



AFGA Newsletter

Third Quarter 2022



AFGA Organized Its 51st General Assembly Meeting

August 14, 2022 – Kabul: Afghan Family Guidance Association (AFGA) organized its 51st General Assembly Meeting at the Safi Landmark Hotel in Kabul. The meeting was attended by the general assembly volunteer members, the AFGA Board of Directors and management team, and representatives from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH).

The meeting started with reciting a few verses from the Holy Quran. Afterward, Dr. Nasrin Oryakhil, the board chairperson, welcomed the participants and reviewed the meeting agenda, which the general assembly members approved with no addition.

Dr. Abdullah Fahim, the former Senior Advisor of the MoPH and former AFGA Board member, talked about the AFGA operation, activities, and its vital role in the country.

Mr. Najibullah Samim, the CEO, and Dr. Mohammad Ajmal Alkozai, the Program Manager of AFGA, presented the

achievements and financial position of AFGA in 2021 and the activities plan for the year 2022. They also reviewed the AFGA's current projects' activities, including the Core Fund, UNFPA, NORAD, and Stream-III.

Mr. Najibullah Samim admired the ceaseless efforts of AFGA employees during 2021/2022. The General Assembly members also appreciated the efforts and congratulated the AFGA Board and management for the achievements.

The consultants presented the proposed amendments to the AFGA constitution. After a short discussion, the general assembly members approved the modifications in the constitution.

In the end, Dr. Nasrin Oryakhil, the board chairperson, concluded the meeting with her closing remarks and pinpointed the upcoming general assembly meeting date.



Establishment of an Integrated Youth Center at Ataturk Hospital

Through the financial support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in September 2022, AFGA established an Integrated Youth Center in Ataturk Hospital in Kabul. This has been the result of the frequent meetings of the AFGA management team and the UNFPA senior officials during the second quarter of the year.

With the establishment of Youth Centers, AFGA aims to capitalize on the UNFPA pilot experience in Afghanistan to establish Youth Health Corners integrated with health facilities. The Youth Health Center will be a one-stop midpoint in the hospital to provide youth-friendly services and encourage adolescents (specifically young women and girls) to access Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), health lifestyles information, and referral services.

The Youth Center will provide health information to adolescent boys and girls and raise their awareness to reduce the risks of early and unwanted pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and vulnerability to endangerments of tobacco, alcohol, and other drug usages. On several occasions, young

girls subjected to child marriage get counseling around family planning methods and referral services. The services are provided by trained staff, including youth educators.

AFGA, in coordination with UNFPA and Ataturk Hospital, will design specific and compelling awareness-raising campaigns and referral mechanisms that will be adopted in the youth center.

Furthermore, the youth center will provide comprehensive programs on adolescent, youth, and child marriage, community mobilization via peer educators, and enhance community engagement by activating the youth peer educators.

Moreover, AFGA will identify and engage with a minimum of five youth-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to involve them in the youth-led initiatives to provide AFGA with the ideas to be considered in the youth center. AFGA will organize these sessions and provide logistical support. AFGA will also provide seed funding to selected CSOs for their expenses concerning the program activities assigned to them.

LARC Training on Family Planning and Reproductive Health

With the financial support of UNFPA and technical support of MoPH, AFGA planned to conduct Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) training for 350 Community Outreach Midwives (COMs) in central and western regions during the year 2022.

To this end, AFGA organized the first round of LARC training in June 2022 in Kabul and Herat provinces. Midwives from Ghazni and Logar provinces received the training in Rabia Balkhi Maternity Hospital in Kabul, and midwives from Badghis, Ghor, and Farah provinces received the training in Herat.

As of September 2022, AFGA conducted 24 rounds of LARC training (16 in Kabul and eight in Herat), attended by 306 COMs from the neighboring provinces under the coverage of AFGA.

During the trainings, the midwives were trained to provide quality Intrauterine Contraceptive Device (IUCD), reproductive health, family planning, and implant services to the clients.

Through these trainings, AFGA aims to enhance the capacity of midwives in family planning and reproductive health.

"I am grateful to the UNFPA project and AFGA for conducting the LARC training. During the 6-days training, I learned to use the IUCD, implant, and Sayanapress services and to provide quality health services to the clients."

Shahnaz Halimi,
Midwife in Ghazni Maternity Hospital



Y-Peer Training of Trainers

AFGA conducted a 6-days Y-Peer Training of Trainers (ToT) in Kabul during September 10 – 15, 2022. 30 female Y-Peer participated in this training. The training focused on adolescents in humanitarian settings, youth, family planning, quality of time, decision-making, healthy lifestyle, mental health, HIV, child marriage, effective communication, and public speaking.

