

Communication update

EOC Pakistan

Issue VIII: Feb 13, 2015



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Fighting Polio - Religious Scholars lead the way!



Religious leaders play a vital role in shaping the behaviours of the society in Pakistan wherein more than 96 percent of the population subscribe to Islam. For the same reason, the NEAP 2014 provided guidelines to engage religious scholars in various stages of the campaign planning and implementation to ensure that no children are missed due to religious misconceptions.

The engagement with religious leaders has been an important component of the social mobilization strategy with an aim to seek the support of key religious scholars in shaping public opinion in support of oral polio vaccination, provide support to campaigns by addressing misconceptions based on religion, and help strengthen the outreach to the children in security compromised areas.

This engagement with religious leaders not new. In 2009, UNICEF partnered with the Inter-Religious Council for Health (IRCH) to improve maternal and child health care. Community leaders, religious groups, media, scouts and alliance members were actively involved in advocacy and social mobilization events on Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) through Universal Salt Iodization (USI) and infant feeding programs. A host of communication materials were produced to support efforts, which included information flyers for school children and religious leaders.

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Similarly, the support of religious scholars was identified as a key component of communication strategy to reach children with oral polio vaccine and garner wider support for vaccine preventable disease. In 2013, the International Islamic University, Islamabad held a conference for renowned religious leaders from polio endemic countries; this was a follow up meeting to an earlier gathering in Cairo, organized by Al-Azhar University. A joint declaration was signed by all participants attending the conference. The meeting also resulted in the formation of the National Islamic Advisory Group (NAIG) for Pakistan, which condemned attacks on health workers and announced that OPV is safe and has no forbidden ingredients in it.

An international Ulama Conference on Polio Eradication was held in Islamabad in June 2014, which was attended by scholars from various Islamic countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt besides prominent religious scholars from Pakistan. At the end of the two day conference the Islamabad Declaration was issued in support of polio vaccination. The declaration is annex below.

Objectives of engaging religious scholars

1. Garner support of the religious scholars in support of OPV and polio eradication
2. Address misconception on vaccination among masses
3. Reach missed and refusal families with support of religious scholars in high risk areas.
4. Seek support in strategies to effectively overcome social and political challenges
5. Strengthen the support for polio eradication program in reservoir areas.
6. Build consensus among scholars on addressing religious rumors on OPV

The proactive engagement of religious scholars for polio eradication has continued since 2012 at the national and provincial level. A large number of workshops and seminars to raise awareness among the religious scholars have been held over the period which were attended by more than 700 religious leaders from various Islamic schools of thought. The objective of the seminars was to foster sustainable relationships and forge alliances with religious groups. The awareness sessions for members of Council of Islamic Ideology and heads of WafaqulMadaris Pakistan were also held to gain their support for polio eradication initiatives.

The partnership with the Council of Islamic Ideology also seeks to facilitate public discourse around polio vaccination in the context of Islam through the development of reference documents for religious leaders, communication materials for the general public and by publicizing this information through various mass media channels. *Fatwa* decrees supporting OPV and vaccination from international, national and local religious leaders and institutions were compiled and published as a “*Fatwa* Booklet.” More than 250,000 pocket-size copies were printed and distributed.



A social mapping was conducted recently in all the polio reservoir areas in 2014, identifying key religious leaders and institutions that do not support polio eradication, their spheres of influence and a plan to reach out to each leader. This exercise has contributed to the subsequent individual meetings with such religious leaders to maximize support for polio eradication efforts across the country.

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IAG (International Islamic Advisory Group)

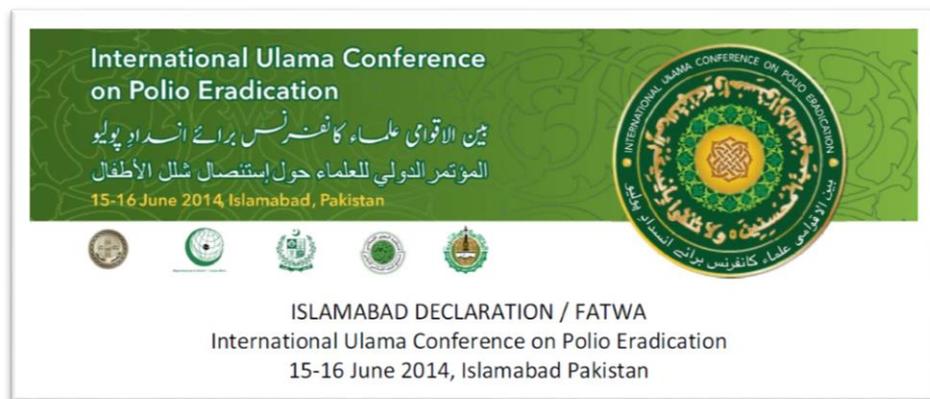
IAG has membership from all the Muslim worlds who have come together at one platform to provide support to health interventions. This group is providing international support to address resistance to OPV by certain segments of religious scholars and is working to create wider acceptance and support of Islamic world for polio and other vaccine preventable disease.

