

THE POLIO ERADICATION

MOBILIZER



मेरे बच्चे को दो बूँद, हर बार

unicef

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Over 1000 join 'Polio Marathon' in Bhagalpur, Bihar

A polio marathon was held in Bhagalpur on 7th of April to commemorate the last mile in the fight against Polio. Over 1000 participants, ranging from students, NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, teachers, Rotarians, health officials and the general public, participated in the run, reflecting their true spirit of camaraderie and deep commitment to the cause.

Two days prior to the event, a signature campaign and spot polls were carried out. More than 500 citizens pledged their support to eradicate polio.

The marathon was organized by SMNet Bhagalpur and was supported by telecom major Idea Cellular and the popular radio station Radio Active FM. Flagged off by acting Civil Surgeon, Dr C. P. Singh, the run highlighted the polio programme successfully.



Dr C. P. Singh, acting Civil Surgeon, Bhagalpur flagging off Polio Marathon.

Cricketer Shahid Afridi to be face of Pakistan's polio campaign

Popular cricket superstar, Shahid Afridi, will now wear a new hat – that of a “Polio Champion” for his country. UNICEF has roped him in to promote polio vaccination in Pakistan. The aim is to ensure that 34 million children are vaccinated. In his first statement in his new role, Afridi, who hails from Khyber, where 9 cases were reported last year, said: “Every child is a gift of Allah, so I will do my best to take the message to every doorstep. Reaching every child, every time with polio vaccine is not only necessary, it is our duty. This disease can not deter us, we will defeat it”.



Cricketer Shahid Afridi calling on parents for polio vaccination.

DID YOU KNOW ?

- ◆ On 21 June, WHO's European Region marked 10 years of remaining polio-free. Today, 53 countries that make up the region remain polio-free.
- ◆ Angola has completed a year without reporting any case of wild poliovirus.
- ◆ One in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis, usually in the legs. The virus enters the blood stream and invades the central nervous system. As it multiplies, the virus destroys the nerve cells that activate muscles. The affected muscles are no longer functional and the limb becomes floppy and lifeless – a condition known as acute flaccid paralysis (AFP).

'Global Poverty Project' team visits India

The Global Poverty Project (GPP) team visited Ghaziabad, in Uttar Pradesh, and Patna, in Bihar to observe

first-hand the remarkable work undertaken by UNICEF's Social Mobilization Network in the fight against polio.

The team observed booth day vaccination in Ghaziabad on 17 June and interacted with the district authorities, local influencers, religious leaders, elected representatives, community leaders and also polio afflicted children and their parents. In Patna, the team observed house-to-house polio vaccination and also visited brick kilns, which are in focus due to high-risk migrant populations.

GPP works with partners like UNICEF to support the polio eradication programme globally and is focusing on making polio eradication a top agenda for the world leaders.



GPP team with 'bulawa toli' children in Ghaziabad.

Maulana motivates families for polio vaccination in Bihar

Maulana Asharfi, the Imam of Jama Masjid in Samastipur, Bihar, has been actively involved in the polio eradication programme. He regularly accompanies the SMNet Mobilizer to high-risk areas and appeals to resistant families to get their children vaccinated for polio. In 2010, he played a major role in resolving a mass refusal of polio vaccine by more than 200 families. Since then, there have been no refusals in this area. He says, "My life is devoted for children, for their health, education and well-being".



Maulana Asharfi flagging off a polio rally.

Afghan polio team observes India Programme

A delegation from Afghanistan recently visited Moradabad to understand how polio was tackled. Indian authorities mapped out the history of interventions for the delegation. Participating in an immunization drive at Karola, where hundreds of children were vaccinated, the delegation observed how the district administration worked closely with parents and partners like WHO-NPSP, UNICEF and Rotary. The Afghanistan delegation appreciated India's efforts. "In Afghanistan, there are three provinces where we still have polio cases. We are very much impressed with your community engagement and plan to implement some of the measures in Afghanistan," said Carmen Garrigos-Perez, UNICEF Afghanistan Polio Team leader.



Afghanistan team with polio partners and children in Moradabad.

STAR MOBILIZER



Sangeeta (first from right) counseling a family on polio vaccination.

Sangeeta Kaur is a CMC working in the polio high-risk area of Sonvarsa in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. When she joined SMNet in 2009, she struggled with widespread reluctance to the oral polio vaccine due to misconceptions. Routine immunization was affected as well. But Sangeeta did not give up. Through her persistent efforts, she built a relationship of trust with the community including migrant families. She counsels mothers on health and nutritional issues, such as benefits of institutional delivery, exclusive breastfeeding for newborns, the importance of routine immunization and the use of zinc and ORS to manage diarrhea.

Her inter-personal communication skills ensured parents and caregivers understood key facts about polio and the risks of not immunizing their children. One such parent was Riyazuddin, who resisted. Sangeeta roped in a local influencer to counsel him. When Riyazuddin's child was unwell, she took the child for treatment to the local doctor. Riyazuddin was convinced that Sangeeta had the well-being of his child at heart and since then has immunized his child in every round. Today there are no resistant families in her area.

Nomadic children get routine immunization in Vaishali, Bihar

Bijepura village in Patepur block of Vaishali district, Bihar is home to 59 nomadic families who refused routine immunization for their children due to several myths and misconceptions. To convince them about the importance of immunization, the SMNet team regularly visited the families and conducted group meetings. They also solicited the support of the health, ICDS and Panchayat representatives in counseling the resistant families. With its persistent efforts, the SMNet not only vaccinated 48 children but also successfully coordinated with the health department to ensure that these children received routine immunization wherever they go. All nomadic sites are now included in the routine immunization micro-plan.



A routine immunization session at nomadic settlement in Bihar.

QUOTABLE

"We have come so far in the battle against this crippling disease. We can now make history - or later be condemned by history for failing. Our efforts are at risk until every child is fully immunized against polio."

Anthony Lake
Executive Director, UNICEF

POLIO FACTS

A majority of children develop adequate protection to poliovirus, but there are some who due to factors like malnutrition, diarrhea and other health issues, require higher number of doses to be protected against the virus. As long as poliovirus transmission is ongoing, all children till 5 years need to be repeatedly immunized at every available opportunity, both in routine immunization and polio campaigns.