

To strengthen trauma care and save lives in conflict-ridden Kunduz and surrounding provinces, WHO has supported the renovation and establishment of a trauma care unit in Kunduz Regional Hospital. Funding through the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) enabled WHO and partners to establish the trauma unit and equip it with essential medicines, medical and non-medical supplies and equipment.

The unit became operational in July 2016, and through support from USAID, WHO strengthened the trauma unit by providing additional medical supplies and equipment as well as staff salaries. The Ministry of Public Health took over operations of the unit in March 2017 with continued support from WHO.

Over 4000 people have received care at the trauma care unit since it started receiving trauma patients.

Through this photo story, meet some of the patients receiving treatment at the trauma unit and the heroic health workers saving lives and helping trauma patients on their road to recovery.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Serving people from Kunduz and surrounding provinces, such as Takhar and Baghlan, the trauma care unit has an emergency ward with 10 beds, a general surgical ward with 15 beds, a neurosurgical ward with 5 beds and an orthopaedic ward with 10 beds. It also has an operation

area with 2 operating tables and essential emergency imaging and investigation equipment.

As conflict intensified in Kunduz in October 2016, more than 300 wounded patients were treated in the trauma unit. During the escalated violence, the unit was hit by a rocket that resulted in minor damage to the building's wall and window, visible on the left side.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Nurse Nooria attends to a patient at the unit where she has worked for the past 6 months, providing pre- and post-operation care, checking on patients, taking care of patients' relatives and distributing medicines.

"I work very long hours but I enjoy my work. Last month we treated a 5-year-old girl who was shot in the stomach and she suffered from very severe bleeding and injuries. But her surgery was successful and she recovered fully. I am happy when we can help people recover fully and they can go back home," Nooria says. Nooria would like to become a medical doctor one day but there are no opportunities for further education in Kunduz.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

6-year-old Ahmad Jan broke his leg when a car ran over him in his home village in Baghlan province. He was first taken to Baghlan hospital but was later referred to the Kunduz trauma unit for surgery and further treatment. He was able to leave the trauma unit after 10 days and go back to school.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

A rocket struck the home of 16-year-old Sitara in her village in Kunduz province as her family was sleeping. Sitara and her 4 sisters sustained serious injuries in the attack and were brought to trauma care unit where surgeons immediately operated on them.

Sitara has been at the trauma unit for over a month, and is recovering well from her severe injuries. "The doctors here are very friendly and they visit us many times a day to check on us and give medicines. My other sister is still here with me but the others have already recovered and they have been able to go back home," Sitara said.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Nurse Mohammad Massoud examines 2-year-old Abdullah who fractured his leg when he fell from a roof over a month ago. Abdullah was treated at the trauma care unit and his fractures have healed well.

Nurse Mohammad has worked at the unit for over 6 months. “My favourite part of this job is to see the patients doing well and going back to their homes. I like serving the Afghan people. This makes me very happy,” he says.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Mohammad Zamir came to the trauma unit from Baghlan province. He was injured in an attack on a police checkpoint, and after 4 days of treatment, he is recovering well. “The doctors are like my family members and they treat me very well, they visit me and other patients many times a day and we get medicines that help us feel better,” he said. Mohammad has 2 daughters and a son and he looks forward to seeing his family and returning back to work after he recovers fully from his injuries.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Fatima (left) and Farahnaz have been working in the Kunduz trauma unit for the past 6 months. They both received diplomas from the Ghazanfar Medical Institute in Kunduz in 2015. Fatima and Farahnaz dream of becoming specialized medical doctors but there are no opportunities for further study in their province. “The most interesting part of my job is to see the patients happy when we care for them,” said Fatima.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Amir Mohammad is 12 years old and is completing his fifth class of school in Takhar province. As he was walking to school one day, Amir was hit by a landmine. He was first taken to a hospital in Takhar before being referred to the Kunduz trauma unit where he was treated by surgeons and doctors. His father stays by his side every day at the trauma unit.

Civilian casualties hit a record high in Afghanistan in 2016 with the UN documenting 11 418 casualties, including 3498 deaths. Children suffer disproportionately from the conflict with 923 children killed and 2589 injured in 2016, an increase of 24% over the previous year. Almost 90% of casualties from unexploded ordnance are children.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Surgeons operate on a woman who survived a rocket attack on her home in Kunduz province.

Active conflict continues to threaten the physical safety and health of Afghans, disproportionately so for women and children. 4.5 million people currently live in conflict-affected districts with extremely constrained access to health services, especially trauma care. As the conflict intensifies in Afghanistan, WHO continues to support the strengthening of trauma care and mass casualty management around the country to save lives.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

Head nurse Abdul Malik checks on 50-year-old Abdul Ahmad who fractured his knee a few days ago. “I’m very happy for the treatment I have received here, the doctors visit me many times a day,” Abdul Ahmad says. He has 6 children and he works as a shopkeeper in a village in south-eastern Kunduz.

Nurse Malik has worked in different Kunduz hospitals for over 29 years. “The trauma care unit has been helpful in terms of decreasing the patient load of the main hospital and making sure we can give more timely treatment for everyone who is in need,” Mr Malik said.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/S.Ramo

The trauma unit has 60 staff, including 3 surgeons, 6 medical doctors, 19 nurses and 2 laboratory technicians. The Ministry of Public Health took over the trauma unit's operations in March 2017 with ongoing support from WHO, enabling the unit to continue the provision of life-saving trauma care for Afghans.

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