

Rotary President Jennifer Jones announces US\$150 million pledge toward polio **eradication**

By **Ryan Hyland**

Rotary International President Jennifer Jones appeared on the main stage at the star-studded Global Citizen Festival on 24 September to highlight Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio and announce an additional US\$150 million pledge toward that end.

Jones, who spoke in front of 60,000 people in New York City and tens of thousands more online and on TV, noted the state of emergency that the governor of New York state recently declared to combat a resurgence of polio in the region.



Rotary President Jennifer Jones announces on 24 September Rotary's \$150 million pledge toward polio eradication efforts at the 2022 Global Citizen Festival in New York City.

Jones stressed that polio is preventable through vaccines and that wild poliovirus is endemic in only two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although female vaccinators are critical to building relationships with mothers and reaching children in these areas, they sometimes can face harassment or even attacks.

In Pakistan, "frontline female health workers put themselves at risk every day," Jones said. "They are committed, even with obstacles, to reaching every last child with polio vaccines." The vaccination program works with the local police and government to ensure the safety of these health workers.

Jones talked about the effect of polio vaccinations in some countries being disrupted by COVID-19. She pointed out that in 2021, about 25 million children went without critical immunizations. "The world has beaten back this disease significantly, but we must redouble efforts," Jones said.

The additional funding Jones announced will go to the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#), which said in August that it was seeking new funding commitments for its 2022-26 polio eradication strategy. "We

want this to be the start of a massive effort to reach the initiative's US\$4.8 billion funding goal," Jones said.

Rotary members have been at the center of the worldwide effort to eradicate polio for more than three decades. Rotary launched PolioPlus in 1985 and helped found the GPEI in 1988, when there were an estimated 350,000 polio cases across more than 125 countries in one year. Since then, cases have plummeted more than 99.9%, sparing more than 20 million people from paralysis. Rotary has helped immunize nearly 3 billion children against polio, contributed more than US\$2.6 billion to global polio eradication efforts, and helped secure more than US\$10 billion from donor governments.

[The Global Citizen Festival](#), an annual music celebration, urges world leaders to end extreme poverty, take action on climate change, empower girls and women, and dismantle systematic barriers. This year's Global Citizen Festival, which took place in New York City and in Accra, Ghana, called on global leaders to invest US\$600 million into the future of women and girls, narrow the US\$10 billion climate change shortfall, and provide US\$500 million to help farmers in Africa to respond to the global hunger crisis.

The New York component, hosted by actor and Global Citizen ambassador Priyanka Chopra Jonas, included performances from Metallica, Charlie Puth, Jonas Brothers, Måneskin, Mariah Carey, Mickey Guyton, Rosalía, Angélique Kidjo, and Billy Porter. Presenters included celebrities Amber Ruffin, Bill Nye, Connie Britton, Katie Couric, Tamron Hall, Katie Holmes, and more.

Global Citizen says that since its first concert in 2012, more than US\$41 billion in funding has been dispersed that's affected the lives of more than 1.1 billion people.

Jones urged people to get involved: "Global citizens, use your voice — help us call on governments, businesses, and other leaders to join us in pledging ambitiously at the World Health Summit in October to end polio forever."

Rotary has worked with Global Citizen for a more than decade, primarily regarding the effort to eradicate polio worldwide. At last year's event in Paris, France, Jones announced \$97 million pledge for sustainable project. At the 2012 concert in New York City, Rotary General Secretary and CEO John Hewko announced Rotary's \$75 million commitment to polio eradication. Rotary and Global Citizen have also connected at Rotary International Conventions, the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meetings, polio advocacy events, and polio funding announcements.