18 December 2012, Islamabad: The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF join the Government of Pakistan and the provinces of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in condemning the multiple attacks that have killed six health workers in the past 24 hours.

At least six people working on a polio vaccination campaign have been reported shot dead in several locations in Pakistan - Gadap, Landi, Baldia and Orangi towns of Karachi city, Sindh Province and Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Those killed were among thousands who work selflessly across Pakistan to eradicate polio.

The Government of Pakistan and the affected provinces have temporarily suspended the vaccination campaign due to concerns over safety of health workers.

Such attacks deprive Pakistan's most vulnerable populations – especially children - of basic life-saving health interventions. We call on the leaders of the affected communities and everyone concerned to do their utmost to protect health workers and create a secure environment so that we can meet the health needs of the children of Pakistan.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that can cause permanent paralysis in a matter of hours. Safe and effective vaccines protect children from the disease. Currently the disease remains endemic in only three countries: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan.

WHO, UNICEF and all their partners in Pakistan and globally express their deepest sympathy to the families of the health workers. We remain committed to supporting the Government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan in their efforts to rid the country of polio and other diseases.

For further information, please contact:

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