The training aimed to enhance the participants' knowledge on the course outlines, improve the capacity of trainers and peer educators in delivering trainings, and promote youth-led initiatives and innovative programs.

Adolescents and youth in Afghanistan comprise a large group whose power and engagement could benefit positive community changes and their health

and well-being. Building on this enormous power, utilizing an effective and engaging education approach in non-formal settings is crucial where evidence-based peer education capacity building can fill the gap.

The Y-PEER network in Afghanistan has been actively working since 2016 and has trained thousands of youths. However, since 2021 the number of active members and trained professionals has reduced drastically.

Through the support of UNFPA and AFGA, Y-PEER Afghanistan Network nationally organizes the ToT on peer education to equip young people with skills to promote health and well-being initiatives with their peers on the community level.



Refresher Training on IPES and MISP

Under the NORAD-funded project, AFGA conducted a series of trainings on the Integrated Package of Essential Services (IPES) and MISP for midwives of different provinces. 76 COMs from Kabul, Logar, Parwan, Kapisa, Nangarhar, Laghman, Balkh, and Samangan provinces received the trainings in three phases.

The first training was conducted during September 26 - 28, 2022, for 28 midwives of Laghman and Nangarhar provinces in Jalalabad city of Nangarhar, followed by the second training that was conducted for 30 midwives of Parwan and Kapisa provinces in Charikar city of Parwan during September 28 - 30, 2022.

The third training was conducted for 18 midwives of Kabul and Logar provinces in Kabul during October 3 - 5, 2022.

The trainings aimed to enhance the capacity of midwives in SRH, MISP, and Quality of Care (QoC) to help mothers and newborns in emergency delivery situations and provide quality health services to the clients.

AFGA will continue organizing such trainings for the midwives of other provinces too.



AFGA Conducted Sayanapress Training



Supported by the UNFPA, during the third quarter of the year, AFGA conducted a series of training programs on Sayanapress for the Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Logar, Bamyan, Daikundi, and Ghazni provinces.

The main purpose of the training was to train the CHWs to know the overall health conditions of the mothers in the country, the prevention of mothers' and newborns' death, and the importance of distance between the deliveries.

In the first training that was conducted in Logar province, 38 CHWs participated, and in the second training conducted in Bamyan province, 197 CHWs participated.

In the third and fourth trainings, 118 CHWs of Daikundi province and 82 CHWs of Ghazni province received the trainings.

AFGA organizes capacity-building training programs for CHWs and Community Outreach Midwives (COMs) to enable them to provide high-quality health services to communities all over the country.

Collaboration with Private Universities

September 28, 2022: AFGA's Integrated Youth Center team signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ghalib and Rana Universities officials in Kabul. Through this MoU, AFGA will provide capacity-building programs on preventing child marriage, Gender Based Violence (GBV), and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) to 60 male and female students of the mentioned universities.

Based on the MoU, the universities will introduce more interested students to this program upon completion of the first round of the trainings.

Supported by UNFPA, the integrated Youth Center of AFGA is committed to providing capacity-building programs on the abovementioned topics.

As of September 2022, two training programs were organized for 30 students at the Ataturk Hospital in Kabul. The participants learned about preventing child marriage, GBV, and SRH.

At the end of the training programs, the participants appreciated AFGA's efforts in organizing such influential capacity-building events.

AFGA aims to continue its bilateral cooperation in organizing capacity-building programs with other universities and academic institutions too.



Governance Reform Workshop

Mr. Najibullah Samim, the CEO of AFGA, participated in the Governance Reform Workshop organized by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in Bangkok - Thailand, during September 15-16, 2022.

The IPPF member associations who had completed the first and second phases of the Governance Strengthening Initiatives were among the workshop participants. During different workshop sessions, participants from various countries shared their experiences and best practices on diverse aspects of the member associations' Governance.

Mr. Najibullah Samim presented the AFGA's experience during the workshop and actively participated in the discussions.

Based on the feedback from the participants, the workshop was of great learning for them, and they will practice the takeaways soon after the seminar.





Youth Conclave Event on The Effects of Harmful Traditional Practices

Supported by AFGA and managed by the Afghanistan Center of Excellence (ACE), the Youth Conclave Event titled “The Effects of Harmful Traditional Practices” took place on July 31, 2022, in Kabul. The event helped the participants meet each other in one place and exchange ideas, share learnings, engage with media and government officials, and develop advocacy objectives for SRH. The discussions revolved around marriage and the bad manners of society, mental health awareness, mental health stigma, and the barriers to mental health care.

Various key findings were drafted using the participatory approach in the event. Most of the participants emphasized on:

- The role of government in creating job opportunities for youth to decrease mental health issues and to provide orientations on mental health through workshops.
- The community elders and influencers should try to change evil customs at weddings.
- MoPH should establish Youth Mental Health Spaces at the community level.

