

## **Polio Vaccination Works With Taleban's Help**

**Author:** [IWPR](#)

The militants insist they will not let other humanitarian workers into the districts they control. Here at the Bost Hospital in Lashkar Gah, parents bring their children in every day to get vaccinated against polio. It's the last phase of a widespread drive to rid Helmand of the debilitating disease. The campaign has been highly successful, health officials say - but only because the Taleban cooperated.

After a series of negotiations, the insurgent agreed to let vaccination teams into the districts under their control, according to Muhammad Qaseem, who supervises the vaccination programme at Bost Hospital.

"The Taleban do not oppose the vaccination procedure and they have been cooperating with us everywhere as we implement the vaccination programme. As a result of their collaboration, the vaccine can be taken to all parts of the province and be administered there."

Mir Wais was in charge of the vaccination programme in Musa Qala when the Taleban were in control of the town.

"Unless they help us, it is difficult for us to do this job. They accompany us at all times for security," he said, adding that the campaign had been disrupted only when there were clashes between the Taleban and foreign forces.

But Muhammad Qaeem says security is not the only challenge.

"It is an obvious fact that the level of education is very low in our community. There are some people in our community who do not know the benefits of vaccination, and they may have heard propoganda against it. So some families refused to vaccinate their children."

The polio vaccination programme is being carried out by the Afghan government in partnership with UNICEF and the World Health Organisation.

**Topic:** [Helmand Voices: Health](#)

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