



UNICEF India's Polio Program:

Legacy in Action

The India Polio Program is an amazing public health achievement that many did not think possible in 2009 with India contributing over half of the global polio cases. **With polio free certification in 2014, India is now poised to take on the crucial challenge of applying the legacy of the polio program to other convergent health strategies, and to other locations in India.**

The state governments are preparing to transition polio assets such as the Social Mobilization Network (SMNet) to a government owned, funded and managed setup. The program is transitioning in scope programmatically, geographically, financially and in its human resources management. We are witnessing legacy in action on the ground, applying these assets in routine immunization (RI) and other convergent activities, and documenting the lessons for India and global learning.

The polio program today has become a people's program – trusted and owned by the community.

The momentum of the polio program must be capitalized on now, before it is too late – not only to maintain zero polio but also to address other health and sanitation issues.

Transitioning beyond Polio

- Using polio strategies for routine immunization strengthening + convergent health initiatives with a focus on high risk areas and groups.
- Generating demand for RI through Mission Indradhanush and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) health systems strengthening grant.
- Engaging communities on child survival health issues, such as exclusive breast feeding, hand washing, diarrhoea prevention and treatment.
- Preparing for the introduction of Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) in Q4 2015 and the shift in types of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) through communications and social mobilization strategies.
- Maintaining zero polio – continued mobilization, new post-certification strategy and messages, emergency preparedness and response planning.
- Legacy learning for India and globally.

Transition in Action - Programmatic

Maintaining the momentum: Keeping India polio free post-certification

The polio program continues to mobilize families during five rounds annually – two National Immunization Days (NIDs) and three Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs). Each national campaign reaches approximately 170 million children across the country.

The polio program maintains an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) at the national and state levels to respond to any importation. Additionally, measures such as border vaccination, certification of polio vaccination of travellers from endemic countries, capacity building of Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) and the SMNet have contributed to keeping India polio free.

Strengthening routine immunization

Beyond polio, UNICEF also supports the government in health systems strengthening for RI, including GAVI funded activities and Mission Indradhanush which focuses on 201 districts with the poorest RI indicators. An equity based strategy, Mission Indradhanush builds upon polio lessons in communication and social mobilization and provides an opportunity to demonstrate the polio legacy in action.

Legacy In Action: Polio approach to RI Mission Indradhanush

The polio program's legacy is visible in implementation of the government led new equity based program Mission Indradhanush (meaning rainbow) for the seven vaccine preventable diseases namely Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Childhood Tuberculosis, Polio, Hepatitis B and Measles. The Government of India targets to ensure 90% full routine immunization by 2020 .

UNICEF has been leading in supporting communication planning, capacity development, social mobilization, media sensitization, intensive monitoring, supportive supervision and evidence-based, real-time planning. The SMNet has been deployed to other states and districts on the request of the Government to support planning and mobilization.

Nationally IEC visibility increased from 84% to 92% from April to July 2015. Moreover, the development of district communication plans increased from 50% to 78.1%.

Mobilization and strengthening health systems through the SMNet

Each month, SMNet mobilizers reach out with messages on RI to approximately 2.7 million households in high risk areas, informing them of upcoming RI sessions and when their children are due for vaccination. They hold over 7000 mothers meetings and more than 200,000 interpersonal communication each month to raise awareness about the benefits of routine immunization, and address concerns, myths and misconceptions related to RI. Mosques and other faith based institutions regularly make announcements not only on polio but also ahead of RI sessions.



The SMNet not only mobilizes demand for the sessions but also supports strengthening the sessions and their staff by training over 100,000 frontline government health and nutrition workers in interpersonal communication (IPC) and community mobilization. UNICEF's SMNet also monitors and offers supportive supervision at over 7,000 RI sessions per month, mentors and takes corrective measures on the spot.

Convergent activities are a part of the polio program

The India Polio Program has been increasingly working on convergent health initiatives – water and sanitation, early and exclusive breast feeding, and diarrhoea management linked to child survival and achieving reduction in infant mortality. This holistic approach to addressing the needs of children and families has boosted trust and ownership of the polio program.

Introducing IPV into the polio program

India polio partners are preparing to introduce IPV in Quarter 4, 2015. Drawing upon polio experiences, UNICEF is leading the communication activities for the IPV launch. Linked to IPV introduction, the India Polio Program is preparing for the global switch from tOPV to bOPV in April 2016.

Global simultaneous shift: IPV introduction, TOPV to bOPV switch and OPV gradual withdrawal

As part of the GPEI End Game Strategy, countries will introduce at least one dose of Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) into routine immunization schedules, strengthen RI and withdraw oral polio vaccine (OPV) in a phased manner. Towards this end countries will introduce IPV in 2015 with the global shift from tOPV to bOPV to remove the Type 2 in April 2016.

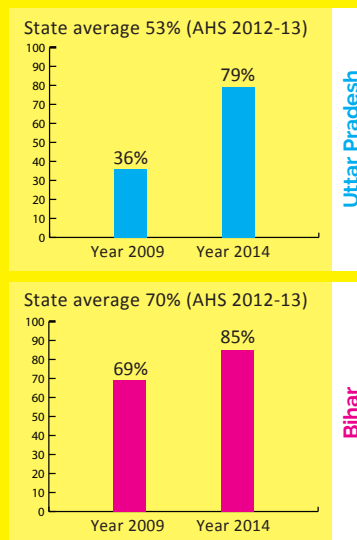
India polio partners have galvanized all efforts to implement a communication and operational strategy for introduction of IPV in November 2015.

