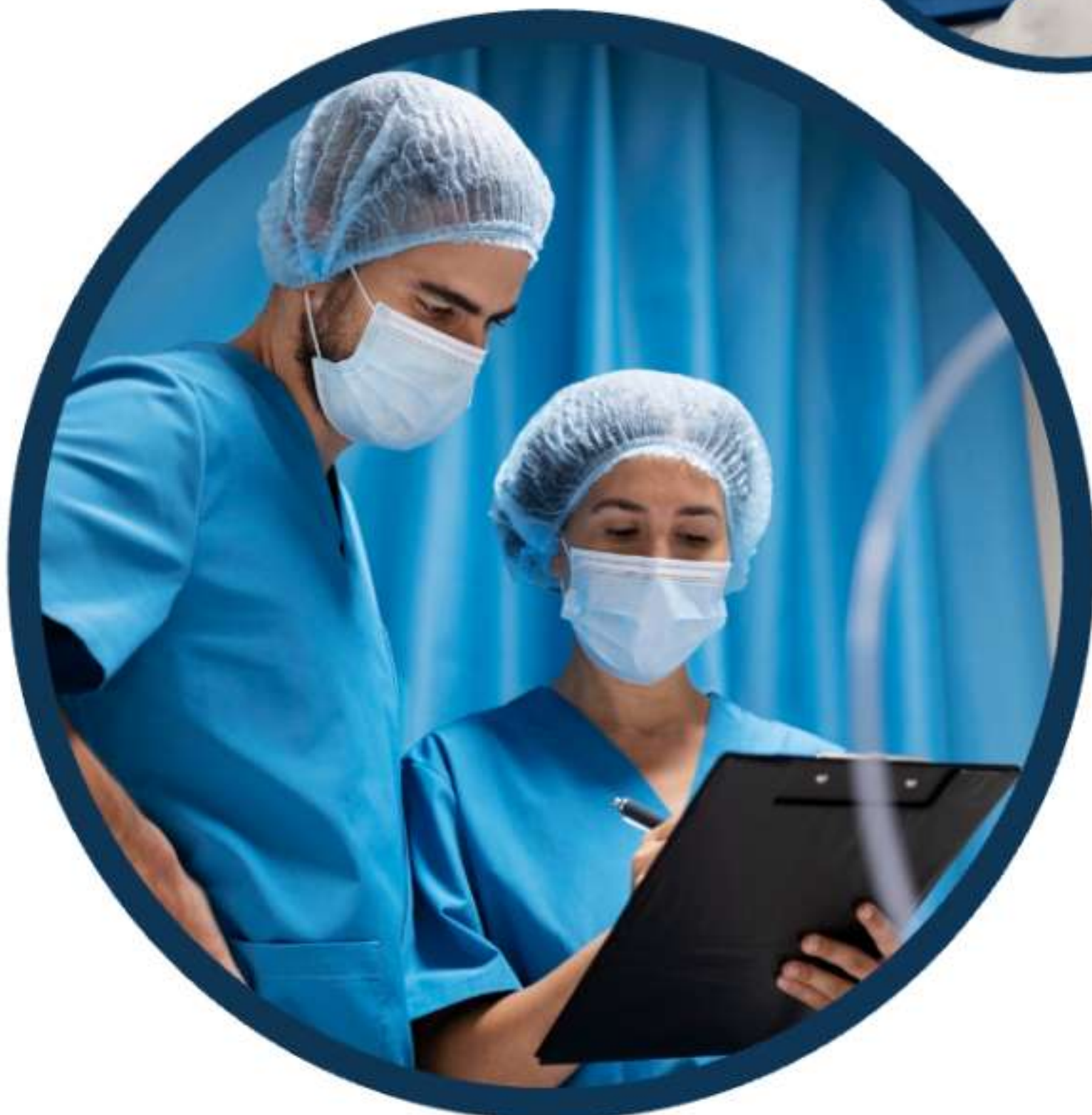


Proceedings of the Event

Pakistan's Nursing Workforce - Report Launch





Report Launch

Pakistan's Nursing Workforce

Export Potential, Challenges & Recommendations

Tuesday, August 12, 2025

03:00PM to 05:00PM

Rufayda Auditorium, AKU-SONAM



Aga Khan University School of Nursing & Midwifery, Pakistan x Pakistan Business Council

Overview

The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) launched its study “Pakistan’s Nursing Workforce: Export Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations” in collaboration with the Aga Khan University - School of Nursing and Midwifery (AKU-SONAM). The event was organized at the Aga Khan University- School of Nursing and Midwifery (AKU-SONAM) on the 12th of August, 2025. This event brought together key stakeholders to discuss the crucial issue of the nursing workforce for our Pakistan’s future.

