



PolioPlus

A programme of The Rotary Foundation that Supports global polio eradication efforts in Polio endemic countries by conducting National Immunisation Days, monitoring poliovirus Transmission and other activities

March 2006

POLIO NEWS IN BRIEF

POLIO ENDEMIC COUNTRIES HIT ALL-TIME LOW OF 4

The number of countries with indigenous polio has dropped to 4. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative has announced that Egypt and Niger are no longer polio endemic since the indigenous form of the virus that causes the disease has not circulated in either country for over 12 months.

The remaining endemic countries are:

	Cases of Poliovirus
Nigeria	788
India	66
Pakistan	27
Afghanistan	7

This is the first time in three years that the number of polio-endemic countries has fallen, leaving Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan as the only countries that have never stopped indigenous polio transmission.

The Initiative's spearheading partners – Rotary International, the World Health Organisation, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF – also announced that this year, the monovalent form of the

oral polio vaccine will be the vaccine of choice in all polio-affected areas. Aimed at individual virus strains, the monovalent vaccine will be used to eradicate polio virus types 1 and 3 during this phase of immunisations.

Egypt: The success of Egypt and Niger is the result of intense efforts in 2004-05 to halt Africa's polio epidemic and fast-track the introduction of monovalent polio vaccines into selected areas.

Niger: Niger was officially removed from the list of endemic countries, having not detected indigenous poliovirus transmission for more than 12 months. All reported cases in 2005 have been genetically linked to poliovirus circulating in northern Nigeria.

This year, in addition to mass immunisations in the four remaining polio-endemic countries, large-scale campaigns with the monovalent vaccine will need to take place in eight countries with reported cases of imported polioviruses.

Nigeria: extensive transmission of poliovirus continues in the northern part of the country. With 770 cases reported in 2005, Nigeria accounted for 40% of global cases. The southern part of the country is polio-free, as no indigenous polio transmission has occurred there in 2005.

India: the number of cases of polio in India and Pakistan in the last quarter of 2005 also fell by more than half compared with the previous year, due to more effective immunisation strategies and the use of monovalent vaccine.

The first cases of 2005 have been reported and the primary challenge remains ongoing and efficient transmission in key reservoir areas. For 2006, focus continues to be on reaching every child, particularly newborns.

Afghanistan: the primary risk to Afghanistan's polio eradication effort is difficulty in accessing children due to insecurity in Hilmand and Uruzgan – the only two remaining polio-infected areas of the country.

Eleven previously polio-free countries reported polio cases in 2005 (Somalia, Yemen, Indonesia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Mali, Cameroon, Chad, Eritrea and Nepal).

In the words of Dr. David Heymann, Special Representative to the Director General of the World Health Organisation: *“Rotarians can be proud that their hard work will contribute to conquering the last remnants of polio.”*

The PolioPlus Programme continues to welcome contributions from Rotarians who are interested in making

additional gifts. Funds will help to support increased needs in Africa and Asia due to outbreaks caused by importations.

Please forward your Club's contributions, if so decided, marked for PolioPlus, to:

**Suresh Gupta
11 Middle Row
London
W10 5AT**

**Mortimer H. (Tim) Raath Chairman PolioPlus Committee
34 Chaucer Road, London E17 4BE Telephone (020) 8527 0488**