Polio Legacy Demonstrating Results

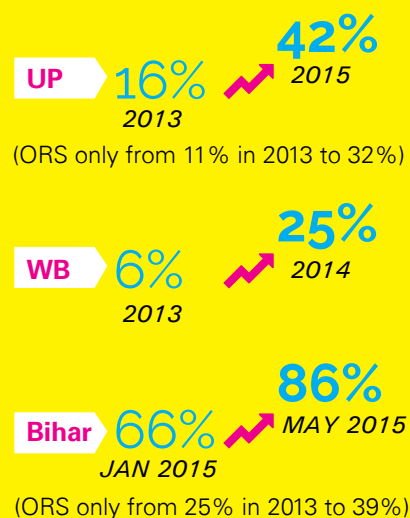
The work in routine immunization and convergent activities are contributing to improved child wellbeing and survival. The SMNet's mobilization has been reaching almost 2.7 million households and 2.2 million children under five in high risk communities in Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar and West Bengal (WB)-directly contributing to an increase in full RI coverage rates in the SMNET high-risk areas of UP from 36% in 2009 to 79% in end 2014 and in Bihar from 54% in to 85%. In both states, full RI coverage in these highest-risk SMNet areas is now well above the state average.

SMNet results

Routine immunization



Behavior change in the use of ORS and Zinc



Transition in Action - Geographical

Polio strategies, tools and techniques are being introduced in seven other states (Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Odisha and Rajasthan) other than the traditional polio endemic states as part of the GAVI-funded health system strengthening and Mission Indradhanush.

Using the polio experience in communication planning and implementation, **extensive 360 degree communication activities are being undertaken in nine states.**

- **Mid/local media:** Street plays (1,090) and mobile audio visual shows (5,433) have reached over 424,000 people in high risk communities in priority districts. They have been so popular that the showings have been over 300% the number of originally planned.

UNICEF also supports information, education and communication (IEC) materials development and display on polio and RI in the post-certification era.

- **Mass media:** TV and radio spots are being aired for Mission Indradhanush over national television and radio channels. A new mass media campaign with the celebrity polio champion Amitabh Bachchan is underway.
- **Social mobilization, planning and monitoring:** As part of the GAVI funded program, community mobilizers spend almost half of their time on messages about the benefits of RI, the RI session location and date, dispelling myths and addressing concerns in both door-to-door visits and mothers meetings.

Deployment of the SMNet – A legacy applied beyond the 'polio states' for social mobilization, planning and monitoring:

The SMNet has been deployed to other districts and blocks within UP and Bihar and to other states including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. These mobilizers have been able to identify missed communities,

help communication activities including IEC planning, monitoring and giving feedback at block and district meetings for corrective action resulting in increased IEC visibility.

UNICEF and SMNet staff have also been deployed to support Ebola response in Africa.

Transition in Action - Funding

Funding is increasingly shifting from traditional Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) donor funds to other sources. In 2014, of the \$14 million budget (for Polio and RI), UNICEF contributed \$3 million of regular resources to the program, while the government contributed \$4 million from its GAVI fund for health system strengthening. Together this constituted almost a half of the polio budget. The Government has also given \$1.2 million for IEC production since 2012.

Transition Strategies - Towards a government owned, sustainable program

Discussions between UNICEF and the government at national and state levels have formalized strategies for SMNet transition to nationally owned mechanisms to support polio, RI and beyond. Each of three states involved (UP, Bihar and West Bengal) have incorporated these strategies into state Program Implementation Plans (PIPs) for 2015-2016. The discussion is now at the national level. The three states have different approaches reflecting the different nature of SMNet in each state.

Nationally, there is agreement in principle on a transition plan and dialogue continues as a high priority between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at the Union Government level and UNICEF.

SMNet state transition

Maintaining high polio immunity, boosting RI and advocating for other health/convergent issues.



Uttar Pradesh

- Polio plus focus on RI and convergent activities.
- The government proposes to take over 25% of the funding amounting to approximately \$1.6 million.



Bihar

- Polio plus focus on RI and the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health initiative.
- The government proposes to take over 50% of the funding amounting to approximately \$1.6 million.



West Bengal

- Polio plus focus on RI and the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health initiative.
- The government has agreed to fund a portion of the activities for IEC and Behavior Change Communication (BCC) in one of the four districts.

Human resources in the transition

UNICEF has been following the India Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) 2013 and 2015 recommendation to maintain the polio human assets until global certification, and has ensured a continued quality workforce for Polio, RI and more.

WHO and UNICEF regularly review the high risk areas to ensure adequate deployment.

A review of SMNet and polio assets is underway to evaluate the current structure, scope and management system to feed into recommendations for transitioning to match state priorities and agreements. Current transition plans retain the human resources management structure for UP and Bihar (managed through a third party) as well as West Bengal (managed through NGOs).



Legacy Learning

UNICEF India polio program has been conducting many activities to capture the lessons from polio for other health initiatives and global learning.

- To support others it hosted Learning Missions from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and deployed staff to support Afghanistan and East Africa.
- The lessons and successes are documented in various forms: through the legacy photographic book – demonstrating innovations/game changers to triumph over polio, six books on the strategies in UP, seven films documenting UNICEF India's social mobilization strategies among others.
- UNICEF India also developed a website for legacy learning, "India Polio Learning Exchange" www.iple.in.
- As input to the transition strategies and to link to global legacy planning, UNICEF is conducting an SMNet Legacy Review. This builds on the very positive evaluation conducted in 2013 which found that the SMNet had "made positive contributions to the larger goal of polio eradication" through changing behavior in an efficient, flexible, dynamic manner. Further the evaluation report recommended that this "efficient, effective, relevant, cost-effective model" should be replicated in other health initiatives.
- In the coming months several studies will be completed on the actual impact of the SMNet on RI, convergence and on the empowerment of the mobilizers themselves.
- Likewise, IPV preparedness and Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) studies will give further insight to the impact of the program and lessons for its future and other areas.