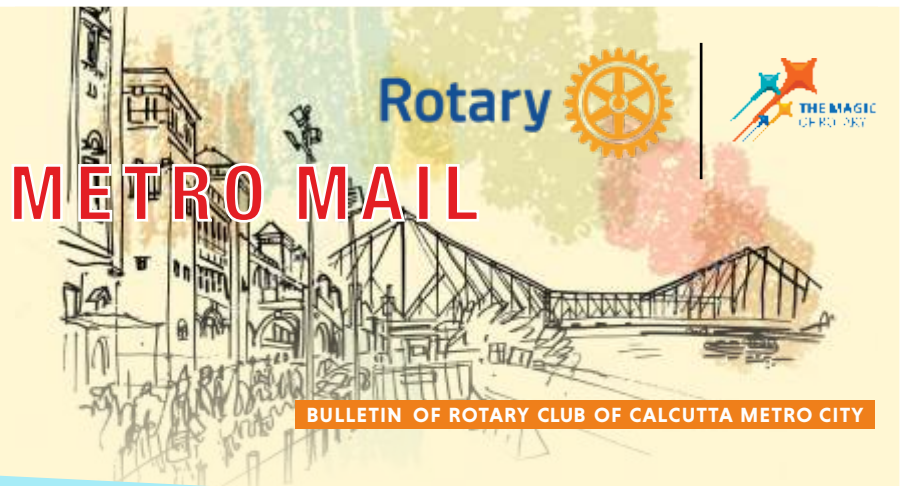


RI President: Rtn. Stephanie Urchick  
Dist. Governor: Dr. Krishnendu Gupta  
Club President: Rtn. Sunando Sen  
Club Secretary: Rtn. Dipu Mullick  
Club Editor: Rtn. Subhojit Roy

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While globally, Rotary's focus is on eradication of polio, October is also observed as Economic and Community Development Month. Rotary International has been a catalyst for economic and community development worldwide, with a significant focus on countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Through its projects, Rotary addresses critical issues such as poverty alleviation, skill development, and infrastructure improvement. Programs like vocational training centers, microfinance initiatives, and small business support empower communities to achieve self-reliance. For example, Rotary clubs in India have been providing sewing machines to women, setting up computer training centers, and have offered financial literacy workshops to promote entrepreneurship.

Rotary's collaboration with local governments, NGOs, and corporates further amplifies its impact. Signature initiatives like the Literacy drives and water conservation projects demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development. Rotary's emphasis on youth through scholarships, Rotaract clubs, RCC's and skill-building programs ensures long-term economic growth by preparing future leaders.

However, we, Rotarians can enhance our impact by addressing the following areas:

**Increased Focus on Rural Development:** While urban projects often gain attention, rural communities remain underserved. Rotarians can bridge this gap by adopting villages for comprehensive development, focusing on agriculture, health, and education.

**Scaling Digital Literacy:** The digital divide in India hampers economic progress. Rotarians can support initiatives that train underprivileged communities in digital skills, enabling access to e-governance and online job opportunities.

**Enhanced Monitoring and Sustainability:** Rotarians should implement robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of projects, learning from previous initiatives to refine future efforts.

**Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Collaborating with corporates under CSR policies can unlock additional resources and expertise for larger-scale projects.

By prioritizing inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability, Rotary in India can create transformative economic and social changes, ensuring that no community is left behind.

**Subhojit Roy**

## *‘When,’ not ‘if’: Progress continues toward ending polio On World Polio Day, Rotary International leaders and public health experts reiterate their commitment to global eradication*



*Photo credit : Rotary Zones 33/34*

Eradicating polio around the world is still an attainable goal, Rotary International President Stephanie A. Urchick and public health experts said as they commemorated World Polio Day in the city where the vaccine was developed.

“I know it is a question of *when* polio will be eradicated, not *if*,” Urchick told the audience at a **livestream event on 24 October** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

“Our Action Plan talks about improving our impact. That’s really where our polio eradication program shines,” Urchick added. “Millions of children won’t get this crippling disease. Billions of U.S. dollars won’t be spent on ancillary health care costs as a result of this disease. We have made so much progress.”

Rotary leaders, including RI President Stephanie Urchick

(middle), and global health experts discuss the future of the polio eradication effort at a World Polio Day event in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, 24 October 2024.

World Polio Day raises awareness and funds for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative’s work to eliminate the disease. Since Rotary and its partners formed the GPEI in 1988, the number of wild polio cases has decreased by 99.9%. The event highlighted Rotary’s continuing efforts toward complete eradication.

Polio remains endemic in two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2024, increased case counts of wild poliovirus and the first case of paralytic polio in Gaza in 25 years served as a reminder that until the disease is fully eliminated everywhere, it remains a threat to children everywhere.

