

Final END POLIO NOW update for 2021

Greetings friends,

Special thanks to those Governors and District Polio Chairs who took time to update me on their District activity and fund raising, prior to two midnight zoom meetings with senior PolioPlus leaders in the USA this week. This information is vital as we plan the final six months of the 2021/22 Rotary year. Rotary Clubs and Districts are charged with raising US\$50m by June 30 to ensure the END POLIO NOW vaccination campaigns continue in key areas of our world, ie: Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair and RI Past President John Germ was pleased to note that 'giving' to both The Foundation and Polio was up in Australia – compared to the first half in 2001.

FIVE WPV CASES

However, sobering news was delivered last week with the advice that ONE further case of the wild polio virus was reported in Afghanistan, taking the total in that country to FOUR. Just ONE case has been reported in neighbouring Pakistan which means a total of just FIVE wpv cases in the world this year!

This is still exciting news, given there were 140 cases reported throughout the world in 2020 – 84 in Pakistan and 29 in Afghanistan.

RI's Polio Plus Chair and RI Past Vice President Mike McGovern recently returned from meetings in Pakistan and personally reported to our meetings.

He explained that the impact of our intense vaccination campaigns was now very positive.

'The 84 cases in Pakistan last year were spread throughout 39 Districts. This year – just one District – and the cases in Afghanistan were largely contained to one household in Kunduz province,' he said.

He added that the 70 sampling sites throughout Pakistan had revealed just one positive sample in the last three months and suggested that we have really begun to corner the virus.

Mike said the vaccination campaign was looking to get more engaged in Nigeria in an effort to contain the vaccine derived virus. Another challenge has presented itself as demand has outstripped supply of the bivalent oral polio vaccine.

'We are optimistic moving forward and feel good about showing the way with other health systems. Our campaign is bringing out Rubella and Measles as part of our PolioPlus campaign in Pakistan.'

Mike urged Rotarians to share the news that END POLIO NOW is making progress but there is still a way to go.

'We are working with the Taliban in Afghanistan but the house-to-house vaccination program has been slow, due to some disturbances by the ISIS group. We are looking to upgrade security,' he concluded.

DISTRICTS TO BE FEATURED IN RDU

In closing, RDU Editor Meagan Martin has issued a reminder to all Districts that she plans to feature the achievements of all Zone 8 (Australia and NZ) in special issues of RDU during 2022.

However, she requests that Governors provide her with their favoured month – a choice of two will help to provide flexibility.

Please advise Meagan of your choice as soon as possible.

Thank you all for your efforts in the Rotary year to date. We are wary of the excessive demands made on District teams and really appreciate your support in so many ways.

Warm best wishes for a happy, safe festive season and a successful 2022,
With thanks,

Bob

PDG Bob Aitken AM JP

RI END POLIO NOW Coordinator/Team Leader, Zones 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 2018/23

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