

**Kabul, March 14, 2018**

Two new polio cases have been confirmed in the past week in Kunar and Kandahar provinces, bring the total number of confirmed polio cases in Afghanistan to 5 during 2018.

The cases occurred in Ghaziabad and Shahwalikot districts. Both children – who are now paralysed for life – have never been vaccinated against polio.

Both cases have been reported from refusal families, who never allowed their children to be vaccinated by the teams coming at their door steps. This is an important reminder to all parents that polio is a real and serious health risk. Polio is incurable and the only way to protect your child from potential paralysis is to vaccinate.

A team at the national level has been assigned to conduct a detailed investigation and risk assessment of the cases and the area to understand the risk of further spread of virus to other children.

The cases were confirmed whilst a nationwide polio vaccination campaign is underway across the country. This week, around 9.9 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated against polio.

Children are at the greatest risk of polio because their immunity is low. The virus is a crippling and 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. While there is a child anywhere with polio, all children are at risk of this crippling disease.

The Polio Eradication Initiative is a global public health intervention that aims to eradicate polio and protect children from paralysis.

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

**For more information, please contact:**

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