

Current major event

Ending Polio: Final push

As the world celebrates the world polio day, the battle continues to end polio transmission in two of the last endemic countries in the world which happen to be both in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO.

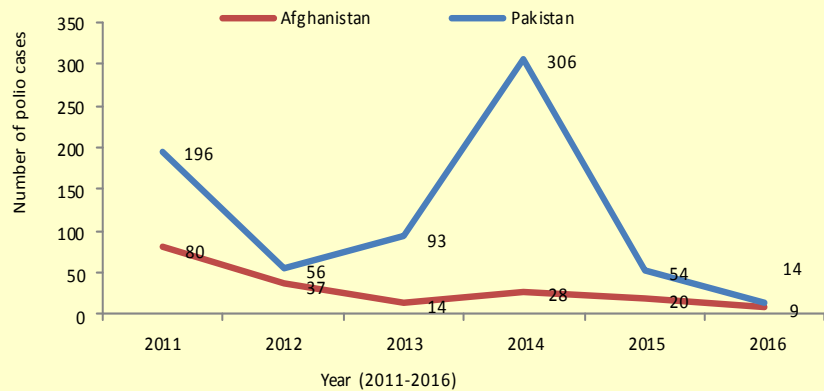
Editorial note

World Polio Day was established by Rotary International over a decade ago on 24 October to commemorate the birth of Jonas Salk, who led the first team to develop a vaccine against poliomyelitis. Use of this inactivated poliovirus vaccine and subsequent widespread use of the oral poliovirus led to the reduction of polio worldwide by 99% with only Afghanistan, and Pakistan as the remaining polio endemic countries in 2016.

Polio is a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease. There is no cure, but there are safe and effective vaccines. Polio can be prevented through immunization. Polio vaccine, given multiple times, almost always protects a child for life. The strategy to eradicate polio is therefore based on preventing infection by immunizing every child until transmission stops and the world is polio-free.

While tremendous progress has been made in Region including in last two endemic countries of the world-both happen to be in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (Please see the graph), pockets of wild poliovirus remain, leaving unvaccinated children at risk of lifelong, irreversible paralysis in these two countries as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Polio resurged in Syria in 2013 and Iraq in 2014 in the Region after 14 years of absence. An 18-month multi-country, multi-partner outbreak response, including more than 50 rounds of polio campaigns, successfully stopped the spread of the virus. Despite these gains, serious challenges remain, for example, conflict limits consistent access to high-risk populations in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and this continues to hinder efforts to vaccinate every single child

Trend of polio cases in endemic countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2011-2016



Confirmed Polio Cases reported from endemic countries in last six months of 2016

Month	Afghanistan	Pakistan
October	2	
September	2	2
August	2	
July	0	1
June	0	2

under five, and compromises surveillance and early warning systems.

Polio continues to circulate in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and recently made a comeback in Nigeria, and so long as there is transmission anywhere, children in the Region are always at risk.

What is important now is as the final push to end wild polio virus transmission in the Region is to strengthen routine immunization in all countries in the region and focus on high risk areas to ensure every child is vaccinated and to prevent future outbreaks. In addition, periodic supplementary vaccination campaigns will be needed in polio-endemic countries as well as other high risk countries until polio is eradicated worldwide. Surveillance, mop-up campaigns and care for post-polio paralysis are the other activities which need to be scaled up for this final push.

World Polio Day is an opportunity for the global polio eradication community to renew its promise of a polio-free world to future generations.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

MERS-CoV in Saudi Arabia; Cholera in Somalia; Cholera in Yemen

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian Influenza : 2006-2016

Egypt (A/H5N1) [356 (121), 33.9%]
 Egypt (A/H9N2) [3 (0)]

MERS-CoV: 2012-2016

Saudi Arabia [1414 (601), 42.5%]
 Bahrain [1 (1), 100%]

Cholera : 2016

Somalia [13728 (497), 3.6%]
 Yemen [2241 (47), 2.4%]

Yellow fever: 2015-2016

Angola [4347 (377), 8.7%]
 DRC [2987 (16), 0.5%]

Lassa fever : 2015-2016

Nigeria [273(149), 54.5%]
 Benin [54(28),51.8%

Avian Influenza A (H7N9) : 2013-2016

China [775 (307),36%]

Avian Influenza A (H5N6) : 2016

China [4 (0)]

Wild poliovirus: 2014-2016

Pakistan [376(0)]
 Afghanistan [66(0)]

Zika Virus Infection: 2007-2016

73 countries and territories have reported transmission so far