

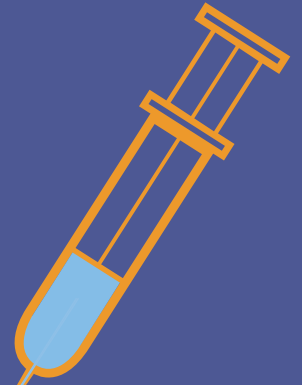


World Health
Organization

Western Pacific Region

POLIO ENDGAME

IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION 2013–2018



POLIO ENDGAME IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION 2013–2018

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FOREWORD



Dr Shin Young-soo
Regional Director

We have an obligation to protect the children of the Western Pacific Region – home to about a quarter of the world’s population – from the poliovirus and the crippling and sometimes-deadly disease it causes called paralytic poliomyelitis.

Through decades of hard work, commitment and investment, Member States fulfilled this obligation in 2000 when we became only the second WHO region to be certified as polio-free. The Region has been a champion for polio eradication, maintaining its polio-free status through collaboration and constant vigilance.

Polio-free status cannot be taken for granted, however. The endgame strategy calls for all regions to be polio-free so that the Western Pacific Region can remain permanently polio-free, without the threat of the disease being carried here from other parts of the world.

Polio is still endemic in three countries outside our Region (as of mid-2014), but viruses do not respect borders. The risk of wild poliovirus importation is a continuous threat to the four polio-free regions. The Government of China reported imported wild poliovirus from a neighbouring region in 2011 that resulted in 21 confirmed polio cases. The poliovirus was efficiently and rapidly contained, allowing the Western Pacific Region to retain its polio-free status.

The polio endgame goes further. So that no child will ever again suffer from poliomyelitis, worldwide eradication is necessary. For this to happen – as outlined in the global document *Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013–2018* – all countries and regions share responsibility to implement the required actions, including those aimed at strengthening routine immunization systems.

One of the greatest challenges is the need for countries and areas still using only oral polio vaccine to rapidly add a dose of inactivated polio vaccine to their national routine immunization schedule. Children who receive the recommended doses of both oral poliovirus vaccine and inactivated poliovirus vaccine will have the best available protection against wild and vaccine-related polioviruses. Seventeen Western Pacific countries and areas still use only oral polio vaccine and will need to add inactivated polio vaccine to their schedule.

All countries and areas in the world are expected to switch from using the trivalent oral poliovirus vaccine to the bivalent oral poliovirus vaccine in the future. This process must be synchronized across all regions, countries and areas to mitigate the risk of vaccine-derived poliovirus outbreaks and the spread of outbreaks to other countries.

The *Polio Endgame in the Western Pacific Region 2013–2018* offers guidance on how to conduct these processes within the Region and outlines the support and resources available to countries and areas through the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific.

Many resources have supported the global polio eradication initiative and more will be required to complete the polio endgame. Once the world is polio-free, however, these resources can be re-directed towards other global health priorities.

Polio eradication efforts in the Western Pacific Region have strengthened national health systems and helped in the prevention of other diseases. For example, today's integrated surveillance system for vaccine-preventable diseases in the Western Pacific Region is modelled on the polio surveillance system. The techniques and knowledge gained from conducting polio vaccination campaigns in hard-to-reach populations are still used today in several public health programmes across the Region.

Just as many lessons have been learned by eradicating polio and keeping the Region polio-free, many new lessons will be learned and subsequently shared from the actions required to complete the polio endgame.

Polio eradication is everyone's responsibility:

- Parents and caregivers ensure their children receive routine vaccinations according to the national immunization schedule.
- Health-care workers promote the necessity and benefits of vaccination and safely administer vaccines.
- Immunization programme managers and staff develop and implement national strategies to raise population immunity and respond to outbreaks.
- Health authorities ensure that the surveillance system for polio is sensitive enough to detect early transmission of polioviruses.
- Laboratory workers ensure rapid detection of polioviruses by promptly testing samples and reporting findings to WHO.
- Health systems ensure vaccines are available in sufficient quantities to meet demand.
- Communicators make sure changes are communicated in advance to parents and health-care workers.
- Policy-makers enforce immunization standards in their country.
- Donors provide support to make the interventions possible.
- International polio eradication partners including the World Health Organization, support all of these efforts.

For the endgame to succeed, cooperation is necessary.

In addition to meeting regional responsibilities, the WHO Region for the Western Pacific is committed to fulfil its global responsibility: to ensure that no child in this Region falls ill or dies from wild or vaccine-related polio disease.

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