

NEWSLETTER

EXPANDED PROGRAM ON IMMUNIZATION



Expanded Program on Immunization
Government of Pakistan

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Special Assistant to PM, Health apprised on immunization imminent value additions

The National Inter-Agency Coordination Committee meeting, chaired by Honourable Dr. Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health, MoNHSR&C was convened on the 12th November, 2020. The agenda was to discuss and endorse the following 3 points.

- Switch of Pneumococcal Vaccine from PCV-10 to PCV-13
- Addition of IPV Second Dose in RI Schedule
- Revision of Multi Dose Vial Policy

Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar, National Program Manager EPI delivered an articulate presentation in the light of recommendations by The National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) on switch of Pneumococcal Vaccine from PCV-10 to PCV-13. Dr. Rana also signified the addition of second dose of Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) in Routine Immunization (RI) and revision of multi dose vial Policy for IPV in line with the Polio eradication end game strategic plan.

The participants in addition to Dr. Malik M. Safi, Director General Health, MoNHSR&C included nationwide representatives from all provincial/federating areas EPIs, UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, BMGF Gates Foundation, GAVI, JICA, AKU and many other stakeholders participated in the meeting in-person and virtually. The house agreed unanimously and endorsed the three agenda points.



Special Assistant to PM sharing his vision during the NICC meeting

Formulation of COVID-19 National Technical Working Group (NTWG) Sub Committee at Federal EPI

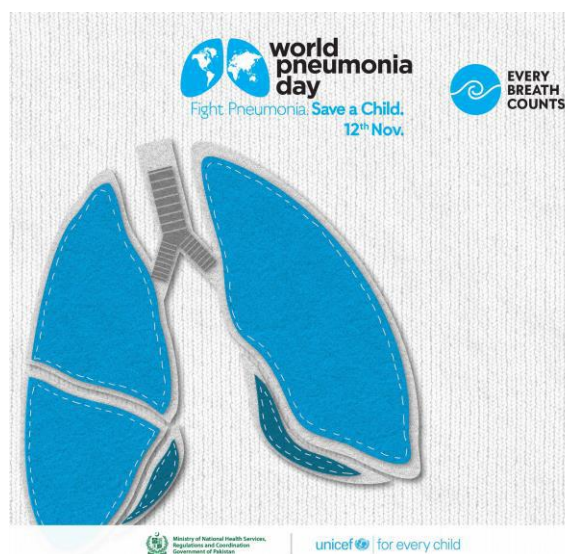
The pandemic of COVID-19 has tested the capacity of our health delivery system. As the world is responding to COVID-19, Pakistan also advances its efforts to combat the pandemic by harnessing expertise of all stakeholders. In this spirit a national COVID-19 Technical Working Group (NTWG) Sub Committee has been constituted at Federal EPI. This initiative will strengthen Pakistan's response to COVID-19 by assisting NCOC in outlining a clear road map in terms of policy and implementation.



First meeting of COVID-19 NTWG Sub Committee

EPI commemorates World Pneumonia Day to raise awareness on the leading killer of children under five

World Pneumonia Day is observed on November 12 worldwide every year. The day holds great significance and the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) under the guidelines of the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSR&C) and in collaboration with partners commemorated this



World Pneumonia Day Banner



day to raise awareness on this vaccine preventable disease and help prevent millions of avoidable child deaths annually from pneumonia, world's leading killer of children under the age of five.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a limited but still very holistic series of awareness creation interventions were carried out to ensure maximum spread of the word.

- Public Health specialists from EPI and relevant counterparts participated as guests on mainstream Radio Shows.
- Email footer with Pneumonia Banner were used by all EPI and Ministry staff.
- Social Media messages and banners were displayed all over EPI and Ministry's SM Platform and Official Websites.
- News articles were published in various daily Newspapers available at the following links: -

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1589723>

<https://nation.com.pk/12-Nov-2020/world-pneumonia-day>



Technical Focal Person and CHIP CSO Coordinator as EPI Reps on World Pneumonia Day Radio Show

EPI nationwide capacity building initiative on Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP)

In line with the environmental legislations and safeguard policies, Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) is implementing the "Environmental and Social Management Plan" (ESMP) under the National Immunization Support Project (NISP) to address potentially negative environmental and social impacts associated with the Immunization value chain.

