



Dear polio eradication supporter,

Upcoming March milestones provide exciting opportunities to highlight the important work being done by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. On 8 March, we celebrate International Women’s Day (IWD), spotlighting the women across the world who are paving the way towards a polio-free future. Tune into the webinar, [Why Gender Matters](#), on 7 March to learn more about how gender-related barriers impact immunization. In addition to IWD, we look forward to celebrating the South-East Asia Region’s (SEARO) 10-year wild poliovirus free anniversary. This milestone serves as a powerful reminder of the collective commitment that can make a seemingly insurmountable challenge possible.

Leaving no stone unturned to refine poliovirus surveillance systems



© WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region

WHO started the year by convening a three-day meeting in Oman to support the programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia to further refine surveillance for poliovirus in children and in the environment. The teams reviewed implementation status of the Global Polio Surveillance Action Plan 2022-2024 and considered strategies to enhance their surveillance plans and address potential gaps in surveillance. These efforts will enhance the timeliness of detection of any polioviruses, advance opportunities for integration and ensure gender-related aspects are embedded in various streams of work. This was the last technical meeting that Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, the former Regional Director for the WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region, attended during his five-year tenure.

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild Poliovirus in 2024 (2023)*

Global Total: 0 (0)

Circulating Vaccine Derived Poliovirus in 2024 (2023)*

Global Total: 0 (4)

*Data as of 27 February 2024. Numbers in brackets represent data at this time in 2023.

Breakdown by country
[Polio this week](#)

POLIO IN THE NEWS

[The Telegraph](#): This polio doctor believed he had a ‘sacred’ duty to vaccinate children – now he is dead (Ben Farmer & Ashfaq Yusufzai, 21 February 2024)

[Associated Press](#): Zimbabwe starts an emergency polio vaccination drive after detecting cases caused by a rare mutation (Farai Mutsaka, 20 February 2024)

[Our World in Data](#): The global fight against polio — how far have we come? (Max Roser, 19 February 2024)

What's next for nOPV2

From being developed through a public-private partnership to being the first vaccine to move from use under a WHO Emergency Use Listing authorization [to full licensure and WHO prequalification](#), the journey of the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) has been unlike any other. Now that nOPV2 has received WHO's final stamp of approval, making it easier for countries to use, experts are excitedly looking ahead to how nOPV2 will strengthen outbreak response. Read more about the future of nOPV2 in this [GPEI interview](#) with Dr. Ananda S. Bandyopadhyay (Chair, nOPV Working Group, GPEI and Deputy Director, Polio, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), Ann Ottosen (Chair, Vaccine Supply Group, GPEI and Senior Manager, Vaccine Supply, UNICEF), and Dr Jamal Ahmad (Polio Eradication Coordinator, WHO African Region). [[More](#)]



An unbroken spirit



In the wake of a life-altering accident, Huma Ashraf's courage shines as a beacon of hope and strength. While working as a health worker with Pakistan's Polio Program, she found herself in a harrowing accident that left her without both feet. However, Huma's unwavering spirit, supported by her family, colleagues, and leaders in the Polio Program, propels her forward. Despite the challenges, Huma remains steadfast in her determination to return to her work in polio eradication, embodying the essence of resilience. Read more about Huma's inspiring journey [here](#).

DONOR UPDATES

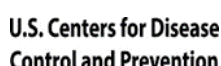
WHO would like to extend its gratitude to the Board of Trustees of the **Rotary Foundation** for the approval of new grants totaling US\$ 25.5 million at its January 2024 meeting, in support of polio campaign operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, technical assistance in Nigeria and global outbreak response.

UNICEF and WHO gratefully acknowledge the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** for the contributions of €119.7 million and €51.3 million, respectively, to support vaccine procurement and response activities in outbreak countries. These are the first disbursements of an innovative financing partnership with the EIB, the **European Commission** and the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** that aims to invest €500 million in support of the GPEI.

WHO is very grateful to **US CDC** for their generous contribution of US\$ 18 million to support technical assistance, STOP and global polio eradication activities.

WHO also thanks **USAID** for the contributions of US\$ 500 000 and US\$ 600 000 to support polio surveillance in Benin and Nepal, respectively.

UNICEF would like to thank **Rotary International** for their generous contribution of US\$ 25 185 348, which will support UNICEF's polio eradication activities in the endemics and global outbreak response activities.



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Photo of the Month



A health worker holds a vial of nOPV2. © WHO AFRO