

WB's Additional Support for Pakistan's Polio Eradication Initiative US\$21.14 million

The World Bank has approved a US\$21.14 million additional financing to support the Government of Pakistan's (GOP) effort to eradicate polio. The additional financing for the Second Partnership for Polio Eradication Project builds on the first and the second polio projects. The combined World Bank financing for polio eradication in Pakistan during 2003-2007 now amounts to US\$110.78 million.

Pakistan's Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) is part of the World Health Organization-(WHO) led, multi-country effort in support of a global public good, i.e., eradication of polio from the world. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 2006 ensured geographic restriction of wild poliovirus within the four remaining endemic countries: Nigeria, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Supporting these countries is crucial to stop virus transmission to cross the final hurdle towards global eradication.

Pakistan has made good progress towards polio eradication through sustained and intensified efforts. In recent years, polio cases decreased from 324 in 1999 to 28 in 2005. Despite an increase in polio cases from 28 in 2005 to 40 in 2006, most areas of Pakistan, and the vast bulk of the national population, are polio free and epidemiological evidence suggests that virus transmission has been further restricted in four geographical zones in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan.

The purpose of the project is to assist GOP in eradicating poliomyelitis. As the parent project, the additional support project will have only one component, i.e., to support the procurement and supply of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), needed for additional Supplemental Immunization Activities (SIAs) from August 2007 to January 2008. The program's additional OPV requirement to be supported by the project is 140 million doses, at a total cost of US\$21.14 million equivalent.

International Development Association (IDA, World Bank's concessionary lending arm) will finance the project through a normal credit that will be reduced to a grant through the innovative financing mechanism—“*IDA Buy-Down*”—as used in the parent project. The resources for the buy-down are being made available through a partnership between IDA and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Nations Foundation with funding from the Center for Disease Control. The partners' funding will help provide funds to buy down the debt incurred on successful implementation of the project. The first Partnership for Polio Eradication project was successfully converted to a grant through the triggering of IDA buy-down mechanism based on results of performance audit.

Among the four remaining endemic countries, Pakistan is closest to achieving polio eradication. A robust fully functional program reaching out to almost all children in each round, increasing coordination with Afghanistan and supported by availability of the best tools including new monovalent vaccines which protect children twice as fast as the traditional trivalent vaccine, and laboratory procedures that halve the time needed to detect poliovirus to rapidly achieve polio eradication justifies the investment.