



News Release



Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Embassy

USAID Funds \$ 5.3 Million Program for Government Health Workers

Islamabad, February 6, 2007 -- The National Institute of Health (NIH) and Health Services Academy inaugurated here today the first training course of a \$5.3 million Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training (FELT) Program that will turn Ministry of Health employees into Field Epidemiologists and Laboratory Scientists through a first ever in-service training program in Pakistan.

Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Pakistan, the FELT program has been designed and being implemented by international health specialists at the Center for Disease Control (Atlanta, USA), with the help of NIH, provincial health directorates and several other institutional partners.

“The US is supporting the FELT program to strengthen Pakistan’s capacity to respond to existing and emerging disease threats,” USAID Pakistan’s Mission Director Jonathan Addleton said. “Early disease detection and containment is a global necessity in the 21st Century.”

He said that addressing emerging infectious threats in Pakistan also protects the US and the rest of the world's health and security.

“There had been a critical need to develop applied epidemiology and supportive laboratory capacity for health workers in Pakistan to enable them to respond to Avian Influenza and other epidemics,” CDC Resident Advisor, Dr. Rana Jawad Akhtar, said in his remarks. “This program will address that need by developing highly skilled field epidemiologists.”

Also present on the occasion was the Executive Director NIH, Gen. (Retd.) Masood Anwar, who termed the program “an important step” towards the development of Pakistan’s public health sector.

For the training course on Surveillance and Outbreak held Tuesday, 25-37 health officers were selected from the four provinces and Northern Areas. During the training, they designed and conducted a short study, and analyzed and presented the results in a short time frame.

<p>ISLAMABAD Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5 Phone: 2080000 E-mail: infoisb@state.gov</p>	<p>KARACHI Collector's Lane, 8 Abdullah Haroon Road Phone: 5685170-9 E-mail: irckhi@state.gov</p>	<p>LAHORE 50, Empress Road Phone: 6034000 E-mail: irclahore@state.gov</p>	<p>PESHAWAR 11, Hospital Road, Peshawar Cantt. Phone: 279801-3, 285901-3</p>
--	--	--	---

The course, taught by experts from Pakistan and abroad, sensitized the participants to bio-threat agents, respiratory infections like Avian Influenza and vector-borne diseases like Dengue and Hepatitis. Organizers hoped the course would prepare participants for future outbreak response in their provinces.

At the end of the course, eight top ranking candidates will be selected for the first FELTP class that starts in May 2007. The first batch of field epidemiologists will graduate two years later with a batch appearing every year thereafter.

Support for FELTP is part of the \$1.5 billion in aid that the U.S. Government is providing to Pakistan over five years to improve economic growth, education, health, and governance.

###