HISTORIC VISIT TO NIGERIA
Chairman's Address

DGE Elvis Chukwu whose call name is Elvis became a Rotarian in the year 1993. He is a member of the Rotary Club of Jos-South and is very passionate about eradicating polio from the world. He has supervised polio campaigns in Sokoto and Abia States. He lists as his most memorable moments, the time he spent helping to resolve cases of non-compliance Ukwa West LGA of Abia State and making sure that every vulnerable child received two drops of the life-saving polio vaccine. He also enjoyed the time he spent immunizing children at the border post in Ilella, Sokoto State with Rotarians from Niger Republic. It was interesting having Rotarians from the two sides of the border joining hands in the same worthy cause.

He encourages all Rotarians to volunteer for supervision during the vaccination campaigns and encourages those who are yet to participate to do so immediately because there is a sense of fulfillment in getting involved in a hands-on manner. He says that if we all contribute in this manner, we will soon kick polio out of our world.

MY POLIO STORY

PDG Pearl Ijeoma Okoro whose call name is Aijay is one of the amazons of our polio fight. She stands tall and makes sure she is counted every time she has the opportunity to help push polio one more step towards its final exit from our world. She is of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt having joined Rotary on September, 1999. She is currently the ARRFC for Zone 20A in Rotary International while at the same time the District 9125 Trainer 2016-2018. She is also a Past District Governor, having led Rotary International District 9140 in the 2015-2016 Rotary year. She has monitored and supervised polio immunization in Rivers, Anambra, Borno States and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

She lists her most memorable moment in the polio fight to be the moment she visited the IDP camp in Maiduguri, Borno State and met the first child to contract polio after Nigeria had been without any case of polio for 2 years. She says that seeing that child opened her eyes to the fact that our entire polio effort will be wasted if we have any child who is not immunized with the polio vaccine because regardless of what had been done before, one single case will take us back to the beginning of the fight again. She mentions her sense of fulfillment on one occasion when a child in a primary school she was visiting while monitoring polio vaccinations spoke of having met her at a previous vaccination drive in another part of city some years before. It brought to the fore the need for Rotarians to remain consistent in the fight till the very end. She also recalls her privilege at having been able to meet Anne Watafua, a polio survivor from Kenya during an activity to distribute tricycles to people whose mobility has been affected by the deadly disease. While riding one of the tricycles, Aijay remembers feeling very lucky that she was vaccinated as a child so that she was not afflicted by the disease.
LEADING THROUGH A CRISIS

Just about a year ago was when disaster struck. We got the news no one wanted to hear. Polio was back in Nigeria. It wasn’t just back, it had never left! It was depressing and gut-wrenching news. At that moment of crisis, it was easy to get lost, get confused and lose hope. It was easy to drop the ball and lose hope. We could have but we didn’t.

It has been a year since and as I look over what has transpired in the intervening period, I am convinced that what kept us on this fight and got us back on track is LEADERSHIP.

Harry Truman once said “In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.” I dare to say that the Polio programme in Nigeria has been blessed with great leaders. When the crisis struck and we had the setback, there was no wrangling, no blame-sharing, no confusion, and no prevarication. There was immediate consensus and effective action. They got together at every level and made decisions which led to one of the largest and most effective outbreak responses the world has ever seen. The fact that the virus has not been seen in any form this year within our borders is testament to this effective leadership. This piece is dedicated to these wonderful leaders.

I have been privileged to be led by a General of Generals in PDG Dr. Abdulrahman Tunji Funsho. John C. Maxwell said that “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way”. That statement sums up PDG Funsho. Our achievements in the NNPPC and at PolioStop couldn’t have happened but for his wonderful leadership. He doesn’t just send us as warriors into battle, he is there in front of us and beside us charging with us into battle. I have seen him at the epicenter of the insurgency in Maiduguri, acting with courage and impervious to danger. I have seen his compassion among the weak and deprived in IDP camps but it was when I saw him go knee-deep into sewage and mud in a slum in Lagos while trying to reach underserved vulnerable persons with life saving vaccines that my mind was made up to write this and celebrate his exemplary leadership. Harold S. Geneen said, “Leadership is practiced, not so much in words but in attitude and actions”. Thus, as Chairman of Rotary’s NNPPC, he leads us with his attitude and actions. Colin Powell said, “Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.” We keep bringing him our problems because we know he cares and he keeps finding solutions to them. That is why we keep improving, why we keep succeeding. Thank you Dr. Funsho for your leadership and steady hands in the midst of the crisis of the last year.

