

15–17 September 2014, Islamabad – WHO, in collaboration with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination (MONHSRC), have conducted a pharmaceutical sector assessment survey (Level II) in 2014. Since 2002, a total of 11 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have conducted these pharmaceutical sector surveys. The first survey was conducted in Pakistan in 2007 but in light of changing scenarios it was time to conduct a new survey.

WHO has developed tools to measure the performance of the pharmaceutical sector and systematically monitor the progress of efforts to improve access to essential medicines, their availability and use and to compare situations in health facilities at different levels of health care.

A comprehensive assessment of the pharmaceutical sector helps to determine what the gaps are in order to design effective interventions and allow evaluation of the impact of interventions over time.

Pakistan is a country with a double burden of communicable diseases combined with maternal and perinatal conditions and increasing trends in noncommunicable diseases. Pakistan has low maternal and neonatal health indicators such as 89 deaths/1000 live births meaning that 1 in every 11 children born in Pakistan dies before reaching their fifth birthday. The infant mortality rate is also alarming at 74 deaths per 1000 live births (PSLM2012–2013).

Medicines account for a substantial 43% of total household health expenditure in Pakistan, while total health expenditures at 64% are borne by households mainly through out-of-pocket payments (National Health Accounts 2009).

Pakistan has a vast primary health care system and assessing the performance of the public health service is critical. Availability of medicines is vital to ensure primary health care utilization. The non-availability of medicines leads to underutilization of public primary health care facilities and gaps exist between rural and urban use of health facilities (World Bank, 2010).

To address these issues in a scientific way and plan interventions based on available evidences the Level II survey is being conducted and training of data collectors from all provinces is currently being conducted from 15 to 17 September 2014 at the WHO country office in Islamabad.

The aim of the training is to build national capacity on conducting, assessing, monitoring and evaluating country pharmaceutical situations which could help to plan policies to address issues of access and rational use of medicines.

The results of assessment will serve as a monitoring mechanism to assess pharmaceutical sector performance. The information thus collected will help to guide national and provincial health authorities in revising the national health policy, provincial health strategies and medicine policies affecting access to medicines.

This will also help governments to focus on identified priorities, advocacy plans and initiate information campaigns. As evident access and availability to quality medicines is vital for success of all health interventions which ultimately are linked with improvements in the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGS).

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