The National Training Plan (NTP), approved in the mid of 2020 is a comprehensive and dynamic nationwide initiative comprising of series of completed "Training of Trainers" TOTs for professionals from districts all across Pakistan. The only remaining province of KP (inclusive of the merged districts) was the target for November 2020. A total of 120 participants in four Batches were trained on ESMP from 3rd to 6th November, 2020.

Purpose of the trainings was to develop understanding about Hospital Waste Management rules among the Health Care Providers (HCP) and Health Managers (HMs) and to develop knowledge and practical skill among the HCPs and HMs of KP province.



Dr. Soofia Yonus, DD Training and Dr. Ibrahim Mughal, ESMP Coordinator in a Group Photo

Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) Review Committee meeting

Meeting of the National Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) review committee was conducted virtually on 19th November, 2020 in Federal EPI. Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar, NPM, EPI inaugurated the meeting by highlighting the significance of a sensitive AEFI surveillance system for ensuring vaccine safety particularly in context of new vaccines. Participants included National AEFI Review Committee members and AEFI focal persons from all provinces.



Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar with his Opening Remarks at the AEFI Review Committee Meeting

Dr. Asad Ali, Associate Professor, AKU the chairman of the AEFI Review Committee concluded the session with the following recommendations:

- Development of application for VPD and AEFI Surveillance
- Strengthening the AEFI Surveillance system by allocating resources specifically for surveillance activities and human resource
- Having biannual meetings of National AEFI Review Committee

Dr. Yasmin Rashid, Honourable Health Minister Punjab reviewed the measures to improve routine immunization coverage in Punjab

Dr. Yasmin Rashid, Health Minister, Punjab has directed the authorities concerned that every child in the province must be vaccinated and Birth Registration Certificate will be issued only after immunization of the children. The initiative came in connection with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, She gave deadline of enhancing the immunization coverage to 90 per cent by June 2021. Dr. Yasmin Rashid was briefed by the Director Health Services, Dr. Bashir Ahmed comprehensively on the EPI Program, Punjab. Secretary PSHD Captain (Retd) Muhammad Usman Younis and many other senior dignitaries and health officials participated in the meeting.

EPI Punjab organized Performance Review Meeting

Under the leadership of Dr. Bashir Ahmad Director Health Services EPI and guidelines from Mr. Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti, Secretary Health, South Punjab, EPI team always work to improve all functions of the program and latest intervention conducted in this regard was the comprehensive EPI Review based on more than 46 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of all the 36 districts of Punjab in first week of November 2020. Period of these comprehensive review was starting from January 2020 to September 2020. These meetings were held in three different cities, including Lahore, Multan and Islamabad with technical and financial support of WHO. District level government officials, reps from partner organizations (WHO, UNICEF, BMGF and ACASUS) participated in these meetings. District performance was ranked on the basis of scoring and grading as weighted by process and performance indicators. Major challenges and way forward strategies were discussed in depth. Director Health Services, EPI Punjab Dr. Bashir Ahmed Siddiqui emphasized field officers to improve their performances by timely responses to these indicators. He applauded the best performance districts and their teams on their efforts. Dr. Osama Mere, country office WHO attended the session and highlighted the importance of immunization coverage and its role in saving precious lives from vaccine preventable diseases. Dr. Osama congratulated EPI Punjab



Group Photo at the End of the Comprehensive EPI Review Punjab

Coordination to strengthen EPI-PEI Synergy

Expanded Program on Immunization & Polio Eradication Initiative coordination meeting to strengthen EPI-PEI Synergy held at DGHS conference room jointly chaired by Dr. Bashir Ahmed Siddiqui, Director Health Services, EPI and Ms. Sundis Irshad Provincial EOC coordinator. The agenda was to strengthen mutual coordination and work towards attaining common goal of Polio eradication & decrease VPDs burden. Director EPI Punjab ensured his full cooperation and extend more support by utilizing all the possible resources in strengthening the EPI-PEI synergy.