Pakistan’s Nursing Workforce: Export Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

Team Leader: **Samir S. Amir**

Lead Researcher: **Farah Naz Ata**

Available at: <https://www.pbc.org.pk/research/pakistans-nursing-workforce-export-potential-challenges-and-recommendations/>

The event, hosted at AKU, was the launch of the PBC’s Study on Pakistan’s nursing workforce. The launch included opening remarks from officials from AKUH, AKU-SONAM, and the PBC. A co-author presented the report. A panel discussion on the challenges faced by the nursing workforce in Pakistan was moderated by the CEO of the PBC and featured experts from various health organizations. **Ms. Nida Khuhro** - Parliamentary Secretary, Health and Population, Government of Sindh also attended and spoke at the event. The event concluded with a high-tea.

The PBC is grateful to the 75 attendees, the 12 thought leaders who spoke on the occasion.

The video recording of the event is accessible on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/P5y_rwu_vK0



The Pakistan Business Council

An Overview

The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) is a research-based business advocacy platform established in 2005. It is now supported by over 100 private sector local and multinational businesses with significant investment in, and long-term commitment to sustainable growth of the country. They come from 14 countries, have leading roles in 17 major sectors of the formal economy, generate 40% of annual exports, contribute a third of Pakistan's total tax revenues and employ three million. Their combined sales represent every 6th Rupee of Pakistan's GDP.

PBC's major objectives are to advocate policies that lead to creation of jobs, value-added exports and reduction in import reliance through improved competitiveness of manufacturing, services and the agriculture sectors. It also promotes formalization of the economy.

PBC's over-arching theme, "Make-in-Pakistan" consists of three pillars: "Grow More/Grow Better", "Make More/Make Better" and "Serve More/Serve Better." Its evidence-based advocacy is backed by over a hundred studies to date through its full-time research team, supplemented by collaborative research with renowned industry experts and economists. Through its Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business (CERB), PBC works to build capacity and capability of businesses beyond its membership, to adopt high environmental, social and governance standards. PBC holds conferences, seminars and webinars to facilitate the flow of relevant information to all stakeholders in order to help create an informed view on the major issues faced by Pakistan. Through its presence in Islamabad and Karachi, it works closely with relevant government departments, ministries, regulators and institutions, as well as other stakeholders including professional bodies, to develop consensus on major issues impacting the economy.

PBC is a pan-sectoral, not-for-profit, Section 42 entity. It is not a trade body; therefore, it does not advocate for any specific business sector. Rather, its key advocacy thrust is on easing barriers that thwart competitiveness of businesses in Pakistan.

Further information on the PBC is available on: www.pbc.org.pk.

The PBC's Founding Objectives

- To provide for the formation and exchange of views on any question connected with the conduct of business in and from Pakistan.
- To conduct, organize, set up, administer and manage campaigns, surveys, focus groups, workshops, seminars and fieldwork for carrying out research and raising awareness in regard to matters affecting businesses in Pakistan.
- To acquire, collect, compile, analyze, publish and provide statistics, data analysis and other information relating to businesses of any kind, nature or description and on opportunities for such businesses within and outside Pakistan.
- To promote and facilitate the integration of businesses in Pakistan into the World economy and to encourage in the development and growth of Pakistani multinationals.
- To interact with governments in the economic development of Pakistan and to facilitate, foster and further the economic, social and human resource development of Pakistan.

