

## 5. Elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis can be prevented through antenatal screening and appropriate treatment. The importance of these strategies was reaffirmed with the World Health Assembly endorsement in 2016 of new global health sector strategies for HIV and syphilis, which included the goals of zero new HIV infections among infants by 2020 and the elimination of congenital syphilis by 2030.

The Western Pacific Region has made significant progress towards the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Between 2009 and 2014, the percentage of pregnant women who were tested for HIV increased to 67% from 21%. During the same period, the proportion of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral medicines increased to 58% from 38%. By contrast, syphilis screening among pregnant women remains low in many countries.

In 2014, approximately 12 000 pregnant women were living with HIV, and 2000 cases of new paediatric HIV infections occurred in the Region, mostly through mother-to-child transmission. In 2012, there were approximately 45 000 cases of maternal syphilis infections in the Region, resulting in 13 000 adverse outcomes, including early fetal deaths.

With relatively low epidemics of both diseases, steady economic development making health care more accessible and the availability of effective interventions,



The low burdens of HIV and syphilis, combined with steady economic development in the Region making health care more accessible, are favourable conditions for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

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At the 10th Asia Pacific Prevention of Parent-to-Child Transmission Task Force Meeting in September 2015, Member States reviewed progress and renewed their commitment to achieve the elimination goals.

China, Fiji, Malaysia and Mongolia are close to achieving elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. In December 2015, WHO regional offices for South-East Asia and the Western Pacific jointly established regional validation mechanisms, including a regional validation secretariat.

Some countries are also integrating hepatitis B into their elimination efforts. China's integrated prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme provides a free antenatal care package of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B screening and preventive interventions, including treatment as routine maternal and child health services.

A similar programme has been piloted in Viet Nam. WHO plans to provide a regional framework for triple elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B to promote better maternal and child health. ■