

Global Polio Situation



Fiscal Year 2026 Rotary Request

- At least \$180 million for polio eradication efforts of CDC in the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill.
- At least \$85 million for polio eradication activities in the State, Foreign Operations/National Security, Department of State, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

The Role of Rotary International

Rotary is a global network of leaders who connect in their communities and take action to solve pressing problems. Our commitment to the global eradication of polio spans more than 35 years and is our top priority. We proudly work with the United States Government and governments around the world to build community trust, participate in immunization campaigns, raise essential funds and public awareness and focus political attention on the historic opportunity to permanently conquer this crippling disease.

Our nearly 300,000 members throughout the United States have raised more than \$470 million of the total \$2.9 billion Rotary has contributed to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. This represents the largest contribution by an international service organization to a public health initiative ever. These funds have benefited 122 countries. They are used to buy vaccine and the equipment needed to keep it at the right temperature and support the means to ensure it reaches every child. Our funds also support the training of health workers and the laboratories that monitor polio transmission and test suspected cases of polio. More importantly, tens of thousands of our volunteers have been mobilized to work together with their national ministries of health, and health providers at the grassroots level in thousands of communities.

Progress in the Global Program to Eradicate Polio

- When the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) was created in 1988, there were 350,000 annual cases of wild polio in 125 countries. Since then, the global polio burden of polio has been reduced by 99.9%.
- The GPEI has helped protect over 20 million children from paralysis by reducing polio infections and transmission through vaccination activities.
- Eradication efforts have successfully wiped out two of the three wild poliovirus strains. Type 2 was certified as eradicated in 2015, and wild polio type 3 was certified eradicated in October 2019 – leaving just one type to stop before eradication of all wild polio is achieved.
- Fewer than one hundred cases were recorded in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the only remaining polio endemic countries in the world where insecurity continues to hamper efforts to reach all children.
- Outbreaks of variant poliovirus, which increased following the pandemic health service disruptions, pose an ongoing challenge to under-immunized communities. However, there were nearly 50% fewer such cases located in fewer geographic areas in 2024 as compared to 2023.
- The GPEI vaccinates more than 370 million children multiple times annually. Every year more than 650,000 children are spared lifelong paralysis thanks to continued polio eradication efforts.
- 2022 saw the first case of paralytic polio in decades in New York state along with detections of poliovirus in several counties. ***Polio anywhere is a risk everywhere, including in the United States.***

Benefits of Polio Eradication

Since 1985, nearly three billion children have received the oral polio vaccine. Thousands of public health workers have been trained to investigate cases of acute flaccid paralysis and manage massive immunization programs. Cold chain, transport and communications systems for immunization have been strengthened because of the polio eradication initiative.

Polio eradication is helping countries to develop public health and disease surveillance systems useful in the control of other vaccine-preventable infectious diseases. The disease surveillance system--the network of 146 laboratories and trained personnel established during the Polio Eradication Initiative – helps track measles, rubella, yellow fever, meningitis, COVID-19, and other deadly infectious diseases. The Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) surveillance system and global laboratory network that supports it will continue to support the surveillance of other diseases long after polio has been eradicated.

Immunization campaigns for polio have been used as an opportunity to provide other essential health services. Distribution of essential vitamin A, which, like polio, is administered orally, has saved the lives of more than 1.25 million children since 1998. Every year, on average, 82 million doses of vitamin A, 64 million doses of measles vaccine, 34 million deworming tablets, 7 million doses of yellow fever vaccine, 5 million doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine and 4 million insecticide-treated bed-nets are delivered alongside oral polio vaccine during polio activities

Besides the savings of more than \$27 billion in health costs that has resulted from eradication efforts since 1988, investing in polio now may cumulatively save an estimated \$33.1 billion by the end of this century when compared to the cost of maintaining the control of polio without eradication. Polio eradication is a cost-effective public health investment, as its benefits accrue forever. On the other hand, as many as 200,000 children could be paralyzed annually in the next 10 years if the world fails to capitalize on the more than \$20 billion already invested in eradication.

Our Legacy

In 1985, Rotary made the historic decision to immunize all the world's children against polio. Today, the world is nearly polio free. **With the continued leadership of the United States, that of polio-affected countries, civil society, and partner agencies, we will fulfill the promise of a polio free world.**