

Strathfield
Rotary
Club

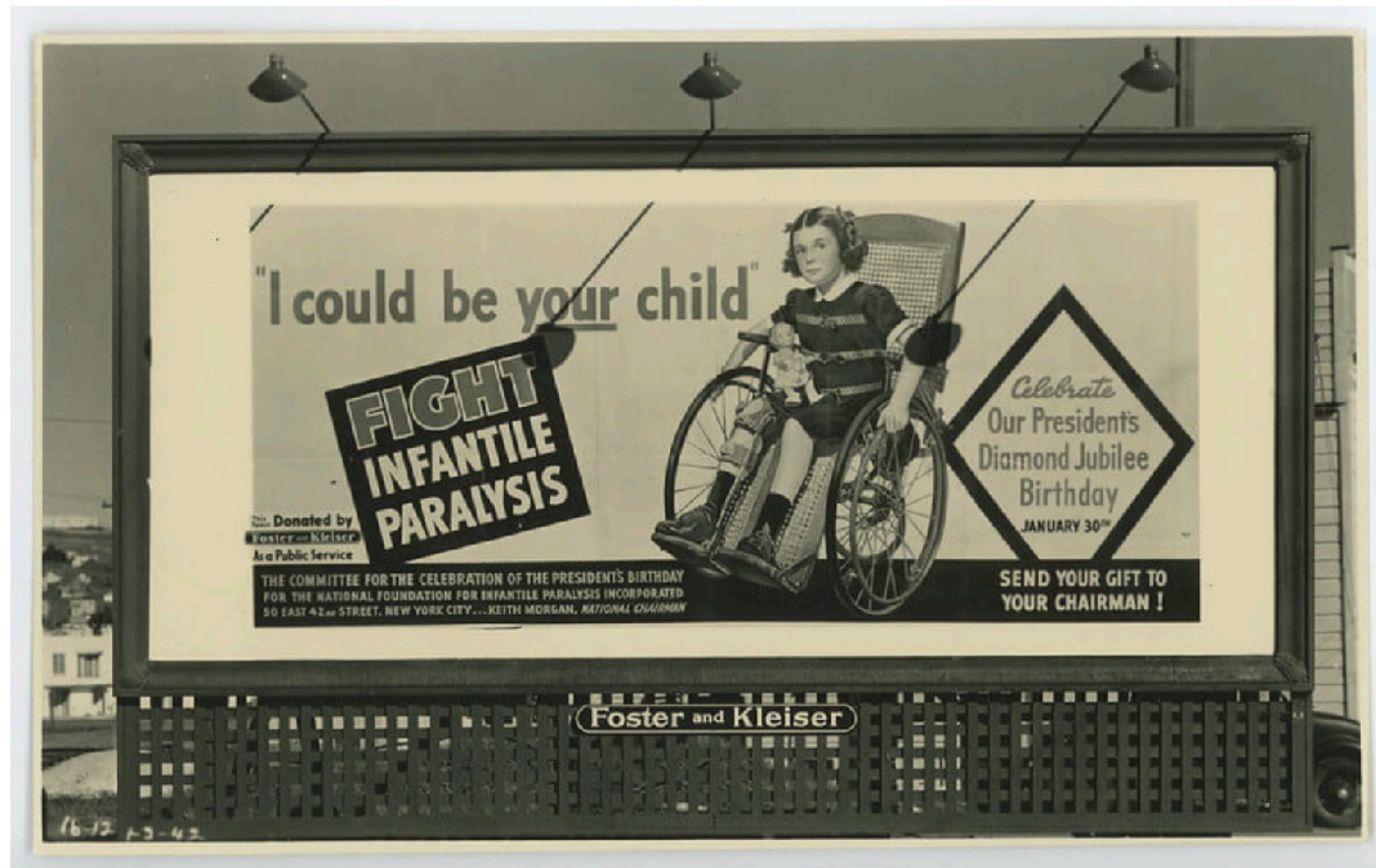


Rotary Club Strathfield Wednesday Night Meeting

Sergeant Session

13th August 2025

Subject : A Reminder Why The Fight To End Polio



Billboard sponsored by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which would become the March of Dimes, 1942.

Source: FDR Presidential Library & Museum's Photostream/Flickr

Source: American Society for Microbiology

What Is Polio?

