

Minutes of the Special Meeting of National Task Force (NTF) on Communicable Diseases
(August 12, 2009)

1. **Venue:** Conference Room of the National Institute of Health, Islamabad
2. **Objectives:**
 - a. To review the global, regional and national situation vis-à-vis national preparedness and response for influenza pandemic 2009
 - b. To make specific recommendations for the Hajj 2009 in the light of:
 - i. Recommendations of the Experts Panel Meeting held in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, June 27-30, 2009
 - ii. Resolution of the Special Session of the Regional Committee on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 comprising of EMRO Health Ministers July 22, 2009, Cairo, Egypt.
 - c. To discuss the measures being undertaken by the provincial health departments for prevention & control of Dengue and Gastroenteritis

3. **Participants:**

Chaired by Prof. Rashid Jooma, Director General Health, Government of Pakistan; the meeting was attended by the representatives of Ministry of Health, Departments of Health of all four provinces, AJK, FATA, FANA, CDA, Central Health Establishment, Ministries of Religious Affairs, Communication, Information, Agriculture, Livestock and Press Information Department. Besides Government officials, WHO staff and Representative in Pakistan, Resident Advisor FELTP Pakistan also attended the meeting. List of participants is attached at Annex-I.

4. **Proceedings of the Meeting:**

- 4.1 Meeting started with recitation from the Holy Quran which was followed by the introduction of the participants.
- 4.2 Dr. Birjees Mazher Kazi, Executive Director NIH while welcoming the participants explained the objectives of the special meeting of the National Task Force convened in the backdrop of upcoming Hajj 2009.
- 4.3 Dr. Rana Jawad Asghar, Resident Advisor deliberated on the global and regional pandemic situation and highlighted its epidemiological characteristics being observed in the affected regions/countries. While mentioning high risk groups, he also updated NTF on the steps being taken by the international community including status of novel vaccine H1N1 development.
- 4.4 Dr. Arif Zaka presented the National Action Plan for Pandemic Influenza and requested inputs of the provincial / area Departments of Health to finalize the same.
- 4.5 Mr. Aftab-ul-Islama Raja, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Religious Affairs updated the NTF on Hajj arrangements. He informed that a total of 165,000 Hajjis (80,000 under Government scheme and 85,000 under private scheme) would perform Hajj during 2009. The Ministry of Hajj had received the recommendations of Saudi Government on 11th August 2009 which urge elderly and children to postpone their Hajj in the wake of ongoing pandemic. Besides this; administration of seasonal influenza vaccine has also been recommended for which he desired support of the Ministry of Health.
- 4.6 The NTF also reviewed the recommendations of the Expert Panel meeting held in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the resolution of the EMRO Health Minister's meeting in Cairo. Based on the said guiding documents and the available scientific evidence, recommendation for Hajj 2009 were discussed and finalized.

- 4.7 The representatives of the provincial departments of health updated the NTF on the situation of Dengue and Gastroenteritis across Pakistan. It was observed that due to the preventive measures undertaken by the DoHs, the Dengue situation was well under control however; sporadic gastroenteritis outbreaks were being encountered almost all over Pakistan.
- 4.8 The WHO Representative in Pakistan, while appreciating the commitment of the Government of Pakistan commended the deliberations made in the meeting. He strongly urged the need of developing comprehensive surveillance mechanism. He also suggested that as prime national public health forum, the National Task Force must also take the responsibility of developing and updating national guidelines on various technical issues related to prevention & control of communicable diseases in the country.
- 4.9 Dr. Rashid Jooma, DGH/Chairman NTF thanked all participants for valuable inputs and urged the need of concerted and coordinated efforts on part of all stakeholders. While thanking their continued technical support, he desired WHO & FELTP Pakistan to devise and implement a standardized training curriculum/ program aimed at the capacity building of Healthcare professionals on Pandemic Influenza as well as Dengue and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever.

