



Congratulatory message from Polio Chief, UNICEF

Dear friends,

Congratulations!

India has completed two years without recording any case of polio. This is a major milestone for the country and for all of us.

This would not have been possible without your sincere efforts and commitment to the programme. I would like to thank each one of you for your valuable contribution to this achievement.

In this last phase of our fight against polio, we need to maintain a high level of vigil and guard against any complacency setting in. Let us keep up the fight and root out polio from our country.

All the very best to you all!

Lieven Desomer

Chief - Polio
UNICEF India

From CMC to Sarpanch, story of Noor Mohammad

Noor Mohammad Qasmi, Sarpanch (village head) of Mahapatra village in Madhubani district in Bihar has a multi-faceted personality. He is a doctor, an Islamic scholar and a journalist too. But what got him the seat of the village head was his stint with the Social Mobilization Network as a Community Mobilization Coordinator (CMC) for polio. 34-year old Noor was a CMC for 3 years beginning 2008 until he became the village head. It was his hard work and dedication to the cause of polio eradication that impressed the villagers, who persuaded Noor to contest for the post of Sarpanch in 2011.



Noor Mohammad with his Anganwadi wife Shabnam.

"I convinced resistant families by citing references from the Holy Quran and Hadiths. This made a remarkable difference," says Noor, who has a degree in Islamic studies from Darul Uloom Deoband, Asia's famed Islamic University. With a degree in Ayurveda from Banaras Hindu University, Noor is the only doctor in the village. His clinic serves as the routine immunization centre in the village. Noor also writes for Urdu National daily Qaumi Tanzeem. Most of his reports are on polio – an issue still close to his heart.

"SMNet has given a new meaning to my life", says Noor. He still goes house-to-house with polio vaccinators during immunization rounds to ensure each and every child of his village continues to be protected against the crippling disease. "I want to see polio eradicated globally during my lifetime," he says.

Raina, Sehwag, Kaif appeal to 'Bowl Out Polio'

Cricketers Virender Sehwag, Suresh Raina and Mohammad Kaif on 3 November appealed to people to immunize their children against polio. "We cannot lose the match against polio. This is possible if we ensure that our children up to the age of 5 years get polio vaccine in each polio campaign," they said in their appeal. The appeal was made at a "Bowl Out Polio event" organized in the Jawaharlal Nehru Cricket Stadium in Ghaziabad, on the sidelines of the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh Ranji Trophy match and on the eve of the 4 November Sub National Polio Immunization campaign. The cricketers administered oral polio vaccine to children during the event.



Suresh Raina giving polio drops to a child during the event.

DID YOU KNOW ?

- ◆ In 2012, 222 cases were reported globally from five countries – Nigeria (121), Pakistan (58), Afghanistan (37), Chad (5) and Niger (1). The cases in 2012 are less than half of the 627 cases reported globally from 16 countries in 2011.
- ◆ The WHO Western Pacific Region has been certified polio-free following China's successful control of the outbreak last year. In 2011, poliovirus from Pakistan had infected China to cause 18 cases.

Border force adds strength to polio programme in Bihar

Jainagar in Madhubani district of Bihar is situated on the India-Nepal border where several families cross over every day. Many of them are unaware of the need to protect children against polio. To protect children on the move, SMNet in Bihar garnered support of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). At the five transit points, nine vaccination teams were positioned with SSB support. The joint efforts



SSB jawans finger marking a child at a border booth in Bihar.

have borne fruit -in September this year, around 5,436 children were immunized in Jainagar.

STAR MOBILIZER



Juli carries her mission with determination.

Areas and enclaves inhabited by commercial sex workers are teeming with pregnant women and children. Yet these areas are beyond the access of polio vaccinators. Male vaccinators are unwelcome and female vaccinators hesitate to go in for fear of social ostracism. The SMNet team in Munger district of Bihar faced a similar challenge. But things changed with the joining of Juli Khatoon as a CMC.

She gradually established a good rapport with the local residents. She counseled mothers on the

importance of polio vaccination and also mobilized them for routine immunization, hygiene and sanitation, exclusive breastfeeding for first six months and diarrhea management using zinc and ORS.

Notwithstanding social stigma, Juli works tirelessly to reach every last child. With her consistent efforts, routine immunization sessions are now being held regularly and mothers come in full attendance! In the last polio round, all 40 children below 5 years of age in the area, including 8 newborns, were vaccinated.

Polio advocacy with Haj pilgrims stepped up

The Social Mobilization Network in Uttar Pradesh has further strengthened polio advocacy with the Haj pilgrims. At all the 171 sites identified in 44 districts of the state for administering oral polio vaccine to the people going on Haj pilgrimage, the SMNet has stepped up efforts to advocate with them and also build them as polio emissaries on return. Appeals endorsed by religious institutions are disseminated among pilgrims, meetings are organized with religious leaders, in addition to polio IEC at these sites. As a result, now over 1500 Hajjis are supporting the SMNet in counseling families. They actively participate in community meetings in high-risk areas of western UP.



Haji Parvez Qureshi vaccinating a child at Azamnagar block in Bareilly.

Tracking nomads in hard to reach areas in UP

Van Gujjars – a nomadic tribe living in deep forests in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh – have always been a challenge for the polio programme. The SMNet in Meerut along with other polio partners, partnered with the Forest department to reach these hard-to-reach communities and mobilize them for polio and routine immunization. Following mobilization efforts, the district Health and Forest Department sent mobile vaccination teams to these areas and held health camps for the nomadic tribes. At a recent health camp, over 100 people were attended to and 47 children vaccinated for polio and six other vaccine preventable diseases as part of routine immunization.



Health services being provided to 'van gujjars' in Saharanpur, UP.

QUOTABLE

"Polio is now at its lowest levels - more children are being reached, for the first time, in high-risk areas. We have a very real opportunity for success. We must seize this opportunity with a sense of urgency appropriate for an emergency situation and drive out the poliovirus."

Dr Margaret Chan

Director-General - World Health Organization

POLIO FACTS

- ◆ Polio is a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease. Polio has no cure but can be prevented through immunization. Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), given multiple times at every available opportunity, almost always protects a child for life.
- ◆ The aim of the polio eradication campaign is to protect children against polio and stop poliovirus transmission to ensure a polio-free world.