

24 January 2018 – Year 2017 was historic for Pakistan’s polio eradication programme as the country registered an overall 97% drop in wild poliovirus cases from the dire situation of 2014 – cases consistently dropped from highs of 306 to 54 in 2015–2020 in 2016 and only 8 in 2017. Despite many challenges faced by the programme in 2017, fewer children were being missed by vaccinators and the campaign quality has continued to increase.

In 2017, thanks to the support of the United Arab Emirates’ Pakistan Assistance Programme polio campaign Phase IV, more than 12.8 million children across Pakistan’s highest risk districts were repeatedly reached with the most vital health intervention for protection against polio: 2 drops of oral polio vaccine (OPV).

The generous support of the United Arab Emirates has greatly contributed to the turnaround seen in Pakistan since 2014, when the country reported 306 cases. Since then, a reinvigorated programme has been able to first stem the tide of uncontrolled transmission and tackle the more chronic underlying challenges that have proven obstacles to virus interruption and eradication. A fundamental paradigm shift towards reaching and vaccinating missed children among the 37 million target under 5 population has seen missed children reduced to historic lows.

With the support of funds from the United Arab Emirates, highly committed and dedicated staff in the field have accessed and facilitated access to the 66 most high-risk districts across Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federal Administered Tribal Areas and Sindh, vaccinating some of the most vulnerable children, many of whom would otherwise not have been reached by any health service.

The financial contribution made through WHO Pakistan has ensured that more than 96.23 million doses of polio vaccine were received by vulnerable children in Pakistan. It also helped to cover incentives to polio frontline workers, in addition to the associated operational costs of the campaigns in identified districts, enabling WHO to continue strengthening capacity and outreach in the most difficult parts of Pakistan.

“We are extremely grateful to the United Arab Emirates and the Director of the Pakistan Assistance Programme, Mr Abdullah Khalifa Al Ghafli, for the continued commitment to polio in Pakistan. Initiated in 2013, the generous support from the United Arab Emirates has helped the programme accomplish its peak performance. We would not have been able to achieve what

we achieved today without the unwavering support from the United Arab Emirates,” said Dr Mohammad Assai Ardakani, WHO Representative in Pakistan.

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, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces announced a commitment of US\$ 120 million in support of global efforts to put the world over the finish line for polio eradication, with a focus on Pakistan, one of the last endemic countries. His Highness has also announced further contribution of US\$ 30 million to this initiative during Atlanta International Convention 2017 under the slogan “reach zero polio case: charity to eradication polio in the world”. Since 2011, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan has donated US\$ 167 million to support global efforts to eradicate poliomyelitis, focusing particularly on Pakistan and Afghanistan.

## **Overview of United Arab Emirates’ Support to the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative**

In 2017, the United Arab Emirates contributed \$US 18.7 million to the Polio Eradication Initiative in Pakistan through WHO to cover incentives to polio frontline workers, in addition to the associated operational costs during the supplementary immunization activities in 66 high-risk districts of FATA, KPK, Baluchistan and Sindh.

- Through this initiative, more than 12.8 million children were repeatedly administered polio drops between February and December 2017. During this period, more than 96.23 million doses of polio vaccine were given to children during campaigns in 66 districts in different parts of Pakistan.
- This contribution helped to reach children in the most insecure areas through the support to more than 25 000 security forces.
- The financial support has allowed the programme for continued incentives to 87 000 frontline workers in addition to their transportation costs, which adds to their motivation.

In 2018, the United Arab Emirates’ contribution will help vaccinate 13.36 million children in 83 high-risk districts in Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federal Administered Tribal Areas and

Sindh.

Friday 26th of April 2024 03:37:25 PM