

THE POLIO ERADICATION

MOBILIZER



मेरे बच्चे को दो बूँद, हर बार

unicef

VOLUME 8, OCTOBER 2012

Mohammad Kaif flags off 'Polio Walkathon' in Agra

Hundreds of Agra residents came out in huge numbers on September 7 to take part in the 'Polio Walkathon', flagged off by cricketer Mohammad Kaif, to support the cause of a polio-free India.

"Every child has the right to have proper health. I congratulate each and every person who has contributed significantly to the cause and this Walkathon," said Kaif, the UP Cricket Team captain, who has been an ardent supporter of the polio campaign over the years.

The event was organized and supported by The Times of India, the Amrapali Group, Vodafone and 92.7 BIG FM under the banner of 'India Unite to End Polio Now' campaign supported by UNICEF. Dr Manju Sharma, Chief Medical Officer, Agra, and Mr Anil Kumar Sharma, Chairman and Managing Director, Amrapali Group, were among those present.



Mohammad Kaif flagging off 'Polio Walkathon'.

Indian, Afghan cricketers join hands for polio eradication

Indian cricketers Virender Sehwag, Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh and Rohit Sharma met Afghanistan team members and exchanged cricket bats signed by both T20 teams, as symbols of both countries' commitment to end polio. These bats will be presented to the governments of Afghanistan and India to underline cricketers' support to the fight against polio. During the India vs. Afghanistan match, messages on polio were displayed in English, Hindi and Pashto on the electronic advertising boards and electronic scoreboard, calling on parents to immunize their children against polio.



India and Afghanistan cricketers swapping signed bats during T-20 to support polio eradication.

Cycle Rally rolls out polio message in Patna

A colorful cycle rally rolled out on the streets of Patna on



Food and Consumer Protection Minister Mr Shyam Rajak flagging off the cycle rally.

September 9, the sub-national polio immunization day, to spread the message for polio eradication. Donning polio caps and carrying placards with polio messages, over 50 students from Arya Kanya High School and Ravindra Balika Vidyalaya joined the cycle rally.

Bihar Food and Consumer Protection Minister, Mr Shyam Rajak, flagged off the rally in the presence of officials from the state health department and partners. Organized in partnership with Aidmatrix, the rally commenced from Kargil Chowk in Gandhi Maidan and made its way through the city thoroughfares reminding parents to immunize their children against polio during the polio campaign.

DID YOU KNOW ?

- ◆ Polio is a vaccine-preventable disease. Nearly 99 percent of the disease has been eliminated from the world. Today, there are only a small number of polio cases in some countries, a milestone for the first time ever in history.
- ◆ China has completed a year without reporting any case of wild poliovirus. In 2011, polio from Pakistan had infected China to cause an outbreak in the southern region.
- ◆ In 1988, when the global fight against polio began, there were 125 countries where polio raged. Today, there are only three: Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Medical students support polio drive in Bhagalpur

In Bhagalpur, the SMNet team engaged medical students of JLN Medical College, for community mobilization during polio vaccination rounds. There is community resistance in some pockets of the district, coupled with a high incidence of sickness in children. The student doctors interacted with families when vaccination teams went on polio rounds. Counseling by the young, enthusiastic medical students has been extremely effective in converting resistant families. Refusals have come down, particularly in the two blocks, Jagdishpur and Urban.



Medical students counseling a resistant family for polio vaccination.

Nomadic children receive routine immunization in Saharsa

One of the greatest challenges faced by the polio programme is tracking mobile families. In Saharsa district in the Kosi sub-region in Bihar, there is a large Nomadic community. In September during the RI week, the SMNet team identified these families and organized immunization rounds. All children were provided with routine immunization and pregnant women received shots as well. Through these interventions, SMNet and polio partners are playing a pivotal role in providing access to marginalized and underserved communities to ensure high levels of immunization.



Nomadic children get routine immunization at Gausala campus, Bariahi in Saharsa Sadar.

STAR MOBILIZER



A confident smiling Sabiya is the face of polio eradication in India.

25-year-old Sabiya has been working as a CMC in the high-risk Jeevangarh, a predominantly Muslim suburb of Aligarh in western UP. "When I joined four years back, I met this family which kept on resisting vaccinating their children. I did not give up until I convinced them about the benefits of the vaccine and got their child vaccinated," recalls Sabiya. Sabiya counsels parents and caregivers during house-to-house visits and group meetings. She also lists all children under five years, tracks expectant mothers and newborns, and liaises with religious leaders and other influencers in the area. Sabiya also mobilizes the community on routine immunization, hygiene and sanitation, hand washing with soap, exclusive breastfeeding for first six months of a child's life and diarrhea management through the use of zinc and ORS.

The immense efforts of Sabiya and SMNet workers have borne fruit. The number of polio cases in Aligarh has dropped from 30 in 2001 to 9 in 2009 and none since 2010. Far from being complacent, Sabiya feels even more motivated to work harder to ensure that the community she works with does not report any case of poliovirus ever again.

Millions reached with polio messages on Eid in Uttar Pradesh

A series of communication interventions was implemented in 44 high-risk districts, mostly in western Uttar Pradesh, during the holy month of Ramadan. Advocacy for polio vaccination was done when people gathered to offer namaz (prayers). Banners, posters and leaflets were strategically placed and distributed at over 1200 Idgahs (mosques). Religious leaders endorsed the communication materials which significantly helped in countering resistance among the community. The critical high-risk districts of Moradabad, Meerut and Aligarh reported the highest number of 'taqreers' or lectures held, indicating that communication efforts had helped consolidate community support and religious ownership of the polio programme.



A taqreer (lecture) on polio immunization taking place in a mosque.

QUOTABLE

"This decisive moment is a matter of health and justice. Every child should have the right to start life with equal protection from this disease. That's why eradicating polio is a top priority."

Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General

POLIO FACTS

- The risk of polio persists as long as there is poliovirus anywhere in the world. Unprotected children are at risk of getting the disease. Polio can be prevented by administering oral polio vaccine (OPV) to children at every available opportunity – polio campaigns and routine immunization days.
- Good hygiene and sanitation, exclusively breastfeeding children up to 6 months and managing diarrhea through ORS and zinc supplementation helps improve child's health and immunity to fight diseases, including polio.