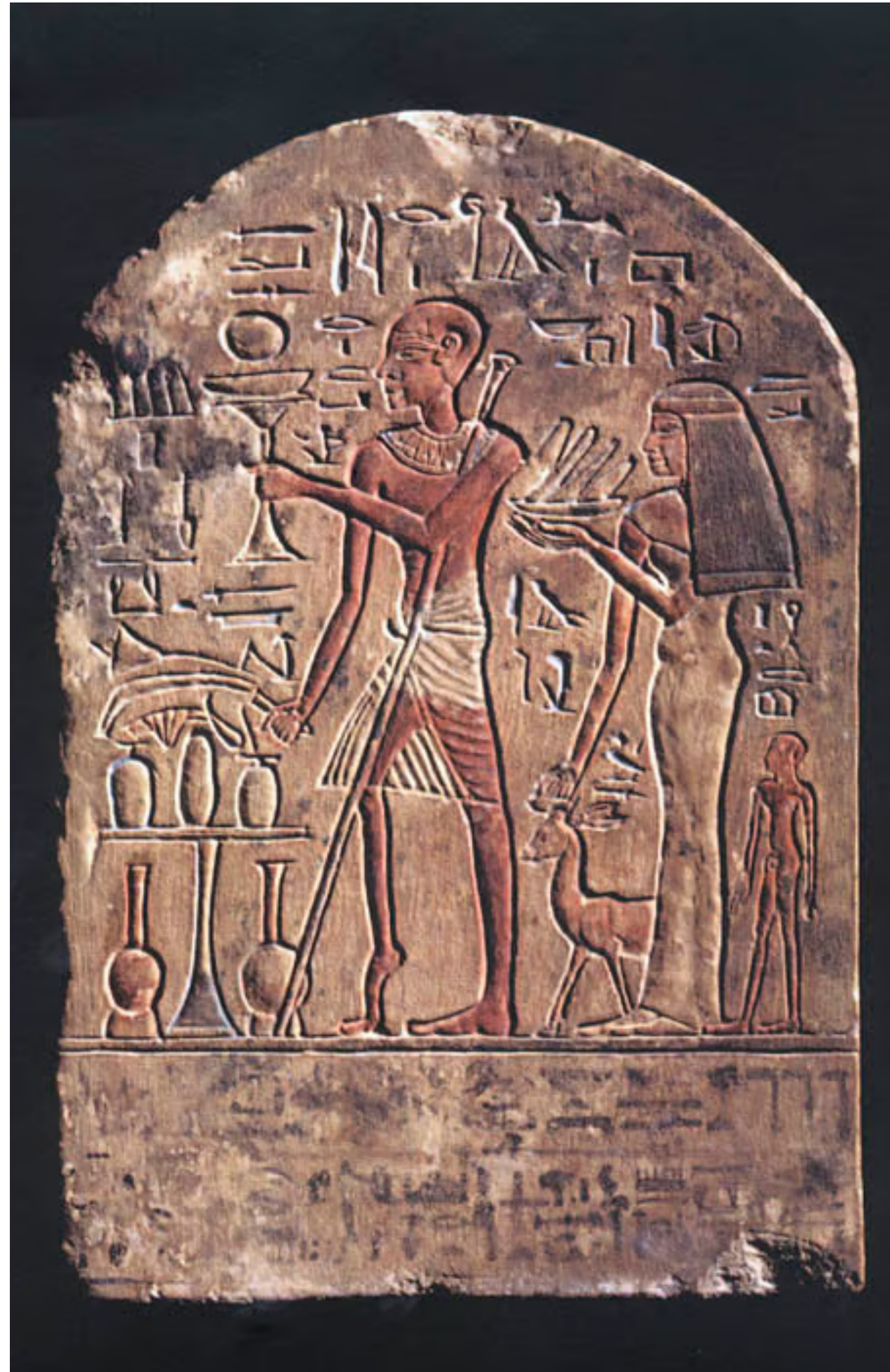
Poliomyelitis is a highly infectious disease that most commonly affects children under the age of 5 years old.

Most know it as poliovirus.

The virus spread person to person, typically through contaminated water. It can attack the nervous system, and in some instances, lead to paralysis.

Although there is no cure, there is a and effective vaccine - one which Rotary and our partners use to immunise over 2.5 billion children worldwide.

