

## Reaching the target for global polio eradication – almost there!

Following the eradication of smallpox in 1980, a partnership was established in 1988 to launch the global polio eradication campaign spearheaded by the World Health Organization, Rotary International, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and UNICEF. The success of the campaign is illustrated by the following facts:

- The number of children paralyzed globally by wild poliovirus was reduced by over 80% from 2979 in

2000 to 480 in 2001.

- The number of polio-endemic countries has diminished from 125 to 10 (Afghanistan, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and Sudan).
- Five countries with high-intensity poliovirus transmission (Afghanistan, India, Niger, Nigeria and Pakistan) accounted for more than 85% of new polio cases in 2001.

### LEARNING POINTS

The 2005 global polio eradication target is in sight; however, several challenges remain:

- Adequate polio vaccination worldwide must be maintained until all children are protected.
- The risk of polio exists even in countries that have been polio-free for several years.
- Because cases of wild poliovirus have been documented in Canada as recently as 1996, CPSP surveillance of acute flaccid paralysis must continue to validate our polio-free status.
- Because of the threat of importation, vigilance is

essential because there is no cure for polio; it can only be prevented.

- An additional US\$270 million should be invested because the savings of polio eradication are potentially as high as US\$1.5 billion/year, funds that could be used to address other public health priorities <<http://www.polioeradication.org>> (version current at October 30, 2002).

With the eradication of polio in 2005, a similar public and/or private worldwide partnership is needed to eradicate other infectious diseases such as measles, AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

*The Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program (CPSP) is a joint project of the Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada's Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control that undertakes the surveillance of rare diseases and conditions in children. For more information visit our Web site at <[www.cps.ca/english/cpsp](http://www.cps.ca/english/cpsp)> or <[www.cps.ca/francais/pcsp](http://www.cps.ca/francais/pcsp)>.*