



Rotary

End Polio Now

February 2021

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Rotary remains committed to fighting polio and responding to COVID-19

As Rotary members continue the fight against polio, they're also responding to the COVID-19 health crisis by addressing the urgent needs of the communities it's affecting worldwide. And now with the development of COVID-19 vaccines, Rotary is ready to use its expertise in distributing polio vaccine and communicating about vaccine efficacy to assist local health authorities in promoting and delivering COVID-19 vaccinations. [Learn how Rotary's experience with global polio immunizations is helping COVID-19 vaccination efforts.](#)

World Immunization Week

With decades of experience from working to eradicate polio, Rotary members can play a key role in publicizing the power of vaccines. World Immunization Week, 24-30 April, is an opportunity for Rotary clubs to raise awareness of the importance of vaccines in saving lives — and the critical need to continue supporting polio vaccinations even while protecting people against the coronavirus.



Download the World Immunization Week Toolkit.

Rotary members persevered to eradicate wild polio in WHO's African region

Despite many challenges, Rotary and our partners have remained committed to polio eradication. As a result, in August 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) was able to certify its African region free of wild poliovirus. Since 1996 — when wild polio paralyzed an estimated 75,000 children across Africa — health workers have given more than 9 billion doses of the oral polio vaccine and helped prevent 1.8 million wild polio cases. Rotary members around the world have contributed nearly \$890 million to end polio in Africa. To distribute vaccines, determined Rotary leaders, local officials, and health workers in the region worked together to overcome immense obstacles, such as war and conflict, vaccine skepticism, difficulty reaching remote locations and, at times, weak political support.



Read how we did it.

Polio infrastructure supports contact tracing to control disease

An extensive health network and strong partnerships built over time through Rotary-supported polio eradication efforts help control the spread of several global diseases. In 2014, an Ebola outbreak in Nigeria was stopped when the government health ministry modeled its response after the country's polio program. Officials recruited health experts in polio to train 150 contact tracers, who then visited thousands of people to check them for symptoms. This prevented an epidemic. For COVID-19, global health responders again depended on lessons they had learned from contact tracing to control polio. This time, more than 50,000 community members in Nigeria who were already trained in looking for symptoms of polio and other diseases are also monitoring for signs of coronavirus and assisting in contact tracing to prevent further spread.



[Read more about contract tracing.](#)

Rotary in the news

An article in WIRED magazine examines how Rotary's fight against polio and our success in vaccinating millions of children can serve as a model for administering COVID-19 vaccinations in the United States. In it, India PolioPlus Chair Deepak Kapur mentions how lessons from polio vaccination programs are assisting efforts to control COVID-19 in India.

Gulf News also covers **using polio eradication infrastructure to carry out COVID-19 vaccinations**. Past Rotary International Director Ashok Mahajan, who leads Rotary's COVID-19 task force in India, explains how Rotary clubs, together with the other Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners, can apply experience they gained from conducting mass polio immunizations across India to vaccinating the country's population against COVID-19.

In **an extended interview** for India's Down to Earth magazine, Dr. Tunji Funsho, chair of Rotary's Nigeria PolioPlus Committee, describes the monumental effort by Rotary members and partners to eradicate wild polio in the African region and the importance of safely continuing vaccinations during the COVID-19 outbreak. Dr. Funsho is also featured in a **CNN story about achievements in spite of the pandemic in 2020**, which leads with the certification of the World Health Organization's African region as free of wild poliovirus.

Help Rotary reach children with the polio vaccine

Rotary is committed to raising \$50 million per year to end polio, with every dollar matched with two additional dollars from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Help Rotary raise \$50 million this year to support global polio eradication efforts.

With every contribution tripled, your donation goes even further toward reaching children in every part of the world with the polio vaccine and other essential health services.

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