

New Year Congratulatory Message from ASMO Executive Director

On behalf of myself and ASMO Management Team, I would like to congratulate all ASMO staff and their respected families on the auspicious occasion of Nowruz. For thousands of years, this has been a time to gather with family and friends and welcome a new spring and a new year. The celebration of Nowruz goes back to thousands of years in time. Nowruz is a time of joy and festivity among different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and geographic groups. This special occasion helps bring people together in its spirit of joy, friendship, compassion, co-existence, and solidarity. The year 1398 is ahead of us. In this year as always, there are both opportunities and threats. Everyone should make efforts so that we can benefit from the opportunities of this year in the real sense of the word and so that at the end of the year, our organization witnesses a tangible difference compared to the beginning of the year. We are hopeful that the New Year in Afghanistan, brings renewed hope, stability and prosperity for our great Afghan nation. Happy Nowruz! May 1398 take you on the path to glory where all your endeavors become glorious and your life becomes a success story. Happy Nowruz! Wishing you a year that marks the beginning of remarkable era of success and happiness in your life.

Thank you and I wish you a very happy Nowruz.



Success Story (Modern family planning methods outreach through Mosque Meetings)

In Afghanistan, religious leaders are one of the credible links to population for conveying health messages including Family Planning Messages. Reinforcement of health messages through religious leaders, increase health products acceptability and use. Mullah Sahib Mirwais, a local religious leader the Imam of Qoba Mosque, and the head of Qoba female Madrasa (Religious School) in Kabul who is teaching 18 – 50 females on daily basis, is a role model in spreading family planning messages and has become a link between outreach family planning campaigns of Afghan Social Marketing Organization (ASMO) and the target population in the community. He attended into one of our Mosque meetings. Conducting meetings at mosques for male worshipers is an initiative through which ASMO is spreading awareness, creating demand for family planning products, involving head of families on maternal & child health programs trying to remove myths and misconceptions from the prospective of Islamic guidelines and provide information on family planning methods. At the end of the meeting, he politely requested ASMO's Mosque Meeting Facilitator (MMF) to conduct a similar session to his Madrasa students as well. Based on his request ASMO conducted a separate session through its female facilitators to his Madrasa students which was quite productive and brought about positive feedbacks. According to Fakhria Fakhrazad, ASMO's Promotion Agent, "lack of adequate information is creating wrong perceptions about family planning that can be mitigated through social behavior change communication initiatives within the Afghan Communities taken by ASMO under USAID Funded SHOP Plus Afghanistan Project".



ASMO Celebrates 8th March, International Women's Day

ASMO celebrated the International Women's Day in its head office on March 10, 2019. The event was attended by Dr. Ebrahim Heidar, ASMO Executive Director, Mr. Soumitra Ghosh, Chief of Party for SHOPS Plus Project, Ms. Elaha Popalzai, member of ASMO Board of Directors, and the rest of ASMO management team and the staff. Dr. Ebrahim Heidar, Mr. Soumitra Ghosh, Ms. Elaha Popalzai, and Mr. Moheb Ali Yawar (ASMO Operation Director) congratulated the courageous Afghan women for International Women's Day respectively and spoke about the achievements of Afghan women, the need for their full participation in the Afghan community, and stressed on the importance of observing women rights, gender equality, and ensuring a safe working environment to the female staff of ASMO. The ceremony ended up with the distribution of gifts to ASMO's female staff and taking celebratory photos.



Modern Birth Spacing Methods

Afghanistan has one of the world's highest fertility rates and, related to this, an infant mortality rate far higher than its South Asian neighbors. Contraception enhances child spacing, improves women's safety in child birth and, as a result, reduces maternal, infant and child mortality. According to World Health Organization (WHO) there are various Modern Birth Spacing Methods of which we want to introduce two methods here while the rest of the methods will be explained in the coming newsletters.

