CASE STUDY

# Sehat Kahani

## Employing mobile technology to connect women doctors to underserved communities in Pakistan

**FOUNDING YEAR**

2017

**GEOGRAPHY**

Pakistan

**FOUNDING TEAM**

Dr. Sara Saeed Khurram | Co-founder and CEO

Dr. Iffat Zafar | Co-founder and COO

**TWEET PITCH**

Sehat Kahani provides a mobile-based telehealth solution that aims to democratise healthcare in Pakistan by connecting women doctors with patients in underserved communities.

**WEBSITE**

https://sehatkahani.com/

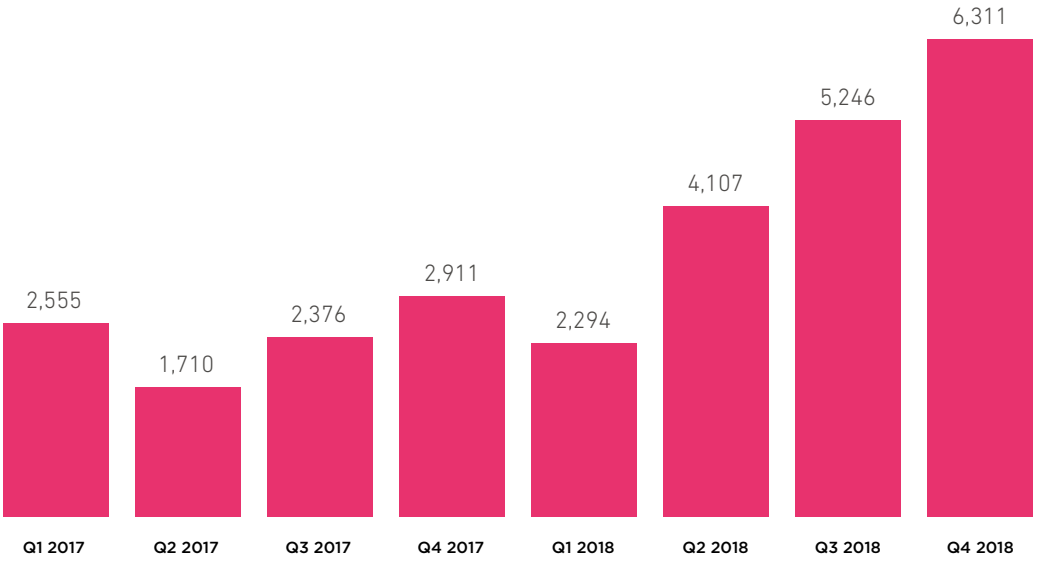
Pakistan faces a multitude of challenges in its healthcare sector. The country ranks 154th out of 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare, lagging behind its South Asian counterparts, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.[14] Almost 50 per cent of Pakistan's population is deprived of basic healthcare facilities and about one per cent of the country's GDP is spent on healthcare, eight times less than recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).[15] This is reflected in the country's child healthcare statistics. According to UNICEF, Pakistan has one of the world's highest infant mortality rate, with 74.9 deaths for every 1,000 children five years and younger.[16] This ratio is 39.4 in India, 32.4 in Bangladesh and just 9.3 in China.

A shortage of practicing female doctors, combined with socio-cultural barriers, in part explain why healthcare is so inaccessible. While Pakistan educates 150,000 doctors every year and 63 per cent of medical students are women, according to the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, only 23 per cent of doctors are women.[17]

