

POLIO STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

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Change

JUNE 2026



**VISIT OF ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
GENERAL SECRETARY RTN JOHN HEWKO**

**END
POLIO
NOW**

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The Nurse Who Fell Standing: Remembering Anna Ndidi and The Price Of A Polio-Free World

She had done it a thousand times before.

Lean down. Smile gently. Two drops. A child protected.

On Thursday, 6th May 2025, in the town of Umuaka, Nurse Anna Ndidi was doing exactly that, administering the oral polio vaccine to a frightened toddler, when a stray bullet ended her life. She did not see it coming. She did not have time to run. She fell where she stood, in the middle of the sacred, ordinary work she had devoted herself to.

In a single, senseless moment, a mother was taken. A nurse was silenced. And a frontline warrior in humanity's longest-running battle against disease was lost.

The news broke across health corridors and communities in a wave of grief and disbelief. I will not pretend I was unmoved. I sat with it for some time. But grief, however deep, is not the same as remembrance. And I have come to believe, after many years in this work, that remembrance must be deliberate. It must be active. It must sometimes require us to travel at personal cost, to stand before a grieving family, and to say with our presence what words alone cannot carry: we have not forgotten.

A PILGRIMAGE OF GRATITUDE

Months after the headlines had moved on, I rang RtnAlmai Some. I told him: we are going to Umuaka. We are going to see Anna's family. She was to be honoured with the Bob Keegan Polio Eradication Heroes Award, which is one of the most solemn recognitions in the global polio eradication movement, reserved for those who have given their lives in the service of children they would never know. I was not going to let that award be delivered by a letter.

The journey tested us. Almai and I missed our first flight. I will admit there was a moment; brief, but real, where the easier path presented itself. We took the harder one. We rebooked. We pressed on. And when we finally arrived and stood before Anna's family, we were not alone. I had ensured that. We stood with the State Ministry of Health, the State Immunisation Officer, and a representative of the World Health Organization. I did not want Anna's family to see two Rotarians. I wanted them to see the full weight of what their daughter had represented, a movement, a mission, a community of people who understood the price she had paid.

WHAT THE AWARD COULD NOT SAY, BUT DID

When the Bob Keegan Award was placed in the hands of Anna's family, the room fell into a silence I will not forget. I have attended many ceremonies in my years of Rotary service. I have never stood in a silence quite like that one. It could not restore what was lost. It could not undo the morning of 6th May or return a mother to her children. But I

believe it said something that needed to be said, to Anna's family, to the health workers in that room, and to all of us: her life mattered. Her work mattered. She did not die in vain.

I think often about the men and women this movement asks the most of. The nurses. The vaccinators. The community mobilisers who walk into places where the reception is not guaranteed to be warm. We do not put them in our annual reports often enough. We do not speak their names at enough podiums. They are the last mile. They are the reason, when the number of cases falls, that the number actually falls.

THE LAST CHILD

I have given much of my adult life to this cause. I have seen the data improve. I have seen maps clear. I have watched Nigeria earn, and defend, its wild poliovirus-free certification. And I genuinely believe that the end of polio is within our generation's reach. The work that remains is hard, but it is finite. The distance between where we stand and a truly polio-free world is real, and it is narrowing. When that final case is confirmed, the world will celebrate. And it should. But I will be thinking of Anna Ndidi. And of every person like her who carried the vaccine to the last house, in the hardest place, on the most dangerous day, and did not make it home. The victory, when it comes, will belong to them too.

And she gave everything.

*Nurse Anna Ndidi was one of them.
She leaned down. She smiled. She gave two drops.
And she gave everything.*



The Giving That Moves the Numbers: *Nigeria's PolioPlus Districts in Review, 2025–2026*

An appreciation of district fundraising across all six Nigerian Rotary districts — and a call to every club for an even stronger Rotary Year 2026–2027

These numbers represent more than dollars raised. They represent children protected, campaigns sustained, and a movement that refuses to stop. As Rotary Year 2025–2026 draws to a close, the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee is proud to place on record the collective giving of six districts' clubs and Rotarians who chose, year after year, to fund the fight.

Together, Nigeria's six Rotary districts contributed a combined total of \$882,932 to the PolioPlus Fund as at 30 June 2026, spanning direct district contributions and District Designated Fund (DDF) allocations. Built club by club and Rotarian by Rotarian, that figure is a collective statement from a country that understands more than most what it costs to keep polio at zero.

DISTRICT 9141: NIGERIA'S HIGHEST

We can't open the report of this Rotary Year without acknowledging the effort of District 9141. With a final total of \$ 469,001.30 contributed to The Rotary Foundation Polio Fund by the close of the year, the highest PolioPlus giving by any Nigerian district, District 9141 has set a benchmark that will define ambition for every district in the years ahead. Of the district's 189 clubs, 188 contributed. Only one did not. That near-total mobilisation is as remarkable as the sum itself.

The district's top three clubs deserve special recognition: the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Airfield, home club of District Governor Osaretin Woghiren, led all clubs in contributions; the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi placed second; and the Rotary Club of Auchil Central came third. Their generosity, alongside 38 clubs giving \$1,500 or above and four major gifts recorded, built the foundation of this historic total. We salute PAG Happy Iyomi, District PolioPlus Committee Chair, and every Rotarian in District

9141 who made this possible. The bar has been raised. The rest of Nigeria has taken note.

