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EDITORIAL



October is an important tryst with Rotary's destiny, World Polio Day, on 24th October. The pledge taken by Rotary three decades back holds as much importance today as it did then and this is because of the fact that we haven't been able to eradicate the dreaded disease even after relentlessly trying to do so after so many years. The reason is multifarious; it has had to do with geopolitical, ethnic, religious, administrative reasons and more importantly human errors. Though we pride ourselves with the fact that world is 99% free of polio but it is that 1% which can come back like a tsunami if we are off guard and that is exactly a fear that is looming large on us. Low levels of immunity and surveillance leave countries at risk of polio returning. To ensure that every country stays free from polio, it is essential to reach every child with polio vaccines and to strengthen disease surveillance.

Let the World Polio Day not remain just a photo opportunity or a selfie moment for Rotarians. I was browsing through the recent World Polio Day program with the RI President in Kolkata and what was very disconcerting was the complete lack of media presence and as a result a very poor public outreach exercise, it makes very little sense to have a Rally which does not connect with the masses. It has to be externalisation and not internalisation of public campaigns and if the people are not part of such campaigns or stake holders are limited to us it shall be difficult to succeed.

But with deepavali setting in let us look forward to the festival lights to illuminate the lives of those in perpetual darkness and let Rotarians be the ambassadors of light, enjoy the festival and look forward with hope!

Subhojit Roy

Rotary's World Polio Day Program Looks toward Polio Eradication's Endgame

by Ryan Hyland



Rotary's goal of ridding the world of polio is within reach, global health experts said during the 2021 World Polio Day Online Global Update on 24 October. The 30-minute program, "Delivering on our Promise of a Polio-Free World," provided encouraging information about the progress and remaining challenges in the fight to end polio.

So far in 2021, only two cases of wild polio have been reported — the lowest circulation of the disease ever — with one infection each in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the two countries where polio remains endemic.

During a Q&A session, Dr. Hamid Jafari, director for the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Region, attributed the low case count to several factors. He said these include mass polio vaccination campaigns resuming after the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the natural immunity induced by the wild polio outbreaks of previous years, and the restrictions on travel and population

movement that also were due to the pandemic.

"This is truly unprecedented that we are seeing this decline simultaneously in the two countries," Jafari said.

He added that the low case count provides a window of opportunity for health workers, but cautioned that a resurgence of the poliovirus is possible since summer is the high polio transmission season. "So this is the time to really press hard in making use of the opportunity that presents itself now," he told Q&A host Jeffrey Kluger, editor at large for Time magazine.

Jafari also addressed the challenges of political change and security concerns in Afghanistan and explained that the polio program there is used to adapting operationally during uncertainty. "Currently we do see opportunities coming up as well, so that we may have access to all parts of Afghanistan for implementing mass vaccination campaigns," he said.

According to the WHO and UNICEF, nationwide house-to-house polio vaccinations will resume in Afghanistan in early November, providing access to children in areas where campaigns had been banned for the last three years.

"You know with the evolving situation in Afghanistan, it is of course very, very important that we partners maintain our neutrality and impartiality of the polio eradication program," Jafari added. "As always, we will continue to work with all parties."

Mohammad Ishaq Niazmand, chair of Rotary's Afghanistan PolioPlus Committee, echoed Jafari's sentiments in a video address with his counterpart for Pakistan, Aziz Memon.

Niazmand said of Afghanistan, "Rotary and our partners are working with all stakeholders to ensure that polio eradication remains a top priority, even in the midst of change. Work is underway to ensure that children have access to lifesaving polio [vaccines] and other childhood vaccines."

Memon, a Rotary Foundation trustee and chair of the Pakistan PolioPlus Committee, said Rotary continues to build trust with government, community, and religious leaders. "By bringing broader health services to children and families alongside polio vaccinations, we're ensuring better health care and greater vaccine acceptance," he said.

Strategies for the future

This year, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) announced a new five-year strategy for 2022-26 to end all polioviruses, including tackling the persistent transmission of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus. Rotary and our GPEI partners identified the remaining obstacles to polio

eradication and developed approaches to reaching the goal. The plan aims to achieve and sustain a polio-free world through a focus on implementation and accountability while using innovative methods and tools.

