

BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION CHALLENGE GRANT

This is a historic moment in Rotary's history. The partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has reached a new level to provide a significant portion of the funding necessary to make the dream of a polio-free world real.

“The extraordinary dedication of Rotary members has played a critical role in bringing polio to the brink of eradication. Eradicating polio will be one of the most significant public health accomplishments in history, and we are committed to helping reach that goal.”

— *BILL GATES, COCHAIR, BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION*

WHAT ARE THE TERMS OF THE GRANTS?

The Gates Foundation has awarded The Rotary Foundation a total of \$350 million in two challenge grants to help end polio. In response, Rotary has committed to raising a total of \$200 million by 30 June 2012. This effort is called **Rotary's US\$200 Million Challenge**.

The Gates Foundation grants represent a tremendous validation of the approach and success of our PolioPlus program. The RI Board of Directors and The Rotary Foundation Trustees have unanimously agreed to accept these challenge grants at a critical juncture for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which needs adequate funding to reach the eradication goal. Funds from the grant will be distributed by The Rotary Foundation to the most critical polio-affected countries through grants to the World Health Organization and UNICEF in direct support of polio immunization activities.

WHY IS MORE FUNDING FOR POLIO ERADICATION REQUIRED?

At Rotary International's convention in June 2008, Dr. Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization, declared polio eradication as the “top operational priority” for the WHO. Intensified polio eradication activities in the polio-endemic, high-risk, and importation countries must continue in order to finish polio once and for all. India, for example, is conducting immunization activities almost monthly in some areas and reaching tens of millions of children during each activity. Nigeria's polio eradication activities are now being overseen by a presidentially appointed task force. This increased effort requires additional resources.

In 1985, Rotary promised every child a world free from the threat of polio, and we are almost there. The new funding agreement between Rotary and the Gates Foundation will bring us closer to our ultimate goal of eradicating polio. We have the technical tools to do it, and now we must complete the job.

“The funds made possible through the Gates Foundation grant will help the Global Polio Eradication Initiative scale up its efforts to provide oral polio vaccine to children in those isolated locations where it's most needed.”

— *ANN M. VENEMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNICEF*

IS PROGRESS BEING MADE IN POLIO ERADICATION?

Since Rotary launched the PolioPlus program, the number of polio cases has decreased by more than 99 percent and the number of polio-endemic countries has fallen from 125 to 4. In the four polio-endemic countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, Pakistan), wild poliovirus circulates in very limited geographic areas.

“We hope that this shared commitment of Rotary and the Gates Foundation will challenge other donors — including foundations, governments, and nongovernmental organizations — to step up and make sure we have the resources needed to rid the world of polio once and for all.”

— DR. ROBERT S. SCOTT, 2008-09 CHAIR, INTERNATIONAL POLIOPLUS COMMITTEE

WHAT ARE ROTARY CLUBS AND ROTARIANS BEING ASKED TO DO?

Rotary club and Rotarian participation in Rotary’s US\$200 Million Challenge is crucial to making it a success. Rotary raised over \$57 million toward this amount in 2008. Therefore, each club is being challenged to organize a public fundraising event to raise a minimum of \$2,000 annually for the next three years.

Individual Rotarians are also invited to personally take part in Rotary’s challenge, with special emphasis on new clubs and members who have not yet had the opportunity to participate in PolioPlus, Rotary’s priority program.

“As a government agency, we think it’s wonderful that our private-sector colleagues have taken a leadership role in something as important as polio eradication. Their participation is absolutely critical.”

— DR. JULIE GERBERDING,
DIRECTOR, U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

WHO ELSE IS PROVIDING FUNDING FOR POLIO ERADICATION ACTIVITIES?

This extraordinary commitment from the Gates Foundation and our organization can serve as a catalyst for further donations from others to help us realize the dream of a polio-free world. Donor nations will continue their support of polio eradication activities, but the competition for funding of other public health problems such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis is intensifying. The Gates Foundation has agreed to lend its support to polio eradication advocacy activities as an important part of its relationship with Rotary.

“I am putting the full operational power of the World Health Organization into the job of finishing polio eradication. This is the power that eradicated smallpox. This is the power that stopped SARS, the first severe new disease of the 21st century, dead in its tracks within four months. I am making polio eradication the organization’s top operational priority on a most urgent, if not an emergency, basis.”

— DR. MARGARET CHAN, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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