

India to eliminate polio by 2007

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Since the initiatives to eradicate polio from India started in 1995, significant success has been achieved in reducing the number of polio cases in the country. As against 1,600 cases in 2002, 134 cases were detected in 2004. There has been 92 percent decline in Polio cases recorded between 2002 and 2004. The geographical spread has also declined from 159 districts in 2002 to 87 in 2003. By the year 2004, the virus could be restrained to only 43 districts mainly in Western UP and Bihar.

During 2005-06 (upto February 28, 2006) only 66 cases were confirmed. Out of the 39 cases detected so far, 30 cases were detected from Bihar and 29 cases from Uttar Pradesh. The geographical spread has been limited to only 35 districts mainly in western UP and eastern Bihar.

In view of predominance of Type 1 Polio virus, the government of India has revised the strategy for use of monovalent OPV 1 in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi and Mumbai, based on the advice of WHO and other experts. Monovalent OPV 1 vaccine was indigenously made available in a record time.

In order to reach every eligible child during the pulse polio round, apart from the strategy of vaccinating children at fixed booths and house-to-house visit, efforts in vaccinating children in transit at railway stations, inside long distance trains, major bus stops, market places, religious congregations and major road crossings throughout the country have been intensified. Through these efforts, five million children in transit have been effectively administered polio drops from May 2005 immunization rounds.

Strategy for polio eradication

The government is keen to eradicate polio from the country and also decided to rehabilitate the polio-affected children. And it has formulated a strategy with more funds. The union minister for health and family welfare, Dr Anbumani Ramadoss said that the government intends to eliminate polio from the country by 2007.

In this regard, the Cabinet committee on economic affairs, government of India on June 29, 2006, approved funds to the tune of Rs 1,039 crore for implementing the polio eradication strategies in the year 2006-07.

The number of SNID rounds in high-risk states/areas and their coverage each year will depend upon the recommendations of Indian Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) made from time to time. Similarly, mop-up rounds could be recommended by IEAG in case of occurrence of polio cases in non-SNID states. In view of this, the Department of FW will be allowed to adjust and modify the strategy, including revising the number of SNID rounds and their coverage, converting NID into SNID or vice versa and also conduct mop-up rounds in non-SNID states in accordance with IEAG recommendations and implement the same within the overall outlay of Rs 1,039 crore.

The Cabinet committee on economic affairs also gave its approval for corrective surgery and rehabilitation of the polio victims and to equip them to earn their livelihood and lead a dignified life in the community. For this activity, Rs 20 crore has been earmarked. As per the data available with the National Polio Surveillance Project (Joint Venture of WHO and government of India), it is estimated that there are about 20,000 such children in the country. Each child will get an average of Rs 10,000 for corrective surgery, fitment of prostheses, calipers/boots of good and light quality and residency and training of victim and attendant for treatment and physio-therapy period.

Elimination of polio will improve the quality of lives of those otherwise affected by polio involving life-long disability, thus improving national productivity and eliminating wasteful expense on treatment and rehabilitation.