

Today Marks 3 Years Without WPV Case In Nigeria: A letter from Dr. Samuel Usman, CGPP Nigeria Secretariat Director

August 21, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Today marks three years since the last time a child was paralyzed by the wild poliovirus in Nigeria. The last 3 WPV cases were seen in Borno (a CGPP focal state) in August 2016.

This milestone of 3 years without **a case** of WPV means the Government of Nigeria (GON) and PEI partners can now begin taking steps to begin the process of **possible** certification of the WHO African region as wild poliovirus-free as soon as **probably** mid-2020. As the last polio-endemic country in Africa, Nigeria going three years without a case of wild poliovirus is an important step towards a polio-free world.

It is important however, to note that the job is **not yet** finished as Polio-free certification for Nigeria remains only a **probability** since we still have active transmission of Circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus Type 2 (cVDPV2) occurring across our country due to low RI coverage, inaccessible areas due to insecurity and pockets of vaccine rejection as well as Governance issues (non-release of counterpart funding by some state governments). We still have Surveillance challenges in many areas across the country as well. These challenges you will agree with me, cannot be wished away and will require concerted efforts by all stakeholders to address them holistically.

Thus, as we mark today, we need to all be mindful of the fact that our support from the lowest to the highest levels in the communities, Wards, LGAs and States where we work is still required. We must not relent in our efforts as we work hard to rid our country of cVDPV2 and the last bastions of vaccine rejection in our focal areas.

I want to thank all the state teams (VCMs, VWS, LGACs, Program Officers etc.) for the effort at ensuring every child is vaccinated. You have donated your time and effort, endured all forms of hardship; advocated to governments and you've helped deliver the lifesaving polio vaccine to countless children. Because of your support, we're also able to provide convergent messages to vulnerable communities to raise awareness and **build trust**. I cannot thank you enough for your support and dedication.

To our colleagues in other CGPP focal countries, our HQ bosses, Technical Advisors, and our donor USAID, we are immensely grateful for your tireless support. We will continue to count on this support to reach the last child with the Polio vaccine.

We should all be proud of our collective efforts, but it is not time to celebrate yet. We still have work to do but optimism is key. I look forward to joining with you as soon as mid-2020 to celebrate the certification of a wild poliovirus-free Nigeria and eventually, Africa!

Best,

Dr. Samuel Usman

CGPP Nigeria Secretariat Director