



Polio Afghanistan

**INTERNATIONAL
PEACE
INSTITUTE**

HIGHLIGHTS

BACKGROUND BRIEFS FOR BMGF SECURITY AND ACCESS STRATEGY SESSION: AFGHANISTAN

1. Drivers of insecurity and conflict

NB: Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, information denoted with an asterisk () is confidential and can be elaborated upon in oral briefings with IPI.*

It should be noted at the start that as of now, the polio eradication programme in Afghanistan is achieving far better results than its far larger, more expensive counterpart in Pakistan. Leaving aside the disparity in scale (landmass and population), a major factor responsible for Afghanistan's success is the following:

The Afghan Taliban, under the authority of Mullah Omar, have issued explicit approval of and support for the polio eradication programme, with the following conditions:

(i) each anti-polio campaign in areas under Taliban control or influence should be coordinated by the Afghan authorities with the "shadow" Taliban authorities in advance;

- (ii) a "safe passage letter" issued by the Afghan Taliban should be obtained; and
- (iii) no foreigners should be part of the health team.

So far all sides have kept to this bargain.

It is equally clear that there is misreporting on anti-polio coverage in Afghanistan, though on a smaller scale than in its neighbor to the south and east, including corruption and poor accounting.*

- The explicit Afghan Taliban approval of the polio eradication programme is a major reason for the success of polio eradication in country.
- The upcoming elections, changing political alliances and withdrawal of NATO troops, will worsen the situation.
- The unpredictability in the intensity, scope and magnitude of expected developments will lead to deterioration in a well-functioning polio eradication programme.
- A further challenge will be the military situation, in particular the withdrawal of the NATO/ISAF forces.



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