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A $5.5 billion six year plan to get rid of polio globally by 2018

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Experts at the 'Global vaccination Summit' predicted that by the end of 2018, the world could be free from Polio with a robust $5.5 billion vaccination and a monitoring plan. This is the first 6 year plan made to eradicate all types of polio disease (both wild poliovirus and vaccine derived cases) simultaneously. At the Summit, commitments and pledges helped USD 4 billion of the $5.5 billion needed to implement the six year plan.

The plan incorporates the lessons learned from India's success becoming 'polio free' in early 2012 and cutting-edge knowledge about the risk of circulating vaccine derived polioviruses. India is being commended as the nation that could help guide the three endemic nations - Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria - to attaining similar success through their experience. The country is en route to completing three years without a case of Polio that makes it eligible for the regional Polio-free certification in 2014.

The total $5.5 billion six year budget requires sustaining current yearly spending to eradicate polio. It also includes the costs of reaching and vaccinating more than 250 million children multiple times every year, monitoring and surveillance in more than 70 countries, and securing the infrastructure that can benefit other health and development programs. "After millennia battling polio, this plan puts us within sight of the endgame. We have new knowledge about the polioviruses, new technologies and new tactics to reach the most vulnerable communities. The extensive experience, infrastructure and knowledge gained from ending polio can help us reach all children and all communities with essential health services," said Ms. Margaret Chan, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General.

Rotary International, the flagship donor to the GPEI, pledged its commitment through 2018 to raise funds and mobilize support of the endgame strategy. "India is a live example of success. Uttar Pradesh has already been announced as Polio free and we are hopeful that finally we will be able to defeat Polio by February 2014 with continuous efforts and enough fund commitments backing the initiative", said Mr. Deepak Kapur who is Chairman Rotary International's India Polio Committee and for the past more than a decade leading a volunteer team of Rotarians committed to making India Polio-free. Supporting the plan, various philanthropists from all across the world endorsed the value of investing in the end of polio. At the summit, Bill Gates announced that his foundation would commit one-third of the total cost of the GPEI's budget over the plan's six-year implementation, for a total of $1.8 billion. Other philanthropists present at the summit pledged contributions amounting to an additional US$335 million toward the plan's six-year budget.

Public health experts say if the polio eradication campaign succeeds, the world would not only declare its second eradicated disease - smallpox was wiped out in 1979 - it would also be billions of dollars richer. A 2010 analysis found that if polio transmission were to be stopped by 2015 the net benefit from reduced treatment costs and productivity gains would be $40 billion to $50 billion by 2035.