



Dear polio eradication supporter,

This past month, we celebrated an important milestone – the South-East Asia Region’s 10-year anniversary of being certified wild-polio free. To honor this milestone, experts involved in this accomplishment including Dr Ananda Bandyopadhyay (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) and Deepak Kapur (Rotary International) [shared insights](#) on how the country became polio-free. These lessons are critical as we strive to reach a polio-free world. At the end of this month, **we will celebrate World Immunization Week from 24-30 April!** GPEI partners are looking forward to joining in the launch of an exciting new digital campaign for World Immunization Week 2024, and we hope you will take part too. Keep an eye on our channels over the coming weeks and help us tell the world that with vaccines, a healthier, polio-free world is possible.

Health ministers convene to discuss polio



At the end of March, Dr Hanan Balkhy convened the WHO Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) Regional Subcommittee on Polio Eradication and Outbreaks for the first time in her new role as WHO EMRO Regional Director. Speaking to Subcommittee members, Dr Balkhy emphasized her priority to build the region’s capacity not just to end polio transmission, but to remain polio-free. Critical strategies to this effort include maintained high-quality surveillance and intensified cross-border collaboration between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Read more about what members discussed [here](#).

POLIO IN NUMBERS

Wild Poliovirus in 2024 (2023)*

Global Total: 2 (1)

Circulating Vaccine Derived Poliovirus in 2024 (2023)*

Global Total: 9 (31)

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

Breakdown by country
[Polio this week](#)

POLIO IN THE NEWS

[The Telegraph](#): Child left paralysed as Pakistan records its first polio case of the year (Lilia Sebouai, 20 March 2024)

[The Nation](#): Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation reiterates support to Pakistan to end polio (18 March 2024)

[The Guardian](#): Global eradication of polio ‘tantalisingly close’ with UK urged to keep up funding (Shaoni Bhattacharya, 16 March 2024)

Women on the frontlines of polio eradication in Afghanistan

Women in the Female Mobiliser Vaccinator (FMV) program in Afghanistan are leading vital immunization efforts to reach every child and end polio in the country. From bustling maternity wards to remote communities, FMVs are driving the polio eradication program forward, administering life-saving vaccines and conducting vital health education sessions. Since its inception in 2020, this groundbreaking project has expanded to 20 out of the country's 34 provinces, improving the health and lives of thousands of women and children daily. Check out [this story](#) to learn how the FMV program, tailored to Afghanistan's cultural complexities, is revolutionizing healthcare delivery, increasing vaccination rates, and fostering trust in the healthcare system.



Remembering Paul Alexander, who lived 70 years in an iron lung

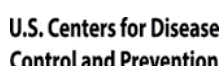


The GPEI was deeply saddened by the passing of Paul Alexander, who spent 70 years living in an iron lung after contracting polio as a child. During his incredible life, Paul overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles and became an accomplished lawyer, author, artist, and advocate. Paul was a proud Rotarian and enjoyed sharing his story with other Rotarians to inspire action on eradication efforts. Honoring his memory, Rotary has published a [reflection](#) on his remarkable accomplishments.

DONOR UPDATES

WHO would like to thank the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** for the generous contribution of US\$ 20 million to support polio campaign operations, technical assistance and other immunization activities in Pakistan.

WHO is very grateful to the **US CDC** for the contribution of US\$ 2 million to support the GPEI STOP (Stop Transmission of Polio) Program. The STOP Program recruits and trains international public health consultants to deploy to countries worldwide in efforts to combat polio.



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Photo of the Month



At a temporary health facility in Eastern Afghanistan, a female mobiliser vaccinator (FMV) marks a young boy's finger after giving him polio vaccine. The Afghan boy had recently returned from Pakistan.
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