Challenges

- Resource challenges lead to decreased supplementary immunization activities.
- Conflict and insecurity disrupt services and complicate the difficult jobs of health workers.
- Fragile vaccine supply with few manufacturers and limited capacity following disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Vaccination refusal continues due to misinformation and community fatigue, which was exacerbated during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Health systems in Africa are strained by competing health priorities and emergencies, which negatively impact efforts to address health challenges, including polio, resulting in delayed vaccination campaigns and variable quality of those.

Way forward

- Strengthen cross border coordination, communication and collaboration.
- Improve population immunity focusing on reaching zero dose, under-immunized children in hard-to- reach and/or security-affected areas.
- Enhance and expand Acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and environmental surveillance for rapid detection.
- Strengthen laboratory sequencing capacity.
- Advance gender equality and the empowerment of women to eradicate polio.
- Intensify vaccination campaigns, leveraging technology and innovative solutions.

Find out more:

SCAN ME

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Polio Eradication in the African Region

World Health Organization
African Region

POLIO GLOBAL ERADICATION INITIATIVE

Highlights (January - July 2024)

The African Region has remained steadfast in its commitment to eradicating all forms of polio, safeguarding children from the devastating effects of paralysis and death. In May 2024, following thorough assessments, an independent Polio Outbreak Response Assessment Team (OBRA) recommended the closure of the wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) outbreak in Malawi and Mozambique. This triumph stands as a powerful testament to the relentless dedication and unity of African governments, health workers, communities and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). This multi-country response protected the extraordinary milestone achieved in 2020, the certification of the African Region as free of indigenous wild poliovirus.

Also, in December 2023, the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) made history by becoming the first vaccine under the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing (EUL) to achieve full licensure and prequalification for its expanded use. The African Region is leading its deployment, with over a billion doses administered since March 2021.

The WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) is implementing a set of prevention and response activities including iimplementation of supplementary immunization activities, building human resource capacity, providing technical support, strengthening surveillance activities and data and information management (Including the use of geospatial technologies). WHO is also leveraging the existing polio assets to support other crucial public health priorities, particularly enhancing vaccine-preventable disease surveillance, strengthening routine immunization, and increasing response capacity.

Our impact in the African Region

167 million children vaccinated in 2024 (as of end of July)

25 countries conducted vaccination rounds against polio (as of end of July)

1.8 million polio frontline workers paid with digital finance solutions in 22 African countries

11 WHO-trained labs expanded genomic sequencing, with 6 of them pilot-testing techniques

98% (46/47) of countries have established environmental surveillance systems

800+ health professionals trained in GIS, ODK, GTS, data analysis, and visualization in 2024

We support countries

Maintaining high quality surveillance to ensure polioviruses are detected on time. The region achieved a 6.7 Non polio Acute Flaccid Paralysis rate (full year) and a 89% stool adequacy rate in 2023, meeting targets for both key core surveillance indicators. Over 241,000 active surveillance visits were documented electronically with AFRO developed technologies in 2023.

Detecting 204 polioviruses in 21 countries in 2024 (as of mid August, 2024). variant type 1 and 2 cases were confirmed. 59% (28/47) of countries in the African Region reported polio cases in the past year.

Responding to polio outbreaks by implementing supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) in 25 African countries from January to end of July, 2024. In total, more than 167 million children were vaccinated with at least one dose of polio vaccine.

Enabling 98% (46/47) of countries in the African Region to have functional Environmental Surveillance Systems. All countries have been visited and 47 new environmental surveillance sites were set up in 2023, resulting in enhanced detection activities. More than 7,300 environmental isolates were collected from wastewater and tested in the past year.

Enhancing country capacities through the AFRO Geographic Information Systems Centre to map cross-border communities, migratory routes, border crossings and transit routes using key electronic data tools (eSURV, ODK). Over 800 health professionals were trained in GIS, ODK, GTS, data analysis, and visualization tools in the first half of 2024.

Reaching over 1.8 million frontline workers with timely payments in 22 African countries. WHO´s Mobile Money digital payment system has been able to pay 95% of health workers within 10 days following the end of each vaccination campaign. In 2024, three additional countries are implementing this system: Benin, Guinea, and Mozambique. The system serves as a model for improved campaigns in resource-challenged settings.

Tracking polioviruses through the 16 Polio laboratories able to provide timely determination of the origin and type of poliovirus in stool and wastewater samples. In 2023, WHO conducted trainings for regional polio laboratory data managers and health professionals. Out of the 11 laboratories trained to carry out genetic sequencing for polio (both on Sanger and MinION), 6 are already conducting pilot testing in 2024 to ensure high-quality laboratory data.