WHO Regional Committee (RC) for South-East Asia

WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia held its 71st session during 3-7 September 2018 at New Delhi, India. Member States unanimously nominated Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh for a second term as WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia. Congratulations!

Furthermore, resolutions by Regional Committee inter alia prioritized dengue prevention and malaria elimination. A ‘Delhi declaration’ was adopted, to make essential medical products accessible, affordable to all. In addition, the Regional Committee resolved to strengthen emergency medical teams to enhance preparedness in the Region, which is prone to natural disasters.

Member States welcomed expansion of the mandate of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund to include preparedness in addition to response, to be better equipped to handle disasters.

Importantly, the RC agreed to continue to focus on frontline workers, improve rural retention and transformative education, and encourage coordination between health and other ministries; with Member States willing to increase health budgets and address social inequities. RC further emphasized an integrated approach with reproductive, newborn, maternal, child, adolescent health programmes at the heart of universal health coverage -- to promote quality of care while “leaving no one behind”.

WHO emergency assistance for floods

Seasonal monsoon floods affected several states and regions in Myanmar since July 2018. Most affected areas are Bago, Kayin, Mon and Tanintharyi. A cumulative 152,211 people were reported to have been displaced, and 32 people reportedly died. 72 health facilities were affected by the floods.

Ministry of Health & Sports (MoHS) led the health response to provide emergency health services to at least 28,136 affected people. WHO provided a package of support - including essential medicines, life jackets and operational cost - to assist health teams of MoHS in Mon & Kayin States, Bago and Thanintharyi Regions.

Further, on 29 August 2018, a spillway of the Swar Chaung Dam in Bago Region, broke to cause flooding in Yedashe township. 54,000 people were estimated to be affected. 16,600 people were reportedly evacuated to 52 evacuation sites in Yedashe and Taungoo townships. WHO supported operational cost for mobile clinics by the health authorities in Myo Hla, Swar, Thar Ga Ya, Yedashe and Taungoo townships. WHO continues to collaborate with MoHS and Humanitarian Country Team to provide humanitarian assistance to affected population.
Human resources for health management unit in Myanmar

Competent Human Resources for Health (HRH) - assigned to the right posts, in right numbers, with right skills - are a key to efficient functioning of health systems. Management of HRH calls for flexible and novel ways to address emerging health challenges. In Ministries of Health of many countries, HRH management units, once established, were found to improve management of human resources for health.

As Myanmar is going through rapid sociopolitical, economic changes, technological advances, and changes in trends of disease burden, demand and expectations on HRH also increased. In Myanmar, recruitment, selection, deployment and retention of competent human resources for health is of utmost importance, especially in rural areas, where 70% of the total population (of 53.82 million) resides.

Union Ministry of Health & Sports, in August 2018, requested WHO’s technical support to establish an HRH management unit. The Technical Working Group led by the Department of Human Resources for Health, on 11th Sept 2018, proposed its formulation: the HRH management unit will function as a coordination body for health workforce planning & management, monitor implementation of HRH policies, strategies and plans for all departments of the national health authorities. This unit intends to develop and analyze health workforce data to track health workforce distribution, flows, demand, supply, capacity, projections, remuneration -- through updating and sharing data on human resources for health. It will support quality and competencies of staff through continuing professional development. It is an important departure to address human resources for health as part of health systems strengthening efforts overall.

World AIDS Day 2018

1st December of every year is designated as World AIDS Day, since 1988. Commemorative activities take place across the world - to help prevent HIV-AIDS, promote HIV testing, treatment and care. The idea is to demonstrate solidarity, fight against stigma and discrimination and promote equity of care, to leave no one behind.

World AIDS days focus on specific themes. For 2018, it is “know your status”. The purpose is to improve people’s knowledge of their own HIV status: because early diagnosis and treatment makes better health outcomes more likely -- as well as help prevent transmission.

