



Commissioner of Family Welfare,
Government of Andhra Pradesh



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For immediate release

AP shares lessons with other states on strengthening routine immunization and introducing new vaccines

Hyderabad, Nov 14: Andhra Pradesh today celebrated the successful introduction of hepatitis B vaccine in routine immunization by using auto-disabled syringes throughout the state. AP has been working closely with PATH, an international development organization, for the past five years to introduce innovative technologies, systems and methods in strengthening routine immunization in the state.

Liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus is estimated to cause more than 6,000 deaths each year in Andhra Pradesh – almost all of which are preventable through the vaccine. As a result of the project, the percentage of children immunized against hepatitis B infection in AP increased from about 10% in 2000 to 87% in 2005.

A function to share AP's accomplishments and experiences in implementing this project was organized at the Jubilee Hall, Public Gardens, Hyderabad. It was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Y.S. Rajashekhara Reddy, and was presided over by the Hon'ble Health Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri K. Rosaiah.

Mr. C.B.S. Venkata Ramana, Commissioner Family Welfare and Ex. Officio Principal Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, said that experiences in successfully implementing this project were very rich. There were challenges, experimentation, innovation, patience, and stories to tell how adverse situations can be converted into opportunities. It also demonstrates how successful partnerships with NGOs, professional bodies, civil society and a whole range of functionaries in the health system can be effectively forged to great advantage.

AP has almost been a laboratory to test introduction of new technology and show impact on the ground, he added. The project has not only raised immunization coverage for all vaccines from 72% in 2000 to 80% in 2005, but has also demonstrated that adding hepatitis B vaccine has also strengthened other public health measures. In addition, the quality of the immunization program has been strengthened enormously – cold chain, capacity and capability of the front line health staff, safe injection practices, procurement system, etc – to name a few.

Mr. Jeffrey O'Malley, PATH's Country Director, echoing the Commissioner's sentiments, felt that AP has modeled the way for 10 other states that are about to implement similar projects through an agreement with the Geneva based Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI). He thanked the Department of Health & Family Welfare for its cooperation, active support and for effectively partnering with PATH to implement this project.

Mr. O'Malley also thanked the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for supporting the project, and said that Mr. Gates has personally shown enormous interest in this project on each of his India visits.

A document describing the project challenges and lessons learned entitled "*Protecting Children for Healthy Tomorrow: Lessons from the Andhra Pradesh Partnership Project on Immunization*" has been prepared jointly by the Government of AP and PATH. This document was released by Dr. Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy.

The document provides a basic framework within which the various stakeholders involved in the immunization program can anticipate problems and work together to address them, and thus increase the likelihood that similar projects yield good results.

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About PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health)

PATH is an international, nonprofit organization, working on a broad range of public health issues. Its mission is to improve the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening health service systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors.

Headquartered in Seattle, USA, PATH is currently working in more than 100 countries across the world. The India country office is based in New Delhi, supported through project offices in Mumbai, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Imphal, Chennai and Bangalore, as well as partnership operations in Assam and Bihar.

PATH in India is working in four broad areas of public health – development of high priority new health technologies; immunization, both routine and specific; HIV and sexual reproductive health; and maternal and child health.

PATH works in collaboration with diverse public- and private-sector partners, non-governmental organizations, and communities in facilitating access to the most appropriate health services. For more information, visit www.path.org.

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