

**Canada's Statement – Annual Session 2021 – UNICEF Executive Board
Special Focus Session on the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI)**

The eradication of polio has been a long, arduous and challenging road. New obstacles keep emerging at every turn. But, working together, we have largely succeeded in overcoming those obstacles. Despite being the closest to eradicating polio that we have ever been, we are now possibly facing the greatest challenges we have ever encountered: vaccine-derived outbreaks; financial and organizational challenges; and a pandemic.

We know polio can be eradicated and we know how. Now is not the time to reduce or delay our efforts. We urge all our partners - international organizations; donors; affected countries; and private partners to stay the course and sustain their efforts.

As a member of UNICEF and a donor to UNICEF's work on polio eradication, it is critical that we all renew our commitment to work together and eradicate polio and support the new 2022-2026 Polio Eradication Strategy. Canada recognizes the important contribution UNICEF has made so far but also calls for more to be done:

First, we need to collectively work harder to integrate services. An area of particular strength for UNICEF that is also key to

ensuring we can reach the hardest to reach and most vulnerable communities.

Second, we need to do more on community outreach, also an area of strength for UNICEF. Fighting disinformation and building support at community level is more important than ever;

And third, we need to pay more attention to gender. Women and girls are more than beneficiaries. They are the agents of change we so urgently need at this time. Having more women in leadership positions is about both equity and being able to deliver better.

Transition planning and implementation will be critical to ensure the sustainability of GPEI infrastructure. What is UNICEF's transition plan to ensure vaccine preventable disease programming is not lost and polio eradication is sustained?

What does UNICEF see as the biggest hurdle to integrated service delivery, and how can we as donors support the efforts to breakdown the hurdles?