

# Rotary raises the pitch for polio eradication

Earlier there was no public outrage to eradicate polio the way it is now. Donor's protest about polio still lingering in India was put on hold with the assurance that Rotary clubs here will up the ante with their contributions and physical assistance before, during and after the NIDs. But when Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab and Jharkhand reported fresh cases of polio during the weeks that have gone by it ignited public anger. This year 2009 was a revelation of our weakness but not a revolution to finish the battle against the polio virus.

It revealed the true nature of Rotary club's power by stripping away the deceptive trappings of a superpower to save the children of India. In essence, what happened was that we belatedly saw through the lethargy of clubs and District Governors to mobilise resources to end the battle against polio by eradicating it this year.

Rotary International said that the eradication of polio is not just the end of the disease but the end of history of the virus as such. That history has nearly ended with the virus being totally eradicated in all but four countries. Over 30 years of a costly war against polio nearly came to a close few years ago. We failed to seize the opportunity. Elsewhere in the world the present generation does not know about polio. If you want to know how to end it in India immediately check out what other countries did. Take the help

of the National Committee Members of IPPC. The District Governors must include a session on polio eradication in their conference. It is appalling to see the PolioPlus Chairs in the clubs

District Governor and each Rotary club President makes responsibility for polio eradication a priority, we will continue to devastate our children, ourselves and our country.



**“Back when Rotary became involved with polio, most people thought volunteer organisations were about tackling projects down the street or across town — not across the world. Rotary changed all that, and in the process, you reminded us that there is no human problem so daunting that it can't be overcome by people.”**

**Bill Gates, Sr.**

totally ignorant of what they should do. Most of them still do not know why there is a word 'Plus' after the word 'Polio.' As long as the Polio Sundays are considered to be yet another occasion for a fellowship and clubs don't clean up their act, the chances are that we may lose our shine as pioneers of a global healthcare programme.

I see that grandiose plans are being made right now for pre-PETS, PETS and District Assembly by the District Governors of 2010–2011. Such events are organised in exotic locales within India and earlier even abroad! At the end of these events I wonder how many club leaders remember what happened in the classrooms. I am not advocating that such sessions should be held under the Banyan tree or in a shanty. But the point I am stressing, as the member of the International PolioPlus Committee, is that until each

The world is asking how a nation of highly educated, intelligent people could commit such atrocities when it comes to saving their offspring. Part of the answer is that despite the education given at the International Assembly, Zone Institutes and other forums, the District Governors do not seriously believe in committing extra resources for this programme. Polio

eradication has two parts—one involving the cost of advocacy and the other cost of delivery of the vaccine. Rotary has to tackle the first immediately and bring more children under the immunisation programme. Unless every Rotary club can do more than focus on the past, the next year might not be any better. But now is your chance to eradicate whatever is left of the polio virus in a few places. Make yourself part of Indian history by eradicating polio and of India's future.



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