



Manna from Nigeria

From Jenny Horton of Kenmore Club
on the Polio Eradication Trail



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11 November 2009

Sannu from Bauchi!

I send greetings from northern Nigeria where I am based in the state of Bauchi and supporting the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) of Giade and Katagum (both are in the far north of the state). It is a great time to be here to see Nigeria making very positive moves towards a polio-free country having had 3 separate weeks with no new polio cases reported. This is the first time this has happened since the program started. Fabulous news!!!

It is nice to be back here and to serve the program in the same state where I have made many friends. The Bauchi WHO team are incredible and work so hard I feel very privileged to be part of the team. Since my arrival here it has been nonstop with sIPDs (sub National Immunization Plus Days) held early October, the analysis of data, training of all focal persons in the state in surveillance (for AFP, Measles, Yellow Fever, Meningitis and Neonatal Tetanus) and making plans for the next National OPV and Vitamin A round which is to be in mid-November.



Polio Team



Vaccine drops For all!

In between rounds, we work actively on routine immunization to strengthen this as 25% of child mortality globally is from vaccine preventable diseases and here in Nigeria, the completion rates are low. Also there are always advocacy visits and feedback visits to various agencies and relevant persons to encourage them to maintain the commitment.

In Bauchi State, all the 20 LGA Chairman have been stood down by the Governor so now we have new caretaker chairman to "sell" our program to and assure their leadership and presence in the campaign. So some political unrest brings more challenges.

Stop Team 32

This STOP team with which I am serving, is a group of 53 medical volunteers from 23 countries serving in 20 countries supporting polio and routine immunization programs for 3 months (sometimes more). The STOPers support the government in its effort to reach the goal of a polio-free nation.

It is an incredible program that has been part of the Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) for over 10 years now. Sometimes I just think of the person hours donated through this one program alone to PEI. It is amazing!

A lot of the time the conditions STOPers serve in are very difficult and usually very different to what we are used to, as we chase down those last reservoirs of the polio virus. It is not unusual to find oneself in an area long term without a satisfactory electricity supply, using bucket water and challenging bathrooms. These areas also frequently lack internet, although most of the team members report cell phone coverage, so at least they can phone home.

It is really awesome to be part of this team. Doubly so serving as a Rotary volunteer and knowing the beginnings of this program. Thanks to you, PRIP Sir Clem Renouf. For me, it is now 2 years service in this sector of PEI. It is amazing how the time accumulates.

Polio Global Update

2009 has seen a decline of approximately 50% of WPV1 cases compared to the previous year.

Total Cases Wild Polio Virus	2008 Total	Jan 01- Nov 03 2009*	Jan 01- Nov03 2009*
Globally	1651	1449	1282
Pakistan	117	91	75
India	559	499	528
Afghanistan	31	23	24
Nigeria	798	744	382
No of countries with virus.	18	15	22



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However, this year there is also a significant increase in WPV3 cases, due primarily to an ongoing outbreak in Western Uttar Pradesh, India.

We are nearing the end of the peak season here in Nigeria and things are really looking good. Nationally there has been increased ownership of the program which is equating to more commitment of the chairman of the LGA and other agencies. I can even notice the difference since I first came to Nigeria in January 09.



**Kick Polio out
of Nigeria**

Village place

Although we still have all three strains of virus (type 2 is circulating vaccine-derived virus) in the community the WPV1 cases are only 73 for 2009 compared to 683 for same period in 2008. While India is struggling with a WPV3 outbreak focused in Uttar Pradesh, here I have seen the best quality polio campaigns that I have ever witnessed, as the dedicated teams strive to reach every child under 5 years with vaccine. In UP and Bihar, the persistent diarrhoeal diseases are also an issue with the sero-conversion of the vaccine.

Nigeria according to Hajjia Jumai

My "home" is in Azure, a town in Katagum LGA. It is a lovely area and very different this trip then last because we are just completing the rainy season. What was a dusty desert last year is right now crop land filled with maize (or corn), millet, watermelon, and some tomato. It is lovely to see the change and all the activity in the fields.

Now markets are bustling with farmers selling their crops and purchasing for the months ahead. The harmattan (dust storm) is much less right now, although in the months I have been here it is visibly increasing. In January to May, the harmattan drove me crazy, breathing in the dust 24 hours a day and causing problems with my airways. Sometimes it is so bad that we need the lights on in the car to see.

I am feeling very comfortable now in Azure. Last term, I used to miss my shower, a light to dress by, a fan to cool the night and the internet. But now I seem to have mastered the changes and they do not disturb me. Although I do love to return to the state capital, enjoy a hot shower and catch up on the emails.

I am still really careful with my diet and stick mainly to rice. The lack of adequate refrigeration worries me (due to the inconsistency of electricity supply) and I do not wish to take the risk with my GI tract. It is easier to avoid meats then to suffer the consequences.

Luckily we have phone coverage in Azure, so I can stay in touch with my Mum every few days. She is most important.

As Eid ul Adhr and Christmas approach, the movement of persons globally is huge and the risk of virus spreading is increased. Already here we see the traffic on the roads increasing. The roads are a real worry in Nigeria as people speed to reach their destination, often disregarding the condition of the roads and their vehicle. I have seen some terrible accidents as I travel around.

Oh the adventures of a polio warrior!

I thank all those who are working so hard to support PEI in all our different ways. I am reminded daily why we are doing this program as I step out and see many persons affected with polio. No one should have to live with this disability and together we will win this war on this virus.

Eid Mubarak and a blessed Christmas to you all! Please be safe and take advantage to share time with those whom love you. Na gode!

With Deputy Director!



As Mother Teresa said "If you want a love message to be heard, it has got to be sent out. To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it".

As you observe Remembrance Day, I too remember all those who support this important program.

WE WILL WIN!

***Jenny
STOP Team 32 (Stop Transmission of Polio)***