

THE POLIO ERADICATION

MOBILIZER



मेरे बच्चे को दो बूँद, हर बार

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India, Pakistan teams 'Bowl Out Polio'

The India and Pakistan cricket teams united for a common goal - to defeat polio. In Delhi for the one-day international on 6 January, Pakistan team members Younus Khan and Imran Farhat administered polio drops to children on the eve of the match and made an appeal to parents in both India and Pakistan to 'Bowl Out Polio'. "We need to ensure a world free of polio paralysis for our children. We need to win against polio," they said.

'Bowl Out Polio' messages were flashed at the Feroze Shah Kotla grounds where the teams clashed on 6 January. Airtel electronic periphery scrolls carried the message to "Bowl Out Polio". About a hundred children on the stands, wearing yellow jackets with polio messages, cheered the teams. The '4' and '6' cards that the crowd flashed had the 'Bowl Out Polio' message.



Pakistan cricketers Younus Khan (left) and Imran Farhat (right) administering polio vaccine to a child in New Delhi.

Holy dip and polio drops

Children accompanying parents for the 'holy dip' at Sangam during the 'Maha Kumbh' mela in Allahabad, also got two drops of the oral polio vaccine. Millions of pilgrims visited Allahabad during the month-long festival, observed once in 12 years. Nearly 250 polio vaccination teams were deployed at the congregation site. Hoardings, banners and boats painted with polio messages, helped create awareness for polio immunization.

Polio immunization at such congregations has been one of the important strategies of the eradication programme in India. These gatherings provide an opportunity to reach out to and immunize millions

of children on the move who are at highest risk of getting the disease.



Boats at Kumbh mela carrying polio message.

Maktab girls spread polio message

One of the oldest Maktab school in Hajipur, Bihar, established in

1937 in a mosque, is now actively advocating for polio immunization. Under the leadership of their Principal Mohd Mohiuddin, the school girls took out a huge polio rally ahead of the January national polio round.



Polio rally by Maktab girls in Hajipur.

Notwithstanding the orthodox and conservative norms of a religious institution, hundreds of Maktab girls came out on the streets and participated in a polio awareness rally carrying placards with polio messages.

Not to mention that the support to the programme from Maktab school, helped further secure the community's ownership of the programme. This follows successful intervention by the SMNet in Hajipur.

DID YOU KNOW ?

- ◆ Polio eradication is the largest peace-time operation in history. During a Polio National Immunization Day (NID):
 - 23 lakh vaccinators, under 1.5 lakh supervisors, visit 20.9 crore households, to immunize 17.2 crore children under 5 years of age
 - 80 lakh children in transit are given OPV, by 450 transit vaccination teams
 - 1 lakh children are immunized on running trains.
- ◆ Immunization is also ongoing along the India-Pakistan border in Baramulla and Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, Wagah and Attari in Punjab, Munabo in Barmer district in Rajasthan and 84 posts along the India-Nepal border.

Mithilesh Devi gets best ASHA award

Mithilesh Devi – an ASHA from Dumra block of Sitamarhi district in Bihar, is an inspiration for many women in her area. Rightly awarded as the best ASHA in her block, Mithilesh Devi's mission in life is to ensure that every child in her area is protected against polio in each immunization round and gets all the routine immunization vaccines as per schedule and on time. Ever since she became an ASHA in 2005, she has been working diligently for the health and well-being of women and children in her area.



Mithilesh Devi goes on her task – counseling mothers on the importance of vaccination.

Consolidating community support during Eid Milad un Nabi

Eid-Milad-un-Nabi, commemorating the birthday of Prophet Mohammad, is celebrated all over. Over the years, polio partners have tapped on these mega congregations as an opportunity for polio advocacy, seeking and reiterating people's faith in the programme. The SMNet mapped institutions in all 22 high priority districts of west UP, where congregations were scheduled, and briefed organizing committee members, to ensure polio messages are included in religious discourses of leaders. Appeals endorsed by Deoband and Barelvi sects, and polio advocacy booklet by Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University were distributed among the pilgrims. In Bareilly, appeals endorsed by the organizing committee of Dargah Ala Hazrat were distributed among people.



Waving polio flags, children participate in a procession by Anjuman Khuddam-e-Rasood in Bareilly.

STAR MOBILIZER



Nargis, empowered by the polio programme.

For the last five years, 25-year-old Nargis Bano has been working relentlessly to ensure all children are protected against polio. She has been a 'Star Mobilizer' all along. Nargis joined the SMNet in 2007 as a CMC in Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh. With her extra-ordinary work in converting refusal families in her area and promoting polio immunization, she was soon promoted as a Block Mobilization Coordinator in Aligarh in 2011. "For the first time in my life I travelled alone and by train, which I saw for the first time," she recalls.

Nargis coordinates social mobilization activities at the block level, supervising eight CMCs and monitoring about 4,000 households and also networking with religious leaders and institutions, elected representatives, government officials and health functionaries at the block level. "Whenever a CMC faces any resistance to the polio vaccine, I intervene and seek the support of local influencers to make parents change their minds. I also try and get doctors to visit the household." For Nargis, it has been a process of learning by doing. "I am acquiring new skills, which has made me much more confident," she says. Joining the SMNet was probably one of the most important decisions of her life, of which she is really proud off.

Panchayat head leads the fight against polio in Samastipur, Bihar

64-year-old Rajendra Paswan, head of Vaini panchayat in Pusa block of Samastipur, Bihar, has a clear goal - to ensure all children in his panchayat are protected against polio. For the last 3 years, he has been actively supporting the polio campaign. "I am happy with my life because I feel I am doing something meaningful in protecting the lives of our children," he says. He supervises all efforts for polio immunization in his area and actively participates in block meetings, supports bi-phasic activity and even accompanies polio teams to counsel resistant families. His support helped 71 children from nomadic families get life-saving vaccines under routine immunization during the RI round in September 2012.



Nomadic children get routine immunization in Pusa block of Samastipur, Bihar.

QUOTABLE

"We need to protect every child up to the age of 5 years with the polio vaccine, till polio is eradicated globally. Polio eradication effort will continue to be one of the thrust areas of the government so that the country and the South East Asia Region are declared Polio free in 2014."

Ghulam Nabi Azad
Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India

POLIO FACTS

- ♦ The first wild poliovirus case of 2013 was reported from Sindh in Pakistan in a 14-month old child. Last year, 222 cases were reported globally from 5 countries – Pakistan (58), Afghanistan (37), Nigeria (121), Chad (5) and Niger (1).
- ♦ Immunization activities are planned in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria – the remaining three polio-endemic countries. Response activities are also ongoing in Niger and Egypt, in response to a recent case (in Niger) and environmental isolates (in Egypt).