
UNICEF Pakistan's Community & Lady Health Worker Program
UNICEF's Next Generation, March 2011

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The Threats Facing Pakistani Children and Women

Pakistani children face a variety of serious challenges ranging from malnutrition and poor access to education and health facilities to exploitation in the form of child labor. Every year, almost 460,000 Pakistani children under the age of 5 die from preventable causes and nearly one in ten will not see their fifth birthday. Pneumonia and diarrhea are the main killers of young children—13 percent and 11 percent, respectively, and their low status in society can leave them at risk to daily violence at home and in school as well as to organized trafficking and sexual exploitation. Girls are particularly vulnerable as conservative attitudes may prevent them attending or finishing school.

Similarly, Pakistani women face numerous challenges to leading healthy and productive lives as they too have a comparably low social status. This status, as well as discriminatory social norms, leaves women vulnerable to sickness, neglect, and violence. For instance, an estimated 25,000 Pakistani mothers die every year due to complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The absence of medical facilities and skilled birth attendants in rural villages means that pregnant women suffering from complications must travel from the remote corners of the country to the cities for treatment. Travel over the

unpaved roads in mountainous terrain, typically via donkey, is dangerous and often impossible.

Very few women in Pakistan are trained in health care and midwifery procedures, which significantly compromises the health and safety of Pakistani women and infants. Cultural norms often prevent Pakistani women from receiving health care at hospitals staffed exclusively by male health personnel. As a result, most maternal deaths in Pakistan occur due to complications that could have been treated and prevented with the assistance of a trained female birth attendant and the appropriate medical supplies.

Women and Children Bear the Brunt of Disasters

The number of people displaced by natural disasters and conflict is further exacerbating the health of babies and mothers. Last year, more than 20 million people—one in eight Pakistanis—were affected by severe flooding that took place in July following heavy monsoon rains in the north. Swiftly moving south, the floods engulfed more than one fifth of the country's landmass swallowing an area the size of the United Kingdom. Over 2,000 people died and over a million homes were destroyed.

Photo cover

Pakistan: Mir Afzal, 4, his fractured foot wrapped in a bandage, sits in his sister's lap in a camp that has been set up for earthquake survivors next to Mansehra District Hospital in the town of Mansehra in NWFP. © UNICEF/Pirozzi

Photo below

Pakistan: A health worker administers a dose of oral polio vaccine to a boy, as other children wait their turn, in Quetta, capital of the southwestern province of Balochistan. © UNICEF/Bronstein





Map
Flood-affected areas shown in red.

The consequences of flooding on Pakistan's poorest and most vulnerable are serious. Over 10 million children (28 percent of them under five years old) and 3 million women were severely affected by the flooding last year and tens of thousands are still in relief camps and spontaneous settlements. The 2011 monsoon season is looming precariously near, and as recent as January 2011, parts of southern Pakistan were still under several feet of water.

Malnutrition, compounded by the vicious circle of contaminated water, lack of sanitation, and poor hygiene practices, is a major challenge. Some areas of Pakistan, notably Sindh Province, where flooding was the most severe, are still faced with an increased number of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Sanitation remains virtually non-existent, water sources remain damaged or contaminated and people lost not only their houses but also essential household items to fetch and store water, resulting in an acute shortage of safe drinking water and an increased risk of waterborne disease.

UNICEF in Action

Pakistan's high maternal and infant mortality rates undoubtedly reflect the country's shortage of trained health providers. Exacerbating this problem are pervasive delays in decision making by uninformed family members, extensive delays in transportation to appropriate health facilities, and general delays in administering quality health services.

To overcome these challenges, UNICEF initiated the Community and Lady Health Worker Program. This innovative program creates community awareness about key health issues such as the critical importance of seeking care from health workers and health facilities at the appropriate time. The program trains Pakistani women with the knowledge and skills necessary to inform families about the health and nutrition interventions that are available for their children. For example, a UNICEF-trained Lady Health Worker will go door-to-door encouraging families to attend upcoming vaccination drives. Additionally, Lady Health Workers educate pregnant women about antenatal care and ensure that women in their communities

Photo right

Pakistan: Rabia (right), from the NGO Islamic Relief, UNICEF's implementing partner, goes over the items in a UNICEF family hygiene kit with a group of women accompanied by their children in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. © UNICEFZaidi



receive proper support during their pregnancies. Each Lady Health Worker is assigned approximately 100 households that have not had prior access to essential health and nutrition services.

