



## ROTARY AND POLIO

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**“When Rotary started talking about polio, people listened.”**

*- William Gates Sr., co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

The US\$200 million funding agreement between Rotary and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation marks another milestone in Rotary’s 20-year legacy of polio eradication work.

Rotary, a volunteer service organization of 1.2 million men and women, made a commitment to immunize the world’s children against polio in 1985 and became a spearheading partner in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative three years later. The other partners are the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF.

Rotary’s primary responsibilities include fundraising, advocacy, and volunteer recruitment. To date, Rotary has contributed nearly \$700 million to the eradication effort, an amount that will grow to more than \$850 million by the time the world is certified polio-free.

With nearly 33,000 clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas, Rotary reaches out to national governments worldwide to generate crucial financial and technical support for polio eradication. Since 1995, the advocacy efforts of Rotary and its partners have helped raise more than \$3 billion in vital funding from donor governments.

Rotary clubs also provide “sweat equity” on the ground in polio-affected communities, which helps ensure that leaders at all levels remain focused on the eradication goal. Over the years, Rotary club members have volunteered their time and personal resources to reach more than two billion children in 122 countries with the oral polio vaccine.

Thanks to Rotary and its partners, the number of polio cases has been slashed by more than 99 percent, preventing five million instances of childhood paralysis and 250,000 deaths. When Rotary began its eradication work, polio infected more than 350,000 children annually. In 2007, fewer than 2,000 cases were reported worldwide.

But the polio cases represented by that final 1 percent will be the most difficult and expensive to prevent for a variety of reasons, including geographical isolation, worker fatigue, armed conflict, and cultural barriers.

That’s why it’s so important to generate the funding needed to finish the job. To ease up now would be to invite a polio resurgence that would condemn millions of children to lifelong paralysis in the years ahead.

The bottom line is this: As long as polio threatens even one child anywhere in the world, all children – wherever they live – remain at risk.