EVERY DISTRICT DESERVES RECOGNITION

District 9127 delivered \$117,769, with 14 clubs at the \$1,500-plus threshold and a strong DDF allocation of \$38,208, the second highest nationally. District 9111 crossed \$106,741, breaking the \$100,000 symbolic mark. District 9112 contributed \$98,785 anchored by nine strong clubs. District 9142 gave \$73,004 with 10 contributing clubs and no non-givers. District 9126 added \$54,865 across its seven-state geography, also recording zero non-giving clubs. Every district gave. Every district advanced the mission.

THE OPEN CHALLENGE: RY 2026–2027

Non-giving clubs remain in several districts. Each is a gap to close, a conversation to have, a case to make. The NNPPC calls on every district to enter Rotary Year 2026–2027 with a written giving plan, club targets agreed before the first DG visit, DDF allocations committed early, and Polio Society membership actively promoted. District 9141 has shown what total club mobilisation looks like. Every district is capable of its own version of that. Nigeria's children deserve nothing less than the full effort of every club in every district.

188/189 clubs contributed

38 clubs gave \$1,500+

4 major gifts recorded

YOUR CHALLENGE · RY 2026–2027

- Set a club PolioPlus target before the first DG visit
- Commit DDF allocation to PolioPlus early
- Recruit Polio Society members (\$1,000+)
- Plan a club-level fundraising event
- Remember: Gates Foundation matches 2:1

Zero zero-giving clubs — every club, every district

A Surveillance System Working –and the campaign Surge to Match

How Nigeria's NEOC is deploying multi-antigen strategy and targeted campaigns to stop cVDPV2 and cVDPV3 transmission in 2026

By Almai Some, Nation Programme Coordinator



Forty cases of cVDPV2 and cVDPV3 reported by Week 25 of 2026. The number sounds alarming. But the National Emergency Operations Centre frames it differently: active surveillance is working. The detections are not a sign that the programme is losing ground, but a sign that it knows where to look. What matters now is the response, and Nigeria's response has been deliberate, tiered, and rapidly deployed.

Zamfara leads with 13 cases; Kebbi follows with 11. Together they account for more than half the national caseload, and they sit at the heart of an axis that has been the programme's most persistent challenge for several years.

BLOCK A: THE RAMADAN STRATEGY

The NEOC's first move was one of the most contextually sensitive in recent campaign history. During the fasting period, a Ramadan Outbreak Response was implemented across the three Bloc A high-burden states (Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara). Instead of relying solely on door-to-door visits, vaccinators offered pluses to children and caregivers in the form of nodules, a gesture that resonated in communities with high non-compliance. Teams received sugar as a palliative during the long fasting hours. Coverage reached 81% for nOPV2 and 83% for bOPV.

Block A's Phase 2 took the strategy further with co-administration of IPV and bOPV alongside nOPV2, a deliberate dual-antigen approach to reduce environmental shedding of the virus and guard against the emergence of isolated strains.

BLOCK B: 12 STATES, DOPV, AND A CVDPV3 RESPONSE

Across twelve Block B states (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Yobe), March/April campaigns targeted selected LGAs and wards using the Digitally-enhanced Oral Polio Vaccine (DOPV) approach. Coverage reached 86% via the Fionet application and 94% via e-tally across these states.

Borno and Yobe faced an additional complexity: the isolation of PV3, the basis for cVDPV3. Both states implemented co-administration of nOPV2 and bOPV to address this emerging threat simultaneously. A Quality Improvement Plan was deployed across states at campaign close, with NEOC members visiting each to assess gaps and sharpen the next round.

THE BIG CATCH-UP: JUNE 2026

June's campaign marked a strategic shift: the Big Catch-Up integrated with the In-Between Round Activities (IBRA) to strengthen routine immunisation alongside the polio response. Fixed and Temporary Fixed Posts offered all RI antigens; house-to-house teams followed, armed with an IEV micro-plan census conducted in February 2026 to identify missed children by settlement. Forty cases located. A system that knows where the virus hides. That is not failure, but a surveillance working exactly as designed.

2026 NATIONAL FIGURES

40

total cVDPV2 & cVDPV3 cases as at Week 25

13

cases in Zamfara (highest nationally)

11

cases in Kebbi State

86%

Block B coverage via Fionet application

94%

Block B coverage via etally

CAMPAIGN BLOCKS

BLOCK A · Ramadan Strategy

Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara nOPV2 + bOPV + fIPV co-admin 81% nOPV2 | 83% bOPV

BLOCK B · 12 States DOPV

Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Yobe Borno&Yobe: nOPV2+bOPV for cVDPV3 response

JUNE · Big Catch-Up + IBRA

Fixed & temporary fixed posts House-to-house follow-up IEV micro-plan from Feb 2026 All RI antigens integrated

From Olumo Rock to Oshodi Market: District 9111 Takes Polio to the People

PAG Busola Satuyi, District PolioPlusChair

On 10 October 2025, Rotarians from Districts 9111 and 9112 stood atop Olumo Rock in Abeokuta and hoisted banners reading "Keep Polio at Zero" and "End Polio Now." The day had begun with a symbolic train ride from Lagos, followed by a horseback procession through the Adire Market. It was advocacy by presence; visible, rooted, and impossible to ignore.

THE MARKET AS FRONTLINE

On 22 October, District Governor Rtn. Prince Henry Akinyele led the district into Oshodi Market for a large-scale End Polio campaign, an 8 a.m. awareness walk through the market's busiest streets, drawing Rotarians, Rotaractors, and traders into a unified column. More than 1,000 participants were reached. Mrs. Adeyemi Funmilayo, Immunization Officer for Oshodi/Isolo LGA, delivered a health education session on vaccination schedules. Mrs. Olaide Ojetokun was decorated as a Rotary Polio Ambassador, a trusted community voice now tasked with keeping the message alive long after the campaign closes.

