



**Kabul, 18 September 2018** – A new polio case has been reported in Kandahar. A 14-month-old boy from Loyawala will be permanently paralysed by polio. This is the 14<sup>th</sup> case in Afghanistan, and the 9<sup>th</sup> case in the southern region.

The Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz expressed concern that Afghanistan now has

the highest number of polio cases in the world: “Another young boy has been needlessly paralysed by polio in Kandahar. This should never have happened. Polio is serious and has lifelong consequences, but the virus can be eliminated from our country. The only way to do this is to repeatedly vaccinate every child. I urge parents to learn the facts about the vaccine and ensure their child is protected from permanent paralysis.”

Next Monday, polio vaccination teams will visit 6.4 million children under the age of five in 27 high-risk provinces, mainly in Kandahar and Nangarhar. This follows several new cases in both regions.

The vaccination campaign will take place from 24 - 28 September 2018. Parents should ensure their children are home and available to be vaccinated. All children under five should receive the polio vaccine, including newborns, sleeping, sick, and visiting children. Children who miss the vaccination should visit their local health centre as soon as possible, where the vaccine is available free of charge. The polio vaccine is safe, even for sick and newborn children. It is very important these children get the vaccine, because they have lower immunity which makes them more susceptible to the virus. Repeated vaccination is very important for children because it builds their immunity to the virus.

Polio is a crippling and a potentially fatal infectious disease. There is no cure and the polio vaccine is the only safe and effective way to protect children. All children should be vaccinated against polio during each campaign, until they reach the age of five. House-to-house vaccination is the only way to achieve polio eradication because it means every child has access to vaccination. This strategy has been implemented in all countries that have managed to eradicate the virus.

Currently, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are the only three remaining polio-endemic countries in the world.

**The Ministry of Public Health urges parents and caregivers to ensure no child misses the vaccine, as this is the only protection from polio and permanent paralysis.**

***For more information:***

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