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Nigeria is on the brink of eliminating polio, thanks to women

By Shamard Charles, MD, Aug. 1, 2019

UNICEF and volunteers, mostly young mothers, have spearheaded vaccination efforts that many experts believe will soon lead to a polio-free Nigeria.



Aisha Shuaibu Mohammad holds the oral and inject-able polio vaccines that many women throughout Nigeria have used to almost eliminate the disease. Shamard Charles / NBC News

KANO, Nigeria, Amina Anas wanted more information before getting her baby boy vaccinated against polio.

Anas, who lives in a village in northern Nigeria, spoke to other women in the community about her concerns. Ultimately, Aisha Shuaibu Mohammad, a UNICEF-trained volunteer, was able to convince her.

Mohammad is one of hundreds of Nigerian women who have spearheaded the country's fight against polio by becoming vaccinators.

The women are close to being able to declare victory: Aug. 21 will mark three years since Nigeria's last case of polio, said Dr. Anis Siddique, UNICEF's chief of communication for development who led the polio team. In the northern state of Kano, where Anas lives, there hasn't been a case in five years, Siddique said.

Siddique is cautiously optimistic that the country will receive World Health Organization certification for polio eradication in October - a country must go three years without a case, and the WHO routinely waits two months after the three-year mark to make an official declaration, he said.

This won't be the first time Nigeria has been declared polio-free. In 2015, the WHO declared that polio had been eliminated, but a 2016 outbreak wiped out the designation.

Efforts on the ground

To eliminate polio, women, mostly young mothers, have gone door-to-door, slipping drops of polio vaccine under the tongues of as many as 30 million Nigerian children. The volunteers work with UNICEF and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and have received clinical training to properly administer the vaccine.

In Nigeria, the vast majority of vaccinators are women. That's crucial to ensuring that vaccines reach every child, because men, with the exception of husbands and close male family members, are prevented from entering households. This rule is strictly enforced in the northern and middle belt regions of Nigeria, where Islam predominates.



A group of volunteer community mobilizers, all women, getting trained by a senior member of the team Shamard Charles / NBC

Mohammad, the UNICEF-trained volunteer, admitted that it's impossible to convince every woman to vaccinate her children, but said that she sees successful cases every day.

"Once we talk to women like Amina, they usually open up. We not only give vaccines ... we discuss their fears about the medicine, proper hygiene and sanitation, and even prenatal care," Mohammad told NBC News.

She said that with the help of volunteer community members, "we send reminders every Monday to all new mothers in the community that there will be a vaccine clinic the following day. We are here every Tuesday."



Aisha Shuaibu Mohammad, a vaccinator trained by UNICEF volunteer community leaders, discusses vaccine safety with, Amina Anas Shamard Charles / NBC News

As in the United States, there's some skepticism surrounding vaccines in Nigeria. But the similarities end there: Some anti-vaccination myths in Nigeria are put forth by the violent militant group Boko Haram, and volunteers may be the target of violence. In 2013, two Kano vaccination teams were murdered.

But Michael Galway, deputy director of the Polio Team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said that opposition to vaccines is no longer as big a challenge as it once was. Now, only 1 percent of people are not getting vaccinated because they refuse the vaccination, Galway said.

More challenging is simply reaching people. Large nomadic populations live along Nigeria's borders. Last year, the WHO renewed efforts to vaccinate children regularly crossing into and out of the country by supporting the government in an initiative to improve vaccination efforts in the northwest region of the country.

Preventing polio

Alasan Isa, the village head of a small rural community in Minjibir, Nigeria, said that seeing the devastating effects of polio has led him to encourage women to become volunteers and vaccinators.



Alasan Isa, the village head of 1,200 households in the Malam Meladi Minjibir community in Kano, Nigeria
Shamard Charles / NBC News

"I have seen how even one case of polio can devastate a community. I don't ever want to see polio again ... a child with paralytic polio cannot move and often they cannot work in the future. It's not a way to live," Isa said.

In many parts of Nigeria, the polio vaccine is given orally, as drops under the tongue. This form of the vaccine is easy to administer unlike an injection, it can be given by anyone. However, because the oral vaccine uses a live version of the virus, it carries the very small risk that the virus can mutate and cause disease, the WHO says. These cases only occur in areas where overall vaccination rates are very low, leaving people susceptible to the virus.

Siddique, of UNICEF, stressed that the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the small risk.

When outbreaks of so-called vaccine-derived polio do occur, they are kept under control and generally do not cause paralysis, Galway noted. What's more, these cases should not take away from the milestone that may soon be reached.

"Providing these vaccines is part of our long-standing commitment to child survival," Galway said. "It takes meticulous state level programs to interrupt transmission. In 2016, we almost reached a polio-free level in Nigeria, but we fell short. This time, I hope we can declare that Africa is certified as free of polio."

