

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. As of January 2004, a provisional total of 667 confirmed cases of paralytic polio were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) for 2003. Currently, more than 200 countries and territories are polio-free, and indigenous polio is confined to parts of six countries in South Asia and Africa. Until polio is eradicated in every country, it remains a threat to children in polio-free countries and a scourge we must eradicate.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In collaboration with 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. For example,

- During 2003, CDC contributed about 465 million doses of oral polio vaccine, through UNICEF, to eradicate polio.
- CDC helps countries conduct National Immunization Days (NIDs). During these activities, every child under 5 years of age receives two doses of oral polio vaccine, one month apart, regardless of their prior immunization status.
- Twenty CDC professional staff are assigned to partner agencies, including WHO and UNICEF, in critical positions within the global project. Moreover, CDC's Atlanta-based staff travels extensively to provide technical assistance to regions and countries.
- CDC sends public health professionals with experience in epidemiology and surveillance to polio-endemic countries to assist with surveillance and to plan, implement, and evaluate NIDs through Stop Transmission of Polio (STOP) Teams. Since January 1999, 483 STOP team members have participated in 3-month assignments in 39 countries.
- CDC and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners have intensified activities to strengthen active surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis especially in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Angola, Egypt, 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. To date, 147 laboratories are in the global polio network.

Example of Program in Action

Since 1999, CDC has provided short-term consultants to help with polio eradication efforts in Bangladesh. As a result, disease tracking has improved, and poliovirus circulation appears to have been stopped. The last confirmed case of polio in Bangladesh occurred in 2000.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative's goal is that by 2005 wild poliovirus transmission will be interrupted and the world will be certified as polio-free in 2008. CDC will continue to fight polio by collaborating with partners to improve surveillance and increase the number and quality of NIDs, so that disease transmission is interrupted in the remaining six polio-endemic countries. 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 oral polio vaccine use in the post-eradication era.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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