

## Rotary and UNICEF Celebrate Groundbreaking Partnership For Children

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(Evanston, IL – USA: 1 November 2004) Glenn Estess, President of Rotary International, and Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said today that their groundbreaking partnership, which has brought polio to the brink of eradication, proves that the public and private sectors can unite to deliver incredible results for children. The two organization heads were meeting today at Rotary International Headquarters, in Evanston, Illinois.

Rotary and UNICEF, along with the World Health Organization and US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are the spearheading partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. The Initiative is the world's largest ever public health endeavour, and has slashed polio cases by more than 99 per cent since its launch in 1988. With only six countries yet to stop the virus, polio is tantalizingly close to becoming the first disease of the 21st century to be eradicated.

Through Rotary International, the fight against polio has been largely driven by volunteers, over 20 million of them, mostly in developing countries. Rotarians around the world have also donated over \$500 million to polio eradication and advocated with governments to give more. Never before have individuals and the influence of the private sector played such a core role in a global public health effort.

"Rotary's contribution to the polio campaign over the last fifteen years sets a new global benchmark for dedication to children," said Carol Bellamy. "The success of our partnership proves that the private sector can, and should, work with public sector organizations in global projects, to mobilize resources, hold down costs and achieve the best results on the ground." As well as mobilizing half a billion dollars, Rotary's network of volunteers have worked hand in hand with UNICEF teams in many of the world's poorest countries to guide strategy and bring the polio vaccine to the poorest children who could otherwise slip beyond help.

Reaching poor and marginalized children with basic tools to help them survive and thrive is UNICEF's highest priority. According to Bellamy, the value of community-based networks like Rotary in helping UNICEF achieve this goal is "incalculable".

Rotary, UNICEF and the global polio partnership are currently taking action to combat the threat of a looming polio epidemic in Africa. They are supporting Africa's largest ever coordinated health initiative for children – 23 nations holding mass synchronized immunization campaigns with the goal of reaching over 80 million children under the age of five. The first round of campaigns were conducted from 8-12 October and the second rounds are scheduled for 18-22 November, with further rounds.

As ending polio has been Rotary's top philanthropic goal since 1985, Rotary's 1.2 million members are doing everything possible to ensure their promise to the children of the world. "With so much at stake, we cannot come this close to ending polio and not finish successfully," said Estess. "Thanks to the strength of our unique partnerships with UN agencies like UNICEF, I am confident that we can overcome these current challenges, and ultimately lead the way for other private-public collaborations to achieve major health objectives in the future."

Bellamy also congratulated Rotary International on their upcoming Centenary in 2005, saying it marked "a century of leadership for children".

## About UNICEF

For nearly 60 years UNICEF has been the world's leader for children, working on the ground in 158 countries to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for poor countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, quality basic education for all boys and girls, access to clean water and sanitation, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of governments, businesses, foundations and individuals, and through the National Committees for UNICEF sell greeting cards and other products that help advance humanity.

## About Rotary International

To date, Rotary has contributed more than US\$500 million toward ending polio worldwide, and raised an additional US\$130 million during its second global fundraising drive in 2003. Over one million Rotary members have volunteered their time and personal resources to help immunize more than two billion children in 122 countries.

In 1985, Rotary International launched its PolioPlus program, which aims to immunize the world's children against polio by the organization's 100th anniversary in 2005. Rotary's community-based leadership, volunteer support and initial funding for vaccine were the catalyst for the World Health Assembly's resolution in 1988 to eradicate polio.

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