Despite the challenges, Michael K. McGovern, chair of the International PolioPlus Committee, said he remains confident as ever that global eradication is within reach. “We’re in a bumpy period, but we’re going to get this done by continuing to focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan and doing the things that were done so successfully by Rotarians,” he said.

The event included videos featuring polio vaccination workers in the field. Urchick said she was inspired by them during a visit to Karachi, Pakistan, earlier this year.

Dr. Peter L. Salk, president of the Jonas Salk Legacy Foundation in La Jolla, California, and a part-time professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, talked about what drove his father to develop the first inactive polio vaccine.

Other presenters at the livestream event included 2016-17 RI President John Germ. Several members of Rotary’s eradication effort also sent video messages.

In a video shown at the event that was originally recorded for the 2023 Rotary International Convention, Gates Foundation co-founder Bill Gates lauded the commitment toward eradication. “When polio is eradicated, it will be one of the biggest advances in public health in human history,” said Gates. The Gates Foundation, a partner in the GPEI, matches up to US\$50 million that Rotary raises each year at a 2-to-1 ratio, which means up to US\$150 million for the effort each year.

Salk, too, said he was honored to be in a room full of Rotary members who have a passion for solving tough problems.

## *New Team End Polio Campaign Reminds People about a Tenacious Disease*

By Etelka Lehoczky



Ramesh Ferris wants you to see his legs.

“When people see me walking with my crutches and braces, if I’m not wearing shorts, they do not think of polio,” says **Ferris**, who contracted the disease at six months old. “But when people see my legs, they’re like, ‘Oh, what happened?’ It starts a discussion around what people can do to work together for a polio-free world.”

Ferris tries to wear shorts whenever he’s hiking or using his hand-cycle, a three-wheeled device powered by hand cranks. And he’s found other ways to channel his athleticism into the fight against polio. In 2008, he hand-cycled 7,140 kilometers (4,437 miles) across Canada to raise awareness and funds for polio eradication.

Now Ferris has joined Team End Polio, a new campaign by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative to raise awareness about the need to wipe out the disease. Team End Polio’s starting roster of top international athletes includes several who, like Ferris, have been directly affected by the disease. All are determined to speak up on social media and at sporting events.

**Rotary commits funds to polio outbreak response in Gaza**

“Polio is one of these forgotten-about diseases that is ‘out of sight and out of mind,’” says Ferris, a member of the Rotary Club of Whitehorse-Rendezvous, Yukon, Canada.

The effort to fully eliminate polio has been a massive project. It’s reduced cases by 99.9% over four decades, and today the wild poliovirus endures in just a few places around the world. And yet, as is true in many races, the final lap is the hardest part.

*At an event announcing Canada’s contribution of CA\$151 million (US\$111,233,500) to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, Ramesh Ferris presents a Team End Polio jersey to Canadian Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen.*

Dentler used a hand-cycle to complete the New York City marathon in 2006 and later qualified for the Ironman World Championships. It took her two tries, but she became the first woman wheelchair athlete to complete the grueling triathlon. She had to swim 2.4 miles, hand-cycle 112 miles, and propel her racing wheelchair for 26.2 miles, with a time limit for each stage. The second time she competed, she crossed the finish line in 14 hours and 39 minutes.

Like Dentler, the other athletes on Team End Polio embody ideals associated with sportsmanship: strength, dedication, determination, and the ability to work as part of a team.

“When you compete in a sport like football, you have to rely on your teammates to defeat your opponent. The fight against polio is no different,” says **Michael Essien**, a coach and former star player from Ghana. During a trip to Liberia in June 2024, he says, he witnessed the collaboration and coordination required to implement a polio vaccination campaign.

“To end polio, it will require all of us working together as one team,” he says.

Other members of **Team End Polio** include :

- Ade Adepitan, a polio survivor and two-time wheelchair basketball medalist in the Paralympic Games
- Wasim Akram, former captain of Pakistan’s national men’s cricket team and an international cricket commentator
- Muhammad Ali, a member of Pakistan’s national men’s cricket team
- Junior Bosila Banya, a French polio survivor and professional breakdancer
- Bismah Maroof, a former captain of Pakistan’s national women’s cricket team
- Ajara Nchout, a Cameroonian professional football player
- Anne Wafula Strike, a British polio survivor who was among the first female wheelchair racers from Africa to compete in the Paralympic Games

Ferris’ home country of Canada recently emphasized its commitment to ending polio. On 20 September, Minister of International Development Ahmed Hussen announced a pledge of CA\$151 million (US\$111,233,500) to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative at a Rotary institute. The donation puts Canada at over \$1 billion contributed for polio eradication. At the event where the pledge was announced, Ferris gave Hussen a Team End Polio jersey.

