

# INTRAHEALTH INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT AT 70TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

May 2017

## 12.3 POLIOMYELITIS

IntraHealth International is a US-based NGO committed to improving the performance of health workers and strengthening the systems in which they work. Polio cases have decreased by over 99% since 1988, thanks to tremendous global collaboration and political commitment. Key to this feat has been the heroic efforts of health workers delivering life-saving vaccines on the front lines of care, often in geographically difficult and even dangerous settings. However, polio survives in a handful of the world's poorest and most marginalized communities, alongside mistrust and misinformation about the vaccine, insecurity, poor sanitation, and weak health systems. Alarming, we've also witnessed targeted attacks on health workers, including dozens of killings and abductions in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Nigeria in 2016 alone, setting back country campaigns as well as global progress.

The eradication of polio depends on the success of health workers in reaching these final disease strongholds. In the last mile of polio eradication, target countries must proactively manage their human resources for health and maintain the workforce necessary to ensure interruption of transmission and effective response to outbreaks. Frontline health workers are our first line of defense against disease threats, and they must be continuously supported, respected, and protected, particularly in dangerous settings.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative has left a legacy of far-reaching surveillance and response capacity for health and humanitarian emergencies in some of the world's most demanding settings. IntraHealth and the Frontline Health Workers Coalition encourage the sharing of the polio eradication effort's assets and lessons learned with other global health initiatives, including experience with strengthening immunization systems, improving data management, engaging communities, and building a well-trained and motivated health workforce for the global public good.

## CONTACT

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