

Philanthropists pledge \$4bn for polio eradication

29 April 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau



Singapore: The Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) presented a first-of-its-kind comprehensive six-year plan, titled 'Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan 2013-18' to eradicate all types of polio disease, including both wild poliovirus and vaccine-derived cases, at the Global Vaccine Summit in Abu Dhabi.

Global leaders and individual philanthropists pledged close to three-quarters of the plan's projected \$5.5 billion, over six years. They also called upon additional donors to commit up front, the additional \$1.5 billion that was needed to ensure eradication.

The new plan capitalizes on the fact that now is best opportunity to eradicate polio, since the number of children paralyzed by the disease are at the lowest level ever, with only 223 cases reported in 2012 and only 19 in 2013. The urgency is linked to the tremendous advances made in 2012 and the narrow window of opportunity to seize on the progress and stop all poliovirus transmission before polio-free countries become re-infected.

Dr Margaret Chan, director general, World Health Organization (WHO), said that, "After millennia battling polio, this plan puts us within sight of the endgame. We have new knowledge about the polioviruses, new technologies and new tactics to reach the most vulnerable communities. The extensive experience, infrastructure and knowledge gained from ending polio can help us reach all children and all communities with essential health services."

The plan was developed by the GPEI in extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. The plan incorporates the lessons learned from India's success in becoming polio-free during early 2012 and cutting-edge knowledge about the risk of circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses. It also complements the tailored Emergency Action Plans that are being implemented since last year in the remaining polio-endemic countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria and comprises of approaches to vaccinate children in insecure areas.