

Nigerian president saluted for anti-polio campaign

President Muhammadu Buhari was named Rotary International's Polio Eradication Champion in acknowledgment of his government's efforts to keep Nigeria polio-free.



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Removed for polio-endemic list

Last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) removed Nigeria from its list of polio-endemic countries after the African nation went one year without reporting a case of the disease. The last reported case of polio in Nigeria was 24 July, 2014, in south Kano state. Nigeria is the last country on the African continent to report active transmission of the wild poliovirus.

Public campaigns

Shortly after taking office in July 2015, President Buhari demonstrated his personal commitment to ending polio by publically immunising his young granddaughter. In September, he launched polio immunisation campaigns in his hometown of Daura, Katsina, by vaccinating local children. Mostly recently, he convened a presidential task force on polio eradication, through which 36 Nigerian state governors reaffirmed their commitment to keeping Nigeria polio-free.

"Progress against polio in Nigeria, while a tremendous achievement, remains fragile. The country must ensure high-quality polio campaigns and surveillance activity for at least another two years, or risk the return of this disease,"

Rising to the challenge

"President Buhari and the Nigerian government have shown they are equal to this challenge, maintaining strong commitment and public support for polio immunisation in the face of zero cases." says Rotary International president, KR Ravindran.

Past recipients

Rotary established the Polio Eradication Champion Award in 1995 to recognise leaders and others who have made significant contributions to the global eradication of polio. Past recipients include Shinzo Abe, prime minister of Japan; Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany; David Cameron, prime minister of Britain; Enda Kenny, prime minister of Ireland;

and Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary general.

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