

The Rotary Foundation's first African trustee chair takes office

Date: 07-02-2008 02:18 PM CET

Category: [Politics, Law & Society](#)

Press release from: [Rotary International](#)



EVANSTON, Ill. USA (July 1, 2008) -- Jonathan B. Majiyagbe, a Nigerian lawyer who took office on July 1 as chair of The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International, will devote his one-year term to fighting polio in its last remaining strongholds – which include his homeland.

“I am honored to lead the Rotary Foundation this year,” said Majiyagbe. “It is abundantly clear to all of us how endless is the need for help in our world, how limitless the opportunities for service. Poverty, disease, ignorance, and hatred cast dark shadows, and The Rotary Foundation shines a light into these dark corners, bringing life, inspiration, and hope.”

As the first person of African origin to lead The Rotary Foundation, Majiyagbe's chairmanship is historic. He was also Rotary's first president of African origin in 2003-04.

Rotary International is a humanitarian organization with more than 1.2 million members in 200 countries and regions. The Rotary Foundation is the organization's charitable arm, supporting an array of humanitarian and educational projects carried out by Rotary clubs worldwide. As chair, Majiyagbe will lead the Foundation's 15-member Board of Trustees.

Rotary made polio eradication its top philanthropic goal in 1985. As the lead private sector contributor and volunteer arm of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative -- a public/private partnership spearheaded by World Health Organization (WHO), Rotary International, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF -- Rotary has contributed US\$ 700 million to ending polio, a figure that will rise to \$850 million by the time polio is eradicated. Rotary has contributed \$55.5 million toward polio eradication in Nigeria.

To date, more than two billion children have been immunized against the paralyzing and sometimes deadly poliovirus. Tremendous progress has been made in the last two decades, as polio cases have declined by 99 percent. Yet, challenges remain in the four polio-endemic countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and particularly Nigeria, where a new outbreak of wild poliovirus threatens to spread to neighboring countries.

According to WHO Director-General Margaret Chan, 80 percent of children paralyzed by type 1 poliovirus are in Nigeria.

“In some parts of the country, more than a quarter of the children have never been vaccinated,” said Chan. “This is an operational problem, and it can be solved. I am making polio eradication the Organization's top operational priority on a most urgent, if not an emergency basis. We are moving people and reallocating resources across the organization in order to finish the job.”

Recognizing the risk this outbreak poses to the rest of the world, intensified vaccination activities are planned throughout July

and August.

Because the challenges to halting the spread of polio in Nigeria are largely operational, Majiyagbe is confident that polio eradication can be achieved. During his term, Majiyagbe will lead Rotary's new effort to raise an additional \$100 million to match a challenge grant in the same amount awarded to Rotary by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. All of the resulting \$200 million will support polio eradication activities.

“The massive efforts being launched in Nigeria are a testament to the commitment of getting polio eradication back on track and ending this terrible disease,” said Majiyagbe. “With WHO's new operational emphasis on polio eradication and Rotary's latest challenge to raise \$100 million more toward the cause, our goal of a polio-free world is within sight.”

A Rotary member since 1967, Majiyagbe belongs to the Rotary Club of Kano. He is Chairman of Rotary's African Regional PolioPlus Committee and a member of the International PolioPlus Committee. Majiyagbe is also a member of the Honourable Body of Benchers, and a former member of the interim judicial service committee for Kano State, a past vice president of the Nigerian Bar Association and a member of the International Bar Association. He has been chancellor of the Anglican Diocese of Kano and has served as the Chairman of the Nigerian Red Cross Society, Kano Branch.

Rotary International

1560 Sherman Ave., Evanston, IL 60201, USA

Sandra Prufer, Media Relations Europe/Africa

+ 1 847 866 3208 sandra.prufer@rotary.org

Founded in Chicago in 1905, Rotary is a worldwide organization of business and professional leaders who provide humanitarian service and help to build goodwill and peace in the world. Rotary's global membership is approximately 1.2 million men and women who belong to more than 32,000 Rotary clubs in more than 200 countries and geographical areas.

[You can find this press release here](#)