

5 April 2022 -- "This activity represents an important milestone towards improving the quality of care for Libyan children at primary health care level. Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness is the key evidence-based strategy being used globally. We, in WHO the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, have been supporting and will continue to support Libya to institutionalize and scale up child health interventions."

The IMCI guidelines promote evidence-based assessment and treatment, using a syndromic approach that supports the rational, effective and affordable use of drugs. The guidelines include: methods for checking a child's immunization and nutrition status; teaching parents how to give treatments at home; assessing a child's feeding and counselling to solve feeding problems; and advising parents about when to return to a health facility. The approach is designed for use in outpatient clinical settings with limited diagnostic tools, limited medications and limited opportunities to practise complicated clinical procedures.

The journey started in October 2019, the WHO and UNICEF country offices in Libya, in collaboration with the Libyan Ministry of Health, held a workshop to adapt WHO/UNICEF guidelines on the integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness (IMNCI) to the Libyan context. This 4-day workshop was attended by child health specialists from the Ministry of Health, primary health care (PHC) facilities, universities and hospitals across the country developed specific guidelines for Libya, based on global WHO/UNICEF guidelines.

As per the workshop recommendations, finalization of the package process was followed through coordination with PHC institute, child health unit and an international consultant assigned for this task. The final IMNCI training package for Libya which had been finalized in 2020 was endorsed by the Ministry of Health in 2021.

This was followed by selection of PHC facilities for the implementation of Libya-specific guidelines and staff training on their application.

In August 2021, first national training of trainers workshop was carried out, in coordination with UNICEF and under the direct technical guidance of the Regional Adviser for the Child and Adolescent Health Programme in the Regional Office, and 24 national facilitators were trained by an international course director and 4 international facilitators.

Scaling up training at provincial level was carried out through cascade training workshops conducted all over the country in which 115 physicians were trained and introduced to the national IMNCI standard case management guidelines.

Dr Hesham Ben Masut, Family Medicine Consultant and certified trainer in the IMCI programme of child health in the WHO country office, explained that each training course encompasses both theoretical and practical curriculum. The later takes place in both PHC centres and hospitals for all children under 5. He also clarified that the programme targeted both healthy and sick children, in addition to assessing the nutritional and growth status of the child, aiming to reduce complications in the long term that would result in reduction of under-5 morbidity and mortality rates in Libya and ensure high quality service provision.

The WHO country office in Libya is encouraging all health care providers in this area to enrol in these training courses to be able to provide the service to every child in Libya.

All health partners (WHO, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health) are monitoring the implementation of the IMNCI guidelines, aiming to expand PHC centres providing services in line with the national IMNCI guidelines as part of WHO's efforts to achieve universal health coverage.

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