



Expanded Program on Immunization
Government of Pakistan



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Top Leadership of EPI and Polio, at same page for Universal Immunization Coverage (UIC) and Polio eradication (August 5, 2019)

A high profile meeting of the National Inter Agency Coordination Committee - NICC, was chaired by Dr. Zafar Mirza, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health and attended by Prime Minister Focal Person on Polio, Mr. Babar Bin Atta. An in-depth discussion on current state of affairs in the National and Provincial Immunization Program was carried out. The meeting was attended by Director General, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations Coordination, while officials of Health from federal and provincial/ area EPI and PEI programs, donors and development partners also participated in the meeting.

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National Program Manager, EPI presented the plan for UIC in Islamabad while all provinces and areas including AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan presented their respective plans of action to achieve universal immunization coverage (UHC) by year 2022. Further, the provincial program managers presented yearly targets to achieve Universal Immunization Coverage and public sector financial challenges they are facing in their respective provinces/areas. SAPM and PMFP reviewed and scrutinized all work plans and stressed to integrate efforts undertaken for EPI and PEI on parallel fronts to ensure optimal outcomes. Dr. Zafar Mirza took cognizance of contributions by the development partners to strengthen immunization program of Pakistan, however he reiterated that children of Pakistan are our responsibility and the Government of Pakistan would ensure all efforts to contribute and expand immunization services in sustainable manner with domestic resources in coming years.

Dr. Zafar Mirza also assured high level advocacy to provincial Chief Secretaries to address all financial and operational bottlenecks at provincial level. He further urged the Provincial Program Managers to share ground realities so that these issues can be addressed at highest forum. Mr. Babar Bin Atta, PMFP during his remarks also highlighted the need to integrate and start a joint awareness campaign for Polio and EPI to build trust in the community about importance of vaccinations.



Visit of the Joint Supervision and Appraisal Mission

A Joint Supervision and Appraisal Mission led by the World Bank visited Pakistan from August 26 to September 5, 2019, to review the National Immunization Support Project (NISP). The team visited Karachi, Peshawar and Islamabad. The mission members included representatives from the Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The objectives of the mission were to review project progress and bottlenecks to implementation by the following agencies.

Specific areas reviewed were:

- a) Progress on implementation of operational plans for FY19/20 for the Federal and Provincial EPI programs – including services in mega cities of the country;
- b) Progress towards achievement of the project development objective and targets (DLIs);
- c) Progress made in completion of the third-party validation of DLIs;
- d) Implementation progress of financial management and procurement arrangements at the Federal and Provincial levels, including the availability of specialist financial and procurement management in the implementing programs;
- e) Implementation progress of the Environmental and Social Management Framework, as well as the grievance redressal mechanism of the project; and

Technical advisory group (TAG) for Polio Eradication Initiative



Technical advisory group (TAG) for Polio Eradication in Pakistan was conducted in Islamabad on August 29, 2019. The meeting was chaired by Dr Zafar Mirza, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health, Mr. Baber Bin Atta PM focal person and by Dr. Jean Marc, President TAG.

PEI and EPI teams from the national and provincial level participated in the meeting. Presentations were given on the PEI and need of synergy between EPI and PEI to achieve the objective of eradication. National Program Manager, EPI also presented an overview of the EPI with special lens of synergy. TAG appreciated the efforts being undertaken to strengthen synergy between two programs and recommended to bridge all gaps to achieve optimum results in both programs.

A step towards achieving Universal Immunization Coverage in Islamabad | Equity based EPI Model for Islamabad

Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan is following an equity based EPI model to achieve Universal Immunization Coverage as envisaged by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Islamabad administration has taken major steps in this regard to achieve desirable results.

Previously the EPI workforce was unable to cater the needs of increasing population of 2.1 million. The available skilled human resource of 35 vaccinators was insufficient to serve approximately 35,000 under one year target children, scattered in the communities over 3600 sq.km area. The immunization service delivery, through fixed and outreach sites was sub optimal, due to sprawling new settlements in the form of urban slums and rural areas which are being served with only 18 fixed sites, in addition to the settled urban sectors.

In January, EPI program realized the need to revitalize the existing program infrastructure, with the aim to “Reach Out to Every Child” and not to leave any due child unvaccinated.



Now routine outreach services are being ensured, at least once in a month for all the communities and settlement, with a special focus on urban slums, underserved rural communities and economic migrant hard to reach mobile populations.

Initially extensive detailed microplanning exercise was conducted to map out all the areas and settlements, with their estimated target population. During a short period of six months, 10% increase in coverage has been recorded on monthly basis, comparing it with the last six months of 2018. The number of outreach sessions has been increased from 408 per month to 1068, by increasing the skilled human resource to 68, and ensuring immunization services, hopefully more than 95% target against all antigens will be achieved during next couple of months.

Social mobilization efforts are being doubled to ensure every child is vaccinated against all antigens. Social mobilizers go door to door and spread message while mosque announcements are made to bounce the message through trusted influencers.

ACTIVITIES Undertaken across Pakistan for EPI



PUNJAB

Focused Group Discussion on Improving Routine Immunization

A Focused Group Discussion with participation from all stakeholders was conducted on August 20, 2019 in Lahore to review processes for improving Routine Immunization. The Group discussed on how to improve Routine EPI coverage in district Lahore with District Health Management Team



E-DDM Training workshop

E-DDM training workshop was conducted in Lahore for Data Entry Operators and DSV/CSVs of Punjab on August 20-21, 2019. Now e-DDM will also be used for EPI related activities after its successful implementation in Polio Eradication Initiative activities in Pakistan.



KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa EPI Department is working with JICA to improve Routine Immunization in the province. In this regard, first Joint Coordination Committee Meeting-JCC was held on August 22, 2019 in Islamabad. The meeting was jointly chaired by Director General Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and JICA senior representative. Director EPI, Provincial Coordinator LHWs program, DHOs from District Mansehra, Torghar, Kohistan along with their EPI coordinators participated in the JCC meeting.

The Committee discussed objectives of the initiative including its outline and activities. Forum was briefed about the interventions in the target districts i-e Mansehra, Torghar, Lakki Marwat, Kohistan, Lower & Kolai-Palas.

JICA support project has set three outputs:

Output - 1: mobile and outreach RI coverage are strengthened (service delivery) for hard to reach and mobile population/seasonal migrants.

Output - 2: Social mobilization for under covered communities is strengthened

Output - 3: Quality of routine immunization services in health facilities is improved through supervision in the province.

During the meeting work plan was shared and discussed and necessary changes were made. Project design matrix was shared with the meeting participants and discussions was made on the indicators to be achieved at the completion of the project. It was also decided that to set indicators, there will be another meeting at each DHO's office and realistic targets will be fixed with mutual consultation.

AJ&K

Provincial Task Force Meeting on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization

Provincial Task Force meeting on Polio Eradication and Routine Immunization was held in the office of Chief Secretary at Muzaffarabad, AJK. The meeting was chaired by the Chief Secretary AJK, Mr. Mutahir Hussain Rana and attended by Additional Chief Secretary General, Secretary Health, Secretary Tourism, Secretary Communications, Secretary Law, Divisional Commissioners, Provincial Program Manager EPI, Deputy Inspector General Police, Deputy Commissioners, Deputy Directors EPI & WHO representatives. The Secretary Health AJK briefed the participants about the Polio Eradication Initiatives in AJK. The Provincial Program Manager-EPI AJK comprehensively presented Polio Eradication Initiatives & progress of the program. She informed that AJK has a Polio free status for the last 19 years & appreciated the coordinated efforts of Front line workers, Department of Health, District administrations & other line departments which have been pivotal in this regard. She emphasized on the need of Continual Coordination, Cooperation for effective polio campaign.

The Chief Secretary AJK directed the Deputy Commissioners to take ownership of Polio Eradication Initiatives in AJK and also a detailed account of the Polio Eradication Program and activities, in their respective districts for ensuring successful accomplishment of the forthcoming Polio Campaign. The Chief Secretary also directed the EPI-PEI program to ensure that the Permanent Transit Points (PTPs) are visible & functional round the clock. The Chief Secretary appreciated the efforts of Health department, the Provincial Program Manager-EPI AJK & her team for their dedicated work & commitment in maintaining the Polio free status in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

Workshop for CSOs Demand Generation for Routine Immunization:

To develop comprehension on basic concepts of immunization and demand generation and document reasons of low demand in the context of low performing districts a series of three-day training workshops on "Demand Generation for Immunization" was organized for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the month of August 2019. The purpose of the training organized by Civil Society Human and Institutional Development Program, was to equip the grass-root level CSOs from each province about knowledge, core concepts and skills necessary for generating demand for routine immunization.

The training met the main objectives which were to enhance knowledge and skills for developing context specific demand generation messages (Advocacy tools) and to analyze relevance and effectiveness of old tools for demand generation and facilitate development of new context specific demand generation tools;

The Unsung Heroes of EPI

Around 70 participants trained, represented 55 CSOs, mostly members of Pakistan CSOs Coalition for Health & Immunization (PCCHI) with experience of working on immunization related interventions in their geographical concentrated areas.

BALUCHISTAN



Abdul Ali Vaccinator (UC Hanna Urak)

Mr. Abdul Ali (Vaccinator UC Hanna Urak) is 48 years old, yet a dedicated soul of Baluchistan. He has been working devotedly in his UC to save the lives of many children. Mr. Abdul Ali also belongs to a religious Pashtun family. His father remained a lead of the main mosque at Hanna. He is the only bread winner of a large family. He joined health department as a vaccinator and posted at BHU Hanna. He has worked devotedly day and night to make a successful contribution in EPI program from his joining to till date. Besides working for EPI program his services were also availed by the Polio program and during which he remained a victim of negative propoganda spread by the miscreants about the polio program. Once he was physically tortured by community once while he was on a mobilization visit.

Remembering one incident Mr. Abdul Wali said “they thought I was working on a negative agenda of Western countries. A mob of 10 to 12 people physically tortured me when I was on a regular mobilization visit of my own community.” I suffered from head injury and injuries in different parts of my body. It was a very tough time for me and my family.

After that incident, He kept working in the same community, through involving major stakeholders especially religious leaders. He met with every single person of his UC and sensitized them on the efficiency of vaccine. He sensitized the local clerics for mosques announcement during the polio campaign.

Discussing on the current scenario he said “Community resists sometimes but I have to do my best to keep the children safe from deadly diseases and the acceptance ratio is increasing day by day which is very satisfactory for me.” He added that he is very thankful to the extended support of EPI program and its staff.

