



## Overview

Despite continually rising health needs in Afghanistan, WHO and partners are aiming to turn the situation around by stepping up their support. The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (UN CERF) has provided US\$ 45 million to WHO and UNICEF to sustain 2331 primary and secondary health facilities in 31 provinces (previously supported under the Sehatmandi project) from November 2021 to January 2022. Thanks to this, essential medicines, medical supplies and fuel for heating were provided to the health facilities just in time for the harsh winter ahead. The funding also covers other operational costs, including salaries for around 25 000 health workers.

Support to further sustain these 2331 health facilities has been aligned through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) that will provide UNICEF/WHO with US\$ 100 million to deliver essential health services from February-June 2022. Three out of 39 COVID-19 hospitals will also be supported as part of this funding.

However, this is still not enough. Afghanistan is currently facing five outbreaks -- acute watery diarrhoea, measles, polio, COVID-19, and malaria -- which have increased the burden on the already fragile health system. There are over 1000 health facilities and around 10 000 health workers who are not covered by the support being provided through UN CERF or ARTF. This includes the majority of hospitals designated for COVID-19 care.

## Key Actions

- As part of the efforts to sustain health facilities previously under the Sehatmandi project, WHO is supporting 1209 health facilities in 17 provinces and covering the salaries of 14 000 health workers -- which have already been disbursed for the month of November 2021. Payments for December are in process. Winterization supplies have also been provided to these health facilities.



*A polio vaccinator marks the finger of a child after administering the vaccine*

- The implementation of the fourth national polio immunization campaign started on 13 December. The campaign was synchronized with Pakistan to improve cross-border polio eradication efforts. WHO and UNICEF are jointly supporting the delivery of this campaign.
- In response to the measles outbreak, WHO is supporting a measles vaccination campaign targeting 1.4 million children aged 9-59 months. The campaign is currently underway in six provinces: Ghazni, Ghor, Helmand, Kandahar, Paktika and Balkh.

## Situation and WHO Response

### 1) Sustaining the Health System

Given the support being offered by WHO and UNICEF, the 2331 health facilities previously under the Sehatmandi project remain operational. Since November 2021, WHO has provided more than 1640 medical kits to the 1209 Sehatmandi health facilities. These supplies are enough to cover the health needs of over 1.15 million people. In addition, winterization supplies including fuel, wood and coal have also been provided to ensure availability of heating at these health facilities.



*Winterization supplies provided by WHO to a health facility in Bamyan*

A Prevention of Sexual Exploitation

and Abuse Training has been delivered to 400 WHO staff and contractors, and NGO staff who are managing the Sehatmandi health facilities on behalf of WHO. The NGO staff will further train health workers at the 1209 health facilities being managed by WHO. This training will support in strengthening the quality of service and protection for people seeking health care across the country.

### 2) Outbreaks Response

#### a) COVID-19

**Testing and surveillance:** To date, 157 855 cases of COVID-19 and 7344 related deaths have been reported. WHO has stepped up efforts to train technicians and procure necessary supplies and equipment needed to ensure that Afghanistan has the capacity to detect COVID-19 variants. A slight increase in the number of COVID-19 cases has been reported in the last few weeks. Though the 35 WHO-supported labs remain functional across the country and are being provided with supplies, overall testing remains low. To a large extent, this is linked to the disruption of rapid response teams (RRTs) which facilitate sample collection and case investigation. WHO is providing technical and financial support for the recruitment of 170 RRTs to boost COVID-19 testing.

**Vaccination:** WHO and UNICEF have recently concluded a COVID-19 vaccination acceleration campaign in all 34 provinces using 1.6 million doses of J&J vaccine remaining in the country since August. Despite this, only around 12% of the population has been fully vaccinated to date, while 3% is partially vaccinated. Currently, there are only 82 300 doses of AstraZeneca available in the country along with a recently received Chinese donation of one million doses of Sinopharm.

**b) Polio:** Four cases of Wild Poliovirus Type 1 (WPV1) have been reported in Afghanistan in 2021 so far. The November polio campaign reached 8.5 million children, including 2.4 million

children who were previously inaccessible. Six national polio vaccination campaigns are planned for 2022.

- c) **Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD):** The AWD outbreak continues in five provinces: Kabul, Kapisa, Kandahar, Laghman and Zabul. Since September, 4688 cases of AWD and eight related deaths have been recorded. A significant decrease in cases has been observed since the start of December. WHO is continuing support for 18 rapid response teams that are responsible for AWD outbreak detection, case investigation, laboratory sampling and referrals to AWD treatment centres.
- d) **Measles:** Around 28 457 cases of measles and 100 related deaths have been reported in Afghanistan in 2021. Of these, 2435 are lab confirmed. WHO is monitoring the measles outbreak and also supporting the planning for a national measles vaccination campaign due to begin early next year.
- e) **Dengue Fever:** The dengue fever outbreak continues in Nangarhar province with 700 reported cases since 20 September 2021. With the arrival of winter, a decline in cases has been observed since November. WHO is supporting the provision of vector surveillance and control supplies to strengthen the outbreak response. A public information TV and radio campaign has also been supported to raise awareness among the population of Nangarhar.
- f) **Malaria:** A recent cluster of confirmed malaria cases has been reported from the Alishang district of Laghman province, which is a key endemic area for malaria outbreak in Afghanistan. WHO is supporting in strengthening testing, case management and surveillance for malaria. Eight health facilities in Alishang have been supplied with anti-malaria medicines.

### 3) Logistics and Supplies

#### Medical Supply Airlift

Two European Union Humanitarian Air Bridge flights supported by ECHO (European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid) delivered WHO supplies to Kabul which include treatments for AWD, trauma and surgery. The supplies will support care for around one million people.



*WHO receives critical medical supplies through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight supported by ECHO*

## Supporting Health Facilities

Face masks, essential medicines for noncommunicable diseases and trauma care, and surgical care supplies to cover the needs of 21 800 people were provided to health facilities in Nangarhar province.

Also, face masks, essential medicines, trauma care and surgical care supplies, and treatments for pneumonia, malnutrition and AWD were provided to health facilities and wards for the treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition in Helmand, Kandahar, Gardez and Zabul provinces.

The supplies will cover the health needs of around 42 000 adults and children.



*Critical medical supplies being dispatched to health facilities from the WHO warehouse*

### 4) Trauma Care

WHO trained 24 surgeons on basic emergency care to improve and standardize treatment of trauma victims. These surgeons will further train 2400 health workers as part of WHO's efforts to expand basic emergency care across the country. The construction of a new trauma care unit supported by WHO has also commenced in the Spin Boldak district of Kandahar to respond to the high trauma caseload in the province.



WHO organized a 10-day training in the WHO/ICRC Basic Emergency Care Course in Kabul from 7 to 16 December 2021

### 5) Health Cluster

The Health Cluster is continuing to coordinate and support a multi-pronged health response. In November, the Health Cluster reached around 555 000 people with primary care, 48 000 people with trauma care, and 109 000 health workers with trainings on health care. The Health Cluster is also supporting the finalization of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan and the Humanitarian Needs Overview. Support has also been provided in the preparation of an integrated Health and WASH cluster AWD response action plan, which is currently being implemented by partners.

