

# SEHAT CHECK



JUNE  
2023

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



A Joint Project of



# EDITOR'S NOTE

## HELLO THERE!

June has been an exceptional month for mothers in Pakistan, with the implementation of important rules and programmes to support them. The introduction of Nourishmaa and the Maternity Leave Act signifies significant progress in ensuring the well-being and care of mothers. These initiatives provide essential support for new mothers, allowing them the necessary time and resources to prioritise their health and bond with their babies without any external obligations interfering. It is a commendable step towards creating a nurturing environment for mothers and their children.

Lady healthcare workers and nurses play a vital role in the overall healthcare sector. In a country where the number of patients outweighs the availability of doctors and maternal mortality rates remain high, these women are key to reducing such alarming figures. However, it is crucial that they receive fair compensation for their work. Many of these dedicated workers have protested against low wages and the lack of protection. Furthermore, their working conditions are often substandard and unacceptable. It is imperative to create a conducive environment where lady healthcare workers and nurses can carry out their duties with dignity and without compromising their well-being.



# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

**Source:**

The  
Frontier  
Post

**Date:**

2-6-2023



## BENAZIR NASHONUMA PROGRAM REACHES OVER 659500 WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has served over 659,500 women and children under the Benazir Nashonuma initiative until now through provision of health and nutrition services. Among the total beneficiaries, a total of 320020 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and 339480 children have been facilitated so far. 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. In return, mothers are required to attend regular antenatal health checks and awareness sessions during pregnancy, consume specialized nutritious food (SNF), and take their children for immunization and regular health checks.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

Source:  
The News

Date:  
3-6-2023



## NOURISHMAA CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

Nutrition International has joined hands with the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSR&C) and Punjab Health Department to launch a campaign – NourishMaa. According to a press release issued on Friday, this collaborative effort aims to promote maternal nutrition in the province by enhancing the knowledge and skills of healthcare providers and frontline health workers in two selected districts of Punjab. “Maternal malnutrition’s impact extends across generations, making it crucial for Pakistan to urgently address this issue,” emphasised Punjab Health DG Dr Ilyas. He praised the NourishMaa Campaign for its collaborative efforts, forming valuable partnerships with the Department of Health and professional medical associations to reach public and private healthcare providers. The latest National Nutrition Survey 2018 indicated that the macronutrient and micronutrient deficiencies are alarming amongst women of reproductive age (WRA, 15-49 years). 14.4% are underweight while 24% are overweight. There is a very high prevalence of anemia (42%) in this age group. Similarly, the nutritional status of adolescent girls (10-19 years) is also worrisome. The survey highlighted more than 55% women suffered from anemia. The high rate of malnutrition among WRA as well as adolescent girls, combined with underlying complications emerging from early marriages, closely spaced pregnancies, and maternal malnutrition aggravate a vicious cycle of high morbidity and mortality, leading to adverse maternal and child health outcomes.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

---

**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
6-6-2023



## SINDH CABINET OKAYS BREASTFEEDING LAW, PROCUREMENT OF 60 AMBULANCES

The Sindh cabinet met on Monday with Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in chair, and approved the breastfeeding law to ensure breastfeeding of children for three years, and the procurement of 60 ambulances, including 30 mobile medical vans. The cabinet discussed and approved the Sindh Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition Act 2023. Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho said that it was expedient to ensure safe and adequate nutrition for infants and young children up to the age of 36 months by promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding, promoting healthy diets to prevent obesity and non-communicable diseases, and regulating the marketing and promotion of designated products, including breast milk substitutes. Under the act, the government would establish a 22-member board under the chairperson of the Sindh Assembly Standing Committee on Health. The functions of the board include framing regulations, advising standards of designated products and proposing guidelines to the government to establish an effective monitoring system for the purpose as per the WHO/UNICEF protocols.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

---

**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
6-6-2023



## HOPE BEYOND INFERTILITY

Unable to conceive after her first baby, Abida blames it on the evil spirits that only manifest in women. According to Fozia, she is unable to conceive after trying for five years because it is a divine punishment. These examples represent two types of infertility, which can be of primary type, when pregnancy is never achieved, or secondary type, when at least one pregnancy is achieved. It is important to understand that unless we fight the myths and misconceptions around infertility, women will continue to face violence, stigma, stress, and they will not be able to enjoy their basic right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Infertility is defined by the failure to achieve a pregnancy after twelve months or more of trying regularly. World Health Organization has estimated that 1 in 6 people globally are affected by infertility. A study estimates that 48 million couples and 186 million individuals worldwide live with infertility. In Pakistan, infertility prevalence is reported as 22 per cent. Infertility may be caused by issues in either male or female reproductive systems and sometimes, it is due to unidentifiable reasons. The problem is exacerbated because we live in a culture where the family name is carried forward through the birth of a child and involves inheritance rights, and children are seen as a future source of household income and a source of strength in old age. Unfortunately, in our society, mostly women are blamed when couples are unable to have babies. Women should empower themselves with crucial information related to infertility so that they can take appropriate steps for their happiness and wellbeing.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

