

POLIO ERADICATION WHERE WE STAND!

The number of countries where polio is endemic decreased from 10 in 2001 to seven in 2002. Of the 1,920 polio cases reported in 2002, a total of 1,893 (99%) were reported from three countries: India (1,599), Nigeria (201), and Pakistan (93). Pakistan reported 22% fewer cases in 2002 (93) compared with 2001 (119). In addition, transmission was more focal in 2002 compared with 2001. Genetically related P3 clusters decreased from six in 2001 to one in 2002.

January–April 2014, Pakistan reported 66 cases, compared with eight cases reported during the same period in 2013. Since mid-2012, local authorities have imposed a complete ban on conducting SIAs in North Waziristan and South Waziristan. Pakistan's polio eradication program faced a number of significant challenges in 2013. These challenges meant that the ambition to stop the transmission of wild poliovirus by the end of the year was unfortunately not possible. In fact, the program was severely challenged in 2013, as the number of wild polio cases increased on last year's count.

There are multiple reasons for why this was the case. Unprecedented violent attacks on health workers, ongoing military operations in the tribal belt and a ban on polio drops called by militants in North Waziristan and South Waziristan created distinct barriers between vaccinators and children. Lapses in campaign quality and demand creation efforts are also partly to blame for the increase in the number of paralyzed children.

However, despite these setbacks the program also made progress. The number of districts infected with polio decreased, indicating that spread is more localized and type-3 of the poliovirus has not been detected for more than a year now.

Until 2000, the WHO clinical classification scheme for reporting polio cases was used in Pakistan. In 1999, 561 AFP cases were classified as confirmed polio. Of the 561 confirmed cases, 328 had wild poliovirus isolated from stool specimens; 265 were poliovirus type 1 (P1) and 63 were poliovirus type 3 (P3). Effective January 2000, the classification scheme was changed to a system in which cases with wild poliovirus isolated are classified as confirmed, and those without adequate specimens but with signs and symptoms consistent with polio are classified as compatible. Cases with inadequate specimens are classified by a review committee of provincial medical experts.

Since the 1988 World Health Assembly resolution to eradicate poliomyelitis globally through 2002, the number of countries where polio is endemic declined from 125 to seven, and the estimated incidence of polio decreased >99%. In 2002, the European Region became the third World Health Organization (WHO) region certified as polio-free, joining the Region of the Americas and the Western Pacific Region, certified polio-free in 1994 and 2000, respectively. Despite these achievements, a provisional total of 1,920 polio cases were reported during 2002, a substantial increase from 483 in 2001, reflecting primarily the large polio epidemic in India

In 1988, the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) resolved to interrupt wild poliovirus (WPV) transmission worldwide, and in 2012, the World Health Assembly declared the completion of global polio eradication a programmatic emergency for public health. By 2013, the annual number of WPV cases had decreased by >99% since 1988, and only three countries remained that had never interrupted WPV transmission: Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Polio cases in Pakistan in 2002: 93 cases

Polio cases in Pakistan in 2010: 144 cases

Polio cases in Pakistan in 2011: 198 cases

Polio Cases in Pakistan in 2012: 58 cases

Polio Cases in Pakistan in 2013: 93 cases

The polio eradication initiative is now paid for by the Government of Pakistan for the people of Pakistan. Polio will be eradicated by Pakistan and for the sake of Pakistan.

The country is at a critical juncture and intensified polio eradication activities in the next few months will determine if eradication of poliovirus will be successful in 2014.

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