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Policy Analysis Research Paper

**THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN
PAKISTAN IS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE IN
COMBATING POLIO – MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOAL (MDG) # 6**



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ABSTRACT

The entire global community is battling to deal with Coronavirus. However, developing countries, such as, Pakistan has yet to cease the spread of Polio before streamlining strategy to encounter any other novel disease. Polio eradication is one of the top agendas of the recent visit of the United Nations Secretary General, His Excellency António Guterres, to Pakistan. The government of Pakistan has launched its first nationwide campaign of 2020 on 17th February, this year. Nearly 39.6 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated across Pakistan with the help of 265,000 polio workers. The UN has come up with 50 goals spanning from 1960 to 2000. The goals varied with different circumstances under consideration including; focus on education, child mortality, life expectancy, hunger and poverty, and sustainable development. The significance of the eight goals set during the Millennium Summit which was held in New York in 2000 is being criticised for not achieving the desired results. Apparently the failure on part of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

relies on the fact that some countries have been sidelined. Out of the eight, the MDG # 6 was envisaged with two targets of halting HIV by 2015 and reversing it, and halting malaria and other diseases and reversing it; including Polio. The World Health Organization (WHO) along with its partner organizations launched a Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 2001. In 2015, the MDGs were redefined as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 was set as the redefined deadline to achieve development targets, including improvement in health conditions and eradication of deadly diseases, such as, polio. A lot of resources were spent on anti-polio campaigns and about 200 countries participated in the campaign of eradicating polio. Some significant results were achieved; however, three countries, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria failed to eradicate polio.

KEYWORDS

Coronavirus, Polio, and its eradication; Health, UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Analysis of Polio Eradication in Pakistan; World Health Organization (WHO) & Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI); Management, Anti-Polio Drives & Health Policy.

COMMENTARY & ANALYSIS

“My appeal to all leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, is to fully support the Government of Pakistan and other governments around the world to make sure that we will be able to fully eradicate polio.”(H.E. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, during his visit to Pakistan on 18th February, 2020)

The entire global community is battling to deal with Coronavirus. This newly spread virus has killed at least 1,868 people in mainland China and has infected some 72,000 worldwide, mostly in China right in the beginning of 2020 (Aljazeera 2020). However, developing countries, such as, Pakistan has yet to cease the spread of Polio before streamlining strategy to encounter any other novel disease. Polio eradication is one of the top agendas of the recent visit of the United Nations Secretary General, His Excellency António Guterres, to Pakistan (Bukhari 2020). Pakistani government launched its first nationwide campaign of 2020 on 17th February, this year. Nearly 39.6 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated across Pakistan with the help of 265,000 polio workers (Babakhel 2020). In the perspective of history, so far, the UN has come up with 50 goals spanning from 1960 to 2000. The goals varied with different circumstances under consideration including; focus on education, child mortality, life expectancy, hunger and poverty, and sustainable development. The significance of the eight goals set during the Millennium Summit which was held in New York in 2000 is being criticised for not achieving the desired results. Apparently the failure on part of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relies on the fact that some countries have been side lined while coming up with the figures and statistical analysis (Jolly 2010, p. 48). However, in 2015 the UN envisaged another blueprint of achieving development goals naming it ‘Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’. Superseding the MDGs, the Sustainable SDGs are 17 goals with 169 targets that all 191 United Nations Member States have agreed to try and achieve by 2030 (Espino 2018) (**Refer to Table 1**). The goals represent a new transformative agenda for the world which aims to improve economic, social and environmental conditions for populations and the planet through enhancing partnerships, peace and prosperity.

In 2015, the United Nations revised Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and came up with a new roadmap for development setting new goals and targets calling them Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed tools to measure country progress in achieving the targets of the Goals. SDG 3 is the health-related Goal “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, and while WHO takes the leadership role in supporting countries to achieve SDG 3, health plays a fundamental role in development and is linked to some targets under SDGs 6, 7 and 11 (WHO 2017).

