

17 December 2017

Dear Colleagues,

This past year has been full of exciting moments for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) – from funding milestones such as the [US\\$ 1.2 billion pledged](#) at the Rotary International Convention in June and an additional \$130 million pledge from the UK in August, to the dramatic reductions in wild poliovirus cases since 2016. To round out the year, global health leaders gathered in Abu Dhabi on November 15 for a forum focused on addressing what’s needed in order to stop polio and other infectious diseases for good. I’d like to use this letter to highlight the Abu Dhabi forum, as well as preview what’s being planned for 2018.

Global Leaders Convene in Abu Dhabi

Progress against polio was in the spotlight at [Reaching the Last Mile: Mobilizing Together to Eliminate Infectious Diseases](#), the forum hosted by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The Carter Center. During the event, Skoll Global Threats Fund Chairman Dr. Larry Brilliant spoke on stage with polio survivor and advocate [Dennis Ogbe](#) about why it’s so essential that no child suffers from the disease ever again. Later in the day, the Crown Prince presented one of the inaugural REACH (Recognizing Excellence around Champions of Health) Awards to Abdullah Khalifa Al Ghafli, the director of the [United Arab Emirates Pakistan Assistance Program](#) (UAE-PAP), to recognize his dedication to driving polio out of Pakistan. The forum is just the latest example of the UAE’s strong support for global eradication efforts – the country pledged more than US\$167 million to the polio eradication efforts since 2011, and has provided polio vaccines to over 43 million Pakistani children since 2014 through the UAE-PAP.



Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and Bill Gates congratulate Chip Carter as he receives a Lifetime Achievement REACH Award on behalf of his father, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. Image courtesy of Mohamed Al Hammadi / Crown Prince Court - Abu Dhabi.

Looking Ahead to 2018

As we continue getting closer than ever to zero new polio cases, it’s crucial that the global community works together to both end the disease for good and protect the incredible progress made. With only 17 cases to date in 2017, it’s also time to accelerate planning for a polio-free world.

As I mentioned in the August 2017 newsletter, the guiding technical document for this planning is the Post-Certification Strategy (PCS). The PCS covers the activities that need to be performed in the first 10 years after certification to maintain a polio-free world. Since everyone—from individual countries to major global health initiatives—has an interest in keeping the world polio-free, a [wide-reaching consultation](#) was launched to obtain inputs on the strategy, and an information session for WHO Member States was held on December 12. The PCS will be completed in the coming months and

presented to Member States at the World Health Assembly in May 2018. While GPEI is playing a leading role in the development of the PCS, GPEI will not be the implementers of this strategy. At the upcoming POB meeting in January, my fellow POB members and I will discuss this issue and determine who within our organizations – beyond the polio programs – are best suited to move this work forward.

With a record-low number of cases this year, 2018 promises to be a pivotal year in our fight against polio.

At the forum in Abu Dhabi, Dennis Ogbe told the audience, “No child, even the poorest of the poor should suffer because of polio; we should take action now and end polio forever.” The GPEI is ready to answer Dennis’s call to action, and we hope that you will continue working closely with us in 2018 to achieve a polio-free world.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping, sweeping strokes that form a cursive name.

Chris Elias
President, Global Development, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Chairman, Polio Oversight Board