Participants of EPI-PEI Synergy Meeting

Training Workshops for District Monitors on TCV Campaign

A Training workshops for district monitors was conducted on 13-14 November 2020 in Islamabad followed by one in Lahore on 16-17 November 2020 on orientation and planning of TCV campaign. These 36 District Monitors were hired for TCV campaign by CTC and supported by WHO. All aspects of routine immunization and TCV campaign were briefly discussed including micro planning, readiness assessment tool and other aspects for a successful implementation of future TCV catch-up campaign.



District Monitors Training Group Photo



DHS EPI Punjab visits CEO DHA, Rawalpindi

DHS, EPI carries field visits to monitor progress

Director Health Services EPI, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Siddiqui carried out a field monitoring visit to district Rawalpindi and held a meeting with CEO, DHA Rawalpindi. Director EPI discussed EPI related issues faced in Rawalpindi district. Dr. Bashir also briefed the CEO Rawalpindi over recruitment, training and immediate posting of all the newly hired vaccinators that will add to the human resource of the health teams. Director EPI also inspected the ongoing EPI activities in different fix and outreach EPI sites.

National level delegation visits EPI/EOC Sindh

A federal level delegation led by Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar, NPM EPI accompanied by Dr. Altaf Bosan Technical Advisor, Dr. Hamish Young UNICEF Polio lead and Dr. Kamal Soomro FLETP visited EPI and EOC Sindh. National EOC team was welcomed by Team led by Dr. Akram Sultan, Project Director EPI. A briefing was arranged for the visiting colleagues that included EPI current progress, success elements and lesson learnt during the 2019 Typhoid campaign and the way forward. EPI/PEI Sindh team presented National EOC with cultural souvenirs, TCV booklet, and shields.



Dr. Akram Sultan presenting a regional souvenir to Dr. Rana Muhammad Safdar

EPI Sindh showcasing EPI interventions on all sorts of Media (print, electronic and social) to create awareness

EPI Sindh continues the use of social media to create awareness among parents, families and community in order to increase coverage. During the month of November, 2020 EPI Sindh Facebook continued to create awareness regarding importance of immunization. Radio Pakistan broadcasted a program on "Radio Clinic" focusing on importance of Routine Immunization. Dr Ruksana Narejo, Surveillance Coordinator EPI Sindh was invited as the guest on various radio shows and advocated for the immunization cause. TV talk show on the TV One Channel program "Lalkaar" was broadcasted on 13th Oct with the guest participation from the famous pediatricians and member of Pakistan Pediatrician Association Dr. Akram Sultan, PD EPI, Dr Jamal Raza Director NICH, Dr. DS Akram and Dr. Iqbal Memon.



EPI Sindh Presence on all Spectrum of Media

District EPI field assessment & monitoring

EPI provincial office has been continuously focusing on the field assessment and reviews of districts to monitor progress of all EPI indicators. Assigned team were guided to visit the few low and best performing UCs. UNICEF team supported in field assessment, data management, meetings and feedback. Special focus was given on Advocacy, Communications & Social Mobilization (ACSM) activities conducted by the districts. Training refreshers on Inter Personal Communication (IPC) was suggested by field mission. All feedback extracted from the field was properly recorded, documented and communicated to District Health Management Team and district administration.



District Field Assessment Visit

Visit to SHRUCs for branding of EPI Centres

Provincial EPI team visited the super high risk UCs where WHO has completed the renovation and branding of EPI centres in SHRUCs. A team of technical officials from EPI Sindh and UNICEF visited the 4 targeted UCs to check the status and plan the implementation of the future branding interventions.

Enhanced public private partnership for increasing immunization in Karachi, Sindh

The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) Sindh working strategically tend to partner with the private sector in order to increase the coverage with no child left behind. In this regard, first in the line is signing an MoU with a private healthcare entity named Zubaida Machiyara Trust (ZMT) having free of cost providing 35 health facilities in Karachi; mostly in the slum areas.



Visit of Refurbished Health Facilities



MOU Signing Ceremony Meeting



Capacity building on EPI Management Information System

Improvement in governance and accountability for vaccine consumption and cold chain data is one of the key priority areas identified by EPI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While going with the integration approach, two of the best Information management tools i.e. Vaccine and Logistic Management Information System (vLMIS) and the EPI Management Information System (MIS) has been interfaced together.

