

Polio True Story—Asma

Asma, Peshawar, February 2007:

Born on the 14 August 2004 in Peshawar, Asma was a healthy child, until at the young age of nine months, when she was diagnosed with polio. Being the only child of her parents, she is loved very much by all, especially her uncle and his children, who reside in the same house.

But yet Asma's story is a sad one. The polio team did visit her house, but yet she still got polio.—it breaks her mother's heart when she realizes why.

When the polio team came to her home to vaccinate all children under the age of five with polio drops, Asma was sleeping. All the other young children in her house were given the drops, but Asma's mother made the decision not to wake up her child when the team came, so that Asma would not be disturbed. Resultant of this was that Asma was not protected against polio.

All was revealed in an interview with Tauseeq Haider, as now she is two and a half years old and she can't walk – her parents worry when they think about how she will be as she grows up. Asma won't be able to play with other children, and as she gets older, she will be a burden on others. As Asma crawls across the floor and tries to stand up—she can't. She reaches out for support—for a hand to hold, and her father is there to help her, as she cannot stand up alone.



In an interview with Sharpcut Films her father says that he will always try his best no matter how long it takes, to make her walk. While polio has no cure, all that is possible is to “make her strong enough not to be a burden on others” says Feroz Khan. At the moment, “when I call her, she drags herself towards me.”

Some mothers, realizing the importance of each child getting polio drops in every campaign, do wake up their children to ensure that they are not missed. Yet it is sad but true that there are many children who are not woken-up when the polio teams visit house-to-house—mothers like Asma's. In such cases, the polio team visiting door-to-door may have to re-visit houses to vaccinate children that were sleeping—making their work more difficult, and the chances for children to be left un-vaccinated, increase.

“It is painful for us, and for her as well,” admits Feroz Khan with a deep sigh. Asma, with her rosy red cheeks and beautiful features will have to face many problems as she grows up because of polio.



In households such as Asma's where multiple families live within the same premises, it is almost too easy to forget a child, and leave one un-immunized. It is vital that each mother makes sure that all their children are vaccinated and none are missed.

Until and unless every child under the age of five is given drops in every campaign, polio will spread, and children will be left crippled.

“If only we had given her polio drops in time, she would never have been in this situation,” realizes Asma's mother, while being interviewed for the Polio True Stories TV series. The other children living in the same house and are all healthy, as they have completed their routine immunization, and all children, until the age of five, are given polio drops every time the team comes. “Now, all the other children of her age are playing but she sits. If only I had awoken Asma.”

Asma's story is just one in the series of polio true stories produced and directed by Sharpcut Films.