“We condemn the attacks launched against health workers, as they contravene Islamic teachings and human values, and demand that governments, local societies, civil societies and religious organizations extend all necessary assistance to ensure the safety and security of all health workers who carry out their duties to protect our children from fatal diseases.” –declaration by Members of the Global Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) for Polio Eradication, meeting in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 26-27 February 2014.

N-IAG (National – IAG)

National Islamic Advisory group was established at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), to address misconceptions related to OPV and all other vaccines.

NIAG comprises of religious scholars and technical experts. IIUI held four NIAG meetings since June 2014. Maulana Muhammad Hanif Jalandhri, General Secretary of Wafaqul Maddaris, is also the Secretary of NIAG and on several occasions emphasized the need for building a mindset for eradication of all fatal disease including polio. He also appealed to all Khateebis and Ulama to include the health awareness aspect during Friday sermons.



International Ulama Conference on Polio Eradication Islamabad

An International Ulama Conference on Polio Eradication was organized by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), in cooperation with the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA) and the government of Pakistan, in Islamabad on June 15-16, 2014.

The participants were unanimous on the need for working with the local religious social and political leaders in order to remove any misperceptions and promoting the acceptance of polio vaccination.

NIAG members endorsed a nine-month religious activities plan and Provincial Scholars Task Force (PSTF) formulation for polio reservoirs in KP/FATA, Quetta and Karachi blocks. NIAG members offered their religious institutions to support PEI and welcomed the concept of setting up fixed sites during SIAs and routine EPI centers in their religious institutions.

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Working with Religious Publications

The polio reservoirs in Pakistan are geographically located in such parts that have substantial influence of religious scholars and are also security compromised. One common fact for a majority of these areas is that they have a wide subscriber base for religious publications. It has been observed in the field that reports published in religious influence perception regarding polio campaigns. Thus, it became important to work with religious publications, engage them to reach out to the communities and seek their support in creating awareness on importance of OPV, polio eradication and protection of children from vaccine preventable diseases.

In light of increased security concerns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the continuing inability of the teams to reach a large number of children in FATA and parts of KP, the religious publications and scholars are one of the few options available to create awareness on OPV. It has also been reported from the field that people with religious inclinations have confidence in the editorial content of the magazines, the shelf life for such publications is spread over years since they address social issues in the light of religious injunctions, are used as a reference document and people in certain areas present copies of anti-OPV articles from these magazines to justify refusal. Thus, securing the support of religious publication was aimed at ensuring that editorial content advocates the use of OPV and enable the field staff to address refusals based on religious misconceptions and also serve as reference document for future.

There are more than one hundred publications of various religious organizations and seminaries across Pakistan and are widely circulated across Pakistan and even across the borders in Afghanistan. These publications have a huge influence on population in priority areas and frequently carry edicts, stories and features written by leading religious scholars. An absolute majority of editors of these publications are leading religious scholars. These scholars have influence in tribal areas along the Pak-Afghan border, among Pashtun communities and in restive areas. .

A set of activities were planned to engage these religious publications and the successful conduct helped in engaging key religious scholars, build their capacity through information sharing and resulted in achieving support for vaccination to protect children against polio. The intervention was conducted for religious publications and writers based across the country, especially in KPK and FATA.

Mapping of Religious Publications

The mapping of religious publications with circulation across the country has been completed to identify those that have outreach across the target region, especially in FATA, wide subscribers based, particularly in security compromised areas, are popular among the religious community and have linkages to prominent religious scholars.

