

WHAT WOMEN WANT!

*Demands for Quality
Reproductive and Maternal
Healthcare from Women and Girls*



**LISTEN AND ACT ON THE DEMANDS OF
PAKISTAN'S WOMEN AND GIRLS!**



What Women Want

Demands for Quality Healthcare from Pakistan's Women & Girls

Approximately 300,000 women and girls die during pregnancy and childbirth every year. In Pakistan, where the maternal mortality rate stands at 140 per 100,000 live births (WHO 2017), changing this picture begins with women and girls. When women and girls are involved in identifying the barriers and solutions to healthcare, progress accelerates. As quality has a huge impact on whether a woman or girl will seek care, the heart of the What Women Want campaign is about understanding quality from women's and girls' perspectives.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, 359 partners asked nearly 1.2 million women and adolescent girls in 114 countries ***what is your top request for your maternal and reproductive healthcare?*** In Pakistan, approximately 5,000 community health volunteers, led by White Ribbon Alliance Pakistan and the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), mobilized demands from nearly 250,000 women and girls in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and the provinces of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

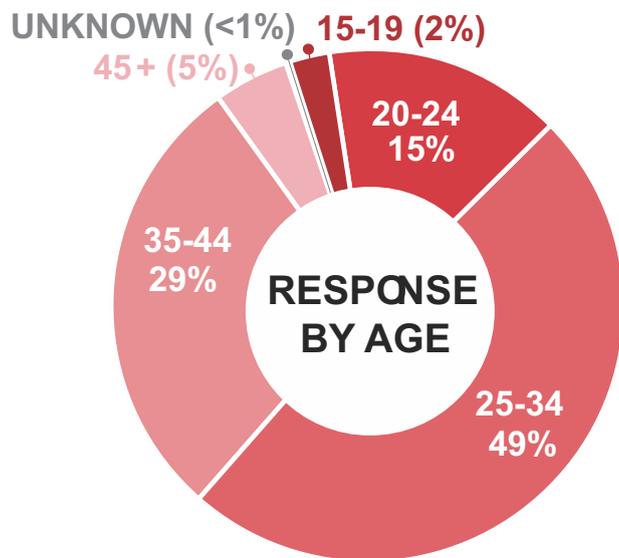
The What Women Want campaign is unique in that it asked women and girls in Pakistan to set the agenda, as opposed to beginning with a premise of what is important or asking them to decide among a set of options. Women's answers were often unexpected, challenging assumptions and shining new light on the realities of their daily lives.

What Women Want also provided an opportunity for women to speak out about experiences which have often remained hidden, taboo or unacknowledged. Many have taken risks to speak out, but the risks of remaining silent were considered greater. Many of these brave women found encouragement from the words of others, validating and articulating their own experiences. These represent the voices and concerns of those often lost, but which are vital to providing services which women want and use.

A resounding call for better quality health services as defined by women and girls, this brief provides the top ten demands of those who participated in the What Women Want campaign from Pakistan. If the hope and expectation is for women and girls to visit health centres, adhere to recommended advice, and collectively pursue better health outcomes, it follows their agenda must become everyone's agenda.

**Women and girls
have spoken,
now it's time to listen.**

244,752 DEMANDS



To learn more about the methodology and analysis of these results, visit: whiteribbonalliance.org/whatwomenwant to download the complete summary report.

TOP TEN DEMANDS

1. Increased, fully functional and closer health facilities*
2. Antenatal information, personnel, services and supplies
 - Availability of ultrasound machines and services**
 - Provision of iron supplements during pregnancy
3. Water, sanitation, and hygiene
 - Availability of clean drinking water
 - Clean toilets in health facilities
4. Food and nutrition information, personnel, services and supplies
5. Medicines and supplies
 - Availability of quality drugs
 - Increased medical equipment and tools
6. Labor and delivery information, personnel, services and supplies
7. Increased, qualified, closer and better supported female providers
8. Transportation infrastructure
9. Family planning information, personnel, services and supplies
 - Availability and access to modern family planning methods
10. Free and affordable services and supplies

* Women's demands during What Women Want often went well beyond the campaign's focus on maternal and reproductive healthcare: demand for improved health services for children and education and schools made up a significant portion of top 10 responses.