In order to streamline the vaccine and logistic data management and to build capacity on all other component of EPI-MIS, interactive training sessions in three batches were organized for the identified District Focal Persons (DFPs) to train them on EPI-MIS.

Moreover, District EPI storekeepers were also trained on Vaccine and cold chain Equipment Inventory Management continuing working in par with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001 certification standards.



VLMIS Training Session in Progress

Peshawar Urban Health Initiative continues to build capacities of Vaccinators

Under Urban Health Initiative the training of the vaccinators on Child Electronic Registration and Vaccination (CERV) in Peshawar. Electronic Immunization registry is an option to identify the defaulter and missed children by capturing hand/foot thumbprint expressions of newborn and helps to reach the unreached children.

Communication and social mobilization interventions carried out

EPI KP in collaboration with JICA and UNICEF worked jointly to spread of the Immunization word as max as possible amongst masses. In this regards, JICA supported the advocacy meetings on development of contextualized social mobilization strategies for enhancing essential immunization in Kohistan Upper, Lower and Kolai Palas. On the other hand, UNICEF supported the orientation session of all the EPI Coordinators of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Community Engagement. Moreover, under Peshawar SHRUCs action plan Union Council Medical Officers and Union Council Communication Officers of SHRCUs also oriented on community engagement for equitable utilization of health/immunization services.



Environmental and Social Management Plan and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (ESMP & GRM)

ESMP-GRM TOT conducted in four batches for all districts of KP including NMDs in Federal EPI Islamabad. A large number of EPI KP HR were equipped with latest information and best practices on public health and social impacts of the project activities, proposes appropriate mitigation and precautionary measures – most of which are already practiced by the EPI teams. To address these negative impacts, describes institutional and monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of the proposed mitigation and precautionary measures, and defines the associated documentation and reporting requirements.



EPI Manager KP, DD Training and National ESMP Coordinator presenting certificates to the participants



Community Engagement Session in Progress



EPI Manager KP handing Over VLMIS certificates



Top Health EPI Officials Balochistan during Quarterly EPI Review Meeting

EPI Balochistan Quarterly Review Meeting

Provincial EPI conducted quarterly EPI progress review meeting with District Health Officers and Deputy District Health Officers of all districts in two batches on 6th & 7th November, 2020. Primary agenda of the meeting was to discuss impact of COVID-19 on routine immunization, review of EOA coverage and plan to improve EPI coverage during EOA-Catchup activity. Meeting was chaired by Honourable Secretary Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Health Department. The said top high level health official assured their full support to EPI. Part of the review also involved presentation on the initiative of Birth Dose vaccination sites at labor rooms of tertiary care hospitals in district Quetta to all DHOs followed by a discussion on expansion in other districts of the province. During meeting, productive discussions were held on current situation, progress and area of improvement of the districts and future strategies.

Enhanced Outreach Activities (EOA)

Provincial EPI with support of WHO had been conducting Enhanced Outreach Activities (EOA) since December 2018 providing massive support in increasing routine immunization coverage of the province by providing additional resources to increase skill immunization staff for covering to reach every community.



Vaccination in Progress during Enhanced Outreach Activity

These efforts are further supported by the UNICEF provided technical staff at divisional and district level during planning, monitoring and implementation phases. This intervention will certainly have high impact



Teams Maneuvering in District Khuzdar for Polio Vaccination and Routine Immunization

Building capacity on "Data Quality Assessment" DQA Exercise

Provincial EPI is in process of conducting Data Quality Assessment (DQA) exercise. The aim of DQA is to assess data accuracy, timeliness & completeness, weekly VPD reports, field validation, reporting, recording and monitoring system of EPI and identify weak areas at UC, District and provincial level. A workshop on Data Quality Assessment was organized at provincial level to train the assessment teams to benefit and recognize key areas of reporting system which needs to be focused at various levels and evaluate implementation of previous Data Quality Improvement Plan.



