders will maintain strong response efforts to stop all forms of the virus on the continent. We are also encouraged with the widespread use of nOPV2 in more than twenty countries – we expect to hit the five hundred millionth dose administered any week now – as well as the declining trend of new emergences of cVDPV2 in 2021-2022.

However, to support these Ministers of Health, other affected country governments and local partners around the world, the GPEI must secure the US \$4.8 billion needed to fully implement its eradication strategy and deliver a polio-free world. At this month's meeting, the Polio Oversight Board approved a 2022 GPEI budget increase from \$932M to \$1,070M, and approved a \$1,050M 2023 GPEI budget to support a robust response to outbreaks and fully fund the polio program in the endemic countries to leverage new opportunities to access at-risk communities. The Polio Oversight Board emphasized the importance of continued budget prioritization and efficiencies to reduce costs, but also underscored that without additional funding, the GPEI would be forced to make difficult programmatic trade-offs and encouraged donors to pledge additional funds at the October World Health Summit Event in Germany.

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At this year's World Health Summit in Berlin, donors have the historic opportunity to ensure that no child will be paralyzed by polio ever again. At the GPEI's pledging moment on October 18<sup>th</sup>, I look forward to welcoming donors, partners, and country representatives from around the world alongside the assembled GPEI leadership and Minister Schulze (Development Minister, BMZ). Special thanks to the Government of Germany for co-hosting this crucial milestone toward a polio-free world. I would also like to extend deep appreciation to [Rotarians](#) worldwide who have been committed to polio eradication since the 1980s. The world would not be this close to eradication without your support.

From New York State to Tete Province to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and everywhere in between, it is clear that as long as polio continues to circulate anywhere, children everywhere will remain at risk. The GPEI has faced and overcome challenges to eradication in the past, and with the necessary support, I am confident that we will finish the job.

Best regards,



Christopher J. Elias, MD, MPH  
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Chair, Polio Oversight Board, Global Polio Eradication Initiative

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