---

**Source:**  
Daily  
Times

**Date:**  
10-6-2023



## FROM CONCEIVING TO BIRTH AND BEYOND

Maternal Health is one of the major public health concerns nowadays. Poor maternal health eventually leads to maternal deaths and that exists in many developing and underdeveloped nations around the world. Globally, one pregnant woman dies every 2 minutes, either due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth. In 2020 alone, 303,000 women died of pregnancy or childbirth-related issues. Maternal mortality rate is particularly high in developing countries with the occurrence of almost 99% of all the cases reported in these areas. South Asia is home to a large number of maternal mortalities. Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan are the countries where most of the maternal deaths are taking place. In terms of chiefly talking about Pakistan, the country has low socio-economic indicators. Besides, the social development index of Pakistan does not reveal a very positive picture. Currently, the country ranks 53 out of 184 countries globally in terms of maternal mortality and at third number in South Asia after Afghanistan and Nepal. The country has been slow to bring advancement in gender equality, and education and change those socio-cultural practices that are hurdles in the way of seeking maternal health for women. Particularly talking of rural areas of Pakistan, the majority of rural areas of the country are deprived of necessities of life and rural people are supposed to live a difficult life. Despite the efforts of the government, health facilities in rural Pakistan are still scarce. Women and children in such a scenario have to suffer most from this neglect.

# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

Source:

Daily  
Times

Date:

10-6-2023



## ‘MATERNAL HEALTH KEY TO FAMILY PLANNING’

Maternal Health is one of the major public health concerns nowadays. Poor maternal health eventually leads to maternal deaths and that exists in many developing and underdeveloped nations around the world. Globally, one pregnant woman dies every 2 minutes, either due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth. In 2020 alone, 303,000 women died of pregnancy or childbirth-related issues. Maternal mortality rate is particularly high in developing countries with the occurrence of almost 99% of all the cases reported in these areas. South Asia is home to a large number of maternal mortalities. Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan are the countries where most of the maternal deaths are taking place. In terms of chiefly talking about Pakistan, the country has low socio-economic indicators. Besides, the social development index of Pakistan does not reveal a very positive picture. Currently, the country ranks 53 out of 184 countries globally in terms of maternal mortality and at third number in South Asia after Afghanistan and Nepal. The country has been slow to bring advancement in gender equality, and education and change those socio-cultural practices that are hurdles in the way of seeking maternal health for women. Particularly talking of rural areas of Pakistan, the majority of rural areas of the country are deprived of necessities of life and rural people are supposed to live a difficult life. Despite the efforts of the government, health facilities in rural Pakistan are still scarce. Women and children in such a scenario have to suffer most from this neglect.



# REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

---

---

Source:

Dawn

Date:

23-6-2023



## ADVERSE MATERNAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Despite significant interventions made during the last two decades, newborns and mothers still die from otherwise preventable causes. According to the WHO, about 287,000 women died in 2022 during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Although maternal mortality witnessed a decline of 44 per cent between 1990 and 2015 globally and 64pc in southern Asia between 1990-2013, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia still carry a heavy burden of these mortalities – ie, 86pc of the total number of global maternal deaths. More than 90pc of maternal deaths occur in middle- and low-income countries and among women living in rural and underprivileged areas. Young girls aged between 10 and 14 years face a higher risk of maternal death. Pakistan, one of the low-income countries, ranks high on the list of infant and maternal mortality rates. It has an MMR of 186 deaths per 100,000 live births – along with the current neonatal mortality rate of 40 per 1,000 live births. As part of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, the goal is to reduce MMR to less than 70 per 100,000 live births and neonatal deaths to 12 per 1,000 live births by 2030. Given the current socioeconomic crisis, social structure and exposure of Pakistan to climate-related disasters, this goal looks unattainable. There are several factors influencing maternal health in Pakistan that result in adverse health outcomes. These elements are not isolated but influence and complement each other in various ways. Poverty, poor education and place of residence top the list. Poor socioeconomic conditions are major contributors to women’s unmet nutritional needs before, during and after pregnancy. Climate change, socioeconomic disparities, conflicts and disasters bring additional challenges to women’s health and well-being by enhancing the risks of complications and poor outcomes during pregnancy and childbirth.