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The comprehensive exercise helped in identifying more than 126 religious publications having wider circulation and acceptance, especially in KPK and FATA, and are published by influential religious institutions / personalities. The tone analysis of the publications was conducted for polio vaccination supportive content or such content that creates misconceptions on polio vaccine and vaccination campaign or are silent with regards to this issue.

Orientation Workshops for Editors / Writers

During the past one year more than 12 orientation workshops have been held with writers and editors of religious publications from across the country that were attended by more than nearly 400 participants. In some of the activities conducted in KPK and FATA, editors, writers and religious scholars from across the border in Afghanistan also

Video Messages

Video messages in support of polio and routine immunizations were recorded by a large number of key religious leaders popular especially in KPK and FATA. A number of these leaders enjoy influence in the Taliban ranks. Those who recorded the message include the following:-

1. Dr.Maulana Mufti ShaukatullahKhattakHaqqani, Darul Aloom Haqqania
2. Maulana Ghulam Sadiq, former MNA, Sheikhu Hadith Darul AloomIslamia at Charsadda
3. Maulana Abdul Ghaffar, Jamia Abu Huraira in Mardan district of KPK.
4. Maulana Abdul Majeed, Principal of Jamia Anwarul Quran, Nowshera
5. MaulanaAttaullah Shah, JamiaTahseenul Quran, Nowshera
6. MaulanaHabibullahHaqqani, Jamia Abu Huraira, Mardan
7. Maulana Hashim Khan, JamiaDarulAdab, Charsadda
8. MaulanaIbraheemFani, DarulAloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak
9. MaulanaImdadUllah, JamiaSiddiqia, Zarobi, Swabi
10. MaulanaInamurRehman, Principal of JamiaTahseenul Quran, Nowshera
11. MaulanaIrfanulHaq, DarulAloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak
12. MaulanaRohullahHaqqani, Tehrik-e-Khilafat-e-Islamia, Peshawar
13. MaulanaSaadUIBaqiHaqqani, DarulAloomSiddiqiaZarobi, Swabi
14. MaulanaSalmanulHaq, DarulAloom Haqqania
15. Maulana Abdul Hakeem Akbari, JamiatUlema-e-Islam, Dera Ismail Khan
16. Maulana Abdul RazzaqMajjadi, former MPA KPK, Principal Jamia Anwarul Aloom, Bannu
17. Mufti Abdul Ghani Advocate, JamiaNizamia, North Waziristan
18. MaulanaMuftiFaheemullah, Principal Jamia Hasan Bin Ali, Charsadda
19. Maulana Mufti Muhammad Qaisar Haqqani, JamiaIslamiaFaridia, Swabi
20. Mufti Shah Aurangzeb Haqqani, Principal DarulAloomIslamiaFaridia, Shabqadar, Charsada
21. QariAbdullahWazir, JamiaTahseenulQuran, Nowshera

Pro-OPV and RI Fatwas

More than 30 senior clerics, institutions and religious leaders have issued Fatwa in support polio and routine immunization. Although, each of the Fatwa is important in its own right, but the Fatwa issued by Maulana Samiul Haq, Principal Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, remains a huge success for the programme. Similarly, the Fatwa issued by Mufti

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Siraj of Darul Quran, Panjpir, Swabi, is expected to be a huge support to the vaccination campaigns.

