



Dr. Samia Rizwan of UNICEF, Shoaib Shahzad of Mercy Corps & Dr. Farid Midhet of MCHIP addressing the participants.

Use of Chlorhexidine for Umbilical Cord Care in newborns stressed

Highlighting the importance of application of Chlorhexidine for Umbilical Cord Care in Newborns, experts at a Consultative Meeting stressed the role of Chlorhexidine Digluconate to in reducing the neo-natal mortality in Pakistan.

The National Technical Consultative Meeting on national recommendations for use and scale up of 7.1 percent Chlorhexidine Digluconate for umbilical cord care in Pakistan was organized by Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) Services Component 2 of USAID/Pakistan's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program—Implemented by the Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP) at a local hotel in Islamabad. MCHIP is implemented by Jhpiego — an international, non-

Hopkins University — in collaboration with Save the Children, JSI and PATH. MCHIP/Jhpiego is working with health experts, government departments and community leaders to provide high-quality health care to the people of underserved areas of Pakistan. The aim of the Meeting was to finalize the national policy on the basis of provincial recommendations for the application of Chlorhexidine in umbilical cord care for the prevention of neonatal sepsis in Pakistan.

Dr. Sabeen Afzal, Deputy Director, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination in her welcome address informed that Pakistan is signatory to the MDGs. The three MGDs are related to health but the country is lagging behind to improve its maternal

To improve the maternal and neonatal death rates, cost effective, evidence based regime is required to tackle the major cause of deaths. One such intervention, the induction of Chlorhexidine is the need of the day. Chlorhexidine is efficacious, low cost, simple to use, safe and furthermore, it is evidence based. Dr. Afzal informed that the trials have been done on application of 7.1% Chlorhexidine in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan which clearly shows its efficacy and its potential role in reducing neonatal mortality as well as severe infection. The intervention has now been introduced in Pakistan in order to reduce neonatal mortality.

The Ministry is simultaneously making efforts to regulate Chlorhexidine drug with

the drug is registered for import or manufacturing within the country, its production could also be sponsored by NGOs and other health sector activists for distribution in the rural sections of population, she added.

Dr. Farid Midhet, Chief of Party, USAID funded Maternal & Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP led by Jhpiego) shared his experience on community based distribution of Chlorhexidine in district Tando Allahyar (Sindh). He said that MCHIP/Jhpiego has started implementing the strategy to reduce the neonatal mortality through Community-based distribution of Chlorhexidine.

In this strategy, MCHIP/Jhpiego trained Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and community

providing antenatal and postnatal care to the women in their respective communities. After training, these community midwives started distributed Chlorhexidine gel tubes to prevent newborn sepsis due to umbilical cord infection.

Dr. Samia Rizwan, Health Specialist at UNICEF Pakistan gave an update of Every New born Action Plan (ENAP) followed by draft of strategy for the local production of Chlorhexidine, implementation and scale up of Chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care in Pakistan. She informed the Plan provides a roadmap and joint action platform for the reduction of preventable newborn mortality. Linking the work of all stakeholders, it enables policy makers and others to take action to accelerate national plans to achieve clear

survival, enhancing the achievement of wider goals for women's and children's health.

Shoaib Shahzad, Project Manager, Mercy Corps speaking on Improving Chlorhexidine advocacy for new born said that globally, umbilical infection rates have been reported as 2 to 54 per 1,000 live births from hospitals. Sepsis is closely linked to unhygienic practices and environment during delivery. In 2012, 65% of births in Pakistan took place at home: 72% of which were not attended by a skilled birth attendant. These newborns were at risk of sepsis due to poor cord care practices. He emphasized on the need to adopt interventions like other countries have through which the mortality rate of the country has reduced.

Legislations according to UNCRPD demanded

Aurat Foundation, in collaboration with the Directorate General of Special Education, organized a policy dialogue, titled 'Road Map for Justice and Equality for Persons with Disability (PWD)', the International Day of Persons with Disability in Islamabad. The event was supported by AUSDFAT, Trocaire and Women Learning Partnership (WLP). Speakers at the occasion spoke about the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and their social inclusion. They also talked about the need for improved awareness among stakeholders, services available for persons with disabilities and current status of legislation on disability. She said that there is no clear legislation at national level for the rights of persons with disabilities, and hence a strong and effective lobbying is required with relevant stakeholders.

The policy dialogue focused on challenges

faced by disable community, inclusion process and challenges of establishing inclusion set ups and international and national commitments which have direct implications on person with disabilities. The event also featured musical performance by the TLC students.

Ammara Anwar, Program Specialist, Pakistan Foundation Fighting Blindness, in her presentation focused on the challenges faced by disable community of Pakistan. Major challenges faced by disable community include communication gap among NGOs working for PWDs, and the organizations working for human rights, insufficient quota allocation for persons with disabilities, and 18th amendment and its consequences.

Saba Mohsin, Early Intervention Consultant, discussed in detail the inclusion process and challenges of establishing inclusion set ups. The major challenges,

she pointed out, was lack of coordination between ordinary schools and special schools, lack of awareness and education within the community, inadequate attention to disability-friendly infrastructure, lack of teachers' training, resource materials and funds to develop the inclusive programs, and of course the attitudinal barriers of society including parents, educators and policy makers.

She stressed the need for sufficient financial resources, adequate support system including sufficient trained and qualified professionals, community participation, and on-going evaluation of established programs.

M Jawwad Afzal, Deputy Director, Directorate General of Special Education, in his presentation shared that out of total population of 180 million, there are 4 to 8 million persons with disabilities in Pakistan, and 45% of these are children under age 18. At least 3 million adults (both genders

included) need rehabilitation through some kind of employment.

Elaborating the human rights of persons with disabilities he said that they have right to social, political and economic integration, barrier free access to state resources and services, right to a dignified life as citizen, and that they must not be labelled as 'handicap' but be accommodated as 'human diversity'.

Barrister Usman Ibrahim, State minister for Capital Administration and Development Division said that the government

is committed to address the challenges faced by the persons with disability.

Director Coordination Aurat Foundation Prof. Farkhanda Aurangzeb stressed the need to create special opportunities for women with disabilities. Director Advocacy and Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) for Aurat Foundation Rabeea Hadi demanded Employment quota equal to the percentage of disability existing in the society. She suggested the government to prepare a comprehensive database

to identify exact number of persons with disabilities and consider disability aspect while drafting new electoral reforms.

Chief coordinating Officer Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza demanded legislations according to United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD).

In closing remarks, Director General Directorate of Special Education Sibghat-ur-Rehman acknowledged the efforts of organisers. ■

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Dr. Muhammad Tariq, Country Director, USAID's DeliverProject spoke on the status of Chlorhexidine with provincial Essential Medicine Lists. Later on, Dr. Shabbir Chandio - USAID, Dr. Zareefuddin - WHO, Dr. Qudsia - Save the Children, Professor Iqbal Memon - Pediatric Association of Pakistan

and representatives from provincial health departments expressed their remarks on the use of Chlorhexidine in Pakistan.

Dr. Malik Safi, Director Program National Ministry of Health Services, Coordination and Regulation in his concluding remarks said that the ministry will provide a platform for all provinces and partners and facilitate

the process of adaptation of CHX in Pakistan. He shared the 'National Policy on CHX: Recommendations and Next steps' to the participants, encouraging all the development partners to initiate the use of CHX in all provinces helping the Government to scale up efforts in adaptation of Chlorhexidine intervention. ■