



The Sehatmandi project is the main source of health care in Afghanistan, provided through more than 20,000 health workers at 2,309 health facilities. In 2020, more than 30 million people benefited from health services provided through the project, in addition to 1.5 million children vaccinated.

A funding pause that went into effect in late August 2021 means that more than 2,000 (90%) health facilities supported by the project are now at risk of reducing services significantly and even closing.



3M

People to be reached with health services coordinated by the Health Cluster, by the end of 2021

127 MT

Medical supplies delivered by WHO between Jul-August 2021

153K+

COVID-19 confirmed cases and 7,144 deaths as of 6 September

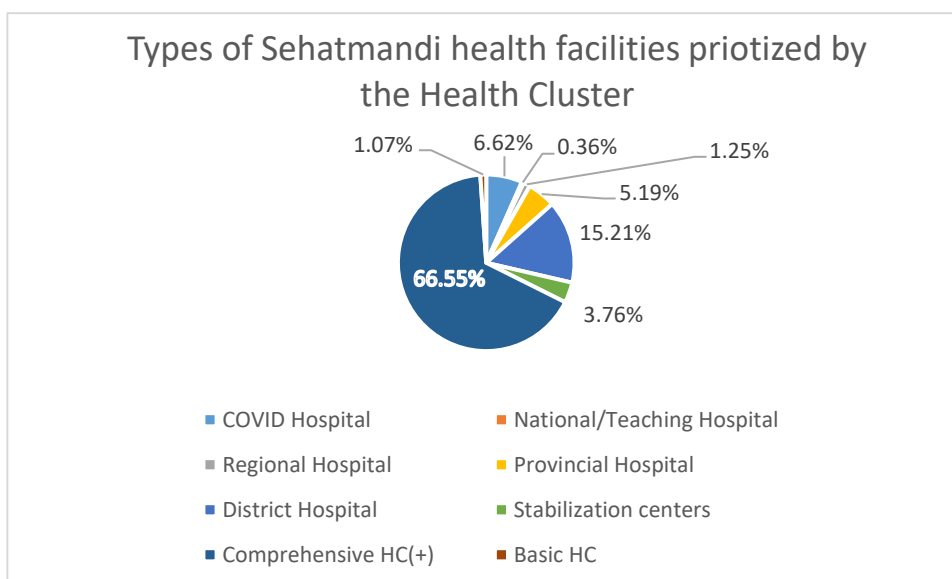
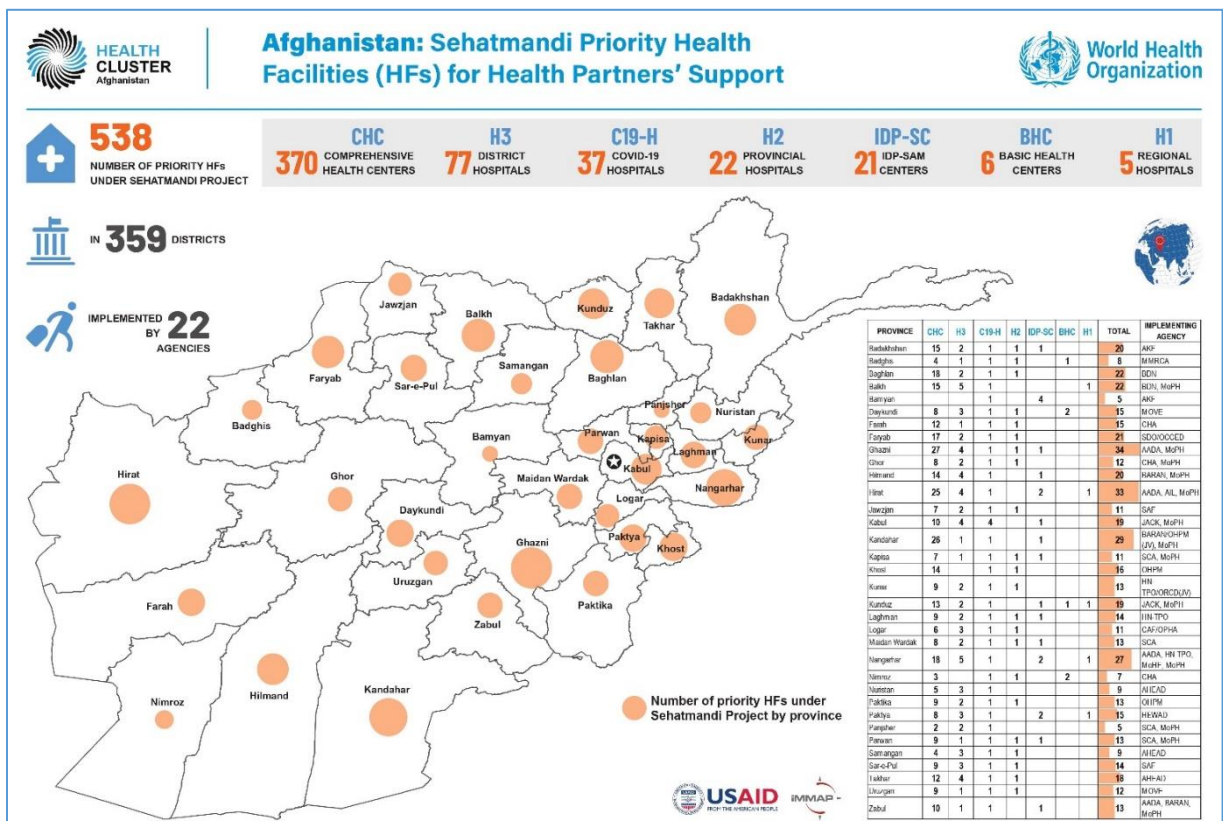
66 million