Inspired by this theme, many activities are currently being organized, at national, regional and local level. For example, essay writing & posters in schools; exhibition & booth displays at public places; community involvement in walkathons and media campaigns.

For 1 Dec 2018, commemorations are planned at Myitkina, Kachin State as well as in Yangon Region. In addition, for more than two weeks, the national programme and partners plan to hold events at work places throughout the country.
World antibiotic awareness week, 12-18 Nov 2018

Antimicrobial resistance is occurring anywhere in the world -- compromising treatment of infectious diseases and undermining advances in medicine and health. Antimicrobial resistance is largely caused by overuse and misuse of antibiotics.

Therefore, tackling antibiotic resistance is a high priority for the national authorities and for WHO. Raising awareness of antimicrobial resistance and promoting behaviour change by public communication is key. Different audiences in human & animal health need to be persuaded. Agricultural practices, too, need to improve to reduce resistance.

**Antibiotics: handle with care** is the theme of this year’s campaign. World antibiotic awareness week is set to foster awareness and best practices among the public, policymakers, health, veterinarian, agriculture and environmental professionals.

WHO Myanmar is working closely with FAO, partners and the AMR technical working groups in One Health approach, to mark World Antibiotic Awareness Week in Myanmar, 12-18 November 2018.

World Contraception Day 2018

Launched in 2007, World Contraception day takes place annually in September. The idea is to improve awareness of contraception -- enabling people to make informed choices regarding sexual & reproductive health. Ensuring access to preferred family planning methods for women and couples is essential to well-being of women, girls and families, while supporting health and development of communities.

On Sunday 23rd September 2018, World Contraception day 2018 was commemorated in Hlaing Tharyar township, Yangon Region, by the national, regional and township health authorities and many partners. “It’s your life, it’s your responsibility” is this year’s theme -- with the event opened by Prof Thet Khaing Win, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health & Sports. Educational entertainment featured, as did expert panel discussion. WHO Myanmar, and many others, contributed to raising awareness on a range of different family planning methods to enable voluntary, informed choices.
Injury prevention and rabies

Rabies is still a major public health concern in Asia including Myanmar. Dogs are the main source of human rabies transmission. WHO, FAO, OIE (International Organization for Animal Health) and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control are working together to tackle rabies, with the goal for “zero human rabies deaths by 2030.”

In Myanmar, Ministry of Health & Sports has been implementing preventive measures against rabies together with veterinary sector and other partners. Free health care services for dog bite cases, including rabies virus vaccines and immunoglobulin, are provided at hospitals at different levels, according to national standard operating procedures for human rabies prevention.

Key information on rabies – including how to prevent it – is available at https://bit.ly/2CcGdrI

Eat smart - for good nutrition and to prevent NCDs

Consumption of sugar, trans fats and excessive salt are clear risk factors for a whole range of noncommunicable diseases. Eating smart is a great way forward to prevent them – and good for nutrition.

WHO recommends:

- to take a smart plate - as depicted below.
- to consume less salt and sodium - less than one tea-spoon per day.
- to consume less sugar - not more than six teaspoons in the whole day, less is better still.
- to take smaller portion sizes – how much you eat or drink matters; average total calories needed per day, for a sedentary male or female, is approximately 2,200 calories (varies according to age & work).
- to consume more fibre - from fruit and veg - at least 30-40 grams of dietary fibre per day.
- to avoid trans-fats altogether.

Menu of Healthy Food Choices

Use spices, herbs and lemon to enhance the flavor of food

Drink water instead of sweetened beverages/fizzy drinks

Check nutritive value; total calories and serving sizes of the foods you buy

Prefer low glycemic foods

Cut down on salt and sugar

Gradually train your taste buds to eat healthy

Important dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Sight Day</td>
<td>11 October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World AIDS Day</td>
<td>1 December 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Health Day</td>
<td>7 April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Malaria Day</td>
<td>25 April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Imunization Week</td>
<td>24-30 April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Food Day</td>
<td>16 October 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World TB Day</td>
<td>24 March 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>