

Launch of process for Validation of Elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and syphilis Programme, Sri Lanka

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The rationale for the elimination of MTCT of HIV and syphilis is that dual elimination will help to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and reduce the spread of HIV.

In Sri Lanka, antenatal VDRL screening services for pregnant mothers for prevention of MTCT of syphilis has been offered since 1952. Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV programme was launched in the year 2002. In the year 2013 this programme was improved further as “Elimination of mother to child transmission of syphilis and HIV programme”.

Since then measures were taken to scale up testing services for HIV and syphilis among pregnant women throughout the country aiming at reaching >95% testing of pregnant women for HIV and syphilis by end 2016. Countrywide HIV testing for pregnant women could be established by end 2016. This is a considerable achievement as HIV testing coverage among pregnant women has increased from 5.6% in 2012 to >90% by end 2016. During the year 2016, twenty three pregnant women with HIV and 80 pregnant women with syphilis have received EMTCT services and delivered uninfected babies.

This was possible only because of the dedication and commitment of all stakeholders representing Central, provincial and regional level authorities, tertiary care hospitals, maternal and child health services and STD services staff. All those who contributed to the success of the EMTCT programme need to be commended at this point.

Based on this background the WHO has requested Sri Lanka to apply for validation of EMTCT of HIV and syphilis programme, Sri Lanka.

The term “validation” is used to attest that a country has successfully met criteria for EMTCT of HIV and/or syphilis at a specific point in time.

At the Asia Pacific conference held in Beijing, China 2016, Sri Lanka stated the commitment to work towards achieving validation of EMTCT of syphilis and HIV by end 2017. Country has to intensify scaling up of EMTCT services throughout the country and monitor the programme closely to identify the draw backs and to take measures to improve these areas.

The success of the programme shows the importance of every partner in multidisciplinary approach. NSACP appreciates the contribution of field and institutional staff providing MCH and STD services.

