



WEEKLY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL REPORT

A publication of the Epidemiology Unit
Ministry of Health

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Flashback 2023

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The year 2023 was challenging for the Epidemiology unit as the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measles outbreak set in the country despite high childhood vaccination coverage. Additionally, the effects of the economic crisis also affected the smooth functioning of the unit to a certain extent. However, the functions of the unit, mainly the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) and the disease surveillance (both vaccine-preventable and other important communicable diseases) - were carried out successfully with a team spirit.

Covid-19 Vaccination Campaign

The COVID-19 vaccination drive continued for the year 2023 with the Sinopharm vaccine. It was given to anyone above 18 years of age including pregnant mothers to complete the primary vaccination or anyone above 20 years as first or second booster dose. At the end of December 31st, 2023, the number of vaccinations carried out was reported as, at least a single dose – 17,143,761, 2nd dose – 14,752,827 first booster 8,220,788 and the second booster 202,751.

Disease surveillance

Communicable disease control largely depends on the timely surveillance of the diseases. Epidemiology Unit along with the wide network of Medical Officers of Health Units spread throughout Sri Lanka collects, analyzes, interprets and disseminates data on communicable diseases weekly paving the path to control them.

Currently, the “e-Surveillance”, the web-based

disease surveillance system, is implemented to minimize the errors encountered in the paper-based system in all 364 Medical Officers of Health (MOH), divisions. The completeness of the system is near 100%.

National Immunization Programme

The National Immunization Programme (NIP) is one of the major responsibilities of the Epidemiology Unit. Currently, NIP protects the nation from 12 dreadful communicable diseases and 2 non-communicable diseases.

Age-appropriate vaccination is available and accessible to all eligible children in the country and services are provided by well-trained MOH staff. The services are provided at the MOH office and fixed field vaccination clinics as well as at the school vaccination sessions.

Regular monitoring of the programme is carried out at the district and central levels and necessary feedback and guidance are provided to the field staff. A major component of monitoring and evaluation of the NIP is the EPI/ VPD reviews which are conducted annually at both district and national levels. During 2023, as with the other years, EPI/ VPD reviews were conducted in all 26 health districts to assess the performance of the NIP during the year 2022. Gaps in service provision were identified and relevant general and specific recommendations were made to improve the immunization service delivery.

Measles

Along with the measles outbreaks that were being experienced in the year 2023 globally, Sri Lanka also started reporting measles cases in

Contents	Page
1. Flash Back 2023	1
2. Summary of selected notifiable diseases reported (23 rd – 29 th December 2023)	3
3. Surveillance of vaccine preventable diseases & AFP (23 rd – 29 th December 2023)	4

mid-2023. The first case was reported on 23rd May 2023 through the routine disease surveillance system from the Colombo Municipality Area. Transmission of the disease was initially observed predominantly among vaccine refusals in the CMC area followed by Kolonnawa, Gothatuwa and Dehiwala MOH areas in the Colombo district. By the end of 2023, 786 confirmed measles cases were reported across the island affecting 161 MOOH areas out of a total of 358 MOOH areas. The majority of the cases were reported from Colombo district (40%) and Gampaha district (18.7%) followed by Jaffna district (10.9%). Among them, approximately 55% of cases occurred among Sinhalese, 29% belonged to the Moor ethnicity & 16 % to the Tamil ethnicity. Out of the total positive cases, 17% were less than 9 months old aged infants while nearly 35% of patients belonged to the 20 to 30 years age category.

A measles outbreak response plan was activated and the following activities were carried out around each confirmed patient:

- Contact tracing and follow-up of contacts for 2 incubation periods
- Conducting fever, and rash screening in households around a positive patient
- Vaccinating children of 9 months -15 years who have missed the routine vaccination
- Vaccinating contacts between 15 - 45 years, who do not have evidence of measles vaccination.

In addition, the Medical Officer of Health areas with a significant number of children with vaccine refusal implemented several measures to vaccinate them.

Further, as an attempt to protect infants under 9 months of age, who are not eligible for routine vaccination but are vulnerable to the disease and its complications, a supplementary immunization activity will be conducted in early January 2024, targeting infants between 6 to 9 months in selected 9 high-risk health districts. At the same time, a nationwide catch-up campaign will be conducted for children between 9 months to 15 years who have missed the routine vaccination. Planning and preparation activities for these two programmes were carried out during the last few weeks of December 2023.

