KARACHI/NEW YORK/GENEVA, 21 July 2012 – The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF are deeply saddened by the killing of Mr. Muhammad Ishaq
,
a local community worker who was part of the polio eradication initiative in Pakistan.

Mr. Ishaq was shot and killed in the Gadap town area of Karachi on Friday evening.

Polio immunization activities were suspended in this area of Karachi earlier this week after a shooting incident injured two WHO staff members who were supporting the implementation and monitoring of a vaccination campaign.

Until activities were suspended, Mr. Ishaq had worked with the national polio eradication effort as a Union Council Polio Worker for several months, helping to plan and implement vaccination campaigns to protect the most underserved and vulnerable children against this debilitating disease.

Because of the dedication of heroes like Mr. Ishaq, Pakistan is this year closer than ever to the eradication of polio. He was known for his dedication and diligence to immunize all children against polio.

Polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus that can cause permanent paralysis in a matter of hours. There is no cure, but there are safe and effective vaccines. Polio can be eradicated if every child is immunized until transmission stops worldwide.

Currently the disease remains endemic in only three countries: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Mr. Ishaq was one of the thousands of people across Pakistan who worked selflessly in the battle to eradicate polio.

WHO, UNICEF and all of the polio partners in Pakistan and globally express their deepest sympathy to his family for this tragic loss. The partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative remain committed to supporting the Government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan in their efforts to eradicate this devastating disease.