

Rotary



Polio

ROTARY AND POLIO

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a paralyzing and potentially fatal disease that still threatens children in some parts of the world. The poliovirus invades the nervous system and can cause total paralysis in a matter of hours. It can strike at any age but mainly affects children under five. Polio is incurable, but completely vaccine-preventable.

PolioPlus

In 1985, Rotary launched its [PolioPlus](#) program, the first initiative to tackle global polio eradication through the mass vaccination of children. Rotary has contributed more than \$1.7 billion and countless volunteer hours to immunize more than 2.5 billion children in 122 countries. In addition, Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by donor governments to contribute more than \$7.2 billion to the effort.

Global Polio Eradication Initiative

The [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#), formed in 1988, is a public-private partnership that includes Rotary, the [World Health Organization](#), the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [UNICEF](#), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and governments of the world. Rotary's focus is advocacy, fundraising, volunteer recruitment and awareness- building.

Polio Today

Today, there are only three countries that have never stopped transmission of the wild poliovirus: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan. Just 37 polio cases were confirmed worldwide in 2016, which is a reduction of more than 99.9 percent since the 1980s, when the world saw about 1,000 cases per day.

Challenges

The polio cases represented by the remaining one percent are the most difficult to prevent, due to factors including geographical isolation, poor public infrastructure, armed conflict and cultural barriers. Until polio is eradicated, all countries remain at risk of outbreaks.

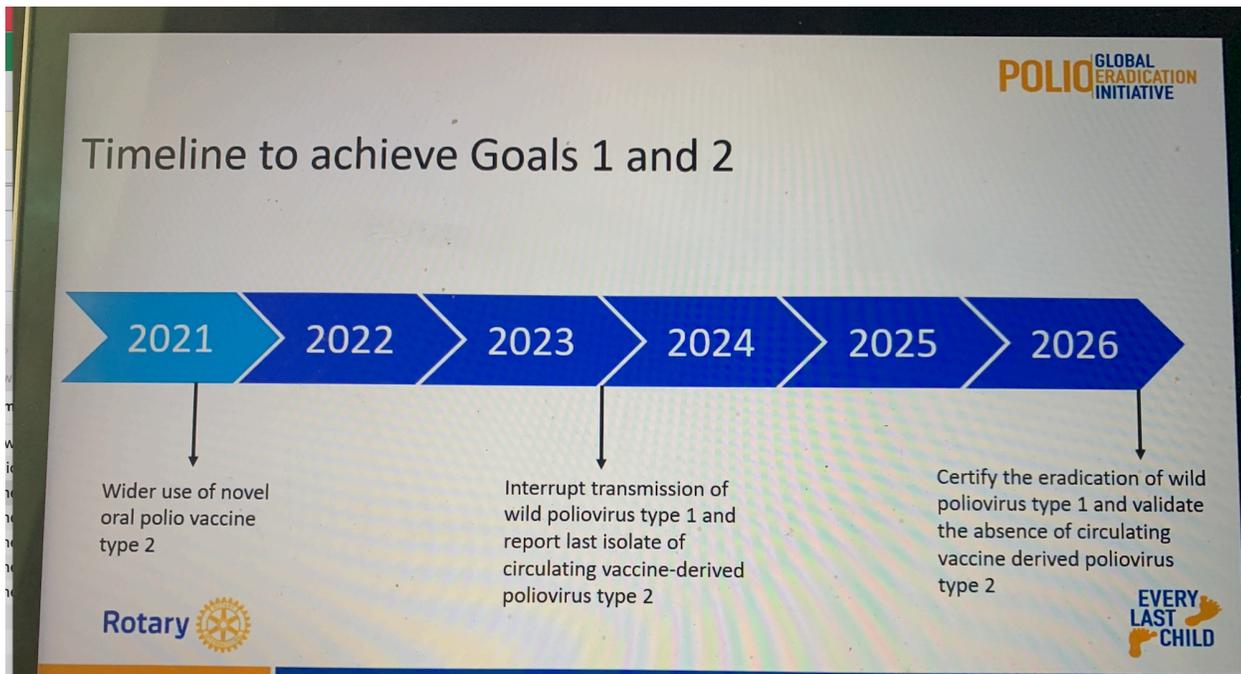
Ensuring Success

Rotary will raise \$50 million per year over the next three years, with every dollar to be matched with two additional dollars from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. These funds help to provide much-needed operational support, medical personnel, laboratory

equipment, and educational materials for health workers and parents. Governments, corporations and private individuals all play a crucial role in funding.

