Kayla Hatch - Kyrgyzstan

Hello my name is Kayla Hatch, my country of study is Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a polio free country and has been officially since 2002 with the last case of wild polio being in 1992.

Since 1995 Kyrgyzstan has had 90% immunization in the country, However starting in the 2020's there has been a declining trend in immunization, as it is currently sitting at around 82%. Herd immunity. Herd immunity is most optimal at ~95% or more of the population being vaccinated, which can make the 82% national immunization concerning. The fall in immunization is largely due to a shift in parents becoming more hesitant to vaccinate their children.

Though the vaccines parents are hesitant to allow their children to receive are general vaccines for children two and under, there has also been a decline in preventative childhood polio vaccines as well. This has potential to become a risk and leave the country vulnerable to various major diseases, such as polio.

For example, there are also immunization concerns with its neighboring mountain countries. One being Tajikistan, which borders the country from the south, also shared a polio free status starting in 2002. In 2021 a sudden outbreak left over 30 children with polio paralysis. This was mainly caused by an immunity gap in young children, which is now being seen in Kyrgyzstan. Though there was a rapid response, it was again eradicated by 2022. A neighboring country having had an outbreak with signs of similar trends to ones' country should act as a warning sign.

Kyrgyzstan's government is concerned about the trend of decreasing immunization, in response their Ministry of Health is working with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund on joint efforts. One of these efforts include strengthening the management of national immunization programmes to those that are not yet vaccinated. Other efforts include further equipping parents with more in depth knowledge on the benefits of vaccinations, due to the ongoing hesitation and suspicion of immunization in the country. This is said to be achieved through training and using health care workers on how to inform parents in hopes to change public attitudes toward immunization.