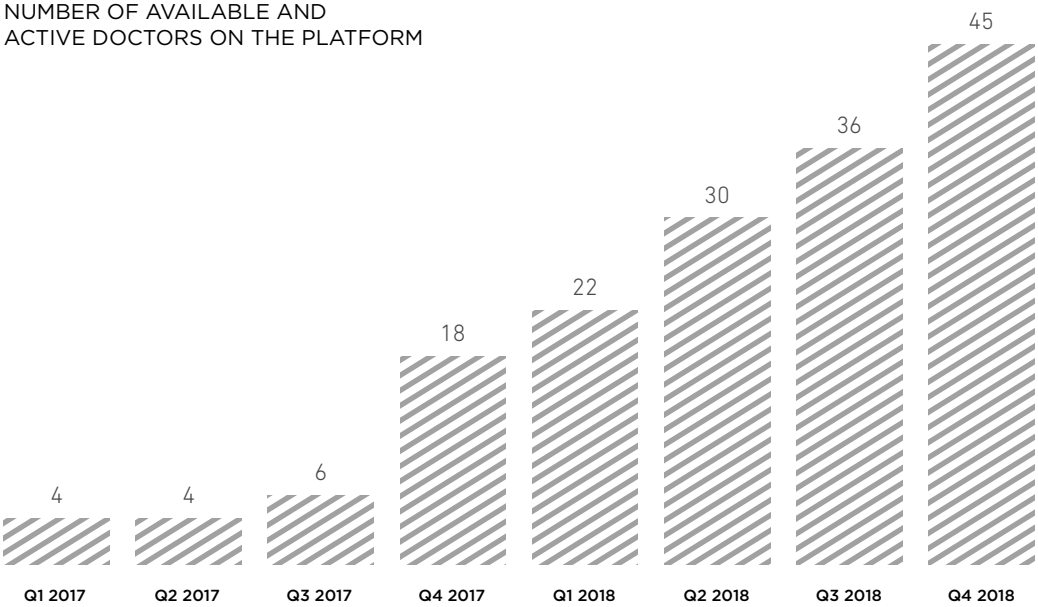
Given these challenges, Sehat Kahani launched a dedicated mobile-enabled healthcare service aimed at underserved communities across Pakistan in 2017. The start-up created a network of e-Hubs (walk-in clinics) that use telemedicine to connect users to qualified women doctors online, while qualified nurses or health workers act as intermediaries in selected communities. Sehat Kahani has also developed a mobile and web-based telemedicine solution that gives users direct access to virtual consultations, as well as general preventive and mental health information. Since its launch in January 2017 to December 2018, Sehat Kahani facilitated 27,510 total patient visits through its e-Hubs. Sehat Kahani currently has 23 telemedicine e-Hubs spread across three of Pakistan's four provinces: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab and Sindh.

14. The Lancet, 2 June 2018, "Measuring performance on the Healthcare Access and Quality Index for 195 countries and territories and selected subnational locations: a systematic analysis from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016", Vol. 391, Issue 10136, https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)30994-2/fulltext
15. Cartier Women's Initiative: https://www.cartierwomensinitiative.com/candidate/sara-saeed
16. UNICEF, "Country profiles: Pakistan", https://data.unicef.org/country/pak/
17. Cartier Women's Initiative: https://www.cartierwomensinitiative.com/candidate/sara-saeed

