The Rotary Foundation FAQs

Rotary's $200 Million Challenge

This is a historic moment in Rotary's history. A new partnership has been forged between Rotary International and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to provide US$555 million toward our priority goal of a polio-free world. This challenge grant is one of the largest given by the Gates Foundation and it represents a tremendous validation of Rotary's goal-oriented, business model approach to polio eradication. The Gates Foundation has agreed to lend its support to polio eradication advocacy activities as an important part of its relationship with Rotary.

Q. What are the terms of the grant?

A. The Gates Foundation has awarded The Rotary Foundation a $355 million grant, and challenges Rotary to raise an additional $200 million, over a total of five years.

The RI Board of Directors and The Rotary Foundation Trustees have unanimously agreed to accept this challenge grant at a critical juncture for the polio eradication initiative, which needs an infusion of funds to reach the eradication goal. For this reason, the initial $100 million was distributed by The Rotary Foundation through grants to the World Health Organization and UNICEF in direct support of polio immunization activities in 2008.

Rotary has committed to raising $200 million of new funds over a five-year period which began 1 December 2007. Rotary's new PolioPlus fundraising effort, known as "*Rotary's US $200 Million Challenge*" was formally launched 1 July 2008 and will be completed 30 June 2012.

Q. Why is more funding for polio eradication required?

A. At a February 2007 meeting of all polio eradication stakeholders, the director general of the World Health Organization noted that an urgent injection of additional funding for polio eradication activities was required to reach the eradication goal. Over the past several years, polio eradication efforts have intensified by increasing the number of supplementary immunization activities in the polio-endemic, high–risk, and importation countries. India, for example, is conducting immunization activities almost monthly in some areas and reaching tens of millions of children during each activity. 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. This funding agreement between Rotary and the Gates Foundation is a huge step forward, bringing us even closer to our ultimate goal of eradicating polio. We have the technical tools to eradicate polio and the means to reach all children. Health experts agree that the goal can be met, but only if the necessary resources are provided.

Q. Is progress being made in polio eradication?

A. Tremendous progress continues to be 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 four. The polio cases represented by the final one percent are the most difficult to prevent due to such factors as geographical isolation, poor public infrastructure, armed conflict and cultural barriers.

The number of polio cases globally was an estimated 40% percent less in 2007 compared to 2006. In the four polio-endemic countries (India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Afghanistan), wild polio virus circulates in very limited geographic areas, and the World Health Organization recently confirmed that all four remaining polio-endemic countries are on track to achieve eradication.

Q. Who else is providing funding for polio eradication activities?

A. By the time the world is certified polio-free, Rotary will have contributed more than US $850 million. Rotary also reaches out to governments worldwide to obtain vital financial and technical support. Since 1995, donor governments have contributed more than $3 billion to polio eradication, due in part to our advocacy efforts.

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. It is expected 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.

Q. What are Rotary clubs and Rotarians being asked to do?

A. Rotary club and Rotarian participation in this effort is crucial to making it a success. Each club is being asked to organize a public fundraising event to raise a minimum of $2,000 annually until the completion of the challenge. Individual Rotarians are also invited to personally take part, with special emphasis on newer clubs and newer members who have not yet had the opportunity to participate in PolioPlus, Rotary's priority program.

Rotary's US $200 Million Challenge also brings with it the need to seek funding outside of Rotary's membership by reaching out to corporations and foundations throughout the world who can assist us in the global effort to eradicate polio.

A more detailed plan to meet the challenge grant is being developed and will be shared in the coming months.

Q. Why should we give to the Annual Programs Fund when "Rotary's US$200 Million Challenge" requires that the Foundation raise US$200 million in matching funds for polio eradication over five years?

A. The Annual Programs Fund (APF) is the lifeblood of our Foundation. Contributions to APF give both gravity and strength to our programs each year because they carry the "brand identity" of Rotarians – that is, our Rotary Foundation programs are identified by Rotarians, supported by Rotarian contributions, and administered by Rotarians at the project site.

It is our "*Every Rotarian, Every Year*" contributions to the Annual Programs Fund that support all of the following educational and humanitarian programs:

- **Educational Programs**: Ambassadorial Scholars; Group Study Exchange (GSE); Rotary Grants for University Teachers; Rotary Centers for International Studies

- **Humanitarian Program**s: Matching Grants; District Simplified Grants; Health, Hunger and Humanitarian [3-H] Grants; and, Volunteer Service Grants

Many clubs and districts participate in these efforts as Rotarians worldwide identify potential scholars, select GSE teams, partner with other clubs on Matching Grants and spend contributions on quality projects in their own communities through District Simplified Grants.

The contributions that go unspent (perhaps a pending Matching Grant or a scholar that declined participation at the last minute) remain in the District's Designated Fund (DDF). Each year, districts may direct any un-allocated DDF to support the Foundation's Polio eradication effort, and now towards *Rotary's $200 Million Challenge*. Moreover, APF-SHARE contributions raised this Rotary year (before 30 June 2009) will generate DDF available in 2011-12 – the final year of the Challenge.

Therefore, our *Every Rotarian Every Year* contributions to the Annual Programs Fund can help support all of our Foundation programs and help reach our latest fundraising goals for a polio free world.