



Kabul, 26 July 2021 – Earlier today, WHO received a shipment of 500 oxygen concentrators procured in response to the critical shortage of oxygen for hospitalized COVID-19 patients in Afghanistan. The shipment worth US\$ 800 000, arrived by way of WHO's logistics hub in Dubai was handed over to the Ministry of Public Health for distribution among COVID-19 hospitals across the country.

COVID-19 patients with moderate to severe disease typically require supplemental oxygen, which can sometimes mean the difference between life and death. The 500 oxygen concentrators arrive in Afghanistan as it still battles its third and largest wave of COVID-19 cases.

“WHO is sparing no effort to respond to the pandemic on all fronts. One of the most effective and basic ways to treat COVID-19 patients is through providing oxygen. We are working closely with the Ministry of Public Health to put in place a distribution plan that maximizes the use and benefit of the concentrators,” said Dr Dapeng Luo, WHO Representative in Afghanistan.



As COVID-19 continues to ravage health systems across the globe, Afghanistan has been hit

hardest by the pandemic that added yet another layer of complexity to an already fragile health system. Active fighting, population displacement, drought, malnutrition, and extreme poverty pose a serious challenge against implementing control measures and hinder vaccination, exposing Afghanistan even more to the perils of the unrelenting pandemic.

The announcement by the Ministry on 19 June that the Delta variant, which is associated with increased transmission of COVID-19, has been detected in Afghanistan was accompanied by a surge of cases, while the escalating conflict continues to overwhelm the health system further with complex trauma cases.

Given all the competing challenges and demands of Afghanistan's health system, WHO's provision of the oxygen concentrators is an important addition to the extensive support across all aspects of the COVID-19 response, including for vaccinations, surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, treatment and ICU care.

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