



With UAE PAP's support, millions of children have been reached with vital oral polio vaccine in the highest-risk areas of Pakistan. In the last week of August, more than 15.5 million children across Pakistan's highest-risk districts received the most vital health interventions to protect them from polio: two drops of oral polio vaccine.

Pakistan is close to entering the final stages of what will be a major milestone in global health: the interruption of polio. After many years, and despite many challenges faced by the polio programme, the highly transmittable yet vaccine-preventable virus, is finding that there are very few places left to hide.

In some of the highest-risk districts, where polio has in the past found haven, vaccinators like Shahnaz and Fatima take to the streets of their union council monthly during mass immunization campaigns with one focus: miss no child.

Knocking on the doors of every house in their area, these vaccination teams ask parents and care givers to allow them to vaccinate any children below 5 years in their home.

During the August subnational immunization days in North Nazimabad, a town in the core polio

reservoir of Karachi, Shahnaz shares details of her microplan, “I have a target of children that I should achieve [vaccinating] by the end of this campaign – but this only tells us about the children we know about, maybe from the last campaign. There are also children that are visiting our area, maybe staying with relatives, or there are new families, some we didn’t vaccinate here last campaign. Those are the children we need to ensure are protected by the two drops,” she says.

A vaccinator for two years, Shahnaz says that there are many challenges teams can face in the field in carrying out their mission to protect the children of Pakistan from this crippling virus. “There are often children that are not home when we visit, so we record their date and time of return and later we will go back to their houses to vaccinate them. Besides not available children, there are still some parents who refuse to vaccinate their children when we first knock on their door,” Shahnaz said, “We talk to them, if they still do not agree we have the support of local community leaders and the local imam who will return to the home to speak with the parents about their concerns.”

During the 2015–2016 low season, the programme made steady progress in reducing the immunity gap through a series of well-planned, high-quality immunization campaigns. In 2016, supported by the United Arab Emirates Pakistan Assistance Programme (UAE PAP) the programme is making extra gains in the 66 high-risk districts across Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federal Administered Tribal Areas and Sindh.

The campaign across the high-risk districts, referred to as the Emirates Polio Campaign, was launched under the directives from President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and as part of an initiative of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of United Arab Emirates Armed Forces, to support Pakistan to eradicate the disease.

In the first five months of this year, more than 10.5 million children received repeated doses of polio drops in the campaigns supported by UAE PAP. The financial contribution through World Health Organization (WHO) Pakistan has also extended to cover incentives to polio frontline workers, in addition to the associated operational costs of the campaigns in identified districts.

Michel Thieren, WHO’s Representative to Pakistan said the continuous support of UAE PAP has enabled WHO to continue strengthening capacity and outreach in the most difficult part of Pakistan.

“Each time our polio workers vaccinate a child we are not only keeping that child on her/his feet, but are one step closer to our goal. Much of the recent success in Pakistan is owed to innovative practices and outreach strategies that the programme is turning to in the last mile. Without the generous and ongoing support of donors like United Arab Emirates, the programme would be lacking what it needs to push through to the end.

“We are extremely grateful to the United Arab Emirates and the director of the Director of UAE PAP, Mr Abdullah Khalifa Al Ghafli, for the multi-year long commitment shown to ending polio in Pakistan. Mr Al Ghafli truly is a polio eradicator.”

The United Arab Emirates has long played a pivotal role in supporting global eradication efforts. In 2013, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, announced a commitment of AED 440 million (US\$ 120 million) in support of global efforts to push the world over the finish line for polio eradication, with a focus on Pakistan, one of the last endemic countries.

In July, UAE PAP announced a further \$US 8.3 million contribution to the polio programme in Pakistan to continue the Emirates Polio Campaign across the 66 high-risk districts identified for support.

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