



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SUCCESS STORY:
SPEAKING OUT FOR
AFFORDABLE
MEDICINES IN
PAKISTAN 1

CITIZEN REPORT CARD
STUDY - THATTA AND
SUJAWAL, SINDH 3

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-
CORRUPTION DAY 2020 4



TransparencyInternational.Pakistan



@TIPakistan1



ti_pakistan



transparency.org.pk

SPEAKING OUT FOR AFFORDABLE MEDICINES

People in Pakistan have challenged suspicious activity in the pharmaceutical sector that caused surges in drug prices – a critical win, with COVID-19 spreading fast.

As COVID-19 sweeps across the world, affordable medicine has never been more important. Yet in 2018, families in Pakistan needing to buy drugs had a shock. In pharmacies and health-care facilities, prices suddenly rocketed, making many medicines unaffordable for people in desperate need. And this was just the start.

The price rise proved to be the first in a series of staggering increases in the following years, hitting Pakistan’s poorest families and those needing regular medication the hardest.

Unable to afford drugs despite careful budgeting, many people were forced to go without essential treatments and pain relief. Even middle-income families were hit hard.

Patients with illnesses including diabetes, cardiac disease, hepatitis and cancer had no choice but to pay extortionate prices for medicines or risk endangering their lives.

Speaking out against price hikes

Life expectancy in Pakistan is 67 years old, six years lower than global life expectancy. There are many causes for this, but Pakistan’s high health-care costs are one. They are also a major financial burden on millions of households.

Many citizens believed that the sharp increases in medicine prices were happening under suspicious circumstances – officials had been arrested before for colluding with companies to illegally increase prices. Several contacted the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) run by TI Pakistan raising questions

about undue influence from pharmaceutical companies. Corruption has a strong grip on the health-care sector in Pakistan and neighbouring countries. According to the latest Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) – Asia, which surveyed more than 20,000 people in 17 nations about their day-to-day experiences of corruption, nearly one in five Asians who accesses basic services, such as health care, has to pay a bribe.

Investigating corrupt price-setting

Following up on the citizens' reports, the ALAC carried out detailed research into the official medicine pricing policy of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). It found that DRAP raised prices several times in 2018 and 2019, even revising the official pricing policy to permit the increases.

The price of all medicines was allowed to rise, while the price of almost 500 medicines rose up to 200 per cent - the highest increase in the past 40 years. Most households' incomes were not enough to afford these new prices - with harmful or fatal consequences for countless people.

There was no justified explanation for these increases - making it possible that the price surges were linked to the undue influence of the pharmaceutical sector on drug industry regulators. With no monitoring mechanism to control illegally high drug costs and penalise policy violations, citizens feared that drug companies could simply pay officials to raise the prices of medicines.

Challenging the authorities to protect patients

To ensure that Pakistan's regulators prioritised citizen's needs over those of the pharmaceutical industry, the ALAC wrote to DRAP and the health ministry, highlighting the need for affordable medicines and demanding punishment of any officials found to be responsible for irregular prices rises.

It also urged the Senate Standing Committee on Health to conduct a fact-finding inquiry into the pricing issue, and notified other key authorities, including the National Accountability Bureau and the Supreme Court. To help keep the issue at the forefront of public and government attention, Transparency International Pakistan gave an interview to Pakistan's leading news show.

Breaking the cycle of price manipulation

As a result, in May 2019, Pakistan's government finally imposed a 75 per cent cap on the increase in the



price of drugs. This reduced the cost of many much needed medicines - although others remain expensively high.

Transparency International Pakistan is working hard for full accountability in the country's health sector, encouraging people to speak out when they face lack of integrity in medical care - and providing safe, accessible support through the ALAC. This has a ripple effect. Each time someone tackles an individual case, they're also helping build a wider culture of trust and integrity.

Pakistanis will need to keep pushing for integrity - medicine prices recently went up again. Fortunately, the GCB shows that more than three out of five of people in Asia think ordinary citizens can help stop corruption. By speaking out against suspicious irregularities in drug pricing, Pakistan's people have already shown that they can create change to make a difference - ending corrupt schemes and securing fairer prices.



Fighting Corruption for Better Governance and Effective Citizens Services: Regional Challenges and Best Practices

On November 24, 2020, TI Pakistan representative participated in the regional webinar organized by Pak-US Alumni Network, US Consulate Karachi. The webinar aimed to discuss the best anti-corruption practices from the region and the need for effective citizen participation in the fight against corruption.

The participants shared the regional wisdom during the session and elaborated how they have been deploying regional approaches and success stories when it comes to fighting corruption. Besides exploring avenues for enhancing regional cooperation, the participants also elaborated the in-country practices and inculcation of digitization by defining SOPs for a corruption free society.

Citizen Report Card Study

From 25-28 November 2020, TI Pakistan conducted a Citizen Report Card Study focusing on the health sector in context of COVID-19. The participatory social audit tool, Citizen Report Card or CRC, is based on citizens/users feedback on the quality of public service delivery. This tool engages citizens in assessing the quality of public services, identifies its loop holes or gaps and presents recommendations to the government for corrective actions. It is a collective reflection of citizens' feedback on the performance of a service provider formed by their experience of actually having used a particular service.

The CRC study was done in districts Thatta and Sujawal, Sindh. The aim of the survey is to analyze public feedback on the initiatives taken by the Government of Sindh to deal with COVID 19 situation.



Creating Awareness Against Corruption

Advocacy and Legal Advice Center (ALAC) reject the notion that people are apathetic in the face of corruption. Rather, they demonstrate that they will become involved in the fight against corruption when they are provided with simple, credible and viable mechanisms for doing so. In this quarter, TI Pakistan has actively engaged with public, youth in particular, to create awareness and assist them in legal matters. Number of online webinars were organized to raise awareness about the crucial importance of access to information in the context of COVID-19. Citizens, members of civil society were training on how they can use RTI laws to hold government accountable.




میں ایک عام شہری ہوں مجھے معلومات تک رسائی کے قانون کا کیا فائدہ ہے؟
 حکومتی معلومات اصل میں آپ کو یہ بتاتے ہیں کہ حکومت عوام کے لئے کیا کر رہی ہے۔
 جیسا کہ اگر آپ کے پاس کسی بھی ادارے کے سرکاری فیس / ریش کے معلومات ہوں
 گے تو کوئی بھی آپ سے زیادہ پیسے نہیں لے سکے گا۔
 آپ کے خیال میں RTI کے اور فوائد کیا ہو سکتے ہیں؟

اگر آپ کرپشن کا شکار ہیں تو مفت قانونی مشورے کے لیے رجوع کریں

Mobile: 0333-2261415 Email: alacpakistan1@gmail.com
 Address: 4-C, First Floor, Khayaban-e-Ittehad, Phase VII,
 DHA 75500 Karachi, Pakistan

International Anti-Corruption Day 2020: Recover with Integrity

On International Anti-Corruption Day 2020, TI Pakistan joined hands with number of stakeholders including government departments, Anti-Corruption Divisions, district government offices, civil society, academia, journalists and the general public across all four provinces of Pakistan and organized seminars and walks to highlight the detrimental effects of corruption and the need for stronger anti-corruption laws. Activities were organized at Karachi, District Matiari, Nawabshah, D.G.Khan, Toba Tek Singh, Buner, Jaffarabad, and District Layyah.

Participants appreciated the role of Transparency International Pakistan in striving for the eradication and prevention of corruption from the society.

