Polio Eradication in the African Region

World Health Organization
African Region

POLIO GLOBAL ERADICATION INITIATIVE

Highlights (July- September 2025)

In the third quarter of 2025, the WHO African Region made decisive strides in the fight against polio — marked by strong political commitment, expanded laboratory capacity, and unprecedented vaccination efforts.

The momentum began in August at the 75th WHO Regional Committee for Africa in Lusaka, where African health ministers pledged to “accelerate the polio endgame.” They committed to sustaining political leadership, integrating polio assets into broader health systems, and reinforcing cross-border coordination to prevent future outbreaks.

In September, Côte d’Ivoire inaugurated a newly upgraded polio laboratory at the Institut Pasteur in Abidjan, equipped with advanced sequencing technologies to speed up virus detection and strengthen surveillance across West Africa. At the same time, Kenya’s KEMRI laboratory as well as South Africa also expanded its sequencing capacity, further stepping up the region’s ability to detect and respond to poliovirus swiftly.

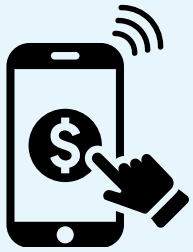
Then in October, Nigeria launched an integrated vaccination campaign — one of the largest in Africa — targeting over 106 million children with measles, rubella, and polio vaccines. This milestone highlighted how polio infrastructure continues to support wider health goals.

Taken together, these developments show how high-level political will, stronger laboratory systems, and ambitious vaccination drives are accelerating progress towards a polio-free Africa.

Our impact in the African Region (Q3, 2025)

37 million children vaccinated in Q3 2025 (as of end of September)

6 countries conducted vaccination rounds against polio in Q3 2025 (as of end of September)



4 million polio frontline workers paid with digital finance solutions across the Region this year

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 polioviruses. Comparing the number of African countries with active type 2 poliovirus outbreaks between 2024 and 2025 (as of October) the number declined from 24 to 14, and total virus detections dropped by 54%. Two countries reported type 1 cases, 14 countries type 2 and 3 reported type 3 based on data as of October, 2025.

Responding to polio outbreaks by implementing supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) in 6 African countries from July to end of September, 2025 (Q3). In total, more than 37 million children were vaccinated with at least one dose of polio vaccine in that 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 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.

Find out more:

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