

## EVENT BULLETIN

# World Polio Day

24 October, 2022



The Government of Pakistan commemorated World Polio Day on 24 October 2022 with renewed commitment and zeal for eradicating polio. In line with the global call for “A healthier future for mother and children,” the Polio Eradication Programme organised various events across the country in partnership with Rotary International along with other Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) partners to observe the day.

The Government of Pakistan honoured the sacrifices of the frontline workers and awarded selected workers for their outstanding performance as part of the celebration. The Minister Abdul Qadir Patel, Ministry of Health Services, Regulations and Coordination attended the event as chief guest while representatives of donors, partners and various stakeholders were present at the programme held in Islamabad. The day also coincided with the inauguration of the Sub-national Immunization Days (SNIDs) campaign in selected districts of Pakistan.



### Honouring Unsung Heroes

Led by the Federal Health Minister, the Polio Programme paid tribute to the martyrs who lost their lives in the course of duty by observing one minute of silence. A total of 68 front-line workers including members of the security forces sacrificed their lives during various polio campaigns since 2012.

### Recognising Best-performing Front-line Workers

The Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel awarded the ten best-performing front-line health workers with shields, certificates and gift packages. Following a set of criteria, these hard-working men and women were selected for their dedication and commitment to reaching every child with life-saving vaccines in their respective district.



A brief video depicting the inspiring journeys of polio workers to reach children with vaccines while overcoming unfavourable and various hurdles was screened during the event, captivating the audience's attention.

# Reassuring with Renewed Commitment: Collective Voices for Polio Eradication



The Federal Minister extended his gratitude for the efforts of the front-line workers, and the sacrifices made by individuals during vaccination campaigns. He announced the construction of a wall with photos of Polio Martyrs at the Constitutional Avenue of Islamabad to honour polio martyrs so that people would remember these selfless souls.

The Minister also applauded front-line health workers for their hard work and dedication while calling on everyone to play their part to ensure a polio-free Pakistan. He also praised the support of Global Polio Eradication partners for their commitment and support for polio eradication efforts.

“We reaffirm our resolve to synergize all possible efforts, leverage all capacities, onboard all sectors necessary to decimate polio from Pakistan,” said Dr Shahzad Baig, Coordinator National Emergency Operations Centre, in his welcome address. He extended his sincere thanks to partners, the provincial leadership and the government, as well as security forces for their contribution during campaigns and also applauded the immensely dedicated front-line effort.



Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative, appreciated the efforts being rendered by all sections and called for greater synergy, mutual efforts and contributions to “the greater mission for a polio-free Pakistan”.



“The front-line health workers across the nation are constantly defying innumerable challenges to reach every child with life-saving vaccines. We honour and salute them for their dedication and tireless contribution to the fight against polio eradication,” said Hamish Young, Team Lead, Polio Programme, UNICEF while reaffirming UNICEF’s commitment to a polio-free Pakistan for every child.



Dr Altaf Bosan, National Technical Focal Person for Polio from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, appreciated the work of the front-line workers and called for parents and caregivers to support their efforts, and cooperate with health workers on the ground for a safer future for their children.



“I admire the front-line health workers’ hard work and dedication to polio eradication. We, at Rotary International, are committed to continuing our support until the last mile, until we make the world polio-free,” stated Nausherwan Khan, a member of the Pakistan Polio Plus Committee from Rotary International.



The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) representative Hasna Zainul appreciated the efforts of front-line workers and expressed her deep admiration for their determination, despite facing a diverse range of challenges. She also reaffirmed their commitment to the fight for polio eradication.



## Inauguration of SNIDs

As part of observing World Polio Day, Federal Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel inaugurated the Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs) campaign of 2022 by administering two drops of polio vaccine. He also interacted with the caregivers, health workers and distributed goody bags among children.

The campaign reached more than 25 million children under the age of five with life-saving vaccines, covering 83 districts including high-risk districts, especially those districts susceptible to the poliovirus. This includes 21 districts of Sindh, 14 of Punjab, 28 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 18 of Balochistan and two of Islamabad.