5. Decisions:

S. #	Decision	Action by
5.1	The provincial/area departments of health would review the National Action Plan on Pandemic Influenza and convey their comments to the National Task Force within one week enabling its finalization.	Director General Health Services, Punjab, Sindh, NWFP, Balochistan, AJK, FATA & FANA
5.2	The Rapid Response Teams shall be added to the Pakistan's Medical Mission for Hajj 2009. The composition shall be urgently proposed by National Program Manager NICP and Resident Advisor FELTP and finalized by the Ministry of Health in a week time.	NPM, NICP DDG (PH), MoH Resident Advisor FELTP
5.3	The following two committees were constituted to undertake immediate measures for mitigation of Influenza Pandemic impact during Hajj 2009: <u>Technical Advisory Committee:</u> i. Executive Director NIH (Convener) ii. Resident Advisor FELTP iii. Dr. Magdi Salih Abdalla, WHO Medical Officer <u>Committee for Training of Healthcare Staff and Hajjis:</u> i. Dr. Arif Zaka, NPM NICP (Convener) ii. Deputy Director General (IH), MoH iii. Health Education Advisor, Ministry of Health iv. Representative of WR Pakistan	Conveners of respective committees
5.4	As per agreed mechanism, the team leader of the Rapid Response Team in the Medical Mission shall forward a daily report to the Technical Advisory Committee for review and the issuance of advisory to all concerned.	Concerned Team Leader
5.5	The Ministry of Health shall undertake necessary measures to arrange seasonal influenza vaccine for 80,000 Hajjis under the Government scheme.	DDG (PH), MoH

6. Specific Recommendation for Hajj 2009:

While taking in to account the recommendations of the Expert Panel convened by the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (June 27-30, 2009) and the resolution of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee (22nd July 2009); and reviewing the available scientific information about the spread of H1N1 pandemic, the National Task Force for Communicable Diseases during its meeting on August 12, 2009 makes the following recommendations for implementation in Pakistan:

- 6.1 The initiatives of the KSA MOH to meet the impending public health challenge be fully supported and recommendations actively pursued before, during and after the Pilgrimage.
- 6.2 Pakistan's national action plan for pandemic influenza developed by the National Task Force for Communicable Diseases be circulated to the provincial health departments for feed back and implemented vigilantly by all stakeholders as per set guidelines.
- 6.3 All Hajjis, Umra visitors, healthcare providers and other members of the Hajj Mission 2009 be administered seasonal influenza vaccine, at least two weeks prior to their departure for KSA.
- 6.4 If available and licensed by the regulatory authorities, the influenza A (H1N1) vaccine be administered to all Hajjis, Umra visitors, and healthcare providers and other members of the Hajj Mission 2009.
- 6.5 An extensive health education campaign be undertaken for Hajjis and Umra visitors to promote non-pharmaceutical measures for prevention and control of Pandemic Influenza.
- 6.6 The medical mission accompanying Hajjis must carry appropriate amounts of antiviral drugs for H1N1 treatment, N-95 Masks and Ambient Temperature Viral Transport Medium.
- 6.7 The Pakistan's Medical Mission must also have adequate number of Rapid Response Teams on board comprising of public health professionals, infection control specialist and laboratory personnel. The team leader shall regularly monitor the situation in KSA and submit a daily report to the Technical Committee in Pakistan for undertaking specific measures before arrival of Hajjis back in the country.
- 6.8 On return of Hajjis, an adequate screening arrangements be made for A (H1N1) at ports of entry in order to limit its spread using current measures such as thermal scanners, temporary quarantine facilities etc).
- 6.9 In accordance with the national action plan, 01 national, 04 provincial, 01 AJK and 06 regional (geographical distribution to be based on needs) reference laboratories be established / strengthened by November 2009 to cope with possible increased numbers of cases.
- 6.10 The following high risk groups for severe pandemic influenza postpone their participation in Hajj and Umra for this year:
 - i. Elderly; over the age of 65 years
 - ii. Pregnant women
 - iii. People with chronic diseases; serious cardiovascular diseases, asthma, tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases, uncontrolled diabetes
 - iv. Children under the age of 12 years

Note: The recommendations are based on available scientific knowledge till date and will be updated as more epidemiological information becomes available.

(Dr. Birjees Mazher Kazi)
Executive Director NIH/
Secretary NTF

(Prof. Dr. Rashid Jooma)
Director General Health
Chairman NTF