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Research Article

### CHALLENGES FOR THE OUT REACH HEALTH WORKERS IN PROVIDING HEALTHCARE SERVICES AT DISTRICT SHERANI

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**Abstract:**

**Background:** Essential healthcare was made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community by the means acceptable to them through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country could afford. For achieving the set goals of the Primary Health Care (PHC) components the adequate availability of the required well motivated, properly trained and skilled health workforce was essential. It has recently been reported that World Health Organization (WHO) has called for a revival of Primary Health Care [2]. A number of authors have emphasized over quality improvement and recommend the devising strategies to improve training and education of the health professionals. It was suggested by them that primary health care workers should be discussed at the policy level and must be considered on priority level.

**Methods:** A qualitative Study was conducted. The phenomenological approach was used. Twelve in-depth interviews and six focus group discussions were conducted. Detailed feedback from the outreach health workers was obtained, analyzed and the result was interpreted.

**Results:** Most of the health workers don't have any issue regarding pay and other allowances. The main issues for the health workers are security threats. Most of the staff is not working according to their job description due to less number of workers in District Sherani. The supply of medicines in the outreach area is in demand and is not delivered timely. However, supply of vaccines is always timely and with maintaining the cold chain. The supervision of Senior Health Managers is Supportive and Monitoring of Administration is also helpful.

**Conclusion:** From all the above study, it can be concluded that outreach health workers are an integral part of human resource for health, which is ultimately a basic building block of a health system. No health system can be successful without the proper functioning of these outreach health workers.

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## INTRODUCTION:

According to WHO the Primary Health Care (PHC) is "Essential healthcare made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community by means acceptable to them, through their full participation, and at a cost that the community and country can afford" and it has been recommended to meet the challenges of a changing world as asset of health services that can improve the primary health care system [1]. A number of components fall under the domain of Primary Health Care. Health workers (HWs) are an important and core components of Primary Health Care. These HWs are bridges between the community and the health system. In addition to basic clinical skills, there should be appropriate knowledge and interpersonal communication skills and expertise, supervision and supplies are the key work of CHWs [3, 5].

The HWs on their part act as a bridge between community and health system. They can effectively enable the people to improve their health and they can help with planning strategies to get the results. HWs should be sensitive culturally, in order to accomplish these effectively, and there is a need to have full community participation.

The Lady Health Workers (LHWs) of Ministry of Health Pakistan are excellent examples of Out Reach Health Workers (ORHWs); this is one of the successful large-scale community programs in Pakistan, which has gained a lot of success and had played their part in improving the Maternal and Child Health indicators [6]. Various evaluations have been made that enumerates the successes of this program and it also highlights the areas to ensure the improvement in the quality of health services provided [7, 8].

A number of authors have emphasized over quality improvement, recommend the devising strategies to improve training and education of the health professionals. It was suggested by them that primary health care workers should be discussed at the policy level and it must be considered on priority levels [9, 10]. However, regarding health worker communication capacity, awareness, education and satisfaction levels only a few studies are known from Pakistan which has been done to seek the Health workers' own perceptions.

Since the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, many efforts have been made to improve access to healthcare (HC). It demonstrated that Health Care improvements are required to achieve universal health coverage. Multiple countries have made coordination which has been made for HC program improvement. However, there is still an enduring challenge to serve vulnerable and poor community around the world.

The international community has adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which provides the basis for strengthening of the international HC system by a new generation of investments. It also focuses on different methods of delivering care to most poor and vulnerable populations around the world. At country level many steps have been taken to create pressure towards meeting the MDGs. In this regard health worker are the key component of health promotion which is the highest level of health, and especially the community health workers (i-e) outreach health workers. All over the world the countries which are attaining their MDGs timely have attained these due to their community health workers and the primary health system based on community health workers and community participation.

## Rationale

Health workers have a vital role between health systems and community, and most of the countries have attained the MDGs by the help of these health workers. In Pakistan the primary health component based on these health workers and our country is far behind attaining MDGs due to the lack of monitoring and evaluation of the problems faced by outreach health workers in remote areas.

