NEONATAL PALLIATIVE CARE IN AFGHANISTAN

Mohammad Fahim Omar[1], Zabihullah Kashifia[1], Mohammad Khalid Ghalib[1], Dorothee Deslandes[1], *__Nikola Morton__[2]

[1]Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Kabul, Afghanistan; [2]MSF, Sydney, Australia

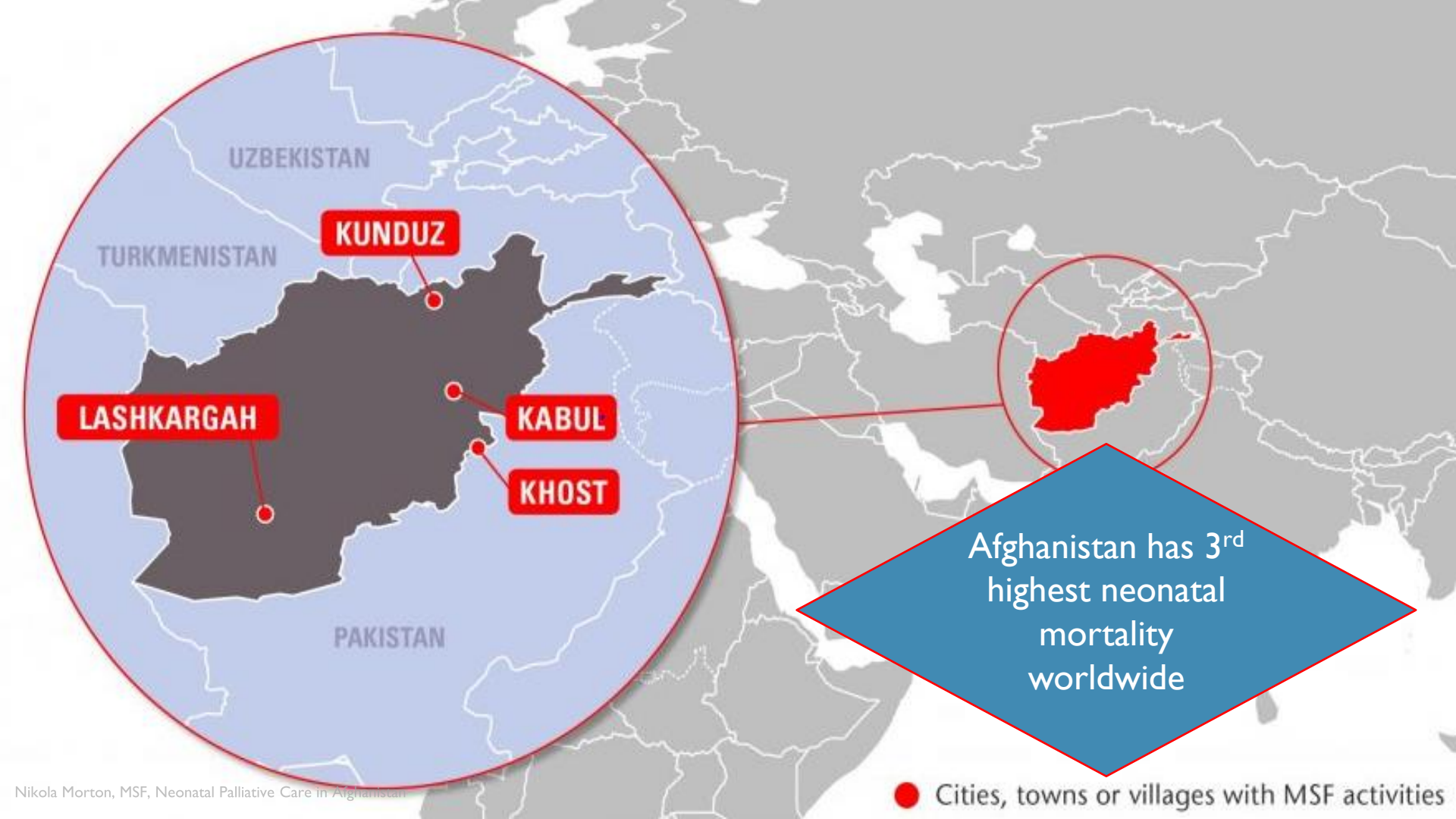
WHAT IS PALLIATIVE CARE??

