

WORLD HEARING DAY 2021

A Report



Pakistan Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences

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INTRODUCTION

World Hearing Day (WHD) is celebrated on 3rd March, which was accompanied this year by the launch of the WHO first ever World Report on Hearing (WRH). This Day and the Report draw attention to the needs of all people living with or at risk of hearing loss and ear diseases. Marked by the theme “Hearing care for all”, the World Hearing Day 2021 and the World Report on Hearing 2021 call upon governments to integrate ear and hearing care (EHC) into national health plans.

Globally, nearly 450 million people live with disabling hearing loss. When un-addressed, hearing loss has a huge impact on those affected and is a cause of significant financial losses. The World Report on Hearing clearly states that it is possible to both prevent and address hearing loss through cost-effective public health interventions. ¹

- 1.16 billion - mild to moderate hearing loss
- 400 million - moderate to severe hearing loss
- 30 million - profound or complete hearing loss

In 2015, when countries adopted the new agenda for sustainable development in the form of 17 goals, they pledged to leave no one behind. Definitive action is required to deliver the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG3 (good health and well-being); SDG4 (quality education); SDG8 (decent work and economic growth); and SDG10 (equality). In 2017, the World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA70.13 which urges governments to integrate ear and hearing care into their national health system framework.

PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Pakistan Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences (PIRS) is a private sector educational institute offering Bachelor of Science in Audiology (BSAU), Bachelor of Science in Vision Sciences (BSVS), Bachelor of Science in Prosthetic and Orthosis courses (BSP&O) and public health research in cross disability. PIRS has been diligently working with WHO and advocating for EHC for nearly a decade. PIRS regularly conducts an annual Public Health Planning for Hearing Impairment (PHPHI) in collaboration with the International Centre for Evidence in Disability (ICED), London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) since 2015.

EAR AND HEARING HEALTH IN PAKISTAN

A population census in 1998 found a mean national prevalence of disability of 2.49%. Of this, deaf/mute accounted for 7.43%. The World Report on Disability 2011 estimated that Pakistan had a prevalence of 13.4% for all disabilities and 9.6 YLDs (Years Lost to Disability) per 100 persons in 2004.

Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), one of the largest social sector and development national organizations in the country, reported from a carpet survey in 23 Union Councils in six districts that 8% of persons in the population surveyed were disabled to a varying degree. The total prevalence of all types of disabilities was 12% (more than the prevalence of persons

¹ World Report on Hearing 2021.

who are disabled because some had multiple disabilities). The commonest type of severe disability found was visual impairment in 0.9%, followed by physical disability in 0.5%, hearing impairment in 0.3%, with learning, self-care and communicating (speech) 0.1% each.

Noise induced deafness is an emerging cause of public health significance as can be evidenced from studies on aviation workers, public transport driver and textile industry workers. Ear diseases accounted for about 47% of all patients who attended an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department at a tertiary hospital.

There are an estimated 900 ENT specialists and 100 Audiologists working in the country, including at least 646 ENT specialists working at district government hospitals. There are 24 training programmes for minor diploma (DLO, MCPS) and 66 major diploma (MS ENT, FCPS ENT) that are accredited. There are at least 7 centres that offer training related to audiology, while 13 centres offer courses related to speech and language pathology or therapy. There is currently insufficient data regarding the type, deployment, and distribution of the ENT health workforce. ²

PLANNING AND COORDINATION FOR EHC IN PAKISTAN

There is at present no national or provincial structure for an ear and hearing health programme, nor is there any national or provincial ear and hearing health programme. In 2010, a national consultation resulted in the formulation of strategies for a ten-year Audio 2020 Pakistan plan on hearing care. However, this could not be implemented due to lack of a national structure to implement the plan and devolution of social sectors, including health to the provinces in 2011.

Health is an investment in the future: the cost of doing nothing is one we cannot afford.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, 2020

PROCEEDINGS OF THE WEBINAR

An advocacy webinar was conducted on 9th march at 1400 – 1530 hrs (Islamabad time), attended by representatives from Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (MNHSRC), Provincial Additional Director General (ADG) Health Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Chief Planning Officer - Planning and Development Department (P&D) KPK, Head of Health Systems Reforms Unit (HSRU) KPK, Federal Directorate General of Special Education (FDGSE), Audiology students/faculty (PIRS), parents support group of children with hearing assistive devices, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and participants of Public Health Planning for Hearing Impairment (PHPHI) courses. The Webinar aimed primarily at advocacy for EHC in Pakistan. It also focused on the introduction, promotion, and dissemination of the World Report on Hearing.

The Webinar started with a welcome address from the Executive Director PIRS Maj. Gen. (R). Dr. Farrukh Seir.