Ultimately, leadership is not about glorious crowning acts. It’s about keeping your team focused on a goal and motivated to do their best to achieve it, especially when the stakes are high and the consequences really matter. It is about laying the groundwork for others’ success, and then standing back and letting them shine.

-Chris Hadfield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Target Populations</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>28th - 31st</td>
<td>SIPDs (18 States)</td>
<td>2nd mOPV2 OBR in 18 states</td>
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<td>25th - 28th</td>
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<td>3rd - 6th</td>
<td>SIPDs (7 High Risk States)</td>
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Now one year without polio, Nigeria is back on the pathway to polio eradication in 2020. This month, August 21, 2017, Nigeria is once again moving closer toward eradicating polio as it has been one full year without a new polio case reported in the country. The last case was in Monguno Local Government Area (LGA), Borno state with onset of paralysis on 21st August 2016. So, if all pending laboratory investigations return negative results in the coming weeks, Nigeria may once again be taken off the list of polio-endemic countries. However, Nigeria will only be certified polio free by WHO if it maintains a polio free status for 3 full years. And, Nigeria must show evidence of effective surveillance system, improved routine immunization services and maintain high quality campaigns. Procedurally, achieving one year without polio is just one of many hurdles the country must overcome before being certified a polio-free nation.

Rotarian Michael McGovern, Chairman, International PolioPlus Committee (IPPC) was in Nigeria when the country marked 1-year without a new case of polio. The Chairman was in the country to appreciate the work local Rotarians are doing to eradicate polio and to interact with the government and partners on the progress and challenges of polio eradication in Nigeria. Michael McGovern said: "We are very pleased with the government of Borno and that they are working very closely with the national government, with everyone involved to make sure that those kids receive polio vaccines. We are confident that the progress we have made in Nigeria will continue and with everyone working together we will soon see not only a polio free Nigeria, but a polio free world".

Eradicating polio in Nigeria will require perseverance, commitment and sustained collaboration amongst wide range of patrons. Government leadership at every level is important and should be all-encompassing, as well as support from international agencies must be steadfast. Donor complacency could be a big threat as is with waning political support for immunization services. Nigeria’s Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) partners such as Rotary International, WHO, UNICEF, CDC, BMGF, USAID and host of others are needed for Nigeria to succeed. There is no room for any partner to succumb to fatigue and scale-down on program funding. If there is a time to scale-up, it is now so the job can be finished. Rotary International maintains that at a time like this, the Nigeria program cannot afford to lower its spending on immunization services. Michael McGovern while meeting with key partners and government agencies restated Rotary’s commitment to stand with Nigeria till polio is totally eradicated. With one year without a new polio case now behind us, we cannot afford to be complacent. It’s now the time to double down and continue to immunize our children and maintain strong monitoring and surveillance to track any sign of poliovirus. Though all stakeholders are excited on regaining control on the virus in Nigeria, they shouldn’t get distracted by the progress. Polio Eradication must remain an emergency in Nigeria with strong government oversight and leadership on program management and funding. Polio campaigns should continue with intensified efforts to reach every child. Surveillance needs to be more sensitive so that no virus will pass undetected. And routine immunization coverage must improve significantly, especially in the northern states where recent survey shows very low coverages across the region.

Rotary remain convinced that the Nigeria program is on the right track; deploying sufficient resources and activities on the remaining polio strongholds in the country, particularly the northern states. Key innovations being implemented in the security compromised areas to reach inaccessible populations are yielding tangible results. Rotary is in concordance with its partners that strong commitment and coordination reinforced by accountability in-country and throughout the Lake Chad Basin region situates Nigeria in the best position to stop transmission and sustain the gains through to full eradication. All partners including Rotary International are now using their infrastructure, manpower, resources, and knowledge to support the Nigeria Program rejuvenate its Routine Immunization System. The new strategic direction taken by the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) to begin harnessing the opportunities created by the investments in Polio Eradication Initiative has huge potentials for building a sustainable public healthcare services in Nigeria.

Globally, wild polio virus still exists in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria. While Nigeria has been on a zero-case status for 12 months now, Afghanistan and Pakistan have reported nine (9) cases this year: six (6) wild poliovirus cases in Afghanistan and three (3) in Pakistan. Though, the prevalence of the virus has decreased; with as low as 9 cases this year against 21 cases reported in the same period in 2016. With such improvement, it is likely that the last new case of polio will be seen this year, paving the way for the world to be certified polio-free by 2020. The prevalence of the disease has reduced by 99.9% worldwide. The milestone achieved in Nigeria is another outcome of Rotary’s support to global polio eradication efforts, which began in 1988. Today, more than 16 million people are walking who would have otherwise been crippled.
Rotary International has reassured Nigerians of its commitment to support the country in ending polio infection in Nigeria and secure World health Organization (WHO) Polio-free certification by 2019.

