

## QUESTION

What is the status of women health in Pakistan? How it could be improved within the available economic resources?

## ANSWER

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not a mere absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization). These words of World Health Organization (WHO) give the holistic definition of health. The comparison of women health in Pakistan with this notion of WHO makes it clear that the women health in Pakistan is not satisfactory. Men and women are the two pillars of a social system. A healthy social system cannot be built unless both the pillars ensure with equal life resources. However, the situation is different in Pakistan. It stands in 142 position out of 146 in gender gap rank. Pakistan is the world-third country with maternal mortality rate and many more. There are multiple factors which contribute to worse condition of women health in Pakistan. These factors include limited access to health facilities, Patriarchy,

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lack of awareness, traditional way of treatment and many other. Although health issues exist, still a few measures would be helpful to mitigate them. These include women education, awareness lectures and sessions, free health facilities, avoiding midwives and quacks and others. Hence

one can improve the miserable health status of women in Pakistan with few but organized planning.

## **WOMEN'S HEALTH STATUS IN PAKISTAN:**

Women have a miserable health status in Pakistan. Pakistan is the fifth largest country according to population. Women's make 49.7% of its total population which means its half population is of women. Although Pakistan have equal population of men and women but distribution of resources is not equal here. There are few reasons which are responsible for this which are as following for the health issues of women in Pakistan which are as following.

### **1- Limited health facilities.**

Pakistani women specially those who live in rural areas lack health facilities. There are number of villages which don't

have a single health center. When women suffer due to severe problems they are advised to be patient and take pain killers. These medicines affect them adversely.

## 2- Patriarchy

Patriarchy is another reason for women issues. They make women subordinate due to which they could express their ~~women~~ feelings openly. They are not allowed to go to hospital without a security. Depression is the main reason behind women miserable health which is the byproduct of this system.

## 3- Midwives and Quacks

The women in rural areas have dearth of doctors access. During delivery they prefer home treatment and midwives service. The midwives cannot understand the complexities of pregnancies. This results in maternal mortality. When a woman becomes sick in rural areas the lack of awareness compels them to go to quack. The medicines recommended by the quacks are the absurd replacement of effective medication. These medicines do not play in the good health of women and the women suffer more with the passage of time.

## MEASURES WHICH CAN BE USEFUL TO IMPROVE WOMEN HEALTH IN PAKISTAN

### 1- FREE HEALTH FACILITIES

Free health facilities will play a vital role in improving women health issues. There are women who cannot meet their basic need of health. In Sindh 60 percent of women are below poverty line. They hardly manage their two time meals. For such women health facilities should be free.

### 2- AWARENESS ABOUT WOMEN HEALTH

Although Pakistan is suffering due to financial issues but awareness session can be arranged through volunteer organisation. There are multiple organisations which offer free service like Edhi foundation. If people are women become aware of their issues and the ways to handle them it will be a key step towards the mitigation of the <sup>problems.</sup>

### 3 AVOIDING TRADITIONAL WAYS OF TREATMENT: MIDWIVES & QUACKS

The nonprofessional midwives and quacks makes the the women health ~~too~~ worse. Sara Rizvi in her book women, health & violence in Pakistan writes that traditional way of treatment should be avoided. ~~Only~~ The health workers present in villages <sup>should be</sup> trained so that the women donot face complication during pregnancy.

#### 4- WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

There are three Ls of women empowerment learning, labor and leadership. If women learn about their health issue and learn the leadership qualities she would address her issues and draw them toward solution. Although women make fifty percent of Pakistan's population but their literacy rate is below men literacy rate still.

#### 5- INVESTMENT IN WOMEN EDUCATION

The investment in women education is low in Pakistan. In a survey it is found that only 0.2 to 0.8 percent of GDP has been invested on women education in Pakistan while WHO benchmark is 6 percent of GDP. Although Pakistan has financial issues but if not 6 percent it should be at least two percent of GDP.

#### 6- INVOLVEMENT OF NGO IN WOMEN HEALTH ISSUES

Non-government organization can play a vital role in the improvement of women health in Pakistan. In Pakistan different NGOs, like AKRSP, RED-CRECENT and many others, provide their services in various fields. If government request them to arrange awareness session for women it would be helpful for all women. They also provide free health facilities which would again a fruitful action.

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## PROVIDING FOOD

In the poor Province of Pakistan, (Baluchistan) more than **63%** suffer due to lack of food. out of these ~~to~~ these percentage **36** percent women are under weight. Beside having financial issues if it focus little on those women, their health problem can be solved a bit.

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## POLICIE REGARDING WOME HEALTH

Government of Pakistan has no specific policy regarding women health. In past several policies were made but they could not be implement due to political instability. The first national women conference **1947** <sup>had</sup> made several policies ~~but~~ which never seen the light of implementation. The government of **90s** also made various programs ~~but~~ which become limited to paper only.

## CONCLUSION

In summation, Pakistani women have a miserable health condition due to various factors. These include lack of access to facilities, dearth of awareness, patriarchy and many other. Although, Pakistan has limited economy, still a few organized step could improve the women health in Pakistan. These measures include awareness session, avoiding traditional

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way of treatment, empowering women, women's education, providing food and many others. Having all facilities is an ideal case. ~~and~~ No nations in the world has provided women with all the standards of lives, yet ~~as~~ a well planned initiative can make a prosperous step towards women's empowerment.