Needed for health cluster partners to keep life-saving health services running till the end of 2021.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

- **Sehatmandi Suspension:** A pause in funding for the Sehatmandi project – the backbone of Afghanistan’s health system – has left millions of vulnerable Afghans at risk of losing access to essential health care. If not urgently addressed, lost access to health care could lead to thousands of preventable illnesses and deaths. With the expected closure of health facilities, only 3% of the 1,318 COVID-19 isolation beds in Afghanistan will remain functional. Women’s access to female health workers will also be severely affected. Reduced access to health care will compound the impact of conflict, food insecurity, poverty, and COVID-19. Half of all children under five in Afghanistan are projected to face acute malnutrition this year, and extended disruptions to

malnutrition care services will have devastating consequences. Prior to the funding pause, essential health care activities such as routine immunization, malnutrition care, antenatal care, and services for pregnant women were already being interrupted by conflict and insecurity. At least nine out of 37 COVID-19 hospitals had already discontinued operations. Together with Health Cluster partners, WHO has identified 538 priority clinics and hospitals for urgent support, to ensure continuity of services until a resolution to the funding pause can be found. WHO is also collaborating with donors and partners to explore options for a longer-term solution. Continued access to essential health services for all Afghans must remain a priority for the international community to protect the most vulnerable and to avoid a roll-back of the substantial health gains of the past 20 years.

