

## **National Consultation Workshop on Childhood TB 6-7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Serena Hotel, Islamabad, Pakistan:**



*Participants of the National Consultation Workshop on Childhood TB held in Islamabad Pakistan on 6-7<sup>th</sup> September 2016*

**Newsletter - 7th September Islamabad-Pakistan (Stop TB Pakistan):** A national consultation workshop on childhood TB was organized by Stop TB Pakistan (National Partnership) at Serena Hotel Islamabad, Pakistan on 6-7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 in coordination with Mercy Corps Pakistan, NTP Pakistan, WHO-EMRO & TB Alliance. The national workshop on childhood TB provided the stakeholders an opportunity to engage the various stakeholders (NTP, MCH, NGOs, pediatric association, Pakistan Chest Society, the provincial TB Programs and PGs) and to jointly plan for the scale-up of childhood TB activities.

The sad reality of Childhood TB and the encouraging pathways to addressing its rising burden were a subject of discussion at the first-ever “National Consultation on Childhood TB Care in Pakistan” which concluded here on Wednesday. The consultation, which was organized by Stop TB Pakistan (National Partnership) in coordination with Mercy Corps and NTP, with support from the Global TB Alliance, offered a perfect platform to review the burden of Childhood TB in the light of current policies and practices.

There was consensus on the need to initiate the development of a national childhood TB roadmap, and to prepare a framework of steps enabling transition to childhood TB Fixed-Dose Combinations (FDCs) including training requirements. "Improved access to TB care products (FDCs and diagnostic products) will be ensured, and Childhood TB recording, reporting and monitoring will be integrated in the existing TB programme reporting system," the participants were apprised. Top-notch clinicians, researchers, academia, and representatives of professional organisations attended the consultation.

NTP's manager Dr. Nasir Mehmood guaranteed full support in scaling up Childhood TB and ensuring the availability of FDCs in the coming months.

During the consultation it was decided that a sub-group on childhood TB will be formed, led by the National TB Control Programme (NTP) tentatively by November 2016, as a first step to prioritize and scale up Pakistan's response to what still remains a relatively neglected area. Plans to revisit the guidelines on management of Childhood TB and to conduct a Childhood TB situation analysis are also in the pipeline. Additionally, a package of interventions will have been developed, by June 2017, for delivery of pediatric TB care in public and private sectors alike.

These measures are great news for Pakistan, which harbours the fifth highest burden of TB amongst the world's 30 high-burden countries, and reports 27,245 TB cases in children below 15 years of age in 2014 (constituting almost 10% of the total TB cases). Each year, more than half a million Pakistanis develop TB; of these, more than 50 per cent are bacteriologically positive.

STP's chairman Professor Masood Hameed Khan emphasized the importance of generating indigenous funds within the country to eliminate TB. "Major funding for TB control is coming from donors; there is a dire need to engage the private and corporate sectors for resource mobilization. We also need to engage with local pharmaceutical companies for manufacturing of anti-TB drugs within the country for the sake of sustainability," he stated.

The country director of Mercy Corps, Dr. Arif Noor, highlighted the importance of engaging the private sector in TB control efforts.

Based on global lessons learnt and home-grown research findings, a consensus has been developed on the recommendations, which have been presented to secretary health Muhammad Ayub Shaikh, and Baluchistan's Minister for Health Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch. Both have stated to endorse the recommendations.

Ayub Shaikh acknowledged the efforts of prioritizing the prevention, control and treatment of Childhood TB and appreciated the recommendations for their practicability. "The government is making every effort to make Pakistan TB-free and planning is underway to prepare ourselves, free of donor dependence," he stated.

The consultation will serve as a major first step towards scaling up Childhood TB interventions in Pakistan.