



Health Watch Weekly Update

NEWSLETTER

January 22, 2015

January 22: Four-days Polio drive concludes in K-P

A four-day drive to administer oral polio vaccines to children up to five years of age will draw to a close across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa on Thursday (today).

The campaign was launched in 24 districts across the province with the exception of Peshawar which was covered on Sunday. Some union councils of Peshawar district were even covered ahead of schedule on Saturday due to security concerns. Officials said the health department was informed that certain union councils of Peshawar were sensitive in terms of security and thus the decision was taken of holding the campaign ahead of schedule.

They said the department was on course to achieve its target of administering polio drops to over 5.35 million children in 25 districts across the province. The officials added a total of 19,596 teams were formed to administer the vaccine in K-P. An official of the immunisation programme said strict security measures were taken before the drive in Peshawar district. It kicked off after the administration imposed a ban on motorbike riding during campaign hours.

[Express Tribune](#)

January 21: The battle against polio

The eradication of polio has become a literal as well as a metaphorical battleground. In most of the country, the vaccination campaigns go ahead as a matter of routine and have done for many years, but it is not so everywhere. The vaccinators are mostly women, they are paid a pittance when they are paid at all, and many pay with their lives for the privilege of doing what must be counted as one of the most dangerous jobs in Pakistan.

[The latest attack on a vaccination team in Oranji town, Karachi](#), happened on January 19. A police official deployed to protect the vaccinators was shot and injured, and the police

subsequently refused to provide protection for the vaccinators. The campaign was immediately suspended having fallen short of all of its targets.

The health teams are increasingly unwilling to put themselves at hazard; and the police are sitting ducks for the attackers who usually arrive on motorbikes and are gone in seconds after they have done their evil work. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan have repeatedly reiterated their threats to target the vaccinators and their ability to do so, appears in no way degraded.

It is difficult to find a single instance of anybody being prosecuted for attacking a polio worker or a policeman protecting polio teams anywhere in the country. The failure to eradicate polio has increased Pakistan's isolation as travel restrictions are enforced and as matters stand, the battle is not being won — but fighting on anything less than a war footing will win nothing.

[Express Tribune](#)

January 21: Attack on policeman hits polio drive

The ongoing polio campaign in the city experienced security hiccups on Tuesday causing a halt in the drive in several union councils when volunteers could not go into the designated areas after finding no police cover there to guard them, officials said.

The security arrangements for the campaign suffered a heavy jolt after a policeman assigned to provide security to a polio vaccination team in Orangi Town was shot and wounded on Monday. The officials in the police and health departments said that the incident had only 'temporarily shattered the confidence' of the police and polio workers and their nervousness would not last longer.

"Monday's incident may have dampened the police morale but it is just a matter of day, we'll be in streets on Wednesday with the same zeal, vigour and courage," a senior police official said. The officials said polio campaign had been planned for districts Karachi East and West and Malir where, out of planned 2,186 teams, 1,602 teams (73 per cent) could be deployed and for whom 1,358 policemen were there to provide security cover.

[DAWN](#)

January 20: Over 34m children to be vaccinated in the year's first polio drive

Except for a few districts, the new year's first national polio campaign was launched to vaccinate over 34 million children across the country on Monday.

However, due to the security reasons, unavailability of staff and harsh weather conditions, the anti-polio drive could not be launched in a few districts. Because of the prevailing security situation, the campaign would be carried out in three phases in Karachi.

Also, the drive was postponed in five districts of Balochistan: Zhob, Sherani, Loralai, Musa Khel and Qilla Saifullah. Mansehra, Chitral, Battagram and some areas in Skardu were not included in the campaign due to the severe weather conditions and snowfall. The shortage of field staff also led to the postponement of the drive in Bannu. It may be noted that the government and UN agencies have expressed their resolve to eradicate the crippling disease from the country during the current year.

[DAWN](#)

January 20: K-P launches health insurance for the underprivileged

In what can be seen as a major leap, the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government has launched a social health insurance programme for the underprivileged of the province.