**SEHAT KAHANI**
TOTAL PATIENT VISITS PER QUARTER



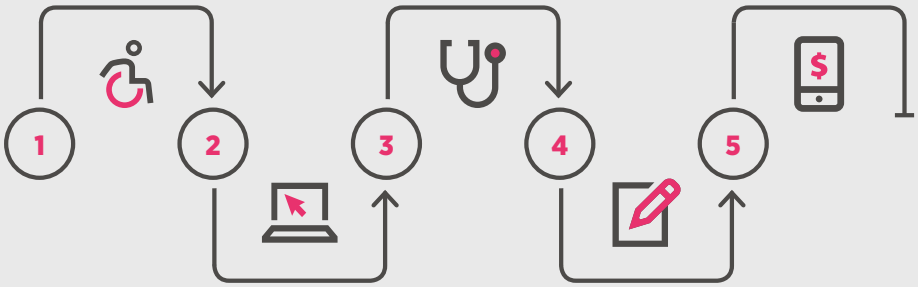

**SEHAT KAHANI**
NUMBER OF AVAILABLE AND
ACTIVE DOCTORS ON THE PLATFORM



# How the service works

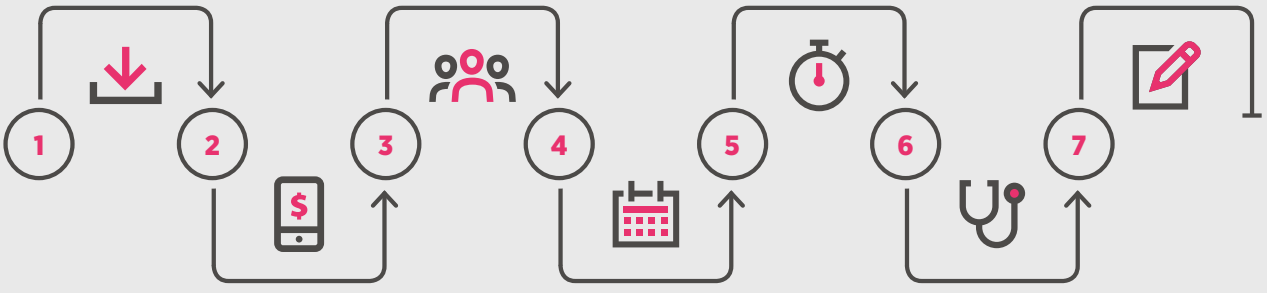
Sehat Kahani's e-Hubs are physical clinics located in low-income communities, underdeveloped urban areas and rural areas of Pakistan. Its mobile telemedicine solution enables individuals to consult with a Sehat Kahani doctor virtually. This is how the services work:

## E-HUBS (WALK-IN CLINICS)

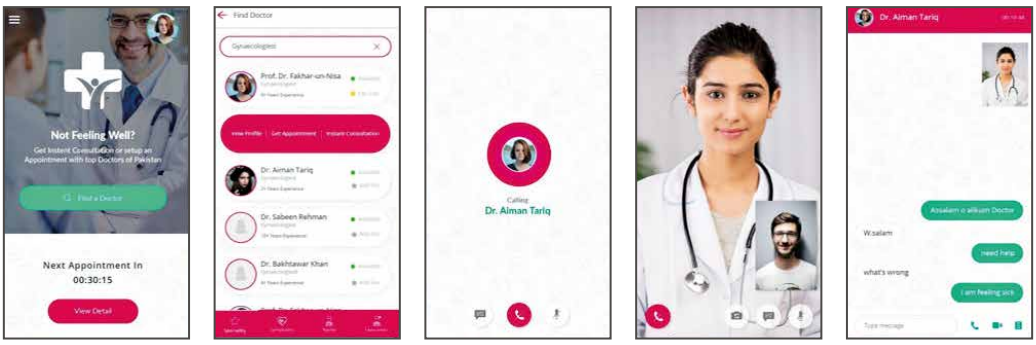



1. **Sehat Kahani**'s qualified nurses or health workers welcome the walk-in patient to the e-Hubs.
2. The staff logs in to **Sehat Kahani**'s online consultation system, connected to the internet using the Jazz 3G/4G network (laptop connected through a dongle or tablet).
3. The system connects virtually to an available **Sehat Kahani** doctor who provides a consultation to the patient and gives the available staff instructions on how best to support the patient.
4. Once the session is completed, the patient receives the session summary and prescription from the nurse or health worker.
5. Patient pays for their consultation via JazzCash (mobile money) or in cash.

## TELEMEDICINE MOBILE APP




1. The user downloads the **Sehat Kahani** Android or iOS mobile app on their smartphone, register on the app and create a basic profile to which they add their medical and social history for the doctor's reference.
2. User pays for the consultation via JazzCash (mobile money) or bank transfer.
3. User selects a doctor from the panel after clicking on the New Appointment tab.
4. They can then click on Book an Appointment and select one from the available slots or request an instant consultation by clicking on the Consult Me tab (if the doctor is available).
5. At the time of the appointment, the user clicks on the Consult Now option and enters the session.
6. Once they enter the session, the user can speak with a doctor through an audio or video call.
7. User receives the session summary and prescription via email after the session is completed.




