



## Challenges and Visions for a Polio-Free World

On **World Polio Day**, celebrated on October 24, we raise awareness of the critical importance of polio vaccination and celebrate the strides we have made in our quest for polio eradication.

To ensure a polio-free future, we need to maintain high immunisation coverage, implement meticulous and high-quality surveillance mechanisms, and maintain a state of preparedness to respond swiftly and effectively in the event of an outbreak. This mission is not without its challenges. Polio remains endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and until poliovirus transmission is interrupted in these countries, all countries remain at risk of the importation of polio, especially countries with travel or trade links to endemic countries.

While significant progress has been made, challenges such as conflict and insecurity, vaccine hesitancy, and operational challenges remain. For example, in Afghanistan<sup>1</sup>, a ban on door-to-door immunisations has prevented more than one million children in the southern regions from receiving polio vaccines. In Pakistan, vaccine hesitancy has increased due to misinformation about vaccines and vaccination programs. Operational challenges, such as inadequate planning and staffing issues, can also hinder progress.

Despite these challenges, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) is committed to eradicating polio by 2026 by addressing the challenges through a variety of initiatives, such as strengthening surveillance, improving the quality of vaccination campaigns, and addressing vaccine hesitancy through communication and advocacy campaigns.

Polio eradication is a global effort, and it will require the continued support of donors and partners, as well as the commitment of all stakeholders, to achieve success. We must remain determined to achieve the ultimate goal of a polio-free world, despite the persistent challenges we face.

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<sup>1</sup> Polio Global Eradication Initiative. "Polio Eradication Strategy 2022 – 2026, Delivering on a Promise." Accessed October 23, 2023. <https://polioeradication.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Polio-Eradication-Strategy-2022-2026-Delivering-on-a-Promise.pdf>