How Long Has Polio Virus Been Infecting Humans?



An Egyptian Stele dating back to 1403–1365 BC of a man with polio.

In the Past

Source: Our World in Data



Note both men have the withered leg due to polio.

Present Day

Source: immunize.org

Does the Polio Virus Discriminate?

Simply answer is NO.
Reality is more complicated.

Scientists believe that polio was quite common throughout history, but that people were exposed more often due to poor living conditions and unhygienic environments.

However, when hygiene improved in the 19th century across industrialized countries, there was an unexpected effect on the spread of polio amongst infants: cases of severe poliomyelitis actually increased.



Kim Beazley was hospitalised with polio as a child.



Singer-songwriter **Neil Young** contracted polio during an epidemic in the summer of 1951.



Arthur C. Clarke contracted polio in 1962. His recovery returned him to top form at his favourite sport, **table tennis**.



Toymaker **Margarete Steiff** was paralysed as an infant.

Source: Wikipedia & American Society for Microbiology

The Evolution of Solutions : The Practical Bush Nurse

Sister Elizabeth Kenny, the Australian bush nurse who defied the medical fraternity to develop her own unorthodox methods to treat polio.

Between 1930 and 1986, an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Australian children developed paralytic polio.

During one of Australia's worst outbreaks in the 1930s, Sister Kenny's reputation grew for rehabilitating patients through her controversial technique of using hot baths, medical fomentations, discarding braces and calipers, and encouraging active movement.



Sister Elizabeth Kenny (left) with Rosalind Russell, who portrayed her in a 1946 biographical film.

(Supplied)

Source: ABC News

The Evolution of Solutions: The Iron Lung

In 1928, **Philip Drinker and Louie Shaw** developed the "iron lung" to save the lives of those left paralysed by polio and unable to breathe. Most patients would spend around two weeks in the device, but those left permanently paralysed faced a lifetime of confinement. By 1939, around 1,000 were in use in the US. Today, the iron lung is all but gone, made redundant by vaccinations and modern mechanical ventilators.



The Evolution of Solutions: The Iron Lung_continued

Hospital respiratory ward in Los Angeles, 1952



Fig 3—Iron lungs in Los Angeles County Hospital during polio epidemic in 1950s. Courtesy of Warren E. Collins, Inc.

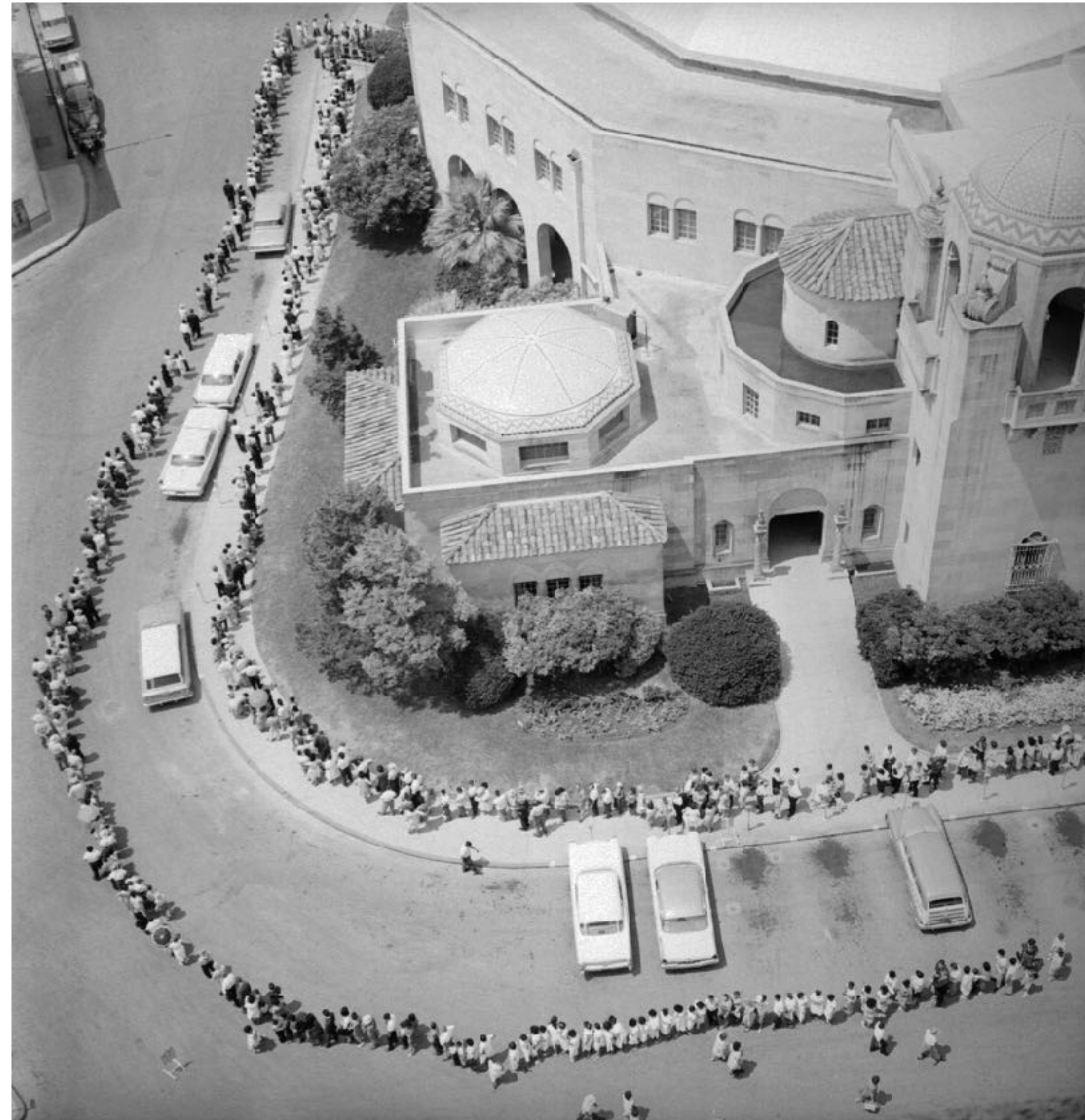
The Evolution of Solutions: The Vaccines



