

26 Sept, 2019 Kabul – We acknowledge and welcome the lifting of the ban on WHO activities in Afghanistan. Unhindered access to all areas is necessary to provide health services to those in need.

WHO is supporting health activities in all parts of Afghanistan, including primary health care, response to health emergencies, vaccination and polio eradication. Access to health services is a basic human right. WHO is committed to ensuring access to health services for all.

In 2019, so far, 16 Afghan children have been paralyzed due to infection with the poliovirus. Afghanistan is one of only two countries in the world still reporting circulation of the wild poliovirus.

“We welcome this announcement as a step in the right direction and, with partners, will start Health Facility based campaigns in the previously banned areas ” said Dr Richard Peepkorn, WHO Afghanistan Representative, “However, we are concerned that following this long pause in vaccination, more children have become vulnerable to poliovirus, and we will see more Afghan children paralyzed”.

To eradicate Polio, at least 95% of the under-five population need to be repeatedly vaccinated. Experience has shown that house to house campaigns are the best way to consistently reach all children with the polio vaccine.

“We will continue to reach out to help ensure all children in Afghanistan will be reached and protected by the polio vaccine, and eradicate polio once and forever”, said Dr Richard Peepkorn.

We welcome this development and call upon all parties to ensure the neutrality of health interventions and protection of health workers.

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