“There have been a copious number of amazing global citizens who have rallied together with one goal in mind, and that is ending polio,” Ferris says. “The good thing about the polio program is that we’re united to cross the finish line. We’re not doing it alone.”

## *Rotary Commits Funds to Polio Outbreak Response in Gaza*

By **Rotary International**



*Immunized Children at Gaza*

The recent detection of variant poliovirus type-2 isolates in environmental samples and the confirmation of a 10-month-old child who has contracted polio in Gaza is a stark reminder that as long as polio exists anywhere, it is a threat everywhere.

The ongoing crisis in Gaza has contributed to reduced routine immunization rates and an increased risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio. The crisis also poses a significant challenge to fully implementing disease surveillance and vaccination campaigns.

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers there to be a high risk for the spread of this polio strain within Gaza and internationally, particularly given the current situation's impact on public health services.

A humanitarian pause allowed a two-round polio vaccination campaign to begin in Gaza. The first round was successfully implemented from 1-12 September 2024 and vaccinated 559,161 children, or an estimated 95% of eligible children at the governorate level, according to independently conducted post-campaign monitoring.

The second round of the emergency polio vaccination campaign in Gaza began on 14 October. The campaign started in Central Gaza, vaccinating children under ten years old with nOPV2, where children aged between 2-9 years old were also offered Vitamin A.

As of 23 October, the Polio Technical Committee for Gaza, including the Palestinian Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and **partners have been compelled to postpone the third phase of the polio vaccination campaign.** This final phase aimed to vaccinate 119,279 children across northern Gaza.

The current conditions, including ongoing attacks on civilian infrastructure, continue to jeopardize people’s safety and movement in northern Gaza, making it impossible for families to bring their children for vaccination safely and health workers to operate.

Rotary committed US\$500,000 to bolster the initiative, channeling these funds through a dedicated Polio Outbreak Response Fund. This contribution represents Rotary’s sustained support to the WHO in combating polio globally.

Rotary will continue to work with its partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and other agencies as vaccination efforts unfold.

Financial contributions to the PolioPlus fund will help Rotary and its Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners achieve a world in which no child is paralyzed by polio again.



# District News

## *World Polio Day Program by Rotary International District 3291*



Rotary International District 3291 and the District Polio Plus Committee organized a program at Gyan Manch, Kolkata, on October 29, 2024, to mark World Polio Day. Originally scheduled for October 24, the event was postponed due to Cyclone Dana. Key speakers included Rotary International Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, District Governor Dr. Krishnendu Gupta, and representatives from UNICEF, WHO, and the

Ministry of Health. Discussions emphasized India's polio-free status since 2011 and the ongoing global challenges, with a concerning rise in wild polio cases—62 in 2024, up from 6 in 2021.

The program underscored the need for vigilance and collective action to prevent the virus's resurgence while maintaining hope and determination.

Our club member, PDG Shyamashree Sen, INPPC's National Committee Advisor also spoke on the occasion. Our club co hosted the program.

## Club News

### *World Polio Day- Public Image Initiatives by Rotary Calcutta Metro City*



Rotary Calcutta Metro City and District Polio Plus Committee tie up to observe the WORLD POLIO DAY on 24th October 2024.

In association with 91.9 Friends FM it is promoting the awareness campaign through Radio PSA's.

This is the club's Public Image Initiative.

The club also put up a outdoor hoarding 30ft x6ft

at the busy intersection of Gariahat and Golpark/ Dhakuria promoting the cause of END POLIO NOW on the occasion of the World Polio Day in association with the District Polioplus Committee of RI D 3291.

The club also tied up with 91.9 friends FM for promoting the cause for a week prior to 24th October.

The club has actively advocated and played a major role of creating public awareness around the End Polio Now campaign.

Brand association and the Outdoor Hoarding was courtesy PP Rtn Subhojit Roy and Hony Rtn Tarun Bhattacharya.



### *Thalassaemia Awareness with IIM & C at Sonarpur*



Rotary Club of Calcutta Metro City organized its monthly session on Thalassaemia ad part of its Thalassaemia Free India campaign in association with Indian Institute of Mother & Child at Sonarpur, South 24 Parganas.

PP Rtn Jharna Mitra was the speaker and gave a presentation on how to prevent the birth of a thalassaemic child.. There were 65 participants who were all young women and the session also had an interactive session.

## Greetings

*Happy Birthday to  
Rtn Nirjhar S Bhaduri for 4th November!  
Rtn Sohini Roychowdhury for 5th November!  
Rtn Deepanwita Banerjee for 10th November!*

*Wedding Anniversary to  
Nausheen & PP Rtn Firoz Md!*



Edited & Published by PP Rtn Subhojit Roy

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