

Going Around to End Polio Now

Kerala is the State in the Malabar Coast of south west India. It has the highest human development index in India. The State boasts of 99 percent literacy rate and has banking facility in every village.

Traditionally, education and health accounted for the greatest shares of the state government's expenditure. Though poor by standards of per capita income, industrialisation or agricultural production, the Indian state of Kerala has shown that these constraints need not hinder the development of social sectors. This 'health development' is generally attributed to inter-sectoral factors such as the spread of education, political awareness, development of road networks, transportation and social movements. Investment in education and health infrastructure has been a consistent policy of all elected governments in Kerala, whatever their political leaning. The tradition of government support for health development has been a catalyst for the advancement of health care in the state.

No wonder, the Government of Kerala and the Rotarians have taken enormous pains to eradicate polio in the state. The last case of polio was detected in Kerala in the year 2000. It was in the Malapuram district and the entire government and Rotary machinery swung into action immediately. Kerala has been polio-free from that year onwards. However, the agencies concerned have not slackened their vigil.

Rotarians in Kerala, especially from Kochi, were excited to learn that during the year 2011, there has been only one case of polio in India. They



Rallyist ready to go around India.

decided that this was the time to spread the message throughout the country about the need to support Rotary's initiatives that seems to be paying dividend now. In their zeal to muster support to end polio, a dedicated group of Rotarians led by Rtn. K Georgekutty have embarked on a 19,500 km road travel in two cars which will go all around India with the message to end polio now. The team will cover 23 Rotary Districts in India before it returns to Kochi.

Flagging off the rally on December 11, 2011, I was able to see the enthusiasm of the Rotarians in Kochi. It was a Sunday morning and people were practicing their Christmas corals. The day was also an auspicious day for weddings. The previous night, the lunar eclipse had its own share of heavenly splendor. The determination to eclipse polio forever from India was writ large in the face of every team member who was undertaking the grueling journey.

Seeing the well attended function at the venue it was evident that Rotarians were determined to make India polio-free during 2012. They had lined up meetings with Rotary clubs *en route* and have plans to meet the top political leaders in New Delhi when the cars reach there.

Kochi was the centre of Indian spice trade for many centuries. The car rally by the magnificent men in the driving machines does add spice to Rotary's campaign to End Polio Now.



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