A major breakthrough came in 1952 when **Dr Jonas Salk (L)** began to develop the first effective vaccine against polio. Mass public vaccination programmes followed and had an immediate effect; in the US alone cases fell from 35,000 in 1953 to 5,300 in 1957. In 1961, **Albert Sabin (R)** pioneered the more easily administered oral polio vaccine (OPV).

The Evolution of Solutions: The Vaccines_continued

Aerial view of a crowd awaiting polio immunisation, San Antonio, 1962



Source: Immunize.org

Winning The Fight With A Little Help from Our Friends

The fight to end polio is led by the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), which includes Rotary, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gates Foundation, and governments of the world, with the support of many others around the globe.

GAVI

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi uses innovative finance mechanisms to secure sustainable funding and an adequate supply of quality vaccines. Gavi supports the inclusion of inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) in routine immunization programs and the strengthening of health systems in Gavi-supported countries.

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The Gates Foundation

Date last updated: Aug 04, 2025
Showing 1 - 10 of 776 for "polio"

Date descending ▾

Download results

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PAKISTAN COUNTRY OFFICE

Division	Date	Region served	Committed amount
Global Development	JULY 2025	ASIA	\$2,470,766
Grant topic	Duration (months)	Grantee location	
Polio	6	Islamabad, Pakistan	

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CDC About CDC

 For Everyone
FEBRUARY 12, 2024

AT A GLANCE

- CDC is the nation's leading science-based, data-driven, service organization that protects the public's health.
- CDC puts science into action to help children stay healthy so they can grow and learn; to help families, businesses, and communities fight disease and stay strong; and to protect the public's health.
- Learn more about CDC's mission, priorities, role, and core values.



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UNICEF

UNICEF

UNICEF buys polio vaccine and manages its distribution. The agency spreads the word about the benefits of vaccination to gain community acceptance. On the ground, field workers immunize children with the help of local health workers and volunteers.

