

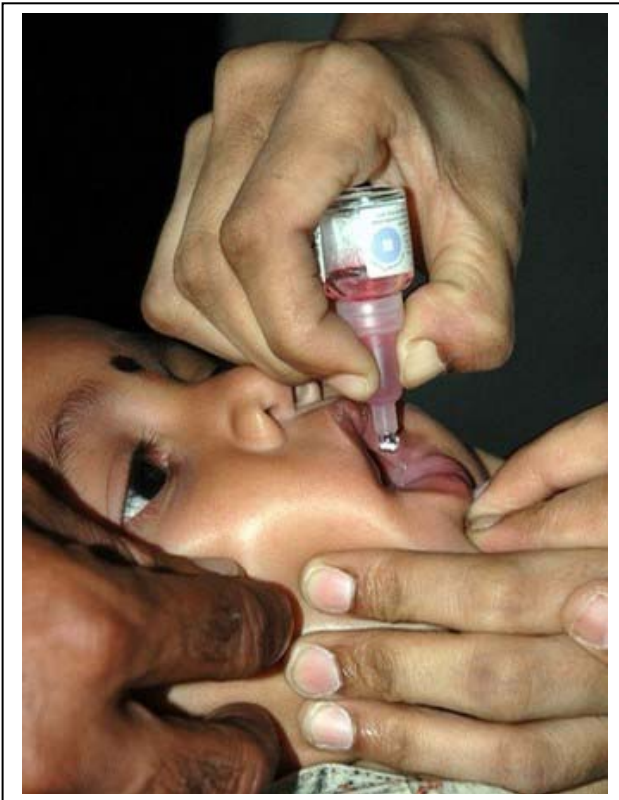
The Fight against Polio in 2009

Dear Rotary Leaders,

The December 21st NID was successfully held across the country. Children of five yrs and below were administered with Polio drops that were aimed at protecting them from contracting the crippling disease, Polio.

The nationwide immunization activity (NID) held usually in January, was advanced as per IEAG recommendations (due to the election schedule in 2009) and thus held in December this year.

This immunization round was one of India's most ambitious campaigns, aimed at immunizing more than 170 million children. Well co-ordinated, high quality pulse polio round was undertaken. More than one million vaccination teams of paramedics and health workers, equipped with millions of doses of the vaccine, fanned



out to every nook and corner of the country. They went from house-to-house and worked at booths in communities to reach every child under the age of five. The drive will help combat the growing polio epidemic in the northern part of the country and controlling its emergence in polio-free states.

People in northern India, defying the winter chill and in some parts even snow, turned out in huge number at booths to get their children immunized. And the same was witnessed in states of Southern India. However, as mentioned in my earlier communication there was slight disruptions in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over a child's death, falsely rumoured to be associated with the Polio vaccine. This has been brought under control by the local administration

and Rotarians in the district too have sprung into action to contain the damage. Further, initiatives to win back the confidence and also to quell the doubts felt by these parents were aptly suggested by the India National PolioPlus Committee and positively supported by the Rotary leadership in the two States. I congratulate them for such prompt actions in ensuring that one false rumour doesn't derail the national campaign against Polio.

Further, joining these thousands of health workers, Rotarians as volunteers in many parts of India helped immunize children with the Polio vaccine. At many districts, Rotary organized Polio awareness rallies, IEC campaign and even sensitized the local media to support the movement by creating awareness through their news papers and channels. The seriousness in the implementation of the campaign from Rotarians, Partners and the Government administration at both central and state level were encouraging. The performance reported so far through booths, house-to-house and transits (though the final figures are yet to come) has been positive and is expected to boost the 2009 eradication campaign against the virus.

Speaking of 2009 reminds me of the importance of the forthcoming national immunization day scheduled for February 1st. In terms of the virus epidemiology, we had a promising year in 2008 that suggested that we are very close to eradicating the virulent P1 type. The year 2009 as per experts should be the year when the existence of the P1 virus in the country will be totally eliminated and P3 controlled and near to eradication. Having said this, it is important to note that this is not achievable if our efforts get slacken or we become complacent. We already have 546 cases (as on 27th December) in 2008, 66 P1 and 480 of P3. Hence, recognizing the urgency of doing everything possible to eradicate polio in India during the coming 12 months, we must double our efforts and support the Partnership for a strong campaign against the virus. .

I am optimistic of your leadership in taking us closer to achieving the historic goal of becoming polio-free. You may be sure of the continued support from me and the India National PolioPlus Committee.

With warm regards,

Affectionately yours in Rotary,



Ashok Mahajan

Director – Rotary International