Lady Health Workers also reach out to families displaced by the floodwaters. With the assistance of the Lady Health Workers, UNICEF has reached over six million people with a combination of safe water supplies and water treatment for families. UNICEF supports Lady Health Workers as they distribute millions of water purifying tablets and messages about proper hygiene to avert secondary infections such as cholera and other diarrheal diseases.

Photo right

Pakistan: Taslim Kausar, a lady health worker, measures the arm of an infant with an arm band, in the village of Basti Nowshera in Layyah District. The red portion of the armband indicates severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition. © UNICEF/Shehzad Noorani



As an added benefit, the program simultaneously addresses the financial pressures Pakistani people are facing due to the loss of income, livestock, arable land, and other economic resources caused by the floodwaters.

By providing participating Pakistani women with a salary and training, UNICEF is able to make the Community and Lady Health Workers program sustainable. Providing a salary ensures the retention of trained health care workers, and also provides a source of income that empowers women in Pakistan. Through the program, UNICEF is also able to set up community health and nutrition committees to turn this newly acquired knowledge into practice. With participation from community members themselves, the program delivers services through training and deployment of over 100,000 Lady Health Workers whom UNICEF equips with

blood-pressure apparatus, thermometers, health treatments like oral rehydration salts and zinc, safe maternal delivery kits, and other supplies, along with informational and educational materials to support outreach.

The Impact of Your Support

The women and children of Pakistan need your support now more than ever. Engaging new Community and Lady Health Workers is an integral part of UNICEF's plan to scale up many of the tried and tested health interventions that have demonstrated positive results. So far, these dedicated Pakistani community workers have had a lasting positive effect on childhood vaccination rates; they have increased the use of antenatal services; they have increased the provision of iron tablets to pregnant women; they have increased the frequency of child growth monitoring; and they have lowered the rates of childhood diarrhea.

With your support, UNICEF and its local partners will be able to strengthen existing community and lady health workers and identify more young Pakistani girls that can serve as community health workers and facilitators as Pakistan prepares for a national scale up. With the necessary training, these girls will eventually be able to provide basic—yet lifesaving—packages of health services to communities throughout Pakistan.

UNICEF has an extraordinary level of technical expertise that is backed by a network of highly skilled field staff and teams of professionals in public health, disease prevention, logistics, education, and emergency response. UNICEF can call on this expertise to maximize the impact of your support. For instance, UNICEF's Next Generation's commitment of \$75,000 could support one of the following components of the program:

- Train and support 255 young Pakistani women serving as Community Health Workers for one year.

- Provide information, education, and communication packages for 60,000 Community and Lady Health Workers including counseling cards for health education sessions; birth registration sheets; and brochures on antenatal care, birth preparedness, clean delivery practices, and essential newborn care.
- Provide 4 million chewable de-worming tablets for distribution to 2 million children twice a year.

Education and awareness building are critical components in this campaign, along with greater respect for the rights of women and children. The program fosters women's participation and empowerment in households, communities, places of employment and in politics. Additionally, it encourages greater involvement of men in maternal and child care.

Impact of a Gift

At this time, I hope you will consider a gift to UNICEF's Next Generation Pakistan Project.

Your gift of **\$1,000** could purchase 40 first aid kits, containing bandages, tape, gloves, scissors, a blanket, eye ointment, and disinfectant.

Your gift of **\$2,500** could provide school supplies for one year to over 200 children.

Your gift of **\$3,000** could provide 435,000 water purification tablets to make 580,000 gallons of clean water.

Your gift of **\$5,000** could train and provide health supplies and annual stipends to 17 young Pakistani women serving as Community Health Workers.

Your gift of **\$10,000** could purchase over 525,000 chewable de-worming tablets that Community and Lady Health Workers can distribute over the course of two rounds of de-worming each year per child.

Your support is vital to the expansion of this successful program, and at the same time, will empower Pakistani women by enhancing their skills, knowledge, and their social status. You can help these women become true agents of change—for themselves and their communities. Thank you for your continued interest in and concern for the children and women of Pakistan.

To make a donation, please visit:
www.unicefusa.org/projectpakistan

or send a check to:
(made payable to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF)

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UNICEF has saved more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization in the world. Working in over 150 countries, UNICEF provides children with health care, clean water, nutrition, education, emergency relief, and more. The U.S. Fund for UNICEF supports UNICEF's work through fundraising, advocacy, and education in the United States.

UNICEF is at the forefront of efforts to reduce child mortality worldwide. In just two decades, the

number of children under age five dying each day has been cut by one-third. But still, 22,000 children die each day from preventable causes. Our mission is to do whatever it takes to make that number zero by giving children the essentials for a safe and healthy childhood. For more information, visit www.unicefusa.org.

Believe in zero. | ~~22,000~~

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