

Since then, we have made enormous strides in fulfilling the ICPD agenda. But millions are still denied their health and rights every day – something that can and must end.



## How can we create a more equitable future?

- > **Improve access to affordable, quality maternal health services** and increase the number of female physicians, which can yield remarkable gains: In Pakistan the Births attended by skilled health personnel between 2004 and 2022 has increased to 68 % .
- > **Increase midwife-delivered interventions**, which could avert 41 per cent of maternal deaths, 39 per cent of neonatal deaths and 26 per cent of stillbirths worldwide.
- > **Advance women's equality**, which could double the contribution of women to global GDP growth, and could add \$12 trillion to global GDP over the course of 10 years.
- > **Recognize community leadership and partnership as essential** which could double the contribution of women to global GDP growth, and could add \$12 trillion to global GDP over the course of 10 years.

The achievements since 1994 have been many but we must go further. Time and again, the world has seen that efforts to eliminate poor health outcomes and end preventable maternal death are simply not enough to overcome the barriers posed by inequality, discrimination, bias and stigma. Yet this fact offers us perhaps the best chance at achieving our agreed goals – those from both the ICPD and Agenda 2030 – to realize the rights and choices of all people. We know what is needed: Vigilance and a renewed commitment to action, not pessimism. We are capable of creating a future that acknowledges the dignity and value of every individual, one which recognizes that assuring the rights of all people means securing the rights of each person. After all, the fabric of humanity is vast and beautiful, but it is only as strong as its most fragile thread.



Ensuring rights and choices for all

[www.unfpa.org/swp2024](http://www.unfpa.org/swp2024)



## INTERWOVEN LIVES, THREADS OF HOPE

Ending inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights



Thirty years ago, the world came together at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and put people's sexual and reproductive health and rights at the heart of global development.



## Celebrating Progress

In 1994, 179 governments adopted the ICPD Programme of Action, thereby agreeing to uphold the sexual and reproductive rights of all people. This groundbreaking consensus affirmed that inclusive, sustainable development is not possible without prioritizing the individual autonomy of women and girls.

In Pakistan Laws and regulations that guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education are at a high of 69 % (2022).

## Who has been left behind?

*In every 50 minutes, one mother dies because of pregnancy related issue in Pakistan.*

Despite the remarkable gains witnessed over the past three decades, progress on issues such as bodily autonomy and reducing maternal death has slowed – and in some places even reversed. Millions have been excluded from progress, in part due to the multiple, compounding forms of marginalization and discrimination they confront daily.

Each year, Pakistan experiences 10,200 maternal deaths. The government continues its efforts to make maternal healthcare accessible to all; however, the Universal health coverage (UHC) service coverage index remains dishearteningly low at only 21% in Pakistan.



## What have we achieved?

- > Between 2000 and 2020, global maternal mortality declined by 34 per cent.
- > Births among girls aged 15 to 19 have fallen by around a third since 2000.
- > From 2007 to 2022, the number of women making decisions on contraceptive use has hit a high of 85%.
- > An historic 162 countries have passed laws against domestic violence.
- > In Pakistan, access to skilled health personnel present at birth has increased to 68 %

## What have we achieved?

- > In 68 countries, a quarter of women still cannot make their own health-care decisions.
- > In Pakistan, less than 1 in 3 women can make decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health.
- > Research from 25 countries shows that barriers to health care have fallen more quickly for women of higher socio-economic status and for those belonging to ethnic groups that were already better off.
- > Pakistan has over 50% of its population under the age of 19, and the population is projected to double in next 36 years.
- > Every 50 minutes, one mother dies because of pregnancy related issues in Pakistan.
- > Between 2016 and 2020, the global annual reduction in maternal death was effectively zero.
- > Women and girls with disabilities are up to 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence, including sexual violence.



## Weaving the path forward

Yet a new vision for the world is gaining momentum, one in which strengthening the rights and welfare of individuals reinforces those of the collective, and vice versa. From climate change to demographic shifts to the digital revolution, the world's greatest concerns can only be addressed through collective action for the benefit of all.

To ensure that the next 30 years of progress includes everyone, we must pivot towards providing comprehensive, universal and inclusive sexual and reproductive health care and guaranteeing rights for all.

The recent 2023 Population Census reveals a population of 241.5 million, growing at a rate of 2.5 percent. This data serves as a reminder of the task ahead, but it also presents us with an opportunity. With over 60 percent of Pakistan's population below the age of 30 years, we have the potential to harness the demographic dividend through strategic investments in human capital.

To achieve these goals, Pakistan has outlined a National Action Plan on Population (2019-24), setting impact-level targets for 2025 and 2030. Pakistan is committed to reaching a contraceptive prevalence rate of 50 percent by 2025 and 60 percent by 2030 while concurrently reducing maternal mortality.

Solidarity works. We are at a pivotal point in history, a moment that requires a global reckoning to overhaul the structures and systems that continue to hold millions back from realizing their full potential.

We know that investments in gender equality and in sexual and reproductive health and rights are essential to securing a more just future. And not only that – these investments would also lead to significant economic returns. The UNFPA's efforts for Continued policy dialogue have resulted in an overall 82% increase in Family Planning expenditure since 2018. Pakistan has also witnessed a remarkable increase in facility-based deliveries, rising from 37 percent to 71 percent during the same period. But the world is not sufficiently investing in empowering women or saving their lives – which suggest a shortfall of will rather than of ideas or resources.

This can be linked to the world's legacy of gender inequality, racial discrimination and misinformation, all which remain stubbornly embedded in health systems. Just look at the field of midwifery: Its largely female workforce remains severely underpaid and undermined worldwide, despite the fact that substantially increasing coverage of midwife-delivered interventions could avert 41 per cent of maternal deaths especially in the current climate crisis.