

NOW, MORE THAN EVER: STOP POLIO FOREVER.



FAST FACTS: THE FIGHT AGAINST POLIO IN AFRICA

A REGION AT RISK

In 2004, Africa recorded 74% of all polio cases in the world (1263¹ cases). An epidemic, caused by suspension of immunization campaigns in Nigeria and spurred by low immunity across the region, re-infected 11 previously polio free countries and re-established transmission in six (Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad and Mali). A massive immunization response from African countries took place last year. Efforts were hampered by conflict in Sudan, where vaccinators found it hard to reach children, and in Cote d'Ivoire, where campaigns were halted due to civil unrest.

TAKING ACTION

To close down the epidemic, 23 African nations will come together in 2005 to synchronize mass immunization campaigns aiming to reach 100 million children. The first round of campaigns was conducted from 25 February-1 March; a second round will take place from 8-12 April, and a third from 14-17 May. Participating countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo and Uganda. In many countries, Vitamin A will be delivered with the vaccine to boost children's immunity. Similar campaigns in 2000 and 2001 stopped polio in all but three African countries.

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

It is feasible to stop polio globally by end-2005. But this goal can only be achieved if every un-immunized child is reached. The success of polio eradication depends on political determination to hold high quality campaigns that deliver the vaccine to the hardest-to-reach children – those living in remote communities, conflict zones or refugee camps, with little or no basic healthcare. However, the global polio eradication initiative is facing a critical funding shortfall of US\$75 million for 2005 and US\$200 million for 2006.

SO MUCH IS AT STAKE

There has been a massive global investment to date in the fight against polio - over US\$3 billion and countless volunteer hours. Stopping transmission in Africa would be a just return on this investment, proving we can work together to reach development targets. National and global leaders have given their full support to achieving this important goal: the African Union, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the G8 have all committed to providing the necessary funds and oversight until polio has been stopped.

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

The remaining six endemic countries are in Asia (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan) and Africa (Nigeria, Niger and Egypt). Between 2003 and 2004, transmission halved in Asia (335 vs 186, the region's lowest ever rate) but more than doubled in Africa (448 vs 1037). The Africa epidemic continues to export the virus to polio-free countries, most recently into Saudi Arabia [and Ethiopia](#). This proves that polio anywhere is a threat to children everywhere.



Urgent funding of US\$75 million is urgently needed to conduct polio immunization activities in 2005. The synchronized polio campaigns will immunize millions of children in 23 countries. Photo: UNICEF WCAR/Kent

Polio cases in endemic countries	2003	2004	Transmission re-established	Re-infected
Nigeria	327	789		
India	223	136		
Pakistan	99	53		
Niger	25	25		
Afghanistan	4	4		
Egypt	1	1		