

[Press release: UK leads final push to make polio history](#)

The UK is leading the final global push to eliminate polio around the world for good, International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced today (Friday, 4 August 2017).

Polio was wiped out in the UK in the 1980s and there are more than 100,000 British survivors today. Globally, the wild poliovirus still exists in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, with 8 new cases this year.

It is likely that the last new case of polio will be diagnosed this year, paving the way for the world to be certified polio-free in 2020.

Ms Patel has announced UK support to lead the last push needed to end polio. This will immunise 45 million children against the disease each year until 2020 – that is 80 children a minute.

Britain has had a long standing commitment to making polio the second human disease in history to be eradicated, after smallpox. As a direct result of the UK's support to global efforts, which began in 1988, more than 16 million people are walking today who would have otherwise been paralysed, and the number of people contracting the disease has been reduced by 99.9%.

The UK's support will:

- immunise up to 45 million children against the disease each year until 2020 – that is 80 children a minute;
- save more than 65,000 children from paralysis every year;
- help over 15,000 polio workers reach every last child with life-saving vaccines and other health interventions; and
- help save almost £2 billion globally by 2035, as health care systems are freed up from treating polio victims.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Polio has no place in the 21st Century. This devastating and highly infectious disease causes painful paralysis and is incurable – trapping the world's poorest people in a cycle of grinding poverty.

The UK has been at the forefront of fighting global health threats, including polio, and our last push towards eradication by 2020 will save 45 million children from contracting this disease.

The world is closer than it ever has been to eradicating polio for good, but as long as just one case exists in the world, children everywhere are still at risk.

Now it is time for others to step up, follow Britain's lead and

make polio history.

Paralympian and broadcaster Ade Adepitan, who contracted polio as a baby, said:

The UK has done so much to help eradicate polio and UK aid contributions have delivered great results. The number of people around the world contracting polio has gone from thousands every year to just a few cases. We can see the finish line – and we can't stop now.

The UK has always been a world leader. It can be part of our legacy to be at the forefront of the race to eradicate polio around the world. Let's keep doing what we are doing and make the world a better place for future generations.

We are so close to eradicating polio. We need just one last push to make this disease history and change the world.

This last push will help break the relentless cycle of poverty for millions more children so they can live healthier lives, go to school and then get a job. It will mean more people contributing to their economy, which will help their countries to grow and become more prosperous.

This is good for Britain too: helping people become less reliant on UK aid in the long-term.

As the world becomes more interconnected, it is right that Britain acts to tackle those diseases, which pay no attention to national borders, so that we can stop them spreading and threatening us here at home. For example, defeating Ebola – the deadly epidemic that was only ever a plane ride away – ultimately protected British lives.

- International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, has today set out an additional £100 million (\$130 million) to help end polio for good.
- It is possible that the last case of polio will be in 2017, and it takes three years without a single case to prove eradication; meaning the world could be certified polio-free in 2020.
- Pictures and human stories of DFID supported work in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are [available on Flickr](#); footage and hi-res pictures detailing the personal stories of vaccinators and survivors are [available on Google Drive](#); and an [animation, designed for social media use](#), can be found on DFID's Facebook channel. For UK polio survivor and polio expert interviews, contact DFID Press Office.

- On 12 June 2017, during Rotary International's Convention in Atlanta, global leaders recommitted to the importance of a polio-free world, and pledged financial support, totalling US\$1.2 billion against the additional US\$1.5 billion needed to finally eradicate polio.
- With the UK contribution, there is still a \$170 million funding gap – it is time for others to step up.
- The UK's £100 million support will be channelled through the World Health Organisation (WHO) to implement programmes of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).
- The GPEI is a public-private partnership led by national governments with 5 partners – WHO, Rotary International, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Its goal is to eradicate polio worldwide.
- Polio eradication activities are implemented by UNICEF and WHO in partnership with countries and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.
- Today's announcement builds on the British Government's commitment in 2013 to spend £300 million on polio between 2013 and 2018. Since 2013 our support has helped control outbreaks and limit the polio virus to only 3 countries – Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria.
- This is a success story. Less than 30 years ago there were 350,000 cases in over 100 countries. Eradication will need continued intensive surveillance, high immunisation rates and rapid responses to any polio virus identified.