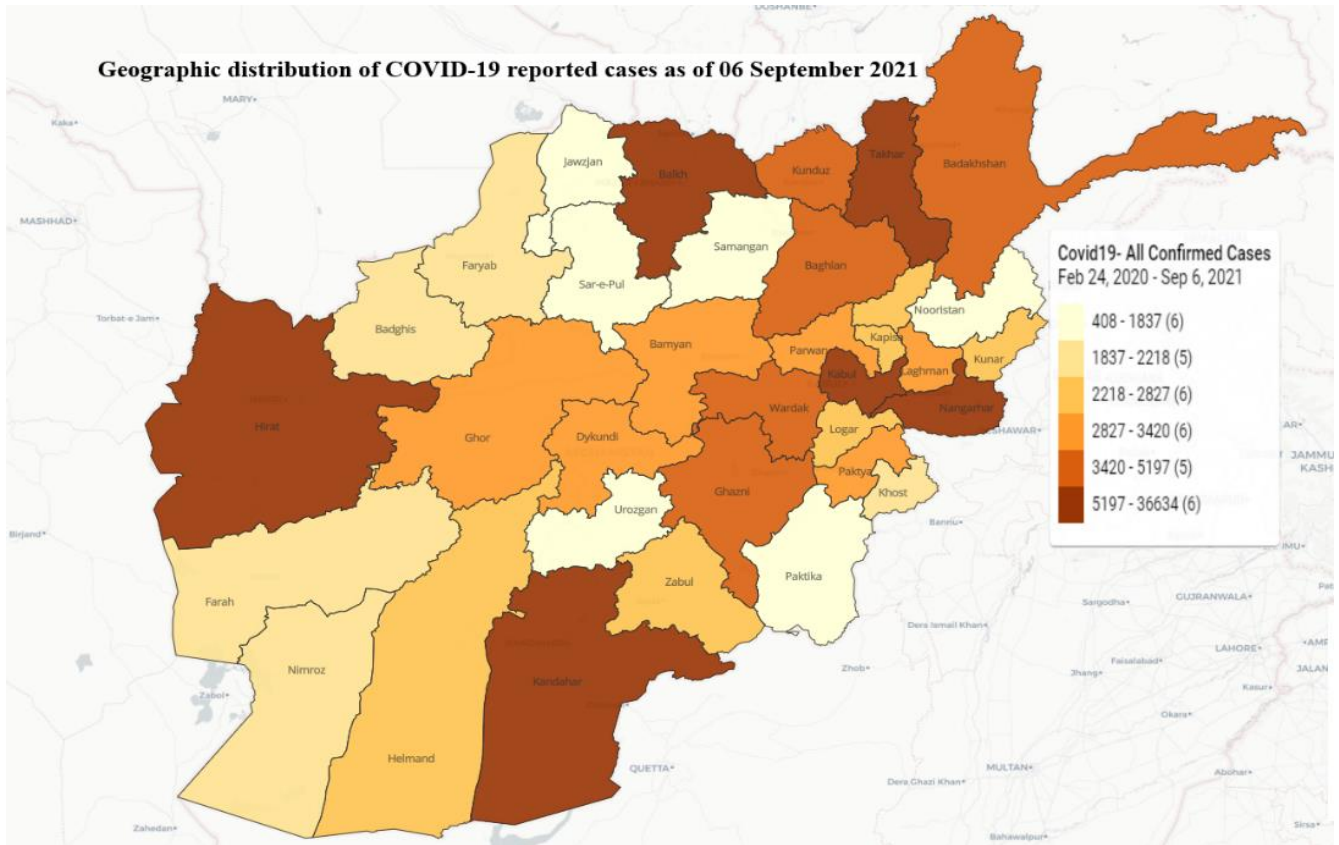


- **Funding:** Urgent funding is required to respond to rapidly rising health needs triggered by the escalation of the humanitarian crisis in the recent months due to insecurity, conflict, drought, displacement, COVID-19 pandemic and reduced access to health care. As part of a United Nations appeal for Afghanistan launched on 5 September 2021, WHO and health sector partners are requesting US\$ 66 million to deliver essential and life sustaining health care services for 3.4 million people until the end of the year. The appeal covers support to the 538 prioritized health facilities referenced above. The funding from the appeal will not be sufficient to sustain all health facilities affected by the pause in funding to Sehatmandi.
- **Galvanizing support:** The United Nations will hold a high-level ministerial meeting of member states on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 13 September. The meeting aims to raise awareness about the current situation, needs and gaps; galvanize support for the updated Flash Appeal and Humanitarian Response Plan and timely mobilization of scaled-up resources that are flexible; advocate for unimpeded humanitarian access; and provide an opportunity for partners to pledge support.
- **Supplies:** With support from the World Food Programme (WFP), 53 metric tonnes of WHO essential medical supplies were flown to Mazar-i-Sharif airport on 6 September. This was one of three flights planned with WFP to bring in urgently needed medicines and supplies. WHO is continuing to explore further options to expedite shipment of more supplies into the country.



