

OpenVoiceNews Pakistan

Transparent. Unbiased. Yours.

Pakistan's Working-Class Women Face Menstrual, Maternal Health Crisis

August 11, 2025

— Categories: Human Rights



Pakistan's working-class women, including housemaids, factory laborers, and farm workers, face significant challenges related to menstrual hygiene and maternal healthcare. Many women from marginalized communities lack access to affordable sanitary products and adequate prenatal and postnatal care, increasing their risk of infections and maternal complications.

According to a 2021 report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), over 50% of rural Pakistani women and around 60% of women living in urban slums cannot afford

sanitary pads. As a result, many resort to using old cloths for menstrual hygiene. The report notes that this practice, combined with limited access to clean water and sanitation, increases the risk of bacterial infections such as bacterial vaginosis and urinary tract infections. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes poor menstrual hygiene as a factor contributing to these health risks.

Maternal health outcomes also remain a concern. UNICEF's reports indicate that more than 60% of pregnant women in rural Pakistan do not receive adequate prenatal care, including essential supplements like vitamins and recommended ultrasound scans. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Pakistan is estimated at 178 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the World Bank, which is higher than some neighboring countries in the region.

Common pregnancy-related conditions such as pre-eclampsia and postpartum hemorrhage are among the leading causes of maternal deaths. A 2020 study published in the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics highlights that many women, especially in rural areas, face limited access to healthcare services that can detect and manage these conditions effectively.

Health experts emphasize the importance of regular prenatal check-ups to reduce risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Public health initiatives advocate for increased availability of subsidized menstrual hygiene products and improved maternal healthcare services to address these issues.

Media outlets such as The Express Tribune have reported calls from health advocates urging the government to implement programs that provide affordable menstrual products and expand access to reproductive health education. Such efforts aim to improve health outcomes for Pakistan's working-class women and reduce preventable infections and deaths.

The challenges faced by these women underline the need for coordinated actions from government agencies, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations to improve menstrual hygiene management and maternal health services across Pakistan.