

## January 2020 Polio Newsletter

to all Rotarians in Rotary District 5040

Recently I have been asked on several occasions: "what is going on with the End Polio campaign?", or "why is the number of polio cases increasing?". In this newsletter, I will try to answer some of those questions as well as give a general update.

My message remains the same:- we must keep our resolve and by doing so we will defeat the polio virus and eradicate this dreaded disease. Yes, it is taking longer than we hoped but giving up is not an option!

### Polio Eradication - Highs and Lows in 2019

The polio eradication effort faced significant challenges in 2019, including increasing vaccine-derived polio outbreaks and rising wild polio cases in the virus' last hiding places. In response, the GPEI, country governments and key stakeholders are working rapidly to develop and implement innovative strategies and tools to overcome the virus in 2020. Amidst challenges, we were encouraged by several key events and milestones:

- On October 24<sup>th</sup>, the wild polio virus type 3 was declared eradicated. This follows the eradication of wild poliovirus type 2 in 2015, leaving only the wild poliovirus type 1 in circulation.
- Nigeria has gone over 3 years without a declared case of wild polio and is close to being declared polio-free.
- Donors pledged \$2.6B to the End Polio campaign during the Reaching the Last Mile Forum in Abu Dhabi in November. Read *MORE*.
- The polio eradication initiative is estimated to have saved over 16 million children from paralysis.
- On 22 Jan 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced it has extended the 2 to 1 funding match with Rotary for another 3 years.

“Despite this incredible progress, the polio program faces significant challenges in the last mile towards eradication. Inconsistent campaign quality, massive mobile populations, conflict, insecurity, and parental refusal to vaccines, have prevented health workers from reaching all children everywhere with polio vaccines”, according to Jay Wenger, who leads the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s work on polio eradication.

The disease remains entrenched in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Circulating vaccine derived polioviruses - which mainly occur in communities with low immunization rates and poor sanitation - have also been on the rise in other countries including Africa and the Philippines. These outbreaks are providing additional challenges to polio eradication efforts worldwide.

**READ:** Overview of the status of polio eradication efforts: GPEI Polio Partners Meeting 6 Dec 2019.

## Africa

No wild poliovirus has been detected anywhere in Africa since 2016. This stands in stark contrast to 1996, a year when wild poliovirus paralysed more than 75,000 children across every country on the continent. The WHO African Region however, is currently facing outbreaks of the poliovirus strain known as circulating vaccine derived poliovirus cVDPV (see below).

### Reaching nomadic settlements in the Lake Chad basin



From April to August 2019, the Lake Chad response teams reached 1067 nomad groups in 17 districts in Chad alone and vaccinated more than 27,000 children. Across all five countries making up the Basin, more than 40,000 children in 3451 nomadic camps in 62 high-risk districts received their routine immunizations, including protection against polio. The information recorded during these activities will be used in routine immunization planning to ensure that children continue to receive all their vaccinations according to the schedule.

## Afghanistan

In Afghanistan the number of WPV cases was 29 in 2019 compared with 21 in 2018 and 14 in 2017. In April, the Taliban banned polio vaccination campaigns in its occupied territories, accusing the groups of carrying out “suspicious” activities. The ban was lifted in September but health workers could only give vaccinations at health centres and not in door-to-door campaigns. This has resulted in millions of children not receiving the polio vaccinations. There is poor campaign quality in Kandahar City and large numbers of vaccine refusals in the South, as well as very low routine immunization coverage and poor access to basic health services. The security situation and reaching the remote communities will continue to be a challenge during 2020.

## Pakistan

Pakistan saw the number of WPV cases rise to 136 in 2019 following 12 in 2018 and 8 in 2017. According to the GPEI, in Pakistan the programme has been off-track, facing political disruption and increased community resistance.

Political instability, population mobility and violence driven by intolerance have made it hard to reach all children for vaccination. Two policemen were killed on December 18th while on their way to accompany a polio vaccination team in the Lower Dir district, about 112 miles northwest Islamabad. Since 2012, at least 98 people have been killed in attacks on Pakistan’s polio vaccination campaigns.

