



Welcome to the new monthly Social Mobilization Newsletter

Dear friends,

I am extremely happy to interact with you through this newsletter. This is a very good platform to share some of the wonderful work you have been doing in your areas.

India is very close to eradicating polio, with only one case reported this year from West Bengal. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have remained polio-free this year. All this has been made possible by your sincere efforts and commitment to the programme. In the 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 join hands together to root out polio from our country.

All the very best to you all !

Lieven Desomer
Chief - Polio
UNICEF India

Toilets construction at brick kilns

TIGER brick kiln in Gogri block of Khagaria, Bihar, stands out from among the other brick kilns of the area – reason being its owner has got two toilets constructed for the workers at the brick kiln. The SMNet in Bihar, which has been working closely to spread awareness on polio and associated risk factors, motivated the owner in getting this done for the workers.

UNICEF mobilizers regularly interact with brick kiln owners and workers and their families on key health behaviours such as getting their children regularly vaccinated, hand washing, sanitation and child care practices. The migrant workers at this brick kiln are happy with the change. “Earlier it was difficult for us, especially at night, but now with these two toilets, life has become so much easy and healthy too”, said one of the women.



UNICEF mobilizer with migrants at brick kiln

Medical students support polio drive

THE SMNet in Uttar Pradesh has engaged medical students of S.N. Medical College, Agra to support polio immunization in resistant pockets of the city. The student doctors interact with families and move with vaccination teams during polio rounds.

The enthusiastic young doctors are helping convert resistant families with their counseling to get their children vaccinated for polio. Their support has instilled the local community’s trust in the programme.



Medical Interns counseling parents for polio vaccination in Agra

DID YOU KNOW ?

- ◆ This year, one case of polio has been reported in the country from Howrah district in West Bengal on 13 January.
- ◆ Uttar Pradesh has been polio free for over a year now. The last P1 case was reported in November 2009 and the last P3 case was in April 2010.
- ◆ Bihar has not reported any case of polio since 1 September 2010.

India is close to eradicating polio with lowest ever 42 cases in 2010, from 741 polio cases in 2009 and 1 case in 2011.

Tapping huge gatherings for polio advocacy

THE SMNet reached out to over a million people this year at the annual Urs-e-Razvi in Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh. The annual Urs was held from 29-31 January at the Dargah Aala Hazrat. Banners with appeals from religious leaders and posters with messages on the importance of polio vaccination were displayed prominently at the Urs venue and also on the buses used by the devotees. Polio messages were also distributed to the devotees by UNICEF social mobilizers.



Polio messages being distributed to the crowd by UNICEF social mobilizers

OUR STAR MOBILIZERS



34-year-old Suman Kashyap, CMC from Moradabad district, UP has been working tirelessly in Nazir Ki Maddiya – one of the biggest urban slums with around 3000 people. Predominantly inhabited by migrant rag pickers from West Bengal and Bihar, the slum is a grim picture with overflowing drains, poor sanitation and contaminated water, increasing the risk of polio transmission.

In these extremely challenging and harsh conditions, Suman goes about her task of mobilizing and convincing resistant families to give their child polio vaccine. She recalls, "Four years back, when I started working here, as many as 60-70 families used to refuse polio vaccine due to misconceptions that the vaccine caused sterility. Language was another barrier as most of the inhabitants are Bengali speaking migrants".

With her determination and sincerity, Suman has established trust and rapport with the families. She advises mothers on health and nutritional issues, such as benefits of institutional delivery, importance of routine immunization and exclusive breastfeeding for children, and the use of zinc and ORS to manage diarrhea.

CMCs like Suman are the backbone of UNICEF's SMNet, making a critical difference in the fight against polio.

QUOTABLE

"The polio programme has a long history in UP and Bihar and is mature and advanced. The UNICEF team is doing very good work and should continue to strive for better documentation of its activities and innovation and their potential impact."

Dr. Robin Nandy

Team Lead – Polio Eradication
UNICEF, HQ

CMC Utsavs in Uttar Pradesh

TO commend and recognize the efforts of CMCs, Lucknow Office organized Utsavs in various sub-regions of the state. For most CMCs, this was a wonderful experience. Poonam from J.P. Nagar said, "This is the first time I am stepping out of my village. I am very happy to be here and interact with my sisters". The CMCs left, feeling motivated and more driven to the cause of polio eradication. "We have an important responsibility in eradicating polio from Uttar Pradesh and are committed to achieving this goal", said Rajkumari, CMC from Badhapur, Bijnor.



The CMC Utsav provided an opportunity for interaction with the government and partners

Bill & Melinda Gates visit Bihar villages

ONE of the world's richest people, Bill Gates, accompanied by wife Melinda, visited Simraha and Jamsot villages near Patna, Bihar on 23 March. They interacted with local villagers, mostly women. The Bill & Melinda Gates foundation has been a major donor to the polio eradication programme worldwide.



Bill & Melinda Gates interacting with women

POLIO FACTS

There were initially 3 types of wild poliovirus: wild poliovirus type 1, type 2 and type 3.

Wild poliovirus type 2 was eradicated in 1999. Following the introduction of bivalent oral polio vaccine (BOPV) in January 2010, which targets both remaining wild poliovirus types 1 and 3 at the same time, with very high efficacy, as of 1 June this year there has been zero cases of wild poliovirus type 3 across India.