

A Memoir of a Successful World Immunization Week, 2023 Pakistan

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World Immunization Week (WIW) 2023 themed the “Big Catch up” aim to accelerate rapid progress to vaccinate all children and adolescents getting them back on track and detect to catch up on missed vaccinations.

The Federal Directorate of Immunization under the direct leadership of the Ministry of National Health Services and in collaboration with all provincial EPIs and partner organization commemorated WIW 2023 in a successful manner. Being a part of a huge team of the Immunization Programme of Pakistan and actively participating as a UNICEF representative, when I look back at the weeklong commemoration activities, I see an extraordinary joyful celebration crowd of children cheering, clapping, and smiling in front of camera. Youth participating energetically in public events such as run and ride rally in the streets of Islamabad lit up with colourful blooming lights and balloons. On top of that health awareness walks being organised by the dedicated government for being part of a historical moment and marking a critical turning point for immunization.



A moment of relief and sigh by the Pakistani people being able to not feel caged like a bird inside their homes in quarantine thus living a happier and healthier life from the unprecedented, unforeseen disastrous pandemic COVID-19. The pandemic adversely affected the country however with the frontline healthcare workers heroic rescues in the midst of a global public health disaster, the World Immunization Week served as an opportunity to salute these unsung heroes. Hence FDI ensured WIW the Front Line Health Care Workers are bestowed with tribute. FDI organized special events for the doctors and nurses whom depict

their extraordinary dexterity in hospital wards to fight back and save every precious life from such a terrifying disease.



Aside from COVID-19 main commitment of the dedicated relentlessly hard-working government is to promote vaccinations to protect people against all vaccine preventable diseases. Indicator of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) currently Pakistan is ranked 40th in the world. The broadened scope of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) has the capacity to complete endeavours towards the attainment of UHC by 2030. Still committed to protect community and strive to achieve higher in ranking and most importantly combat all key challenges perceived such as large proportion of the population living in poverty also a high drop-out rate from insurance schemes unable to pay premium. Vaccines are a key pillar of equity in health care functioning to prevent the spread of deadly diseases, “Wellness seeks more than the absence of illness; it searches for new levels of excellence. Beyond any disease-free neutral point, wellness dedicates its efforts to our total well-being – in body, mind, and spirit.” *Greg Anderson*. Wellness is a response to all dimensions of the body, mind, and spirit to achieve highest potential for well-being in the long term. Health campaigns roll-outs address these challenges with the influential role of social mobilizers. Reaching out in slum areas providing free of cost vaccines, clean drinking water, bars of soaps to maintain a good standard of hygiene furthermore providing warm blankets to prevent hypothermia or other common cold viral infectious diseases in harsh cold winters in the Karakorum mountainous terrains. All service delivery health activities, campaigns been conducted through enhancing

digitalisation with various eventful programmes. This is a result of good governance efforts by health officials in collaboration with international partners. Overall, in primary health care grant has been enabled to support immunization services, vaccine procurement and health system strengthening.



Tremendous efforts made by the Federal Directorate of Immunization to eradicate polio this year is another milestone achievement. On the global scale analysis wild polio virus only one confirmed case is reported in Pakistan from 1st Jan till 23rd May 2023 previously in 2022 three cases reported to World Health Organisation (WHO). This is a strong global control on the lethal polio virus disease in this endemic country. Now children can lead a productive generation pave way towards a healthful energetic future. Rapid public health response in emergence of life-threatening diseases is an incredible success in Pakistan. Main factors contributing to a global public health success for world immunization week is increased maternal literacy, awareness of child healthcare, adequate provision of health services in fixed and outreach sites, vaccine production, motivation and safe drinking water and proper sanitation. For protection of children from illness, disability, and fatal conditions. Routine Immunization coverage has drastically brought improvement and strengthen primary health care to deliver immunization. Pakistan has showed with commitment and efforts that progress can be restored to pre-pandemic levels.

Hence to summarize, I feel great pride as it's a wrap of the World Immunization Week, but the colours and essence of activities conducted from the mountains of Gilgit to the Karachi Sea will last for long while creating multiplying effect resulting in enhanced awareness and reduction of the 12 vaccine preventable diseases. The credit goes to the leadership, the people of Pakistan and most of all Front Line Health Care Workers. THANK YOU ALL !