# DISEASES & INJURIES

## BREAST CANCER MOST COMMON IN PAKISTAN: REGISTRY

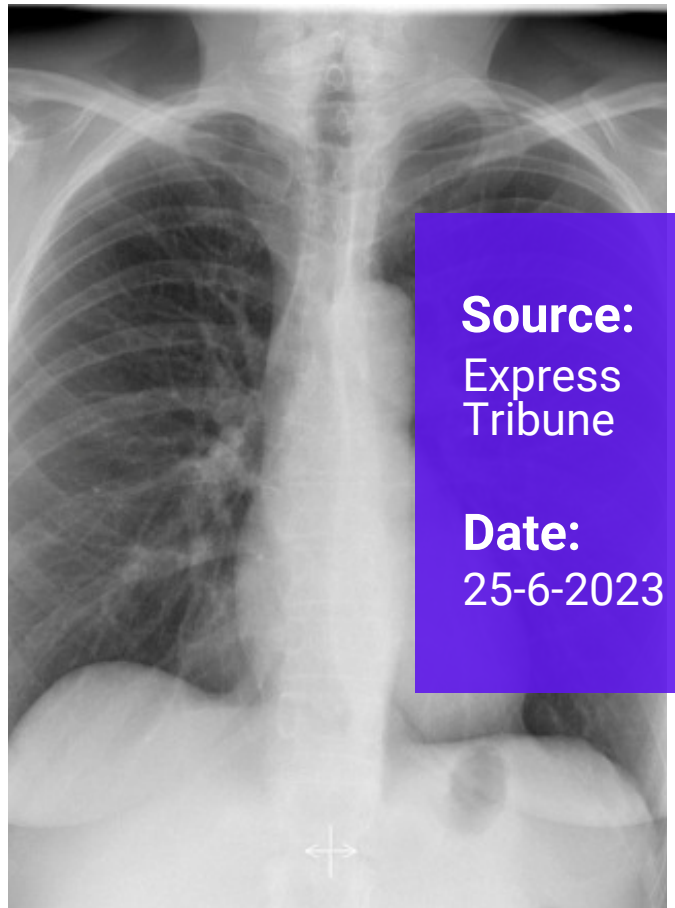
**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
24-6-2023

Breast cancer remains the most common cancer in both women and men in Pakistan followed by cancer of the head and neck, large bowel, liver and lungs, the National Cancer Registry (NCR) at the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, said Friday. In its first analysis of cancer cases in the country between 2015 and 2019, the NCR said a total of 269,707 cases are analysed with 46.7pc males and 53.61pc females. As per provincewide distribution, 45.13pc of cases are from Punjab, 26.83pc from Sindh, 16.46 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 3.52pc from Balochistan. Both genders combined, breast cancer is the most common cancer followed by cancers of oral, large bowel, liver and lungs. In males, the top-five cancers in order of frequency are oral, liver, large bowel, lung and prostate. In females, the top-5 cancers included breast, ovary, oral, cervix and large bowel.

## DOCTORS REMOVE NEEDLE FROM WOMAN'S LUNGS

Doctors successfully completed a procedure on Saturday where they extracted a needle from a young woman's lungs. A 22-year-old Tasmia Fatima from Bhimbhar, Azad Kashmir was admitted to Lahore General Hospital having severe chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Associate Professor of Pulmonology Department Dr Irfan Malik examined the patient in detail and performed a bronchoscope. The scan showed that a needle was stuck in her right lung, and the patient informed physicians that she kept the pin in her mouth while dressing her hijab, when she accidentally swallowed it. Surgeons performed a bronchoscopic procedure and were able to extract the needle from her lung without an invasive surgery or anesthesia.



**Source:**  
Express  
Tribune

**Date:**  
25-6-2023

# MENSTRUAL HYGIENE



Source:  
The News

Date:  
16-6-2023

## PRIORITISING WOMEN HYGIENE TERMED CRUCIAL TO DEVELOPMENT

UNICEF in collaboration with Santex Products, the manufacturers of sanitary napkin, recently organized the Policy Level Dialogue on Menstrual Health & Hygiene Tax Reforms. A pioneering initiative, the dialogue was a continuation of the ethnographic research on menstrual health and hygiene conducted by the two partners in 2022. The discussion brought together prominent stakeholders from government, non-profit organizations, and the private sector who all urged the government to address the pressing issue of period poverty and advocate for policy reforms aimed at reducing financial barriers to accessing menstrual products. Menstrual pads are currently subject to Luxury Tax. Chief guest at the occasion, Mehnaz Akbar Aziz, Member of the National Assembly and Chairperson for the Parliamentary Committee on Law and Justice agreed to raise this issue in parliament and will support tax reforms. She was joined by Dr. Inoussa Kabore, Deputy Representative UNICEF Pakistan and Fawaz Ahmed, Head of Marketing Santex Products along with other dignitaries. The dialogue highlighted the findings of the recent ethnographic study on Menstrual Health & Hygiene in Pakistan, aiming to foster collaboration among key stakeholders for the development of effective strategies for address period poverty.