FOOTBALL, TEDDY BEARS & \$90,000

On 25 October, an inter-zonal football competition between Zones 1, 2, and 3 brought ex-Super Eagle MutiuAdepoju to the pitch, boosting turnout and media attention. Each zone contributed \$500 to the PolioPlus Fund. Behind the scenes, the District introduced a PolioPlus Teddy Bear to be awarded to the top contributor in each club during the DG's visit, sparking healthy competition that drove many Rotarians to honour outstanding pledges. The biggest Teddy Bear of the year went to the Rotary Club of Akowonjo, whose members gave over \$10,000; the District's single largest club contribution. Customised PolioPlus Society pins were presented to all members giving \$100 or more. By December 2025, At the end of the Rotary Year, the district had raised well over \$106,000, as against the \$100,000 target.

Anchoring it all: a PolioPlus Seminar on 13 August, attended by 150+ Rotarians and Rotaractors, featuring expert speakers from WHO and UNICEF and hands-on ODK training for real-time immunisation monitoring. When the November OBR1 campaign came around, District 9111 clubs were ready. Polio stays at zero because people choose to keep it there.

FUNDRAISING · RY 2025-26

\$90,000+

raised by December 2025

Target: \$100,000

TOP CLUB · BIGGEST TEDDY BEAR

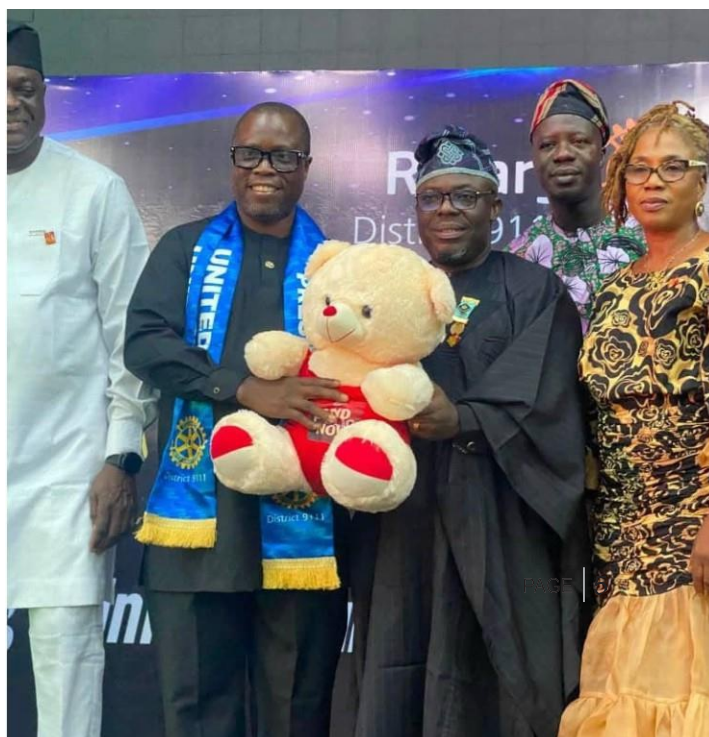
Akowonjo

\$10,000+ given — the District's largest club contribution

ACTIVITIES · JUL-DEC 2025

- **PolioPlus Seminar · 13 Aug**
150+ trained on ODK, RI strategy; WHO & UNICEF speakers
- **Olumo Rock Ascent · 10 Oct**
Joint advocacy with D9112; banners hoisted at the summit
- **Oshodi Market Push · 22 Oct**
1,000+ reached; Polio Ambassador installed
- **Football Cup · 25 Oct**
MutiuAdepoju in attendance; Zone 2 champions
- **OBR1 Immunisation · Nov**
Clubs participated in national outbreak response campaign

Society Pin Customised pin for every member giving \$100+ this Rotary Year.



POLIOSTOP



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From Olumo Rock to Makoko: A Year of Showing Up for District 9112

By PAG Saudat Adenike Abdul-Azeez, DPPC Chairman

Inaugurated on 16 July 2025 at the District Governor's office, District 9112's Polio Plus Committee spent the year proving that polio eradication is won as much in palaces and police stations as it is in clinics. The District Polio Plus Seminar on 10 September drew 324 registered participants; 127 in person, 69 virtual, with former NNPPC Field Supervisor, Mr. Gbenga Olayiwole training attendees on the ODK reporting app that would underpin the year's field activities.

Partnership followed quickly. A 17 September meeting with the Lagos State Primary Healthcare Board, represented by SIO Dr. (Mrs.) Oshodi and IPC Dr. Akinpelu, placed DPPC Chairman PAG Adenike Abdul-Azeez and Lagos State Polio Rep PP Gbenga Olubowale onto the state immunization committee platform. The board's request for raincoats and rain boots to help vaccinators reach waterlogged areas would become a recurring thread through the year.

MAKOKO, OLUMO ROCK & A 136-CHILD WALK

When positive environmental samples surfaced in Lagos Mainland LGA, the committee responded fast by donating pluses ahead of a four-day Outbreak Response, working alongside field teams throughout, then visiting the Baale of Makoko, Jeje Aide, to sensitise his community ahead of October's World Polio Day Walk.

The year's signature project came on 10 October: a joint train ride with District 9111 from Lagos to Abeokuta, town-storming through the city, and the hoisting of the End Polio Now flag atop Olumo Rock by both district governors. Over 300 Rotarians rode the train; more than 500 joined the Abeokuta activities as Ogun-based Rotarians from both districts converged. "It was a glorious day indeed," the committee's report notes.

