

# Fight to Finish

I am writing to you today just after my return from the IPPC (International PolioPlus Committee) meeting and RI Convention in the US this month.

For the first time while representing India I was enjoying a comfortable position at the IPPC meeting. Just one incidence of polio in the last several months in polio endemic India was highlighted as the big achievement. I was congratulated by everyone, the representatives of WHO, UNICEF and CDC at the Committee meeting for the great leap by India in eliminating polio.

Further, at the Convention with about 20,000 in attendance, it was heartening to hear Bill Gates praise about Rotary's effort in eradicating polio with repeated reference to the India's marvelous achievement. For turning the odds in the campaigns' favour, he acknowledged that it was a great effort by Indian Rotarians.

Representing India and you all at these events, I was overjoyed and filled with a sense of pride. And I must thank each one of you for making this happen for India and for Rotary. This has been possible because each one of you had faith in India's triumph and relentlessly pursued towards achieving the goal of eradication. This achievement is truly a landmark and can't thank you all enough. We deserve this glory and accolades, after all we fought for it!



*Bill Gates addressing the RI Convention 2011 at New Orleans.*

But, while we revel in this triumph it must be known that controlling polio in India is a milestone but eradicating it completely is the ultimate goal. And now that we have controlled it (there has not been a single incidence of polio since January 2011), the challenge is to maintain this for as long as polio is eradicated.

As is known, polio virus is a very tenacious and a virulent disease that targets children. The only way to ensure its end is by continuing with the current momentum without complacency. One lapse, one loophole and the virus can cause an outbreak anywhere in the country.

Despite the current gain, there still exists a challenge. We must continue with our diligent efforts at

the Club, District, State and Central level towards eradicating polio. We have to support routine immunisations, surveillance, increasing community participation, coordination with partners and fight complacency and fatigue wherever visible.

Rotarians can strengthen social mobilisation, advocacy and fundraising efforts. The funding gap that exists needs to be bridged for endemic countries like India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan to continue the battle against polio.

We have come this far not to fall back again ... the fight must continue till the end. And each of you will have to take the lead if

India is to build on today's milestone. We may not get this chance again, this opportune moment to make history. We must and we will seize the goal this time!

On behalf of Rotary India, I assured the International members of our commitment to fight till the end. I am sanguine each one of you will live up to this commitment and help India make history.



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