



PRESS RELEASE

Thomson Reuters Foundation, UNICEF and IIMC launch Critical Appraisal Skills online course for Health Journalists

New Delhi, 24 April 2018: The World Immunization Week, is being observed worldwide from 24-30 April, 2018. During this week, UNICEF launched an online version of the 'Critical Appraisal Skills' (CAS) course for health journalists. This course is conceptualized in collaboration with Thomson Reuters Foundation, Indian Institute of Mass Communication and Oxford University. The course is available for entry and mid-level health reporters. It aims to enhance the capacities of media representatives to generate factual and non-sensational reports.

Evidence shows that a well-researched news story, underpinned with an evidence-based approach can help mitigate any adverse perception about large scale public health initiatives such as the Routine Immunization programmes. It also helps dispel myths and fears and ensures pro-active public participation. This becomes catalytic for the success of large scale health initiatives.

In January 2018, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication integrated the course as a module within all the eight communication streams that it presently teaches. Speaking at the launch, Mr K.G Suresh, Director General, IIMC said, "The course provides a specialized set of skills and competencies to the journalism students and enables them to research and analyze health-related information for credibility and relevance thereby improving the accuracy in reporting."

India has one of the largest immunization programmes in the world, in terms of the number of beneficiaries, geographical coverage and quantities of vaccine used, with nearly 26 million newborns targeted for immunization annually. Over nine million immunization sessions are held across the country to achieve this. However, only 62 per cent of the children in India receive full immunization during the first year of their life.

Nicolas Ballet, Director, Journalism and Media Programmes, Thomson Reuters Foundation said, "With this initiative, we are training Indian journalists to apply the Reuters principles of accuracy and impartiality to their reporting on immunization and mother and child health. The media plays an essential role in shaping the conversation, and we hope to inspire a new generation of journalists to take on this issue and shine a light on topics at the heart of social and economic development."



Speaking on this occasion, Dr Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF Representative in India said, "Media is one of our key partners. This course will be an opportunity for health journalists across the country to add a critical dimension of evidence in their reporting and support in disseminating credible messages on the value of vaccines and how immunization saves the lives of millions of girls and boys." "I am delighted to share that the leadership of the Government of India, along with the collaboration and efforts of the multiple partners including the media, has generated a strong response to the call for vaccination, resulting in an increase of vaccination coverage by 9 percentage points over six years. This is a cause for celebration as it contributes significantly towards Child Survival as well as Sustainable Development Goals." Dr Yasmin added.

The free online course is launched in the backdrop of UNICEF's 'Every Child, Alive' campaign which focuses on reducing newborn mortality, ensuring that every child is alive and healthy in the days, weeks and months after birth.

The link for the course website: <http://www.health-of-india.org/>
For photos please visit: <https://uni.cf/2qRhIJI>

About UNICEF

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The Thomson Reuters Foundation acts to promote the highest standards in journalism and spread the practice of legal pro bono worldwide. The organization runs initiatives that inform, connect and empower people around the world: access to free legal assistance, editorial coverage of the world's under-reported news, media development and training, and the Trust Conference.

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