

## **Health-Minimum Service Delivery Standards launched**

Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) have been prepared for the health sector under the Punjab Devolved Social Services Programme (PDSSP). These Standards have been developed keeping in view the international / WHO standards, Punjab's peculiar socio-economic milieu, the viability for implementation of these standards, and above all, feedback from the concerned stakeholders. These MSDS will be implemented throughout the province in phases. In the first, pilot phase, they would be implemented in six to eight District Governments of the Punjab; however on successful completion, they would be extended to the remaining 29 District Governments of the province. It is expected that by implementation of these standards service delivery would markedly improve overtime. The MSDS offers a rare opportunity to the citizens in that they will be in knowledge of the service delivery package they can expect from their District Governments, at least in the health sector; resultantly the accountability of local governments to their citizens will also improve.

There has been a lot of talk of improvement in service delivery in the health sector without realizing that some standards/benchmarks have to be set against which the improvement in service delivery is to be monitored. However, this weakness has now been removed and the Minimum Service Delivery Standards (MSDS) have been developed for health sector. The MSDS document is complemented by two other user-friendly documents of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Standardized Medical Protocols (SMPs) which are going to be immensely useful for both the health managers as well as the hands-on practitioners. These documents are the product of elaborate consultative efforts and quality assurance. The MSDS (together with the SOPs and SMPs) would put this emerging paradigm shift in the health sector on solid footings, whereby systemic improvements would take roots and be taken to their logical conclusion.

The MSDS were launched on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008 in an event organized by the PDSSP. The Chief Guest, Chief Minister Punjab Justice (r) Ijaz Nisar, Minister Health Aslam Humayun, Chairman P&D Suleman Ghani, Secretary Health Anwaar Ahmad Khan and Programme Director PDSSP Abdullah Khan Sumbal addressed the participants. A formal presentation by the PDSSP consultants gave details of the various elements of MSDS. It was generally felt that systemic, T.A.-based inputs would be critical for successful and purposeful implementation of Health Sector Reforms Programme. The Chief Guest hailed the initiative as one which would create palpable and tangible changes in the Devolved Health Sector. The PDSSP communicated its commitment of linking the three documents with the upcoming initiatives such as Job Descriptions for Medics and Paramedics and Referral System.