1. Maulana Samiul Haq, Principal Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, Nowshera
2. Hafiz Muhammad Ibraheem Fani, Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, Nowshera
3. Jamia Anwarul Quran, Perpaye, Nowshera
4. Mufti Shukatullah Khattak, Jamia Tahseenul Quran, Hakeemabad, Nowshera
5. Maulana Sirajul Haq, Jamia Taleemul Quran Hadia, Risalpur, Nowshera
6. Madressah Taleemul Quran Lil Binat, Misri Banda, Nowshera (Girls' Madreesah)
7. Jamia Tahseenul Quran, Hakeemabad, Nowshera
8. Maulana Inamur Rahman Shanglavi, Madressah Ummah, Nowshera
9. Jamia Ashrafia, Eidgah Road, Peshawar
10. Maulana Ubaidullah Sadiq of Islamic Writers Forum Pakistan, Peshawar
11. Maulana Siddiq Swati, Bazm-e-Quran, Peshawar
12. Former Senator Qari Muhammad Abdullah, Senior Vice President JUI, KPK, Peshawar
13. Darul Aloom Sddiqia, Zarobi, Swabi
14. Jamia Rashidia, Thandkoi, Swabi
15. Darul Aloom Rahmania-e-Aysha Siddiqia, Manni, Swabi
16. Maulana Fazal Ali Haqqani, Former Education Minister KPK, District President JUI, Swabi
17. Jamia Islamia Faridia, Kangra, Shabqadar, Charsadda
18. Jamia Darul Adab, Mardan Road, Charsadda
19. Darul Aloom Islamia, Charsadda
20. Jamia Hasan Bin Ali, Nowshera Road, Charsadda
21. Jamia Muhammadia, Matta Mughal Khel, Charsadda
22. Madressah Arabia Shamsul Quran, Bannu
23. Maulana Syed Naseem Ali Shah Al-Hashmi, Principal Jamia Al-Markazul Islami, Bannu
24. Mufti Abdul Ghani, District Khateeb Bannu
25. Darul Aloom Saedia, Oghi, Mansehra
26. Maulana Syed Habibullah Shah Haqqani, Mardan
27. Jamia Rahmania, Rahmanabad, Lakki Marwat
28. Maulana Abdul Hakeem Akbari, Dera Islamil Khan
29. Mufti Siraj, Head of Darul Fatwa at Madressah Darul Quran, Swabi

Pro-Vaccination Articles in Religious Magazines

More than 100 articles in support of polio and RI have been published in more than 30 religious magazines with a huge subscriber base across the country, especially in KPK and FATA in a period of less than one year. Some of the religious publications reported on child health issues for the first time ever. A majority of these reports were produced with input from IRCRA, the organizations which implemented the activity with the support of UNICEF.

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It is encouraging to note that a number of magazines also published appeals to parents, encouraging them to ensure polio and routine immunization of all children below the age of five years. They also published the schedule of routine immunization.

Impact of Activities Implemented in 2014

- Memorandum of Understanding with International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI)
- June 2014 – Government of Pakistan and NIAG convene International Ulama Conference for Polio Eradication, which issues Islamabad declaration to support polio eradication efforts.
- Third meeting of NIAG during September, reviewed progress and advised to expedite the formulation of provincial scholar's task force (PSTFs) for Karachi, KP and FATA reservoirs.
- Forty-eight (48) provincial level Ulama (PSTFs) oriented and engaged in four polio reservoirs to support the district level polio eradication activities.
- About 460 religious support persons (RSPs) from 234 high risk UCs of 10 districts in four high-risk blocks provided orientation on polio eradication. As many as 120 RSPs from Karachi reservoir are engaged by GoP (PM's and CM's cell) supported by JICA in coordination with, IIU, WHO and UNICEF.
- International Islamic advisory group (IAG) has approved funding for engaging these 462 RSPs at union council level for next three months to address <50,000 refusals and reduction of at least by 80% in 234 HR UCs of 10 districts.
- NIAG core group meeting was held in December to review the progress and implementation status of NIAG decisions of September meeting.



Important Landmarks during 2014

- a. Fatwas from known resistant religious scholars of Quetta and Charsada that resulted in converting a large number of chronic refusal families
- b. Articles in support of polio eradication initiative and appeal to community to end polio from the country in several religious publications, including Daily Islam, reputed for publishing anti-polio articles.
- c. Testimonials of eleven religious leaders – national and international produced for TV and radio and aired for three months after June Ulama conference.
- d. Engagement with religious publications and fatwas of key religious scholars / institutions being published in more than 50 religious publications across Pakistan
- e. Sessions with religious editors/scholars held in seven cities of four reservoirs conducted which were attended by more than 300 religious editors/scholars.
- f. Religious publications supporting polio and child health issues like monthly PaigamRehmatulAlameen and Dawah magazine published polio/health articles addressing key issues related to polio

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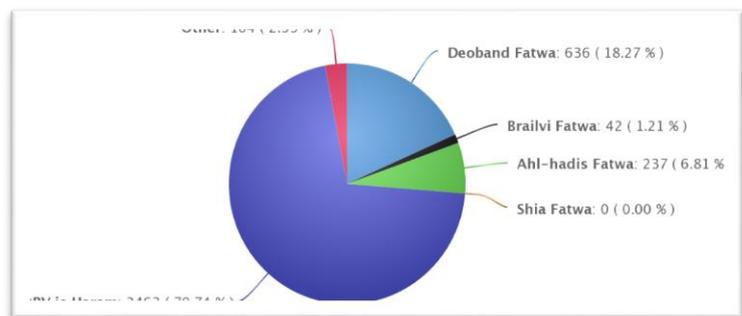
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- g. Federation of Islamic Medical Associations’ (FIMA) launched a Global Call for Action to end polio and improve child health and held press conferences at Islamabad and Lahore on World Polio Day.