** Represent top sub-categories of demands.

“I met with young girls, teenagers and women from all walks of life. Some were pessimistic, others were optimistic; all were victims of different levels of abuse.

However, What Women Want gave women a platform to speak their hearts out and a way to make our voices heard by government.

It gave wings to the women of Pakistan.”

- TALHA RASHEED



TALHA RASHEED

MOBILIZED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RESPONSES

Talha, 24, a journalist with Fire Communications in Karachi, was so moved by the “heart wrenching stories of strong women in my country” which were emerging from the What Women Want campaign, that she persuaded her organization to become an official partner.

“It has been an amazing journey,” she says. “It taught me about the hardships women face. I learned you get tired, so you rest—but above all you don’t quit.” She empathized with the humiliation felt by women seeking care but who were treated as sex objects. “Hospitals are places where you expect to receive respectful treatment,” she says, “where you think that angels will listen to your worries irrespective of your gender. But you can encounter wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

She is referring to a renowned Rawalpindi health facility where women told her the staff are “sex oriented not work oriented.” Raffia, aged 25, said she was touched inappropriately on the chest by staff during an X ray. “The tears came out of my eyes as I heard that,” says Talha, “because I am 24-years old and my body is my business. No one can touch me without my consent.”

“Privacy and respect are the words which echoed throughout the campaign in Pakistan,” says Talha. “In this country, we don’t provide women with even basic care. Their demands are for government action to improve services, which is only reasonable.” Shakeila, aged 30, told her “I am going to give birth to a new human, I want a bed to myself.”

Talha believes women are often held back because they don’t know their rights.

“About 71% of women are not getting formal education,” she says, “and more than half of men think that women should get their permission before going to school or university.” Some women doubted the campaign could change anything; to them Talha replied that “small drops make an ocean.”



Zarina and Rehnaz are among the many who braved opposition in Pakistan to make demands and help gather thousands of demands from other women.

The Rural Support Program Network's (RSPN) huge and trusted network of community resource persons brought the What Women Want campaign into tens of thousands of homes, sitting with neighbors, sisters, cousins and friends, sharing intimate conversations about marriage, pregnancy and childbirth.

Zarina, 40, lives in Sindh Province, which she describes as “very conservative.” In some communities, women are not allowed to talk to men outside of their family. When she became a community mobilizer, she was attacked for informing women in nearby villages about both their own and their children’s rights. “I had to fight our family, tribe and community. My in-laws beat me and threatened my husband.” But she persisted: “I am serving my community, especially the women. The change has been slow but with each life that I empower I am fulfilling the purpose of my life.”

“I was fourteen when I got married,” says Rehnaz, from Mardan district. The birth of her second child was a turning point; her husband refused to get help and she delivered on the floor with her toddler son crying beside her. She decided to act. “I sold my gold earrings and bought a buffalo. I can now earn my children a meal by selling the milk.”

When pregnant for the third time, she met the local community resource person at a health camp. She started going for antenatal check-ups and later became a champion for What Women Want “I was scared at first, but I am determined to stand up for my children and myself. No girl should be married at an early age. No child should have to go through what I did. I will fight for the right of my daughters to marry only when they are of the right age.”

Many of the women in the rural areas were illiterate so they discussed their personal experiences with Zarina, Rehnaz, and other community resource persons who recorded their words, then made their thumbprints on paper. Each one of these statements, was hard won and unique. The statements were carefully collected, collated and counted in RSPN’s district offices. This precious cargo was conveyed to the head RSPN office in Islamabad like ballot boxes in an election.

When healthcare is informed by the women and girls who use it, it's better healthcare.

LISTEN **ACT**

Listening to women is a radical act.

But acting on what we hear is revolutionary.



Tell us how you are listening and acting on women's and girls' demands:
whiteribbonalliance.org/whatwomenwant

Research & Development
FORUM for 
Safe Motherhood Private Limited



**WHAT
WOMEN
WANT!**

DEMANDS FOR QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

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