

GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Polio, once the leading cause of permanent disability in the United States, remains a substantial cause of disability in polio-endemic countries. In 2008, 1,652 confirmed cases of paralytic polio were reported worldwide. Four countries are endemic for polio (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan), and 14 additional countries have reported cases in 2008 as a result of importations (Angola, Burkina Faso, Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Sudan, and Togo). Until polio is eradicated in every country, it remains a threat to children in polio-free countries.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), CDC has provided epidemiologic, laboratory, programmatic expertise, and funding support to help polio-endemic countries with polio eradication activities. CDC's contributions include:

- In 2008, funding for approximately 280 million doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) purchased through UNICEF, and operational funding that supported the vaccination of children in mass vaccination campaigns.
- Technical assistance for microplanning, implementation and monitoring national immunization days (NIDs) in priority countries. During these activities, every child under 5 years of age receives two doses of OPV, one month apart, regardless of their prior immunization status.
- Assignment of 13 epidemiologists, medical officers, and public health advisors to WHO and UNICEF. These staff serve in critical positions within the global polio project.
- Deployment of Atlanta-based staff to provide technical and programmatic support for polio eradication activities to regions and countries.
- CDC and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners have intensified activities to strengthen active surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis (AFP), especially in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and other countries in Asia and Africa.
- CDC assists WHO in building global polio and measles laboratory networks, and serves as a WHO Global Specialized Reference Laboratory for polio. There are 145 labs in the global polio network.

Example of Program in Action:

CDC's Stop Transmission of Polio (STOP) program trains and deploys public health professionals with experience in epidemiology and surveillance to improve AFP surveillance and to help plan, implement, and evaluate NIDs. Since January 1999, 1,049 STOP team members have participated in three-month assignments in 60 countries. The STOP program has contributed substantially to the strengthening of district-level polio programs where STOP team members were assigned.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative's goal is to eradicate polio and certify the world as polio-free as soon as possible. CDC will continue to fight polio by collaborating with partners to improve surveillance and increase the quality of NIDs, so that disease transmission is interrupted in the remaining countries with polio. CDC will provide scientific assistance to improve monitoring and documentation necessary to certify that polio eradication has occurred and continue to be a leader in the development and implementation of global plans for laboratory containment of polioviruses. Finally, CDC is leading research and consensus development efforts to determine the best strategies for stopping OPV use in the post-eradication era.

The WHO governing body has called for the remaining polio endemic countries to make polio eradication their top operational priority. At the World Health Assembly in May 2009, the WHO Director-General reported on the progress made in Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan as well as independent review findings that will guide next steps for the polio eradication initiative.

This document can be found on the cdc website at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncird/progbriefs/downloads/global-polio-eradic.pdf>

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