

So what if it Rains?

The biggest public health effort in the country achieved a major milestone in July when it completed six months without any polio case — the longest period in the history of the campaign. The last incidence of polio reported on January 13, 2011 in Howrah, West Bengal was the lone case this year so far.

The incredible breakthrough in India's anti-polio effort has built up hopes for its eventual eradication in the coming days. The IEAG (India Expert Advisory Group on Polio) that met recently in Delhi has concluded that India is on the right track to eradication and if the ensuing high-risk months (July–September) remains polio free, we are poised to make history in 2011.

Today efforts of each and every Rotarian across the world have been rewarded. Rotarians in India are proud for leading so brilliantly the eradication battle. As I say this, Nigeria and Pakistan are reporting polio cases. Their opportunity for making 2011 the end of polio is slipping away with each new case reported.

The IEAG did conclude that we are on the path to eradication but provided we are vigilant during the impending high-risk monsoon months ahead. Already with the start of monsoon, rivers are overflowing and threat of floods in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal are sending shivers down our spine. Some of the low-lying areas in these states have already



been flooded. This is the time when the virus finds its strength to inflict the disease on the helpless children.

The coming months are crucial and challenging. We cannot let the monsoon wash away our decade-long effort and hopes with it. Everyone in the family of Rotary must participate and contribute towards overcoming this challenge. Remember, your participation and your leadership is crucial towards achieving the goal of eradication in India. In your District, motivate the Clubs, Rotaractors, Interactors, Inner Wheel members and strengthen the eradication effort. Please ensure that routine immunisation and polio immunisation activities are properly conducted. Fundraising initiatives towards the challenge grant, creating awareness and partnership with other stakeholders must be reinforced in the coming days.

Rain may not be under our command or control. But surely saving the life of the child during the rainy days is within our means. Keeping the environment clean and hygienic is under our control. Administering vaccines regularly is within our control. Spreading the awareness, rain or sun, is possible by us. If everything else is under our control, can we not keep polio away during the rainy days ahead? Should we not take pride that we have not allowed the virus to penetrate our defenses during the monsoon? By being more vigilant we can say now and forever, “So what if it rains.”



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