

# Islamic Republic of Pakistan



## Participant in the Study Visit

**Mr. Faiz Rasool** is a core team member at the National Secretariat on Food Systems (Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC)- Ministry of National Food Security & Research) with a key objective to support the process of “Pakistan Food System Transformation” to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) by 2030. Mr. Faiz is also engaged by the Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives as an expert for Integration of “Nutrition Advocacy and Awareness in the Pakistan Planning”. Mr. Faiz has strong experience in engaging the relevant federal & provincial level public sector entities for setting/reviewing and upgrading the food standards and improving regulations and monitoring of nutritious foods. Mr. Faiz is a public health specialist with hands-on experience in dealing with the food supply chains & the food system challenges. He has degrees in Public Health and Public Policy with specialization in Health communication, Public Policy and Public System Management. He has vast experience of behavior change communication for shaping up behaviors towards production and consumption of nutritious foods.

## Nutrition Facts

Pakistan faces a persistent burden of malnutrition. According to SOFI 2025, 33.6% of children under five were affected by stunting in 2024, above the Southern Asia average of 31.4%. Wasting affected, 7.1% of children below five in 2024, this time, well below the Southern Asia average of 13.6%. Exclusive breastfeeding rates have improved, reaching 47.8% in 2023, among infants 0–5 months, nearing the global target of 50%. The national implementation score of legal measures related to the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes is 73 (out of a maximum of 100).

Anemia affected 47.8% of women aged 15–49 in 2023, with little progress since 2012 (45.3%), and efforts still needed to meet global reduction goals. Overweight prevalence among children was low at 2.1% in 2024, but adult obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases such as diabetes pose emerging public health concerns. As much as 23% of adults were living with obesity in 2022, a sharp increase from the 12.7% rate estimated from 2012, and much above the Southern Asia average of 9.7%.

## The Pakistan Multi-sectoral Nutrition Strategy (PMNS) 2018–2025

The country’s nutrition priorities focus on implementing a national multi-sectoral nutrition

strategy (PMNS) that integrates policy development, financial tracking, monitoring, evaluation, and advocacy. Specific attention is directed to early childhood development, school nutrition, and commercialization of specialized nutritious foods.

The PMNS aims to significantly reduce malnutrition, emphasizing marginalized and disadvantaged populations. National targets align with World Health Assembly and Sustainable Development Goals, including a 40% reduction in stunting, 50% reduction in anemia among women, 30% reduction in low birth weight, maintaining wasting below 5%, and increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates to at least 50%.

The strategy promotes nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food security interventions such as boosting agricultural productivity, adopting nutrient-rich crops, drought mitigation, and enhancing household access to diverse diets. It further advocates gender-focused activities, public-private partnerships, and improved water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to support nutrition outcomes.

Additionally, the strategy integrates disaster resilience by including nutrition in emergency preparedness and response and promotes capacity building across sectors.

## **Governance and Institutional Mechanisms**

Nutrition governance operates through a devolved federal structure with strong coordination mechanisms at national and provincial levels. The Pakistan National Nutrition Coordination Council, National Nutrition Forum, and sector-specific technical working groups drive policy and program development. A Scaling Up Nutrition Secretariat was established within the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives to coordinate multi-stakeholder engagement, linking government, UN agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

Subnational units and multi-sectoral nutrition committees in provinces ensure localized ownership and multisectoral collaboration. Capacity building initiatives support nutrition-sensitive programming and financial management, while resource mobilization efforts and budget tracking are ongoing. Strong governance structures support alignment of resources from UN organizations, bilateral donors, NGOs, and private sector partners behind national priorities.

## **Key Programmatic Initiatives**

Key programs include Ehsaas Nashonuma, providing conditional cash transfers and specialized nutrition support for women and young children, and the expansion of community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM). Food fortification mandates and regulations on breast milk substitutes are enforced alongside nutrition education campaigns.

Provinces have developed tailored nutrition strategies, including integration of nutrition into

health programs, adoption of multi-sectoral approaches, and implementation of school feeding and adolescent nutrition initiatives.

