

## **ARE WE READY TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL FIGHT AGAINST DENGUE?**

**Dengue** is not a new problem in Pakistan and was first reported in 1994. Dengue virus is now an endemic in Pakistan, circulating throughout the year with a peak incidence in the post monsoon period. Recent floods in Pakistan made the situation worse.

Conventional approaches to control the Vector Borne Diseases (VSDs) have almost always worked independently. It is the age of economic crisis. Even the developed countries like Europe & Americas have started cutting the health budgets and trying to get the maximum out of human and economic resources. In this context various experiments are being tried like Selective Vector Control (SVC), Integrated Vector Control (IVC) and Comprehensive Vector Control (CVC) to control the VBDs in past. In 2007, however, WHO defined Integrated Vector Management (IVM) as a rational decision making process for the optimal use of the resources for vector control, so as to reduce or interrupt the transmission of VBDs.

Key elements of an IVM include: Advocacy, social mobilization by promoting and embedding the IVM principals in development policies of relevant agencies, organizations and civil societies. Establishing and/or strengthening of regulatory and legislative control for public health after empowerment of the communities. Another very important point is consideration of all options for collaboration within and between the public and private sectors and application of the principals of subsidiarity in planning & decision making. It is also important to strengthen the channels of communications among policy makers, VBD control program managers and other IVM partners. Hence an integrated approach is needed to ensure the rationale use of available resources through application of a multi disease control approach. The integration of non chemical & chemical vector control methods and integration with other control measures is also recommended. Another important key to success is “Evidence Based Decision Making” which means adaptation of strategies and interventions in local vector ecology, epidemiology and resources, guided by operational research, subject to routine monitoring and evaluation. Last but not the least the “Capacity Building” of human resources at local and national level to manage the IVM program based on “Situational Analysis” and development of infrastructure is mandatory.

Reasons for why the benefits of vector control are not fully realized are; skills to both manage and implement vector control program remain scarce, usage of insecticides in agriculture and poor management of the same in public health programs, lack of cooperation between development sectors and stakeholders using the insecticides, decentralization of health sector operation control, lack of support of new knowledge, training of the professional staff and lack of political or bureaucratic will also a big obstacle in achieving the target.

With this background, the answer to the question in the “Title” is a big “YES” if the issues mentioned above are addressed properly with dedication, honesty and determination. In addition to this, the cooperation and coordination between all stakeholders is always a basic need to achieve the goals of such challenging tasks, like control of dengue.

Recommendations in this regard are many out of which few are given below. Six strategies of the National Dengue Prevention and Control Plan (NDPCP): Empowering individuals and communities in DHF prevention and control, environmental modification to control breeding sites of Aedes vector, health promotion and medical services, multi-sectoral networking for DHF prevention and control, development of administrative and management systems, technological development for the prevention, control and management of Dengue fever / Dengue hemorrhagic fever.

Significant Interventions may be: Strengthening of Aedes larvae abatement programs, integration of DHF control into primary health care programs, massive public education campaign, running campaigns for DHF control through multi-sectoral organization, intensive training of physicians and nurses in clinical diagnosis and disease control management, establishing advisory groups on social and behavioral sciences to develop education materials, training of technical trainers and operation trainers for community participation, development of technical materials and organizing international conference on DF/DHF.

Continued research is always necessary to maintain the control of the dengue for; model development for enhancing community participation in dengue vector control, study of community self-awareness of dengue problems and its potential roles on rapid response to epidemics through source reduction and the use of adulticides, study of the use of appropriate larvae control using village wisdom of local community for dengue prevention, droplet size and spraying technique by using new insecticides for dengue control and development of vaccine for dengue.

In the end, message that necessitate the action is; “If we sleep over the problem, it will make us sleep forever”

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