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INFLUENCING **CHANGE**

DOCUMENTATION OF CORE GROUP'S ENGAGEMENT IN
INDIA'S POLIO ERADICATION PROGRAMME



INFLUENCING **CHANGE**

A CORE GROUP PUBLICATION

Disclaimer

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PREFACE

EVERY BOOK IS DIFFERENT BUT THIS ONE IS UNIQUE

In the past decade, one very important development has saved thousands of lives while also demonstrating various strategies and innovations that were effective and successful.

Not every strategy or intervention gets documented with its detailed processes included. This publication tries to do so by describing every step of the communication interventions used in a highly evolved programme: the Polio Eradication Initiative.

Since 1999, our team has been enriched by learning behavioural practices from communities and translating them into positive action.

These experiences are presented in this book called 'INFLUENCING CHANGE'.

Hope you will enjoy reading the chapters and gain from this rich and creative publication.

DR. ROMA SOLOMON
Director
CGPP, India





***India is polio-free – a remarkable achievement.
Eradicating polio is a victory for every citizen in this country.***

India had traditionally been considered one of the toughest places in the world to eradicate polio but the last case was reported in West Bengal on 13 January 2011 and the Southeast Asia region was declared polio-free on 27th March 2014. This was achieved due to a true and strong partnership between communities, government, and partners. India overcame huge challenges to stop polio transmission by implementing innovative strategies, rigorous monitoring, and evaluation that ensured all children are reached and vaccinated.

CORE Group, as one of the communication partners, played a crucial role in reaching and mobilizing communities to accept polio vaccination in high-risk areas and underserved communities. It is achieved through the implementation of quality communication interventions.

This book unfolds processes followed during the implementation of key communication interventions by the CORE Group. It is an overwhelming experience for a development worker to have the opportunity to read the steps followed in the implementation of communication activities.

I hope the readers will enjoy this publication and gain an insight into the details of very successful public health programs.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pradeep Haldar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Pradeep Haldar
Deputy Commissioner, Immunization
Government of India

Inspiring Communities. Defeating Disease.

The SMNet, a hallmark of the CGPP India programme, has far exceeded USAID's expectations. It was established out of frustration. A seemingly unbreakable reservoir of polio virus was circulating in parts of northern India. Children were being paralysed, families were refusing vaccination, community suspicion about the motives of door-to-door teams was abundant. Too many children were being missed in the campaigns, and the reasons were fuzzy. We needed the trust of communities. We needed local women who could answer the questions of mothers and fathers afraid to vaccinate their children. We needed a conduit for sharing information and experience from the grassroots to the policy-makers and back.

USAID counted on a vibrant network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with deep roots in their community, to overcome resistance and rebuild confidence in polio eradication and immunisation in general. USAID encouraged partnership, problem solving, and innovation. With these guiding principles, the project figured out locally appropriate ways to build a 'people's movement' that turned naysayers into polio champions. The bonds between communities, health workers, elected leaders, and national public health policies has never been stronger, after decades of mistrust. SMNet mobilisers have mastered inter-personal communication and not only interrupted polio transmission, but also boosted routine immunisation and vaccinations given at birth through their child-tracking efforts.

More mothers are seeking antenatal care, breastfeeding, and practicing good sanitation and hygiene practices because of the SMNet's integrated approach to polio eradication. The project's goal to engage youth will have a lifelong impact on the health practices of a generation. Millions of children have been protected against polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases because of the project. Many members of the SMNet have advanced their careers due to the skills and capacity they acquired while at the project and are now serving India in numerous ways. More children are walking, running and excelling due to the persistence and dedication of the SMNet's creative and compassionate volunteers.

Ellyn W. Ogden, MPH

USAID Worldwide Polio Eradication Coordinator

September 2018

Affirmations. For Life

Against long odds, the India polio eradication effort achieved a polio-free India in 2011. The CGPP was a major contributor to this singular accomplishment, working with dedication, ingenuity, creativity, and perseverance to achieve the seemingly unachievable. They established an unprecedented coordination mechanism in the SMNet; they engaged community members as mobilisers, change agents, and active supporters; they turned opponents into allies; they learned from their success and mistakes to create a stronger programme; they developed a host of creative behaviour change education materials; and they documented it all through a strong monitoring and evaluation system.

This programme is a shining example of what NGOs, communities, UN agencies, and governments can accomplish when they work together toward a common goal. There is much to be learned from the achievements of the CGPP in India, and this book lays it all out in a well-organised format. I am very proud to be associated with such an amazing accomplishment.

Lee Losey

Deputy Director
CGPP

Empowered Women and Community

My visit to the CORE Group Polio Project in India, was one of my personal highlights of CORE Group's 20th Anniversary year. It was particularly important for me to see the work of this longstanding program that led the way for India to achieve polio eradication and be declared "polio free" by the World Health Organization in 2014. The magnitude of the impact for India of the CORE Group Polio Project and the hard work of the CGPP team could be seen on many levels.

I foremost was impressed by the personal dedication of everyone involved in the project and the multiple stakeholders that worked together - from the government officials to community level ASHAs and social mobilizers. The resistance to the vaccine throughout the many years of the project, and the myths that continued to circulate via social media, were huge obstacles to overcome to ensure every child was reached. The India project team recounted stories of having to demonstrate to the community that the vaccine was safe and not a sterilization method, by taking the oral vaccine themselves- the 2 drops ultimately led to 100s of drops to prove the resistance wrong.

The communication strategies that were employed to promote social behavior change reached levels of creativity that were astounding- barber shop skits, mobile promotion messages, dioramas, and engagement of every level of the health service and community. It was also remarkable how the CGPP approaches empowered the women in the community- from the discussion groups amongst community girls and women, to the community health mobilizer who was so respected in the community. This empowerment broke barriers of class and religion, to create a "safe space" for women to discuss their health needs and the health of their children and families. This opened doors to an integrated approach to immunization, nutrition, water and sanitation and beyond.

Through hard work, political will, creative communication and community engagement, and a strong commitment to polio eradication- the CGPP India team achieved remarkable outcomes. Their model of collaboration should be replicated in other countries, to extend beyond polio eradication.

Lisa Hilmi

Executive Director
CORE Group, Washington DC



