

General Elections 2008

Policy Commitments of Political Parties

Health

Access to health services, public or private, is a basic human need. Statistics indicate that government measures have resulted in better health outcomes over the past years, but still we are lagging behind in key health indicators. An illustrative example is the Human Development Index, which ranks Pakistan 136th among 177 countries. Low public expenditure, poor health infrastructure and inadequate health staff-population ratios are among the major reasons for this state of affairs. Pakistan is among those countries, which have the lowest public expenditure in health sector. According to government's own figures, the total outlay for health sector turns out to be 0.57 % of GDP in 2006-07. Health facilities are insufficient to cater to the healthcare needs of the increasing population, even in strong presence of private health service providers. Currently, there are 4712 dispensaries, 5336 basic health units/sub-health centres (BHUs/SHCs), 560 rural health centres (RHCs), 924 hospitals, 906 maternal and child health centres (MCHs), and 288 TB centres in the country. The number of health professionals working in these facilities is also very low. For example, there is only one doctor for 1254 persons, one dentist for 20839 persons and one nurse for 2671 persons.

Some health indicators have improved over the last few years such as those related to immunization and infant mortality. However, no significant improvement has been achieved in respect of maternal health. About 30,000 women die each year due to complications of pregnancy, and about 25 percent of children are born with low birth weight due to maternal problems. Besides, rural women's health is generally poorest due to the lack of health facilities and skilled health providers. Irrational use of drugs and availability of spurious medicines are also causing serious health problems. These are some challenges we are facing in the health sector. Policymakers in Pakistan need to take serious steps to address these challenges for improving the health conditions of the population.

The table provided below identifies some of the major challenges in health sector, policy actions needed to address these challenge, and commitment of political parties whether they will implement the policy actions, if voted to power, after forthcoming general elections.

	Challenge	Policy Actions Needed	Political Party's Response
1	Public expenditure on health services has been dismally low in Pakistan. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan 2006-07, the expenditure on health comes to 0.57 percent of GDP, whereas it was 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2001-01.	Will your political party increase the budgetary allocations for health from 0.57 % to at least 2% of GDP?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
2	Arbitrary increase in prices of medicines is a recurrent phenomenon. According to cautious estimates, about 50 percent population cannot afford medicines due to high prices set by the pharmaceutical companies. The levy of GST has further added to the cost of medicines.	Will your political party take, at least, the following steps to rationalize the prices of medicines: Increase the supply of subsidized medicines in public health facilities Reduce GST on medicines, at least, by 20 percent (or _____ percent)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
3	Markets are flooded with fake, spurious and counterfeit drugs.	Will your political party take steps to remove fake and spurious drugs from the market and prosecute the offenders?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
4	Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) is empowered to receive and process complaints, but it cannot take cognizance of medical negligence on its	Will your political party empower the PMDC to take cognizance of medical negligence on its own, by using any source	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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	own. Whereas, the victims do not find it worth to register complaint and enter into lengthy legal process. There is a need to empower PMDC to take notice of medical negligence on its own.	of information?	Other response: _____ _____ _____
5	The female mortality rate in Pakistan is 12 percent higher than for males. Each year, an estimated 400,000 infants and nearly 30,000 mothers die from pregnancy-related problems.	Will your political party ensure that maternal mortality rate is reduced up to 200 per 10, 000 live births, till 2011 as envisaged in the National Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) Program?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
6	There is high prevalence of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, diarrhoea, pneumonia and tetanus in the country. In total burden of diseases, the ratio of communicable diseases is 38.4% in Pakistan.	Will your government implement nation-wide campaigns of free vaccination and treatment of all communicable diseases?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
7	The infant mortality rate in Pakistan is 78 deaths per 1,000 live births. This rate is higher than world average of 52 infant deaths per 1,000 live births and Infant Mortality Rate of 57 in all less developed countries.	Will your political party take steps to reduce infant mortality rate to 52 (or _____) per 1000 live births?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____