In a major public health advancement, Pakistan passed a comprehensive national standard in March 2025 to limit industrially produced trans fatty acids (iTFA) to less than 2% of total fat in all food products. This regulation builds on a phased approach that began in 2023 with limits applied to six food categories, expanding to 58 categories in 2024 before establishing a unified standard nationwide. This move aligns Pakistan with global best practices to reduce the intake of harmful trans fats, a key contributor to cardiovascular diseases, thereby strengthening the country's commitment to improving population nutrition and health outcomes.

## **School Meals Consultation and Commitment**

A high-level national consultation convened by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training and WFP reaffirmed school meals as a strategic multisectoral investment. With over 25 million children out of school and many affected by hunger, school meals were recognized as vital to improving attendance, learning outcomes, and reducing poverty-related education barriers.

Federal and provincial authorities committed to scaling up programs, with one province allocating a multiyear budget, another expanding coverage, a third launching new initiatives, and a fourth strengthening its cash-based models. Additional regions are exploring innovative financing options. The government affirmed its commitment to institutionalize school meals as a core component of the education agenda, emphasizing its role in national development and child well-being.

Pakistan has established a solid foundation to tackle malnutrition through comprehensive strategies, inclusive governance, and multisectoral collaboration. Continued focus on provincial implementation, financing, and capacity building is essential to achieve national and global nutrition targets. Recent commitments to expand school meals underscore a growing recognition of nutrition as integral to education and broader development goals, marking a positive trajectory for improved nutrition outcomes nationwide.

## **N4G Commitments (as of April 2025)**

- Formulate/ Revise & implement Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Policy and Strategies
- Strengthen the functionality of coordination mechanisms
- Approval and enforcement of the National and Punjab Food Fortification Laws
- National and Provincial Nutrition Convergence Program
- Evidence-based decision making
- Financing for Nutrition
- Launch and implementation of Initiative on climate Action and Nutrition (I-CAN)
- Provincial Multisectoral Nutrition Programs

## Pakistan is not yet a member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty

### Engagement with the Healthy Diets Coalition

- Pakistan became a member of the Healthy Diets Coalition (HDSFS) in 2024 and has since been a very active member. In 2025, Pakistan was selected to serve as one of the four rotating country members on the Steering Committee for the 2025-2026 term, providing strategic insights on the Coalition's direction. Both government and non-government actors in Pakistan are actively engaged. Other specific engagement includes:
- **Support to Policy Development:** The Director of the Food Policy Division, working with academic partners of the Coalition, contributed to the development of Pakistan's National Healthy Diets Policy. Several coordination meetings were convened by the HDSFS Secretariat, in support of the policy's design (2024).
- **CFS52 Side Event:** Pakistan featured as a panelist in the side event "Healthy diets, sustainable future; bridging nutrition, biodiversity and climate change policies", co-organized by the HDSFS Coalition and partners. The intervention underscored Pakistan's commitment to embedding nutrition within broader sustainability agendas and linking biodiversity, climate, and health in policymaking (2024).
- **Case study:** Pakistan was chosen as one of the HDSFS case study countries in collaboration with the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme (under development). Findings are expected to be published ahead of COP30 (2025).
- **UNFSS+4 Side Event:** Pakistan participated at the side event in Addis Ababa organized by the Government of Madagascar and the HDSFS entitled "Breaking Silos and Fueling Change: Aligning Nutrition and Climate for Food System Transformation." National priorities for integrating climate and nutrition through climate-smart food strategies and related initiatives were shared (2025).

### Remaining Challenges

Pakistan is making steady progress in addressing malnutrition through comprehensive national strategies, strengthened governance, and multisectoral collaboration. Initiatives such as school meals, food fortification, and targeted social protection programs are building a strong foundation for improved nutrition outcomes. However, persistent challenges such as high child stunting, widespread anemia among women, and rising obesity highlight the need for continued investment, provincial implementation, and innovative approaches to achieve lasting impact.