



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Opening Remarks

to the

INTERCOUNTRY TRAINING WORKSHOP ON SURVEILLANCE OF VACCINE- PREVENTABLE DISEASES AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMES

Lahore, Pakistan, 2–4 July 2007

Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the intercountry training workshop on surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring and evaluation of national immunization programmes. I would like to thank the Government of Pakistan for hosting this workshop. I wish also to welcome our colleagues from WHO headquarters in Geneva, and to express my great appreciation to our colleagues from CDC, Atlanta for their support to strengthen immunization activities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Dear colleagues,

Immunization programmes are expanding in all countries in order to meet the global, regional and national targets of eradication, elimination and control of vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization programmes are also making good progress in introducing new childhood vaccines as well as in expanding immunization beyond infancy. In this regard, systematic monitoring and evaluation of performance and impact of the immunization programmes is crucial to provide the data necessary for priority-setting, decision-making, planning, resource mobilization and allocation. Monitoring and evaluation are also vital for measuring success in implementing the set strategies, identifying gaps and documenting progress towards achieving the set targets.

Recognizing the importance of availability of accurate information to guide planning, implementation and evaluation of all EPI activities, the Global Immunization Vision and Strategy (GIVS) addressed surveillance as one of the strategic areas for achieving the GIVS set goals. In addition, WHO has developed the global framework for surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring EPI activities. WHO is currently strengthening measles case-based surveillance in all countries through providing technical expertise, laboratory supplies and networking. The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has established regional networks for documenting the burden of diseases that are targeted by the new vaccines, including rotavirus, bacterial meningitis and other invasive bacterial disease surveillance networks.

Dear Colleagues,

I acknowledge with satisfaction the progress made by some countries in strengthening surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring and evaluation of EPI. Nevertheless, the development of such systems has not yet attained a level at which their efficiency is maximized. Apart from AFP surveillance and the evolving measles surveillance in some countries, existing surveillance activities of vaccine-preventable diseases have limitations that stem, mainly, from the weak laboratory capacities, duplication of surveillance activities and weak connections between the surveillance and control programmes. Similarly, monitoring the performance of routine immunization activities is still a neglected part of the national EPI of many countries.

There is a crucial need to monitor EPI activities using suitable indicators. It is essential to strengthen measles and maternal and neonatal tetanus surveillance in order to support the elimination initiatives. The recurrent outbreaks of the neglected vaccine-preventable diseases, such as diphtheria and whooping cough in some countries, call for more vigilant surveillance to guide prevention and control activities. The low vaccination coverage in several countries necessitates using district level data for prioritization and planning as part of the “Reach Every District” approach. Meanwhile, introduction of effective new vaccines means that more efforts have to be made to ensure these vaccines are distributed equitably and reach the children who need them most.

Dear Colleagues,

As you can see from the agenda, the theme of this workshop is “data for action”. The workshop is meant for discussing practical issues related to surveillance, monitoring and evaluation of immunization programmes, fostering generation of more reliable data and maximizing use of the available data for improving EPI performance and the impact of vaccination on disease occurrence. During the course of the workshop, you will be also briefed on the available tools for monitoring, evaluation and validation of EPI related data as well as available modules for data management.

I would like to ask all of you to seek the utmost benefit from this workshop through sound discussions and open exchange of experiences. I sincerely hope that this workshop will contribute to promoting surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring and evaluation of routine immunization activities at the national, regional and global levels. I wish you all a successful workshop and a pleasant stay in Lahore.