

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Rotary gives US$35 million to end polio worldwide**

**EVANSTON, Ill. (13 January 2016) —** Rotary announces $35 million in grants to support the global effort to end polio. In 2015, the world saw historic progress against the paralyzing disease, with just two countries – Afghanistan and Pakistan – reporting a single strain of the wild virus. If the current momentum is strengthened, this year may mark the last case of wild poliovirus.

“We are closer than ever to achieving a polio-free world,” said Michael K. McGovern, chair of Rotary’s International PolioPlus Committee. “To ensure that no child ever again suffer the devastating effects of this disease, we must all ensure that the necessary funds and political will are firmly in place in 2016.”

2015 Milestones

Nigeria – the last polio-endemic country in Africa – was removed from the World Health Organization’s list of endemic countries in September, following one year without a new case of the wild virus. The last wild polio case anywhere on the African continent was in August 2014.

In September 2015, one of the three strains of the wild poliovirus – Type 2 – was certified as eradicated, with no cases since 1999. Type 3 has not been seen anywhere in the world since November 2012.

Pakistan, which continues to report the majority of the world’s polio cases, reduced its caseload by 82 percent in 2015 over the previous year.

Funds Needed

To sustain this progress, and protect all children from polio, experts say $1.5 billion is urgently needed. Without full funding and political commitment, the disease could return to previously polio-free countries, putting children everywhere at risk.

Rotary’s funds will support efforts to end polio in Pakistan ($11.4 million) and Afghanistan ($6 million).

Additional funds will support efforts to keep other at-risk countries polio-free: Nigeria ($5.5), Cameroon ($1.6 million), Chad ($2 million); Ethiopia ($4.1 million), Somalia ($1.8 million), Iraq ($1.6 million) and India ($618,000). Finally, $355,000 in funds will be dedicated to polio research.

Rotary launched its polio immunization program [PolioPlus](http://www.endpolio.org/) in 1985 and in 1988 became a spearheading partner in the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](http://www.polioeradication.org/) with the WHO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which was later joined by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since the initiative launched, the incidence of polio has plummeted by more than 99.9 percent, from about 350,000 cases a year to 70 confirmed to date in 2015.

Rotary has contributed more than $1.5 billion and countless volunteer hours to fight polio. Through 2018, every dollar Rotary commits to polio eradication will be matched two-to-one by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation up to $35 million a year.

**About Rotary**

Rotary brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges. Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work improves lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. Visit [rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org/) and [endpolio.org](http://www.endpolio.org/) for more about Rotary and its efforts to eradicate polio. Video and still images are available on the [Rotary Media Center](https://www.rotary.org/en/news-features/media-center).

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