

WHY PAKISTAN NEEDS A NATIONAL ONE HEALTH POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

During recent years, the problem of animal to animal and animal to human outbreaks of the diseases has proven that human health cannot be insured without the focus on animal health and the environment. Some of the serious threats to the health of the population in Pakistan include antimicrobial resistance (AMR), zoonotic diseases, and environmental issues. Over 70 % of the new human infections are animal-derived, and this means that threats to health in a particular field can easily transfer to other fields. The huge population of Pakistan, is dependent on the livestock system by rural communities and frequent occurrence of natural disasters like floods and droughts make it vulnerable. There is the need to have integrated One Health solutions to

address the burden of zoonotic diseases and enhance health security (1, 2).

In Pakistan, human, animal, and environmental health sectors are experiencing a lot of difficulty because of lack of coordination, effective communication, and resources. Failure to adopt a multidisciplinary "One Health" approach hinders successful zoonotic disease management and the implementation of long-term, beneficial health solutions (3). This disjointed approach prevents swiftness of identifying outbreaks and slows down the response efforts.

There are growing number of animal-related health risks in Pakistan, such as brucellosis, rabies, avian flu, and Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever. Climate change, urbanization, and large-

scale livestock farming are among the factors that contribute to the trend (1). Although initiatives such as the One Health Units have been initiated through international assistance, but lack of a national framework is yet to be established to assure sector-wide coordination and sustainability. National policy would give roles, responsibilities and budget allocations to make sure that preventative measures are put into focus. This policy would enhance staff training, surveillance systems and data exchange across sectors. Current programs, including the National Action Plan on Health Security by Pakistan, mention One Health but not cross-sectoral collaboration (4). Such kinds of policy would provide standardized guidelines on disease surveillance and early warning, which would reduce cost and enhance the outcomes of the population health.

Other issues such as floods, droughts and pollution are also environmental challenges and they also highlight the importance of integrated approaches. The coordinated action of human, animal, and environmental health sectors is necessary to prevent the spread of diseases by water, food, or vectors. Evidence from Pakistan and other countries shows that One Health strategies increase the preparedness to outbreaks of zoonotic threats and AMR (3).

Implementation will require political commitment, sufficient funding, and training of professionals. The concept of One Health is still not fully understood by many health and veterinary professionals (3). Collaboration should be enhanced by training programs, workshops and joint meetings, and community awareness campaigns should be used to clarify how animal and environmental health affects human well-being. This would result in collective accountability to the community on health and safety over time.

Pakistan stands at the edge and needs to either persist with the disjointed health systems or implement a holistic One Health policy. The integration of human, animal, and environmental health, surveillance enhancement, and enhanced response to AMR and zoonotic diseases would be established through a national policy. Future measures should involve the formulation of a

National One Health Act, a One Health Secretariat as well as incorporation of One Health education in medical, veterinary, and environmental science programs. The steps will assist Pakistan in stepping out of the reaction phase to prevent problems, rather than reacting to them, and the step out of working individually to working collaboratively. A properly designed policy will protect human health, animal health and ecosystems, and promote health security across the world.

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