Dr Tunji Funsho of Rotary International District 9110, Nigeria and Chairman, Rotary Nigeria PolioPlus Committee, gave the assurance in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Port Harcourt.

Rotary International District 9110, Nigeria, covers all Rotary Clubs in Lagos and Ogun States. Funsho spoke with journalists on the sidelines of the visit of Rotary International PolioPlus Committee Chair, Michael McGovern to Port Harcourt recently.

He said that as part of efforts to combat polio, the club was collaborating with the Nigerian Medical Corps to ensure that children in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camps across the North-East were adequately immunised.

"You may recall that Nigeria was on the verge of being certified Polio-free by the WHO but this was truncated following the return of four infected children who as a result of insurgency in the North-East were not duly immunised.

"Our most recent strategy to combating the disease is by getting the Nigerian military to assist us to immunise children in IDP camps.

"We are making efforts to ensure that the Nigerian Medical Corps takes up immunisation exercise to those areas we may not be able to cover due to our peculiar security challenges," he said.

Funsho said that though most parts of the western world were already free from polio over two decades ago, they have remained committed to contributing funds and technical support to end the epidemic in other parts of the world.

"Recently, the U.K. government has provided 100 million Pounds sterling to enhance global fight against polio. "The same with other governments, European Union, Canada and even the Nigerian government.

"Here in Nigeria, the Federal Government has also provided 95 million dollars to combat the disease. "I think Nigeria saw its last polio case last year and so I’m hopeful that in the next two years we shall be certified a polio-free country," he said.

NAN reports that Rotarians have helped to immunise more than 2.5 billion children against polio in 122 countries.

Nigeria is one of the remaining three countries where polio is still present though Aug. 24 will make it one year since the country reported any new case of polio.

It is for this reason that the International PolioPlus Committee Chair Rotarian McGovern is on an advocacy visit and while in Nigeria, he will meet with the Government of Nigeria.

He will also assess the levels of polio immunisation implementation and will meet with Rotarians and PolioPlus team members as well as visit IDP camps and tour polio projects in Lagos, Abuja and Maidugiri.

Source: News Association of Nig
The protracted Boko Haram insurgency in the North East might frustrate efforts to completely eradicate polio from Nigeria. Rotary International PolioPlus Committee Chair, Michael McGovern, expressed this concern when he led a team for immunisation at the Rumuodumaya model health centre in Port Harcourt, Rivers State recently.

McGovern observed that Nigeria has worked so hard to eradicate polio especially as it has not seen a case in over a full year now. He however, expressed concern that all the efforts put into ensure that the country is rid of polio might be jeopardised by the Boko Haram conflict which has rendered some children inaccessible for immunisation. According to him, “We still have some concern up in the far North Eastern part of the country that there may be children who are inaccessible”. He expressed delight that many of the children once trapped in the conflict engulfed areas of the North East are now accessible. Many mothers, he pointed out are bringing their children to be vaccinated in areas where the Nigerian security agencies have repelled the insurgents.

“The North East, everyone understands there has been some conflict there and in any part of the world where there has been conflict, it is inevitable that things like vaccine will take a back seat. But the good news is that all the parties seems to be working together now to ensure that the vaccines are delivered and they are creating safe zones in order for that to happen” said McGovern. The polio plus committee chair said it was really inspirational to see the work that has been done here in Nigeria by the Rotarians; the various levels of government, health workers, mothers and fathers who are willing to bring their children to get the polio vaccine. McGovern noted that in many parts of many countries around the world, it has been challenging over the years to reach people in dire need to medical attention due to similar conflict Nigeria is faced with in the North East. He observed that great progress has been made in receiving polio vaccines. We are confident that the progress we have made in Nigeria will continue to be made and with everyone working together we will soon see not only a polio free Nigeria, but a polio free world” he said.

He explained that he was in the country to thank the Rotarians who are working so hard to eradicate polio and to hear from the government their different concerns in terms of how the progress is going. Secondly, he said there are a lot of people who have made tremendous investment in the global campaign to end polio and it is important to see that investment is properly utilised.

Rivers State deputy governor, Mrs. Ipalibo Banigo, lauded Rotary International for investing tremendous financial resources, advocacy and countless volunteer service in the past thirty years that has led to over 99 percent reduction reported polio cases. She expressed delight that Nigeria has not recorded any incident of polio in a year, which according is a clear indicator that the country was almost at the verge of total eradication of polio.

The deputy governor said the government of Rivers state remains committed to ensure that polio is kicked out of the State permanently and every effort was also being made to strengthen the primary health services and make sure that no child is left out.