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World Health Organisation

World Health Organization

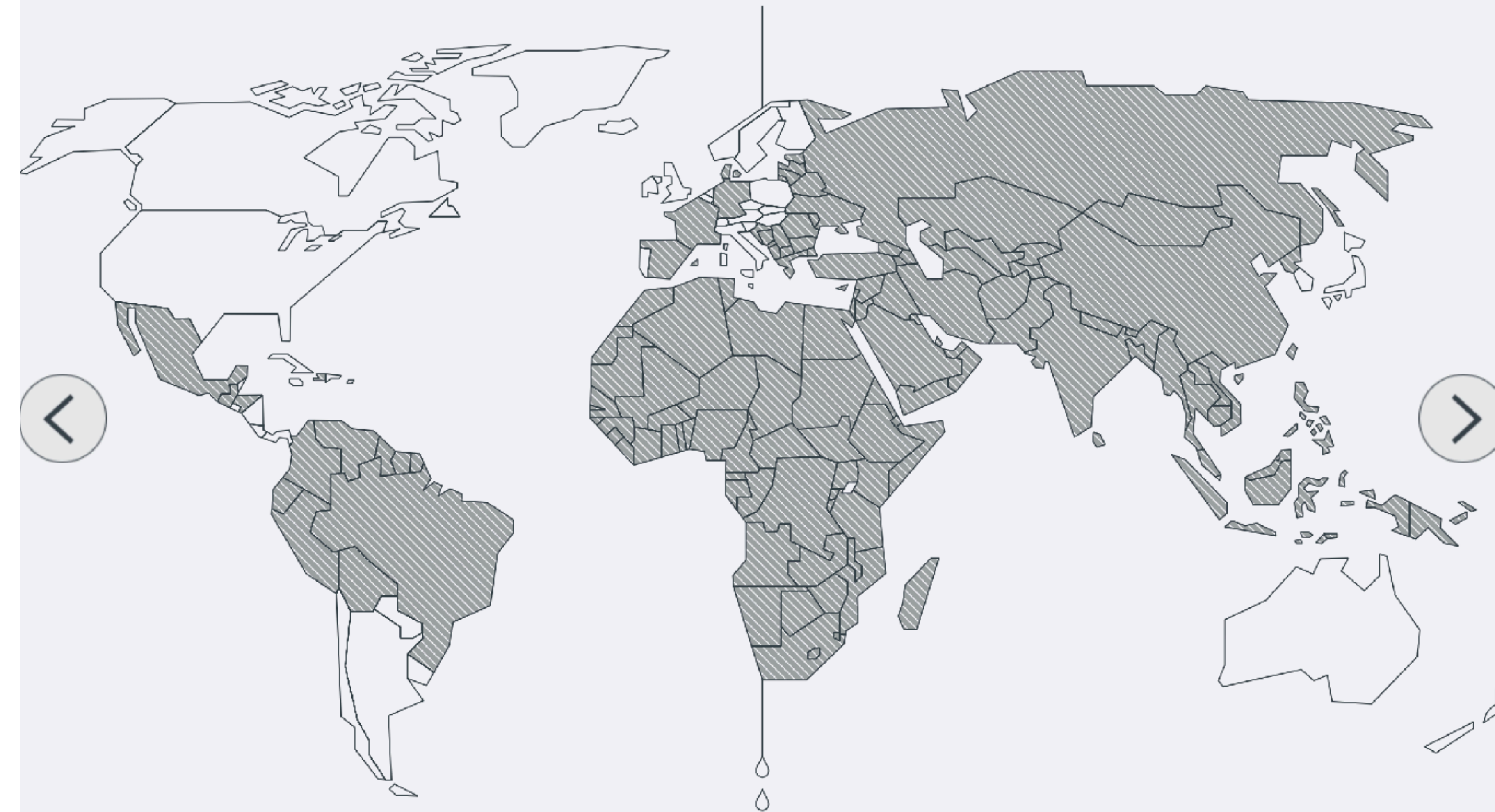
WHO coordinates the management and administration of the GPEI and provides technical and operational support to ministries of health around the world. WHO is responsible for monitoring our progress and strategic planning.



