

THE ISLAMIC ADVISORY GROUP

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 5, SEPTEMBER 2017



NIAG Pakistan's Islamic scholars push for polio eradication



The National Emergency Operations Centre hosted the NIAG core group meeting

Core group members of the Pakistan's National Islamic Advisory Group (NIAG) met at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) on 12 September to review national and provincial work plans and align them with the National Emergency Action Plan of 2017–2018. They reiterated their support for Pakistan's Polio Eradication Programme with a pledge to eliminate the virus from its core reservoirs.

"Vaccinating children against polio is in accordance with Islamic Shariah and is

considered a religious obligation," said Maulana Hanif Jalandhri, chairman of the core group. "I am always keen that my grandchildren do not miss their polio drops every time the vaccination teams knock on my door. Our support to the campaign will continue until Pakistan is polio-free and all our children are safe from polio."

NIAG member and chairman of the Polio Plus Ulama Committee, Maulana Hanif Tayyab added, "Our duty and responsibility as religious community leaders is to ensure

parents vaccinate their children under the age of five against this debilitating but preventable disease, especially those who have not been vaccinated before or were missed in the campaign."

Senator Ayesha Farooq, the Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, lauded the role of religious scholars in addressing misconceptions among communities, families and parents, and praised them for playing a key role in protecting Pakistan's children by reaching and vaccinating every missed child.

NEOC Coordinator Dr Rana Safdar also stressed the importance of vaccinating every child. "Recent cases indicate that the resilient poliovirus has the capability to reach and paralyse our children as long as they are sub-optimally protected either because of refusals or being missed for other reasons," he said.

The support of religious leaders has been instrumental in increasing vaccine acceptance and reaching missed children across Pakistan.

IAG participates in South Asia Religious Leaders' Platform for Children

Members of the IAG executive committee and secretariat participated in the first South Asia Religious Leaders' Platform for Children organized by UNICEF South Asia on 5 to 6 September in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The launch brought together more than 30 influential leaders and distinguished representatives from various religious communities in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to underline the critical role they can play in promoting the fulfillment of child rights and to harness regional solidarity towards a brighter future for all children in the Region.

Dr Abdulqahir Qamar, Director of Fatwa at the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) and a member of IAG's executive committee, introduced the IAG and its role in supporting polio eradication efforts in polio-endemic and at-risk countries by tackling refusals and misconceptions about

the vaccine. He also explained how the IAG is expanding into other maternal and child health initiatives including routine immunization, while keeping polio eradication its top priority until the job is done.

"Islam has bestowed upon children great care and stature," he explained, pointing to their rights to be breastfed and to be taught proper hygiene.

The two-day meeting discussed challenges related to poverty, nutrition, breastfeeding, out of school children, education of girls and early marriage. It ended with the religious leaders' declaration to set aside differences in backgrounds, cultures, and traditions, and to carry forward their resolve to put children's rights and wellbeing at the center of their religious agendas and actions.



IG strengthens collaboration with UNICEF South Asia



Dr Abdulqahir Qamar, Director of Fatwa at IIFA and IAG executive committee member (left), presents a copy of the French translation of the holy Qur'an to Mr Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director of UNICEF South Asia

During their visit to Kathmandu in September, members of IAG's executive committee and secretariat met with the leadership of UNICEF's Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) to update them on IAG's work and to strengthen collaboration with the organization.

Mr Philippe Cori, the Deputy Regional Director for ROSA, and Dr Paul Rutter, its Chief Health and Immunization Officer, were briefed on the consultation process that the IAG conducted in Cairo with UNICEF, WHO, and UNFPA to identify the priority areas within its expanded mandate.

That process had identified breastfeeding, birth spacing, immunization, care-seeking behaviour, as well as hygiene and sanitation as IAG's next targets after polio.

It was agreed to have more cooperation between IAG and ROSA to work jointly in Pakistan and Afghanistan and that the Regional Office will help in identifying UNICEF focal points for immunization and maternal and child health.

UNICEF and WHO provide technical support to the IAG secretariat which is housed in the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

About the IAG

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) was launched in 2013 after consultations between Al Azhar Al Sharif, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), 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).

IAG secretariat

[facebook.com/
IslamicAdvisoryGroup](https://www.facebook.com/IslamicAdvisoryGroup)

[twitter.com/
IslamicAdvisory](https://twitter.com/IslamicAdvisory)

secretariat@iag-group.org
www.iag-group.org

Polio update

11 wild polio cases of type 1 have been reported so far in 2017:

- 5 in Pakistan
- 6 in Afghanistan

Efforts are ongoing through the implementation of national emergency action plans in both countries to address remaining gaps in coverage and surveillance, and in close coordination with each other.

IAG to hold its fourth annual meeting at Al Azhar Al Sharif in November



The fourth annual meeting for the Islamic Advisory Group is scheduled to be hosted by Al Azhar Al Sharif on 22 November in Cairo, Egypt.

The meeting will review and monitor the progress of implementing IAG's

2017 work plan, the progress made by the priority countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia, and will prepare the work plan for 2018.

IAG meetings have been hosted interchangeably between Jeddah and Cairo where the four core partners of the group are based. In 2014, the first annual meeting was hosted by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah, followed by Al Azhar Al Sharif in 2015 and the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah last year. Al Azhar Al Sharif and the International Islamic Fiqh Academy act as co-chairs of the group.