

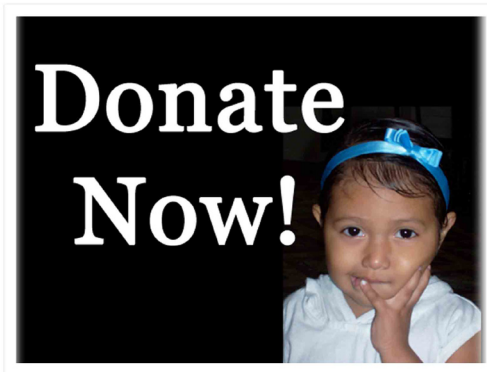
# Give Children the Joy of Living

The most important moment in the life of the parents is to see their child stand up the first time, and probably take a few soft steps and sit down. The child, once it is able to walk around freely just keeps running around with great joy. Food is often only a secondary item to the child as we have seen mothers following the children with meals. The child seems to be a bundle of energy and joy and it is the parent who gets exhausted chasing the kid!

Years later, each parent recalls how enjoyable those days were when they saw their child run, fall and even cry. But these moments of happiness are totally lost to many families. The reason — the child is crippled by polio. The child is just huddled in a corner and made to gaze around, see the children of its age playing in the grounds, kicking the ball, climbing stairs and doing everything that a child should do in the formative years.

The parents are also confined to their house as they cannot move about with a crippled child. Probably, if the father is the earning member, he may have to spend more time outside and forget the misery for a while. The mother is left to cry the whole day, for years. In cases where both the parents have to work to just to keep their body and soul together, the plight of the crippled child can only be imagined. In most cases the child dies even before it can grow up to walk with crutches. Rotary International took up the challenge to make the children grow without being affected by polio. Rotary made this promise to the children of the world. By making that promise, they relied heavily on the support of every Rotarian — every Rotarian who has the power to do good in this world. People who joined Rotary know that it is different from most social networks. Rotary is here for a reason! Its goal? To inspire and empower you to realise your purpose in life so that you can do the same for others and so that

together you can contribute to a better world — a world without polio, a world where every child gets the joy of living. As a parent and as a Rotarian you are aware to the happenings around you. It is your duty to interact and love every child you meet, for you are the caretaker for this moment of time. Parents worry what a child will become tomorrow, forgetting that it is someone today.



A child should have a wonderful childhood. It is your duty to provide it. That requires your immediate support to The Rotary Foundation, to meet the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Challenge Grant to eradicate polio. Being a member of the committee, I have just come out of the meeting of the International PolioPlus Committee of The Rotary Foundation which is being held in Evanston, USA. You may be aware that this topmost committee of TRF has PRID Robert S Scott as the Chairperson. The committee has stalwarts of Rotary such as John Sever, Keith Barnard-Jones, PRIP William B Boyd, PRIP James Lacy, PRIP Jonathan B Majiyagbe, RID Catherine Noyer-Riveau, PRIP Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, Louis Piconi and Herbert A Pigman. The main focus of the discussion hovered around the incidence of polio cases in India and Nigeria. As I write this, the number of polio cases reported in India as on October 16, 2009 is 464. Uttar Pradesh tops the list with 366 cases, Bihar has reported 90 cases, Delhi has thrown up 4 cases and Uttarakhand has 2 cases. Rajasthan and Punjab have

1 case each. The committee noted that during this year the contributions from India towards the challenge grant have been lagging far behind. The bulk of the grants received have been channelised to India and Nigeria by The Rotary Foundation. This was done not with the expectation that Indian Rotarians would donate more to meet the challenge grant but with the genuine concern for the children of our country. Should we not reciprocate the gesture of the citizens and donors from countries who feel so much for the future of the children here? What if the virus strikes a kid in our home? We will have to blame ourselves for not taking the correct steps.

Donate liberally to the challenge grant. Use your DDF today. The matching grants have dried up this year and so DGs may be tempted to use the DDF more to support the clubs in their projects. Fair enough. I am asking you to prioritise the resources this year towards the challenge grant to at least 25 percent in the next few months. The scheme to collect US \$1,000 from every club every year for three years needs to be revitalised. The resource persons must talk to every club.

India has been the beneficiary of funds from abroad to fight polio. It is now your turn to contribute more towards that fund as we have not yet eradicated the disease. If people allow their day to pass by without practicing generosity but enjoying life's pleasures, then they can be likened to the blacksmith's bellows — they breathe but do not live.

With our own Rtn. Kalyan Banerjee slated to be the RI President during 2011–2012, what better gift can we give to ourselves except eradicating polio? You surely will not like the leader's country to be polio endemic, would you?



*Rtn. Ashok Mahajan  
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation*