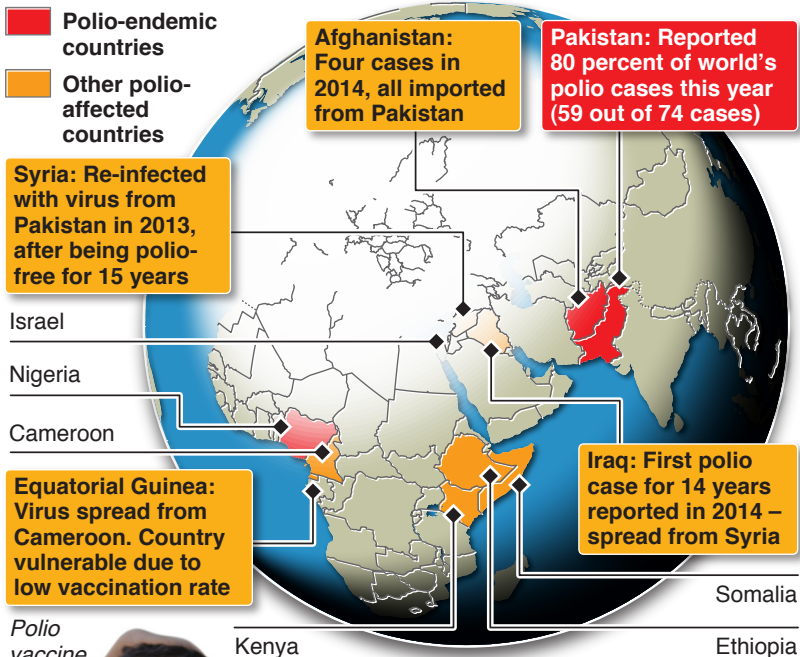# World facing polio health emergency

The World Health Organization has declared the spread of polio an international public health emergency, and described outbreaks of the crippling disease across Asia, Africa and the Middle East as an "extraordinary event" needing a coordinated international response

■ **Polio-endemic countries**

■ **Other polio-affected countries**

Afghanistan: Four cases in 2014, all imported from Pakistan

Pakistan: Reported 80 percent of world's polio cases this year (59 out of 74 cases)

Syria: Re-infected with virus from Pakistan in 2013, after being polio-free for 15 years

Israel

Nigeria

Cameroon

Equatorial Guinea: Virus spread from Cameroon. Country vulnerable due to low vaccination rate

Iraq: First polio case for 14 years reported in 2014 – spread from Syria

Somalia

Kenya

Ethiopia

Polio vaccine

■ **Polio (poliomyelitis):** Viral infection, mainly affects children aged under five

■ **Treatment:** No cure. Polio vaccine – oral or injected – can protect children for life

■ **Effects:** One in 200 infections leads to paralysis. Among those paralysed, up to 10% die when breathing muscles are disabled

■ **Eradication:** Has cut polio by over 99% – from 350,000 cases in 1988 to 417 in 2013

■ **Prevention:** WHO urging all citizens of Pakistan, Cameroon and Syria to be vaccinated before travelling abroad