The PBC Member Companies



The PBC Affiliates



Thought Leaders and Expert Speakers

Chief Guest



Ms. Nida Khuhro
Parliamentary Secretary, Health and
Population, Government of Sindh

Expert Speakers



Dr Zeenat Sulaiman
Regional CEO, Aga Khan Health
Services, East Africa



Dr Raisa Gul
Principal, Shiffa Tameer-e-Millat



Ms Khairunnisa Hooda
Chief Nursing Officer, The Aga Khan
University Hospital



Ms Farida Shah
Regional Board Member, International
Confederation of Midwives

Report Launch



Tuesday, August 12, 2025

03:00PM to 05:00PM

Rufayda Auditorium, AKU-SONAM, P

2:30 – 3:00 PM	Registration and Arrival of Guests & Welcome Tea
3:00 – 3:05 PM	Recitation from the Holy Qur'an
3:05 – 3:10 PM	National Anthem
3:10 – 3:20 PM	Opening Remarks Dr Zeelaf Munir Chairperson, The Pakistan Business Council Managing Director and CEO of EBM
3:20 – 3:30 PM	Dean's Address Dr Salimah Walani Dean, School of Nursing, The Aga Khan University
3:30 – 3:35 PM	President's Address Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin President, The Aga Khan University
3:35 – 3:45 PM	Pakistan Nursing Workforce Report Presentation Ms Farah Naz Senior Economist, The Pakistan Business Council
3:45 – 3:55 PM	Chief Guest's Address Ms Nida Khuhro Parliamentary Secretary, Health and Population, Government of Sindh
3:55 – 4:00 PM	Rising Voice in Nursing Rabab Vadivala Clinical Nurse, Aga Khan University Hospital
4:00 – 4:40 PM	Panel Discussion: Balancing Global Opportunity and Local Need: <i>Addressing the Dual Challenge of Nursing Workforce in Pakistan</i> Moderator: Mr Javed Kureishi Chief Executive Officer, The Pakistan Business Council Panelist: • Dr Zeenat Sulaiman Regional CEO, Aga Khan Health Services, East Africa • Dr Raisa Gul Principal, Shiffa Tameer-e-Millat • Ms Khairunnisa Hooda Chief Nursing Officer, The Aga Khan University Hospital • Ms Farida Shah Regional Board Member, International Confederation of Midwives
4:40 – 4:50 PM	Q&A Session
4:50 – 5:00 PM	Closing Remarks Dr Saleema Gulzar Associate Dean, Outreach and Partnership Office
5:00 – Onwards	Hi Tea & Social Event



Opening Remarks



Dr. Zeelaf Munir

Chairperson, The Pakistan Business Council Managing Director and CEO of EBM

Key Takeouts

- Dr. Zeelaf Munir welcomed the guests and highlighted the critical role of nurses, sharing her experience as a practicing psychiatrist to underscore their clinical and emotional contributions.
- There is a sharp contrast between the respected and empowered status of nurses in developed countries and the ongoing challenges that they face in Pakistan, including systemic gaps and underinvestment.
- The global shortage of nurses, projected by the WHO will be 4.1 million by 2030, and Pakistan has a , yet unfulfilled, potential to meet this demand, with only a small fraction of its registered workers abroad being nurses.
- The PBC is proud to launch its report “Pakistan’s Nursing Workforce”; the report identifies key barriers for nurses, such as low graduation rates, fragmented education, slow and costly licensing processes, and the social stigma associated with the profession.
- Investing in the nursing sector is both an economic and social opportunity for Pakistan.
- More Pakistani nurses working abroad could increase critical remittances and provide financial independence for families, particularly for women from rural and low-income backgrounds.
- Dr. Munir concluded with a call to action, urging the implementation of solutions like scaling up quality nursing education, aligning curriculum with international standards, reducing licensing burdens, establishing structured migration pathways, and, most importantly, changing the public narrative to value nursing as a profession of national importance.

She thanked the PBC team, the hosts (AKU-SONAM) and the nurses and educators who contributed their insights to the conversation, stressing the need for a collaborative effort to invest in a future where the value of this profession is fully realized.





Dean's Address



Dr. Salimah Walani

Dean, School of Nursing, The Aga Khan University

Key Takeouts

- Dr. Salimah Walani welcomed the guests and acknowledged the critical reality that a growing number of nurses are leaving Pakistan.
- While “pull factors” like better opportunities abroad are well-known, the conversation needs to shift to the neglected “push factors” that cause nurses to leave.
- The lack of primary healthcare access, where people in communities without nurses are forced to travel great distances to tertiary care centers, overloading the system.
- The solution is to strengthen the nursing workforce. By retaining, rewarding, and valuing nurses, Pakistan can improve population health outcomes, leading to a healthier and more productive society. Many nurses want to stay or even return to Pakistan if the conditions are right.
- Good news is that Pakistan has made progress in standardizing the nursing curriculum and establishing higher education pathways, with AKU-SONAM leading the way by introducing the nation’s first bachelor’s, master’s, and PhD programs in nursing.
- Bad news is that old stereotypes persist, a lack of recognition from leaders and HR about the impact nurses can have, a “shocking” disparity in pay and grade, and the media’s tendency to portray nurses in a lesser status.
- A better societal status, work environment, and financial rewards for doctors are why more of them stay in or return to Pakistan. The value of the nursing profession in Pakistan must be “reimagined.”

