

Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus elimination (MNTE)

Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus has been once among the most common life threatening conditions that result from unclean deliveries and unhygienic umbilical cord care practices. Once developed tetanus is a disease with extremely high mortality rates, especially when appropriate medical care is not available.

According to hospital in-ward statistics, around 2000 cases of tetanus per year including were reported until the late 1970s which included around 500-1000 cases of neonatal tetanus. The maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination initiative aimed at lowering maternal and neonatal tetanus mortality in the country. This mainly focused on clean deliveries, hygienic cord care practices, and immunizing mothers against tetanus before delivery. Diphtheria-Tetanus-whole cell pertussis vaccine has been a part of the immunization program of Sri Lanka since 1961. Immunization of pregnant mothers to prevent tetanus in newborns commenced in Sri Lanka in 1969. There was a sharp decline in the reported cases of neonatal tetanus from the 1980s onwards and <5 cases were being reported annually from 1997 onwards. For the year 2009, not even a single case of clinically suspected neonatal tetanus was reported from all over the country.

MNTE is defined as less than one neonatal tetanus cases per thousand live births. From year 1995 Sri Lanka is maintaining less than 1 case of neonatal tetanus per 1000 live births which is less than the MNT elimination level. This has been achieved by the hard work done at field level by Medical Officers of Health, Public Health Midwives and Public Health Inspectors, supported by the strong coordination done by the district level officers and strong advocacy by the curative sector physicians. With the government policies on free health and education for

all and strong health infrastructure paved the path for achieving this massive success. As a country, now Sri Lanka faces the task of maintaining the achieved MNT elimination status by keeping the high coverage of tetanus immunization.