- The donors and the developmental sector should allocate more funds and grants to cater to the needs of mental health issues awareness among youth.

Youth Conclave Event is a national platform for youth to self-represent, collaborate, discuss SRH, develop national-level advocacy agenda on youth SRH matters, facilitate the gatherings of various stakeholders interested in ensuring adolescents' access to SRH, and build avenues for partnership and future collaboration. It also aims to seed youth-led and youth-centric advocacy and programming on SRH in the region.



AFGA Established the First FHH in Balkh Province

Under the NORAD-funded project, AFGA launched a Health Center in Ghulam Jan district of Balkh province. The Family Health House (FHH) in this district offers quality health services such as Antenatal Care/Postnatal Care (ANC/PNC), Family Planning (FP), childbirth delivery and growth monitoring, screening and referring, and counseling services to the children below 5 years of age who have critical health conditions.

Bibi Hangama, a midwife of Ghulam Jan FHH, offers 24-hour health services to the women and children in the village, who are mainly poor and are deprived of primary health services. Besides, Bibi Hangama provides counseling services on clean dressing, proper nutrition, and hygiene. Furthermore, she provides health education to the village people for an hour daily.

Ghulam Jan village is one of the 137 villages in Balkh province where 1,060 families live. The nearest health center to this village is 15 KM far, equivalent to a three-hour walk for a pregnant woman.

People of this village have been deprived of health services and health centers for decades. Hundreds of mothers lost their lives due to lack of health facilities, and still, a high percentage of mothers die during childbirth.

By launching the Ghulam Jan FHH, the first solid step is being taken by AFGA and IPPF to provide quality health services to the people in this village.

Under the Norad-funded project, AFGA has established 15 FHHs in different districts of Balkh province that provide health services to vulnerable populations in white areas.

“This is the first time that the people of Ghulam Jan village consider themselves the owner of a health center. They are thrilled and grateful to AFGA for launching the FHH.”

Bibi Hangama
Balkh COM

Humanitarian Aid Packages Distribution to Flood-Affected Families

September 25, 2022: Through the financial support of UNFPA, AFGA distributed humanitarian aid packages to 50 families affected by floods in Dalli and Chonkar villages of Shortapa district in Balkh province. These villages are close to the Amu River, an extremely vulnerable area. Thousands of people suffer from losses and injuries every year and are displaced due to heavy floods. People living in these villages are mainly busy with farming and carpet weaving.

The humanitarian aid packages distributed to the flood-affected families included dignity kits, flour, oil, rice, blankets, tents, household/kitchen items, hygiene, and some cash.



It is the third time AFGA is distributing dignity kits for internally displaced families in Balkh province. The purpose of distributing the humanitarian aid packages is to help the affected families return to their everyday lives.

Residents and local authorities in Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital city of Balkh province, expressed their happiness and gratitude towards AFGA's humanitarian assistance to the flood-affected families.



A Smart Survey Conducted on Public Nutrition Sector in Logar

In coordination with the Action Against Hunger (AAH) and the Public Health Department of Logar province, AFGA conducted a Smart Survey on the public nutrition sector of Logar.

As reported by the Provincial Manager of AFGA in Logar, six professional teams equipped with technical measuring devices surveyed 67 villages of Logar province in 12 working days. He added that the survey aimed to collect figures and statistics on the nutrition, mortality, and health status of children under five years old and female caregivers.

According to the AAH officials, the results from the survey show that nutrition is on average. Compared to the last survey conducted in 2018, nutrition has increased by 2%.

Mr. Hafiz Rahman Qaderi, the Head of the Public Health Department of Logar, thanked the partner institutions and surveyors for their tremendous efforts and was happy with the survey's positive results.

Response to Earthquake-Affected Population

On June 22, 2022, at 01:30 am - local time, a 5.9 magnitude (6.1 magnitude as per BBC) earthquake struck the southern region of Afghanistan, impacting Paktika and Khost provinces. The earthquake recorded at a depth of 10 kilometers, was reportedly felt in neighboring provinces, including Kabul, and Pakistan and India.

To this end, through the financial support of IPPF, AFGA planned to provide the Minimal Initial Services Package (MISP) to Giyan and Spera districts. Starting in July 2022, AFGA continued providing MISP for three months.

The AFGA Stream-III project team operated through two fixed and two mobile clinics in Paktika and Khost provinces. In each fixed clinic, one gynecologist, a midwife, a medical doctor, a nurse, and two security guards worked. In addition, each mobile clinic had one medical doctor, a midwife, and a driver who carried them to remote and hard-to-reach areas to provide MISP services.