Contraceptive methods					
No	Method	Description	How it Works	Effectiveness to Prevent Pregnancy	Additional Benefits
01	Khoshi Combined oral contraceptives (COCs) or "the pill"	Contains two hormones (estrogen and progestogen)	Prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)	>99% with correct and consistent use 92% as commonly used	Reduces risk of endometrial and ovarian cancer
02	Khoshi injectable (Progestin only injectable - DMPA)	Injected quarterly into the muscle, contains Medroxyprogesterone acetate	Prevents the release of eggs from the ovaries (ovulation)	>99% with correct and consistent use 97% as commonly used	Protects against Endometrial cancer, Uterine fibroids and reduces symptoms of Endometriosis

Product high light: Iron and Folic Acid Tabs (Taqwia Khon)

According to WHO, It is estimated that more than 40 % of pregnant women worldwide are anemic. At least half of this anemia burden is assumed to be due to iron deficiency. Pregnant women require additional iron and folic acid to meet their own nutritional needs as well as those of the developing fetus. Deficiency in iron and folic acid during pregnancy can potentially impact the health of the mother, her pregnancy, as well as fetal development negatively. To address this need, ASMO is offering Ferrous Sulfate + Folic Acid tablets with the branded name of Taqwia Khon throughout Afghanistan to the Afghan mothers and pregnant women to avoid iron deficiency during their pregnancies.

Benefits of Taqwia Khon Tablets:

- Play a vital role in the healthy development of the fetus in mother's abdomen during pregnancy.
- Can help prevent/treat iron deficiency anemia.
- It makes liver stronger and resister.
- Prevents dry skin and women menstrual problems caused by anemia.



National Family Planning Summit; renewing commitment to the family planning program

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan conducted a one day National Family Planning Summit in collaboration with USAID, UNFPA Afghanistan and other international health partners and stakeholders in Government Media and Information Center, Kabul, on February 02, 2019 where Dr. Ebrahim Heidar (ASMO Executive Director) and Dr. Khyber Khishki (ASMO Social Marketing Manager) also attended the summit to represent ASMO. The Government of Afghanistan has identified family planning as one of its key priorities. The low level of family planning use poses a threat to maternal and child health, household incomes and national economic development.

"Due to a high fertility rate, around half of country's population is under 15 years of age. Continuing with the same fertility trend will increase the youth bulge. Given our limited resources, it would be difficult to provide opportunities to fulfil the potential of all the young people," says Dr. Ferozudin Feroz, the Minister of Public Health.

The summit aims to mobilize the political commitment and leadership of government in coordination with other partners to enable investments for increased access to quality family planning commodities and services in Afghanistan. The event brought together relevant government ministries, members of parliament, UN agencies, donors, civil society, the media, non-governmental organizations and religious leaders.

The Government of Afghanistan, USAID and UNFPA as well as national and international health partners renewed their commitment to reach the most vulnerable people with family planning services in order to ensure universal access and address unmet needs.

"Universal access to voluntary family planning services can reduce maternal deaths by as much as three quarters and infant deaths by a fifth," says Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi, UNFPA Afghanistan Country Representative. "Investing in family planning is also part of a larger effort to improve women's education, employment and socio-economic progress. It's about a new path to sustainable development."



ASMO Participated into two national events of Farmer's Festival in Kabul and Nawruz Festival in Mazar-e-Sharif

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) hosted farmers' festival and 22nd Spring Exhibition from March 22-26 in Kabul's Badam Bagh Fairground where many agricultural producers, cooperatives, retailers, wholesalers and agribusinesses shown their products to the visitors to attract more customers and grasp new opportunities. In addition, people from across Afghanistan will gather in Mazar-e-Sharif city from March 20-26 to attend the Gul-e-Surkh Festival and celebrate the New Year.

Availing the opportunity, ASMO social marketing team has placed separate boots both in Badam Bagh Fairground and Mazar-e-Sharif to promote ASMO branded products, spread awareness on family planning and maternal child health, distribute promotional materials and products to the target customers / visitors. Its worth-mentioning that; both male and female visitors found the information and ASMO branded products quite useful and expressed their interest of using and advocating others to use such products for family planning and maternal and child health purposes. Additionally, ASMO also installed a FP Counseling boot, where interested couples were provided with detailed information on FP methods.



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