

# ROTARY AND POLIO FACT SHEET

**Polio.** Poliomyelitis (polio) is a crippling and potentially fatal disease that still threatens children in parts of the world. The poliovirus invades the nervous system and can cause paralysis in a matter of hours. It can strike at any age but mainly affects children under five.

**Polio Today.** Today, there are only three countries that have never stopped transmission of the wild poliovirus: Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Fewer than 360 polio cases were reported worldwide in 2014, which is a 99% reduction since the 1980s, when the world saw about 1,000 cases per day. If we don't stay the course, experts say polio could rebound to 10 million cases in the next 40 years.

**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.** Additional funding will help to end polio now. 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.

**PolioPlus.** Rotary launched its [PolioPlus](#) program, the first initiative to tackle global polio eradication, in 1985. Since then, Rotary and its partners have helped reduce the number of annual cases from 350,000 to fewer than 360 and remain committed until every child is safe from the disease. Rotary has contributed more than US\$1.2 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect more than 2 billion children in 122 countries. In addition, Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by donor governments to contribute over \$9 billion to the effort.

**Global Polio Eradication Initiative.** The [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#), formed in 1988, is a public-private partnership including 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.

**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. Rotarians work with partners like UNICEF to prepare and distribute mass communication tools to share the message with those 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 the "'This Close' to ending polio" public awareness campaign, including Bill Gates, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Archie Panjabi, Jackie Chan, Jack Nicklaus and Psy. These ambassadors help educate the public about polio through public service announcements, social media and public appearances.