



Health Watch Weekly Update

NEWSLETTER

January 8, 2015

January 8: Pakistan launches first ever polio injection drive in Fata

For the first time in Pakistan's history the health authorities have started administering polio injections in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), officials said on Wednesday.

The injectable/inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) is said to be highly effective in preventing paralytic disease caused by all three types of poliovirus and is currently being used by a majority of the polio-free developed and advanced countries.

Officials in the Fata secretariat told Dawn.com that polio injections have been planned for 17,393 children in the frontier region of Bannu. They said that so far about 5,906 children have been injected with anti polio vaccines and the five day drive will end on Friday.

[DAWN](#)

January 7: 'Refusals and security responsible for 2014 surge'

The surge in polio cases across the country, especially Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), is a reflection of the uphill task health authorities have faced over the last two and a half years to combat the crippling disease. As yet, the final count for 2014 is still unknown, with the last of the samples being processed in the laboratory.

Looking back

The drive lost momentum when an interim administration took charge after the PPP-led central government completed its five year tenure.

Another major concern remains—security—as more than 60 polio workers, law-enforcement personnel and civilians involved in the eradication campaign were killed in the country – 34 in K-P alone. Nonetheless, campaigns continued across the country in 2014.

Just as security issues plagued campaigns so did coverage; a large number of children were missed in almost every immunisation round. These challenges faced in the polio eradication campaign and major achievements by health workers were highlighted in the National Emergency Action Plan (NEAP) 2014. With the onset of a new year, the plan could prove a useful tool to form strategies in the coming year

[Express Tribune](#)

January 5: Polio vaccination drive kicks off in Quetta amid tight security

A seven-day polio vaccination campaign was launched amid tight security in Quetta after a gap of more than five weeks during which children below the age of five would be administered polio drops.

District Health Officer Quetta Dr. Sher Ahmed Satakzai told Dawn that the vaccine will be administered to 700,000 children in Quetta.

The provincial government of Balochistan has declared an emergency in Quetta and other high-risk districts of the province to eradicate the paralysing disease. Teams comprising health department officials and volunteers were formed to make sure polio drops were administered to children below the age of five years in all parts of Quetta.

[DAWN](#)

January 5: Pakistan faced with two commonest forms of malnutrition: Report

Pakistan is among the countries that suffer from two of the commonest forms of malnutrition that include under five stunting and anaemia among women during the child bearing years.

The results showed that by scaling up key interventions the model estimates reductions in the prevalence of stunting of 17 per cent 21 percent and 18 percent from 2013 to 2025 in Bangladesh Ethiopia and Pakistan respectively.

Predicted reductions in the prevalence of severe wasting were estimated at 65 percent 62 percent and 58 percent respectively.

[The News](#)

January 4: Measles epidemic in Balochistan by Shehzad Baloch

Balochistan's health department failed to carry out its anti-measles campaign in the last month of 2014, belying repeated claims by the health minister that the launch of an emergency campaign was imminent.

It is shocking and deplorable that in the 21st century, children are still dying of this easily preventable childhood disease. The other three provinces have all allocated funds and launched fairly successful campaigns to combat measles. Only Balochistan has lagged far behind in this initiative. The Balochistan government claims that health is one of its top priorities, yet it has been unable to allocate the relatively modest sum of Rs137 million which was needed to launch the anti-measles campaign.

The last anti-measles campaign in Balochistan was held in 2012. The mismanagement of that campaign was at least partially to blame for a 2013 outbreak that claimed the lives of some 43 children and affected 789 others. In June 2013, the Global Alliance for Vaccine (Gavi) agreed to partly fund an anti-measles campaign that would vaccinate approximately 4.4 million children between the ages of six and 10. The provincial government's 48 per cent share of the cost (a mere Rs137 million), however, has not been forthcoming.

[Express Tribune](#)

January 4: Fata patients overburden KP health system

Health facilities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are overstretched due to the influx of patients from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

According to local doctors, Fata residents visit health facilities in the province due to a lack of infrastructure in their region. They say Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has long been offering treatment and diagnostic facilities to patients from Fata though they are meant for its own people.

The relevant officials said the centre directly governed Fata, so it was responsible for caring for the people of the rugged region. They, however, said since Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had never taken up the matter with the federal government, it hadn't secured any funds for the purpose.

[DAWN](#)

January 3: Polio marches onwards

Polio ended the year 2014 grimly victorious in Pakistan. Across the country there were [more](#)

[than 290 cases diagnosed](#), with at least 22 of those found in Balochistan. The first day of the new year saw a [26-month-old boy diagnosed with polio](#) in Chaghi district of the province and there is no indication that the current outbreak has either peaked or been brought under control. Chaghi district shares a border with Afghanistan, which has its own problems in addressing polio eradication — it also shares a border with Iran, which is unlikely to be pleased to find polio on its doorstep having been polio-free for many years.

The Pakistan Taliban are on record having said that they will [target vaccinators everywhere](#) — and they have done so in many parts of the country. They have roots within certain highly conservative communities, which is of significance in the context of battling polio. The provincial and federal governments need to focus on how to neutralise, to turn around, the crucial perceptions that are allowing polio to have a stranglehold on Pakistan. And they need to be doing that as of today, not tomorrow or the next month.

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