

Commencement of the Pilot Interventions of the Organized Cancer Screening in Ariyalur District

The Project for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases in Tamil Nadu (TNNCD (Oncology) Project, supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) inaugurated its pilot interventions of organized cancer screening in T. Palur and Meensurity blocks of the Ariyalur district. The initiative aims to streamline and strengthen the existing cancer screening under Makkalai Thedi Maruthuvam (MTM). After six months of the pilot phase, the activities and tools for the organised cancer screening will be introduced to the entire district.

Notable activities of June 2024

1. INAUGURATION AND COMMUNITY SENSITISATION

Marking the commencement of the pilot activities of personally inviting eligible women to the cancer screening, a community-level ceremony was organised in T. Palur block on the 25th June 2024 with Ms. J. Anne Mary Swarna, I.A.S. the District Collector of Ariyalur as the chief guest. The event was participated by community leaders and eligible women and their family members from the locality along with healthcare providers and state and district



Ms. J. Anne Mary Swarna, I.A.S., Ariyalur District Collector along with District health officials, and the JICA team members initiated the distribution of personal invitation to the eligible women in T. Palur block on the 25.06.2024.

health officials. Following the welcome address by Dr. Ajitha K.M., the District Health Officer of Ariyalur, the event heard the following remarks from prominent dignitaries:

- **Ms. J. Anne Mary Swarna, I.A.S., Ariyalur District Collector** emphasized the importance of cervical and breast cancer screenings for women aged 30 and above. She encouraged every woman to take advantage of this program and highlighted the accessibility of screening services in the district.
- **Dr. Chezian, Joint Director of the Tamil Nadu Urban Health Care Project** pointed out the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases in Tamil Nadu, with emphasizing the need for regular health screenings and good health practices to mitigate risks.
- **Ms. Naomi Imani, Deputy Chief Advisor of the JICA Team** said that cervical and breast cancers need not be feared in today's context as they are both completely treatable when detected early. She further encouraged all to support the women to make a wise choice to get screened regularly.

Ms. Rani, a breast cancer survivor, underscored the life-saving importance of early detection with her testimony of diagnosis and treatment of the cancer.



Chief adviser of the JICA project team Ms. Akiko Hirano presenting a memento to Ariyalur DHO at the Meensurity event on 26.06.2024.

Representatives of WHVs were publicly entrusted with bundles of the personal invitation to cancer screening, to be handed to every eligible individual by them. The invitations were also handed to a few local residents at their home by the dignitaries.

A similar event was organised in the Meensurity block on the 26th June 2024, ensuring widespread community awareness and engagement in promotion of cancer screening.

2. INTRODUCTION OF NEW TOOLS

PERSONAL INVITATION

The project introduced several new tools designed to streamline and enhance the cancer screening process:

- **Personal Invitation to Screening:** This personal invitation is to be delivered to all women eligible for cervical and breast cancer screening by Women Health Volunteers (WHVs) during their routine household visits, encouraging them to participate in the cancer screenings.
- **Cancer Screening Register:** This is a tool to manually capture the demographic and clinical data of the individuals participated in the cancer screening, which will then be entered into the MTM portal by the MTM/Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) staff nurses.
- **Recording Book for Women Health Volunteers (WHVs):** A record-keeping book used by WHVs captures the details of the eligible individuals who received the personal invitation, which are to be entered into the MTM portal.

The usability of the tools is pilot tested in the two blocks for six months. They will be introduced to the entire district after making necessary adjustments based on the feedback from the users.

3. Orientation and training

Orientation for the government primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare facilities:



Orientation at Sendurai GH, 21.06.2024



Orientation at T. Palur Block PHC, 25.06.2024



Explaining about cancer screening register to staff nurses at Meensuritty block PHC, 26.06.2024

The project team provided comprehensive orientation sessions to health administrators and healthcare providers involved in cancer screening services at primary, secondary, and tertiary health facilities of the government, including Medical Officers, Gynaecologists, Pathologists, MTM/NCD staff nurses, Mid-Level Healthcare Providers (MLHPs), Village Health Nurses and Health Inspectors. These sessions covered an outline of the project and details of the

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pilot activities including how to use the new tools mentioned above.

Training Workshop for WHVs:



Training workshop for Women Health Volunteers 27.06.2024 at Jeyankondam GH

A one-day Training Workshop was organised for WHVs on the 27th – 29th June 2024, involving 47 WHVs from T. Palur and Meensurity blocks in three batches. The interactive training was facilitated by the JICA team and district health officials, i.e. DPO/NCD and DTTMO who were trained in the Training of Trainers (ToT) a week earlier. The aim was to equip them with sound knowledge of cervical and breast cancers and to improve their communication skills to motivate eligible women to undergo cervical and breast cancer screenings. Clinical information about cervical and breast cancers and how screening intervenes in the development of these cancers was covered in the morning, while the afternoon session was dedicated to the practical application of this information in motivating women, with role plays and active discussions based on the real situations WHVs need to handle in their daily work. The evaluation of the training workshop showed marked improvements in the knowledge of the participants, who also expressed their appreciation for



*Training workshop for Women Health Volunteers
27.06.2024 at Jeyankondam GH*

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the opportunity to enhance their capacity while sharing their experiences in a constructive manner.

This multi-faceted approach ensures that all levels of healthcare providers are well-prepared and equipped to play their roles in the cancer screening initiative, fostering a comprehensive and collaborative effort to improve women's health in Ariyalur District.