



Almost There

The good news at the end of last week is that there was no new case of polio reported from India. The one case from West Bengal is all that has been observed and the action team from INPPC, Rotary clubs and the districts has swung into action to contain the spread of the virus.

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has aptly titled the last assault on polio as STOP to mean 'Stop Transmission Of Polio.' The task envisages 'hunting down the polio virus in the last reservoirs of the earth.' India has always been looked as a polio endemic country and has areas that can be considered as reservoirs of the virus.

It is now our duty to double our resources and take the fight against this disease to every nook and corner of the country. We have been saying that we are almost there in eradicating polio. But are we? Yes, to a great extent.

In the coming months it is absolutely necessary that every Rotary club engages the members in the onslaught against polio. Preventing a terror attack from a dangerous group requires that the enemy is flushed out from every possible hideout. In this case the hideouts for this virus will be insanitary conditions in many rural and urban areas. Rotary clubs should concentrate on creating awareness about hygiene in such areas. We cannot rest on our laurels that during the NIDs millions of children have been immunised. Routine immunisation programmes have to be monitored and the help from the NCMs can be taken whenever needed.

Our partners in this programme have requested the assistance of



Rotarians in improving surveillance and increasing the quality of NIDs. We cannot afford to have another child being affected by polio in India now. Can you stand the sight of another girl child dragging herself along a floor on her knees and getting sores? It is reported that more than 20 million people living today have been affected by polio. In India we are now at a stage to ensure that not one more child ever suffers such a fate. Especially when we can eradicate polio.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Challenge has to be met by Rotarians and more funds are needed during this last phase of the battle. Apart from the physical help given during the NIDs and other such occasions, TRF needs money to fund the most critical stage in this fight against polio.

Yes, we are almost there. But all that can change if we relax now. The cost of yet another war against polio the next year will be much greater.

Your resources are needed for more developmental work. So, this is our chance. Today is the day we have to Stop Transmission of Polio (STOP).

Please release more funds from your resources today. This is our chance to show that we will gift a polio-free India to RI President-elect Kalyan Banerjee when he leads the Rotary world from July 2011.

We are almost there and we know it is possible. In the words of Jamie Paolinetti, one of the greatest American sportsmen, "Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless."



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