² Situation Analysis of Ear and Hearing Health in Pakistan. A Health Systems and Disability Perspective. 2014

Presentation 1

Prof. Muhammad Daud briefly introduced the World Report on Hearing, with “the WRH envisions a world in which no individual experiences hearing loss due to preventable causes and those with hearing loss can achieve their full potential through rehabilitation, education and empowerment”. This presentation highlighted the importance of hearing across the life course as it is affected by genetic, biological, behavioural, and environmental factors. Screening for hearing was identified as vital for new-born, pre-school, school going, high risk occupations and elderly.

Presentation 2

Prof. Andrew Smith (ICED-LSHTM) highlighted the magnitude of hearing loss and key features of the World Report on Hearing. He indicated that globally, 0.2% of the world’s population lived with complete and profound hearing loss respectively while those with severe hearing loss were 0.4%. 1.3% people live with moderately severe hearing loss and 19.6% with mild to moderate hearing loss. 80% of mild to moderate hearing loss is found in low- and middle-income countries.

Presentation 3

Dr. Diego Santana-Hernandez (Senior Global Advisor on Ear and Hearing Health – Christian Blind Mission - CBM) talked on “WRH is launched – What to do with it now”. This presentation highlighted that the main purpose of the WRH is to make EHC a public health priority and that it provides an evidence-based resource for ear and hearing care. He urged policy makers and stakeholders to prioritize EHC and stressed on the need for a continuous and effective advocacy campaign.

Presentation 4

Presentation by Prof. Isaac Macharia (University of Nairobi/Kenya National Programme for EHC) (Prof. Macharia could not attend webinar due to his prior commitment, shared his presentation that was presented by the moderator) on “Governance and Challenges – Experience from National Ear and Hearing Care Programme

Kenya” gave an insight into their national EHC programme.

This presentation depicted the journey that started from 2008, with its failures and then in 2014 gaining success with the formation of a Technical Working Group in Ministry of Health and appointment of a focal person for EHC.

A National Strategic Plan was developed and launched in 2016.

Since then, the Kenya National EHC Strategy has achieved recognition of EHC cadres, inclusion of provision of hearing aids in the national insurance scheme, counties have developed an EHC infrastructure, and this template is used for developing national EHC programmes in East and Central African countries.

Significant gaps in the capacity of health systems challenge the provision of ear and hearing care services

Presentation 5

Dr. Muhammad Babar Qureshi (Director Inclusive Eye Health & Neglected Tropical Diseases – Christian Blind Mission – CBM) spoke on “Need for a National Programme and National Committee for EHC in Pakistan”. This presentation gave a background of the efforts made in the past for advocacy on EHC. It strongly recommended for national and provincial structures for EHC to facilitate planning and coordination.

Dr. Maryam Mallick (WHO Country Office Pakistan) could not attend due to her personal commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CALL TO ACTION

Dr. Aliya Qadir, Head of department of Research and Development, PIRS, presented the recommendations and a ‘Call to Action’.

Recommendations

1. Develop a national vision and roadmap for Integrated People Centred Ear and Hearing Care (IPC-EHC) to “Make ear and hearing care accessible for all” by 2030
2. Strengthen the governance structure by setting up National and Provincial committees for EHC to facilitate planning and coordination
3. Conduct a situation analysis of EHC
 - Update the situation analysis profile documented in the Report: Situation analysis of Ear and Hearing Health in Pakistan – A health systems and disability perspective. 2014
 - Use the WHO Ear and Hearing Care Situation Analysis Tool (EHCSAT) to conduct district-wise mapping of EHC services; availability of essential technology; type, availability, and distribution of human resources for EHC – combine this with an EHC workforce survey (cadres, deployment, distribution, production)
4. Develop a standard list of infrastructure, staffing, equipment, medicines, and consumables for EHC services at all levels of health care
5. Integrate primary EHC into primary health care (PHC) – adapt the WHO learning resource on primary EHC
6. Conduct a survey to obtain further data on the degree of hearing loss, types and frequency of ear and hearing disorders and its causes using the WHO Ear and Hearing Survey Handbook
7. Develop a district-based pilot programme for EHC promotion, prevention and control of ear diseases and deafness
8. Undertake harmonization of:
 - Training curricula and standards of EHC training programmes
 - EHC essential indicators and integrate these into the District Health Information System (DHIS)
9. Undertake capacity building and integration in existing health programmes for screening new-borns for hearing impairment and deafness initially at all tertiary hospitals

Call to Action

We call upon the health authorities, international partners, professional groups, civil society, and private sector entities, to:

