



Polio Eradication in the African Region



World Health
Organization

African Region

POLIO GLOBAL
ERADICATION
INITIATIVE

Highlights (April- June 2025)

In the second quarter of 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region has seen significant strides in the fight against polio, with a focus on regional collaboration, innovative vaccination efforts, and health system strengthening. From landmark cross-border initiatives to critical country-level milestones, these efforts are shaping a future free of polio for millions of children across Africa. 161 million children were vaccinated from April to June.

Across the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel, countries are synchronizing immunization campaigns to tackle polio in one of Africa's most challenging regions. Similarly, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia vaccinated over 18 million children in a synchronized effort in April, 2025, highlighting successful regional cooperation.

Madagascar also marked a major milestone this quarter with the official declaration of the closure of the circulating variant type 1 polio outbreak in May. Following a comprehensive Outbreak Response Assessment (OBRA), the country successfully halted transmission of the virus, demonstrating the effectiveness of robust response strategies that included extensive vaccination rounds and enhanced surveillance.

In Benin, in June, a nationwide vaccination campaign successfully reached nearly 2.5 million children, aided by innovative tools such as Digital Finance (DF) to improve the efficiency of payments and outreach efforts. The campaign even extended to remote areas, showcasing Benin's resilience and determination in its response to the threat of polio.

Meanwhile, Malawi is strengthening its healthcare infrastructure with investments in cold chain improvements, workforce training, and community engagement—ensuring that its health systems are ready to prevent future outbreaks.

As of 30 June 2025, Prof. Mohamed Yakub Janabi officially stepped into the role of WHO Regional Director for Africa. In a heartfelt op-ed, his predecessor, Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, reflected on the progress made in the first half of the year, calling for renewed commitment from all stakeholders to finish the polio eradication journey and ensure robust health emergency preparedness across the continent.

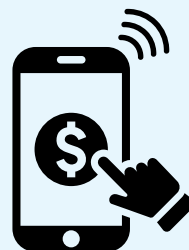
Our impact in the African Region (Q2, 2025)



**161 million children
vaccinated in Q2 2025
(as of end of June)**



**13 countries conducted
vaccination rounds against polio
in Q2 2025 (as of end of June)**



**850,000 polio frontline workers
paid with digital finance solutions
in 7 African countries
in Q2 2025 (as of end of June)**



**11 WHO-trained labs expanded
genomic sequencing, with 6 of
them pilot-testing techniques**



**98% (46/47) of countries have
established environmental
surveillance systems**



**100+ data managers trained in the first
half of the year in GTS,
special population tracking, and SIA
tools for the Lake Chad Basin**

We support countries



Maintaining high quality surveillance to ensure polioviruses are detected on time. The region achieved a 7.2 Non polio Acute Flaccid Paralysis rate (full year) and a 92% stool adequacy rate in 2024, meeting targets for both key core surveillance indicators.



Detecting 177 polioviruses across 15 countries in just the first half of 2025 (January–June), compared with 275 detections in 22 countries during the same period in 2024. Confirmed cases included circulating variant types 1, 2, and 3. Over the past year, 51% of countries in the African Region (24 out of 47) reported polio cases.



Responding to polio outbreaks by implementing supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) in 13 African countries from April to end of June, 2025. In total, more than 161 million children were vaccinated with at least one dose of polio vaccine in the same period.



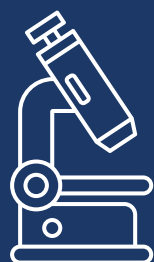
Enabling 98% (46/47) of countries in the African Region to have functional Environmental Surveillance Systems. All countries have been visited and 47 new environmental surveillance sites were set up in 2023, resulting in enhanced detection activities. More than 7,300 environmental isolates were collected from wastewater and tested in the past year.



Enhancing country capacities through the AFRO Geographic Information Systems Centre to map cross-border communities, migratory routes, border crossings and transit routes using key electronic data tools (eSURV, ODK). Over 100 data managers were trained in the first half of 2025 in GTS, special population tracking, and SIA tools for the Lake Chad Basin.



Reaching nearly 4 million frontline health workers across 23 African countries with timely payments, thanks to its Mobile Money digital system. In Q2 2025 alone, over 850,000 health workers were paid promptly through this system during 9 Supplementary Immunization Activities in 7 countries — with 95% receiving payments within 10 days of each campaign. This approach is strengthening accountability and efficiency, especially in resource-limited settings.



Enhancing Africa's polio surveillance, anchored by a network of 16 labs that trace poliovirus from stool and wastewater. In 2025, WHO trained regional lab teams, health workers, and data managers in genetic sequencing, with six of 11 labs piloting advanced techniques like Sanger and MinION. Bioinformatics and data training supported faster, informed outbreak response. Notably, Uganda's Sanger capacity was accredited in early 2025 — a key step in boosting detection efforts.

Challenges

- Resource challenges lead to decreased supplementary immunization activities.
- The decline in routine immunization coverage and the interruption of preventive bOPV Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs) have left significant populations vulnerable to type 1 and type 3 poliovirus outbreaks.
- Conflict and insecurity disrupt services and complicate the difficult jobs of health workers.
- Health systems in Africa are strained by competing health priorities and emergencies, which negatively impact efforts to address health challenges, including polio, resulting in delayed vaccination campaigns and variable quality of those.
- Vaccination refusal continues due to misinformation and community fatigue.

Way forward

- Strengthen cross border coordination, communication and collaboration.
- Improve population immunity focusing on reaching zero dose, under-immunized children in hard-to-reach and/or security-affected areas.
- Enhance and expand Acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) and environmental surveillance for rapid detection.
- Strengthen laboratory sequencing capacity for direct detection and timely response.
- Advance gender equality and the empowerment of women to eradicate polio.
- Intensify vaccination campaigns, leveraging technology and innovative solutions.

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