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PolioPlus Update

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During this presentation, I will provide an update on the status of polio eradication efforts, share information on a new vaccine that is being used and give highlights of the new strategic plan to end polio for good. After that, I will talk about Rotary's role in the global effort and what we can all do to ensure that we realize our dream of a polio-free world.

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In 1988, there were 350,000 cases of polio in 125 countries. Today, only two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to report cases of the wild poliovirus.

In August of this year, we will be recognizing the one-year anniversary of the Africa region being certified free of the wild poliovirus. Five of the six World Health Organization regions are certified polio-free and 90% of the world's population lives in polio-free areas. This is a major achievement to which Rotary and Rotarians have made a significant contribution.

Most compelling is that because of our efforts, and those of our partners, over 19 million people are walking who would otherwise have been paralyzed by the poliovirus.

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This slide illustrates the dramatic decline in polio cases over the past year. So far this year, only two cases of wild poliovirus have been reported, one each in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But now is not the time to become complacent but rather redouble our efforts to avoid

an increase in cases as we saw in 2019 and 2020. We must build on the progress being made with a strong effort to reach those children who are missed with the polio vaccine due to conflict, because they live in remote areas, or are nomadic.

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We are also tracking a strain of the poliovirus called “circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus.” This occurs when the weakened strain of the poliovirus used in the oral polio vaccine circulates among under-immunized communities for a long time and can revert to a form of polio that can cause paralysis. The most prevalent circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus is the type 2 virus. These vaccine-derived polioviruses are a cause for concern and a new vaccine has been developed to respond to them.

Today, the number of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus cases is higher than cases caused by the wild poliovirus.

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Earlier this year, a new vaccine called the “novel oral polio vaccine” was approved for emergency use to address the issue of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus. This new vaccine is a modified version of the current vaccine used to respond to outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus which is more genetically stable and less likely to revert to a form that can cause paralysis.

Several countries have used this vaccine and it has proven safe and effective. We anticipate much wider use of this vaccine later this year.

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In June 2021, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, of which Rotary is a founding member, launched a new strategic plan covering the years 2022-2026. The new plan builds on our progress to date and addresses the remaining hurdles to polio eradication. The title of the strategy is “Delivering on a Promise.” The strategy has two goals: 1) interrupt transmission of all poliovirus in Afghanistan and Pakistan (that means both wild and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus) and 2) stop transmission of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 outside of the endemic countries and prevent outbreaks in polio-free regions.

We are confident that this strategy will deliver on OUR promise to children everywhere that they will soon live in a world free from the threat of polio.

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Some of the major elements of the new strategy include re-establishing polio eradication as a public health emergency. Aside from the COVID-19 pandemic, the only other public health emergency declared by the World Health Organization is the continued transmission of the poliovirus. There is also a significant focus on building collective ownership and accountability with all stakeholders for making progress in polio eradication. The plan emphasizes the need to improve engagement with communities where the poliovirus continues to circulate by addressing their broader needs and hearing their ideas and concerns. And finally, the strategy focuses on gender equality and integrating polio immunization with other health services to reach more children with vaccines.

This is the timeline for the new strategy. While the new strategy formally begins in 2022, many activities are being implemented now.

As noted earlier, in quarters three and four of calendar year 2021, there will be broader use of the new novel oral polio vaccine to more effectively stop outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2.

Interruption of wild poliovirus type 1 (the only type of wild poliovirus that continues to circulate) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 is planned for the end of 2023.

And the certification of the eradication of type 1 poliovirus and the validation of the absence of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 is planned for end 2026.

This strategy, similar to strategies in the past, requires us to reach up to 400 million children per year to sustain high levels of immunity which requires hundreds of thousands of front-line workers going door to door, house to house, market to market looking for all children under the age of five to vaccinate multiple times per year. In addition, disease surveillance activities must intensify by looking for the virus in children **and** the environment as the poliovirus can live for a short period of time in sewage water. This surveillance system is necessary to determine if and where the poliovirus is circulating and will be used to determine when poliovirus circulation has stopped.

Rotary's main role in achieving a polio-free world is fundraising, advocacy and raising awareness through the engagement of our membership.

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The End Polio Now fundraising campaign is our effort to raise US\$50 million per year that is matched two to one by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This means that each year that Rotary commits US\$50 million to polio eradication efforts, the Gates Foundation will contribute US\$100 million to Rotary's PolioPlus program resulting in US\$150 million for polio eradication efforts. Clubs are encouraged to contribute US\$1500 per year and districts are encouraged to contribute 20% of their DDF which is matched US\$.50 (50 cents) to the dollar.

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This pie chart shows how donations to PolioPlus were used in 2020-21. Donation to PolioPlus are primarily granted to the World Health Organization and UNICEF—the two implementing partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The majority of funds are spent on vaccines and getting vaccines into the mouths of children; raising awareness in communities about when vaccinations will take place and the benefits of polio immunization; and the disease detection systems referenced earlier. A small portion of grant funds are used to secure the technical experts at the country, regional and global level needed to guide polio eradication efforts and for research to facilitate progress in polio eradication.

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Since the inception of the PolioPlus program, Rotary has invested more than US\$2.2 billion in polio eradication efforts. This chart shows the top ten countries/regions that have received PolioPlus grants starting at the top with Pakistan receiving US\$308 million, followed by Nigeria, the African region of the World Health Organization, Afghanistan and India. Rotary directs its PolioPlus funding to the highest priority countries and regions.

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Another important aspect of Rotary's work is advocacy with donor governments such as Germany, the UK, the US, Japan, Canada, Australia and others that also provide critical funding to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. This is a photo that includes past Rotary Foundation chair Ravi Ravindran who represented Rotary at the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's pledging moment in Abu Dhabi in 2019. During that event, past Trustee Chair Ravindran and the Rotary delegation had multiple bi-lateral meetings with donor representatives to thank them for their pledges and to encourage continued support.

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In addition, Rotary advocates with polio-affected countries to encourage them to prioritize polio eradication efforts, conduct high quality polio campaigns, and express Rotary's support for their efforts. Here, Past RI President Holger Knaack meets with Prime Minister Imran Khan during a visit to Pakistan. These high-level visits are essential to sustain momentum for polio eradication, recognize the work that governments are doing, and encourage accountability and ownership.

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Another important activity for Rotary is raising awareness about our role in the global effort to eradicate polio and the historic opportunity to eradicate only the second human disease in history after smallpox. World Polio Day on 24 October and World Immunization Week the last week of April are great opportunities to showcase Rotary's contribution to polio eradication and encourage continued global commitment to finish the job. There is a tool kit in the resource section of the End Polio Now website that includes graphics and sample social media posts that you can use to promote your own World Polio Day events.

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As the goal of a polio-free world nears, it is imperative that we, as the organization that first had the vision of a polio-free world, sustain our commitment and encourage the global community to do the same through our advocacy and awareness raising activities. Rotary's leadership is more important than it ever has been.

And we need to ensure that we reach our fundraising goal of US\$50 million to fully leverage the match from the Gates Foundation and provide essential financial resources to the highest priority countries such that critical polio eradication activities continue unabated.

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This photo says it all. A dedicated frontline worker, a happy and proud mother, and most importantly, a child forever protected from paralysis by the poliovirus—this is what our PolioPlus program is achieving. Our vision of a polio-free world is in sight, and we must deliver on our promise to protect all children from the poliovirus. This will only happen with your active engagement and support. Thank you.