Hard-line Islamist forces still spread irrational beliefs that vaccines are contaminated or a Western plot. Social media in Pakistan has accelerated false rumors about vaccination, leading to waves of refusals by parents. According to a recent account by Al Jazeera, another worrisome trend has arisen lately: Villages are using vaccination as a bargaining chip to win other needs from the state, such as water, natural gas, electricity and jobs.

No global eradication effort can be successful without Pakistan. This year must see progress against these serious obstacles, which are caused by human behavior, not virology.

*The Washington Post, Jan 8, 2020.*

## Circulating Vaccine-derived Polioviruses (cVDPV)

There are serious concerns too about the multiple outbreaks of circulating vaccine derived polio virus (cVDPV) in Africa and other countries around the world. There have been 47 cVDPV2 outbreaks in 20 countries since the oral polio vaccine switch in April 2016. Some of these outbreaks are spreading over more than one country. Taking the three years before the switch as a frame of reference, there were 8 cVDPV2 outbreaks in five countries altogether in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

cVDPV takes at least 12 months to occur in a population that is vulnerable to wild polio or cVDPV because there is no immunisation or under-immunisation. The latter occurs when routine or supplementary immunisation are poorly administered, and there is poor sanitation.

In short, the root cause of cVDPV is low immunisation coverage and not the polio vaccine itself. If the population is fully immunised, they will be protected against wild polio and cVDPV.

Read **MORE**.

## Message from Michael McGovern,

Chair Rotary International PolioPlus Committee, 18 Jan 2020.



Dear Rotary Friends,

I was reading that there is some despair that we had 165 cases of the wild polio virus in 2019 after just 33 in 2018. It is disappointing but I am reminded that India had 66 cases in 2005, rising to 874 in 2007 before steadily dropping to 1 in 2011. We are all hoping that Pakistan and Afghanistan follow a similar but quicker and less severe pattern with a drop beginning in 2020.

"We have overcome challenges in the past and we can overcome challenges once again." *AnneLee Hussey*

## District 5040 Donations to PolioPlus

Half way through the Rotary year we appear to be on track to once again achieve our goal of giving to PolioPlus. I urge all D5040 Rotarians and clubs to continue to fundraise and donate to PolioPlus and benefit from the Gates Foundation 2 to 1 match.

District 5040 PolioPlus goal 2019-20 (my goal)	US\$100,000
Total of Clubs goals in Rotary Club Central (RCC)	US\$68,234
Number of Clubs with goals in RCC	45 of 50
Total giving YTD as of 24 Jan 2020	US\$40,574
Number of clubs with donations YTD	34 of 50

Please see the attached PolioPlus report for further detail.

► **[DONATE NOW](#)**

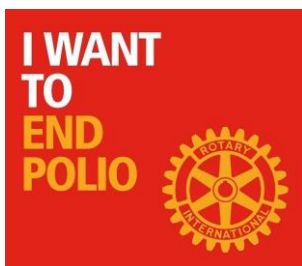
## Case breakdown by Country (as of January 22, 2020).

Countries	Total 2019		Total 2018		Total 2017	
	WPV	cVDPV	WPV	cVDPV	WPV	cVDPV
Afghanistan	29	0	21	0	14	0
Nigeria	0	18	0	34	0	0
Pakistan	136	18	12	0	8	0
Angola	0	88	0	0	0	0
DR of the Congo	0	73	0	20	0	22
Philippines	0	14	0	0	0	0
Other non-endemic countries	0	69	<u>0</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>74</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>96</b>

For the latest details regarding case counts and progress visit [www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org).

## Reference Links

- [End Polio Now](#)
- [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#)
- [The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#)



**Brian Finley**

PolioPlus Chair

[bfin@shaw.ca](mailto:bfin@shaw.ca)

t: 604-892-0288

**Rotary**

District 5040

