



POLIO ROUND-UP AFGHANISTAN



7,547

full-time social mobilisers
reached families with
life-saving information
about polio

NOVEMBER 2017





Technical Advisory Group visits Kabul

In November, senior officials gathered to meet members from the international Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

The TAG was established to review progress towards polio eradication in high-risk countries, assess implementation of previous TAG recommendations, discuss planned activities and issue recommendations to address challenges.

The Minister of Public Health Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz hosted the high-level meeting in Kabul attended by TAG members, national representatives, partner organisations and donors.

Feedback from the TAG was positive. Members acknowledged the extremely challenging situation including interim bans and a deteriorating security situation. They encouraged the programme to continue focusing on the ‘Southern Corridor’ and in particular Helmand and Kandahar; Northern corridor (Jalalabad and Kunar together with parts of Pakistan); and address high risk mobile populations.

TAG members also praised both Afghanistan and Pakistan for planning fully synchronised polio vaccination campaigns. The TAG will reconvene in Kabul next spring.



Meet Atal!

Watch Atal teach young children about polio and why vaccination is so important. The video reached over 167,000 Afghans on social media and has been extensively broadcast on national TV.

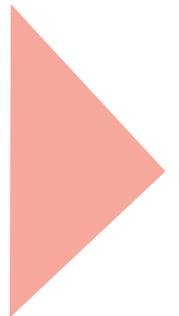


Bicycle rally creates awareness

On 5 November, over 50 cyclists raced through Kandahar city to create awareness about polio. Wearing bright blue t-shirts with ‘vaccinate every child every time until the age of five,’ the message was loud and clear. Local police escorted the cyclists through the main

road with loudspeakers following them, urging vaccination.

Gulab Shah a 38-year-old clay pot seller and father of five said: “when I saw all these young boys riding bicycles I was so excited. It has created excitement throughout the town.” One cyclist Mujtaba added: “I am proud to be part of today’s rally. It is my duty to end polio in Afghanistan.”





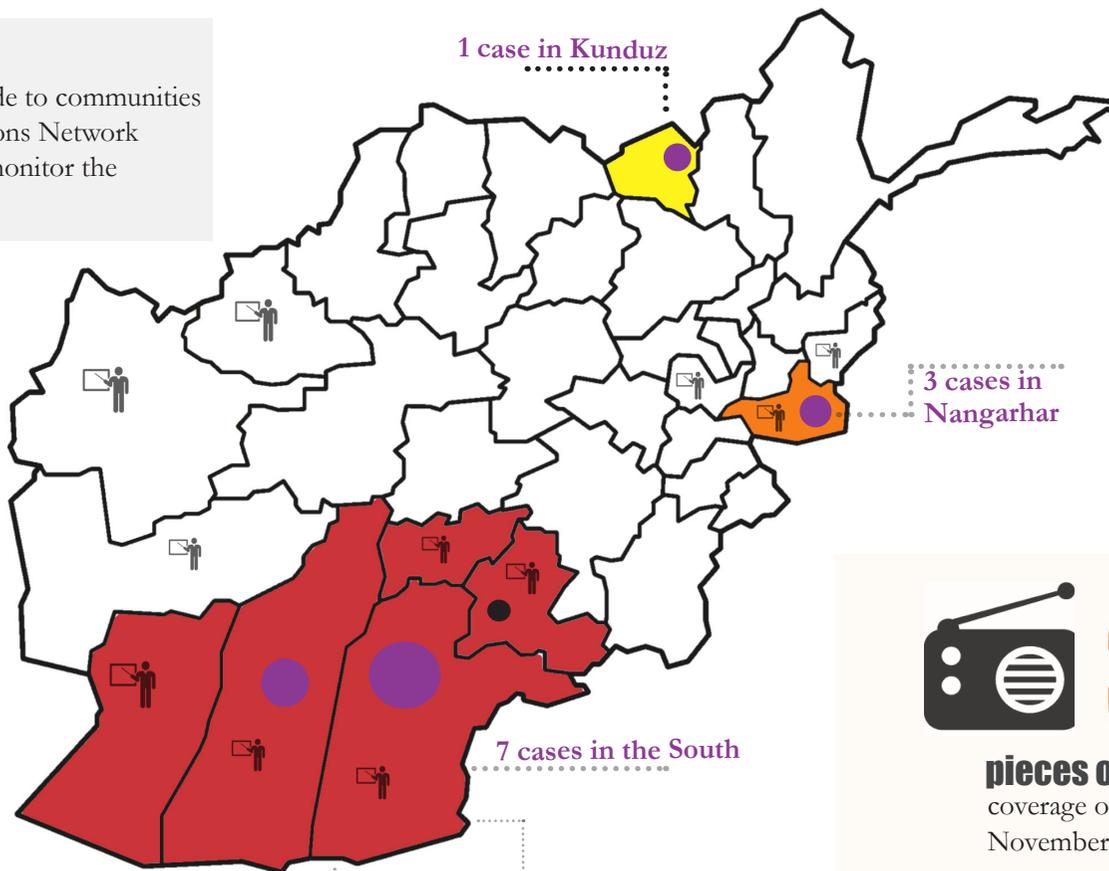
3,215

calls were made to communities and Immunization Communications Network (ICN) workers in November to monitor the campaign in hard-to-reach areas.



1.7 million

children vaccinated in Kandahar. During the campaign a total of 5,700 banners, 923,000 branded balloons, and 618,000 leaflets were distributed to increase public awareness.



Inekas TV hosted a 'media round table' in Jalalabad to create awareness about polio. It reached over 25,000 people in Nangarhar.



394

pieces of national media coverage on polio during November



70% increase from last month



1,648

visits were made to monitor our Immunization Communications Network (ICN) performance in November.

WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

20 November 2017



World Children's Day is a day for children, by children, all over the world to help save children's lives.

In Afghanistan children across the country attended events to celebrate this special day.

In Kandahar, Zarghona Ana Girls' High School hosted 400 children where they presented their challenges to a government panel. Leaflets and balloons with polio eradication messages were distributed.

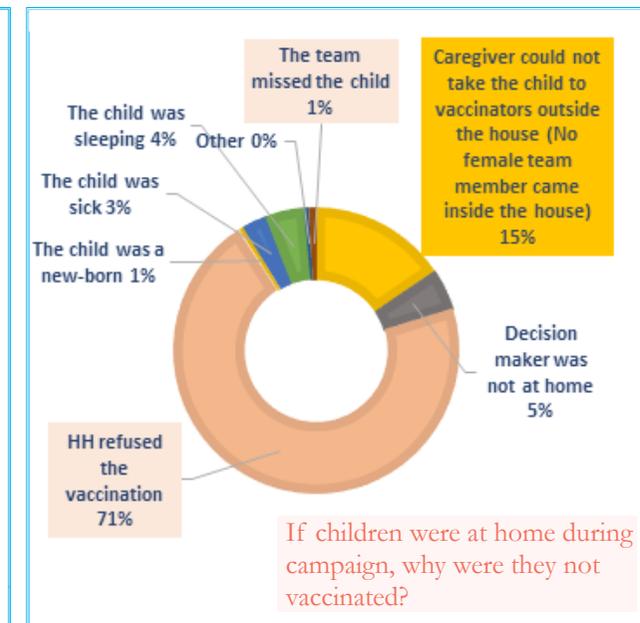
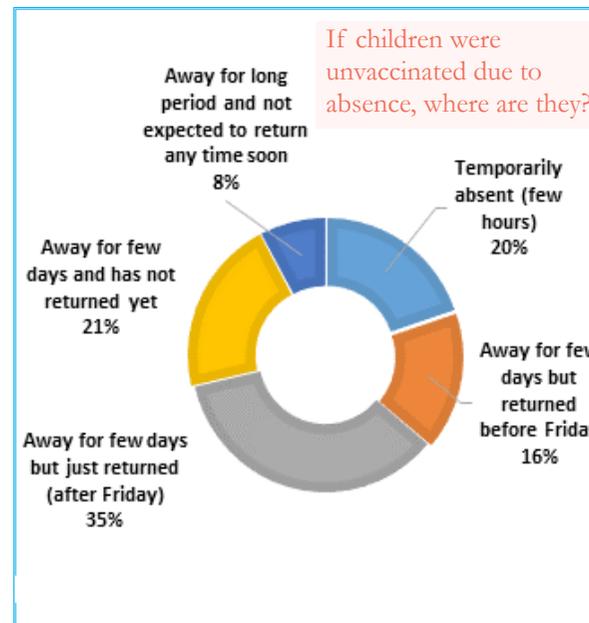


Why are children missing?

Children missing polio drops in southern Afghanistan is the highest in the country. To understand the reasons why children are missing the polio vaccine, and to prevent it from happening, UNICEF conducted a study. Three districts in Kandahar were assessed (Kandahar city, Panjwai, Spin Boldak) and one district in Helmand (Lashkar Gah). The findings indicate a significant number of refusals, 19% thought the vaccine was harmful to their child's health and many thought it was not halal. UNICEF is working with doctors, religious leaders and community elders to educate communities and reduce misconceptions. Another key finding showed that children are missing the vaccine because there

are not enough women vaccinators, and only women can enter the house. In rural areas, it is a struggle to deploy women because many are not allowed to work. While recruitment of female front line workers has increased in urban areas, the polio programme is working to further engage with local communities to mobilise female-mahram pairs as frontline workers. The research also showed that the quality of tally sheet records has dramatically improved and enabled more effective catch-up of unvaccinated children after campaigns by social mobilisers. The research was conducted under the oversight of the National Emergency Operation Centre. Independent local researchers collected the data.

For the full report please contact thabui@unicef.org





BREAKING TABOOS

Beheaded sheep hang tenderly on hooks, waiting to be bought. Men in thick leather sandals sit on stones, kneading bread. This is rural Afghanistan, one of the hardest places to be a woman.

Often absent from public life, most women are confined to their homes. Many have been denied an education, resulting in a dangerous and widespread illiteracy endemic. In some provinces more than 98% of women can't read or write their own name. With almost half its workforce out of action, Afghanistan's economy is struggling to grow.

Uneducated and without work, many women are dependent on men for all their needs. They are financially disempowered, unable to escape domestic violence or pay their way out of poverty.

Afia works for one of the largest female workforces in Afghanistan, a national team fighting the polio endemic. At just twenty-one years old, Afia is defying traditional norms which forbid women from working outside the home. She works for UNICEF, Afghanistan, so as to teach her community about the polio vaccine. "Sometimes this job is difficult because

people think the vaccine is not Islamic, or they don't trust where it comes from", says Afia. "Contrary to medical advice, some community leaders advise against children taking polio drops because they think it's foreign and not to be trusted. It is my responsibility to explain why the vaccine is so important. I want to play my part", she continues.

Not only is Afia helping to eradicate polio through education, but she is also showing women what is possible. She says, "As a young woman, I am proud to work. Actually, it is important women do this job because we are allowed into

the family home so we can check that each child is vaccinated. Men can't do that, and sometimes children miss their vaccine."

Afia stands boldly in the middle of the street, instructing her fifteen protégés. Blue cloth overwhelms and stands out beyond the rubble. Afia and her protégés are the future of Afghanistan, and eradicating polio is leading the way. ■

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