

2 January 2013, Islamabad – Figures collected from various official sources and surveys provide evidence of the current outbreak of measles in different parts of Pakistan resulting from insufficient rates of routine immunization coverage, the World Health Organization confirmed here on Wednesday.

The WHO Representative for Pakistan, Dr Guido Sabatinelli stated that the Government of Pakistan's Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI), which is technically supported by WHO and UNICEF, aims at protecting children aged 0–11 months by immunizing them against childhood tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, hepatitis B, meningitis, *haemophilus influenzae* and measles. The programme also protects newborns against neonatal tetanus by giving TT vaccine to all pregnant women.

Unfortunately, as per the survey of Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (2010–2011) Pakistan's routine immunization coverage does not meet the optimal routine immunization rate of more than 80%. "Pakistan's routine immunization coverage is close to 65% with only some important cities of Punjab recording a better performance", Dr Sabatinelli stated. He said that the huge difference of routine immunization coverage between provinces, districts and cities was at the root of the current measles outbreaks.

The statement further adds that WHO is recommending adequate steps both on an emergency and long-term basis to the provincial governments to ensure that routine immunization coverage is made accessible to each and every child. "At an average, one single EPI vaccination centre in a Union Council caters for a population of 20 000 to 30 000 which is simply not enough to cater for the total population of any Union Council", remarked Dr Sabatinelli.

As an emergency response to the outbreak in Sindh, the Provincial Health Ministry had started a large measles vaccination campaign targeting 2.9 million (29 00 000) children in eight districts of Sindh. "Measles campaign was planned between 31 December 2012 and 9 January, 2013 for eight districts in Sindh; Sukkur, Khairpur, Larkana, Qamber-Shadadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Ghotki and Kashmore.

During this campaign, children from the age of 9 months to 10 years were vaccinated. "A total of 1 300 000 vaccine doses were dispatched by the national authorities to the eight districts", stated Dr Sabatinelli.

For further information, please contact:

Maryam Yunus

Communications Officer, WHO, Pakistan Telephone: +92 300 8441 744

E-mail: [yunusm@pak.emro.who.int](mailto:yunusm@pak.emro.who.int)

Friday 26th of April 2024 06:00:32 PM