The project will ensure the provision of health cards to the underprivileged in the first of its kind public sector facility in the country. Through these insurance cards, introduced along the lines of social security programmes in developed countries, the disadvantaged will be able to receive medical assistance at both private and public hospitals across the province free of cost.

In the first phase of the project, health cards will be provided in four districts namely Mardan, Malakand, Chitral and Kohat. The programme will then be expanded to other areas of the province. The programme has been launched in collaboration with Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), a German government-owned development bank. The KfW will fund 88% of the total expenditure that amounts to Rs1.34 billion over five years in shape of a grant, while the remaining 12% will be covered by the K-P government.

[Express Tribune](#)

January 18: Countrywide vaccination drive from Monday

The government has finalised security arrangements for a countrywide polio vaccination drive which starts on January 19.

The National Crisis Management Cell (NCMC) of the Ministry of Interior will work closely with the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) for polio to ensure security for health workers.

The vaccination drive has been postponed in five Balochistan districts —Musakhel, Qila Saifullah, Zhob, Loralai, Sherani — and Bara tehsil of Khyber Agency for security concerns, said Expanded Programme for Immunisation (EPI) national manager Dr Rana Muhammad Safdar.

He said that NCMC Director General Saud Aziz has been appointed the focal person for security of the campaign. The interior ministry has directed chief commissioners, chief and home secretaries to provide tight security to polio teams.

[Express Tribune](#)

January 18: Anti-polio drive starts in Peshawar

The first anti-polio campaign of 2015 is being launched today in Peshawar amid tight security in the provincial capital.

The administration has banned bike riding for a day in the city as part of security arrangements. The health department plans to administer polio drops to as many as 700,000 children during the one-day drive. 4,000 policemen will be deployed for the security of the volunteers while section 144 has also been imposed in the wake of security concerns.

[The News](#)

January 18: Expired vaccines use in Thar found

Senior Civil Judge Mian Fayyaz Rabbani — who has been serving as the relief inspecting judge under the Sindh High Court's directives since March 2014 — on Saturday seized expired BCG vaccines, found to be administered to newborns at the Bakhu village basic health unit (BHU) in Mithi taluka on Saturday.

The judge checked a BCG vaccine, which was being administered to newborns, and found the expiry date printed on it as December 2014. He made inquiries from BHU vaccinators, Amba Ram and Mr Hussain, who stated that they had mistakenly used it.

The judge obtained their statements, seized the expired vaccines along with the relevant BHU record. The judge was informed that expired vaccines were used this month and according to a break-up, two newborns got this vaccine on Jan 3, one on Jan 10 and two on Jan 17. The judge directed the police to find out condition of the five newborns vaccinated on these dates.

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January 18: Smartphones to help map dengue-hit areas

The Sindh health department has provided 42 smartphones to the dengue prevention and control programme for digital mapping of dengue-infected neighbourhoods, it emerged on Saturday.

Officials said that mobile phones enabled with dedicated software would be used to detect the neighbourhoods infected with dengue larva, photograph and chart them and wire them to a control room, which would record it on its servers and disseminate them to health facilities concerned, organisations and research bodies.

Besides, the officials said, many more gadgets were being examined to be part of a planned massive effort to keep dengue's harm to a minimum level.

[DAWN](#)

January 16: KP hospitals short of treatment facilities for newborns

The shortage of beds, staff and equipment at the nursery wards is hampering proper treatment of neonates in public sector hospitals of the province, pediatricians say.

They say that the 1200-bed Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) has capacity for only 35 babies whereas bed occupancy rate is 150. The ward has eight incubators, which are not enough to cater to the needs of patients. At least six more incubators are required to treat the patients. Similarly, it also needs the services of more trained staff nurses.

Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), the province's biggest health facility, has 30 cots capacity but the number of hospitalised babies remains more than 55. The 1700-bed hospital has only three incubators. Recently, the government established three children units in the hospital but no attention was paid to expansion of the nursery ward to facilitate the newborns.

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