# Working with mobile operators

In December 2018, Sehat Kahani began a partnership with Pakistan's largest mobile operator, Jazz Pakistan (over 56 million subscribers as of December 2018).[18] Under the partnership, Jazz's mobile money service JazzCash is integrated with the Sehat Kahani app, allowing patients to pay for various Sehat Kahani services using JazzCash, including a consultation with a Sehat Kahani doctor. Jazz also provides Sehat Kahani with subsidised data rates for e-Hubs across Pakistan.

> *As Sehat Kahani's partner, Jazz Pakistan is looking for scalability. We can support Sehat Kahani as a technology partner. We can also support with wearable sensors, telemedicine and telemonitoring. Since Jazz Pakistan already offers health insurance, we can integrate our insurance offerings with Sehat Kahani's medical services to create a whole ecosystem. Hence, the whole concept of digital well-being can be realised for the people of Pakistan through this partnership; the gap is huge and only digital technology is poised to bridge the gap.*
>
> **Aamer Ejaz, Chief Digital Officer, Jazz Pakistan**

18. GSMA Intelligence: https://www.gsmaintelligence.com/

# Changing lives

More than 70 per cent of healthcare expenditures in Pakistan are paid out of pocket.[19] Millions of women rely on untrained birth attendants and faith healers, contributing to the country's high maternal mortality rate. Eighty-one per cent of Sehat Kahani's patients today are women, and the service, targeted mainly at underserved communities, contributes directly to bringing down the maternal mortality rate.

By enabling women doctors to work remotely, Sehat Kahani is breaking through the cultural barriers that keep women doctors from practicing. Using mobile health and tele-health technologies, Sehat Kahani is already enabling 45 women doctors to conduct home-based practices, bringing them back into the workforce to provide quality care to remote communities. Sehat Kahani's solution is a positive step towards ending gender stereotypes and changing social norms.

*My health was continuously deteriorating and even after visiting multiple clinics, no one could find a cure for my condition. That was until a Sehat Kahani support worker came at my house and told me about their clinic. I decided to give it one more try and visited the Sehat Kahani clinic which was only 7 km away from my house. The online specialist figured out my issues and advised the nurse to begin my treatment right away. Today, I am healthy and thankful to the team of Sehat Kahani for saving my life.*

**Mehnaz, a 26-year-old woman who was diagnosed with RPOC (retained products of contraception) by a Sehat Kahani doctor after multiple miscarriages**

*I took a break from my career because of my toddler and pregnancy. However, when I heard about Sehat Kahani and its vision, I knew this was the right opportunity for me. I have been working with Sehat Kahani since the beginning and it has been an extremely motivating journey for me. Not only have I been able to pursue my career, but have also been able to give time to my family. I have learnt a lot about tele-medicine and really appreciate the work that has been done for the less privileged people of our country.*

**Dr. Hina, Sehat Kahani doctor**

19. Mahmood Khalid and Abdul Sattar, 2016, "Households Study on Out-of-Pocket Health Expenditures in Pakistan", *Forman Journal of Economic Studies*, Vol. 12, pp. 75–88, https://www.fccollege.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Paper-5-Households-Study-on-Out-Of-Pocket-Health-Expenditures-in-Pakistan-by-Mahmood-Khalid-and-Abdul-Sattar.pdf

# Working with the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator

In February 2018, Sehat Kahani received a grant from the GSMA Ecosystem Accelerator Innovation Fund to deploy six e-Hubs in urban slums and rural areas, as well as develop an e-learning module for Sehat Kahani's doctors and nurses. The e-Hub clinics serve as a referral point for patients who need further consultation and treatment.

Sehat Kahani completed its Ecosystem Accelerator project in March 2019. During the grant, the project had an impact on 30,750 active users, including patients, doctors, nurses and community health workers.