

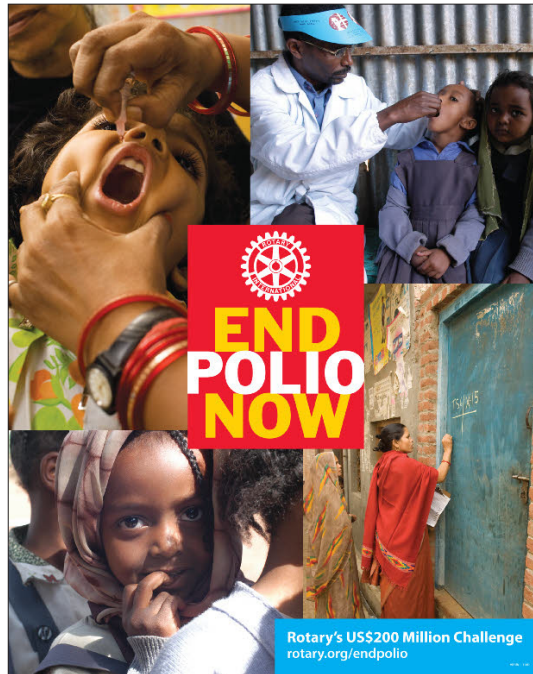
# On the Right Path

The India Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) was established in May 1999 as a group of national and international experts on polio eradication, who would monitor progress toward polio eradication in India, provide technical advice to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, on immunisation and surveillance activities for polio eradication and monitor the quality of immunisation activities, AFP surveillance and laboratory performance. The group has been constituted as a result of the collaboration between the Government of India and WHO.

The IEAG meets on a periodic basis, the frequency being determined by the status of polio eradication in India. Meetings occur more frequently when urgent decisions must be made regarding matters such as acceleration of supplementary immunisation activities, modifications in surveillance policies, or changing approaches to programme communications and social mobilisation.

The IEAG meeting which took place in New Delhi on July 13 and 14, 2011, discussed the progress made in the last six months and the challenges ahead.

The group noted that India has been without an incidence of wild polio virus for more than six months. This progress was gratifying to the members of the group. What was more noteworthy was the fact that the endemic regions of India have been without polio cases for more than a year. Only one serotype and one genetic cluster of the virus were noticed compared to five in 2010. The need to be more careful during the monsoon and post monsoon



season from July to November was stressed. The IEAG decided to up the ante during this season and hence recommended three SNIDs during July to December 2011 and four SNIDs between January to June 2012.

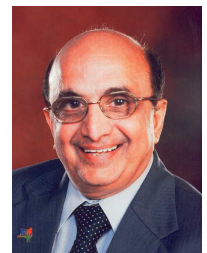
Undetected transmission and return of virus from Africa were noted as threats to the progress made so far. To counter any surprise attack from the virus, the IEAG recommended strengthening of the routine Expanded Programme on Immunisation coverage, routine immunisation and administering the OPV3 especially in West Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. The group emphasised the importance of enhancing the current surveillance level and wanted the field workers to keep a tab on migrant population. The importance of micro planning, environmental sampling and ensuring preparedness by all states to manage an outbreak was discussed. The group recommended that a minimum buffer stock of 40 million bOPV and 10 million tOPV doses must be maintained.

The current gains achieved as a result of exposure through media had to be consolidated and the importance of identifying a designated government spokesperson was stressed. The IEAG declared after two days of grueling discussions and study that 'India is definitely on the right path to finish eradication.' The group which consisted of Dr. Jagadish Deshpande, Director, ICMR, Ms. Anuradha Gupta, Joint Secretary, RCH, Government of India, Mr. P. K. Pradhan, Additional Secretary & Mission Director (NRHM) Government of India, Dr. Nata Menabde, WHO Representative to India, Dr. Bruce Aylward, Director,

Polio Eradication, WHO Geneva, Mr. David McLoughlin, UNICEF, India, PRIP Rajendra K. Saboo, PDG Deepak Kapur, Chairman INPPC, PDG Manjit Sawhney, NCM INPPC, Dr. E.G.P. Haran, Mr Lokesh Gupta, Manager INPPC and myself advised an aggressive approach to manage the risks during the coming months.

Rotarians, we are 'this close' to eradicating polio from India. The IEAG is watching every step we take.

All our advocacy efforts need your financial and physical support. This is your chance to make history. Don't let it slip by.



*Rtn. Ashok Mahajan  
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation  
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