

18 October 2012, Islamabad – A regional training workshop on improving the management of severe acute malnutrition and nutrition surveillance was organized by the Planning and Development Division of the Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with WHO, from 18 to 22 October 2012, in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- improve the capacity of stakeholders and governments on the management of acute malnutrition by provision of updated, evidence-based guidelines
- disseminate the updated guidance on acute malnutrition
- familiarize countries on the latest evidence-based tools and how to monitor progress
- provide technical support to countries to update national plans and policies on acute malnutrition
- introduce successful models of screening of severely-malnourished children to monitor growth and conduct nutrition surveillance.

Dr Guido Sabatinelli, WHO Representative in Pakistan, thanked the Government of Pakistan, donors and partners for coming together under one roof to highlight the problem of malnutrition, its underlying causes, identification and treatment in children under 5. Dr Sabatinelli said, “Malnutrition has remained a persistent problem in Pakistan for several decades and is a major underlying cause of infant and under-5 mortality. In addition to that, the issue of malnourishment further intensified after the floods of 2010–2011. Fortunately, a collective and timely response from the Departments of Health and Nutrition Cluster partners was helpful in mitigating the effects of malnourishment in children of flood-affected areas. For this purpose, 33 stabilization centres were established in these areas which played a crucial role in providing life-saving treatment of severe acute malnutrition with associated complications during the flood emergency. In view of the given level of acute malnutrition prevalent in the country, these centres continue to operate as successful delivery points after floods.”

Pakistan represents an excellent example of effective multisectoral cooperation in the Region. The workshop introduced a good model of nutrition for Pakistan and selected countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The role of academia, UN agencies and implementing partners is critical in addressing nutrition in developing countries. The experience of Pakistan will be

shared and replicated in Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq, occupied Palestinian territory, Somalia, Djibouti, and the Syrian Arab Republic so that the health sector of other countries can also benefit from the experience of Pakistan and improve nutrition standards in their country.

As many as 50 participants were exposed to the new guidelines on nutrition and updates on the nutrition surveillance system which will help them to keep abreast of latest developments in the identification and treatment of malnutrition in their country. Malnutrition is a national priority and a part of the policy and plans of the Government of Pakistan. Multisectoral coordination and streamlining of resources is needed to support the most affected areas and ensure the healthy survival of children and women, especially in the most deprived and vulnerable areas.

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