



Health

Major challenges confronted the People's Government in the health sector when it assumed power in 2008. Health indicators were as low as in some of the African countries. The maternal mortality ratio stood at 260 per 100,000. Together with 78 per 1000 infant mortality ratio, it was alarmingly high. Regular immunization coverage, public health funding (below 1% of the GDP), spread of non-communicable diseases at 38%, and burden of disease at 545% mortality, showed a poor state of health management in the country.

The Ministry of Health has been making all-out efforts to realize the agenda of the Government for improving all health indicators with a special focus on the poor and unprivileged segments of society. The Government's strategy is to shift from curative to preventive, urban to rural, and high-tech cost to basic health services. More attention is being given to public health, especially women and children, and nutrition education.

New Health Policy

One of the earliest steps the Government took was to enforce a comprehensive health policy that focused on the concept of equity and equality. To implement ongoing programs, health services were strengthened by expanding key national preventive and pre-emptive interventions. These include emergency health-care particularly in reproductive health; upgrading essential curative services; prevention of major communicable diseases, mother and child health protection interventions; and women health-care. The polio education campaign launched by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in 1994 has been revitalized. Sectors beyond health like national highways, motorways police and traffic police in major cities, NADRA, PTA and Pakistan Postal

Services have joined hands in achieving health targets targets. An immediate Government announcement was to appoint as many as 20,000 lady health workers. Around 50% of them have been inducted into the service raising their total to 110,000. Another 10,000 will be added in the next phase.

Similarly, about 12,000 community midwives (skilled birth attendants) are being trained for rural areas across the country, while 20 community midwives schools have been established. Necessary equipment for round the clock management of new-borns has been provided to all basic health units, and doctors are being trained in saving lives of mothers and children. Around 6,000 skilled birth attendants are also being trained under the national program for maternal, newborn and child health care program. The Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) has provided an amount of Rs.23.156 billion for 77 projects, which means an increase of about 66% over last year's allocation.

The Human Organ Transplant Authority has been established to check illegal sale of human organs in implementing the law adopted to prevent malpractices in the sector. Designated smoking areas at airport lounges and restaurants have been cancelled to discourage smoking at public places. Pictorial warnings against smoking on all cigarette packs will be printed under a policy to come into effect from May 2010. Offer of consumer incentives by the tobacco industry has been banned.

An MoU has been signed with China for enhanced co-operation in the health sector. The Government has also embarked on improving health education and specialization of doctors at higher institutions. The objective of this policy is to reach backward areas to enable youth there

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to seek learning in medical and paramedical disciplines in their home towns. The Government has planned the establishment of medical colleges in Khuzdar and Loralai, both in Balochistan, and Benazir Medical College in Gujranwala.

The extension and development of MBC Complex and the Cancer Hospital at Quetta has been decided. Similarly, 300-bed hospitals each at the Trauma Centre at Kemari Town, Karachi, and Maternal and Child Health Institute at Benazirabad are scheduled for next year. Likewise, the up-gradation of cancer treatment facility at Nishtar Hospital, Multan, and a 150-bed district headquarters hospital at Palandri, Azad Kashmir, are also on the cards.