

PRESS RELEASE

Ensuring that children, adolescents, and women, especially the most vulnerable, have access to quality and sustainable health services in Pakistan.

Nearly US\$ 20 million made available to improve healthcare services through agreements between Government of Pakistan, Gavi and UNICEF

Islamabad, [23 February 2024]

The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination of the Government of Pakistan, Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance, and UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, came together to sign two new Tripartite Agreements, on Friday.

One of the agreements signed is dedicated to Health Systems Strengthening and the other for providing continued COVID-19 Delivery Support

The successful implementation of the new support is expected to yield several positive results, including reaching more children who haven't received any regular or routine vaccinations as well as easier access to vaccinations for more people, especially in high-risk areas. In total, 86 selected districts or 3,882 Union Councils (UCs) across Pakistan will be targeted.

Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Kazi, Director General – Health, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Islamabad / Federal Directorate of Immunization Pakistan welcomed worthy Secretary Health, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, Mr. Thabani Maphosa Gavi Representative, and Mr. Abdullah A. Fadil UNICEF Representative on this breakthrough signing ceremony convened by the **Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI)**.

Dr. MA Kazi while sharing his thoughts on this significant milestone achieved by the **Federal Directorate of Immunization** said that "signing of the Tripartite Agreements between Pakistan, Gavi, and UNICEF signifies our collective efforts for Health System Strengthening and Equity Based Coverage for the 12 vaccine preventable diseases with a prime focus on polio eradication from Pakistan. According to Dr. MA Kazi EPI/PEI Synergy is the key for a Polio Free Pakistan. He also stressed on the importance of COVID-19 Delivery Support interventions that is part of these agreements.

Dr. Kazi shared his vision in form of the planned interventions that will enhance the immunization uptake inclusive of human centered design approach, solarization of health facilities, capacity building of social and behavioral change staff, inclusion of routine immunization content in school curriculum, increasing the vaccinators workforce, generating more immunization fleets/vehicle resources, enhancing the waste management capacity, Rehabilitation of cold rooms and cold chain vehicles, ensuring independent monitoring systems and following the Integrated Service Delivery model that shall propel Pakistan towards achieving universal immunization coverage.

Dr. MA Kazi while crediting the whole team of the Federal Directorate of Immunization on this first of its kind ever accomplishment highlighted that "FDI has been lobbying with donor and partner organizations showcasing the great developments and achievements in the Immunization Programme of Pakistan by FDI that has resulted in today's successful signing of Tripartite Agreements. It is a testament to FDI's commitment to leave no one behind in our pursuit of equitable healthcare for all".

Dr. MA Kazi concluded by mentioning that "I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the worthy Secretary Health for putting his faith in the FDI Programme and Gavi, UNICEF and other development partner organizations for their unwavering support and collaboration. Together, let us embark on this journey towards a healthier, more resilient future for the people of Pakistan".

The Managing Director of Gavi – the Vaccine Alliance, Mr. Thabani Maphosa in his statement said: "Gavi is honored to continue its engagement with the Government of Pakistan, in partnership with the UNICEF Pakistan Country Office. Vaccines alone do not save lives, which is why Gavi is dedicated to helping strengthen the health systems that are essential to deliver vaccinations. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure this funding will strengthen routine immunization and provide integrated health services to better meet the needs of families in Pakistan."

Mr. Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan in turn said: "The Government of Pakistan's continuous efforts and support from its partners in maintaining the immunization coverage, conducting intensive activities to vaccinate those left behind and to reach communities in hard-to-reach areas, underscores the commitment to immunize all children in the country, especially those not being reached currently."

Secretary, Ministry of Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Dr. Iftikhar Ali Shallwani acknowledged the continuous, generous financial and technical support provided by Gavi for Immunization System Strengthening in Pakistan and the ongoing financial and technical support from UNICEF and other partners for health and immunization programs. "This critical support from Gavi and UNICEF will play a crucial role in our efforts to aim for Universal Immunization Coverage, and to ensure that children, adolescents, and women, especially the most vulnerable, have access to quality and sustainable immunization services" the Secretary said.

The one-year Health Systems Strengthening grant forms part of a larger multi-year and multi-partner partnership.