A recent report by UNICEF ranked Pakistan as the riskiest place to be born on earth. With one in every 20 babies dying before reaching her first birthday, the neonatal mortality rate in Pakistan is the highest in the world. Other health indicators particularly those pertaining to mothers, infants, and children are equally worrying especially when compared to Pakistan’s not so poor position in terms of GDP per capita and economic growth. It is one of the only three countries in the world where polio has not been eradicated completely and the country has had little success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) especially those related to maternal and child health outcomes. Global advocacy measures such as the Alma-Atta Declaration of 1978, the Sustainable development Goals set by the United Nations, and the growing emphasis of international donor community on maternal and child health have played quite an effective role in the implementation of a number of initiatives around primary health care in Pakistan. These initiatives however remain severely underfunded and poorly implemented due to various imperfections in political markets such as political volatility, uninformed voters, and a political culture based on patronage, kinship, and identity, all of which reduce the incentives of politicians to secure sufficient political and financial commitment for universal primary health care. In this paper, I employ the theoretical framework provided by Fox and Reich to show how poor political institutions act as the major bottlenecks in each of the four stages of policy reform cycle identified in the framework. I then argue that any policy reform that is designed and implemented by abstracting from the political and institutional realities of the country is unlikely to be effective. Although there are no quick solutions to the problem of poor political institutions, I propose that some sources of institutional imperfections can be addressed in the short run through an effective leadership role of the state, international donor community, media, and the legislature in the short run, and a major reform in the incentives that drive political competition and the performance of bureaucracy, in the long run.