WALKING THE STREETS, CLOSING THE GAPS

World Polio Day brought walks to both Ogun and Lagos States. In Sagamu, the Akarigbo and paramount ruler of Remo land, Oba (Dr.) Babatunde Adewale Ajayi, flagged off alongside DG Lanre Adedoyin as bikers from Ijebu-Ode and Abeokuta rode

in for the occasion; 136 children were immunized along the route. In Lagos, the walk from Ayetoro Primary Health Center through Makoko Road reached 94 more children. A District-wide DP campaign saw 473 Rotarians change their profile pictures to mark the day.

The committee delivered on its promise to the Healthcare Board too, donating 200 raincoats and 100 rain boots in October, then a second batch of 100 raincoats and 100 rain boots in April 2026. Between the two World Polio Day walks, the district also executed one Outbreak Response and two National Immunisation Days, observed Giving Tuesday with direct committee donations, and in April 2026 ensured every club contributed at least \$10 each, closing the year with zero zero-giving clubs.

WORLD POLIO DAY · 2025

230

children immunized on walk routes (136 Ogun + 94 Lagos)

800+

Rotarians at the Olumo Rock signature project

473

Rotarians joined the World Polio Day DP campaign

YEAR AT A GLANCE

16 Jul Committee inaugurated

10 Sep Seminar · 324 registered

20–23 Sep Lagos Mainland OBR

10 Oct Olumo Rock signature project

18 Oct WPD Walk — Ogun State

24 Oct WPD DP Campaign

25 Oct WPD Walk — Lagos State

Nov–Dec Two NPDs completed

2 Dec Giving Tuesday

Apr 2026 2nd material donation; \$10/club drive



Seven States, One Mission: How District 9126 Took Polio to Every Corner of Southwest Nigeria

By Rasak Saliu, D9126 District PolioPlus Committee Chair

Seven states. Seven World Polio Day celebrations. One district that refused to let the message stay quiet. Between 23 and 25 October, Rotary International District 9126 mobilised simultaneously across Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, and Niger States, road shows rolling through each capital with horse riders, rollerblade artists, jugglers, and branded vehicles cutting through the afternoon traffic, impossible to miss.

This was not a single event replicated seven times. Each state had its own rhythm, its own crowds, its own radio stations primed in the days before with sensitisation sessions by clubs in Kwara, Ekiti, and Ondo. Rotarians taking their arguments directly to the airwaves, urging listeners to vaccinate their children and explaining Rotary's long commitment to a polio-free Nigeria.

District 9126 found an unlikely but powerful advocacy lever in the offices of state governors. Working with the District Governor, the DPPC and State Polio Representatives secured photo sessions with the Governors of Ondo, Niger, and Osun States, where each photographed administering OPV drops directly into the mouths of young children. Those images now stand on billboards at strategic sites across all three states: a quiet but unmistakable message that vaccination is not just a health worker's duty, it is a governor's public commitment. More governors have been engaged and are expected to participate.

On 21 June 2026, a different kind of stage: over 4,000 NYSC Corps members at the Permanent Orientation Camp in Ikare-Akoko, Ondo State were organised into 10 platoons and tasked with creating short dramas and skits on polio, highlighting its causes, its vaccines, the reasons for hesitancy, and the case for immunisation. Cash prizes were awarded across all platoons, with the top three sharing the largest prizes. More than a performance, it was a commission: every corps member who leaves that camp carries the message into their primary assignment community.

"Every corps member who leaves that camp carries the polio message into their primary assignment community."

—Rasak Saliu, DPPC 9126

TRAINING, GIVING & NO CLUB LEFT BEHIND

The District held decentralised seminars at two sites to reduce travel burden: Ilorin on 4 October hosted 85 Rotarians from Kwara, Kogi, Niger and Ekiti; Ibadan on 11 October hosted 125 from Oyo, Osun and Ondo. Both sessions featured the NNPPC, WHO, UNICEF and State PHCDBs, with Rotaractors encouraged to attend alongside their clubs. ODK training ensured members could report immunisation activities directly during National and State Immunisation Days throughout the year.

On fundraising, District 9126 achieved what many districts strive for but few reach: not a single zero-giving club. Every club in the district donated to the Rotary Foundation. The \$46,830 raised in total, is a figure built not on a few large gifts but on the collective commitment of clubs across all seven states. That foundation, broad and stable, is what makes everything else possible.



7 STATES · 7 CELEBRATIONS

- Ondo
- Osun
- Oyo
- Ekiti
- Kwara
- Kogi
- Niger

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Decentralised Seminars · Oct**
210 Rotarians trained across Ilorin & Ibadan; WHO, UNICEF & NNPPC presenters
- **Governor OPV Photo Campaign**
Ondo, Niger & Osun Governors on billboards—more states expected
- **NYSC Drama Partnership · Jun 2026**
4,000+ corps members; 10 platoons; cash prizes for best polio skits
- **Radio Sensitisation**
Clubs in Kwara, Ekiti & Ondo on air ahead of World Polio Day
- **NID/SID Participation**
ODK reporting used across all states during immunisation days



Polio Panel Session at District 9112 Elevate DISCON, District PolioPlus Chair PAG Adenike AbdulAzeez, PDG Dr. Jide Akeredolu, NNPPC Vice Chairman, PDG Yomi Adewunmi, and PDG Dr. Tunji Funsho



At the District 9111 Royal Conference Polio Panel, (From R-L) PDG Joshua Hassan, Rotn Busola Satuyi, DG Akinyele Henry, Dr. Fatiregun Akintola, WHO State Coordinator and PDG Remi Bello



The Polio Aerobics Session at the District 9111 Royal Conference



The Polio Aerobics Session at the District 9112 Conference



The NNPPC team led by PDG Joshua Hassan paid a heartfelt condolence visit and presented an award to the family of late Bello Umar, a dedicated team recorder who lost his life in 2024 while returning from polio campaign duties in Silame LGA, Sokoto State.



