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INDIA

COMMUNICATION UPDATE



Dalai Lama launches Bivalent Oral Polio Vaccine in Bodhgaya (Bihar)

His Holiness the Dalai Lama launched the first National Immunization Day of 2010, in Bodhgaya, Bihar, together with the Principal Secretary Health for the State of Bihar. The January event was the first time the Dalai Lama participated in a polio vaccination campaign in India, and the Tibetan spiritual leader drew a multitude of parents and children eager to receive the two drops of OPV and a blessing. The bivalent vaccine, recommended by the India Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) in November 2009, is expected to help India combat both the wild polio virus Type One (WPV1) and Type Three (WPV3) more effectively in the endemic states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

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Young artists lend their creativity to help design new Polio IEC materials

The 2010-2013 Communication strategy has been launched based on recent epidemiology and strategic operational shifts in the polio campaign. The Polio partners have begun the process of developing new IEC materials to implement the strategy. The first step

of this process has been to initiate a 'National IEC Design Workshop', which sought to bring in young artists who could inject renewed enthusiasm and ideas into the campaign. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organized the workshop in December 2009, together

with UNICEF and in close consultation with WHO/NPSP. Thirty post graduate students of fine arts and copywriters from eminent design schools and institutes across the country participated in the workshop.

The workshop familiarized the young artists with basic behaviour change communication concepts, and then explained the leading risk-factors and barriers to polio eradication, and the 2010-2013 communication strategy, which focuses on targeting mobile populations with messages on polio, as well as expanding messages to all target groups to improve Routine Immunization, sanitation and hygiene, the management and prevention of diarrhoea, and exclusive breastfeeding practices.

"The novelty of this workshop is that young artists and creative minds have come together to design and produce innovative IEC material under polio communication. This will not only help 'mitigate' the natural fatigue factors that have set-in among communities with the same/repetitive IEC material but bring a fresh impetus to the campaign."

Dr. Sunil D Khaparde
Deputy Commissioner, MOHFW, GOI.

More than half of the young participants were from the endemic states of UP and Bihar. As part of the workshop, the participants visited a nearby migrant



Participants at the National IEC Design workshop, December 2009.



dwelling so that they could see the hardest-to reach communities: migrants, nomads and other vulnerable populations.

Young artists worked together with experts from Government, NPSP/WHO and UNICEF as well as copywriters to develop and revise innovative designs.

As many as 70 designs were developed by the participants and were reviewed by a panel of resource persons. The panel cleared a set of materials to serve as a resource-bank for the next phase of the campaign, which will be further conceptualised by a professional advertising agency. While the comprehensive campaign is finalized and rolled out, the Government of India intends to use

Sharing her experience during the workshop, **Anupama Kumari**, an MFA student from Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi said,

"The workshop has enhanced our knowledge on polio and related risk-factors and inspired us to design innovative and cutting-edge IEC material that would motivate the community for greater acceptance of the programme and reach out to hitherto un-reached and left out populations."

these draft communication materials through mobile exhibits, to ensure all parents understand the significance of polio vaccination.

Polio communication redefines airwave culture

'Masoom Muskaan'* as the name suggests brings to life the innocent smiling face of a child. It is a series of thirty two entertainment-based audio capsules designed by UNICEF, in partnership with National Polio Surveillance Project (WHO), under the aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Entertainment education programming was used for these twenty eight minute capsules to weave messages on polio and associated health issues in a captivating story line. O.P. Rathore, a popular and well known radio jockey, engages the emotions as well as the intellect of the listener in *Masoom Muskaan*, inspiring people to think about the scourge of polio – its debilitating effect on children - and on their attitudes and prejudices towards polio vaccination. It presents everyday people, their true stories through testimonials, interviews and questions & answers. It also includes excerpts from role models who can inspire the audience to immunize their children up to 5 years of age every time. 'Masoom Muskaan', interspersed with popular Hindi film songs, entertains the audience while simultaneously addressing various elements of polio transmission, impacts of the disease, and vaccination schedules. Scheduled for broadcast at prime-time over 3 FM stations of North India (Delhi, Lucknow and Jalandhar), 'Masoom Muskaan' contributes to stimulate behaviour change in the community and aims to create renewed momentum to eradicate polio in India.