Rotary in Action

More than one million Rotary members have donated their time and personal resources to end polio. Every year, hundreds of Rotary members work side-by-side with health workers to vaccinate children in polio-affected countries. Rotary Members work with UNICEF and other partners to prepare and distribute mass communication tools to reach people in areas isolated by conflict, geography, or poverty. Rotary members also recruit fellow



volunteers, assist with transporting the vaccine, and provide other logistical support.

‘This Close’ Campaign

Rotary has a growing roster of public figures and celebrities participating in its “This Close” public awareness campaign, including Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; actresses Kristen Bell and Archie Panjabi; WWE superstar John Cena; supermodel Isabeli Fontana; Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu; action movie star Jackie Chan; boxing great Manny Pacquiao; pop star Psy; golf legend Jack Nicklaus; conservationist Jane Goodall; premier violinist Itzhak Perlman; Grammy Award winners A.R. Rahman; Angelique Kidjo and Ziggy Marley; and peace advocate Queen Noor of Jordan. These ambassadors help educate the public about polio through public service announcements, social media and public appearances.

Global Polio Eradication Initiative, June 2021

Subject: NYTimes: A Multibillion-Dollar Plan to End Polio, and Soon -June 9, 2021

A global partnership announced plans to spend more than \$5 billion to eradicate poliovirus.

As the world adjusts to the idea of coexisting with the coronavirus for the foreseeable future, global health organizations are laying plans to eradicate another scourge that has already lingered for thousands of years: poliovirus.

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a public-private partnership led by national governments and health groups, on Wednesday released a \$5.1 billion [plan to eradicate polio](#) by 2026.

Preparing For A Polio-Free World

The work of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative will not end once polio has been eradicated. Activities will be needed to minimize the risks of poliovirus re-introduction and the emergence of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV).

An update on PolioPlus in Afghanistan from Michael McGovern, Rotary International PolioPlus Committee Chair: 8/23/21

Eradicating Polio in Afghanistan

As the sun rose on 1 January 2021, we all worried about what this new year would bring. For those of us who closely follow polio eradication progress, it was an especially worrisome time. 2020 and 2019 had seen an uptick in wild polio virus cases and in circulating vaccine derived cases. Polio vaccinations had had to be suspended for a while in 2020 due to the coronavirus and vaccines for Covid-19 were just starting to receive early use approvals.

The polio news was especially bad in Afghanistan. On the very first day of 2021, a wild polio virus case was reported. In the next week, the national health minister was fired due to hints of corruption on non-polio matters. Before month's end, the government of Afghanistan ordered the UNICEF polio lead to leave the country relating to a verbal spat that had occurred in the President's office. Then in March and June there were coordinated attacks on polio workers and their security teams leaving eight families having lost loved ones. The Taliban denied responsibility for the attacks, and it appeared the attacks were tied to elements who supported ISIS or ISIL as they are also known. We also noted that some areas of the country

had been subject to over 30 months of a ban on house-to-house polio vaccinations.

While all this was going on other activities were occurring which have been mostly unreported. On January 17th, the Regional Directors of WHO and UNICEF met at the Taliban office in Doha, Qatar to discuss polio vaccinations and covid response in the areas controlled by the Taliban. While house to house polio vaccinations were not agreed to, the seven senior members of Taliban leadership indicated support for other measures to provide vaccination activities. In all areas of the country, health screenings continued unabated which showed no new wild polio cases and no positive identification of polio viruses in the environment. In a zoom call of polio partnership leaders the week of 17 August, Aidan O'Leary, the global WHO polio director, noted that Afghanistan has one of the best programs for polio surveillance in the world and it was not finding polio anywhere.

After the fall of the Afghanistan government in mid-August, the new leadership has agreed to keep on the acting health minister who has been effective in righting the program since February. Taliban leaders have visited the national and regional polio offices and pledged their support for the polio eradication program. On 23 August, a Rotary sponsored roadside vaccination hut provided vaccinations to children under five with local Taliban providing the needed security. For security reasons, I will not share the photos I received but it was good to see the Rotary logo doing good in the world.

Rotary has just 35 members in Afghanistan. They inspire me daily with their courage and perseverance. The polio program has always been politically neutral in every country. Rotary and our partners work with the leaders who are in charge. We now work with new leaders in Afghanistan. Rotary funds WHO and UNICEF. We do not send any funds to the governments nor to groups other than WHO and UNICEF. We monitor the spending they do on our behalf very closely. We have never been closer to eradicating polio in Afghanistan. We will continue to work with the Afghani people and our partners to finish what we began over 35 years ago.