



Polio vaccinators vaccinate Afghan refugee children returning from Pakistan on 7 November 2016 at the Torkham border in Nangarhar province. Photo: WHO/S.RamoKabul 7 November 2016 – The Ministry of Public Health along with its partners WHO and UNICEF launched a polio vaccination campaign today in all provinces of the southern, eastern and south-eastern regions as well as selected high-risk districts across the country, including Kabul city. The campaign aims to reach over 5.6 million children and will run until 11 November.

Polio is a crippling disease that is incurable and can only be prevented through vaccination. Every child under the age of 5 in Afghanistan should be vaccinated during each vaccination round.

“Wherever children are not immunized, children’s lives are at risk everywhere in Afghanistan. We urge all caregivers to vaccinate their children against polio because the polio vaccine is the only way to protect children from permanent paralysis and even death,” said H.E. Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz. “Afghanistan is closer than ever to stopping the circulation of the wild poliovirus and our focus remains on reaching and immunizing every single child.”

The polio vaccine is safe and the only effective prevention for polio disease. Polio vaccines are halal and have been specifically endorsed by leaders of the Islamic community, most recently in a conference attended by over 80 ulama in Nangarhar last week. The vaccine is completely safe for newborn, sleeping and sick children and it has no side effects.

The campaign is carried out by around 25 000 trained vaccinators and it runs for four days with an additional day on Friday for vaccinators to revisit children who were missed when the vaccinators first visited. These vaccinators and other frontline health workers are trusted members of the community and they have been chosen because they care about children. Parents who miss having their children vaccinated over the next four days are urged to visit local health centres where their children can be vaccinated against polio.

So far 12 wild poliovirus cases have been reported in 2016 from Kunar, Paktika, Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Afghanistan remains one of the 3 polio-endemic countries together with Pakistan and Nigeria.

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[Polio Eradication Initiative](#)

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