



Dr Michel Thieren, WHO Representative, Pakistan, addressing the seminar arranged by the Rotary International on the occasion of World Polio Day 2015 in Karachi. To mark World Polio Day, as well as national and global efforts in polio eradication, the national chapter of Rotary International organized a seminar on November 1 2015 in Karachi. Polio eradication in Pakistan is a national emergency and has been a priority for Rotary International, since 1985.

Nisar Khuro, Senior Minister for Education and Literacy, Sindh, was the chief guest on the occasion, attended by representatives of WHO and UNICEF, polio frontline workers and other partner organizations.

Among the speakers, Begam Shehnaz Wazir Ali, Coordinator of the Oversight Committee, Sindh, highlighted the challenges in the high-risk areas of Karachi, while expressing appreciation of the efforts of Rotary International, WHO, UNICEF and other partners in eradicating polio in Pakistan.

While addressing the seminar, Dr Michel Thieren, WHO Representative in Pakistan, thanked Rotary International for its ongoing support to eradication efforts in Pakistan. He acknowledged the efforts of national and provincial polio eradication teams and particularly praised the untiring commitment and hard work of frontline polio workers.

Dr Thieren said that World Polio Day was a good time to reflect on the recent gains that had been made because of the hard work of frontline workers and to consider what was needed to keep teams motivated and enthused for the last mile. "It is a singular honour for me to celebrate

this World Polio Day for two reasons; one because it may well be the last World Polio Day looking ahead to a polio-free world, after a succession of similar days looking back at a polio-endemic one, and secondly because I celebrate this day with Rotarians: the one brotherhood at war against polio,” he said.

He added that World Polio Day, which was created in commemoration of the discovery of the polio vaccine, reminded us all that the polio eradication initiative had kept millions of children on their feet.

WHO estimates that since the global polio eradication initiative started in 1988, more than 10 million children have been spared from contracting the life altering illness. For Pakistan, this means everywhere: in every village, in every tehsil, children are running and playing and walking to school. But there is still work to be done before Pakistan will be polio-free.

Dr Thieren shared successes and innovations from the polio eradication programme, such as involving religious leaders from across the country in polio eradication efforts. “I have been warmly welcomed in a well-known madrassa in Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to deliver a speech on health and religion in front of 800 graduating students at the launch of the first national immunization day of this year’s low transmission season.”

Dr Thieren expressed his hope that future World Polio Day’s would be marked by further celebration when the disease is eradicated, not only from Pakistan, but from the entire world.

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