MDG #	Concept	SDG #	Concept
1	Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger	1	No Poverty
2	Achieve Universal Primary Education	2	Zero Hunger
3	Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	3	Good Health and Well-being
4	Reduce Child Mortality	4	Quality Education
5	Improve Maternal Health	5	Gender Equality
6	Combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases	6	Clean Water and Sanitation
7	Ensure Environmental Sustainability	7	Affordable and Clean Energy
8	Global Partnership for Development	8	Decent Work and Economic Growth
		9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
		10	Reduced Inequalities
		11	Sustainable Cities and Communities
		12	Responsible Consumption and Production
		13	Climate Action
		14	Life Below Water
		15	Life on Land
		16	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
		17	Partnerships for The Goals

Table 1: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) List (Espino 2018)

Out of the eight, the MDG # 6 was envisaged with two targets of halting HIV by 2015 and reversing it, and halting malaria and other diseases and reversing it; including Polio. The WHO along with its partner organizations launched a Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 2001. A lot of resources were spent on anti-polio campaigns and about 200 countries participated in the campaign of eradicating polio. Some significant results were achieved to confine polio to three countries only that is Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Although success has been achieved still these three countries pose a serious threat to the global anti-polio campaigns. Keeping this in mind a strategic plan was set to lessen this disease during the period of 2010-2012. Interestingly, 63 per cent of the polio cases has been reduced in 2012 (123 cases were reported) as compared to 2011 (333 cases reported);

however, the trend line is still increasing for the endemic countries like Pakistan, Nigeria and Afghanistan. Thus Pakistan will not likely achieve the dream of eradicating polio due to major obstacle of instability in the region (Khan & Qazi 2013).

The US invaded Afghanistan in 2011 and its chaos was over stretched to tribal belt of Pakistan. Within years the whole country was engulfed in episodes of conflict. As a result, large number of displaced people migrated into Pakistan and therefore the threat of polio virus epidemic multiplied manifolds. On the other hand, many of the vaccination campaigns were abandoned due to instability in the region and thus it provided room for the polio virus to spread. In the rigid conflict zones, the volunteers and the polio vaccination health workers were threatened and even some were assassinated by the militants and extremist groups. In one of recent incidents recorded in 2020, two polio workers were killed in Swabi district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Imdad 2020). The militant leaders were concerned about the origin of polio vaccines which they thought were from US and calling them 'Un-Islamic' for the intake. This fake propaganda increases the polio virus epidemic. Besides this, the government ineffective health sector machinery has failed to deliver. Many of the Basic Health Units (BHUs) that were operative in the north-west of Pakistan stopped working because the staff were afraid of being abducted by active militant groups. The health policy of Pakistan needs to be revamped in a manner that could ensure safety of staff working in fields, particularly women. The entire policy needs a revision coupled with removal of bottle necks from different stages which are creating hurdle in implementation of key initiatives, such as, polio eradication initiative, and to make it results driven (Nishtar 2010). Another major factor that steered the polio virus to spread in the region was the natural disasters (Warraich et. al 2011, pp. 236-237). The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were housed in make-shift tent villages and it provided enabling environment for this deadly virus to play the havoc (Khan & Qazi 2013).

The success of the polio eradication cannot be undermined, however, there is still long way to go for the viral disease to be eliminated entirely. The ongoing conflict in the region is the key threat to the anti-polio campaigns. It is obvious from the *tables 2 and 3* given below that 6,767 terrorism related casualties were reported and 256 polio cases were detected in the period 2003-2007 as compared to 2008-2012; where, 38,368 casualties were reported and 606 polio cases surfaced. During 2013-2017, as the casualties dropped to

17,620; the number of polio cases recorded also leaped back to 249. So it is obvious that as long as instability in the region remains, more terrorism related incidents would occur and more casualties will result in the aftermath of the incidents (EPI 2013 & SATP 2019).

