



Manna from Ethiopia

From Jenny Horton of Kenmore Club
on the Polio Eradication Trail



"Jenny Horton" <yen283@bigpond.com>

26 November 2008

Salem .. Greetings from Ethiopia!

Where there are 13 months of sunshine and currently we are in the 3rd month of 2001.....so I am 7 years younger (at least until I leave)!

Having been here nearly 2 months now I feel remiss in not preparing another Manna to keep all in touch with what is happening in polio eradication and in my incredible world of volunteering for the program. My apologies.

Polio Global Update

The war on the polio virus continues as many around the world strive to save the children from disability and strengthen health systems as they develop through the polio eradication structure.

Total Cases	Year to date 2008*	Year to date 2007*	Total in 2007
Globally	1491	735	1315
Pakistan	101	17	32
India	509	392	874
Afghanistan	26	12	17
Nigeria	756	229	285
No of countries with virus	17	11	12

*data as of 18 Nov 2008

Yes, in looking at numbers we can see setbacks but we always have to remember from where we have come with over 350,000 cases per year in 125 countries. Now with increased use of monovalent vaccines (vaccine with only one strain of polio virus) making effectiveness of 1 dose up to 3 times more, we will soon see the effect of this.

It is already happening in India. We all know that Type 2 wild polio virus has not been seen since 1999 and India is making great headways to eradicating type 1 virus, despite many difficulties. We WILL win this "War on Polio" and make true Rotary's Gift to the Children of the World.

Ethiopia Situation

Ethiopia has been polio free twice now. Once was for 3 years in 2001-04. It then received imported virus from both Sudan and Somalia. Then it was polio-free again for 17 months (end 2006 - mid 08) when again imported virus came from Sudan. Currently this year there are 2 cases of polio near the border area of Sudan in Gambella Region.

One case is in a refugee camp and the other on the border. There have been no cases since 27 April but

there is an increase in cases in Sudan (now 10) and movement of people is free in this area. Since the cases there have been 4 Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs) in the area targeting over 2 million children each time with a mixture of monovalent and trivalent vaccine.

Life in my world...

When I first arrived here I was assigned to the Tigray Region in the far north of the country. My assignment was to visit health facilities (hospitals, clinics and health posts) as well as traditional healers, and Holy Water sites to give support to the staff and assess any problems they may be encountering with disease surveillance, investigation and reporting. I was also reviewing the routine immunization of children, vaccine management and injection safety.

Map of Ethiopia



While at a site every opportunity is taken to teach and refresh the knowledge of staff. My driver and I set out each morning and take with us a government person, both to show the way and for me to give support to that person. Sometimes it may take several hours to reach one facility on roads that are just tracks or even non-existent. Sometimes we have to walk the final stretch, but it is always nice to visit, to review, teach and support. Staff are always very appreciative of my time even when things are not as they should be. There are frequent problems with the cold chain (the mechanism for keeping vaccine cold). If there is a fridge it is often broken, or there are problems with kero or electric supply. But this is part of the challenge.

We venture far of the beaten track to reach outstations and spend time with staff or providers. Since arriving I have visited many traditional healers and Holy Water sites as part of my work is assessing the health seeking behaviour of the locals. Mostly the Hakim or priests are happy to be supportive of the program. In the visit we support Acute Flaccid



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Paralysis (AFP) detection & investigation (to eliminate polio from cases of floppy paralysis), measles detection, investigation and management and Neonatal Tetanus notification while also reviewing the OPD registers for any missed cases of the above. In a day we might visit between 2 - 3 sites depending on travel time. Centres like hospitals often take more than one visit to spend time educating the various staff at different meetings.

Every day is different. I am now in Amhara Region doing similar work but also I have experienced a Trachoma/ Malaria Campaign sponsored by the Carter Foundation and Lions International where every person in a selected area receives an antibiotic (Zithromax) for treatment of trachoma while also receiving a bed net and health advice on hand washing. It has been great to see how the general public has been trained to administer this drug with the dose according to height.

On Dec 6 we will have a measles, vitamin A and deworming campaign for which I will train staff and supervise the implementation. It is good to see these programs utilizing the polio eradication model in order to reach the given target group. Measles has the highest mortality of vaccine preventable diseases and most countries now have implemented an elimination program. At the end of each field trip I have to write a comprehensive report and deliver my findings and recommendations to the senior government health staff as well as giving feedback at every level along the way. Thanks to PDG Kerry Brandt Wilson D9500 many children have koalas to keep. Thanks, PDG Kerry.



The children!

Kerry's Koalas



Visiting Rotarians

I was able to visit with 80 Rotarians who came from USA (mainly west coast) and Canada to attend a Sub National Immunization Campaign and also visit other

projects some of which they had initiated on previous visits. We travelled to the town of Jimma where a newly chartered Rotary Club (of just 2 months) hosted us all for 2 nights and a day's activity in the field.



Travel with UN



Travel with locals

It was really lovely to hear the experiences of many of the team and their acknowledgement of the difficulties faced in reaching every child. An incredible group of people lead by Rotarian Ezra from Seattle. I know Ethiopia touched their hearts and their generosity through TRF will benefit many other projects.

Life in the field is not always easy, rural facilities are different to that of the cities. So I have had my challenges with cold water for morning/evening washes, showers that seem to wash the ceiling more than me, communal wash rooms and toilets (squat type), rooms without ventilation or electricity and many different foods. But that is part of the challenge! Where I can, I stay in a larger city and travel each day to my work area. But I do see progression in Ethiopia with increased electrification of the rural areas, telephone service in most areas, and water programs.

Next

I complete this term near Christmas and will be home with my Mom for Christmas which will be a real treat. I then leave for another volunteer term about 17 January for a country yet to be confirmed. Yes, you are right....I am a bit crazy but the passion to see the world polio free drives me. We WILL win this war.

I thank each of you for your prayers and support over this rather trying year. But thank God my health has been restored. Certainly, this past 2 months has tested it. I remember at this time my dear friend Lofty whom one year ago left us. Truly I miss his support and encouragement but know he is in a better place. May God be with each of you at Christmas and I pray that you feel His strength and direction in your daily activities. Blessings to you all,

Jenny

STOP Team 29 (Stop Transmission of Polio)