

Media Update

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WHO

PRESS RELEASE

WHO supports “Big Catch-Up” initiative to vaccinate 2.8 million children in Pakistan

Islamabad, Pakistan, 21 March 2025 – The World Health Organization (WHO) has partnered with the Government of Pakistan to protect with life-saving vaccines 2.8 million children who had missed routine doses due to the COVID-19 pandemic – or any other reason – during the first and second round of the ‘Big Catch-Up’ immunization campaign across Pakistan.

The second phase of the campaign concluded this week after vaccinating over 1.3 million children throughout February and March, building on a first round that had reached 1.5 million children from October to December 2024. Among the children protected, over 358 000 children had never received an immunization dose. A third and final round is planned for the second half of 2025 to ensure continued vigilance and high immunization coverage.

With financial support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and its partners have supported this Government-led initiative under the leadership of the Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI) and its Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), in partnership with provincial EPIs. The activity was implemented in synergy with the Polio Eradication Programme and mutual support was provided to ensure maximum reach – including frontline workers, monitoring, and resources.

“The overwhelming success of the second round of the Big Catch Up demonstrates the dedication of the Government of Pakistan and its vaccinators working in the frontlines to safeguard its children against preventable

diseases,” said Dr. Dapeng Luo, WHO Representative in Pakistan. “Vaccines work and save lives. WHO will continue to support and partner with Pakistan to deliver health for all and leave no child behind.”

The campaign focused on vaccinating children aged 12-59 months who had missed any dose of their routine immunizations, particularly in 83 high-risk districts.

To ensure maximum reach, over 65 000 teams, comprising skilled healthcare workers and dedicated social mobilizers, were deployed across Pakistan’s provinces and self-governing territories. This is the first time that a routine immunization activity for children beyond two years has been implemented on such a large scale. Special arrangements were made to ensure vaccine availability for children within a higher age group (up to five years), as EPI usually provides routine vaccination for children up to two years.

WHO Pakistan extends its gratitude to the FDI and crucial partners like Gavi and UNICEF for their unwavering commitment to strengthening routine immunization services in Pakistan and reaching every child, particularly in remote and underserved areas, to build a healthier and more resilient nation.

For additional information, please contact:

Maryam Yunus, National Professional Officer – Communications, WHO Pakistan, yunusm@who.int

José Ignacio Martín Galán, Head of Communications, WHO Pakistan, jomartin@who.int

About WHO

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