

Rotary International's statement on COVID-19 and its impact on polio eradication efforts



In every corner of the world, it seems that not a single person or community is unaffected by COVID-19. Rotarians may be wondering how to stay focused on our work eradicating polio when we are dealing with a pandemic of a virus for which there is not yet a vaccine, a situation the world faced with the poliovirus not so long ago.

The COVID-19 pandemic response requires worldwide solidarity and an urgent global effort. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), with thousands of polio workers, and an extensive laboratory and surveillance network, has a moral imperative to ensure that these resources are used to support countries in their preparedness and response.

We can be proud to note that in the ever-connected world of global health, the polio infrastructure Rotarians helped build is already being used to help address, and stop the spread of, the new coronavirus—in addition to countless other health needs. In Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, where polio personnel and assets have a significant footprint, workers from all GPEI partners are working on surveillance, health worker training, contact tracing, and more. In 13 countries, polio volunteers have been deployed to address COVID-19 preparations and response.

We recognize that the COVID-19 emergency means that some aspects of polio eradication program will be affected. While addressing the new challenges of today, the most important thing that Rotary members can do to continue the fight to end polio is to sustain our commitment to polio eradication and reach our fundraising goal of \$50 million dollars this year to ensure that all children are safely reached with the polio vaccine. In the midst of a global pandemic, we understand that attention to polio eradication will be diverted, and this makes it all the more vital for Rotarians to remain strongly committed to fighting polio and not let our progress be eroded.

It is imperative that we remain committed to our work eradicating polio. [Learn more](#) about how our work fighting polio is supporting COVID-19 response and consider [making a contribution](#) to PolioPlus.