

Islamabad 23 February – Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative in Pakistan, visited Larkana and Ratodera, Sindh recently. The visit began with Dr Palitha Mahipala administering polio drops to children at the Sukkur airport as a part of the ongoing National Immunization Days (NIDs) campaign in the country. Dr Palitha emphasized on vaccinating children on polio to save them from a crippling disease.

In addition to this, Dr Palitha Mahipala, WHO Representative in Pakistan, along with Dr Azra Pechuho, honourable Minister of Health and Population, inaugurated the NID campaign in the presence of Polio Emergency Operating Center representative, Asalif Demissie Team lead WHO, along with commissioner Larkana and Area Coordinator of Polio.

Dr Palitha Mahipala and the Honorable Minister for Health and Population Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho inaugurated the Nutrition Stabilization Centre at Ratodero and refurbishment of labor room, at Shaikh Zaid Women Hospital Larkana. Dr Palitha handed over the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) supplies and equipment to the Honorable Minister for Health and Population.

Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, thanked the WHO Representative for his keen interest to alleviate the miseries of people affected and infected with HIV and providing all possible support to curtail the HIV outbreak in the province.

These activities are a part of the ongoing response by World Health Organization to the unprecedented HIV Outbreak in Rato Dero Talkua of Larkana district of Sindh province, which surfaced in April 2019 where 1,294 people were infected with HIV virus, of which approximately 78% (1,012) were children. WHO, on the request of Government of Pakistan, deployed an international mission comprising of epidemiologists, public health experts, infection control specialists to investigate about the possible mode of transmission for HIV virus among the affected population.

Experts believed ‘unsafe practices of blood transfusion’, ‘re-use of injection needles and syringes’, ‘mother to child transmission’, ‘improper disposal and reuse of hospital waste’, ‘tattooing using unsafe needles’, ‘circumcision in males using unsafe blades’ and ‘ear and nose piercing using unsafe needles’ as possible causes for HIV transmission.

As an initial response, WHO responded to HIV through ensuring availability of HIV Treatment drugs, rapid HIV diagnostic kits, provision of human resources, building capacity of human response on care and support of HIV infected cases and establishing a surveillance system for data management and its reporting.

In order to address factors associated with transmission of HIV infection, WHO also focused on expansion of HIV Treatment services through provision of rapid diagnostic kits and other diagnostics, building capacity of health care providers, and strengthening of infection prevention and control, at the initiation level, in addition to addressing the nutritional needs of children who were infected at Larkana.

Province of Sindh has declared a nutrition emergency in the province, with wasting levels in children under 5 surpassing emergency thresholds as per sphere standards set by WHO. In this context WHO supported in establishing a nutrition Stabilization center in Ratadero. It also supported in strengthening another stabilization center in Larkana.

WHO supported refurbishment of labor room, at Shaikh Zaid Women Hospital Larkana, with worth of 2 million rupees for renovation and 1.2 million rupees for the equipment and the supplies. Almost, 60% of the total deliveries in the hospital. Apart from it, WHO supported capacity building of 160 staff working in labour rooms on Early Essential Newborn Care (EENC).

Dr Palitha Mahipala, has emphasized on the importance of Green clean healthcare facilities and integrated approach in terms of health systems strengthening. Moreover, he emphasized on the importance of kitchen gardens and fruit trees along with stabilization centers to promote nutrition diversity and accessibility of vegetables and fruits to malnourished population. He also highlighted some of the upcoming areas where WHO will be working in the area like provision, set up and trainings of environment friendly incinerators in 4 of the hospitals of Larkana. In addition, interventions like growth monitoring, Baby friendly hospital initiative and Kangaroo mother care are other areas which WHO will be up taking in coming couple of months.

Dr Palitha also thanked Minister of health Sindh for her fervent involvement, interest and support to WHO's support in fight against HIV epidemic at Ratadero.

Saturday 27th of April 2024 09:19:53 AM