



## ROTARY INTERNATIONAL

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# FACT SHEET - POLIOPLUS

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### **Background**

Rotary International was founded in 1905 in Chicago, Illinois USA, and is the world's first and one of the largest non-profit service organizations. It is comprised of 1.2 million members working in over 32,000 clubs in more than 168 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.

### **PolioPlus**

In 1985, Rotary International created PolioPlus – a program to immunize all the world's children against polio. To date, the PolioPlus program has contributed US\$600 million to the protection of more than two billion children in 122 countries. These funds are providing much needed polio vaccine, operational support, medical personnel, laboratory equipment and educational materials for health workers and parents.

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 cooperation with the national health ministries, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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 future.

### **PolioPlus Partners Program**

The PolioPlus Partners program, initiated in 1995, was created to provide Rotary members in polio-free countries the opportunity to work with members in endemic countries to support specific supplemental immunization activities involved in polio eradication. PolioPlus Partners provides the necessary tools to assist clubs and districts to educate members, communities, local media, and political representatives on Rotary's involvement in the initiative and the need for their support. Since 1995, PolioPlus Partners has contributed over US\$ 33 million to a polio-free world.

### **PolioPlus Advocacy**

Rotary's Polio Eradication Advocacy Task Force reaches out to governments worldwide to obtain vital financial and technical support. Since 1995, donor governments have contributed in excess of US\$ 2.6 billion to polio eradication, due in part to Rotary's advocacy efforts. That amount, combined with direct funds from Rotary, is more than half the money needed for the entire global polio eradication program. Countries such as Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland,

Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America are now major financial donors to this historic health initiative.

### **Rotary in Action**

Besides raising funds, over one million men and women of Rotary have donated their time and personal resources to help immunize nearly 2 billion children during National Immunization Days throughout the world. Rotarians prepare and distribute different types of mass communication tools to get the message to people cut off from the mainstream by conflict, geography or poverty. Rotarians also recruit fellow volunteers, assist with transporting the vaccine, administer the vaccine to children and provide other logistical support.

- Despite the obstacles created in South Asia by the natural disasters of 2004 and 2005, Rotarians took giant steps toward polio eradication. In **Pakistan**, more than 29 million children were targeted during NIDs in November 2005. Cases of polio also dropped by 63 percent in India during the peak transmission period of August to October.
- In 2005, more than 2,000 Rotarians from 102 clubs joined in a massive effort to immunize 24.4 million children under the age of five in **Indonesia**. Campaigns lasted from the end of August through the end of September, Indonesia's largest mass immunization drive ever.
- In **India** over 100,000 Rotary members and their families joined the Indian Government in January 2003 in immunizing over 165 million children in one day -- signaling the

largest public health event ever in the world.

- After extensive efforts to eradicate polio in **Cambodia**, health officials tracked the remaining pockets of polio to children living on the waterways, missed by the previously held NIDs. Rotary volunteers joined health officials in a boat-to-boat follow-up campaign to successfully reach this population and wipe out the virus.
- In **Nigeria**, 43 Rotary members from the United States joined Nigerian Rotary members to help vaccinate some 40 million children against polio in 2002. In addition, Nigerian Rotary members have been instrumental in educating Muslim and traditional leaders on the importance of protecting children from polio. In 2002, members met with Emir Alhaji Ado Bayero of Kano, one of Nigeria's most influential Muslim leaders. After the meeting, the Emir made an unprecedented endorsement by publicly administering the polio vaccine to more than 20 palace children. I

### **Lasting Legacy**

The savings of polio eradication are potentially as high as US\$ 1.5 billion per year - funds that could be used to address other public health priorities. The savings in human suffering will be immeasurable.

- Since 1979, the US has been recouping its entire contribution to smallpox eradication every 26 days.

*PolioPlus – Rotary's gift to the children of the world.*