NNPPC, in collaboration with its partners, participated in the World Immunization Week Awareness Walk in Kaduna State



DG Funkeakpo Batife of District 9126 led a polio sensitization session at the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Ikare-Akoko, Ondo State, engaging corps members on the importance of immunization and Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio.



NNPPC Vice Chair South East PDG Grace Okaro, immunizing a child during World Immunization Week at Abia State Primary Healthcare Development Agency.



To mark World Immunization Week, DG Kelechi Anyanwu immunizing a child to mark World Immunization Week.



World Vaccination Week celebration at PHC Kwata Galadima Ward, Gusau LGA, Zamfara State



District 9112 in collaboration with Rotary Club of Ikoyi Metro donate raincoats and boots to aid immunization activities during rain season

DISTRICT 9141: Leading Nigeria's PolioPlus Legacy

Special Report by PAG Happy Iyomi

RotaryYear 2025–2026 will be remembered as a defining chapter in the history of District 9141. Across the states of Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers, Rotarians and Rotaractors united behind a common purpose, which is to ensure that the world remains steadfast in its commitment to eradicate polio. What followed was a year marked by advocacy, partnership, awareness, and unprecedented generosity.

Our journey began with a commitment to make polio everyone's business. Through coordinated efforts by our State Representatives and clubs, District 9141 amplified awareness across communities, culminating in vibrant World Polio Day celebrations that featured walks, rallies, media engagements, and public enlightenment campaigns carrying a singular message: "There will be no rest until polio is completely eradicated from the face of the earth."

DISTRICT 9141: A HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT

Recognizing that knowledge drives action, the District, in collaboration with the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC), convened a comprehensive PolioPlus Seminar in Yenagoa on 17 October 2025. Rotarians and Rotaractors were equipped with practical skills in advocacy, vaccination support, fundraising, and ODK Collect reporting that strengthened our capacity to serve as effective ambassadors in the fight against polio.

District 9141 also demonstrated that visibility matters. From the installation of an "End Polio Now" banner at Port Harcourt International Airport by the Rotary Club of Rebisi Kingdom to the introduction of a district-wide branded "End Polio Now T-shirt" worn during awareness walks, vaccination exercises, and fundraising events, our message reached communities far beyond Rotary circles. Perhaps the most enduring symbol of commitment was the commissioning of Africa's largest End Polio Now Monument at Rumuomasi Roundabout, Port Harcourt, a landmark that stands not only as a

monument of hope but as a testament to Rotary's unwavering resolve to end polio in our lifetime.

Yet, the true story of District 9141 is written in the collective generosity of its members. As at 30 June 2026, District 9141 contributed an unprecedented USD

\$469,001.30 to The Rotary Foundation Polio Fund, the highest PolioPlus contribution recorded by a Nigerian Rotary district for the year. Of the District's 189 clubs, 188 made contributions, with 38 clubs surpassing the \$1,500 giving threshold and four major gifts recorded during the Rotary Year.

Special recognition is extended to the top three contributing clubs:

1st — Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Airfield (home club of District Governor Osaretin Woghiren)

2nd — Rotary Club of Trans Amadi

3rd — Rotary Club of Auch Central

Their leadership exemplifies what is possible when Rotary clubs commit wholeheartedly to the Polio Plus mission. District 9141's accomplishments this year are not isolated achievements. They are the culmination of countless hours spent advocating, educating, vaccinating, mobilizing, and giving. They reflect the dedication of every Rotarian who believes that no child should ever suffer from a vaccine-preventable disease.

THE CALL FOR ROTARY YEAR 2026–2027

As we look ahead to Rotary Year 2026–2027, our resolve remains stronger than ever. We will continue to advocate, partner, educate, and invest in a polio-free future, because until the world is permanently certified free of polio, our work is not done.

DISTRICT 9141 POLIOPUS COMMITTEE

"Service Above Self, Until Polio is History"

Zamfara's Hardest Miles: Fighting Polio Where the System is Tested Most

By Shehu Dahiru, Field Coordinator · Zamfara State



Zamfara State holds a distinction no one wanted. From January to 22 June 2026, the state recorded 13 cVDPV2 cases, the highest in Nigeria. In a country already carrying 28% of the global cVDPV2 burden, Zamfara's numbers represent the sharpest edge of a challenge that is simultaneously epidemiological, operational, and social.

The state has been cleared of wild poliovirus. That achievement, real as it is, has not made the work easier. Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus does not spread through weakness in the vaccine itself, but through gaps in coverage, through communities that are missed, and through a system that is, in places, being gamed rather than followed.

THE DATA PROBLEM

The most troubling challenge in Zamfara is not insecurity — it is data falsification. Nationally, studies suggest that fake finger-marking occurs in up to 13% of cases: children recorded as vaccinated without receiving a single drop. In a state where every child counts, every false entry erases real risk. We are intensifying the deployment of independent monitors and the systematic identification of eligible children to close this gap.

Political interference in team selection compounds the problem, where community associates are placed over qualified vaccinators, supervision diluted, accountability weakened. We are working to make traditional rulers the final arbiters of vaccinator selection, positioning them as the community's guarantee of quality, not just its ceremonial endorsement.

