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Implemented by:



Reproductive health – Pakistan

Not without the mothers-in-law

The birth rate is high, as is the mortality rate for mothers and children. As a means to change this, the Reproductive Health programme supported by KfW Development Bank in the northern provinces of Pakistan is focusing on developing basic health-care institutions, raising awareness and prevention. One group amongst others has proved to be instrumental for the success of the programme: mothers-in-law.

Since the middle of the 1990s, the NGO has been working very successfully on building up a services network comprising doctors, midwives and pharmacists and which, amongst other things, offers high-quality family planning products.

The programme is now focusing on the northern provinces by the border with Afghanistan. Some 22 million people live in this area – three million of whom are refugees from Afghanistan, who fled to Pakistan to escape the military conflict in their country.

Context

Pakistan currently has approximately 180 million people. In 25 to 30 years' time it will likely be twice as many. Yet the public health-care system is already unable to cope with the current size of population. There is a lack of experts and accessible health-care institutions – particularly for poorer people in rural regions.

Expectant mothers find themselves in a particularly delicate position. Four out of five give birth at home – without the help of qualified professionals. In the event of complications, the nearest hospital is often too far away. This results in an astonishingly high mortality rate for mothers and infants given Pakistan's level of development. Yet the birth rate is also distinctly high at 2.4% because there is not any relevant supply to meet the demand for contraceptives.

This is why KfW Development Bank is promoting a "Reproductive Health" programme on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that purposefully targets the poorer groups in the population. The programme is being implemented by the Pakistani non-governmental organisation (NGO) "Greenstar/Social Marketing Pakistan".

Project name	Rural family planning, reproductive health
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country/region	Pakistan
Lead executing agency	Greenstar / Social Marketing Pakistan





Consultation in a "Greenstar" clinic. The network of these small private health facilities has steadily grown. (Source: Greenstar)

Project approach

KfW Development Bank is supporting the ongoing programme with an FC grant of EUR 14.5 million, which is earmarked to continue expanding the network of small, private health-care units in rural areas. Furthermore, it will also finance a health-care centre in the Afghan refugee camp in Islamabad. The money can be used to buy obstetrics sets, nutritional supplements and obviously contraceptives, to finance advertising and awareness campaigns as well as to commission training, target group analyses and studies.

Qualified midwives support girls and women in the small health-care centres. Here they receive iron preparations for themselves and their children as nutritional supplements as well as water purification tablets to prevent diarrhoea and other illnesses. Almost all of these clinics are run by women who have received special training, and being local, they enjoy the trust of the rural population. Greenstar regularly recognises the performances of particularly successful clinic managers.

Once a month the health centres also hold a consultation day, when men and women can obtain free information about family planning and be advised about mother-child care. Mothers-in-law have proven to be crucial for the success of rural family planning. They are the main influencing factor when it comes to convincing their sons and daughters-in-law about family planning because it is the mothers-in-law that accompany their sons' wives to the clinics for advice and information about pre-natal and post-natal care. This means access to the mothers-in-law is crucial for tackling the issue of family planning within the son's family.

Impact

More than 8,000 small clinics – health-care unit with one or two treatment rooms and a consultation room – have been constructed by the local partner Greenstar throughout the country in the last two decades. This has already brought about a substantial improvement in rural health care, and Greenstar is looking to expand further. During the programme the plan is to open at least another 450 health-care units.

The supply of contraceptives has also risen thanks to Greenstar's work. Greenstar currently commands a market share of 30% based on sales. Yet to really achieve the development policy objective – improve the health of women and children particularly in rural areas – there must still be a significant increase in demand for reproductive health products and services as well as in the sales figures for contraceptives. The outlook is encouraging. So far, Greenstar has not just met its goals, it has always exceeded them.



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