

## The Sehat Tahaffuz Helpline - 1166

The establishment of the call center aimed to create a platform for parents and caregivers, fostering enhanced community trust in Polio and Routine Immunization (RI) programs by directly engaging with the public. Launched in November 2019 with robust support from UNICEF, the 'Sehat Tahaffuz-1166' call center was initiated to bridge the gap between the public and National immunization initiatives. Equipped with proficient call center representatives knowledgeable about Vaccine preventable diseases, the center offers fundamental information, addresses public concerns, offers medical guidance, support all forms of immunization roll-out plans in collaboration with diverse partners such as WHO, BMGF, GAVI under the umbrella of Ministry of National Health Service, Regulation and Coordination MoNHSR&C at the National Emergency Operation Centre, NEOC This marked the initial stride toward fostering synergy between Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) and Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI)."

The second but equally significant objective was to educate the public about the vital importance of vaccinating their children against polio and other routine illnesses.

The most formidable challenge we faced was combating *misconceptions* surrounding the vaccination programs, which were often perceived as foreign agendas carrying potential negative side effects. **Establishing public trust** became paramount in achieving these delicate objectives.

To address this, the 1166 call reps underwent specialized training in communication strategies, allowing the public to openly express their concerns. Moreover, ensuring strict adherence to addressing reported complaints became pivotal in fostering public trust. Assigned helpline focal persons **diligently followed up on all types of complaints**, including missed children, overlooked areas during campaigns, complaints from all Government districts & tehsils hospitals and dispensaries. This meticulous approach significantly contributed to gaining the public's confidence in our services.

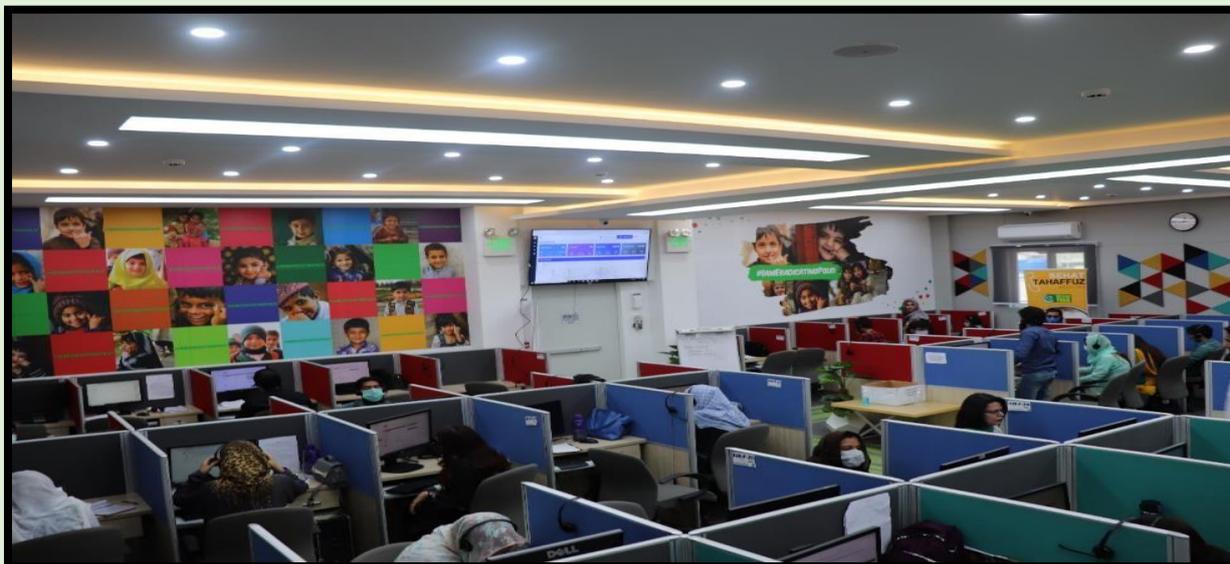
Furthermore, we implemented a dedicated hotline number for both Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) and Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) workers, which proved instrumental in fostering a **stronger relationship between workers and management**."