This is truly unprecedented that we are seeing this decline simultaneously in the two countries.

Dr. Hamid Jafari

Director for WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region

The emphasis will be on decreasing the response time to any outbreak, increasing vaccine demand, increasing access to health care and vaccines, transitioning toward government ownership of vaccination programs, and improving decision-making and accountability.

"Some of the most polio-endemic communities are also the ones that suffer from [a] lack of basic health and civic services," Jafari said. The goal, he said, is a "better alignment and integration with other basic health and civic services in a way that the polio program is seen as a more integrated approach to vaccination."

He added that in some communities, children are still missed because of gaps in the way vaccination campaigns are conducted or because of vaccine hesitancy. "This new strategy speaks to engaging the communities with new approaches, new strategies, partnering with communities, [and] building new alliances with these communities," Jafari said.

The World Polio Day program featured global health experts addressing the new strategy's tactic of broadening distribution of a new vaccine to address outbreaks of cVDPV2, a circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus. This novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2) protects children against polio while being more genetically stable and less likely to regain strength and cause the vaccine-derived polio. It has already been introduced in several African countries, including Benin, Chad, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone.

This novel oral polio vaccine "is a powerful example of the polio program's innovation to overcome the toughest challenges," said Simona Zipursky, senior adviser to the polio director of WHO. "Partners, scientists, and leaders from around the world made nOPV2 possible. This is the kind of collaboration that will help end polio for good."

This year's program included a powerful video of polio health workers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as Rotary members sharing their World Polio Day projects and events to raise awareness for polio eradication.

Rotary Honours 6 members as People of Action: Champions of Girls' Empowerment

Rotary International honored six members as People of Action: Champions of Girls' Empowerment on 11 October, the International Day of the Girl Child. This distinction recognizes the honorees' commitment to improving girls' access to education, health, and sanitation and hygiene resources, as well as their work to create environments where girls can flourish. Empowering girls is one of RI President Shekhar Mehta's key initiatives, and he is encouraging clubs and districts to consider how they can accomplish this through all of their service projects this year.

The honorees will also be recognized at Rotary Day at UNICEF in March.



Momtaz Chowdhury

Rotary Club of Dhaka Mavericks, Bangladesh

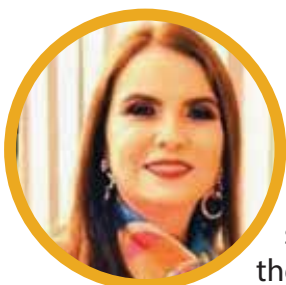
Momtaz Chowdhury is vice president of the Institution for Shelter, Training, and Development of Underprivileged Girls in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which provides housing, food, and education for girls through secondary school. The organization offers vocational training and, when the girls graduate, job placement assistance.

Chowdhury has also helped girls through the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and her family's own educational philanthropy projects. Chowdhury believes that instilling leadership and entrepreneurial skills in girls benefits them as well as their communities, which is why she works with banks to provide flexible loans for female entrepreneurs. She also collaborates with banks to provide small business aid to women who have lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mildred Fragante

Rotary Club of Cubao Metro Aurora, Quezon City, Philippines

Mildred Fragante has worked tirelessly in her career to raise awareness of abuse of women and children. She was a producer for Women's Desk, a national TV program that collaborated with the Women and Children Protection Center on stories about domestic abuse. Fragante also founded Aurora, a resource and education program that works to empower girls, and Reconnect, a program that pairs journalists and authors with survivors of abuse so that the writers can better tell these stories. And her club used a Rotary Foundation global grant to renovate a community shelter for abused girls in 2018.



Elaine Ruiz

Rotary Club of Senador Guiomard, Acre, Brazil

Elaine Ruiz is the director of Sewing the Future, a project that offers professional training to young women in the criminal justice system. It trains girls to become seamstresses, artisans, and service workers, which helps them find work after they're released and reduces their chances of being convicted of crimes again. Ruiz serves as a liaison between the girls and the justice system and plays an integral part in establishing financial partnerships in the community.