"The problem is not the vaccine. The problem is whether the vaccine is reaching the child, and whether anyone is honestly recording that it did."
- Shehu Dahiru, Field Coordinator, Zamfara State

3,000 REFUSALS AND THE HESITANCY FRONTIER
UNICEF reported approximately 3,000 household refusals across Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi during the last campaign. What is striking is where the resistance is sharpest: not only in remote rural communities, but increasingly in urban gated estates and among educated, affluent households. The rumours arrive via social media faster than our teams can arrive at doors.

Our response has three pillars: the Sultan Foundation and local religious partners for community trust; the "Fathers for Good Health" initiative targeting male household decision-makers; and Directly Observed House-to-House Administration, requiring children to be physically brought outside for the dose, removing the possibility of misreporting.

SECURITY, DISTANCE & THE 1.8 MILLION TARGET

Our target for Zamfara is 1.8 million children. A substantial proportion of settlements remain inaccessible due to banditry and insurgency. We have developed a three-tier settlement risk categorisation; inaccessible, partially accessible, accessible — and use fixed-post outreach where teams cannot safely enter. The recent integrated campaign covering Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara together reached over 5.3 million children. But for Zamfara's hardest wards, the work of reaching the last child has no shortcut.

ZAMFARA · 2026 FIGURES

13

cVDPV2 cases Jan-Jun 2026 (highest in Nigeria)

5.3M

children reached in the integrated Zamfara/Sokoto/Kebbi campaign

1.8M

Zamfara target for vaccination across 14 LGAs

3,000

household refusals across Zamfara, Sokoto&Kebbi

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Data falsification**
Fake finger-marking in up to 13% of cases nationally
- **Political interference**
Community associates over qualified vaccinators
- **Urban hesitancy**
Gated estates and educated households increasingly resistant
- **Insecurity**
Banditry limits access to key settlement clusters
- **Cold chain gaps**
Remote wards face logistical delays in deployment

RESPONSE STRATEGIES

- Independent monitors to combat falsification
 - Traditional rulers as vaccinator selection arbiters
 - Sultan Foundation community engagement
 - "Fathers for Good Health" household engagement
 - Directly Observed Administration — public dosing
- 3-tier settlement risk categorisation

The Last Five Houses –in GidanBawan Allah Village

How one field coordinator, a village imam's brother, and five stubborn households got to 17/17

Field Coordinator – Hauwa Muhammad Auwal, Sokoto

Hauwa Muhammad Auwal doesn't carry a megaphone when she arrives in a village. She carries a register, a cooler box with tally sheets, and a quiet kind of resolve. As the Rotary State Field Coordinator for Sokoto State, her job during polio supportive supervision isn't to make speeches. It's to make sure no child is missed.

It was a Tuesday in GidanBawan Allah Village. The immunisation team had been there since 8am, but by 11am the tally sheet showed a gap: 17 children under five, and only 12 marked vaccinated. Five houses at the far edge of the village, near the dry-season stream, were still red on the map. "We've called them three times," the Ward Focal Person told Hauwa. "They say their children are fine. They don't need drops."

NOT TO ARGUE. TO LISTEN.

Hauwa tucked her Rotary vest over her hijab and asked for a volunteer from the village health committee. House by house, she didn't start with polio. She started with names. She asked after the grandmother's arthritis. She admired a toddler's new sandals. She sat on a mat while the mothers explained their worries: fear of side effects, rumours from last season, the fact that the last team had come when the fathers were on the farm. She pulled out the Rotary flipchart of pictures, not long words, explaining how the oral polio vaccine works: two drops, no injection, no sickness. She showed them the cold-chain monitor on the vaccine carrier. "If it was not safe, I wouldn't give it to my own nieces," she said.

Then she introduced Malam Yusuf, the village imam's younger brother, who had come along at her request. He didn't preach. He reminded the mothers that protecting children is protecting the community's future. "The Prophet taught us to tie the camel and trust Allah," he said with a smile. "Vaccination is tying the camel."

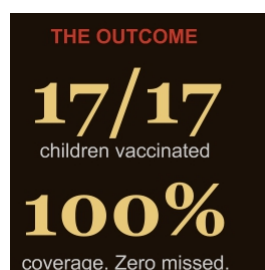
"The Prophet taught us to tie the camel and trust Allah. Vaccination is tying the camel."

— MALAM YUSUF, VILLAGE IMAM'S BROTHER, GIDAN BAWAN ALLAH



By 1:30pm, all five houses had opened their doors. The vaccinator gave two drops to each of the five missing children. Hauwa marked them complete on the tally sheet herself, then double-checked the team's reporting form, the vaccine vial monitor, and the documentation. Before leaving, she sat with the mothers' group under the neem tree and asked them to become Polio Champions, to tell neighbours when the next round comes, and to call her directly if any team skips a house.

On the ride back to Sokoto Town, the Ward Focal Person said: "Last time we left five children unreached. Today, zero." Hauwa smiled and logged it: GidanBawan Allah Village, Sokoto LGA, 17/17 children vaccinated. 100% coverage. Community trust reinforced. In Sokoto State, she makes sure the last house never stays red on the map.



THE APPROACH

- **Listen first**
Start with names, not the vaccine
- **Flipchart, not lectures**
Pictures, simple language, cold-chain proof
- **Community voices**
Bring a trusted local voice—here, the imam's brother
- **Stay to the end**
Double-check tally, vial monitors, reporting form
- **Commission champions**
Leave mothers' groups as future round advocates



Service Above Self, One Vaccine at a Time: Rotary's National Commemoration of World Immunization Week 2026

By Olaide Stephen Onipede, Field Coordinator (South-West) · Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee

Every April, the World Health Organization's World Immunization Week invites the global health community to pause and ask a deceptively simple question: are we reaching every child? For Rotary International and the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee, the answer is never simply a statistic. It is a commitment renewed; in clinics, in communities, and in the conversations that happen when a health worker and a caregiver finally sit in the same room.

