**MORE THAN A GOAL: END POLIO**

**FACT SHEET**

**What is polio?**

* Polio is a contagious disease that often paralyzes or kills young children.
* It spreads primarily in places where sanitation is poor.
* Polio can be prevented through a vaccine given several times in a child’s early life. There is no cure for polio.
* Polio has been eliminated in wealthy countries, but it continues to affect children in many developing countries.

**We are closing in on a weakened, but formidable opponent.**

* Global vaccination campaigns have driven polio cases down by 99%.
* In 1988, polio paralyzed or killed almost 350,000 children. In 2010, there were fewer than 1,500 cases.
* Polio once threatened children worldwide, but there are now just four countries—Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Nigeria—where polio transmission has never been stopped.
* Polioanywhere means the threat of polio everywhere. For every child paralyzed by polio, 200 others are infected and risk spreading the disease.
* Last year, polio resurfaced in Russia after two decades without the disease. Outbreaks are occurring in Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
* A total of 14 countries have had cases of polio this year.

**We can score a decisive victory.**

* We have vaccines that prevent polio for a lifetime. Each dose of oral polio vaccine costs just 13 US cents/ 9 euro cents.
* The Global Polio Eradication Initiative—a team including Rotary International, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control—has mobilized 20 million volunteers in more than 200 countries since 1988.
* With new funding and increased support from polio-infected countries, polio has the potential to be the second disease eliminated from our planet, after smallpox.

**Teaming to kick polio out of the world.**

* However, more funding, enhanced political commitment, and stronger program implementation are needed to rid the world of this disease once and for all.
* The global community must commit to the additional $590 million/€418 million needed to fully fund the Global Polio Eradication Initiative through 2012.

**For more information on polio:**

* + Get statistics and information on eradication efforts at the global Polio Eradication Initiative’s website: [*www.polioeradication.org*](http://www.polioeradication.org)
	+ ***Visit*** [*www.gatesfoundation.org/polio*](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/polio)
	+ ***Read about*** *Bill Gates’* web site about his commitment to ending polio: *http://www.thegatesnotes.com/Topics/Health/Bill-Gates-Eradicating-Polio*
	+ ***Review*** *Bill Gates’ annual letter* on polio: [*http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2011/Pages/ending-polio.aspx*](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2011/Pages/ending-polio.aspx)
	+ ***Watch*** a short animated video about vaccines and polio: [*http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2011/Pages/vaccines-save-lives-animation.aspx*](http://www.gatesfoundation.org/annual-letter/2011/Pages/vaccines-save-lives-animation.aspx)

**VACCINES SAVE LIVE**

**Vaccines are one of the best long-term investments to prevent disease and give children a healthy start to life.**

* Thanks to vaccines, we’ve eradicated smallpox, reduced measles in Africa by 90 percent, and are on the verge of eradicating polio.
* For just a few euros or dollars per child, vaccines can prevent deadly diseases for a lifetime.
* With healthy children, families can be more productive, leading to more self-sufficient communities and stronger economies.

**No child should die from a preventable illness. It’s time to up our game and increase access to vaccines for every child, everywhere.**

* Every year more than 1.4 million children die from preventable diseases such as measles, pneumonia, and tetanus.
* We have the tools to prevent these diseases and save millions of lives.
* New vaccines for rotavirus (a diarrheal disease), pneumonia and meningitis are ready to be rolled out across Africa and Asia.
* We are close to ending polio forever. Cases of polio have declined by 99% in the last two decades.

**All children, no matter where they live, should have equal access to life-saving vaccines.**

* Great progress is being made toward achieving equal access to vaccines, but more commitment is needed.
* The global community must continue investing in immunization and provide continued funding to ensure access to existing and new vaccines.
* By increasing global access to vaccines, we can save 10 million lives by 2020.

**Vaccines Score Wins for Life**

* ***New Funding*:** In June, donors committed $4.3 billion in funding to the GAVI Alliance, which will help immunize more than 250 million children in developing countries by 2015.
* ***Fighting Pneumonia*:** A new pneumonia vaccine, launched in 2011, can save up to 400,000 children each year if it reaches the world’s poorest countries.
* ***Stopping Meningitis*:** Thanks to a new vaccine, cases of meningitis are at record lows this year in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, where the vaccine is now available. As recently as 2009, meningitis outbreaks infected thousands of people.
* ***Preventing Childhood Diarrhea*:** Rotavirus is a leading cause of severe diarrhea that kills half a million children each year. Equal access to rotavirus vaccines will help save the lives of hundreds of thousands of children.