

Rotary International and PolioPlus

Why Polio?

In 1985, Rotary created PolioPlus -- a program to immunize all the world's children against polio by 2005 -- Rotary's centennial. PolioPlus is one of the most ambitious humanitarian undertakings made by a private entity ever. It will serve as a paradigm for private/public collaborations in the fight against disease well into the next century.

Rotary's PolioPlus program is a shining example of the achievements made possible by cooperation between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

Kofi Annan, Secretary General, United Nations

What is Rotary?

Rotary International began in Chicago in 1905. It is the oldest and one of the largest non-profit service organizations in the world. It is comprised of some 1.2 million members working in over 29,600 clubs in 163 countries. Rotary members initiate community projects that address many of today's most critical issues such as violence, AIDS, hunger, the environment and health care.

How is Rotary involved in the global polio eradication effort?

Financially: In 1985, Rotary was recognized by WHO as a non-governmental organization working in the field of international health. In the same year, Rotary set a goal to raise \$120 million to provide the oral polio vaccine (OPV) to newborns in the developing world. When the campaign ended, Rotary had doubled its goal, collecting more than \$247 million. To date, Rotary has contributed US\$378 million to the protection of nearly two billion children. By 2005, Rotary's financial commitment will reach a half billion US dollars.

On the ground assistance: With its community-based network worldwide, Rotary is the volunteer arm of the global partnership dedicated to eradicating polio. Rotary volunteers assist in vaccine delivery, social mobilization and logistical help in co-operation with the national health ministries, WHO, UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Rotarian's volunteer efforts were instrumental in the eradication of polio from the Western Hemisphere, certified polio-free in 1994, and the Western Pacific certified polio-free in October 2000.

Global Advocacy: With the end of polio in sight, the eradication campaign enters the most difficult leg of the journey involving the poorest regions of the world. Rotary's Polio Eradication Advocacy Task Force successfully reaches out to governments worldwide to obtain vital financial and technical support needed to reach the goal of a polio-free 21st century. And Rotary's efforts have paid off. Countries such as Canada,

Australia, Denmark, Japan, United Kingdom and the United States are now major financial donors to this historic health initiative.

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Examples of Rotary in Action

- In **India** over 100,000 Rotary members and their families joined the Indian Government in January 2000 in immunizing over 130 million children on one day -- signaling the largest public health event ever in the world.
- In **Uganda**, Rotarians are actively participating in the planning and implementation of National Immunization Days. Thousands of Rotary volunteers assist authorities by providing cold storage facilities, transporting vaccine to every immunization post, and by helping track children who may have missed the immunization. As respected leaders in their communities, Rotarians play a key advocacy role to win people's confidence in the program.
- In **Kenya**, Rotaractors and Interactors, the youth wings of Rotary clubs worldwide provide free lunches to all health workers in the Nairobi area. They pack lunch boxes, organize distribution teams, and transport meals to more than 1,500 health care staff.
- Since 1996, Rotarians in **Angola** led a campaign to solicit corporate jets, helicopters and vehicles to move vaccine through Angola's land mine infested countryside. Additional volunteers mobilized by a single Rotary club helped the government reach the target population of children under five years of age.
- In countries where there are no Rotary clubs like the **Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Yemen**, the PolioPlus program funded vaccines and promotional materials for National Immunization Days.
- In the **United States, Canada, Japan** and other **non-endemic countries**, Rotary members continue to strengthen the global polio laboratory network needed to support the rapid diagnosis of suspected cases of polio. Rotarians provide assistance to equip laboratories and fund social mobilization drives.