

PolioPlus

January 2006

Dear Amigos,

Now more than ever, Rotarians must remain focused on the goal of a polio-free world. Along with our partners, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, I am optimistic that polio eradication is achievable and within sight. The Advisory Committee on Polio Eradication, the independent, technical oversight body of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, announced after its recent meeting that polio could be wiped out in every country but Nigeria within the next six months provided that the highest quality National Immunization Days (NIDs) are conducted. The group concluded that at least a further 12 months were needed to finish the job in Nigeria.

This will require the full capacity and capabilities of each of the spearheading organizations to ensure that the promise we have made to children everywhere is fulfilled. Our progress has been outstanding. In 1988, more than 1000 polio cases per day were reported in more than 125 countries; in 2005, just over 1600 cases were reported in 16 countries, 5 of which were considered endemic.

In addition to achieving a successful 99 percent reduction in the number of cases worldwide, there is evidence that PolioPlus continues to be a catalyst in boosting the world's capacity to combat other infectious diseases. In areas such as social mobilization, cold chain, surveillance, planning, and funding, the "plus" in PolioPlus is paying off. Other disease eradication and control programs such as those focusing on measles, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, utilize the systems and mechanisms developed to defeat polio.

Opportunities to participate in PolioPlus still exist, and I encourage every Rotarian to consider getting involved in the PolioPlus Partners program. Rotarians in polio endemic, importation, and high-risk countries are working on the front lines of the battle against polio. They organize volunteers to go door-to-door to deliver the vaccine, inform parents about the need for vaccine and how to get it, and put the precious drops in the childrens' mouths. But in order to be successful, they need tools. These tools are provided through the PolioPlus Partners program.

The need for high quality NIDs is of such importance that an urgent appeal is being made to every district to donate a portion of their District Designated Funds to PolioPlus Partners to ensure that your fellow Rotarians can carry out the activities necessary to finally win the war against polio. Contact your district governor or district Rotary Foundation chair to encourage them to support this urgent appeal.

A list of PolioPlus Partners projects is available on the Open Projects List. [Download the file \(.pdf\)](#)

In addition to supporting a PolioPlus Partners project, I encourage all Rotarians to highlight publicly, when appropriate, the role of Rotary International in the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#) and to schedule a club program on PolioPlus to bring all members up-to-date, especially new members who may not be familiar with the program.

Realizing the goal of a polio-free world will be an extraordinary and historic achievement for Rotary International and its Foundation, and our partner organizations. I believe that the "plus" in PolioPlus is also every Rotarian who has ever given of his or her time, effort, and/or financial support, for there is no PolioPlus without individual committed Rotarians. Victory over this crippling and sometimes fatal disease is near and now, more than ever, PolioPlus requires the full attention of our organization.

Your Amigo in Mexico City,

Frank Devlyn

The Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair, 2005-06
Past Rotary International President, 2000-01