In commemoration of World Immunization Week 2026, the Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee coordinated advocacy visits to primary health centres across the country, with Rotary field coordinators and club members joining PHC staff to reinforce the message that vaccines are safe, free, and life-saving. Across multiple states, the same scene repeated itself with quiet power: Rotarians walking into the busiest rooms in the Nigerian health system, sitting with caregivers, and making the case for immunization not from a distance, but face to face.

WHAT ROTARY BROUGHT TO THE PHC

The visits were structured around a core health talk: the importance of timely childhood immunization, the safety of approved vaccines, and the critical need to complete vaccination schedules rather than stopping at the first or second dose. These are not new messages. But they are messages that need to be delivered consistently, by trusted voices, in places where caregivers are already present and already thinking about their children's health.

Rotary Club members at each site reinforced their organisation's long-standing commitment to child health; not in abstract terms, but by encouraging families directly to take up the free immunization services available to them. Officers-in-Charge and Assistant Immunization Officers at the facilities participated actively, fielding caregiver questions on vaccine schedules and side effects with the kind of clinical authority that only the health facility itself can provide. The partnership was deliberate: Rotary brought the advocacy; the PHC staff provided the answers.

CAREGIVERS WHO CAME READY TO ASK

What distinguished this year's commemoration was the quality of community engagement observed at the sessions. Caregivers did not sit passively through the health talks. They asked about fever following

vaccination. They asked whether oral polio drops were safe for newborns. They asked what to do if a scheduled dose was missed. These are the questions of parents who are paying attention, and the fact that they were asking them inside a health facility, to people qualified to answer, is precisely what the visits were designed to produce.

PHC staff, for their part, welcomed the partnership. The presence of Rotary members proved a recognisable, trusted, consistent advocates for child health. Also, it added a community layer to what is often perceived as a purely clinical interaction. The collaboration strengthened not only the day's messaging, but the longer-term relationship between each PHC and the Rotary network in its community.

THE COMMITMENT THAT OUTLASTS THE WEEK

World Immunization Week lasts seven days. The work it represents does not. For Rotary and the NNPPC, these visits are one expression of a partnership that spans campaigns, conferences, field supervision, and the quiet, unglamorous effort of following up on children who missed a dose. The aim is coverage: full, documented, verifiable immunization of every eligible child. The PHC is where that coverage is earned. Rotary will keep showing up.

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

April 2026

Primary Health Centres Across Nigeria

Rotary Club Members · NNPPC Field Coordinators · PHC Staff

WHAT WAS DELIVERED

Health talks

Timely immunization, vaccine safety, schedule completion
— delivered at PHC waiting areas

Caregiver Q&A

OICs and Assistant Immunization Officers answered live questions on side effects and missed doses

Community messaging

Life-saving benefits of vaccines; free services promoted to all attendees

Rotary commitment

Club members publicly reaffirmed child health as a Rotary priority

Partnership built

PHCs, NNPPC Field Coordinators & Rotary Clubs aligned for ongoing engagement

KEY MESSAGE TO CAREGIVERS

Vaccines are free. Schedules exist for a reason. Every missed dose leaves a gap in your child's protection. Come early, complete the schedule, and ask your questions at the clinic —the answers are already there.

Rotary's Top Leadership: Walks Through Lagos Polio House

John Hewko's visit reaffirms a global organisation's commitment to a Nigerian fight that is far from over

John Hewko, General Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, paid an advocacy visit to the Lagos Polio House, accompanied by his wife. The visit placed one of the organisation's most senior global figures inside the very building where Nigeria's polio eradication effort is coordinated day to day, a deliberate signal that the fight against the virus remains a priority at every level of Rotary's leadership.

Rtn Hewko and his wife were received by members of the Nigeria National PolioPlus Committee (NNPPC) and staff of the Lagos Office, who briefed them on the current state of the country's eradication campaigns, ongoing surveillance efforts, and the partnerships sustaining routine immunisation across the country's most at-risk states.

A visit from the very top of Rotary's global structure to a single field office sends a message that travels far beyond the walls of one building.