Gosha-e-Ilm: A Ray of Hope

Posted on August 20, 2019 by Ebadat-ur-Rehman Babar, 2019-20 secretary, Rotaract Club of Faisalabad, Pakistan



Faisalabad Rotaract club members lead an evening class for child laborers

Our idea started back in 2018, when I and two other members of my Rotaract club began looking for an innovative, sustainable project. We wanted to submit an entry for the Rotaract Outstanding Project Awards and we came up with an idea of starting a school for child laborers who do not have enough resources for their education.

According to a survey conducted by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, out of the estimated 40 million children in Pakistan, approximately 19 million are working as child laborers, the majority of those living in slum areas. These kids can't even write their own name. Education is the key to success. So, we prepared a project proposal and submitted it to the rest of our team and they accepted it. But due to lack of resources, we weren't able to begin last year.

In July, we launched the project with funds we collected from club members and named it Gosha-e-Ilm, an Urdu word which means "Corner of Knowledge." The primary aim of this project is to end illiteracy. We started in the neighborhood of Lyallpur, Pakistan, but have plans to expand into other areas of the city after we hold a fundraiser in the near future.

Initially in Gosha-e-Ilm we are providing evening classes. The students can earn their wages during the day and study in the evening. We are teaching them basics and involving them in different learning activities. We provide them all the necessary supplies including stationery.

Gosha-e-Ilm is not just about providing schooling, though. It's a vision for building a better country. In supporting education and building awareness of social issues like climate change, our aim is to improve the quality of life for these children and raise the standard of living for all Pakistanis.

Why our club promotes equal rights, responsibilities

Posted on August 22, 2019 by Christoph Ahlmann-Eltze, president of the Rotary Club of Bordesholm, Germany

Our club chartered 10 years ago, and from the very start, equality between the genders has been a priority. We alternate between a male member and a female member serving as club president every year, and we ensure that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities. This has not always been the case in clubs in my part of the world. But if we are to move forward as an organization, this will need to become more of the norm. Here is more of our club's story.



Knut Ebel congratulates President Stefanie Kämpf in 2016.

Ebel went on to serve as president the following year.

I have only been a member of the club five years, but my fellow club members have filled me in on how it all began with us. In our neighborhood, there were two Rotary clubs, one that had chartered back in 1951, and a newer club that formed in 1999. Neither club had any women members. Some women who were interested in Rotary got together and decided they were not interested in joining the Inner Wheel club (clubs in some regions that were intended for wives of male Rotary members.) So they set out to form a new club.

Leadership rotation

With the help of ten male members, these eight women founded the Rotary Club of Bordesholm on 30 June, 2008. From the start, they determined club responsibilities would be shared equally between men and women. So our first president was Andrea, the second was Werner, the third Angelika and then Peter, Claudia, Holger, Almut, Klaus, Stefanie, Knut and Annegret. My president-elect will be Minu and I am proud to be a friend of all these wonderful Rotarians in our club of 34.

When you attend one of our meetings, it's lively and open-minded. Our families support our service in Rotary. We have added two young women and two men in the past two years, and my task is to bring in three more this year. The other day, I spoke to a prospective member, who is a family life-coach, and he was awestruck by our club. He noted there was still a club in the area he knew that was male-only, and noted, "they are running out of time."

I am so grateful for the balance and inclusivity of our club, which gives us the strength we need to work together on truly "hands-on" projects like our Apel-Fest. Recently, we completed a successful global grant application for a project in Latvia, and the energy that brings to our club is wonderful. I am so proud to serve as a Rotarian. As I experienced at the wonderful Rotary International Convention here in Hamburg, more and more clubs are realizing the benefit of pursuing diversity and inclusion.

Sustaining water resources, delivering service and building resilience: in response to the global water crisis

By Jennifer J Sara, Global Director, World Bank Water Global Practice, August 21, 2019

The global water crisis is a matter of too much, too little, and too polluted. Flooding, drought, dirty waterways - all have made the news these past 12 months.

To respond to this crisis, the World Bank Water Global Practice launched a new Strategic Action Plan earlier this year, following extensive consultation with our partners and clients. It centers on three interrelated pillars: (1) *sustain water*

resources, (2) deliver services, and (3) build resilience. We outlined how these critical areas contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, and how our action plan will further strengthen our ability to help countries deliver on them.



First, the Water Global Practice supports clients' efforts to enhance water security by managing water resources productively and sustainably. **Sustaining water** means improving resource management at the river basin, country, and trans-boundary levels. Keeping watersheds and aquifers healthy is a responsibility that reaches across administrative, political, and sectoral boundaries. We will continue to value water across its competing uses and across sectors, while supporting effective water and environmental policies, laws, and institutions for integrated water management.

Second, we help countries **deliver universal water supply and sanitation services and optimize water use in agriculture.**

Through utility reform, we are incentivizing water and sanitation utilities to be accountable and efficient, and thus achieve credit-worthiness. We continue to make sanitation a high priority, while embracing a Circular Economy approach and following the principles of Citywide Inclusive Sanitation and the Sanitation Economy. We support governments' efforts to achieve universal access, principally through national programs (based on policy, institutional, and regulatory reforms) and results-based-financing. To help deliver universal access in rural communities, we support innovative approaches to behavioral change, product and market development, micro-finance, and other interventions. Improving irrigation performance must be a strategic priority to tackle rural poverty and mitigate climate impacts, especially for the most vulnerable. We are also working on improving institutions for managing irrigation, improved water use efficiency and innovate farmer-led irrigation at scale.