From the reporting of Kelvin Ebiri for theguardian.ng

The Chair of the International PolioPlus Committee of Rotary International Michael McGovern
The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) has declared the Ibadan Polio Laboratory fully accredited to continue performing its duties as a National Polio Laboratory for Nigeria. Accreditation of polio laboratories is conducted annually by WHO to review performance during preceding 12 months with complete data, usually from 13 to one month prior to evaluation. Dr Gumede-Moeletsi, the Coordinator of Polio Laboratories at AFRO, led the 2017 review process. Representatives of the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) and WHO Nigeria, country office, supported Dr Gumede-Moeletsi to conduct the accreditation exercise.

"The laboratory has tested more than 22,000 samples in the recent 12 months’ period with over 99.9% of accurate identification of poliovirus. More than 98% of the results were reported into the programme within the expected turnaround time", says Dr Gumede-Moeletsi.

She added that after the recent proficiency testing, which determines if a laboratory is still performing its duties in accordance with WHO recommended standard, Ibadan passed proficiency test by 100%. Based on the findings, the National Polio Laboratory located at the University College Hospital Ibadan, one of two such laboratories (the other being the University of Maiduguri) in Nigeria, got full accreditation, valid for 12 months.

The Ibadan polio laboratory provides timely and accurate information on the poliovirus that can be used to guide and focus immunization activities, in Nigeria, the only polio endemic country in the African region. The laboratory has consistently passed the accreditation processes by WHO.

The Director of the laboratory Dr Adeniji Adekunle and his team expressed appreciation to WHO for providing timely technical and financial support to the laboratory which enabled them to maintain global best practices. He also assured the review team not to relent in that regard.

Meanwhile, the Maiduguri national polio laboratory which recently moved into its new building after extensive rehabilitation by WHO, is expected to undergo similar accreditation exercise later in the year when fully functional.

Nigeria has not recorded any new cases of the wild poliovirus (WPV) for about 12 months now since the 21 of August 2016, date of onset of paralysis of the last WPV case. In 2016, 4 WPVs were confirmed in the security compromised Northeastern State of Borno after almost 2 years without recording any cases.

Source: www.who.afro.int
The Nigeria Army recently said it had immunised 1,227 children against polio virus in 13 communities in Yunusari Local Government Area of Yobe.

Lt. Col. Emmanuel Kingsley, the spokesperson of 7 Division of the Nigeria Army, said this in a statement in Maiduguri. Kingsley said that the children were administered Oral Polio Vaccines (OPV) during the exercise.

"Troops of 159 Battalion, 27 Task Force Brigade of Operation LAFIYA DOLE, in addition to patrols and clearance operations also vaccinate children in their areas of responsibility.

“The immunisation took place in over 13 villages in Yunusari local government area of Yobe. “No less than 1,227 children benefited from the immunisation,” he said.

Kingsley explained that military personnel also provided medical treatment to people in the area.

Source: News Association of Nigeria
The United Kingdom (UK) recently said it has earmarked £100 million for the immunization of 135 million children in Nigeria from now to 2020.

According to the UK, the gesture is part of the final global push to eliminate polio around the world for good.

The International Development Secretary, Priti Patel, said Polio was wiped out in the UK in the 1980s, adding that there are more than 100,000 British survivors today.

He said, “Globally, the wild poliovirus still exists in Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, with eight new cases this year. It is likely that the last new case of polio will be diagnosed this year, paving the way for the world to be certified polio-free in 2020, Patel said while announcing UK support to lead the last push needed to end polio in a statement.

“This will immunise 45 million children against the disease each year until 2020 – that is 80 children a minute”. Britain has had a long standing commitment to making polio the second human disease in history to be eradicated, after smallpox.

As a direct result of the UK’s support to global efforts, which began in 1988, more than 16 million people are walking today who would have otherwise been paralysed, and the number of people contracting the disease has been reduced by 99.9%, it was gathered.

“The UK’s support will immunise up to 45 million children against the disease each year until 2020 – that is 80 children a minute; save more than 65,000 children from paralysis every year; help over 15,000 polio workers reach every last child with life-saving vaccines and other health interventions; and help save almost £2 billion globally by 2035, as health care systems are freed up from treating polio victims”, the UK office in Nigeria said in a statement signed by Joe Abuku.

“Polio has no place in the 21st Century. This devastating and highly infectious disease causes painful paralysis and is incurable – trapping the world’s poorest people in a cycle of grinding poverty. The UK has been at the forefront of fighting global health threats, including polio, and our last push towards eradication by 2020 will save 45 million children from contracting this disease”, Patel said in the statement.

