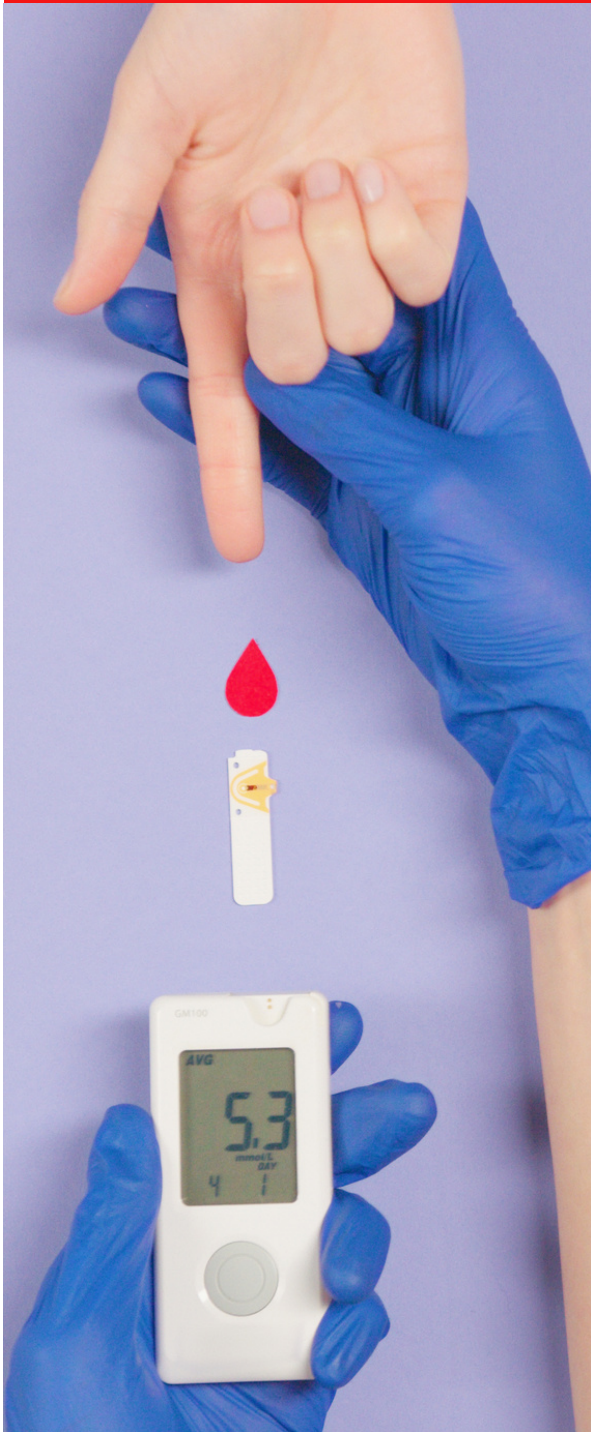


# SEHAT CHECK



APRIL  
2023

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A monthly roundup of  
news articles on  
women's health in  
Pakistan

A Joint Project of



# EDITOR'S NOTE

## HELLO THERE!

For the second time this month, stories about the plight of flood-affected women and their health have been published. While there could have been more coverage on this topic, it is good to see that the issue has not completely disappeared from the press, particularly regarding the difficulties these women face and what is being done about it.

There has also been news about maternal healthcare, including the Benazir Income Support Group (BISP) providing assistance to lactating mothers and children with nutritional needs through their Benazir Nashounama initiative. Thanks to this programme, both mothers and children are able to access the foods they need to combat illnesses and lead healthy lives. A growing number of experts and advocates are calling for accessible basic healthcare facilities for women during and after childbirth, with the hope that their voices become so loud that every Pakistani woman can receive such care. Maternal and infant mortality rates are very high in Pakistan, making it all the more necessary for demands like these to be heard and acted upon



# FLOODS

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**Source:**  
Express  
Tribune