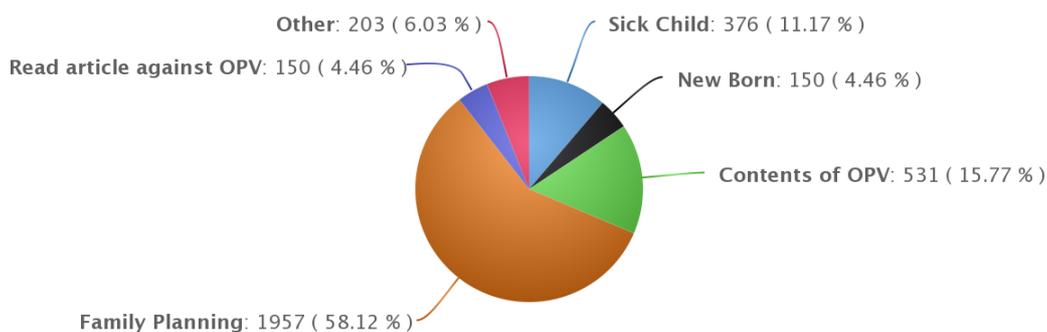
Religious Refusals

Despite the proactive support of religious scholars, we still find refusals to OPV based on religious grounds. The data collected on refusals at the national level during campaigns is not segregated on the basis of categories, however, for the 51 high risk districts, towns and agencies where UNICEF support communication officers, the data on religious refusals is gathered and help guide the communication strategies and messages for media, mass media and IEC material.



The breakdown of refusals provided in the pie chart below show that some 70 % of those who refuse OPV for religious reasons consider the vaccine *haram*, despite the countless number of Fatwas issued by key national and international religious scholars and institutions.

Similarly, the breakdown of refusal data on misconceptions indicate that rumors of OPV causing infertility led to nearly 2000 people refusing the vaccine in the January NID.



The support of religious scholars is playing a crucial part in helping the polio eradication efforts in the country and with the continued consolidated efforts of the polio partners, led by the government, we are working towards a state where religious misconceptions would no longer be seen as a challenge to realize the goal of a polio free Pakistan.

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Book on Child Health

A book titled “Islamic Concept of Health and Disease” written by Muhammad Israr Madni, a teacher at Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak, provides useful information on child health, vaccine preventable disease, polio and mother and child health in the light of Islamic teachings.

The book is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1: Islam and Health – covers nutrition, hygiene, impact of clean environment on health, balanced diet, etc

Chapter 2: Mothers’ Health and Her Responsibilities in Islam – covers the role of mothers in the health and hygiene of family, medical care for pregnant women, diet for pregnant women, routine medical examination, general care during pregnancy etc

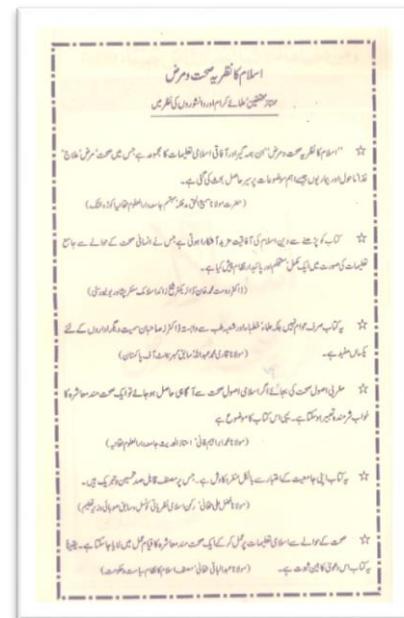
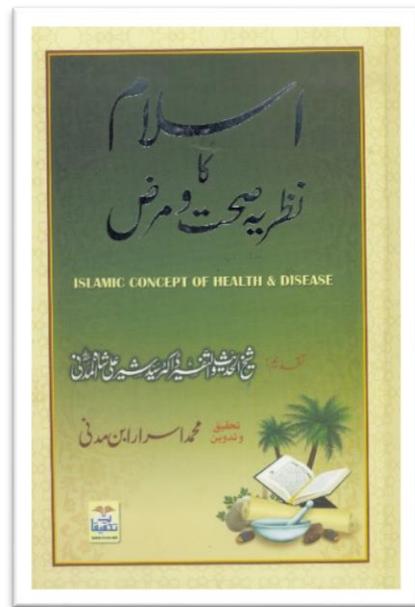
Chapter 3: Islam and Child Health – covers health rights of a child, importance of mother’s milk for child health, primary reasons for illness during infancy, vaccination against preventable diseases, vaccination schedule, vaccination explained in Sharia, importance and need for vaccination etc.