“The world is closer than it ever has been to eradicating polio for good, but as long as just one case exists in the world, children everywhere are still at risk. Now it is time for others to step up, follow Britain’s lead and make polio history”, she added.

Also, a paralympian and broadcaster, Ade Adepitan, who contracted polio as a baby said, “The UK has done so much to help eradicate polio and UK aid contributions have delivered great results. The number of people around the world contracting polio has gone from thousands every year to just a few cases. We can see the finish line – and we can’t stop now.

“The UK has always been a world leader. It can be part of our legacy to be at the forefront of the race to eradicate polio around the world. Let’s keep doing what we are doing and make the world a better place for future generations. We are so close to eradicating polio. We need just one last push to make this disease history and change the world”.

From the reporting of Sunday Isuwa for leadership.ng
An event attended by the President of Somalia, parliamentarians, delegates from the Somali Ministry of Health, World Health Organization and UNICEF, was held on August 14, 2017 in Mogadishu to mark a milestone occasion: 3 years since the detection of the last case of wild poliovirus in the country.

Speaking at the event, WHO’s Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr Mahmoud Fikri, applauded Somalia’s efforts to ward off the crippling and highly infectious virus but urged continued caution.

“The absence of cases of polio in Somalia today is testament to the leadership, commitment and hard work of the Government and people of Somalia, and the effective support and collaboration of many partners,” Fikri said. “We need to remember however, that Somalia is at risk of reinfection and we must stay vigilant,” he said.

Somalia stopped endemic poliovirus transmission in 2002 but has been twice affected by importations of the virus. The outbreak that erupted in the Horn of Africa 3 years ago paralysed close to 200 children. Somalia was at the epicenter and most affected, accounting for more than 90% of these cases.

“The polio programme in Somalia has fought hard to raise population immunity levels [against polio] across the country and to improve surveillance system sensitivity to pick up traces of the disease,” said Fikri. “This is commendable, but there are still gaps we must continue to work to address,” he added.

Insecurity and inaccessibility are key challenges for humanitarian partners operating in Somalia, particularly in the southern and central zones. For the polio programme, aiming to repeatedly reach every child under 5 years of age with vaccine, innovative approaches are proving effective.

“Tools have been developed to help us map and track the movement of nomadic pastoral communities, so that we can reach children on the move,” said Dr Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative to Somalia. “In addition, locally recruited village polio volunteers are helping us administer polio vaccine in and around places we cannot access. These volunteers also play a key role in helping to find and report cases of acute flaccid paralysis which is an indicator for polio,” he added.

The 3-year polio-free celebration comes amidst the worst outbreak of measles the country has seen in years. Somalia is also still responding to an outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea/cholera, which began in January. Polio systems and networks are being used in both interventions.

“Polio infrastructure has been critical in responding to these other serious outbreaks,” Fikri said. “We thank our donors and urge the international community to continue to support efforts to keep Somalia polio-free, and other much-needed health interventions in the country,” he said.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to select individuals for outstanding contributions to Somalia’s anti-polio effort.

Somalia’s last case of polio was a child from Hobyo district, Mudung region. Only 9 cases of polio have been reported worldwide in 2017.

Source: WHO office for the Eastern Mediterranean.
Chairman Michael McGovern (left) and the Hon. Minister of Health, Prof. Isaac Adewole

The Rotary PolioPlus Team with the residents of Dakin Biju Abuja during the Borehole Commissioning

Chairman Michael McGovern Immunising Children in Abuja

Chairman Michael McGovern Commissioning Solar Powered Borehole in Abuja

Cutting of End Polio Now cake in Port Harcourt

Chairman Michael McGovern, the PolioPlus Team and staff of Larry Hout Polio Laboratory Maiduguri

Chairman McGovern Immunising at the Muna IDP Camp, Maiduguri, supported by the Deputy Governor

Chairman Michael McGovern Commissioning Solar Powered Borehole at Muna IDP Camp, Maiduguri

Alhaji Mamman Dirkwa, Deputy Governor of Borno State immunising at the Muna IDP camp

Alhaji Mamman Dirkwa, Deputy Governor of Borno State visiting Chairman McGovern

Cross Section of Rotarians in Port Harcourt during Chairman McGovern’s interaction with Rotarians

Front Row (from right- Dr Tunji Funsho, Chairman Michael McGovern, PRIP Jon. B. Majiyagbe, RIDE Yinka Babalola & DGE Elvis Chukwu

DG Ogiemudia introducing Chairman McGovern to Rotarians in Port Harcourt

Presentation of Cheques to Polio Ambassadorial Scholarship recipient