source- endpolio.org & <https://www.who.int>

Progress to End Polio

1988



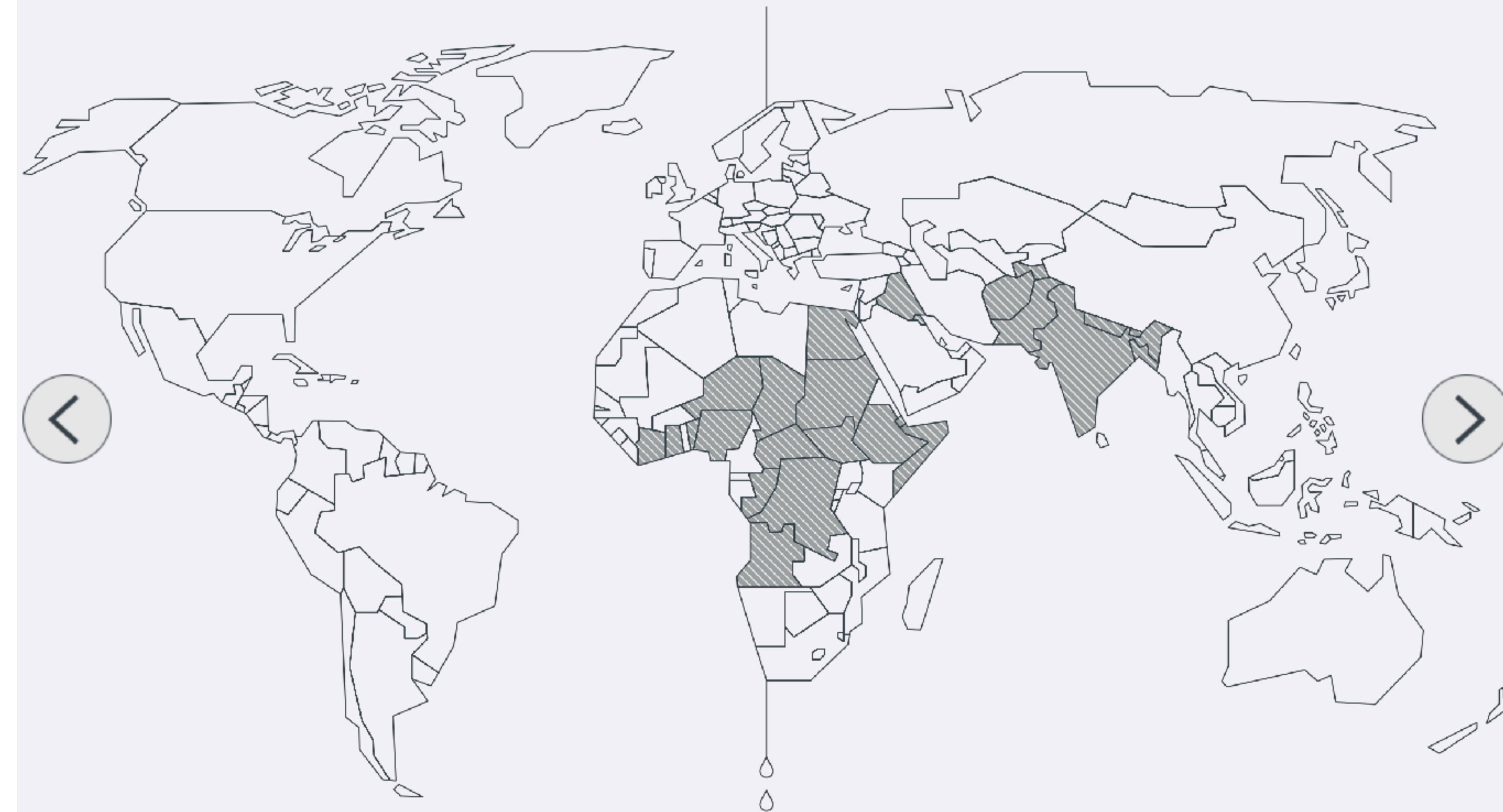
Rotary has been working to eradicate polio for more than 35 years. Our goal of ridding the world of this disease is closer than ever.

As a founding partner of the **Global Polio Eradication Initiative**, we've reduced polio cases by 99.9 percent since our first project to vaccinate children in the Philippines in 1979.

Source. endpolio.org

Progress to End Polio

2000



Rotary members have contributed more than \$2.1 billion and countless volunteer hours to protect nearly 3 billion children in 122 countries from this paralyzing disease. Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by governments to contribute more than \$10 billion to the effort.

