



IMPACT STORIES

2025

CASE STUDIES AND HUMAN STORIES
FROM AFGHANISTAN'S POLIO PROGRAMME

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EVIDENCE AND VOICES: LESSONS AND STORIES FROM THE FIELD



This compendium captures the key lessons and experiences from Afghanistan's polio eradication programme in 2025. It brings together all case studies and human-interest stories developed during the year, showcasing both technical strategies and the human effort behind them.

The case studies highlight approaches such as hyper-localized planning, multi-layered engagement, and integrated service delivery, while emphasizing the critical role of Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) in building trust and driving vaccine acceptance. The human-interest stories complement these insights by sharing voices from the field, including frontline workers, caregivers, and polio survivors whose resilience and commitment remind us that ending polio is not only a technical challenge but a human journey.



CASE STUDIES



The presented case studies demonstrate how Afghanistan's polio programme adapted its strategies to overcome operational and social challenges. Each case reflects practical applications of the Comprehensive Pull Strategy, using **localized planning**, **community engagement**, and **integrated approaches** to sustain progress toward eradication.

These lessons are critical for informing future interventions in Afghanistan and similar high-risk settings

THE CLUSTER-LEVEL APPROACH IN THE EASTERN REGION



When house-to-house vaccination was banned, the Eastern Region introduced a cluster-based approach to maintain campaign quality. Vaccination sites were redefined to cover only five households, supported by detailed micro-planning and the use of child registration books. Female social mobilizers played a pivotal role in engaging caregivers and ensuring children were brought to vaccination sites. This approach reduced missed children to 1.5% and maintained high coverage rates, proving that hyper-localized planning and gender-sensitive staffing can deliver results even under restrictive conditions.

88 percent of caregivers credited campaign-based social mobilizers for their trust in vaccines

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CASE STUDY

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HOW MULTI-LAYERED ENGAGEMENT IS DRIVING POLIO ERADICATION IN THE SOUTHEAST



In the Southeast, vaccine hesitancy and misinformation required a comprehensive engagement strategy during the May 2025 National Immunization Day. The programme activated multiple layers of influence—district authorities, religious leaders, and community elders—while using mosque announcements, radio roundtables, and caregiver meetings to build trust. This approach improved vaccine acceptance in previously high-refusal communities and highlighted the importance of sustained advocacy and culturally tailored communication.

“At first, I was hesitant to give the polio vaccine to my children because I had heard many rumors in the village. But after the health team and local religious leaders explained the importance of the vaccine, I decided to vaccinate all my kids”

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LEARNING FROM INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY



In Chardei village, a fatal polio case prompted an integrated response combining WASH interventions with polio programming. The initiative applied Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) strategies, including triggering sessions, practical demonstrations, and community oversight committees. These efforts improved hygiene practices, reduced open defecation, and fostered local ownership. Water treatment adoption rose from 15% to 93%, and environmental samples turned negative, showing the impact of integration and SBC-driven change.

The community welcomed the initiative, seeing it as an investment in their overall well-being, not just a polio-specific intervention

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LEVERAGING LIVED EXPERIENCE TO ENHANCE VACCINE ACCEPTANCE IN THE WESTERN REGION



In Herat, the Afghanistan Polio Programme’s SBC team partnered with a local women’s paralympic basketball team—many of them polio survivors—to act as social mobilizers. Their lived experience and ability to access households helped overcome cultural barriers and build trust with caregivers. Through household visits and community outreach, they reduced refusals and strengthened demand for vaccination.

Because some team members live with disabilities caused by polio, their message carried a credibility that changed minds and reduced refusals across Herat.

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HUMAN INTEREST STORIES



Beyond strategies and data, the fight against polio in Afghanistan is powered by people, their dedication, resilience, and hope for a healthier future. These human-interest stories capture the voices and experiences of **frontline workers, polio survivors, caregivers, and community leaders** who have turned challenges into opportunities for change.