So the rationale of my study was to evaluate the outreach health worker system from the viewpoint of outreach health workers at district Sherani and explore the problems faced by the Out Reach Health Workers in providing health care services.

## METHODOLOGY:

This qualitative study was conducted in District Sherani, Baluchistan. The Study was completed in three months (April 2015-June 2015). The phenomenological approach was used. Twelve in-depth interviews and six focus group discussions were conducted. Non-Probability Purposive sampling technique was used to gather the data from the target population. The study population is Out Reach Health Workers working in District Sherani. Every staff related to Out Reach Health Services (Vaccinators, LHWs, LHV, LHSs, and UCMOs) in the District Health System are included in the study and Facility based staff (MT, FMT, Lab attendant and technician, N/O) and the staff which was absent at the time of the survey are excluded from the study.

## DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS METHOD

Unstructured /open ended Questionnaire was used. Data was collected from the Out Reach Health Services Providers. All 12 IDI and 6 FGD recorded and then transcribed. The data were analyzed manually, no software was used. The content analysis method was applied to the data of all IDI's and FGD's. The transcripts were read and relevant

parts were underlined using color coding technique. Relevant parts were put together (i-e) common views of respondents were merged at one place. Later, the data were coded; the condensed meaning units were abstracted and labeled with codes then these codes were grouped into categories and later transformed into sub themes and main themes.

### RESULTS:

Research data was collected by conducting In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions. 12 IDIs and 6 FGDs were conducted in total. The IDIs were done individually from respective individuals at their place. For the FGDs, the site was selected keeping in mind the confidentiality and convenience of participants.

Following study findings and results came from my research. Problems faced by Outreach Health Workers.

### SALARIES/FINANCIAL AND NON FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

“Jab se tankhuwa computerize hui hai masala nahi hai, masala sirf polio key paison ka hay, woh waqat pae nahi milty hain”.

“Most ORHWs have same perceptions they said after computerized pay system they do not have any problem regarding pay and other allowances”.

“Mostly said that they have problems with the payment of polio campaigns. Even they are getting the payments of SIA of January in the month of June” “One UCMO said that they are getting Rs. 1400 per polio campaign in Baluchistan as compared to other provinces such as, Sindh, Punjab & KPK, it is Rs. 5800 per campaign.

### STAFF CAPACITY AND PLACEMENT

“Health key mulazim kum haen, magar har koi apne apne ghar ke paas duty karna chahta hai, jis ki wajah se masala hai”

“Most of the ORHWs have same perceptions and they said staff has the capacity to do work in the outreach areas, but most of the staff is not working according to job description due to the less no of workers in District”. “One ORHW said that pharmacists are working as UCMO and Malaria Supervisors and Technician are also working as Vaccinators”.

### SUPPLY OF VACCINE AND MEDICINE

“ Dawai waqat pe nahi milti hai maango to mil ta hai, polio vaccine har maheene aa jata hai” “Most of the ORHWs said that the supply of medicines at the outreach area is on demand and according to demand not delivered timely and supply of vaccines is always timely and supplied with maintaining cold chain”

### LOGISTICS

“Health ki tamam gaari khatam hai, hum log motorcycle se apne kaam karte haen”, “Most of the ORHWs said after the polio workers killing incident in District Zhob and prevailing law and order situation in the area. Now the Administrative Department provides us vehicles with Armed Security Guards but our district has no infrastructure most of the roads are kachha and the outreach area cannot be covered on vehicles, we use our motor bikes to cover the outreach areas.” “DHO said our office doesn't have its own Government vehicle. There is an EPI pick up off road and Family Planning Program Jeep off road.”

### SECURITY ISSUES

“Aaj kal Taliban ki wajah se hamare elaike me polio walo ke lie khatrah hai” “Most of the ORHWs said now a days security is a major issue in the area especially providing the Services to the outreach area”. “one of the ORHW said he is working from last 27 years in this district and works in all Union Councils, he had no issues regarding security before but from January 2015 they have security issues. Every ORHW feel a threat to his life while working in the outreach area even on the way to the Health Facilities.”

### MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

“Naya DHO aachaa hai, naya DC sahib bhi aachaa hai, aur polio me kaafi madad karta hai”. Most of the ORHWs said the supervision of senior health managers is supportive and monitoring from administration is also help full.

### DISCUSSION:

The aim of my study was to explore the challenges faced by ORHWs providing health care services in District Sherani. According to my study Most of the participants agreed that they are facing workloads but they all have the capability to deal with it. The other problems which are shared by the participants in this research were that they don't get their packages of campaign on time and they get motivation from their community and the tribal system values. Similar results are found in Rwanda's study on community health workers. [16] ORHWs in Pakistan play vital role in primary health care system .and they are help full in attaining the MDGs. ORHWs are highly valued by the tribal communities of Baluchistan, ORHWs of District Sherani, Baluchistan experience a range of financial issues regarding campaign's payments and capacity-building challenges that may limit their work. This study highlights the perception of ORHWs regarding challenges faced by them during working in remote areas.

In this study the participants discussed that there is a supportive monitoring and received feedback from

the senior which is very helpful for team work. This finding disagreed with the study conducting in New York published in MOUNT SINAI Journal Of Medicine 78:419–435, 2011 419 “Community Health Workers in Global Health: Scale and Scalability” According to this study Weak supervision and monitoring of quality may be a result of poor management of processes and inputs; high turnover and fragile integration with the health system can create a weakened system that cannot adequately incorporate proper management or clinical supervision.

The effectiveness of the Sherani ORHW system was in real threat due to the brutal murder of four workers in neighboring district Zhob. District Sherani is a district made in 2008 and has still no infrastructure. The Human resource of health is also less. The ORHWs working in the district now a days have a threat to their lives, but they are well trained. The supply of medicine is not on time and demand, but vaccine supply is on time and on demand.

The HWs as a bridge between community and health system, can empower the people to identify their needs and they can assist in planning strategies to get the desired results. ORHWs should be sensitive culturally, in order to accomplish these goals successfully, with strong ability to build a community support. However, regarding health worker communication capacity and education, few studies from Pakistan have been conducted to seek the Health workers' own perceptions.

The international community has adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which provides the basis for strengthening of the international HC system by a new generation of investments. It also focuses on different methods of delivering care to most poor and vulnerable populations around the world. At country level many steps have been taken to create pressure towards meeting the MDGs. In this regard health workers are the key components of health promotion and especially the community health workers (i-e) outreach health workers. All over the world the countries which are attaining their MDGs timely are due to their community health workers and the primary health system based on community health workers and community participation.

### CONCLUSION:

Outreach health workers are an integral part of human resource for health, which is ultimately a basic building block of a health system. No health system can be successful without the proper functioning of these outreach health workers. Many countries have utilized the outreach health worker system and have improved their health status. It must be noted that many health indicators of a

country are dependent on these outreach health workers, e.g. the vaccination coverage rate, so for achieving better health indicators, it is necessary to strengthen our outreach health worker system. Many Millennium Development Goals are also dependent on successful achievement of these health indicators. There was a need to explore the challenges faced by the outreach health workers. The challenges for outreach health workers included security issues, financial constraints, logistic supports, financial and non-financial incentives, staffing capacities and placement, supply of vaccines and medicines, district health information system, response of community, monitoring and supervision. It was found that the outreach health workers were fully committed to work, provided that their problems and issues are resolved by the concerned authorities and the Government.

### Recommendations

- The District Health Authorities of Sherani must strengthen their outreach health worker system.
- There is a need to consider the challenges faced by outreach health workers on priority basis.
- The District Health Authorities of Sherani must communicate and involve the Provincial Health Administration of Baluchistan in this matter of making both operational and strategic plans for addressing the challenges faced by outreach health workers.
- An expert technical team must be established, the responsibility of which will be to remain in close communication with the outreach health workers, it will not only address their challenges effectively but will also boost the confidence levels of the outreach health workers, that they are being looked after well by the Government.
- The concerned authorities must formulate practical implications and keep a monitoring mechanism of these implications for effectively addressing each and every challenge of outreach health workers.

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