

THE ISLAMIC ADVISORY GROUP (IAG)

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UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO Consulted to Support Immunization & Maternal and Child Health in addition to Polio Eradication



IAG executive committee members with representatives of partner organizations during consultation meeting

A one day Consultation Meeting was held between the Islamic Advisory Group for Polio Eradication (IAG) and its UN partners at the premises of the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO/EMRO) in Cairo to discuss expanding the IAG's role to support maternal and child health (MCH) and immunization priority areas. The meeting held on October 26 included representatives of the IAG's executive committee along with partners from the regional offices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and WHO.

Dr Alaa Alwan, Regional Director of WHO/EMRO, inaugurated the meeting by recognizing the work of the IAG in support of polio eradication. He highlighted the urgency of tackling issues related to MCH and immunization for the Region and affirmed WHO's longstanding collaboration with Islamic scholars to provide protection for women and children.

The meeting was co-chaired by Dr Maha El-Adawy, Director of Health Protection and Promotion at WHO/EMRO, and Dr Yagoub AIMazrou, Secretary General of the Saudi Health Council and the chairman of the IAG

executive committee. The participants discussed the priority areas that the IAG can support, and decided to focus at the current stage on breastfeeding, birth spacing, immunization, hygiene and sanitation, and care-seeking behaviors where religious messaging can provide an added value. They also discussed the communication tools that could be used for this expanded role including the use of Friday sermons, face-to-face interactions, social media, mass media, and mobile phone messages depending on the popularity of these tools in each country.

Somali Islamic Scholars Convene First NIAG Meeting



Ulama in First Somali NIAG Meeting

Somali Islamic scholars concluded a two day meeting on December 7 that discussed the state of polio eradication and how to protect Somali children from all vaccine-preventable diseases. The 23 Ulama representing different Somali regions met in Hargeisa, Somaliland, to establish the National Islamic Advisory Group (NIAG) through which they will work with all relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to support routine immunization as well as vaccination campaigns.

Hosting the event was Sheikh Khalil Abdullahi Ahmed, Minister of Islamic Affairs and Endowment for Somaliland, who said that bringing all these different participants together represents a unique opportunity. Dr. Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative, also highlighted the important role played by Islamic scholars in their communities.

In a statement issued at the end of the meeting the scholars called upon parents to "live up to their religious responsibility and protect their children against polio as well as all other vaccine-preventable diseases."

About the IAG

The IAG was launched in 2013 after consultations between the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), Al Azhar Al Sharif, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) who make up the core membership of the group along with other religious scholars, technical experts and academics. It aims to muster support from Muslim religious scholars and groups, donor countries, and organizations for the global effort to end polio in the high risk areas of priority countries (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia).

Afghanistan: Nangarhar Scholars Pledge Support for Polio Eradication ...



Nangarhar Ulama conference

Over 120 Islamic scholars gathered in a conference on November 3 in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, to express their support for Afghanistan's polio eradication programme. The Ulama highlighted that the polio vaccine was crucial for children's health and called on all Afghans to cooperate with health workers during polio vaccination campaigns. They also committed to relaying messages to their communities during Friday prayer sermons about the safety and benefits of the polio vaccine, highlighting that it is the only effective prevention for the disease.

The Nangarhar Ulama also

endorsed the national Ulama Declaration on polio issued at a conference held in Kabul earlier this year with the support of the IAG. The Declaration states that "the polio vaccine is allowed according to Islam and is fully in accordance with the rulings of Shariah."

During the one day conference, local government officials from Nangarhar province and representatives from the Ministry of Public Health highlighted the progress and remaining challenges of the polio programme, encouraging the Ulama to continue their valuable support for vaccination campaigns.

... and Farah Scholars Welcome Vaccine

Also in Farah province over 70 Ulama gathered in a conference on November 26 to express their support for polio eradication. The Islamic scholars called on all caregivers to vaccinate their children against polio during every vaccination campaign and to cooperate with polio workers, emphasizing that polio is an incurable disease that can only be prevented

through immunization.

In his speech Mufti Shamsurrahman Frotan warned that a person who does not get treated for his illness or take preventive measures would be committing a sin. He called for the protection of children's health who are the future of the nation. On his part Mawlawi Samiullah Raihan pointed to

the many fatwas that declare polio vaccine Halal (permissible) in Islam.

Following a successful national Ulama conference on polio eradication held in Kabul in February 2016, similar conferences have so far been held in Nangarhar, Kunar and Kandahar provinces where the Ulama expressed their support for polio eradication.

IAG Secretariat

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Polio Update

37 wild polio cases of type 1 have been reported so far in 2016:

- 20 in Pakistan
- 13 in Afghanistan
- 4 in Nigeria

This represents a positive development compared to the same time period last year, especially for Pakistan and Afghanistan, when the total number of cases reported was 58. However, Nigeria has been reclassified as an endemic country.

IICPSR to Finalize Student Training Manual



During the first quarter of 2017, the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) will hold a two-day Advisory Committee Meeting to finalize the student training manual intended for use with Al Azhar students. Students studying at Al Azhar University coming from the priority countries of Paki-

stan, Afghanistan, and Somalia, will learn about polio eradication, routine immunizations, as well as other priority maternal and child health initiatives to advocate for them in the high risk areas to which they belong. As graduates of such a prestigious academic institution, these students will be well placed within their local communities to dispel the kind of rumors and misinformation that hamper the work of vaccination teams in the high-risk areas of these countries.

The IICPSR was founded at Al-Azhar University in co-operation with the UNFPA in 1975. It functions as an inter-regional organization with a view to serve the Islamic World.