Third, effective climate change adaptation requires sound water management to reduce vulnerability and **build resilience.** We help clients reduce flood and drought risks by financing water infrastructure, creating healthy watersheds, improving hydrological and meteorological services and access to data, and promoting planning processes that address climate uncertainty. We also support building resilience through operations in FCV (fragility, conflict and violence) countries, as they are often vulnerable to multiple shocks involving climate, conflict, migration, and weak governance.

These three pillars also form the core themes of the Water GP's participation at this year's World Water Week (August 25-30, 2019). Organized by the **Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)**, it's the annual gathering where thousands of practitioners, policymakers and water professionals come together to generate ideas, share their experiences and advance solutions in water.

We meet 2nd and 4th Saturdays at GPT Group, JC 25, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700098 at 6.00 PM

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The World Bank will be convening and co-convening with partners a range of sessions covering various topics.



The graphic features six vertical panels with images and text: 'Water Resources Management' (a person with a water tap), 'Water & the Economy' (a person with a water tap), 'Hydropower, Dams, Multipurpose Storage' (a dam), 'Water in Agriculture' (a woman with a water tap), 'Resilience & Climate Change' (a cracked, dry landscape), and 'Water Supply & Sanitation' (a child drinking water). Below the panels are logos for the World Bank Group, GWSP (Global Water Security & Sanitation Partnership), and 2030 Water Resources Group. A central text box says 'JOIN US AT #WWWEEK' and 'www.worldbank.org/worldwaterweek' with a hand cursor icon.

On August 25, our session *"Quality Unknown"* will present new research on the scale, scope, and economic impacts of declining water quality, as well as insights into the most appropriate policy solutions, following the launch of our flagship report on the same topic. The report, *Quality Unknown: The Invisible Water Crisis*, shows that the invisible crisis of water quality is eliminating one-third of potential economic growth in particularly polluted areas and threatening human and environmental well-being.

On August 28, at the *"Revisiting Subsidies for Water Supply and Sanitation Services"* session, we'll be launching another new report by the Water GP. Titled *Doing More with Less—Smarter Subsidies for Water Supply and Sanitation*, this report looks at how subsidies can be powerful and progressive tools in delivering water and sanitation. Stay tuned as the report goes live in a few days!

Turning our attention to water sector utilities, we've gathered the latest evidence about the barriers and opportunities faced by women in water and sanitation utilities across the world. This material draws on recent analytical work and lessons learned from those working on the ground to narrow gender gaps at the utility level. The outcome of this work will be presented in the report, *Women in Water Utilities: Breaking Barriers*, which will be released at the World Water Week session on August 27.

From water quality and water subsidies to gender and many other issues that help shape the global debate in water, our sessions at World Water Week 2019 have a strong focus on how to work together on the three pillars—sustain water resources, deliver services, and build resilience—for a water-secure world for all.

Together with the two global trust funds housed within the Water GP—Global Water Security & Sanitation Partnership (GWSP) and 2030 Water Resources Group (2030 WRG), the four regional trust funds—Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA), South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI), Danube Water Program and Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program (CAEWDP)—and many other partners,

we continue to implement programs and projects worldwide, convene a wide range of partners to achieve cross-sectoral solutions, and share data, knowledge and know-how across developing countries to help tackle the global water crisis.



Upcoming Club programs

- Aug 25, 2019 Multi specialty free health camp at Dutta Phulia village near Bangladesh Border, Nadia organized by Dimer Club along with RCC Chakdah, Dt: Nadia
- Sep 8, 2019 25 beneficiaries will receive Cycle Vans under Global Grant 1524507 titled 'Swabalamban 3' at Amta Howrah
- Sep 15, 2019 35 beneficiaries will receive Cycle Vans under Global Grant 1524507 titled 'Swabalamban 3' at Chakhah, Nadia
Free Health camp at Chakdah, Gynae, Paed, Skin, Oral Cancer, Medicine doctors required
Blood donation camp at Chakdah
Project Green: Distribution of fruit plant sapling to 115 people at Chakdah

Birthdays of Rotary members in August 2019

- Archana Goyal on August 11, 2019
- Rajkumar Rajgharia, past Governor on August 15, 2019
- Jhulan Basu, past Governor on August 16, 2019
- Kusum Chamaria, past President on August 23, 2019

Anniversaries of Rotary members & spouses in Aug 2019

- Sp Sunayana & PDG Utpal Majumdar on August 15, 2019
- Sp Sipra & PDG Aniruddha Roychoudhury on Aug 17, 2019

August is Membership & Extension Month

UNWIND



"A bunch of us are getting together at my place Saturday night to ignore each other and stare at phones. Would you like to come?"

TAILPIECE

We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office. ~Aesop, Greek slave & fable author