

Dear Colleagues,

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Program improvements in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have put both countries and the world closer to eradicating polio. Global developments, including the largest number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people in history, also affect polio eradication. Population movement in border areas is a challenge that requires coordinated work on both sides to ensure all vulnerable children are vaccinated. Afghanistan and Pakistan have improved cross-border collaboration at national, provincial, district, and sub-district levels. More work is needed to reach all missed children and interrupt polio transmission in border areas. It is important to immunize children at border crossings and also in their communities, some of which are temporary.



The number of wild poliovirus (WPV) cases continues to decline. In Pakistan, the number of confirmed WPV cases significantly decreased from 42 in 2015 to 17 as of November 2016. In Afghanistan, there were 16 WPV cases in 2015, compared to 12 as of November 2016. More in-depth information on the status of polio eradication in [Pakistan](#) and [Afghanistan](#) can be found in two recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* articles.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are working together to eradicate polio. Each country's polio National Emergency Action Plan includes strategic activities to improve cross-border collaboration. Pakistan and Afghanistan teams established regular, frequent, and action-oriented communication, at all levels, to monitor and update movement at cross-border transit points. Each country immediately notifies the other of suspect acute flaccid paralysis cases, and both countries are strengthening transit vaccination strategies. Border vaccination posts now immunize children up to ten years of age in both countries, and children who receive polio vaccinations are marked on their right thumb as a standard method to distinguish vaccinated from unvaccinated children. Collaborative efforts are under way to share virus reservoir data and program innovations as they become available. By synchronizing supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) and increasing the number of border vaccination teams, both countries improved their ability to reach previously unvaccinated children. Independently, Afghanistan and Pakistan continue their efforts to reach all children. In the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan where children are at high risk for polio transmission, 28 SIAs were conducted in selected health districts between January 2015 and August 2016. In Pakistan, reassessment of vaccination posts and supervisory mechanisms have resulted in a substantial rise in the number of transit and border vaccination teams.

By implementing effective strategies and continuing to innovate and rigorously evaluate, in border areas and within communities, Afghanistan and Pakistan can soon eradicate polio.

Thank you for all you do to protect the health of children.

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