Source. endpolio.org

Progress to End Polio

2020 - Present



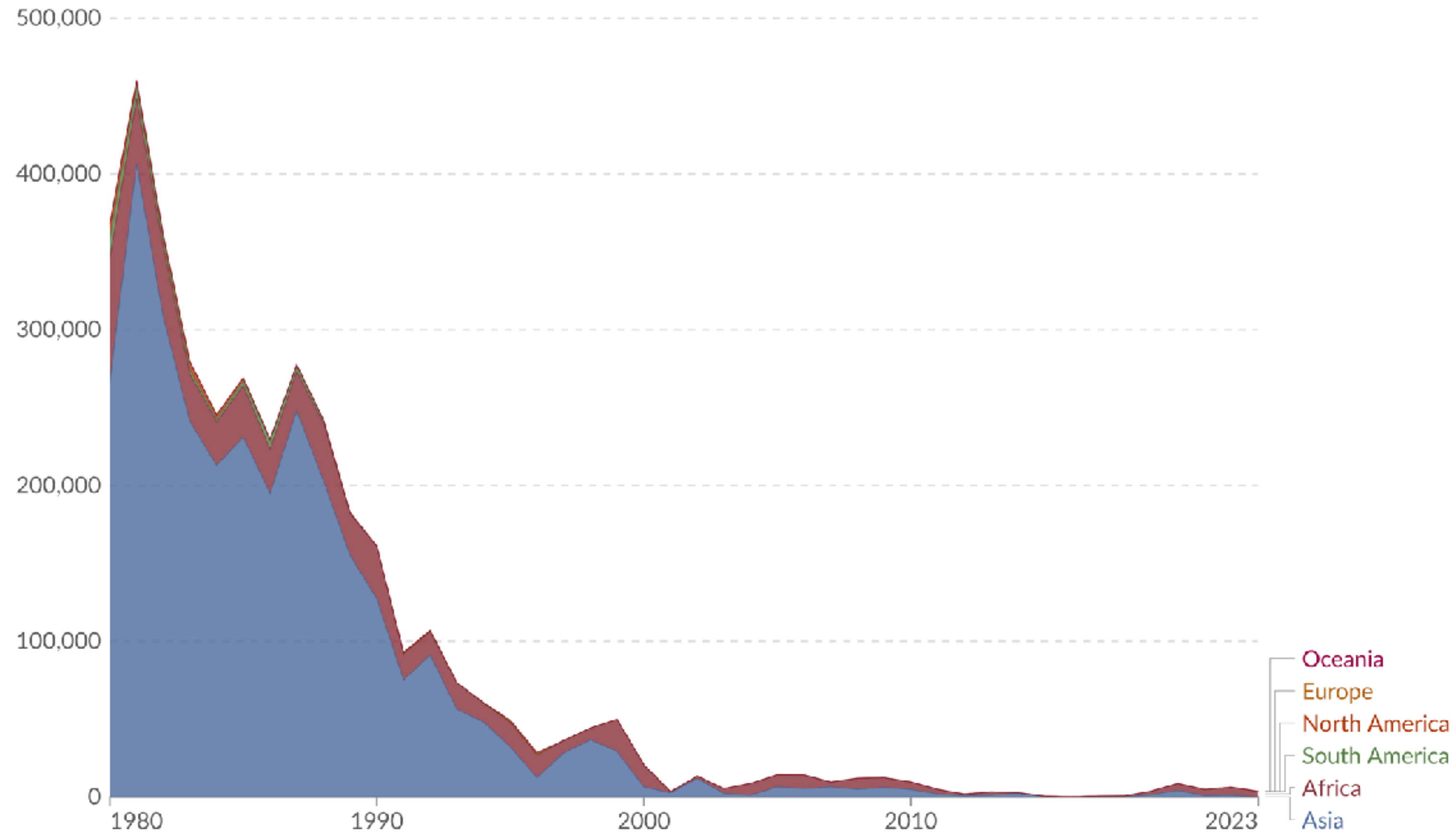
Today, polio remains endemic only in Afghanistan and Pakistan. But it's crucial to continue working to keep other countries polio-free. If all eradication efforts stopped today, within 10 years, polio could paralyze as many as 200,000 children each year.

The Numbers Reality

Paralytic polio: estimated cases by world region, 1980 to 2023

Our World
in Data

Estimates of the total number of paralytic polio¹ cases, due to wild poliovirus² and vaccine-derived polioviruses³.