In 2020, the then SPMA Health inaugurated the call center with the vision of expanding its scope to become a **National Health Helpline on February 6th**. However, as the global COVID-19 outbreak unfolded, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination (MoNHSR&C) decided to give additional responsibility to the 1166 helpline. Its portfolio expanded and focused towards providing vital information, controlling panic among citizens, delivering emergency responses, disseminating awareness, and addressing COVID-related concerns.

The helpline underwent official rebranding as the National COVID emergency helpline, becoming **toll-free in March 2020** to ensure nationwide accessibility. Initially, the National Institute of Health (NIH) assigned doctors for three months to handle emergency and technical calls related to COVID-19. Subsequently, from **April 2020, the support extended to include medical officers assigned to manage emergency calls** and provide medical advice, a measure backed by the World Health Organization (WHO)."

Our helpline operators admirably managed the formidable task of alleviating public panic during a nationwide frenzy, where the 1166 helpline stood as the sole communication channel available to the public. Recognizing its pivotal role, the **NATIONAL COMMAND AND OPERATION CENTRE (NCOC) selected it as the primary channel for communication for COVID Pandemic**.

The volume of incoming calls surged significantly, skyrocketing from 60 to 80 calls, necessitating an urgent capacity boost both in technical infrastructure and human resources. To fortify our operations, additional call representatives received **support from both the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and UNICEF**. During peak months, the helpline experienced an overwhelming load, surpassing a staggering 100,000 calls per day, marking the highest recorded volume."



The 1166 helpline achieved a significant milestone by integrating **the COVID National Immunization Management System (NIMS) within our helpline framework from January 2021**. We provided essential COVID vaccine-related information, including details about vaccination centers (CVCs), scheduling, and vaccine shortages.

To address public complaints regarding NIMS, we **implemented a specialized complaint mechanism**. These complaints were promptly shared with NCOC focal persons for immediate follow-ups, ensuring swift resolution.

- The real-time data and analysis generated through this system were instrumental in not only identifying problematic areas but also **contributed significantly to decision-making processes** at various government and non-government levels. The **1166 data facilitated the formulation of policies** and procedures aligned with evolving trends, public sentiments, and requirements by the key policy makers i.e. **UNICEF RCCE, World Bank, Asian development bank, Jhpiego etc.**
- During the pandemic, we established a dedicated line to **address the concerns of healthcare workers** through our platform. Additionally, a separate line was introduced nationwide for **vaccinators and data entry operators**, enabling them to report complaints swiftly and receive rapid resolutions and troubleshooting assistance for the application."
- The helpline is referred to as the **backbone in reporting the AEFI's for any immunization** on emergency basis to the rapid response teams for investigation and follow ups.
- Moreover, the helpline is utilized for all types of immunization campaigns i.e. Because of the resourceful and proficient responsiveness of the helpline, any health campaign in the country (dengue malaria, RED campaign, MR, TCV and all COVID campaigns nationwide is supported through 1166 platform.

Since **January 2022**, the management of the 1166 call center came under **Federal Directorate of Immunization FDI** supported by **UNICEF Health** department. Recognizing the impact on citizens, a **digitalized Complaint Management System (CMS)** was operationalized to track public-reported issues efficiently.

A comprehensive surveillance mechanism was established, extending to the household level to gather feedback on reported complaints. This system ensures prompt rectification of any identified concerns across various operational segments.

Another notable addition to FDI's 1166 portfolio was the **PM's initiative of Cardio Resuscitation Program CPR in July 2022**. This initiative involves raising awareness by providing essential information and registering citizens for this life-saving program."

Due to the substantial performance of the helpline another huge PM's initiative is assigned to 1166 helpline for **mental health named "Humraaz"**. **Launched in April 2023** the helpline is bridging the gap by connecting the mental health challenged citizens seeking help and assistance with appropriate counsellors and hospitals nationwide.



Speech by **Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Kazi**, Director General, Federal Directorate of Immunization on the World Mental Health Day 2023 at **1166 Helpline** Office

**"This helpline stands as Pakistan's pioneering national-level service, offering an unparalleled range of free health services, setting a global benchmark for its unique and comprehensive support."**