

The Polio Endgame – It's Time to Reenergize our Efforts

As the District 7620 Polio Plus Chair, I often hear how tired Rotarians are of being asked to give to Polio. After all, we've been led to expect that the fight against the wild polio virus would be over by now, and now we are being asked, once again, to contribute even more money. The irony is that unlike those times in the past where Rotary basically fought the good fight against Polio on its own, today we are part of a powerful international team that has declared "The Endgame" for the polio virus. The partners in the GPEI, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, include Rotary International, The World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Centers for Disease Control, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. GPEI understands just how close we are to a historic achievement that, according to Rotary General Secretary, John Hewco, is worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize.



The joint effort, called End Polio Now – Make History Today, comes during a critical phase of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The estimated cost of the 2013-18 Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan is \$5.5 billion. Funding commitments, announced at the Global Vaccine Summit in April, total \$4 billion. The \$1.5 billion funding gap must be met; otherwise, immunization levels in polio-affected countries will decrease. If polio rebounds, more than 200,000 children worldwide could be paralyzed every year within a decade.

In 2007, the Gates Foundation gave The Rotary Foundation a \$100 million challenge grant for polio eradication and, in 2009, increased it to \$355 million. Rotary agreed to raise \$200 million in matching funds by 30 June 2012. Rotarians ended up raising \$228.7 million toward the challenge.

The generosity of District 7620 Rotarians has been magnificent as we do our part to meet Rotary's goal. Last year's Polio Plus contributions totaled \$109,000, exceeding our goal for the year. This year our goal is to once again exceed \$100,000 of District giving, which works out to approximately \$1,500 per club of contributions in addition to our annual contribution of District Designated Funds. I hope your club will continue to give to the Polio Eradication effort. It is something we can all be proud of.

Contributed by Raj Saini, PDG, Polio Plus Chair District 7620