Additionally, AFGA distributed Clean Delivery Kits to visibly pregnant women and dignity kits to 150 vulnerable women and girls affected by the crisis. AFGA also supported its two fixed clinics with five kits (RH-kit 5) for treating Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and three Clinical Delivery Assistance (CDA) kits (RH-kit 6) for better services provision in the target areas.



With the initial target to reach out to 20,000 clients in three months, the project team visited 42,477 clients and provided 99,531 services, showing a remarkable overachievement.

The services provided by AFGA proved to be very effective, where the communities and local authorities are quite happy.

AFGA continued the provision of services for another 15 days (till October 15, 2022) by receiving a no-cost extension approval from the IPPF. AFGA is committed to instant response to such disasters as and when they happen.

"AFGA helped us a lot; they provided health services to our children, women, and men in critical situations. Before the arrival of AFGA, our health issues remained untreated here, and we had to take our patients to Khost or Paktia provinces, which was very challenging due to the mountainous area."

Zemarai
Paktika, Giyan Resident





Samina Received Health Services in Critical Situations

On August 25, 2022, a mother and her 18-months child “named Samina” referred to Ghulam Jan FHH with signs and symptoms of diarrhea, nausea, persistent anorexia, weight loss, persistent crying, and lethargy. After taking the child's history, she was registered with the diagnosis of Severe Acute Malnutrition SAM.

The child's height and weight were measured on the first visit, where the weight and Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) were 7.6 kg and 10.9 cm respectively.

Bibi Hangama, the FHH midwife, visited the child and provided the necessary health and counseling services, including good and proper nutrition, better hygiene, and the use of medicine. The midwife advised the mother to bring Samina for adequate screening and growth monitoring every week.

Moreover, Samina was referred to the nearest primary health center (Balkh Hospital) to receive further health services and the nutrition package of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food RUTF "plumpy nuts". However, since Samina's family is poor and cannot

afford the daily transportation to Balkh Hospital, it was recommended for them to take plumpy nuts with an appetite test daily under the midwife's supervision.

Samina's mother comes to Ghulam Jan FHH with joy and enthusiasm every day and witnesses her child gains weight. Bibi Hangama says: “Samina is the first patient of Ghulam Jan FHH and her mother comes to this FHH every morning, which shows the quality health services of the FHH and people's trust on it.”

After a month, with the regular checkups in place, Samina's weight and MUAC increased to 8.1 kg and 11.3 cm respectively, which shows rapid improvement and well nutrition of the child. *“This is a great and pleasant news for us. We are thrilled and thankful to Ghulam Jan FHH services that saved our daughter's life and treated her in the best possible way.”* - Samina's family

COM's Counselling Changed Father's Negative Mindset about Female Infant

Every morning that I was conducting the ANC and PNC health training for women, a young woman was attending the training and leaving early without referring to the midwife for taking medicine or advice. This situation made me doubtful of the woman, so I tried to find out what was happening.

One day when I was registering the woman in training, I started talking with her. It was apparent from her face that she was hiding something; therefore, her eyes were tearful. I started a friendly conversation with her and tried to gain her trust. I told her about the high level of confidentiality on the COMs and the project. At the end of our first session, I told her the date and time of our next meeting. But she did not attend the training nor the meeting. I thought that my efforts were not sufficient to gain her trust.

A few days later, she attended the training again. She asked me to have a private meeting. I warmly welcomed her, and after checking her up, I asked about the reason for her absence. This time she could not stop herself and constantly cried. After some time, she started to tell her story.

“My name is Mah Pari, and I am pregnant. I have two daughters, and if I give birth to the third, my husband will divorce me. After the ultrasound checkup, the doctor told me that I bear a baby girl. Therefore, I am afraid to share the result with my husband. The reason that I leave the training early is that I memorize the topics you are discussing in the training and I try to share those points with my husband in order to convince him about the possibility of having a third baby girl. But my husband still has a negative idea about baby girls and says that he will marry another woman in case I give birth to another girl. My husband believes that new medications such as Folic Acid tablets have caused the women to bear female infants.”

While hearing her painful story, I was crying too. I promised her that we would do our best to bring positive changes to this negative culture and her husband's mindset. I assured her that our project has been able to change similar beliefs in men during the project cycle.

I scheduled several consultation sessions with her husband, and fortunately, after a couple of weeks, I changed the man's belief about having baby girls.

“Mah Pari's husband is now aware that their future infant is a princess. Surprisingly, the man brings his wife for ANC checkups on time. He persists that we should prescribe more Folic Acid and other medicines for Mah Pari to deliver a healthy child.”

Mia Gul Ibrahimi
Community Outreach Midwife
Herat Province





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