*Innocent smile



A critical link to polio eradication:

Empowering Panchayats for effective community engagement in Kosi

The Polio communication programme has been increasingly recognizing the importance of engaging grassroots functionaries and elected members such as Panchayati Raj Institutions

(PRIs) to support polio eradication in India. In December 2009, UNICEF Bihar State Office and WHO/NPSP, in collaboration with the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on

Population and Development (IAPPD), piloted a "Capacity Development and Skill Building Workshop" for PRIs in the high-risk Kosi River district of Saharsa.

The advocacy workshop aimed at motivating PRIs to play a more proactive role to disseminate polio - related information in the community and mobilize them to ensure that all children up to age five years are vaccinated each time OPV is offered. A day-long programme was devised to foster enhanced participation of PRI members through knowledge sharing and participatory discussion to jointly identify the risk factors surrounding polio and barriers to vaccination. Discussions with technical experts enabled the elected representatives to understand the mode of transmission of the polio virus and the underlying reasons precipitating its spread, such as the practice of open defecation, faecal contamination of drinking water, malnutrition and low routine immunization resulting in overall low immunity among children and their increased susceptibility to polio virus.

Mr. Surinder Yadav, Chairman, District Zila Parishad exhorted the elected representatives to make firm commitments and ensure that action plans are implemented with utmost sincerity to eradicate polio from Saharsa district. As a mark of solidarity, all the PRI members raised their hands and pledged their commitment towards the cause.

The participants were also briefed on the numerous challenges facing the endemic states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and the rationale for labelling certain pockets as 'high risk areas'. It was explained that the Kosi river basin of Bihar was one example of a 'high risk area' marked by geographic isolation, flooding and shifting settlements, making it a challenge to identify and track each child under 5 years in these areas.

Specific action-plans for future work with the Social Mobilization Network (SMNet) and polio programme



The workshop was inaugurated by District Collector Saharsa Mr. R. Lakshman and the Chairman Zila Panchayat Saharsa, Mr. Surinder Yadav. Ms. Nilam Bhagat, Deputy Chairman Zila Panchayat was also present.



Participants in the One-day Orientation workshop of PRI Members on Polio Eradication, December 2009, Saharsa (Bihar).

partners were developed in the workshop by PRIs. The participants came up with substantive suggestions of activities they would undertake in their respective communities/ wards and committed to promote the non-negotiable message of *"do boond zindagi ki, har baccha, har baar"* (two drops of life, every child, every time), and over-arching messages on

sanitation and hygiene simultaneously. Participants committed to help make their area polio-free by actively organizing community meetings and rallies, participating in Village Health and Nutrition Days, community meetings, identifying left out children and motivating 'influencers' to help persuade community members to vaccinate their children.

More than 160 participants attended the workshop, including 81 elected representatives of village panchayats from Saharsa district along with district/ block officials and frontline functionaries of ICDS. Mr. R. Lakshmana (District Collector, Saharsa), Mr. Sita Chaudhary (Deputy Development Commissioner), Dr. Azad Singh Prasad (Civil Surgeon), Mr. Surinder Yadav

(Chairman Zila Parishad), Ms. Nilam Bhagat (Deputy Chairman, Zila Parishad) and representatives from UNICEF and WHO/NPSP were among the dignitaries present during the workshop. The initiative evoked a large participation of Government officials and the local media, thus enhancing programme visibility and local-ownership of the polio eradication programme.

A visit to polio high risk slums in Mumbai:

A reality check by Prasar Bharati producers and writers

Since 2008, when a wild polio virus type one (WPV1) case surfaced in Mumbai, slums like Machhimar Nagar, Ambedkar Nagar, Ganesh Murthy Nagar and Geeta Nagar, have been a key focus area for the polio programme: approximately 2.7 million* children under 5 are immunized during SNID in Maharashtra. With the most recent P1 case reported in Nasik district, communication efforts in Maharashtra are now even more critical. These areas are home to a large number of migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with poor sanitation facilities and no clean drinking water. The Government of India and the respective State governments work to ensure that children of these migratory population are vaccinated during each SNID. The districts under close polio surveillance are Thane, Greater Mumbai, Amarvati, Beed, Sangli, Nasik, Nanded and Jalgaon.