Dr. Walani concluded with a strong appeal to decision-makers to “make it right for the nurses,” urging them to address the systemic issues that are driving this vital workforce out of the country.



President's Address



Dr. Sulaiman Shahabuddin

President, The Aga Khan University

Key Takeouts

- Dr. Sulaiman Shahabuddin thanked the Pakistan Business Council for the report titled "Pakistan's Nursing Workforce: Export Opportunities, Challenges and Recommendations." He expressed his hope that the report would serve as an "eye opener" for the government and policymakers, highlighting the significant opportunities within the nursing sector.
- Pakistan has a severe shortage of nurses, with only 5.2 nurses per 10,000 people. The nurse-to-patient ratio is 1:50, far below the recommended 1:10 (and 1:5 in specialized areas).
- The country produces only 5,600 nurses annually, a number overshadowed by its neighbors—Bangladesh produces twice that, and India produces 50 times more.
- Approximately 8,000 nurses have recently migrated from Pakistan. There is a need for a more encouraging and attractive work environment and compensation to retain and attract talent. Nurses who return from working abroad bring back valuable skills and knowledge, resulting in a "brain gain."
- Appreciated that the report supports advanced practice nurses, a role which is vital for Pakistan's economic and social prosperity. He announced that AKU will be launching an advanced practice nursing program next year, building on the success of a similar program in the AKUH-Africa.
- The negative perception of nursing is fading, and praised the role of AKU-SONAM in this shift.

He concluded by reiterating the goal set by His Highness the Aga Khan: to transform the status of the nursing profession and women in the country. Addressing the shortage, managing migration, and improving compensation must be a top priority on the parliamentary agenda.





Pakistan's Nursing Workforce Report Presentation



Ms. Farah Naz Ata

Senior Economist, Pakistan Business Council

 [Presentation access](#)

Key Takeouts

- The study, conducted by the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), aims to improve the quality of nursing care, assess the potential for remittances from nurses working abroad, and identify challenges faced by Pakistani nurses in global markets.
- It was based on secondary data and interviews with nursing professionals and migration organizations.

Global Trends & Career Prospects

One in eight nurses works outside their home country, and a global shortage of 4.1 million nurses is expected by 2030. The Philippines and India are the leading exporters of nurses globally. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) offers tax-free income but has limited career advancement. The Anglosphere and Europe provide better long-term opportunities, while Europe and parts of Asia have significant language barriers. Licensing and registration processes are universally difficult and lengthy for Pakistani nurses in all regions.

Pakistan's Nursing Workforce

- The number of Pakistani nurses migrating has grown rapidly (CAGR of 33.2% over the 10 years), but the numbers fluctuate due to various factors.
- Compared to countries like the Philippines and India, Pakistan lags in producing nursing graduates and has a lower nurse-to-population ratio. Compared to all over the world where there are 2 nurses to 1 doctor. Pakistan has 2.2 doctors to 1 nurse.



Challenges in Pakistan

- **Workforce Issues:** There is a severe shortage of nurses, a negative social stigma, and an exclusion of nurses from decision-making roles.
- **Education Issues:** The education system suffers from a lack of standardization, proliferation of sub-standard schools, and a significant gap between theory and practice.
- **International Mobility Issues:** Nurses face challenges like delayed documentation, high costs for exams and accreditations, a lack of government support, and curriculum mismatches that prevent them from obtaining licenses abroad.

Recommendations

- **Improve the Profession:** Retain nurses by offering better pay and career paths, and enhance their public image through media campaigns.
- **Reform Education:** Standardize admissions and training, regulate institutions, provide scholarships, and integrate clinical practice with academic studies.
- **Facilitate Mobility:** Train nurses to meet specific international requirements, establish government-to-government partnerships for placements, and streamline the deployment process to reduce financial and logistical burdens.