With support from WHO, 53 metric tonnes of WHO medical supplies were flown to Mazar-i-Sharif

- **COVID-19:** So far, Afghanistan has reported 153,626 cases of COVID-19 and 7,144 deaths with a PCR positivity rate of around 18%. Some 382 new cases (22.1% positivity) of COVID-19 and 23 new deaths were reported last week. This is a 31% decrease in cases and 43% decrease in deaths compared to the week before. Decrease in cases is linked to a significant reduction in testing and reporting because of the recent insecurity. A 36% decrease in testing was reported last week compared to the week before.



WHO RESPONSE

1. PLANNING

- WHO is coordinating with Health Cluster partners to map out the number of facilities each partner can support to ensure a coordinated response to sustaining the 538 prioritized health facilities.

2. LOGISTICS AND SUPPLIES

- With support from WFP, a shipment containing 780 emergency health kits and 50 kits to treat severe acute malnutrition in children, was flown into Mazar-i-Sharif 6 September. The supplies are enough to cover the urgent health needs of 780,000 people and provide treatment to 2500 acutely malnourished children with health complications.
- The urgently needed health supplies flown to Mazar-i-Sharif airport on 30 August, through the support of the Government of Pakistan have been delivered to 37 health facilities across 28 provinces so far. Remaining deliveries will be completed this week. The shipment of supply is enough to cover the health needs of 200,000 people.
- WHO delivered 26 units of different modules of medical kits to health facilities in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces. The supplies are enough to cover the urgent needs of 26,000 people, provide 200 minor and major surgeries and treat 200 cases of cholera.



WHO medical supplies being delivered to health facilities in in Mazar-i-Sharif and Kabul



3. COORDINATION - HEALTH CLUSTER

- The Health Cluster and Nutrition Cluster are assessing feasibility of joint programming. Partners will be advised to ensure the delivery of an integrated package of health and nutrition services at priority health facilities.
- The Health Cluster is coordinating with partners to ensure the scale up of their emergency health response complements the on-going efforts of the Cluster. Partners are expected to support community level interventions, strengthen maintenance of health facilities through supporting the health workforce, providing medicines and supplies and supporting ambulances for referrals.

4. COVID-19

- As part of efforts to scale up COVID-19 vaccination, WHO replenished COVID-19 vaccine stock in Nimroz province. Efforts are underway to send more vaccines to other provinces to ensure they are used before expiring in November.

HEALTH NEEDS

- Urgent support needed from donors and the international community to ensure continuity of health facilities affected by the funding pause to the Sehatmandi project.
- Food and medical supplies remain short in the country. Delays in shipment due to airport disruptions continue to be a major hurdle in rapidly in getting health and other humanitarian supplies into the country.
- The COVID-19 vaccine available in the country will expire in November 2021. There is an urgent need to scale-up the COVID-19 response, especially vaccination.

WHO RECOMMENDATION

- Donors to immediately identify and operate a flexible funding mechanism to resume their funding to the most critical humanitarian needs and continuation of the Sehatmandi project. The international community must also step-up humanitarian funding to meet the rapidly rising health needs triggered by the recent insecurity.
- Health partners to work closely with humanitarian donors to sustain the critical life-saving health services provided by the 538 priority health facilities across the country to minimize maternal, child and other avoidable morbidities and mortalities.
- UN and international partners to continue exploring options for sustaining and expediting a humanitarian airbridge and road transportation option.



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