

F. 1-70/Floods/FE&DSD/2017
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Subject: **Advisory: Prevention & Control of Communicable Disease Outbreaks during Rainy / Monsoon Seasons and Floods**

Reference Pakistan Meteorological department, seasonal forecast (dated June 14, 2017) for monsoon rainfall and floods in different parts of the country during July-September 2017.

2. It is, therefore, urged that the concerned authorities should take necessary preventive measures to avert environmental degradation, water & food contamination and sanitation issues that could work synergistically to increase the incidence of communicable/ infectious diseases. The anticipated food & water, vector borne and zoonotic disease outbreaks could only be contained through advanced preparedness and preventive measures so as to minimize the morbidity and mortality.

3. The National Institute of Health accordingly recommends the following actions in coordination with the relevant stakeholders:

i. Daily monitoring the situation especially in flood prone areas and the data generated by the health facilities may be reviewed regularly (weekly) for early detection of clustering (an aggregation of cases of a disease, closely grouped in time and place). On identification of any clusters, field investigation be initiated immediately to assess the associated risk factors and control its further spread.

ii. Activate district Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) and District Health Management Teams (DHMTs) comprising of clinical experts, public health and laboratory professionals, vector control experts and other line departments and fully equipped with requisite supplies.

iii. Stockpiling of emergency medicines, antibiotics, Anti Tetanus Serum, ORS, IV fluids, Anti Rabies Vaccine (ARV), Anti Snake Venom (ASV), Typhoid vaccine along with logistic support must be ensured.

iv. Besides operationalizing Diarrhoea Treatment Centers (DTCs), the Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) situation be monitored by respective district health departments on daily basis and response initiated immediately without waiting for lab confirmation of Cholera.

4. Rainy areas, poor and congested localities are at greater risk of having epidemics of water & food-borne infectious diseases. Water pipes supplying drinking water are usually old, rusted and damaged while sewage pipes and open sewage lanes running side by side sometimes get contaminated. The water-borne diseases attributed to the consumption of unsafe water and non-observance of proper sanitation and preventive measures may pose a serious challenge for the health and water & sanitation authorities. Such epidemics/outbreaks could however be prevented through following practices and measures:

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- Careful watch on the water supply systems, repair of damaged water pipes, sewerage lines and systems without delay.
- Chlorination of drinking water sources
- Regular monitoring of hotels, restaurants & food points, ice factories, street vendors and water reservoirs.
- Focused health education campaign regarding safe drinking water, hand hygiene, food safety and better sanitation through active community participation particularly aiming vulnerable populations like school children, vendors and pregnant women (who are at greater risk of obstetrical complications and mortality from hepatitis-E).
- Building up hospital capacity for management of patients.
- Keep rapid response arrangements in place and gearing up the preventive measures.
- Regular liaison with the relevant departments like District Govt., Health, WASA etc.

5. The provincial health departments may also consider the establishment of flood control rooms within the District Health offices to coordinate response activities with all stakeholders. It would be pertinent to engage the public health professionals trained by the NIH-Field Epidemiology & Laboratory Training Programme (FELTP) and posted at respective Provincial Disease Surveillance and Response Units (PDSRU) in provincial DGHS offices, which shall prove to be a critical workforce in the emerging scenario to further fortify the surveillance and response activities. These units may also be utilized for data collection, compilation and analysis to monitor the disease trends for timely response to epidemics.

6. The National Institute of Health (NIH) has put Gastroenteritis, Enteric fever and Hepatitis on **High & Mid Alert** respectively vide 39th issue of Seasonal Awareness and Alert Letter (SAAL) disseminated during June 2017. A pamphlet titled "**To make the water drinkable**" in Urdu and latest Issue of SAAL are annexed herewith. The concerned public sector departments be motivated and the preventive efforts / steps lead by the Health Department be effectively implemented.

7. To further facilitate stakeholders in their efforts, the technical documents such as Case Definitions, Guidelines for Sample Collection and Transportation, Vector Control etc. have also been made available at NIH website www.nih.org.pk. Further guidance in this context may be obtained at [Tel:051-9255237](tel:051-9255237), Fax: 051-9255575 and e-mail: eic.nih@gmail.com.



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