Flight Log

October 2023

MAF helps fight polio outbreak in Madagascar

PHOTO: IRINA RANDRIAMANDRATO

With a concerning rise in polio cases across Madagascar, on 28 July the Ministry of Health launched a campaign to vaccinate nearly 18 million people across the island. MAF joined forces with UNICEF to transport 7,400kg of vaccines to 19 isolated locations.

The flights launched after the World Health Organisation (WHO) made an urgent call for gaps in polio immunity to be addressed and to avert an outbreak across the Africa Region, declaring polio a public health emergency of international concern.

At the poliovirus meeting in July, the WHO said it was possible a deterioration of routine immunisation during the COVID-19 pandemic could have placed countries at greater risk of polio.

MAF Pilot Wouter Nagel, along with Country Director Patrick Keller, worked 7 days a week to accumulate 44 hours of flying – facilitating a rapid and efficient vaccine delivery programme into early September.

Polio is highly infectious and can spread rapidly though contact with infected faecal material, such as contaminated food and water. According to Crisis24, one in 200 cases can lead to irreversible paralysis.

Pascal, a registered nurse based in the capital Antananarivo, said the surge in Malagasy cases has been caused by an inadequate number of children receiving vaccinations, and by adults being unaware of the risks.

Jaona, an adult who lives in a rural area, received his first polio vaccine but previously believed the disease was only harmful to children. Jaona said, 'I didn't know adults also have to get vaccinated. I'm happy so many different organisations are taking the initiative to raise awareness. Basic healthcare is difficult, especially outside of Antananarivo. So, it's important to share information and vaccines with everyone.'

MAF Ground Operations Assistant Fanamperana worked around the clock to help speed the polio vaccination campaign to isolated communities. He said, 'Our team loaded the aircraft late in the evening to allow for early departures. We even worked Saturdays and Sundays to make sure isolated places were reached.'

Pause for prayer

Polio is up 120% in Madagascar, with 79 cases reported so far this year, according to the organisation Precision Vaccinations. Please pray for MAF, UNICEF and our other health partners as they all join forces to help combat this deadly disease.

Join the fight

You can help support emergency MAF flights – like those taking off in Madagascar to fight polio – by giving a gift to MAF today. For more information on our latest high impact flying, visit **www.maf-uk.org/news**, if you would like to make a gift towards the cost of these life-saving flights, please visit **www.maf-uk.org/donate**

MAF podcast

Haiti remains one of the most difficult places to be a mission worker, with a recent surge in gang violence causing MAF to temporarily suspend flights. Tune in to MAF's new Flying For Life Podcast to hear from Pilot Eric Fagerland, who waits inside MAF's Haiti hangar until it's safe to resume flying.
www.maf-uk.org/podcast

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