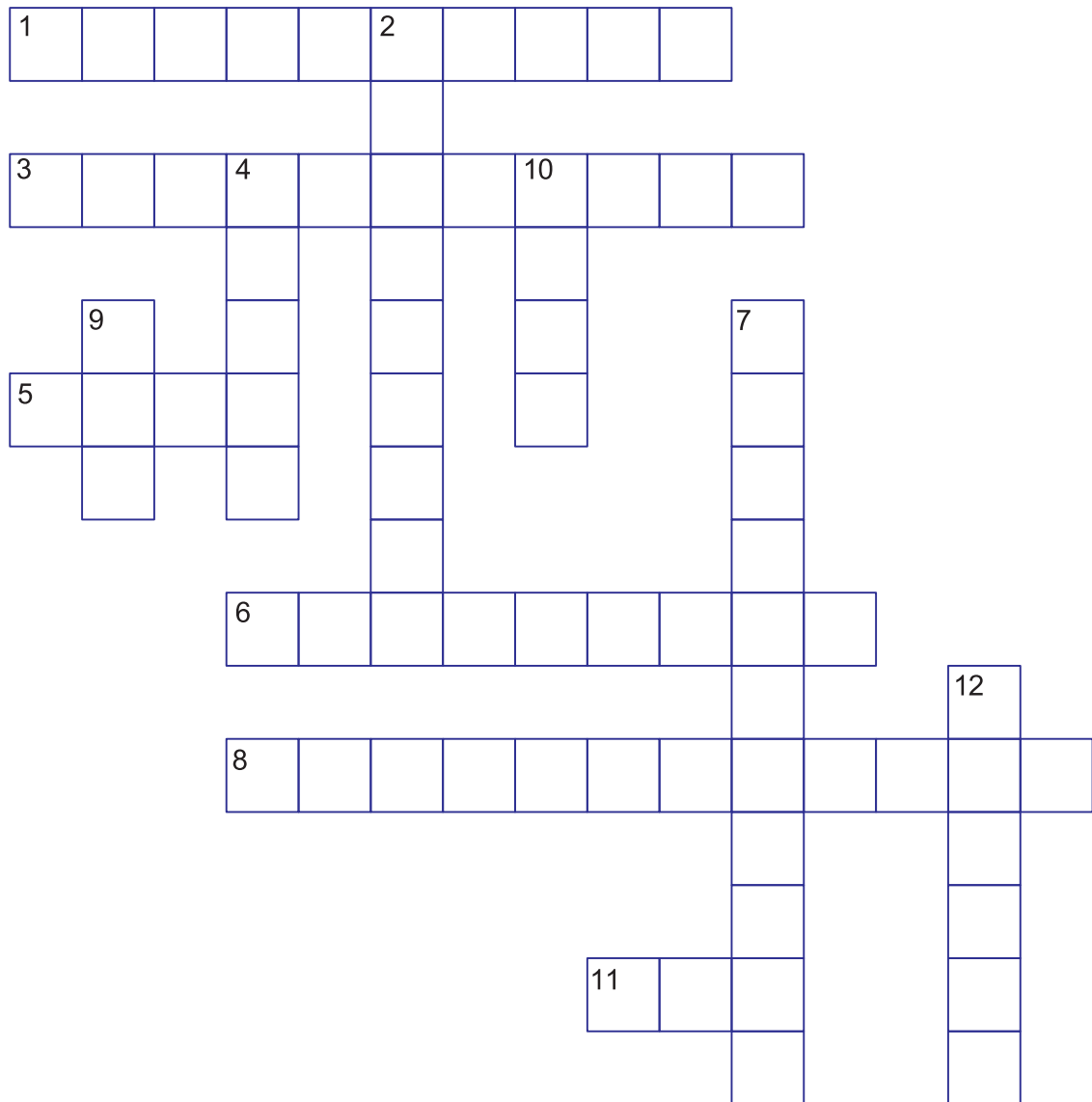
For the NNPPC and the Lagos Office staff, the visit was both recognition and reaffirmation. Nigeria has carried one of the heaviest burdens in the global polio fight; from its years as one of the last wild poliovirus-endemic countries, through certification as wild poliovirus-free in 2020, to its current battle against circulating Vaccine-Derived Poliovirus Type 2. Each of these chapters has depended on Rotary's sustained partnership with WHO, UNICEF,

and Nigeria's federal and state health authorities.

That a leader of Rtn Hewko's stature would route his itinerary through Lagos Polio House underscores something the eradication community has long understood: this fight is not won by headquarters alone. It is won, and sustained, in the offices, clinics, and field stations where committed people keep the work moving; one campaign, one child, one drop at a time.



POLIO CROSSWORD PUZZLE



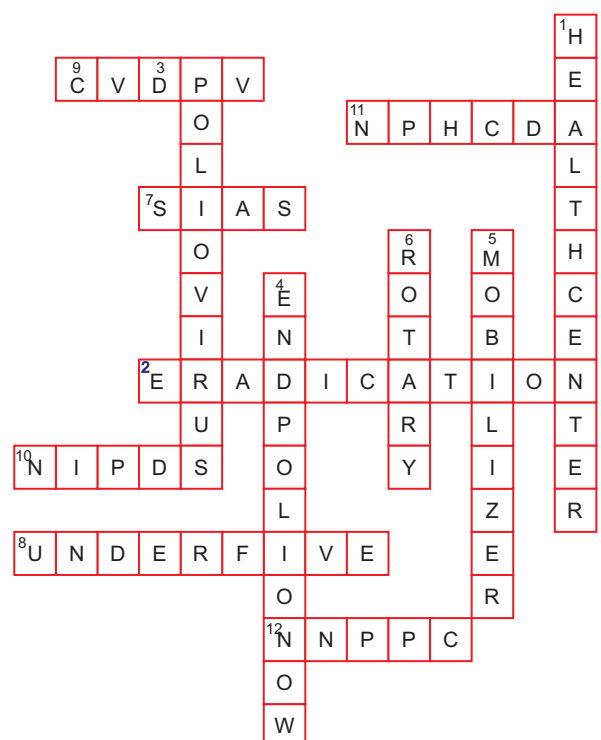
Down:

2. A person who gives time to support immunization activities without pay.
4. The disease Rotary is working to eradicate worldwide.
7. The method that protects children against polio.
9. The injectable vaccine that provides protection against polio.
10. The oral vaccine used to prevent polio.
12. The organization founded in 1905 that leads the fight against polio

Across:

1. The virus that causes poliomyelitis.
3. Rotary's global campaign to eliminate polio.
5. The worldwide initiative coordinating polio eradication efforts.
6. A condition that polio can cause in severe cases.
8. Every child should receive this to stay protected from polio.
11. The health agency of the United Nations partnering in polio eradication.

ANSWER FOR LAST EDITION



POLIO STOP

SO THEY CAN WALK

The Story of Polio
Eradication in Nigeria
The Rotary Perspective



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SO THEY CAN WALK

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The Rotary Perspective

by
CBN Ogbogbo | Rotary 

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