

Recent Events

DAKSHIN Workshop: Advancing Universal Health Coverage: Leveraging Technology for Maternal care and Vaccine Delivery

19th February, 2025

EVENT NOTE

DAKSHIN organized its ninth workshop entitled “Advancing Universal Health Coverage: Leveraging Technology for Maternal Care and Vaccine Delivery” on 19 February 2025. Maternal care and vaccination are important issues concerning the Global South. In particular, this was the third workshop concerning healthcare and it facilitated the rich exchange of ideas, best practices and opportunities for capacity-building vis-à-vis the use of technology to ensure effective maternal care and vaccine delivery.

Professor Gulshan Sachdeva, Chief Coordinator, DAKSHIN welcomed the distinguished panelists and steered the workshop ahead. Dr Rakesh Kumar – Former Joint Secretary, RMNCHA+N, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India opened the discussion by deliberating the importance of monitoring and evaluation for increasing vaccination coverage in India. He acknowledged the importance of technology in fetching accurate data to track such incidences. Dr Ajay Khera – Former Commissioner, RMNCHA+N, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India; Country Representative, EngenderHealth, India stressed the importance of technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital technologies in helping meet the three dimensions of Universal Health Coverage; reachability, quality of care and affordability. Dr Rajib Dasgupta – Chairperson & Professor, Centre of Social Medicine & Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India highlighted the importance of newer non-invasive routes of administering vaccines such as oral, nasal and transdermal. He remarked that virtually painless injections such as the Bubble Gun and edible, sublingual, nasal, melt-in-mouth stripes would help the Global South leapfrog in its vaccination coverage.

Following this, the panellists from the Global South also expressed their views. Dr Kim Hekimian – Visiting Policy Fellow, Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia (APRI); Associate Professor of Nutrition (in Pediatrics and the Institute of Human Nutrition), Columbia University, USA the important role that was played by digital technology in bringing about reforms in caesarean delivery in Armenia. She commented on the crucial role of data visualization graphs in analyzing various statistics regarding caesarean delivery in Armenia and other countries to aid policy reformulation. Professor Rachida Boukari – Professor of Pediatrics; Vice President, Algerian Society of Pediatrics (SAP); Expert at Institut National d'Etudes de Stratégie Globale (INESG), Algeria discussed the importance attached to digital technology and the presence of the National Agency for Digitalization of health with a Working Group for National Digitalization Health Strategy established to collect and communicate information regarding various dimensions of health. She stressed the importance of digital solutions to ensure transparency and efficiency in administering vaccines. Dr Titipol Phakdeewanich – Director, Regional Center for Human Rights, Faculty of Political Science, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand highlighted the AI Thailand Strategy (2022-2027) and

its vision of integrating artificial intelligence in healthcare, including in rural communities. He pointed out the use of artificial intelligence in interpreting X-Ray results, devising surgical robots, and creating content and immersive technology. Mrs Ximena Coronado – President of the Board of Directors, Instituto de Estudios Avanzados en Desarrollo - INESAD, Bolivia upheld the critical role that can be played by technological institutions and educational awareness in building trust and confidence among the masses in Bolivia while accessing vaccines. In this regard, she highlighted several important factors that could be absorbed as learnings from India such as strategy and plantification, technology & data interoperability & standardization, digital information and education and a Patients’ Rights Approach with key public institutions such as the OMBUDSMAN. Dr Rian'aina Razafimandimby Rabarihoela – Founder, Institute of Governance of Madagascar (IGM), Madagascar upheld the efficacy of oral vaccines and needleless vaccination to cover sets of populations suffering from the fear of syringe vaccines. Ms Débora Itriago – Research Fellow, Central America Academy, Costa Rica acknowledged the importance of technological measures to minimize the gap in health outcomes. However, she also pointed out the need for digital health platforms to include native languages to address language barriers and security measures to prevent the piracy of individual data. She remarked that inclusive knowledge systems are needed for better health outcomes and the crucial role of institutions in this regard. Further, she highlighted the need for new management models and operational guidelines in healthcare systems, robust methodologies for monitoring and evaluation and factoring social conditions to promote inclusive digital health. Dr. Adesh Sirjusingh, Director, Directorate of Women's Health, Ministry of Health, Trinidad & Tobago emphasized the importance of developing digital systems to target mothers and children and framing policies for data and monitoring systems for achieving SDG 2030. This would allow focused interventions at regional and national levels while also allowing for targeted interventions. Grace Sookchand, Manager - Expanded Programme on Immunization, Ministry of Health, Trinidad & Tobago highlighted the implementation of the Electronic Immunization Registry in Trinidad & Tobago for tracking access and reachability of vaccines. Further, she also pointed out the crucial role played by capacity building for healthcare concerning training workers to conduct surveillance and monitor vaccination coverage. In the concluding remarks, Dr. Monika Kochar, Advisor Health, DAKSHIN and Professor Gulshan Sachdeva, Chief Coordinator, DAKSHIN thanked the panellists and participants for facilitating such elaborate and targeted discussions on the importance of leveraging technology in the context of maternal healthcare and vaccinization.

