

Situation update, 6 September



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.

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