

Joint International National Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) Surveillance Sri Lanka : 16th to 26th October 2015

As part of the Regional efforts to support countries and EPI programmes, and in line with the recommendations of the South-East Asia Regional Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (SEAR-ITAG), an International programme review was conducted in Sri Lanka on the above.

The general areas reviewed under the joint mission in Sri Lanka for 2015 were:

- EPI implementation and management evaluating key elements in EPI at the core of health systems strengthening (with particular focus on human resources and financing)
- VPD surveillance with special emphasis on approaches towards Polio Eradication and Measles, Rubella, Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) elimination
- Country readiness for introduction of new vaccines including HPV
- Approaches to the EPI life cycle approach, with particular emphasis on school based immunization

The 2015 mission is expected to provide an opportunity to monitor the contribution of Sri Lanka towards wider global and regional targets in Eradication and Elimination of VPD.

Eleven teams including International and National reviewers reviewed 22 districts throughout the country including central level functions of the Epidemiology Unit and the Virology laboratory of the Medical Research Institute.

The review was concluded on 26th October 2015 with a de-briefing session to ministry officials and to the reviewed provincial and district health officials. Main recommendations are as follows and findings and recommendations are to be submitted by the International team at their earliest to be published soon.

- Sri Lanka has an outstanding immunization programme
- VPD surveillance standards identified to be improved to a new level
 - Hospital timely notification required to be improved
 - District level line listing of VPD cases to be maintained
 - Strengthen lab-based surveillance for measles to be done
 - Increase proportion of cases with specimens
 - Link specimens to epidemiological findings
 - Requires to maintain and further increase gains and ensure reaching and maintaining elimination and eradication goals of VPD
- Ensure primary care and immunizations are actively engaged in health care planning including financing
- Strengthen and regularize oversight of private sector vaccination
- Capitalize on economic growth to increase funding for new vaccines