**Date:**  
16-4-2023



## WHY IS KP'S MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE SO HIGH?

According to a 2019 maternal mortality survey, 186 women died for every 100,000 births and 11,000 maternal deaths occurred each year in Pakistan, which has the highest fertility rate in South Asia. In northwestern KP where Lower Dir is situated, the fertility rate is higher than the national average. The annual growth rate of population in KP is 2.89% (1998 to 2017), according to the Pakistan Demographic Health Survey (PDHS), while the annual maternal deaths are 1900. Out of 1000 live births, 53 infants die in the first year of birth, and 23% per cent of children under five years of age are malnourished and underweight. Throughout the journey from her village, Farida cried for help while her husband tried his best to calm her down. As the road was bumpy and the distance long, Farida soon became unconscious. "She had internal bleeding, and looked at our two little daughters as if she was asking for help," says Khan, adding that the recent flood had washed off the roads, leaving entire villages stranded. He kept asking the ambulance driver to go faster but the roads were hard to traverse and their journey was far from smooth. The countrywide floods that affected 31 million people have destroyed the basic infrastructure in villages and towns in the periphery. According to a report by the Population Council of Pakistan (PCP), 18 million people were affected in 16 districts of Sindh, 4.8 million people in Balochistan, 5.7 million people in Punjab and 2.3 million people in KP. The PCP report shows that out of 0.6 million currently pregnant women in Pakistan, 380,000 live in the severely affected districts in rural Sindh, 77,000 in Balochistan, 110,000 in Punjab and 43,000 in the flood-affected districts of KP. Around 93,000 women in KP live with unmet health needs in the severely affected districts, 386,000 five year-old children require immunisation, and 43,000 currently pregnant women need antenatal and postnatal delivery services.

# FLOODS

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**Source:**  
Daily Dawn

**Date:**  
18-4-2023



## MALNUTRITION IN FLOOD-HIT AREAS HAS INCREASED, SAYS UN

The United Nations warned on Monday that the number of children suffering from malnutrition in the flood-affected areas had greatly increased compared to the pre-flood situation, which was already reaching emergency levels. A rapid survey conducted in 15 flood-affected districts suggests that nearly one-third of children aged 6-23 months suffer from moderate acute malnutrition and 14 per cent from severe acute malnutrition – a life-threatening form of malnutrition – with girls being more affected than boys. The number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition with medical complications and admitted to hospital for treatment has also gradually increased since the floods, as global food prices soar. “Even before the floods, child wasting was already reaching emergency levels, but what I am seeing now in villages is very worrying,” said UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Julien Harneis.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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## CALL TO REMOVE HURDLES FOR WOMEN ACCESSING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH FACILITIES

**Source:**  
Daily Dawn

**Date:**  
8-4-2023

Speakers on Friday said with the support of civil society organisations the government could remove barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health information and facilities that negatively impact lives of women and adolescent girls. Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (Poda) organised an event titled `Health for All: SRHR For Women and Girls in Pakistan` in connection with World Health Day. A large number of people representing all walks of life, including university students, health workers, media persons, health experts, lady health workers and women representing rural communities participated. Poda Executive Director Sameena Nazir said the foundation of a society`s progress was its healthy citizenry. She urged the government to increase its annual per capita health budget to ensure citizens` access to quality healthcare, especially rural women and adolescent girls.

## KP GOVT TAKES EXCELLENT MEASURES FOR PROMOTION OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

District Population Welfare Officer of Abbottabad, Shams ur Rahman Saturday said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had taken excellent measures for the promotion of reproductive health and reproductive rights across the province for the welfare and prosperity of the people. Talking to the media, he further said that women were subjected to injustices regarding reproductive issues, and these injustices were a violation of their reproductive rights. When the government protects their rights, they will obtain them legally and misconceptions will be eliminated, he told. He said that health centers, laboratories and other facilities related to health had been delegated to the Population Welfare Department for check and balance, approval and empowerment under the Population Welfare Act 2020.

**Source:**  
Daily  
Times

**Date:**  
9-4-2023

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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**Source:**

The  
Frontier  
Post

**Date:**

17-4-2023



## BISP REACHES OVER 287180 CHILDREN AND 266060 PLW

The benefits of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) have so far reached to over 287,180 children and 266060 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) under the Benazir Nashonuma initiative. According to an official source, these beneficiaries had been served through the network of over 470 Nashonuma Centers across the country. The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) intervention of Benazir Nashonuma was designed in August 2020 to increase the uptake of Health and Nutrition services of its beneficiaries. The primary objectives of the program were to prevent stunting in children under two years of age, improve weight gain of pregnant women during pregnancy, reduce anemia and micronutrient deficiencies and prevent low birth weight. World Food Programme (WFP) is the lead implementing partner for Ehsaas Nashonuma. The programme aims to address stunting among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their children less than two years of age through the provision of additional cash of Rs. 2,000 per quarter per PLW and boy child and PKR 2,500/- per quarter per girl child of BISP beneficiary families.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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## SINDH'S LARGEST PAEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE FACILITY LAUNCHED IN KORANGI AREA

