

Editorial**Measles Outbreak in Pakistan****Azhar Masud Bhatti****Editor in Chief**

The World Health Organization (WHO) said that insufficient immunization had triggered the current outbreak of measles in different parts of the country. Over 300 children and adults have died due to measles in the country, 210 children in Sindh alone in 2012, according to the WHO.

The Country Representative of WHO in Pakistan, Dr Guido Sabatinelli, said that the Government of Pakistan's Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) failed to achieve its objectives.

The EPI, which is technically supported by the WHO and Unicef, was supposed to immunize infants up to 11 months old against various diseases.

The EPI is also supposed to protect the newborn against neonatal tetanus.

As per the survey of Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM-2010/11), Pakistan's routine immunization coverage does not meet the optimal routine immunization rate of more than 80 percent.

"Pakistan's routine immunization coverage is close to 65 percent with only some important cities of Punjab recording a better performance," the WHO country representative stated.

He said that the huge difference in routine immunization coverage between provinces, districts and cities was at the root of the current measles outbreak.

The statement adds that WHO is recommending adequate steps both on emergency and long-term basis to the provincial governments to ensure that routine immunization coverage is made accessible to each and every child.

As an emergency response to the outbreak in Sindh, the provincial ministry has started a large measles vaccination campaign targeting 2.9 million children in eight districts of Sindh.

Sindh Health Minister, Dr. Saghir Ahmed during his visit to Sukkur and other "measles affected" districts of province has ordered that no child aged between nine months and 10 years

The provincial health minister who had been on an extensive visit to the affected areas during past few

days had asked the officials concerned to ensure compulsory availability of doctors and paramedics at the government hospitals on 24 hours basis.

He also urged the officials of expanded program on immunization (EPI) officials as well as those associated with district healthcare facilities to ensure that children and their parents are adequately facilitated.

All the 395 fix sites and 668 mobile teams constituted to run the campaign in the affected districts must also report their concerned in-charges on day to day basis that may further be communicated to him on urgent basis, ordered the minister.

Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Health, Khawaja Salman Rafique has directed Executive District Officers (Health) of all the districts to launch a campaign for eradication of measles in the province like dengue in an effective manner.

"All officers should improve the surveillance system about measles in their respective districts so that complete eradication of this disease could be ensured." He said this while addressing a meeting of EDOs Health of all districts of the province to review the situation of measles,

Director General Health said on the occasion that due to the spread of measles in Sindh province, strict vigilance is being made on the situation in Punjab and the special MOPUP campaign has been launched in tehsils and union councils concerned for protection against measles and children from the age of six months to 10 years have been vaccinated.

EDOs health have been directed that vaccination should be carried out in all those areas where five or more cases were reported and MOPUP campaign should be launched.

Salmaan Rafiq said that focal persons should be appointed in all teaching hospitals for reporting of measles cases and the data of such patients should be sent to health department on time.