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VOICES

from the field

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Lowlands, highlands or islands, commitment never wavers: WHO South Sudan delivers health in any context

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Kauto is 200 Kilometers from Narus town, the closest humanitarian hub. It is one of the most marginalized areas in Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan. Bothering Kenya and Ethiopia, Kauto was part of Kapoeta East County and was declared a separate Administrative area in June 2025.

Its isolation and severe lack of basic infrastructure including clean water, health facilities, good roads, schools and reliable communication networks make daily life challenging. During the rainy season, these conditions render many communities nearly impossible to reach without specialized humanitarian support, especially for routine immunization campaigns.

To overcome these barriers, the World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), has deployed 40 National Supervisors to support State and County teams in planning, implementation, disease surveillance, and routine immunization.

Their technical expertise, combined with strong local leadership, ensures



WHO polio officer takes the path to Napotasigiria through the mountains in Kauto Payam

that vaccines reach even the most remote communities.

Among those deployed is Joshua Brown, WHO National Polio Officer. His work focuses on Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance and coordination of partners, playing a critical role in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, particularly in managing circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2).

"Our work is to reach children in every village with the vaccine, regardless of where they are," Joshua explains. **"We want to eliminate polio by ensuring no child is left behind, even in the most geographically isolated areas."**

No mountain too high

The journey from Narus to Kauto winds through the striking landscapes of the Toposa region, but its beauty masks serious challenges. Safety concerns are high, and travel conditions are extremely difficult.



WHO polio officer climbing highlands of Numurpus village during Polio sNIDs

Roads are mostly dirt tracks that become impassable during the rainy season, making four-wheel-drive vehicles and meticulous planning essential.

Every trip is a logistical operation, yet it remains necessary to deliver lifesaving supplies including vaccines. Joshua works closely with County Health Department and community volunteers to identify where unvaccinated children live. These local teams hold invaluable knowledge of their environment, enabling health workers to navigate safely and reach households that would otherwise be inaccessible.

"I helped during round 1 of the ongoing sub-national polio immunization drive," said Nachapio, a village chief and respected community leader who lives on the island atop the mountain. **"I'm happy the team came to our island. It makes it easier for our children to be vaccinated, and it shows the campaign's goal to reach everyone, everywhere."**

For nurse Aaliya at Kuron Primary Health Care Centre, who has served the community for nearly a decade, the campaign was a turning point.

"Like many islands, we struggle with access and communication," she explained. **"Having vaccines brought here is proof that we are not forgotten."**

sNIDs Campaign results

Children	Round 1	Round 2	%
Target	72,792	80,640	111
Reached	72,792	120,222	165

Turning commitment into impact

The impact of this commitment is already visible with the results of the ongoing sub-national immunization days (sNIDs) campaign.

During Round 1, the target was to reach 72,792 children under five years of age, yet 80,640 were vaccinated, achieving 111% coverage.

These figures reflect not only strong community engagement and trust, but also the effectiveness of WHO's support to MoH in strengthening planning, outreach, and last-mile



WHO polio officer climbing highlands of Numurpus village during Polio sNIDs

delivery to ensure that every child, including those in the most remote and hard-to-reach areas, is protected.

Building on this momentum, Round 2 exceeded expectations even further, with 120,222 children vaccinated against a target of 72,792, representing an impressive 165% coverage.

It takes a village

While WHO provides critical technical operational support, the true success of the campaign rests on the dedication of health workers, community leaders, volunteers, and above all, parents.

Their commitment transforms plans into action and vaccines into protection. From guiding health teams along hidden village paths to encouraging neighbors to bring their children forward, these local champions are the heartbeat of the polio campaign.

"Every dose delivered is a step closer to ending polio for good," said the county Health Department Director for Kapoeta East. **"Together, we can achieve a polio-free South Suda."**

From the lowlands of Kapoeta East to the highlands and the remote islands, when roads disappear, WHO's commitment to support MoH does not. Together, we ensure that no child is left behind in the fight against polio in South Sudan.



National supervisor and WHO polio officer with a group of vaccinated children