Each story reflects the **courage** to overcome barriers, the **persistence** to build trust, and the **commitment** to protect every child from polio. Together, they remind us that eradication is not only a technical goal, but a human journey driven by empathy and determination.

FRONTLINE WORKERS

Social mobilizers, vaccinators, volunteers



Frontline workers are the backbone of polio eradication efforts. Their stories highlight resilience and commitment in challenging environments, whether navigating mountainous terrain, addressing vaccine hesitancy, or adapting to site-based campaigns.

Through respectful dialogue, logistical innovation, and persistent engagement, these individuals ensure that every child has access to life-saving vaccines. Their work demonstrates how trust-building and community presence translate into improved coverage and reduced missed children.

30 stories featured vaccinators, social mobilizers, and volunteers who tirelessly worked to protect children from polio.

Hero highlights



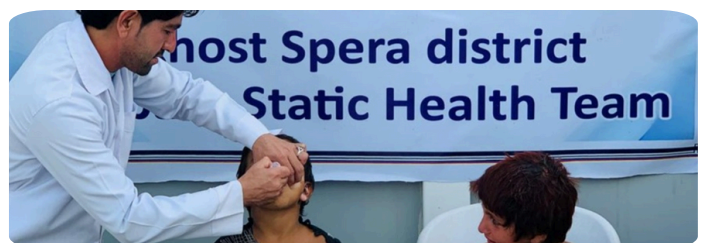
A passionate advocate on the frontlines of child health, Farmanullah ensures no child is left behind.

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Mehrullah Omarkhel is a vaccinator who goes beyond administering drops. He builds trust in remote communities before every vaccination.

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Zarina's efforts have significantly reduced refusals, demonstrating the impact of female mobilizers in improving health outcomes.

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POLIO SURVIVORS

Voices of experience: Turning adversity into advocacy



Polio survivors transform personal adversity into powerful advocacy. Their narratives emphasize the lifelong impact of polio and the urgency of prevention. By sharing their experiences in schools, mosques, and community gatherings, they raise risk perception and counter misinformation.

These voices resonate deeply with caregivers, reinforcing the message that vaccination is not optional but essential for a child's future.

Hero highlights



Izzatullah speaks in schools and community gatherings, encouraging parents to vaccinate their children.

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Through outreach in classrooms and local forums, Najibullah urges families to protect their children from the hardships he endures.

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Niaz Mohammad advocates for immunization by recounting the day his legs were paralyzed by polio and focusing on the irreversible impact of the disease

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COMMUNITY INFLUENCERS

Trusted voices: Leading communities toward protection



Community influencers play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes toward vaccination. Their leadership, whether through public endorsements, mosque sermons, or local dialogues, creates an enabling environment for immunization.

By leveraging trust and cultural authority, these figures dismantle barriers of doubt and mobilize entire communities. Their involvement ensures that polio campaigns are not seen as external interventions but as shared responsibilities for child health.

Hero highlights



Abdul Jaleel mobilizes influential figures and organizes community dialogues to address misconceptions about vaccines.

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Local elders and religious leaders in Paktika publicly endorse vaccination by immunizing their own children first.

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Mohammad Siraj collaborates with imams and tribal elders to promote vaccination during mosque gatherings and community meetings.

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This compendium reflects the work of the Afghanistan Country Office Polio Programme's Social and Behavior Change (SBC) team, documenting how evidence-based adaptations and community engagement have supported the polio eradication programme.

The case studies presented here capture best practices that illustrate how trust-building and dialogue have helped overcome barriers to vaccination. These examples demonstrate innovative strategies to influence behaviors, address concerns, and create an environment where families actively seek immunization.

Storytelling has been central to this effort, leveraging relatable experiences that strengthen confidence in the programme. Aligned with the pull strategy, our communication activities focused on ensuring that communities were informed, motivated, and empowered to act.

This compendium serves as a record of progress and a resource for future action. By continuing to apply SBC principles and the pull strategy, we continue to shift perceptions and reinforce positive social norms around vaccination in Afghanistan.