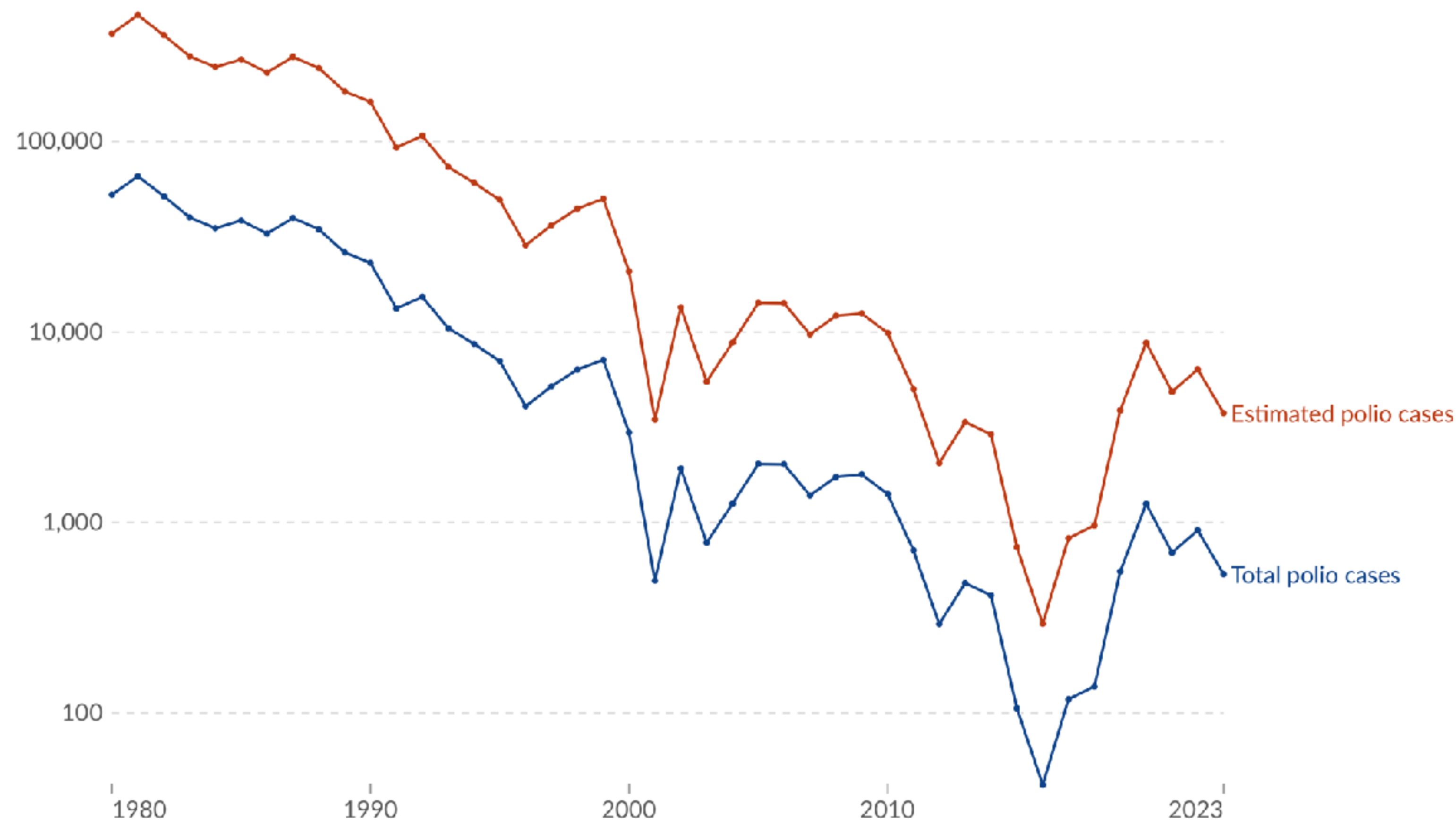
Data source: World Health Organization (2019; 2024); Tebbens et al. (2010)

OurWorldinData.org/polio | CC BY

The Numbers Reality_continued

Reported versus estimated cases of polio, World

Reported cases of polio may be an underestimate of actual cases because people with acute flaccid paralysis may not be detected and tested for the poliovirus in time.



Data source: World Health Organization and Our World in Data adapted from Tebbens et al. (2010)

OurWorldinData.org/polio | CC BY



REFERENCES:

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- CDC - <https://www.cdc.gov/index.html>
- World Health Organization - <https://www.who.int/>

