

file Polio

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May 10, 1999

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Dear Hillary:

I enjoyed our conversation last week – let me know if you would like to follow up and if I can be helpful in any way.

Let me also briefly outline the potential of polio eradication as a central element for your possible trip to India. Elimination of polio would be a great gift from the US to India, from one democracy to another, from a line of US Presidents from FDR to Clinton:

- Polio has been eliminated in the Western Hemisphere, Europe and most of the Pacific. Reservoirs of polio remain in the Indian subcontinent and Central Africa (with a large portion of the need in India itself).
- Because the disease has not been eradicated globally, the world spends about \$1.6 billion/year immunizing children; but it would only cost \$1.2 billion to eradicate the disease worldwide! This is a very cost-effective program; and we know how to do it.
- Dr. Bruntland has identified polio eradication as one of her four central priorities, and has asked the UN Foundation to help. We have identified about 50% of the funds for final eradication, and still need to raise about \$600 million worldwide.
- More than anything else, polio eradication is about children – ridding the world of this terrible, crippling disease, and laying the groundwork for the much broader effort of raising immunization levels, delivering micro-nutrients and providing all the world's children with other life saving health interventions.
- This priority effort by WHO and UNICEF has enthusiastic backing from Kofi Annan, Bill Foege, David Satcher, Jeff Koplan and other key figures in the quest to strengthen the global public health and surveillance systems. The India priority was initially developed by Frank Wisner when he was our Ambassador, and he remains an enthusiastic supporter.

The polio eradication effort is a wonderful opportunity for US leadership – from the US government, private sector and NGO community. Only one other disease (smallpox) has ever been eliminated and polio can be the second – if all sectors work together.

What can you do? Why not make "polio eradication" the major deliverable of your trip to India. You can play a very significant role between now and the end of the year:

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- call the vaccine manufacturers to the White House, and ask them to contribute the vaccine;
- invite key US companies with major interests in India (e.g. Ford; Enron; Coca-Cola) to pledge their support, and ask Indian industry to match;
- ask AID to earmark the cause (with support from Sens. Frist and Leahy), and to urge their DAC colleagues to join;
- request the World Bank to reprogram commitments in India;
- invite private philanthropy to join, convene, and fill in the unfunded areas.

This is a feasible project, of great global significance. In addition to eradicating polio, the global public health system would be strengthened around an activity that brings together partners from the private and public sectors, communities, and the UN. As you know, a stronger public health system is a critical to improve detection of emerging infectious diseases and acts of bioterrorism.

If this makes sense to you, why not call a small group together, review the idea, and then convene a larger implementation group. The larger group might include:

- Brian Atwood (AID)
- Carol Bellamy (UNICEF)
- Dr. Bill Foege (former head of CDC)
- House and Senate Appropriators
- Amb. Tom Loftus (now representing WHO in Washington)
- Dr. Woody Myers (chief health officer, Ford Motor)
- Dr. Gordon Perkin (representing Bill Gates)
- Rotary International
- Hon. Donna Shalala (HHS)
- Amb. Frank Wisner (now at AIG)

The UN Foundation could provide whatever staff, expenses and management might be needed for the project.

Let me know what you think. I look forward to hearing from you.

Good luck.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,



Timothy E. Wirth