

After Polio, Rotary Districts pledge support to make India TB-Free

25 July 2017 | News

Rotary India's contribution to eliminating polio in India is a well acknowledged story of achievement



Governors from all Rotary Districts along with the Rotary National TB Control Committee recently met with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) Officials, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) & The Union to pledge scaled up support to TB elimination in India. This would extend the Rotary partnership to fight for a TB-free India beyond the existing 7 Rotary Districts.

In order to create awareness about Tuberculosis amongst the Rotarians and the community and to support TB case detection in the country, letter of intent was signed between the Union and Rotary India's National TB Control Committee on June 08, 2016.

Challenge TB is the flagship TB control programme of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and is implemented by International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease.

Rotary India's contribution to eliminating polio in India is a well acknowledged story of achievement. The organization has helped India move from having half the world's polio cases in 2009 to being certified "polio free" in 2014. Now Rotary wants to bring the same energy and commitment to take on another big health challenge and help the Indian government take an aggressive step towards the elimination of TB in our country by 2025.

Mr. Arun Kumar Jha, Economic Advisor, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India, commented, "In the past one year, Rotarians have strengthened our fight against TB. This meeting gives us insight on the ongoing TB initiative carried out by 7 Rotary districts. RNTCP is committed to providing increasing access to quality TB care and diagnosis and we need support from stakeholders like Rotary."

Mr. Chocklingam Bhaskar, Rotary International Director, said, "We are grateful to Rotarians who participated in these activities across the country and thank them for their wholehearted commitment and unstinting support to the campaign to end TB in India by 2025. We need to take the message back to our respective districts to create awareness. We wish to encourage other Rotarians to be a part of our efforts and do again what we did with polio: make India TB-Free."

Dr. Reuben Swamickan, Division Chief (TB and Infectious Diseases) USAID India, said, "Tuberculosis affects large segments of the population driving communities towards poverty. To proactively combat this, we need active intervention and positive engagement from all stakeholders, especially the government, international organisations, and the private sector. A formidable partnership with Rotary India, can impact the scenario significantly and help the country reach its goal of eliminating tuberculosis by 2030. Polio is an example. Rotary has the reach, capacity and attitude to help India towards a TB-free India."

Mr. Y. P Das, Chair, Rotary India National TB Control Committee, said, "Rotary India National TB Control Committee got a direction from the Union as to what rotary and clubs can do to bring about awareness about TB. The first meeting happened in 2016. That was the stepping stone. We have been working in 8 districts on activities on awareness towards a TB-Free India and want to take this to other districts as well. We hope all governors will take this back message to their districts and sensitise the clubs."

Nandita Venkatesan, a TB survivor, said, "My message to other TB patients is to be brave and be determined. Take it as a second chance at life. Besides, when life pushes you over, you ought to push back harder! I am far more comfortable in my skin than before. The country requires your support from organizations like Rotary in this fight against TB."

"I pushed myself to run a marathon and trek while on treatment. Stigma & lack of awareness makes it difficult for patients to fight TB. I am a former Rotary member and I know the power of Rotary's network. Together we can fight TB and eliminate it from the country." Saurabh Rane, a TB survivor

Dr. Jamie Tonsing, Regional Director, The Union South East Asia Office said, "The vision of the Indian Government towards a TB- Free India requires participation from all stakeholders. Our association with Rotary over the past one and a half year has started reaping results. Today, we have our tool kits, shared experience, and commitment. I believe that nothing can stop us from achieving the goal."