Year	Civilians	Security Force Personnel	Terrorists/Insurgents	Total
2000	45	0	0	45
2001	29	9	0	38
2002	88	7	44	139
2003	140	24	25	189
2004	435	184	244	863
2005	430	81	137	648
2006	608	325	538	1471
2007	1522	597	1479	3598
2008	2155	654	3906	6715
2009	2324	991	8389	11704
2010	1796	469	5170	7435
2011	2738	765	2800	6303
2012	3007	732	2472	6211
2013	3001	676	1702	5379
2014	1781	533	3182	5496
2015	940	339	2403	3682
2016	612	293	898	1803
2017	540	208	512	1260
2018	369	165	157	691
2019	97	75	56	228
Total*	22657	7127	34114	63898

Table 2: Year-wise Total Number of Casualties in Pakistan up until June, 2019* (SATP 2019)

Time Period	Total No. of Terrorism related Casualties in Pakistan	Total No. of Polio Cases Reported in Pakistan
2003-2007	6,767	256
2008-2012	38,368	606
2013-2017	17,620	249
Total	62,755	1,111

Table 3: Total No. of Casualties in Pakistan Vs. Total No. of Polio Cases Reported in Pakistan (SATP 2019)

A similar kind of analysis was reported by WHO suggesting that the conflict in the region accelerated the endemic transmission of the polio virus, especially when the terror strikes peaked in 2006. The same results were reaffirmed when GPEI 2011 annual report depicted that the decline in vaccination campaign in 2006 led to the higher number of polio cases (GPEI 2011, p.39). Closser (2010, pp. 40-41) draw similar conclusion and states that as long as instability and conflict remain in the region, the eradication of polio will haunt. The transition in the government in Pakistan after May 2013 election has aimed at establishing peace with different militant groups. As long as the the talks are successful, it will ensure the volunteers and vaccination teams to access the far flung areas and would try to control the menace. Beside this, the government authorities can negotiate with the militants to transcend the polio eradication awareness schemes and to capitalize on the propaganda of use of anti-polio vaccines. However, the situation can deteriorate further if the talks with militants failed at any stage. On the other hand, successful talks with militants will lead monitoring teams to access those areas which were not covered as yet.

It is feared that a lot of confirmed cases can bleak the success of eradicating polio and will thus put behind the country's dream of achieving MDG # 6 by 2015 or SDGs by 2030. There are currently about 13,000 US forces as well as thousands of other NATO troops in Afghanistan, 18 years after a US-led coalition invaded the country following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. Although it has been hinted by the US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad that 'we are near to strike a peace deal with Afghan Taliban' and 'to find a resolution to the Afghan war' however, the agreement is still in provisional phase (Aljazeera 2020). It is also feared that when US and coalition forces withdraw from Afghanistan, a civil war in neighbouring country will force many migrants to peep into the porous Pak-Afghan

border. That migration will embellish the viral spread and thus its culmination will push back efforts. Thus on part of the government, it is ample to take more initiatives of anti-polio awareness programs. It should create an enabling environment for volunteers and vaccination workers to perform their duties and liaise with international donor agencies to further facilitate the local organizations which are working in the anti-polio drive. The tribal elders should be educated about the harmful impact on not taking the anti-polio vaccine. Furthermore, they should be directed to spread the anti-polio drive in their localities. It is believed that the polio cases have increased in Pakistan in 2020 as compared to last year (PPEP 2020) (*Refer to table 4 and 5*). A lot has been achieved, but it is right time for the government to pre-plan for the upcoming threat of polio cases. The current government is optimistic in eradicating polio and have launched health safety net programs in 2019, such as ‘Sehat Sahulat Programme (Which issues Sehat Insaf Card)’; however, more concentrated effort is required (Express Tribune 2019). Negligence at this stage will not only overshadow the success of the government but will also affect the socioeconomic fabric profoundly.

Province/Region	Total No. of Polio Cases
Punjab	0
Sindh	5
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	10
Balochistan	2
Gilgit-Baltistan	0
Azad Kashmir	0
ICT	0
Total*	17

Table 4: Province-wise Total Number of Polio Cases Recorded in Pakistan up until Jan, 2020* (PPEP 2020)

Province/Region	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Punjab	2	0	1	0	10	0
Sindh	12	8	2	1	30	5
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	33	10	1	8	92	10
Balochistan	7	2	3	3	12	2
Gilgit-Baltistan	0	0	1	0	0	0
Azad Kashmir	0	0	0	0	0	0
ICT	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total*	54	20	8	12	144	17

Table 5: Province-wise Yearly Total Number of Polio Cases Recorded in Pakistan January 2015 - January 2020* (PPEP 2020)

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