# HEALTHCARE WORKERS

---

---

**Source:**

Daily  
Ausaf

**Date:**

1-6-2023



## 43,000 LHWS PROMOTED, SAYS DR. JAMAL NASIR (TRANSLATION)

Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir has said that the performance of doctors and paramedical staff and administrative affairs in the hospitals is being monitored. He said this while addressing an immunisation media orientation workshop held at a local hotel. Director Health Rawalpindi Dr Ansir Ishaq, CEO Health Dr. Ijaz, District Health Officer Dr. Ehsan Ghani, Divisional Officer WHO Dr. Asif Sehgal, UNICEF Immunisation Officer Quratul Ain, UNICEF Punjab Health Specialist Dr. Manzoor and others were also present on this occasion. He said that the interim government has also promoted the health officials including doctors, nurses, paramedic staff, 43,000 Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) and 18,000 Lady Health Supervisors (LHSs) in the higher pay grades. The minister said that the caretaker government in Punjab, in its short tenure of almost four months has provided the best healthcare facilities including laboratory tests and checkup to some 48000 prisoners detained in 43 jails of the province.

# HEALTHCARE WORKERS

---

---

**Source:**  
The News

**Date:**  
18-6-2023



## INDUCT MORE NURSES INTO MURREE HOSPITAL, SAYS CM

Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Murree and Control Room established in Jinnah Hall on Saturday. Mohsin Naqvi reviewed treatment facilities being provided to the patients in the hospital and made a detailed inspection of Emergency, OPD, Mother and Child Ward, Pharmacy and other departments. Naqvi asserted that the Health Department should initiate the induction process of nurses on the vacant posts in the hospital immediately. He stated that only six nurses are discharging their duties on the 29 approved posts of nurses adding that no hospital can function 24 hours with 6 nurses. Naqvi inquired after the patients and asked about medical facilities being provided to them. He also inspected the extended project building of the hospital and directed early functionalisation of the building. Caretaker CM expressed his severe indignation over closure of few departments in the hospital and ordered to open closed departments forthwith. Naqvi by taking prompt notice of the shortage of nurses in the hospital directed to overcome shortage of nurses at the earliest. CM stated that direction has been issued to the Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Dr Jamal Nasir to improve healthcare facilities adding that he will remain present in Murree till improvement of hospital affairs.

# HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**Source:**  
Express  
Tribune

**Date:**  
18-6-2023



## OVER 5,000 HEALTH WORKERS TO BENEFIT FROM 'NOURISHMAA CAMPAIGN'

More than 5,000 healthcare providers and frontline health workers will benefit from the "NourishMaa Campaign" which aims to enhance their knowledge and skills in maternal nutrition and integrate nutrition counselling into their regular practice. The campaign was launched by Nutrition International in collaboration with the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSR&C) and the Sindh Health Department. While speaking at the launch, Sindh Minister for Local Governments Nasir Hussain Shah emphasised the importance of women's health, nutrition, and well-being during preconception, pregnancy, and postpartum periods. He commended Nutrition International for initiating this campaign and assured the government's support for its successful implementation. The latest National Nutrition Survey 2018 revealed alarming rates of macro and micronutrient deficiencies among women of reproductive age (WRA). Addressing these issues is crucial, and the NourishMaa Campaign aims to complement the Pakistan Maternal Nutrition Strategy 2022-27. The campaign will leverage the role of HCPs, FHWs, key opinion leaders (KOLs), and other stakeholders to address maternal malnutrition in the country.

# UKS RESEARCH CENTRE

**CONTACT:**  
051 2712416

**EMAIL:**  
Info@uksresearch.com.pk

## SOCIAL MEDIA



**ADDRESS:**  
Office 4B-4C 4th Floor, Gulberg  
Palace E-11/3 Islamabad

<https://uksresearch.com.pk/>

# Gender Watch

## Disclaimer:

*Getz Pharma and Uks assume no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of Sehat Check. The information contained in the news stories is provided on an "as is" basis with no guarantees of completeness, accuracy, usefulness, or timeliness.*