Leptospirosis

A total of 9927 cases of leptospirosis were notified to the Epidemiology Unit in the year 2023. The highest caseload was reported from Rathnapura, Galle, Kalutara and Kegalle districts. Increasing trends were seen in Moneragala, Kurunegala and Matara in 2023. The Case Fatality Rate was 2 per 100 cases. Throughout the past years, the case incidence rate has been fluctuating with a higher number of cases being reported in 2023 than in 2022. Reporting of Leptospirosis cases has shown an annual seasonal pattern with peaks during rainy seasons of two monsoons in the country. With the current economic issues affecting agriculture activities and the changing rainfall pattern in the country, it is essential to remain vigilant

as leptospirosis outbreaks can occur with increasing frequency in high-risk districts.

Influenza

There are 19 sentinel hospitals to carry out influenza surveillance throughout the country. Out of 3,320,307 total OPD visits, 229,549 Influenza-like Illness (ILI) cases have been reported to the National Influenza Surveillance System during the year 2023. It represents 6.9% of total OPD visits to the sentinel sites.

During the year 2023, 4766 Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) patients have been reported from four SARI sentinel hospitals. This contributes to 4.1% out of 116,299 inward patients in the Medical and Pediatric wards of the SARI sentinel hospitals during the year 2023.

There were 10 laboratory-confirmed influenza-positive deaths during the year 2023.

**Compiled by
The Editor**

Table 1: Selected notifiable diseases reported by Medical Officers of Health 23rd- 29th Dec 2023 (52nd Week)

RDHS	Dengue Fever		Dysentery		Encephalitis		Enteric		Food Poison-		Leptospirosis		Typhus		V. Hep.		H. Rabi.		Chickenpox		Meningitis		Leishmania-		WRCD	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	T*	C**
Colombo	375	15122	0	18	0	19	0	4	0	12	12	383	0	0	0	6	0	0	10	387	1	57	0	7	95	100
Gampaha	146	13514	0	22	0	21	0	13	0	30	18	642	0	13	1	21	0	0	10	329	4	137	0	48	93	100
Kalutara	89	4876	1	33	1	6	0	1	1	20	14	927	0	2	0	10	0	1	18	596	6	118	0	5	93	100
Kandy	330	9031	0	44	0	3	1	13	0	23	9	316	1	69	1	6	0	2	5	345	0	32	1	39	100	100
Matale	71	2096	0	5	0	3	0	1	0	39	4	159	0	14	0	9	0	0	4	82	0	11	3	356	100	100
NuwaraEliya	13	424	2	173	0	6	0	3	0	52	3	204	1	77	0	6	0	0	5	230	0	34	0	3	100	100
Galle	93	3598	1	58	0	15	0	6	0	49	30	1020	0	85	0	2	0	1	5	401	3	40	0	3	94	100
Hambantota	18	1570	0	18	0	4	0	1	0	10	19	420	0	74	0	9	0	0	3	164	0	21	12	678	100	100
Matara	20	1997	0	30	0	10	0	1	1	72	4	556	0	34	0	7	0	2	6	333	1	26	1	201	94	100
Jaffna	746	4870	1	164	0	2	0	20	1	52	2	23	54	782	0	8	0	2	4	220	1	23	0	3	100	93
Kilinochchi	17	167	0	27	0	0	0	1	1	19	1	13	1	10	0	1	0	0	0	19	0	2	0	0	100	100
Mannar	25	172	1	12	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	41	2	10	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	11	0	1	100	100
Vavuniya	19	234	1	15	0	1	0	0	1	27	8	59	0	10	0	3	0	0	0	37	0	17	1	13	100	100
Mullaitivu	24	185	1	19	0	1	0	5	0	12	4	55	0	7	0	1	0	0	0	19	0	3	0	8	83	100
Batticaloa	113	2754	1	236	1	12	0	5	0	28	6	125	0	2	0	11	0	4	3	159	1	55	0	1	100	100
Ampara	5	296	0	21	0	1	0	1	0	70	8	189	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	106	0	72	0	13	86	100
Trincomalee	23	2176	1	32	0	2	0	2	0	69	8	114	0	15	0	5	0	0	1	90	1	36	0	9	75	100
Kurunegala	164	3876	0	71	0	18	0	2	0	9	19	575	0	21	0	16	0	3	4	550	5	252	9	616	93	100
Puttalam	63	3621	0	51	0	5	0	2	0	2	8	151	0	10	0	1	0	0	3	136	4	105	0	27	46	100
Anuradhapur	42	887	0	21	0	2	0	1	0	12	24	377	3	39	0	6	0	2	7	260	1	56	2	738	96	100
Polonnaruwa	8	664	0	29	0	6	0	7	0	11	8	264	0	11	0	16	0	0	1	103	0	19	3	441	89	100
Badulla	120	2037	1	47	0	7	0	0	0	45	14	389	2	70	0	99	0	0	4	225	1	64	1	45	100	100
Monaragala	29	871	0	27	0	6	0	0	0	8	15	648	0	42	1	37	0	1	0	81	3	98	5	191	100	100
Ratnapura	54	2580	4	76	1	21	0	3	0	64	31	1422	0	34	1	22	0	2	6	288	2	156	1	224	100	100
Kegalle	119	3484	0	32	0	3	0	2	0	23	10	791	0	47	0	6	0	0	7	499	3	102	3	51	100	100
Kalmune	34	1854	1	76	0	14	0	0	0	4	1	64	0	2	0	4	0	0	2	196	0	47	0	0	85	100
SRILANKA	2760	82956	16	1357	3	188	1	95	5	762	280	9927	64	1482	4	315	0	20	110	5858	37	1594	42	3721	93	99