**Source:**  
The Nation

**Date:**  
29-4-2023

KARACHI-Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah, has formally launched the largest paediatric intensive care facility in the province at the government-run Children's Hospital in the Korangi area of Karachi. The paediatric intensive care facility with 28 beds and 52 incubators has been built under the aegis of the newly established Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology (SICHN). The CM noted that more such public health facilities had to be built given the alarming situation of neonatal mortality rate in Pakistan as out of 1,000 newborns 45.6 infants lost their lives. He said that up to 80 per cent of these deaths could be prevented by building more treatment facilities. He appreciated that the newly launched paediatric intensive care facility had achieved a remarkable success rate of 90 per cent. While the average success rate of the other health treatment services at the hospital is 80 per cent.

## 'SAFE MOTHER SAFE FAMILIES' SEMINAR: SCREENING OF GIRLS BEFORE MARRIAGE ESSENTIAL: MINISTER

Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr Javed Akram said that the caretaker government has recommended screening of children in all schools. Screening of girls before marriage has become very important in Pakistan. Instead of waiting for sudden calamities, we have to deal with them in advance. Dr Javed Akram expressed these views while addressing a seminar 'Safe Mother Safe Families' organised by Al-Khidmat Health Foundation in Johar Town on Saturday. Dr Jamshaid from WHO, Dr Mushtaq Sulehria from Punjab Healthcare Commission, Dr Ijaz, Chairman Prof Dr Zahid Latif, General Secretary Dr Usman Anwar, Dr Misbah and officials of Al Khidmat Health Foundation participated in the seminar. The caretaker provincial health minister appreciated the efforts of Al-Khidmat Health Foundation, which provided the best medical facilities to hundreds of pregnant women in the flood-affected areas, for organising a seminar on a very important topic.

**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
30-4-2023

# DISEASES & INJURIES

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**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
16-4-2023



## THE BURDEN OF DIABETES

Diabetes is a growing concern in Pakistan. According to the International Diabetes Federation, one in every four adults is living with diabetes in the country. This is the highest national prevalence in the world. Pakistan has the third highest number of people living with diabetes in the world after China and India. The disease is now a major public health issue, affecting more than 34 million people in the country. Diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs when the body is unable to produce enough insulin or use it effectively. This leads to high levels of glucose in the bloodstream, which can cause a range of health problems, including heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and blindness. In Pakistan, diabetes is a significant health problem. The prevalence of diabetes in the country has increased rapidly over the past few years. One of the main reasons for the high prevalence of diabetes in Pakistan is the society's changing lifestyles. Rapid urbanisation, sedentary living and unhealthy diets have contributed to the rising incidence of the disease. In addition, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of diabetes, its symptoms and its management among the general population. Another contributing factor is the lack of access to quality healthcare in many parts of the country. Diabetes treatment and management require regular monitoring, medication, and lifestyle changes. This can be difficult for people living in poverty or in remote areas with limited healthcare resources. Women with diabetes face unique challenges related to reproductive health, including a higher risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. In addition, cultural and social norms make it more difficult for women to access healthcare services and receive appropriate diabetes management.



# HEALTHCARE WORKERS

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**Source:**  
Daily Dawn

**Date:**  
10-4-2023



## HEROES OF DIFFICULT PATHWAYS MARCH ON IN FIGHT AGAINST POLIO

Pishin is a high-risk district. Although the province hasn't had a polio case for almost two years, the threat is always present that poliovirus is ready to strike somewhere because of an extensive population movement to and from the district, from other provinces and parts of Afghanistan. "It's all because of our community health workers that the district has no polio case. The women are local, from the same community and have easy access to houses. The ratio of female-male ratio is 70-30 percent in Pishin district. The percentage is even lower in rural areas and Barshore is one such Tehsil," said Kaleemullah, district communications officer in Pishin. These women are working to bring about a behavioural change as they not only administer polio drops, but also give awareness to villagers about immunisation. "Last but not the least, they are breadwinners, too. It's very difficult to have women as CHWs in our district. We campaigned hard to persuade many families to let their females join the PEI programme. "We now have 50 female frontline CHWs, out of 96, in Barshore alone," said Mubeen, the communication officer in Pishin. "Marjana, her mother-in-law and father-in-law sometimes hitch a ride on a tractor to vaccinate children. "They have to walk mile upon mile to reach a single child at the top of a mountain. If one house is on the mountain, another is beside a stream gone dry. But they work with dedication and honesty to administer polio drops to every child," Mubeen added.

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# Gender Watch

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