Federal Health Minister inaugurates campaign by administering polio drops.

# Highlights: Key Events in Provinces

## Balochistan, Quetta

In partnership with the Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering & Management Science (BUITEMS), the Provincial Emergency Center of Balochistan organised a sculpture exhibition. The sculptures were a result of the combined effort of 17 students, who built models with fibreglass and 3D design, to present a very clear message to society about the challenges of the wild poliovirus in the country.



Another event titled “Salam Polio Heroes” was also organised to recognise the efforts of front-line workers and the contributions of influencers including religious scholars,

tribal/political notables, law enforcement agencies, and media. A total of 25 best-performing health workers and 20 influencers received shields for their contribution to polio eradication.

The programme was followed by the SNIDs inauguration at the provincial level led by Chief Secretary Balochistan Abdul Aziz Uqaili. In continuation of post-event activities, media talk shows were organised and editorials were published in various newspapers.

## Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar

A debate competition was organised at Khyber Medical College to mark World Polio Day by the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Students highlighted the risk of the circulation of the poliovirus and made convincing arguments in their speeches against anti-vaccination narratives, which contributed to creating greater



awareness. Several officials including Additional Director General Health, Provincial Deputy Coordinator, World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF representatives attended the event, distributed prizes and certificates amongst the students.



## Punjab, Lahore

Expressing their resolve and commitment to the eradication of polio in Pakistan, the PEOC, Punjab honoured ten polio workers for their outstanding performance at an event held in Lahore.

The Health Secretary Dr Irshad Ahmad and the Punjab EOC Coordinator Mr Khizer Afzaal Chaudhary attended the event. The speakers reaffirmed their commitment to a polio-free world in their speeches.

An art competition themed on World Polio Day, which put a spotlight on front-line workers and their challenges as vaccinators, was organised at the Governor House. The spouse of the Governor of Punjab distributed awards amongst the students.



Various districts also organised events at the local level which included certificate distribution amongst front-line workers, awareness-raising walks, seminars in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as awareness sessions for high-risk and mobile communities.

## Sindh, Karachi

The Sindh provincial EOC arranged a special event to mark World Polio Day which was attended by the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. He launched a special anti-polio campaign inaugurated by administering the polio vaccine to children. The



programme was also attended by, Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Chief Secretary Sindh Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput, Additional IG Karachi Javed Odho, Secretary Health Zulfiqar Shah, and Coordinator EOC Sindh Fayyaz Abbasi. A polio-awareness walk was also organised by the Mirpurkhas District Health Office.



# ABOUT WORLD POLIO DAY

World Polio Day is observed on the 24 of October every year globally.

Established by Rotary International in 1985 to commemorate the birth of Jonas Salk, the medical researcher who led the first team to develop a vaccine against polio, World Polio Day has been observed for decades now.

Jonas developed the inactivated poliovirus vaccine, which came into use in 1955. Subsequently, Albert Sabin developed the oral polio vaccine, which was used for the first time in 1961.

While the day commemorates global efforts toward a polio-free future, it also reminds us of the sacrifices made by individuals engaged in the fight to eradicate polio worldwide.

“ We are with the **#EndPolio** teddy bear! 🧸 ”

We want a better world where all children receive the polio vaccine and can run and play and never get sick from this bad polio disease.



Junaina



Muhammad Wali



Maryam



Abdul Qadir Patel  
Minister  
Ministry of National Health Services  
Regulations and Coordination



Dr. Shahzad Baig  
Coordinator, NEOC



Mirza Nasir-ud-Din Mashhood Ahmad  
Special Secretary, Health  
Ministry of National Health Services  
Regulations and Coordination



Ms. Tayyaba Gul  
Rotary Member, Islamabad



Hamish Young  
Team Lead  
Polio Programme, UNICEF



Dr. Rizwan Taj  
CEO, PIMS Islamabad



Dr. Zainul Abedin  
Polio Chief Pakistan, WHO



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- +92 346 7776546