Vaccination in Progress during Enhanced Outreach Activity



Expanded Program on Immunization
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EPI Azad Jammu & Kashmir



EPI AJK Developments remained part of WHO Country Rep's Briefing to the Honourable PM, of Azad Jammu & Kashmir

The Country Representative of World Health Organization Dr. Palitha Mahipala called on the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Honourable Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan on 25th November, 2020. Dr. Mahipala gave a detailed briefing to the Honourable Prime Minister on various health program and projects where the AJ&K Government and WHO is jointly working that also included key achievements from the Expanded Program on Immunization, AJ&K. Dr. Bushra Shams, Program Manager EPI and Dr. Wende, Team lead WHO were also present.

The Honourable PM thanked the World Health Organization for not only extending resources to meet the challenges of COVID-19 but also for playing a vibrant role in all aspects of AJ&K health interventions inclusive of Polio Eradication & Routine Immunization. On this auspicious event, Chaudhary Tariq Farooq, Senior Minister, Dr. Najeeb Naqi, Minister Health/Finance and Maj. Gen. Ahsan Altaf Secretary Health were also present.



Honourable PM, AJ&K presenting Shield to the WR, WHO

EPI AJ&K Quarter Review was convened to make the program more efficient and effective

The third Quarterly Progress Review Meeting was held in Islamabad from 3rd-6th Nov, 2020. The meeting was chaired by Honourable Secretary Health Maj. Gen Ahsan Altaf, other head table officials included Dr. Osama Mere, Team lead WHO, Dr. Yasmine Challoub, Health Specialist UNICEF, and Wendemagegn Dubale Team lead for AJ&K/GB.

The two days comprehensive review was an extensive brainstorming exercise that were Program Managers of vertical programs, DHOs and District EPI Officers actively participated and shared their quarterly progress and highlighted the key achievements and challenges in their respective districts. Different aspects of better coordination, record keeping and reporting, capacity of vaccination staff and prioritization of action areas were discussed at length and it was agreed that EPI at the District level needs to more effectively engage in paving way forward for better and efficient service delivery across AJ&K.



EPI AJK Review Meeting in Progress

Catching Up with the routine immunization gap post COVID-19 lock down

The swift spread of COVID-19 has upended health systems and affected all health services including immunization services. In AJ&K the discontinuation of routine immunization services remained from 22 March–16th April, 2020.

EPI AJ&K closely and proactively monitored the scenario and to make up for the situation came up with an innovative approach of implementation of "Enhanced Outreach Activity (EOA) Phase-2 from 9th to 21st Nov, 2020. The EOA Phase-2 targeted the 9 Districts of AJ&K except district Neelum due to managerial constraints with very encouraging results.



Enhanced Outreach Activity (EOA) Phase-2 All Across AJ&K

AJ&K EPI Staff's Social Mobilization contributions towards COVID-19

The Azad Kashmir government has integrated all departments and personnel towards COVID-19 Risk Communication & Community Engagement RCCE efforts. EPI remained a valuable part of it.



COVID-19 Social Mobilization and Awareness Creation using ICE Materials in Education Institutes

EPI, GB carries Out Enhanced Outreach Activity (EOA)

Enhanced Outreach Activity (EOA) were ongoing throughout the month of November in Gilgit Baltistan, in which 165 vaccinators and 165 Social Mobilizers worked in the field in spite of harsh weather conditions.

The dedication of EPI GB with Dr. Shakeel Ahmed, EPI Manager leading from the front in collaboration with all partners inclusive of WHO, UNICEF, B&M Gates Foundation and many others resulted in great results in terms of catching up for the children missed during COVID-19 lock down.



Vaccinator in the field during EOA in District Kharmang

EPI, GB briefing to the interim Health Minister

The interim Minister Health Dr. Imam Yar Baig held a meeting of EPI-GB in the Provincial Program Manager's office and he was comprehensively briefed on the Progress of the EPI Program Antigen wise for the year 2020. He appreciated the efforts of FLW's who combated the COVID-19 situation and kept intact the immunization services.

The Minister ensured full support to the EPI-GB Program in future.