According to WHO

- An approach that improves the quality of life of **patients** and **their families** facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness
- The prevention and relief of **suffering** including:
  - Early identification of suffering
  - Rapid assessment and treatment of pain & suffering
  - Consideration of physical, psychosocial and/or spiritual problems

~2.6 million neonatal deaths each year worldwide

Nikola Morton, MSF, Neonatal Palliative Care in Afghanistan


UZBEKISTAN
TURKMENISTAN
KUNDUZ
LASHKARGAH
KABUL
KHOST
PAKISTAN
Afghanistan has 3rd highest neonatal mortality worldwide
Cities, towns or villages with MSF activities

DASHT-E-BARCHI PROJECT, KABUL

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THE NEONATAL UNIT

- Extremely busy maternity, with 1200 -1500 deliveries per month!
- 20 bed neonatal unit + 5 bed KMC unit
- In 2018: 1355 neonatal admissions with overall mortality rate 4.8% (with mortality rate of 16.8% in <1500g)
- Intermediate level care
- Limited referral options for higher level of care available

BARRIERS TO PALLIATIVE CARE

New in Afghanistan

Legal issue?

Cultural and religious barriers

INITIAL STEPS

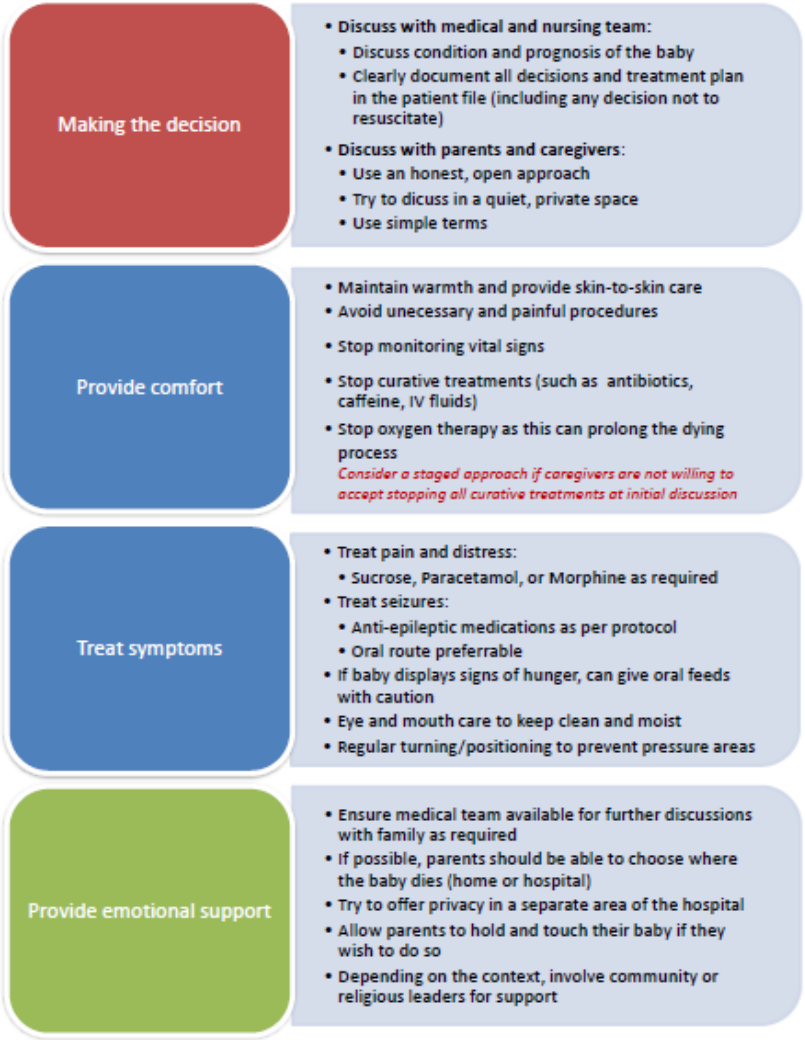
Staff sensitization

Engaging key stakeholders

Development of protocols

Training

PALLIATIVE CARE FRAMEWORK



SHIFT IN FOCUS FROM **CURATIVE CARE** TO **COMFORT CARE**

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COMMUNICATION

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Focus on content:

1. Diagnosis
2. Short-term survival
3. Long-term survival
4. Long-term impairment or illness
5. Burden of treatment

Communication with clinical team & caretakers

TEAM APPROACH

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The Palliative Care Committee:

1. Oversight of palliative care cases:
   - support for clinical decisions
   - caretaker counselling

2. Championing palliative care in the project

SYSTEMATIC PROVISION OF NEONATAL PALLIATIVE CARE

Medical assessments of babies

Communication within the clinical team (nursing/medical)

Communication within Palliative Care committee

Communication with parents

Decision taken

Ongoing support provided

ONGOING CHALLENGES!!

"This is an issue that affects literally every one on the planet. We would all like our lives, and the lives of those we love, to end peacefully and comfortably."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu