



Manna from Nigeria

From Jenny Horton of Kenmore Club
on the Polio Eradication Trail



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22 March 2009

Sannu from Bauchi!

I arrived in Nigeria with the STOP Team 30 who come from a number of countries. I was assigned to Bauchi State.



STOP Team 30

Bauchi is one of the 27 states of Nigeria which has been "home" for me for the past 2 months. I have been based between two cities, that of Bauchi, the state capital and Azure in the LGA of Katagum in the far north of the state (2 ½ hours drive away).



Nigeria



State of Bauchi

In 2008, Bauchi had 53 cases of Wild Polio Virus (WPV) reported and already in 2009 we have 14 cases (all WPV3) in the state which has the second highest incidence in the country. So there is much to do and many problems to deal with.

The north of the state currently has a meningitis outbreak with a high incidence of cases and death especially among children and teenagers. It is quite

distressing to visit with those affected. They are so sick.

To date this year we have completed 2 National Immunisation Days (NIDs) for polio and other antigens and are about to commence the third. So it is one per month right now and there is a concentrated effort to interrupt circulation of WPV1. Hence 2 of the 3 rounds have been with monovalent OPV1 which will boost the immunity of the children against this particular strain of polio. Not forgetting the other two strains, the round planned for May will be with a trivalent vaccine (containing all 3 vaccines). There are still problems with non-compliance and together with the LGA team we have worked hard at addressing these through many avenues in Katagum (which is my primary area of responsibility). We held a meeting of all 93 headmasters and 93 PTA representatives to have an open forum, which was very successful.

The religious advisor to the governor supported us with responses to the questions related to religion (Katagum is under Sharia Law). The traditional leaders responded to questions in their area. The political head (Chairman) joined and addressed the meeting. We had our own experts from WHO and UNICEF there to respond to technical issues. All agreed that this time schools would allow vaccinations of eligible children and PTA would act to sensitize parents.

We have held dialogues with the traditional village heads, discussing with the village men about acceptance of the vaccine. We have arranged Qur'anic mobilizers to support vaccination in the Qur'anic schools, town criers to get messages out, high level response teams to deal with non-compliance when identified and many more initiatives to try to reach every child under 5 with vaccines. In Katagum, the Chairman of the LGA is leading this war very actively and is totally involved. Last round he provided the "pluses" for the kids; a combination of whistles and soap which are used as incentives. Certainly the whistles brought the kids out of the houses to enable vaccination.

The team are working together to try to identify deficits and then to act on them. Let us pray that this round is of high quality OPV/Vitamin A delivery and will also enable the administration of other antigens as the rainy season is near and many areas become inaccessible thus limiting vaccination. This next NID starts 28 March through to 1 April.



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Drops for all



Nigeria's Future



In national dress
with local elders



It is also hot (about 38 yesterday) with a heavy harmattan (a very dry dusty wind from the Sahara) that really affects my airway. However it is mango season, I have a flask for hot water (so coffee is possible regardless of the lack of electricity) and my vegemite. So everything is OK. This week I was invited to Abuja by Dr Bob Scott (RI Polio Plus Chair) for a meeting. It was wonderful to catch up with him again and meet some of the officers of RI at a Polio Plus Training session, especially to meet the National Polio Plus Chair, Busuyi Olubusuyi. Thanks for all you are doing, Busuyi.

Polio Global Update

This week saw India reporting zero cases (for a one week period) which is the first time this has happened since May 2008. Great progress has been made in India which for the period Jan 01-March 17 last year saw 132 cases of WPV compared to just 17 for the same period this year. Sadly we have seen 2 new countries with importations being Uganda with 3 cases and Kenya with 2 cases. While we have ongoing circulation and low routine immunization importations will continue to occur.

Total Cases	2007	Year to date 2008*	Year to date 2009*
Globally	1315	1660	151
Pakistan	32	118	9
India	874	559	17
Afghanistan	17	31	4
Nigeria	285	896	83
No of countries with virus.	12	18	13

*data as of 17 March 2009

Nigeria according to Hajjia Jumai

Yes, that is my Nigerian name, given to me by the Chairman of the Katagum LGA and now adopted by all. Being in Katagum in the north of Bauchi State has been truly welcoming. I have enjoyed the relationships I have built with those I am working with and our long hours at work.

I have learnt some Hausa but get stuck after a few sentences...and am slowly getting used to wrapping my hair up in a scarf but the long skirts in the Land Rover remain a challenge. The major problem I face is the absence of electricity for a majority of the day and night, which affects so many other things.

With Bob Scott



Vaccine even in church

I have also been invited by TRF Chair, PRIP Jonathan Majiyagbe to join the African Regional Polio Plus Committee Meeting in Kano next week but as it clashes with the NID campaign I have had to apologise. So although there is no Rotary in Bauchi State, I still have contact with my colleagues.

Polio Plus Elsewhere

The \$200Million Challenge is certainly keeping everyone active which is great. I have read of some incredible fundraising events and am thankful both for the awareness created about poliomyelitis and the commitment of so many to this program.

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."

WE WILL WIN!

Blessings to all and please include my Mum in your prayers as she has been unwell.

Jenny

STOP Team 30 (Stop Transmission of Polio)