To maintain focus on Maharashtra, UNICEF held a *Capacity Development and Skills Building Workshop for Prasar Bharati producers and writers* in Mumbai, which gave participants

an opportunity to observe the living conditions in such slums and harness knowledge on media habits of the residents. Television was found to be the most popular medium with radio coming a close second.

Walking through the lanes of the slum areas, journalists found mixed conditions. In *Machhimar Nagar*, clean houses, covered gutters, and communal toilets were identified. There was a high level of awareness regarding routine immunization and polio due to health workers' frequent visits. Television was the primary source of mass media awareness.

Alternatively, in *Ambedkar Nagar and Ganesh Murthy Nagar*, the community displayed antagonism towards the government and its programmes due to their perceived lack of adequate facilities. Open defecation was common, with residents lacking knowledge about the importance of safe faecal disposal or how to identify clean drinking water. Dissatisfied with these prevailing conditions, community members in

Ambedkar Nagar have started using resistance to polio vaccination to negotiate additional developmental gains. But their knowledge of polio and the importance of OPV vaccination remains high. When a group of children were asked by the journalists if they knew about polio, one child's reply was, "In the film, *Taare Zameen Par*, Ishaan's friend was suffering from polio; he must have missed the polio drops when he was young."

Following the field visit, participants from All India Radio and Doordarshan brainstormed about the kind of programmes that could be generated to get polio and polio plus across more effectively to these communities. A variety of communication materials in the form of song, jingles, drama, features, talk shows, adverts were presented at the end of the training to the panel of academics, public health, broadcast and media critics. This continuing initiative is expected to foster enhanced advocacy and behaviour change communication programmes on polio and associated issues.

*Source: National Polio Surveillance Project

Profile of a Polio Fighter:

Dr. Bilal Ahmed

"It pains me to see that our children still suffer from polio" says Dr. Bilal Ahmed, a private doctor working among the most resistant families among the Muslim community in Patna, Bihar. A senior consultant with the "Maryam Hospital", run by the head of the Muslim sect "Ahle Hadees," Dr. Ahmed is greatly respected by the people in the local community and thus has motivated many families to opt for polio vaccination.

In 2009, the proportion of cases among Underserved Minority Muslims in Bihar was the lowest it has ever been, at 24%, compared to 43% in 2005. Influencers who travel with vaccination teams during polio rounds convincing resistant parents to give OPV are instrumental to this success.

Working closely with the Social Mobilization Network (SMNet) team in Patna, Dr. Ahmed actively campaigns for the programme, taking a lead role in promoting private practitioners' partnership with the polio programme. With his support an orientation workshop for medical doctors was organized by

the SMNet in February 2010. More than 23 leading paediatricians participated in the sensitization process and made a commitment to give their full support during each polio round.

During the SIA (Supplemental Immunization Activity) rounds Dr. Ahmed accompanies the SMNet team at the vaccination sites. In the Gulzarbagh area of Bihar, he went house to house visiting the families that had refused and successfully convinced many of them to immunize their children. In Bihar, resistance to the oral polio vaccine (OPV) exists not only in the lower socio-economic category, but also amongst those better off and educated. Children of such families are reached and immunized with Dr. Ahmed's vital support.

The SMNet has devised a strategy to reach families from higher socio-economic strata that includes counselling for refusal families with the help of local family doctors, stamping each prescription with polio message, and ensuring clinics display IEC materials in the local language.

Influencers like Dr. Ahmed are playing a significant role in their communities. The unwavering commitment, dedication and support

of people like him has helped make the polio programme successful and ensured sustained mobilization of the community.



Dr. Ahmed administering polio drops to a child of a high profile resistant family in Bihar.