



March 2020

Rotary and Polio

The last case of polio in Canada was in 1977 and it is easy to forget that this paralyzing and potentially fatal disease still threatens children in some parts of the world. It can strike people of any age but mainly affects children under five. Polio is not curable but it can be prevented by vaccines. Unlike most diseases, polio can be eradicated.

The eradication of polio is Rotary's #1 humanitarian priority. Since 1979, Rotary has led the fight to rid the world of this terrible disease. Our PolioPlus program was the first initiative to tackle global polio eradication by vaccinating children on a massive scale. As a core partner in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), Rotary focuses on advocacy, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and awareness-building.

With our partners, we have reduced wild polio cases by 99.9 percent, from 350,000 cases in 125 countries in 1988 to fewer than 150 cases in 2019. Today Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only two countries to continue to report cases of wild poliovirus. The infrastructure we helped build to end polio is also being used to treat and prevent other diseases such as measles and ebola, and to create lasting impact in other areas of public health.

Rotary members have contributed US\$2.1 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect more than 2.5 billion children from this paralyzing disease. Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by governments to contribute more than \$8 billion to the effort.

We have made tremendous progress against polio, but eliminating all cases is going to take even more progress and perseverance. Afghanistan and Pakistan face unique challenges, including political insecurity, highly mobile populations, difficult terrain, and, in some instances, logistical barriers. Despite these challenges, we are optimistic that we will eliminate polio.

Rotary has committed to raising \$50 million per year for polio eradication. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has pledged to match that 2-to-1, for a total commitment of \$150 million each year.

Will you help by donating to End Polio Now? Your contribution will be automatically tripled by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

You can donate now at www.endpolio.org.