

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



World Health Organization

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Dr. Luo Dapeng

Resident Representative in Pakistan
World Health Organization (WHO)

ICMA: How does WHO contribute to building human and social capital in Pakistan's healthcare system?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: World Health Organization (WHO) contributes to building human and social capital in Pakistan's healthcare system. By promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC), WHO ensures that quality and affordable healthcare is accessible to all, which is essential for maintaining good health and enhancing personal productivity. This focus on health is linked with economic prosperity, as WHO recognizes that good health, nutrition, and education lay the foundation for sustainable economic growth.

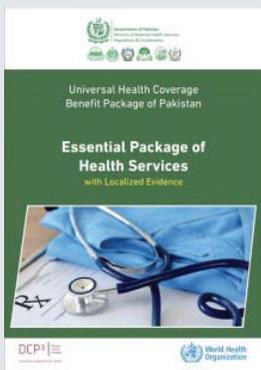
WHO enhances skills and capabilities within the healthcare workforce through training and education, promoting a skilled pool of service providers that can deliver high-quality services. Moreover, WHO strengthens the overall health system by improving leadership and governance, infrastructure, supply chains, service delivery, health information system and health financing. Furthermore, by encouraging community engagement and cooperation, WHO strengthens social capital, ensuring equitable access to health resources. Its emphasis on addressing social determinants of health, creates a more inclusive society where all individuals can prevent illness and maintain

good health. Ultimately, WHO's investment in public health initiatives builds healthier communities, contributing to a resilient and prosperous nation, where health is indeed a key component of wealth.



ICMA: What progress has been made towards achieving Universal Health Coverage in Pakistan?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: Pakistan has made significant progress in advancing Universal Health Coverage (UHC) since signing the UHC 2030 Global Compact in 2018. The country's UHC Index has increased from 40 to 52.7, and the government aims to reach 65 by 2030. Pakistan became the first country to develop a UHC benefit package in 2020 and completed its provincial localization in 2021-2022.



The government notified 12 UHC prioritized districts for phased implementation, with WHO supporting collection of baseline data through Service Availability and Readiness Assessment - (SARA) and mapping of health facilities in all the 12 priority districts and piloting a PHC Oriented Model of Care in two districts. To operationalize the

implementation UHC benefit package, or the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS), a National Health Support Programme (NHSP) was institutionalized with support from the World Bank, Global Financing Facility (GFF), GAVI, the Global Fund (GFTAM), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The implementation of the NHSP (2022–2026) has faced challenges, particularly in accessing Program-for-Results (PforR) funds. Currently, the program is undergoing a midterm review in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab - at federal level, and Sindh. The existing implementation modalities may require redesigning to ensure smooth delivery of the UHC benefit package at the district level utilising the available funding.

To achieve UHC by 2030, the health sector must adopt a more proactive approach, collaborating with provinces, federating areas, and districts to enhance access to essential health services. This includes strengthening of PHC services to ensure availability and accessibility of health services closer to the people.

ICMA: Can you share examples of how WHO supports health services in underserved communities?



Dr. Luo Dapeng: WHO is committed to a global vision of "Health for All" leaving No one behind. Recognizing the need for improved healthcare access and equity in underserved communities in Pakistan, WHO is working in close collaboration with Federal and Provincial authorities to strengthen provision of health

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services at PHC level with access to timely referral when necessary. Specific initiatives include the establishment of mobile health clinics, training for local healthcare providers, and the development of disease surveillance systems. These efforts aim to reduce health disparities and increase access to quality care, particularly during times of public health crises.

Through capacity-building programs, WHO is also enhancing the capabilities of local health systems, ensuring timely interventions and care for vulnerable populations. The ultimate goal is to bridge health disparities and guarantee access to care for all individuals, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic status.

ICMA: How does WHO help protect Pakistan from health emergencies like pandemics?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: WHO provides technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan to support emergency and pandemic preparedness and response efforts. This assistance includes the provision of technical guidelines, development of emergency preparedness and response plans, coordination of partners at federal and provincial levels and the support for strengthening disease monitoring and laboratory diagnostics.

WHO also supports the capacity building of health emergency response, conducts health risk assessments and manages information to facilitate effective preparedness and response.





WHO also provides operational, logistical & technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan for emergency/pandemic preparedness, ensuring a timely and effective health emergency response in the country. WHO facilitates periodic Joint External Evaluations (JEE) as part of the International Health Regulations (IHR) monitoring and evaluation framework. Pakistan's most recent JEE was conducted in 2023, followed by the development of National Action Plans for Health Security (NAPHS).

ICMA: What role does WHO play in promoting overall well-being and healthy lifestyles in Pakistan?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: WHO plays a key role in promoting well-being and healthy lifestyles in Pakistan through various initiatives focused on policy support, capacity building, and aligning national health strategies with global guidance. WHO collaborates with national bodies to develop frameworks, raise awareness, and improve overall health. In its support to the Government of Pakistan, WHO has helped implement impactful tobacco control measures such as banning smoking areas in enclosed public spaces, prohibiting the sale of loose cigarettes, and increasing tobacco taxes. WHO also assists the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in developing a track and trace system for tobacco products. These initiatives seek to decrease the accessibility and affordability of tobacco, enabling Pakistan to achieve a 30% reduction in tobacco consumption by 2025.

WHO is also working on measures to reduce Trans-Fatty Acids (TFAs) in foods and to introduce taxation on sugary beverages. Recognizing the importance of mental health to overall well-being, WHO has built the capacity of lady health workers to provide mental health and psychosocial support at the community level. Additionally, several telemedicine centres have been established to offer specialized mental health and psychosocial services to the population.

ICMA: How does WHO collaborate with other UN agencies and relevant Pakistani organizations to improve health outcomes in Pakistan?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: Since the establishment of the WHO country office in Pakistan, in 1960, WHO has a long-standing relationship with the Government of Pakistan. Over the years, WHO has continued to provide



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technical support to strengthen health services, address public health concerns, and promote health research in the country ultimately aiming at achieving Universal Health Coverage.

WHO is leading SDG-3 Global Action Plan - (GAP) for healthy lives and wellbeing implementation in Pakistan together with other 7 partner agencies aimed at streamlining efforts to better support the country to accelerate progress on SDG 3 and health related goals through effective collaboration. WHO also lead the health sub output for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) a document that guides UN support to the government of Pakistan.

ICMA: What are WHO's key goals for improving health services in Pakistan over the next few years?

Dr. Luo Dapeng: In the coming years, under the 14th Global Programme of Work (GPW 14), WHO's key goals for improving health services in Pakistan include promoting, providing, and protecting the health and well-being of all people in the country. This will involve responding to climate change, addressing the determinants and root causes of illness, advancing Primary Healthcare- (PHC) and essential health system capacities, improving health service coverage and financial protection, and enhancing prevention, mitigation, and preparedness for health risks. Additionally, WHO aims to ensure effective detection and sustained response to all health emergencies.



The Editorial Board thanks Dr. Luo Dapeng, Resident Representative in Pakistan, World Health Organization (WHO) for sparing from his precious time to give exclusive interview for Chartered Management Accountant Journal.