

19 June 2017 – WHO supports the provision of trauma care services in Helmand province through a 90-bed Surgical Centre for war victims and 6 first aid trauma posts operated by Emergency, an Italian NGO. Funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) has enabled WHO to support the full operation of the hospital, including the purchasing of essential medical supplies, equipment and medicines and training health workers on mass casualty management and first aid.

From June 2016 to March 2017, the Emergency Surgical Centre treated over 6500 trauma patients while Emergency's first aid trauma posts supported by WHO and ECHO stabilized and treated over 10 000 casualties and referred over 500 patients to the main hospital in Lashkar Gah.

Through this photo essay, meet some of the patients being treated at the hospital and the health workers saving lives, making a difference to communities in Lashkar Gah and beyond.

[afghanistan/gallery/trauma_helmand](#)

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

"I lost my leg to a roadside bomb in the Nawzad district. My older brother also lost his leg, another one lost his hand and my son Latifullah, 11, lost a finger. Now I come to this hospital twice a week for my check-ups and I am really happy with the services they provide here. All the staff are working very hard and they are doing their best," said Najibullah, sitting next to his son Latifullah in the courtyard of the Emergency hospital.

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Credit: Afghanistan/G.Elham

Since its establishment in December 1999, Emergency has treated over 5 million people in Afghanistan. The Surgical Centre for war victims in Lashkar Gah was opened in 2004. It is the only free specialized facility in an area that has been at the centre of the escalating Afghan

conflict in recent years.

Currently around 4.5 million Afghans live in conflict-affected districts with extremely constrained access to health services.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Mosawer, 4, broke his femur when he fell from a roof at his home. His family brought him to the Emergency Surgical Centre for operations and treatment.

“Most of the patients we treat here are victims of war, landmines and roadside bombs but sometimes we also get some other types of trauma resulting for example from road accidents and natural disasters,” says Mohammad Taous, head of the nursing department.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

The son of Jalad Khan, 43, stands by his bedside as he is treated at the Emergency hospital. Jalad Khan was hit by a landmine.

Many of the patients come from other districts of Helmand where war rages on. In the past year through ECHO funding, WHO supported 6 first aid trauma posts in the province. These trauma posts provide life-saving first aid and stabilize trauma victims, and they are connected to Lashkar Gah’s Surgical Centre by a free ambulance service operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Family members and friends wait outside the Emergency Surgical Centre in Lashkar Gah.

“My friend Nooryali was wounded in a battle with the Taliban and we are here to see him. I have visited him here many times since he was injured. The hospital provides very good facilities for visitors,” said Mohammad, sitting outside the hospital with 7 of his friends. “The security situation in Helmand is getting worse day by day. Many victims of the war do not reach hospitals and lose their lives on the way.”

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Emergency’s surgeons prepare to operate on a man who sustained serious injuries in a battle between the government forces and anti-government elements.

The number of civilian casualties claimed by the war in Afghanistan continues to rise. In 2016, UNAMA documented 11 418 civilian casualties, an overall 3% increase compared to the previous record-high documented in 2015. In the first quarter of 2017, 2181 civilian casualties were documented - 715 dead and 1466 injured.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

60-year-old Nazo stands at the bedside of his grandson Rahmatullah, 19, who was badly injured by a roadside bomb in Lashkar Gah. Rahmatullah lost both of his legs in the blast, and received treatment at the Surgical Centre. “There is a fight going on everywhere and you can hear gun shots from everywhere. I fear that peace will never come,” Nazo says.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Babu, 60, was injured when a rocket hit her home in volatile Marjah district. She was hospitalized for 7 days and returned for regular check-ups.

“After the blast, I woke up here at this hospital, I don’t know who brought me here then. I’m very happy with the services I received at this hospital, all the staff were looking after me. I wasn’t able to do anything and they supported me with everything,” Babu says.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Mohammad Taous, head of the nursing department, checks on a patient. He has worked at the Emergency hospital in Lashkar Gah for 10 years. “The number of patients we get really depends on the security situation on the ground. But over the years, I have seen an increase in the average numbers of patients as the security situation is getting worse and worse,” Mohammad says.

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Credit:WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Nooryali, 28, a police officer from Helmand’s Gereshk district, received treatment at the hospital after his checkpoint was attacked by anti-government elements. He was shot in the chest and sustained serious injuries to his lungs.

“Without this hospital, I would have lost my life,” Nooryali said. “Too many people in Helmand and other parts of Afghanistan die because they cannot access these kinds of hospitals. The Afghan and foreign doctors and staff here are doing a great job, this place feels like a home to me.”

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Nurse Zahra checks the blood pressure of a child at the Emergency hospital.

“Life is very difficult in Helmand, we always live in fear and my family even cannot sleep properly at nights. Sometimes there are many victims who come into this hospital, and we all feel very tired by the end of the day. But we do this work to save Afghan lives,” says Zahra.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Emergency's international staff focus on extensive on-the-job training, both theoretical and practical, to build the capacity of local staff to effectively stabilize and treat trauma cases.

The lack of trained medical personnel, particularly women, remains a major challenge throughout Afghanistan, especially in the south.

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Credit: WHO Afghanistan/G.Elham

Nabi was hit by shrapnel near his home in the Kajaki district in the east of Helmand province. He was treated at the Emergency hospital and recovered well.

Children suffer disproportionately from the conflict in Afghanistan and there has recently been a spike in the number of child casualties of war. In 2016, 923 children were killed and 2589 injured, an increase of 24% over the previous year.

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