

SUPPORT TO END POLIO NOW

It gives me pleasure to tell you that today India is the toast of every polio event. It has become a poster champ for the other three endemic nations fighting polio.

With only a case in the last nine months and more, India is inching closer to the goal of a year without polio. This, however, does not mean that we should be content with the fact that polio has been contained in the country. India still figures amongst the polio-endemic countries along with Pakistan, Nigeria and Afghanistan and will remain so till January 14th 2012 (the last and only case this year was recorded on January 13th). Complacency or losing of guard at this juncture could mean starting all over again!

When I talk of complacency, it is not always a declining participation of Rotarians in immunisation activities or slackening of eradication efforts on the ground. It also means, a decline of funds for Rotary Foundation with less and less of Rotarians committing to replenish these funds. And I repeat (I have mentioned this in my earlier communications as well), we are already running short of USD 520 million for continuing the global eradication activities for 2012 and thereafter.

As many would know, we have been successful in raising USD 195.2 million (as on 11 November 2011) against the Gates' Challenge Grant. There is still to catch up and most importantly this isn't enough



to eliminate polio from India and the world. For The Rotary Foundation to deliver on its promises, funds are desperately needed to bridge the existing gap. It is with this urgency, I request each and every Rotarian to contribute towards USD 200 million challenge grant and The Rotary Foundation.

Rotarians in countries like Korea, Japan and Taiwan have not only given 20 percent of their DDF (as was demanded by TRF) towards the Challenge grant but contributed through funds raised by them as well. Whereas nearly 100 or so Rotary Clubs, Districts are yet to do so in India. Those who attended the Kolkata Zone Institute will recall that RI President Kalyan Banerjee mentioned the contribution from India to the TRF not being satisfactory despite being a great beneficiary of Rotary services.

As mentioned, India is the largest beneficiary of the PolioPlus funds to Rotary and as such the

responsibility is more on Rotarians in India. Rotary Districts/ Clubs, Rotarians, Rotary leaders all must come forward and commit to making greater contribution towards our common goal promoted by The Rotary Foundation.

While we revel in the pleasure of India being endorsed as a model for endemic countries, please remember the task is not over yet. And with a disease like polio, which is even one too many to start an epidemic, we can never rest until it is completely eliminated from within our borders and the world.

Rotarians will have to shoulder the responsibility in India, just as our brothers in rest of the world, that the fight against polio is sustained in the endemic countries just as vigorously as has been to bring an end to polio. The challenges remain of complacency; of funds; of political will and fatigue but we will have to persevere. The commitment and efforts of Rotarians in the country in overcoming these challenges will make the difference!



*Rtn. Ashok Mahajan
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation
Director, Rotary International
2007–2009
Member, International PolioPlus
Committee*