Lydiah Njoroge

Rotary Club of Kiambu, Kenya

Lydiah Njoroge is the program manager for Freedom for Girls at HEART (Health Education Africa Resource Team), where she has directly affected the lives of almost 300,000 girls in Kenya and other parts of East Africa by providing hygiene products to keep them healthy and in school. Njoroge has conducted extensive research on how menstrual concerns affect girls' access to education. She has worked with Rotary clubs both in the U.S. and Kenya and with Procter & Gamble's Always Keeping Girls in School initiative as well as facilitates relationships with partners to create programs that provide girls with resources and helps them get an education. This program has reached girls in more than 500 schools and trained more than 10,000 teachers in mentoring female students.



Srinidhi S.U.

Rotaract Club of Bangalore Seshadripuram, Karnataka, India

Srinidhi S.U. has devoted his Rotaract work to the health needs of women and girls in his community. He served as the project chair for a menstrual hygiene management session in 2018 and later founded a local group of Project Sthree to address women's health concerns, including menstrual hygiene, thyroid and breast cancer, and HPV. The initiative also provides leadership and safety training. He has spoken and collaborated with Red Dot Talks, which encourages men to discuss menstrual issues. His work has given more than 5,000 girls a greater awareness of menstrual hygiene.



Motalib Weijters

Rotary Club of Uden, The Netherlands

Motalib Weijters, who was adopted by Dutch parents, knew very little about his biological family or about life in their home country of Bangladesh. In 1994, he reconnected with his birth family, and he saw the needs of people in their area. He worked on water and sanitation projects in Bangladesh and later founded a clinic for mothers and children. He also established a cervical and breast cancer treatment center that offers services to women and girls in need. These initiatives have helped more than 21,000 people. The clinics are financially sustained by support from nongovernmental organizations and Rotary grant projects carried out by clubs in the Netherlands and Bangladesh.



RI District 3291 News

World Polio Day





On 24th October RI President Shekhar Mehta led a car and motorcycle rally which started from Rotary Sadan, with nearly 100 rotary clubs participated, he was accompanied by DG Prabir Chatterjee, END POLIO NOW Coordinator PDG Shyamashree Sen, DPPC PDG Uttam Ganguli and other dignitaries. A total 78 CARS and 26 Motor Bikes took part. RC Calcutta Metro City was represented by IPP Sunando Sen, PE Amrita Basu, Rtn Debankur Saha and club guest Dr Susanta Banerjee.

The evening witnessed a multi District webinar on Polio with speakers which included PRID Ashok Mahajan, PDG Shyamashree Sen, PDG Uttam Ganguli, who moderated the program, PDG Debasish Mitra and DG Prabir Chatterjee.

Tejaswini Samman 2021 Award



Rotary Club of Calcutta Ayyana organized Tejaswini Samman to Durga Puja committees organized, initiated and helmed by women. The prizes were given away by DG Prabir Chatterjee and PDG Shyamashree Sen and the club which co hosted by Rotary Club of Calcutta Metro City which was also represented by PE Rtn Amrita Basu who was also a judge for the event.

Senior Citizen's Puja Parkrama

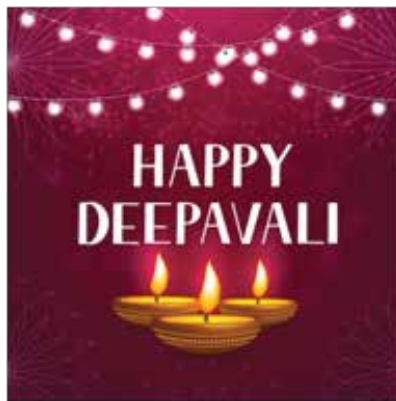


RC Calcutta Metro City along with other clubs hosted a senior citizen's puja parikrama with 45 senior women. They were taken around puja pandals maintaining the COVID protocols. They were provided with new sarees, toiletries and lunch packets and the program was attended by IPP Rtn Sunando Sen on behalf of the club. Hon'ble Minister Dr Shashi Panja was the chief guest.



Contributed by
IPP Rtn Sunando Sen

Coming up...



Greetings!

Happy Birthday

- Nirjhar Bhaduri for 4th November!
- Shubhankar Mondal for 10th November!
- Preetam Ghosh for 13th November!

Happy Anniversary

- Nausheen & Md Firoz for 14th November!