

5 March 2024, Kabul, Afghanistan – King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has committed US\$ 1.1 million via the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) to enhance the quality of maternal and child health services in Bamyan province, Afghanistan. This funding is being facilitated by the Islamic Development Bank and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, as a trustee of AHTF. The funding will support ongoing efforts by WHO to end preventable deaths among pregnant women and children and adolescents in Afghanistan and improve their overall well-being.

Afghanistan's long-standing health crisis in maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity is complex. The country has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. The new project will strengthen the capacity of 3 district hospitals in Bamyan to provide high-quality maternal and child health services. WHO will equip the hospitals and female health workers with the necessary supplies, medicines and equipment, as well as capacity-building for the health workers.

The project will target a population of about 134 876 individuals, including 52 870 pregnant and postpartum women and 63 282 children aged under 5 years. It aims to reduce maternal and child mortality; improve access to essential maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services and commodities; and raise public awareness.

Dr Walid Abdelwahab, Director of the Islamic Development Bank hub in Türkiye, said: "This project, with generous funding from King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, to be implemented by WHO, will contribute to improving equitable access to quality health services for people in remote rural communities through the construction of primary health facilities in addition to improving the quality of maternal and child care services."

"This project will enable us to extend essential health services to some of Afghanistan's underserved areas, particularly focusing on the welfare of women and children," said Dr Jamshed Tanoli, acting WHO Representative to Afghanistan. "It underscores the significance of addressing the pressing health needs of these vulnerable groups. Further, it underscores the indispensable role played by donors and partners, whose support enables WHO to effectively deliver life-saving interventions to those who are most in need."

WHO works with partners to uphold and support the right of access to quality health services for

the most vulnerable target groups in rural areas in Afghanistan. WHO and AHTF will ensure the provision of essential and critical health services for newborns and mothers in Bamyan to safeguard livelihoods and strengthen community resilience.

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Monday 29th of April 2024 05:41:35 PM