



Nigeria on the brink of becoming polio-free

Nigeria has gone almost one year — longer than ever before — without a case of wild poliovirus. The last case was reported on 24 July 2014 in Kano state. Once the gateway to polio in Africa, Nigeria is paving the way to eradicating the disease on the continent.

But reaching the milestone is only one step on the final road to ending polio and it is too soon to celebrate victory. Until polio is eliminated everywhere, it can return to Nigeria and the rest of Africa. Less than a decade ago, in 2006, polio paralyzed 1,000 people in Nigeria.

For the African region to be certified polio-free, including Nigeria, there must be no polio cases for two more

underserved areas — must continue to be protected against the disease.

“The ultimate goal is to ensure that the routine immunization infrastructure is established to increase and sustain the level of herd immunity” [protection for people who are not immune that occurs when a large percentage of the population has been vaccinated], says Tunji Funsho, chair of the Nigeria PolioPlus Committee. This will enable children to “continue to be immunized on schedule and protected from the virus even after the cessation of IPDs [Immunization Plus Days].”

Once all surveillance data is processed, Nigeria will be poised to be taken off the list of polio-endemic countries by the World Health Organization (WHO) in September. That achievement would leave only two polio-endemic countries: Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 2014, Pakistan accounted for 85 percent of the world’s polio cases. As of 17 June, polio cases in [Pakistan](#) had decreased by nearly 70 percent.

“With Rotary, we made tremendous progress last year,” said Hamid Jafari, WHO’s Director for Global Polio Eradication and Research, speaking to attendees at the Rotary International Convention in São Paulo, Brazil, in June. “We must keep going to end polio. If the world’s commitment to polio eradication remains strong, we will soon see a polio-free world.”

GIVE NOW

Africa closer than ever to eradicating polio

Africa’s 54 countries have overcome major challenges to protect children against polio, including insecurity and reaching children in remote areas. The continent’s last case of wild poliovirus was reported on 11 August 2014 in Somalia. In 2004, just 10 years earlier, the disease afflicted more than 12,600 Africans, accounting for 74 percent of all cases worldwide.

Rotary, along with its partners in the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#), has played an important role in this progress, which has us approaching the one-year milestones in Nigeria and all of Africa. Rotary has donated \$688.5 million to fight polio in Africa, including nearly \$207.3 million in Nigeria. Rotarians also have dedicated their time and personal resources, immunizing children, donating and raising funds, mobilizing community support, and engaging governments in the cause.

Rotarians everywhere are looking with great anticipation for Africa to “soon celebrate a milestone that once seemed unthinkable: one year without a single case of polio,” says RI President K.R. Ravindran.

Funding, political commitment, partnerships, and sustained high immunization coverage are needed to finish the job in



Nigeria and all of Africa. As recently as 11 June, Rotary granted \$19 million to support polio eradication efforts in Africa, including \$10 million for Nigeria alone. By continuing to support the final push to eradicate polio, we ca