Source: Weekly Returns of Communicable Diseases (esurveillance.eph.gov.lk). T=Timeliness refers to returns received on or before 29th Dec, 2023. Total number of reporting units 358. Number of reporting units data provided for the current week: 356. C**=Completeness. A = Cases reported during the current week. B = Cumulative cases for the year.

Table 2: Vaccine-Preventable Diseases & AFP

23rd–29th Dec 2023 (52nd Week)

Disease	No. of Cases by Province									Number of cases during current week in 2024	Number of cases during same week in 2023	Total number of cases to date in 2024	Total number of cases to date in 2023	Difference between the number of cases to date in 2024 & 2023
	W	C	S	N	E	NW	NC	U	Sab					
AFP*	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	02	02	98	86	13.9 %
Diphtheria	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %
Mumps	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	00	00	01	01	227	103	120.3 %
Measles	10	05	05	01	00	00	01	01	03	00	01	863	39	2112.8 %
Rubella	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	09	01	800 %
CRS**	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	00	0 %
Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	06	05	20 %
Neonatal Tetanus	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	0 %
Japanese Encephalitis	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	06	01	500 %
Whooping Cough	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	07	01	600 %
Tuberculosis	56	29	07	08	10	00	19	03	17	139	68	9281	6416	44.6%

Key to Table 1 & 2

Provinces: W: Western, C: Central, S: Southern, N: North, E: East, NC: North Central, NW: North Western, U: Uva, Sab: Sabaragamuwa.
RDHS Divisions: CB: Colombo, GM: Gampaha, KL: Kalutara, KD: Kandy, ML: Matale, NE: Nuwara Eliya, GL: Galle, HB: Hambantota, MT: Matara, JF: Jaffna, KN: Killinochchi, MN: Mannar, VA: Vavuniya, MU: Mullaitivu, BT: Batticaloa, AM: Ampara, TR: Trincomalee, KM: Kalmunai, KR: Kurunegala, PU: Puttalam, AP: Anuradhapura, PO: Polonnaruwa, BD: Badulla, MO: Moneragala, RP: Ratnapura, KG: Kegalle.

Data Sources:

Weekly Return of Communicable Diseases: Diphtheria, Measles, Tetanus, Neonatal Tetanus, Whooping Cough, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Mumps., Rubella, CRS,

Special Surveillance: AFP* (Acute Flaccid Paralysis), Japanese Encephalitis

CRS** =Congenital Rubella Syndrome

NA = Not Available

Take prophylaxis medications for leptospirosis during the paddy cultivation and harvesting seasons.

It is provided free by the MOH office / Public Health Inspectors.

Comments and contributions for publication in the WER Sri Lanka are welcome. However, the editor reserves the right to accept or reject items for publication. All correspondence should be mailed to The Editor, WER Sri Lanka, Epidemiological Unit, P.O. Box 1567, Colombo or sent by E-mail to chepid@slt.net.lk. **Prior approval should be obtained from the Epidemiology Unit before publishing data in this publication**

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