

## Editorial

# Health Indicators of Pakistan – A Serious Concern

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Editor

Health indicators is of great importance for health policy makers. Some important health indicators like crude death rate (CDR), crude birth rate (CBR), and infant mortality rate (IMR) and total fertility rate (TFR) of Pakistan.

Covid-19 pandemic had tested the country's health infrastructure and identified needs for ore investment in the sector, especially to improve diagnostic facilities, disease surveillance, prevention and spread, training of health personnel and their protection from pandemic, vaccine development, upgrading healthcare infrastructure, emergency rooms, intensive care units, isolation wards and public awareness.

Life expectancy increased from 66.9 years in 2017 to 67.3 years in 2019 but is still behind other countries. The infant mortality rate, maternal mortality and population growth rate have decreased in the last three years.

A comparative position of the regional countries in health indicators development shows abysmal picture as infant mortality rate (IMR), per 1,000 live births, in Pakistan is 55.7, in Afghanistan 46, in India 28, Bangladesh 25, China seven and in Sri Lanka six.

The under-five mortality rate shows that in Pakistan 69 deaths are reported in 1,000 children against 60 in Afghanistan, 34 in India, 30 in Bangladesh, 28 in Bhutan and seven each in China and Sri Lanka.

However, in terms of population growth, Pakistan is a bit better compared to Afghanistan. Pakistan has recorded 1.9% growth rate compared to 2.3% in Afghanistan, 1% each India and Bangladesh, 0.6% in Sri Lanka and 0.4% in China.

The national health infrastructure comprises 1,282 hospitals, 5,472 Basic Health Units, 670 Rural Health Centres, 5,743 dispensaries, 752 maternity and child health centres and 412 TB centres while the total availability of beds in these health facilities are estimated at 133,707. There are 245,987 registered doctors, 27,360 registered dentists and 116,659 registered nurses in these facilities together.

Health expenditures have increased gradually since 2011-12 - by 14.3% - from Rs. 421.8 billion in 2018-19 to Rs.482.3 billion in 2019-20. Public sector expenditure on health was estimated at 1.2% of the GDP in 2019-20 compared to 1.1% in 2018-19.

In almost every country, healthcare delivery has been disrupted by the mistaken initial assumption that health systems would quickly win the fight against Covid-19.

"Now, it is clear that the pandemic will persist much longer than anticipated. It was estimated that at least half of the world's 7.8 billion people lacked access to essential health services. But now Covid-19 has increased these numbers and eroded access to health-care. The infected cases are rapidly rising in India compared to other countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, which have seen a less devastating impact from the virus.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have so far coped reasonably well with the pandemic compared to other regional countries. Iran is the worst in the region as having the second highest fatality rate of 2.7% after Afghanistan and 96 deaths per 100,000 of population," it stated.

It added that in Pakistan 3% people have been vaccinated compared to 15% in India, 9% in Sri Lanka and 6% in Bangladesh.

The survey claimed that according to the estimates of National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS), the population of Pakistan is 215.25 million with a growth rate of 1.9% in 2020 and population density of 270 per square km.

Population falling in the age group of 15-59 years is 59% whereas 27% are between 15 and 29 years. This youth bulge can translate into economic gains only if the youth have skills consistent with the requirements of a modern economy.

Pakistan has improved health indicators over the last three years, as exhibited in the regional comparison of health indicators shown in the Table below:

Country	Life expectancy at birth, total (years)			Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)			Maternal Mortality Rate (Per 100,000)			Under 5 Mortality Rate (Per 1,000)			Population growth (annual %)		
	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Pakistan	66.8	66.9	67.1	60.5	58.8	57.2	154.0	143.0	140.0	73.8	71.5	69.3	2.1	2.1	2.1
India	68.9	69.2	69.4	33.2	31.5	29.9	158.0	150.0	145.0	41.1	38.7	36.6	1.1	1.1	1.0
Bangladesh	71.8	72.1	72.3	28.0	26.5	25.1	200.0	186.0	173.0	33.9	31.9	30.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Sri Lanka	76.5	76.6	76.8	7.0	6.7	6.4	36.0	36.0	36.0	8.2	7.8	7.4	1.1	1.1	1.0
Nepal	69.8	70.2	70.5	28.7	27.6	26.7	236.0	200.0	186.0	34.8	33.4	32.2	0.9	1.3	1.7
Bhutan	70.8	71.1	71.5	26.5	25.6	24.8	203.0	193.0	183.0	32.0	30.8	29.7	1.2	1.2	1.2
China	76.2	76.5	76.7	8.5	7.9	7.4	30.0	29.0	29.0	9.9	9.2	8.6	0.5	0.6	0.5
Indonesia	71.0	71.3	71.5	22.6	21.9	21.1	192.0	184.0	177.0	26.9	25.9	25.0	1.2	1.2	1.1
Malaysia	75.6	75.8	76.0	6.8	6.7	6.7	30.0	29.0	29.0	8.0	7.9	7.8	1.4	1.4	1.4
Philippines	70.8	71.0	71.1	23.4	22.9	22.5	127.0	124.0	121.0	29.7	29.1	28.4	1.5	1.4	1.4
Thailand	76.4	76.7	76.9	8.6	8.2	7.8	38.0	37.0	37.0	10.0	9.5	9.1	0.4	0.3	0.3

Note: Health-related data is given in a calendar year

Source: World Bank Development Indicators (Year 2020)