

Media Update

11 August 2020

United Nations

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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VIDEO MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2020

The theme of this year's International Youth Day – “Youth Engagement for Global Action” -- spotlights the ways in which the voices and activism of young people are making a difference and moving our world closer to the values and vision of the United Nations Charter.

This year's Youth Day occurs as the lives and aspirations of young people continue to be upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have lost their lives, and many have seen family members and other loved ones perish.

The vulnerabilities of young refugees, displaced persons, young women and girls and others caught up in conflict or disaster have grown more acute.

A generation's very formation has been jeopardized, their steps towards adulthood, identity and self-sufficiency thrown off course.

Some have taken on care burdens or are suffering from increased risks of hunger, violence in the home or the prospect of never being able to resume their education.

But this generation is also resilient, resourceful and engaged.

They are the young people who have risen up to demand climate action.

They are mobilizing for racial justice and gender equality and are the champions of a more sustainable world.

They are peacebuilders promoting social cohesion at a time of social distancing, advancing an end to violence globally and advocating harmony at a time of rising hatred.

Many are young women who have been on the frontlines in mobilizing for justice and climate action — while also serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response.

Realizing the promise of this generation means investing far more in young people's inclusion, participation, organizations and initiatives.

I call on leaders and adults everywhere to do everything possible to enable the world's youth to enjoy lives of safety, dignity and opportunity and contribute to the fullest of their great potential.

Thank you.

Video Link:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/ondem/and/MSG+SG+YOUTH+DAY_CLEAN.mp4

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

Polio vaccination campaigns resume in Pakistan and Afghanistan after COVID-19 disruptions leave 50 million children unimmunized

KATHMANDU/ISLAMABAD, 11 August 2020 – Polio immunization campaigns have resumed in Pakistan and Afghanistan – the last two polio-endemic countries in the world – months after COVID-19 left 50 million children without their polio vaccine.

In Pakistan, the initial round of vaccinations took place at the end of July, covering about 780,000 children. A nationwide vaccination campaign is slated to start later this month. In Afghanistan, polio immunization programmes restarted in three provinces in July. A second campaign covering almost half of the country will start this month.

“These life-saving vaccinations are critical if children are to avoid yet another health emergency,” said Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia. “As the world has come to see only too well, viruses know no borders and no child is safe from polio until every child is safe.”

Polio is a highly-infectious, crippling and sometimes fatal disease that can be avoided with a vaccine. Children under the age of five are particularly vulnerable.

Child vaccination drives, including polio campaigns, were halted in both Pakistan and Afghanistan in March 2020 to avoid the risk of COVID-19 transmission to children, caregivers and vaccinators themselves. As a result, reported polio cases have reached 34 in Afghanistan and 63 in Pakistan, including in some previously polio-free parts of the country.

The application of new vaccination guidelines and the use of protective equipment by frontline health workers will help ensure that vaccination campaigns resume safely.

However, while every effort will be made to reach children nationwide in both countries, UNICEF is concerned that that up to 1 million children in Afghanistan could miss out as door-to-door vaccinations are not possible in some areas and parents will have to make their way to health clinics to have their child vaccinated. In Pakistan, the suspension of vaccination drives has also resulted in the expansion and introduction of the disease into new areas of the country.

“Although we have experienced new challenges and a set-back in the fight against polio because of COVID-19, the eradication of this contagious disease will get back on track and is firmly within our reach,” said Jean Gough. “Together with the respective Governments and other partners including the WHO, Rotary, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with the dedicated work by frontline health workers, we are committed to reaching every child.”

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Notes for editors:

Multimedia materials available [here](#)

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org. For more information about COVID-19, visit www.unicef.org/coronavirus. Information on UNICEF's Immunization programme, available [here](#). Follow UNICEF on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

The UNICEF South Asia region includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

UNICEF's [Regional Office for South Asia](#) (ROSA) works with all eight UNICEF Country Offices in South Asia to help to save children's lives, defend their rights, and help them fulfil their potential. Follow UNICEF ROSA on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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