Minister Health Dr. Imam Yar Baig being briefed on EPI, GB Updates

Provincial Coordination Committee's meeting organized

Provincial Coordination Committee's meeting was held on 9th November, 2020 to improvise the routine immunization coverage. Focus remained with EPI/PEI synergy and how both Programs can contribute mutually in scaling-up of the progress markers of the Program. During this meeting impact of elections on routine Immunization along with the proliferation of COVID-19 was discussed.

An in depth analysis of the program was discussed with focusing on the success factors as well as the challenges faced recently.

Provincial EPI Quarterly Review of EPI-GB

Provincial EPI Review which was chaired by Secretary Health Mr. Waqar Mir was held to gauge the progress of the EPI Program and highlight the underperforming areas. The subject of the meeting remained coverage improvisation, catch up of due defaulters and prior contingent strategy for upcoming months keeping in view harsh weather conditions. The Secretary Health appreciated the developments.



Secretary Health Waqar Mir in a group photo after Provincial EPI Review



Dr. Shakeel Ahmed, EPI GB at the NICC, Islamabad participated also by all other EPI Managers



Directorate of Health Services MCI goes an extra mile to ensure routine immunization for the neglected communities

Directorate of Health Services MCI is core formation of Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad responsible for municipal limits. But considering the health of the neglected areas Dr. Hasan Orooj, Director General Health Services has instructed teams to in addition to routine immunization health care services provision within the municipal limits also cater for adjacent rural areas and urban slums based on equity coverage philosophy.



Teams ensuring no child is left behind

Covering up for the routine immunization Corona pandemic Backlog

In order to ensure the immunization coverage of due and defaulter children and coverage of backlog target children during pandemic, house to house social mobilization was carried out by the daily paid community mobilizers. The efficiency of this initiative and other outreach activities are highly enhanced by the logistic support in form of provision of motor bikes to vaccinators by Federal EPI. The 2-wheelers reaches areas where routine vehicles access was limited and ensure mobility for outreach vaccination, therefore this intervention has proved to be a very effective one.



Motorbike is being handed over to the Front Line Worker

Digital Child Immunization Entry

Digital child registry through "Zindagi Mehfooz" mobile application continued to remain under practice by 34 vaccinators of Directorate of Health Services at EOA as well as at MCI fixed centers. All the vaccinations of children are now registering on daily basis. Further the attendance of the vaccinators is also being assessed on daily basis".



Child Immunization Digital Data Entry in Progress

Preparing for the upcoming TCV campaign in Islamabad

The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) is all set to launch TCV in phased manner during 2019-2021 in Pakistan. In the first phase, TCV is being introduced in Sindh from November 18, 2019 through a catch-up campaign with the target of 10.2 million children between 9 months to 15 years of age followed by introduction in routine immunization. Strategically moving forward, the second phase focuses on TCV launch in Punjab and Islamabad in the first quarter of 2021 with a set target population of 19.1 million (i.e. 18.7 in Punjab and approx .5 million in Islamabad).

For the successful implementation of campaign, the pre-campaign preparation started from second quarter 2020 and a training of 1st level supervisors of CDA and ICT for TCV catch-up campaign on microplanning was organized on 12th and 13th November 2020 at Serena Hotel Islamabad. The training was facilitated by second level supervisors, who were already trained in TOT with Punjab.

The training focused on the microplanning tools for TCV catch-up campaign, Participants were briefed in detail for emerging trends of multidrug and extreme drug resistant and importance of TCV vaccine for preventive measure. Each tool of microplanning was explained in detail with group work on it. Considering the COVID-19 situation participants were also oriented to address the current challenges of COVID-19. Participants were divided in groups and each group was assigned to mention the effective of TCV, school targets, importance of schools in campaign, challenges due to COVID-19 and solution of these challenges. Each group worked on the challenges and came up with significant solution to address them. Total 78 participants from ICT and CDA were trained in microplanning workshops. On 12th November a batch of 42 participants from CDA whereas a batch of 36 participants of ICT on 13th November respectively.



WHO Facilitator Conducting the Training Session



Dr. Zulfiqar Ali, ADHO FP EPI ICT Addressing the Audience



Team Lead EPI, WHO Pakistan, Dr. Mohammed Osama Mere Interacting with the Audience



ICT Group Photo at the end of the Session.