



K.R. "Ravi" Ravindran, RI President 2015/16

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Last month, after confirming a full year without a single case of wild poliovirus, Nigeria was removed from the list of the world's polio-endemic countries. It was the last polio-endemic country in Africa. Today, only two countries – Afghanistan and Pakistan – harbor the world's final reservoir of endemic poliovirus. As this issue of *The Rotarian* goes to press, global cases of polio in 2015 number only a few dozen.

The scale of this achievement can hardly be overstated. Polio has existed for millennia; it has plagued humanity since our earliest civilizations. Today, because of Rotary's work and that of our partners, the end is in sight. We are counting down not in years, but in months. And yet, our success is as fragile as it is monumental. We are moving forward, slowly, steadily, inexorably – thanks to colossal efforts that never cease. We continue to vaccinate hundreds of millions of children in vast synchronized campaigns; we constantly monitor environments to prevent new outbreaks. The sheer scale of the effort – the coordination, the cost, and the commitment – boggles the mind.

Some ask why such high levels of immunization and surveillance are still needed to combat a disease that is almost gone. The answer is simple: It is the only way forward. If we did anything less – if we allowed the virus any quarter – years of work would be undone. We know too well how easily polio could spread again. We know how quickly our decades of progress could be lost. And this is why the months ahead are so tremendously important. We need your voice – to raise awareness, to raise funds, and to keep the momentum going. We need your strength to help fight this war until we have won.

On 24 October, we mark World Polio Day. I hope that on that day, all of you will take part in some way in our work to eradicate polio. I know that many of you intend to publicize this event on the club or district level; for those who have not yet made plans, there are still many ways to participate. Visit endpolionow.org for ideas, tools, sample press releases, and ways to donate. You'll also find the link to our livestream event; be sure to join in, and share it on social media.

This war of ours – which started as a war against polio but is also a war against hatred, against ignorance, against fear – this war will be won. It will be won soon. And when it is won, all of Rotary will have a story to tell – to the children, and the grandchildren, who will never see a leg brace or an iron lung, or know a world with polio in it.

Whether you are a Rotarian in Kano or Peshawar or Swat, in Seoul or Madrid or Chicago – you are a part of this story. Your part in it is one that only you can write. I ask you all to write it well – so that the story you will one day tell is one of which you will be proud.