Chapter 4: Islam on Medical Treatment – looks at Islamic injunctions regarding treatment for various illnesses, support to the patient, highlights that treatment of illness is Islamic in nature, prevention and modes of prevention etc.

Chapter 5: Introduction to Viral Diseases – indicating the reasons, symptoms, treatment or prevention of tetanus, polio, measles, whooping cough, meningitis, pneumonia, AIDS, tuberculosis, jaundice, hepatitis B, dengue etc

The book has been endorsed by the following:-

1. Maulana Samiul Haq, Principal Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak.
2. Dr Dost Muhammad Khan, Director Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, Peshawar University
3. Maulana Qari Muhammad Abdullah, Member Council for Islamic Ideology, former Member of Senate
4. Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Fani, Sheikhul Hadith at Darul Aloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak
5. Maulana Fazal Ali Haqqani, Member Council for Islamic Ideology, former member of KPK provincial assembly and former education minister.
6. Maulana Abdul Baqi Haqqani, former of Khost and Kabul in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. In charge of (Taliban) madressah curriculum development in Afghanistan.



The foreword of the book is written by Maulana Dr Sher Ali Shah, a senior cleric at Darul Aloom Haqqania, who has a huge influence on Pakistan and Afghan Taliban leaders. The former chief of

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Taliban Movement in Afghanistan, Mullah Muhammad Omar, was also a student of Maulana Sher Ali Shah.

A total of 3000 books were published and distributed free of cost to various key madaris across KP and FATA. The availability of this book as a reference material at key institutions in the target area is expected to contribute towards addressing misconceptions spread through religious publications since this well-researched document on a range of child health issues, including polio and other vaccine preventable diseases, is written by a religious scholar and carries endorsement from religious scholars who are extremely influential among Taliban, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the Deobandi school of Islam thought, the followers of which are in absolute majority among the religious refusals across Pakistan.



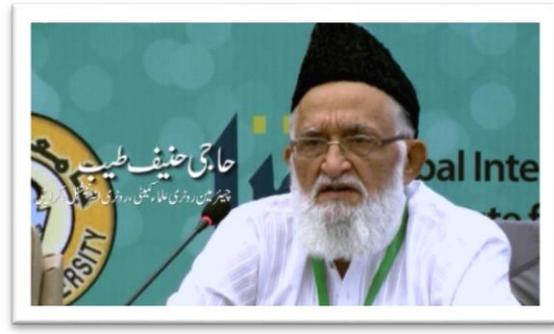
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A Few Prominent Religious Scholars who Recorded Testimonials in Support of Polio Eradication



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Video Messages Recorded in Support of Polio and Routine Immunization by IRCRA



Dr. Mufti Shaukat Ullah.mov



Maulana Ghulam Sadiq.wmv



Maulana Abdul Ghafar.wmv



Maulana Abdul Majeed.mpg



Maulana Attaullah.mpg



Maulana Habib Ullah.wmv



Maulana Haidar Ali.mpg



Maulana Hasham Khan.wmv



Maulana Ibrahim fani.wmv



Maulana Imdad Ullah.mpg



Maulana Inamur Rahman.mpg



Maulana Irfanul Haq.wmv



Maulana Roohullah.mpg



Maulana Saadul Baqi.mpg



Maulana Salmanul Haq.wmv



Mufti Faheem.wmv



Mufti Ihsanullah.mpg



Mufti Muhammad Qaisar.wmv



Mufti Shah Aurangzaib.wmv



Qari Abdullah.mov



Qari Gul Ramzan.mpg



Qari Mahmood Alam.mpg



Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui.mpg