

16 November 2017 – A national meeting on developing consensus-based action priorities based on the results of the WHO Emergency Care System Assessment was convened in Islamabad on 14 and 15 November 2017 by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, Pakistan, in collaboration with the WHO Country Office and with support provided by WHO headquarters and WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Participants included emergency care system professionals and stakeholders from Baluchistan, Gilgat-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh.

The meeting aimed to review the WHO Emergency Care System Assessment results undertaken by national experts and stakeholders from participating provinces. Based on these results, the meeting also aimed to build consensus on action priorities to address identified gaps in the following areas: system organization and governance; finance; emergency care data; quality improvement; scene care; transport and transfer; facility-based emergency care; rehabilitation for emergency conditions; and emergency preparedness. The action priorities served as the basis for an implementation plan that would inform policy-makers, health system administrators, health care providers and other stakeholders in their efforts to strengthen the emergency care system in the country.

The meeting was inaugurated by Director-General Dr Sabeen Afzal, Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination and Dr Mohammad Assai Ardakani, WHO Representative, Pakistan. Dr Ardakani highlighted the fact that although emergency medical care is being provided by different hospitals and health facilities, it is fragmented, and that there was a need to establish a national system that was available country-wide. He emphasized the importance of linked pre-hospital care, well-equipped ambulances, properly trained health workers and fully operational trauma and emergency medical centres. Dr Sabeen Afzal, Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, said that there is a dire need to streamline the policies and protocols related to the emergency care system. While service delivery is of course the mandate of provinces, a nationwide emergency medical care system needs to be established.

This meeting was part of a broader WHO regional initiative to strengthen emergency care systems in countries of the Region. The initiative has already been implemented in Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya and Tunisia. It is hoped that the outcome of this meeting will pave the way for more structured action to strengthen the emergency care system in Pakistan, at both national and regional level.

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