- **Adopt** 'HEARING 2030 Pakistan' as our collective national vision and roadmap for IPC-EHC to 'Make ear and hearing care accessible for all' by 2030
- **Include** IPC-EHC in Universal Health Coverage
- **Strengthen** health systems to deliver IPC-EHC at all levels of care
- **Determine** targets, monitor national trends, and evaluate progress
- **Promote** high quality public health research on EHC
- **Align** with the WHO strategy for IPC-EHC
- **Collaborate** to ensure that all stakeholders can contribute to and share a common vision for EHC
- **Highlight** the importance, needs, and means for EHC, and advocate for its prioritisation in national and sub-national health agendas

A SHORT VIDEO "HIDDEN DISABILITY"

A short video on WHD 2021 theme "Hearing for all - Screen, Rehabilitate, Communicate" was made featuring a real life journey of a deaf person. The video is about challenges, difficulties, opportunities, and attitudes. This video is about social inclusion of disabled persons in society. The title of video is "Hidden Disability" that encompasses the hearing impairment and hearing loss/deafness as invisible as it is to the society. Links to this short video is given in annex 3.

SCREENING AND AWARENESS ABOUT NOISE INDUCED HEARING LOSS

A screening activity was arranged in the premises of PIRS on 3rd March. This activity aimed at screening of public transport drivers and making them aware of the danger of 'NOISE' to their hearing. registration of drivers for screening started a week before and 25 drivers arrived on the day of screening (Limited number of drivers were invited because of COVID-19 SOPs in the institute). These were screened and their hearing levels shared with them. This was followed by a brief session on awareness. Dr. Shahid Nawaz, Head of Department of Audiology PIRS and Mr. Letaf Khan, Audiologist, PIRS, highlighted issues related to hearing loss due to excessive noise in the daily routine life of drivers e.g., unnecessary honking, maintenance of vehicles etc.

A brief play prepared by PIRS students shed light on the life of a driver who lost his hearing and how it affects his profession, financial condition and family/social life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

PIRS acknowledges Coalition for Global Hearing Health (CGHH) and World Health Organization (WHO) small grant scheme award for recognition and support for World Hearing Day activities in Pakistan.

ANNEXURES

Annex 1

World Hearing Day 2021 – Webinar/meeting agenda

1. Primary aim of the webinar /meeting is advocacy to policy makers/health planners/MNHSRC, INGO/NGO and academia for a national structure on ear and hearing care i.e., national committee for ear and hearing care with provincial chapters.
2. Promotion, introduction, and dissemination of World Hearing Report.
3. A short video on the WHD 2021 theme, “Hearing for all. screen – rehabilitate – communicate” and social inclusion
4. Webinar will be followed by a brief meeting and discussions

Opening and welcome	Dr. Farrukh Seir	5 mins
Introduction of World Report on Hearing 2021	Prof. Muhammad Daud Khan	7 mins
Global magnitude of hearing loss and World Report on Hearing	Prof. Andrew Smith – LSHTM	7 mins
World Report on Hearing is launched – What to do with it now	Dr. Diego Santana-Hernandez – CBM	7 mins
Governance/challenges in national ear and hearing care programme – Experiences from National Programme on Hearing and Ear Care – Kenya	Prof. Isaac Macharia (Pre-recorded presentation)	7 mins
Need for a national committee/programme for ear and hearing care	Dr. Muhammad Babar Qureshi	7 mins
Role of WHO country office in assistive technology for ear and hearing care	Dr. Maryam Mallick	7 mins
Comments from representative of Ministry of Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (MHSRC)		7 mins
Video “Hidden Disability”	PIRS	7 mins
Recommendations and call to actions	Dr. Aliya Qadir	5 mins
Comments from Parents Support group of children with assistive hearing devices/implants	Support group member	5 mins
QnA and panel discussion	Participants	20 mins
Closing of webinar		

Moderator – Dr. Aliya Qadir

Time – 1400 hrs. (Pakistan time)

Duration of webinar – 90 mins (+-10 mins)

Venue of meeting – Nazara Hall – Serena Islamabad

Annex 2

List of participants/representatives from ministry/Health department

Dr. Samra Mazhar – Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination

Dr. Saleem – Additional Director General Health. Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Dr. Asghar – Chief of Health Systems Reforms Unit (HSRU). Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Dr. Qaisar Alam - Chief Planning Officer – Health, Planning and Development Department (P&D). Government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

Dr. Irfan Ahmed – Directorate of Special Education (DGSE). Government of Pakistan

Faculty department of Audiology – PIRS

Students’ department of Audiology – PIRS

Alumni – PIRS

Participants of the past PHPHI courses

Annex 3

Links to PIRS short video “Hidden Disability”.

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/6LTGYV8TyTw>

PIRS Website: <http://pirs.edu.pk/?p=3630>

PIRS Facebook page: <https://fb.watch/4j98DiU2WX/>

Annex 4

Photographs