Chief Guest's Address



Ms. Nida Khuhro

Parliamentary Secretary, Health and Population, Government of Sindh

Key Takeouts

- Ms. Nida Khuhro congratulated the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) on its report, emphasizing that nurses are not only the backbone of healthcare but also a significant, untapped strength for Pakistan.
- The world faces a projected shortage of 4 million nurses by 2030, which presents a major opportunity for Pakistan. The annual 54% increase in overseas employment for Pakistani nurses over the last five years demonstrates the high quality of their skills.
- Despite international demand, Pakistan has a significant shortage of nurses domestically, with a ratio of two doctors for every nurse, which is the reverse of what it should be. This especially impacts rural healthcare.
- Khuhro proposed several policy-level actions:
 1. *Empowerment*: Give nurses more leadership roles.
 2. *Education Reform*: Align nursing education with international standards through integrated and simulation-based training
 3. *Talent Retention*: Retain nurses in Pakistan by offering fair pay, safe working conditions, and clear career growth paths
 4. *Joint Efforts*: A collaborative effort among the government, private sector, academia, and development partners to provide scholarships, upgrade facilities, and support advanced nursing roles.





Appreciation Token for the Chief Guest





Rising Voice in Nursing



Ms. Rubab Vadivala
Clinical Nurse, Aga Khan University

Key Takeouts

- Ms. Rubab Vadivala, a paediatric nurse at AKUH, reflected on her experiences and the evolution of the nursing profession.
- Highlighted the resilience of nurses who have overcome significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and other healthcare emergencies, serving as leaders and the backbone of the healthcare system.
- Need for better support for nurses, such as safe nurse-to-patient ratios, compassionate leadership, and respect, to ensure both nurses and patients thrive.
- Nursing workforce in Pakistan has evolved significantly, transitioning from diploma-only programs to bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees.
- The future of nursing in Pakistan is tech-savvy, research-driven, and bold. It requires investment in higher education and nurses taking on leadership roles in hospitals and policy-making.
- Nurses in diverse roles, including hospital CEOs, policy advisors, directors of national health programs, nurse practitioners, and even using AI for education. Nurses working beyond traditional hospital settings in communities, managing telehealth, running mobile clinics, and responding to climate emergencies.





Panel Discussion

Balancing Global Opportunity and Local Need

Addressing the Dual Challenge of Nursing Workforce in Pakistan

Moderator



Javed Kureishi
CEO, Pakistan Business Council

Panel



Dr Zeenat Sulaiman
Regional CEO,
Aga Khan Health Services, East Africa



Dr Raisa Gul,
Principal,
Shiffa Tameer-e-Millat



Ms Khairunnisa Hooda
Chief Nursing Officer,
Aga Khan University Hospital



Ms Farida Shah
Regional Board Member,
International Confederation of Midwives

Key Takeouts

Insights from Dr. Zeenat Sulaiman

- **The Role of Nurses:** Nurses are vital clinicians whose collaboration with other healthcare professionals in hospital settings has been shown to improve patient outcomes. Dr. Sulaiman emphasized that nurses should be seen as equal partners in the healthcare system, a model observed in multi-disciplinary rounds abroad.
- **The Future of Nursing:** The global shift toward recognizing nurses as advanced practitioners is a positive and necessary development for Pakistan's healthcare system.
- **Exporting Nursing Talent:** Dr. Sulaiman viewed the migration of nurses as an opportunity for Pakistan, citing the Philippines as a successful example of a country that exports its nursing workforce while maintaining enough professionals for its local needs. She suggested that improving the quality of nursing in Pakistan will allow the country to capitalize on the global demand, as many Pakistani nurses could find opportunities abroad.

Insights from Dr. Raisa Gul

- **Concerns about "Mushrooming" Institutions:** Dr. Gul highlighted the issue of an uncontrolled increase in nursing schools, influenced by political agendas. She argued that without a standardized intake criteria and a focus on quality, merely increasing the number of nurses will be detrimental to the profession.
- **The Importance of Quality Education:** She stressed that faculty development is critical for improving the quality of nurses in Pakistan. Without this, nurses may struggle to



meet international standards, potentially being sent back from abroad and damaging the country's reputation.

