

The fight's not over yet

Polio cases have been reduced by 99.9% worldwide since 1988. Fewer than 40 polio cases were reported worldwide in 2016, thanks to the 10-billion doses of oral vaccine that have been administered since 2000.

And 14 days into a month-long campaign to call attention on immunisation, civil society across Africa join global efforts to call for continued vigilance on polio, routine immunisation programmes and stronger health systems.



"We cannot rest until polio transmission is interrupted and there are zero cases for at least three consecutive years," says Salisu Musa Muhammad, deputy director at Community Health and Research Initiative in Nigeria.

Nigeria is one of three countries – and the only one in Africa – where polio is still endemic. Although Nigeria has not reported any cases since the August 2016 outbreak, it is possible that the poliovirus is continuing to spread undetected in the Lake Chad region given ongoing inaccessibility, surveillance gaps and a fluid security situation. To stop the outbreak and respond to the ongoing risk in the area, Nigeria and neighbouring countries have implemented large-scale vaccination campaigns.

"Global and national efforts to eradicate polio have been significant and sustained. This is why we are so close," Boubacar Sylla, coordinator of the civil society platform POSSAV in Guinea, says. "However, with the eradication of polio, comes the reduction of resources allocated to disease, including the cost of routine immunisation and strengthened health services. So, countries will have to increase their support to routine immunisation."

Policies and budget allocations

In January 2017, African heads of states endorsed the Addis Declaration on Immunisation, through which they acknowledged that despite their endorsement of the Global Vaccine Action Plan, they are largely off track. The ADI reinforces their commitment at the highest level of political engagement.

These political commitments have to turn into adequate policies as well as concrete budget allocations in order to achieve universal access to immunisation. To ensure that this time, countries get or stay on track, civil society organisations will continue to track the vaccines, the finances and the legislation.

The 33 days to Power Up Immunisation campaign is a continuation of what was started with the Africa Vaccination Week and World Health Assembly.

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