

Government of Pakistan
Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination
Press Release
EPI Program strengthening is on Government's top agenda, Minister National Health Services

November 20, 2018: Today in a high powered meeting chaired by the Federal Minister of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Mr. Aamer Mehmood Kiani stressed upon the need of strengthening EPI program as the most cost effective preventive health measure. Federal Minister also shared with the participants that the current Government plans to increase Health sector budget to fill the financial gaps and expedite fund flow to provinces for smooth conduct of EPI program activities in the country. He appreciated support of all donors and partners in extending technical assistance to the country.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Health, Mr. Iqbal Durrani, National Program Manager EPI, Dr. Syed Saqlain Ahmad Gilani, Provincial EPI Managers and officials. Dr. Syed Saqlain Ahmad Gilani in his remarks appreciated the joint team efforts to conduct successful Measles SIAs in the country. He further highlighted that Federal EPI is in process to develop SOPs to engage CSOs and Private Sector organisations as long term partners of EPI.

The Joint Supervision, Appraisal and Evaluation Mission of GAVI multi donors debriefed the Minister on the week long review of the Federal and Provincial EPI Program. Mission members included representatives from GAVI, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank, USAID, UNICEF and WHO. Representatives of the Mission appreciated the Pakistan's overall performance in achieving the milestone of successful Measles SIAs throughout the country to reduce disease burden.

Members appreciated the increase in immunization coverage as reflected by PDHS survey 2017/18 but bureaucratic bottlenecks needs to be addressed to expedite funds flow for smooth operations. Members also highlighted the need to improve synergy between EPI and Polio program to sustain the momentum achieved during the latest measles campaign. While sharing the recommendation, Mission emphasized on the need to generate credible data and ensure quality reporting for effectively projecting EPI performance in the provinces. All policies and strategies should then be aligned accordingly by utilizing the quality data and evidence for decision making. Mission members urged the new government to promote EPI program as an integral part of regular health budget instead on a project mode and a major component of an overall primary health structure within a wider health system.

Members stress upon the need of clear strategies, effective operational plans to reach out marginalized population for EPI service and improved strategies for demand creation based on data and evidence.

Additional Secretary Mr. Iqbal Durrani in his closing remarks assured full support of the Ministry in streamlining the EPI program and addressing issues including swift fund flow and stern mechanism of monitoring and accountability.

Sajid Hussain Shah
PRO to Federal Minister