- **Policy and Political Challenges:** Dr. Gul shared her experience from a 2013 government planning project on nursing that was never acted upon. She pointed out that while the COVID-19 pandemic raised the value of nurses, political interference continues to influence institutions like the Pakistan Nursing & Midwifery Council (PNMC). She deemed the government's demand for a rapid increase in the number of nurses for export as unreasonable, as proper training takes at least four years.
- **Lack of Resources and Representation:** Dr. Gul noted that the government of Punjab has doubled student intake in nursing colleges without a corresponding increase in faculty, technology, or space for practical training. She also lamented the repeated postponement of the nursing licensure exam and argued that the profession will not improve until policymakers work directly with nurses. A single nurse on the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Healthcare is not enough representation to effect meaningful change.



Insights from Ms. Khairunnisa Hooda

- **Praise for the PBC Report:** Ms. Hooda commended the Pakistan Business Council's (PBC) report, "Pakistan's Nursing Workforce," noting its widespread reach and positive reception.
- **AKUH as a Benchmark:** She highlighted the stark contrast in capacity building and career progression opportunities available at the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) compared to other institutions, suggesting AKUH as a model for what is possible in the nursing profession.
- **Addressing Nurse Shortages:** AKUH faces the same dual pressure of a national talent shortage and a global "brain drain." To combat this, it has focused on several key practices:
- **Improving Working Conditions:** The hospital has set a benchmark for a safe nurse-to-patient ratio.
 1. **Professional Growth:** It provides and helps cover the cost of professional development opportunities.
 2. **Flexibility and Wellness:** The hospital offers flexible four-hour shifts to help retain nurses who have left the workforce and is actively working to reduce burnout and double shifts.
 3. **Midwives are Essential:** According to Ms. Farida Shah, midwives are the backbone of maternal and neonatal healthcare in Pakistan, especially in rural areas where they are often the only medical providers.



Insights from Ms. Farida Shah

- **Need for an Autonomous Profession:** For midwives to be effective, their education must meet international standards. They need to be integrated into the healthcare system as an independent profession with a separate identity from nursing.
- **The Midwifery Model of Care:** Pakistan should shift from its current doctor-centric healthcare model to a more cost-effective, woman-centric midwifery model, as recommended by the WHO.
- **Critical Challenges:** Midwifery in Pakistan faces significant issues, including substandard education, a lack of clear professional roles, limited career paths, and low professional status (grade 6).
- **Slow Progress in Standardization:** While other countries have standardized midwifery education, Pakistan is just beginning this process. A four-year degree has been introduced in Punjab and KPK, but the Sindh province is still lagging.
- **Achieving UN Goals:** Strengthening midwifery education is crucial for Pakistan to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 3, which focuses on good health and well-being. Midwives contribute 85% of maternal health services, making their role vital for reaching this goal.





Closing Remarks



Dr. Salimah Gulzar

Associate Dean, Outreach and Partnership Office, AKUH

Key Takeouts

- Dr. Gulzar expressed her gratitude to all attendees, panellists, presenters, and special guests, including Ms. Nida Khuhro and the AKUH leadership. She also specifically acknowledged Dr. Zeelaf Munir, Javed Kureishi, the report’s co-authors, and the entire PBC team.
- She highlighted that the event and the report were crucial for spotlighting both the challenges and opportunities within Pakistan’s nursing profession.
- Nurses deserved better opportunities, recognition, and respect. She emphasized the shared vision to strengthen nursing in Pakistan, invest in the profession, and create ethical global opportunities for nurses.
- She stressed that achieving this vision requires the collaborative efforts of the government, the Pakistan Nursing & Midwifery Council (PNMC), nursing leaders, and nurses themselves.
- Dr. Gulzar urged the audience to view the report not as a document to be forgotten, but as a roadmap for policy reform, investment, and meaningful change.
- She concluded by giving a special thank you to all the nurses and midwives whose daily work continues to inspire people worldwide.





After Event Hi- Tea





**8th Floor, Dawood Centre, M.T. Khan Road,
Karachi, Pakistan**

 +92 21 3563 0528-29

 +92 21 3563 0530

**2nd Floor, 1-E (South) Jinnah Avenue,
Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan**

 +92 51 8444 008

 +92 51 8444 009

 www.pbc.org.pk