



Kabul, 25 July 2016 – The Ministry of Public Health, with the support of WHO and UNICEF, will hold concurrent vaccination campaigns in July and August to vaccinate around 4.3 million children under the age of 5 against polio. These vaccinations are particularly important for children because the months between May and October are Afghanistan’s high transmission season for polio. The poliovirus is most active and dangerous during these warm summer months, putting Afghan children more at risk of becoming paralyzed or killed.

Children under 5 years of age will be vaccinated in 135 districts with a high risk for polio throughout the country. The first campaign runs from 25 to 29 July and the next from 1 to 5 August. Many of the targeted districts were missed during a campaign in March when snow and bad weather conditions hampered vaccination teams’ access to these areas.

“The aim of the polio programme is that not a single child is missed during these vaccination campaigns because only that is how the virus can be controlled and children can be saved from this preventable disease,” said the Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz. “It is especially important that all children are vaccinated this round because the risks are so high right now and children need to build a wall of immunity through repeated vaccinations.”

“Afghanistan’s polio programme has made significant progress in the recent months and we are closer than ever to eradicating this debilitating disease for good. We need to make sure that all parents and caregivers give 2 drops of the polio vaccine to their children during every single campaign round to boost their immunity and protect all Afghan children,” said Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Representative in Afghanistan.

Polio is a crippling disease that is caused by unwashed hands or contaminated objects. It is incurable and can only be prevented through vaccination. Every child under the age of 5 in Afghanistan should be vaccinated during each round. The polio vaccine is safe also for newborn, sleeping and sick children, it has no side-effects and it is the only effective prevention for polio.

A recent meeting by the Technical Advisory Group on polio eradication concluded that Afghanistan has made significant progress in polio eradication efforts as witnessed by polio epidemiology, improvements in population immunity and the quality of supplementary immunization activities and vaccination campaigns. So far this year 6 polio cases have been confirmed in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only 2 remaining polio-endemic countries in the world, forming one epidemiological block.

### Relevant links

[Global Polio Eradication Initiative - Afghanistan](#)

[Technical Advisory Group on polio eradication meeting in July 2016 in Kabul](#)

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