LLF LIFE-SAVING HEALTHCARE PROJECT
Delivers Hope in Niger

Adversity and hardship stalk the vast desert plains of Niger where life in this landlocked West African nation is tough.

More than 80% of the country’s land lies in the Sahara. According to the UN, it is one of the least developed countries in the world – with an economy that relies on subsistence agriculture and a healthcare system that aims to cope with a growing population.

As the number of people in Niger grew, it exposed a heart-breaking statistic – appallingly high death rates for young mothers and their babies.

In 2015, there were 525 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births – way above a set maximum figure of 175.

Healthcare coverage across the country stood at less than 49%, with the uneven distribution even worse across the regions - from as low as 38% in Zinder to 45% in Dosso.

There was a severe shortage of midwives and obstetricians in addition to inadequately staffed and poorly equipped hospitals and training facilities.

All this formed a huge challenge for Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH) services, battling to safely deliver newborns and protect the health of mothers.
Starting in 2019, the Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF) of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) provided US$40 million to fund a three-year project to decrease these maternal and neonatal deaths by strengthening Niger’s health system and improving access to quality MNCH services.

More than 5,000 healthcare workers were trained to help communities across all 28 districts with the aim of providing MNCH care to 90% of pregnant women and overall benefitting approximately 9 million people.

At project completion, almost 1.9 million women of childbearing age will have access to quality MNCH services.

LLF, which partnered with the Government of Niger and global health agencies including UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, is funded by donors including:

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“Yesterday, an ambulance came to pick us up from our village to the hospital. Today, my wife and I have twins,” says one proud father in Dosso.

No better tribute to the success of this project than that of new parents with healthy babies.

The scale of the transformation of MNCH services across Niger is impressive:

- 9 million people across 28 districts will have improved access to quality integrated health services,
- 90% of pregnant women will have at least 4 prenatal consultations, compared with 37% previously,
- 80% of live births are attended by a skilled healthcare professional, compared with 29% previously,
- 65 health centres are equipped and operational,
- Over 5,000 healthcare workers including community health volunteers are trained,
- 4 MNCH training sites are equipped with upgraded referral and counter referral system,
- 55 ambulances are in service.
- 50 regional and district radio journalists trained as part of the social mobilization campaigns to disseminate awareness messages and create demand for improved MNCH services.

Chief Doctor Soumana Harouna said the ambulances have “greatly improved medical evacuations” especially in “the most remote areas”.

Summing up the lifechanging outcomes of the scheme, Senior Doctor in Charge, Dr. Yaye Katanga says:

“According to our observations in 2022, there has been a clear regression in maternal deaths, which is linked to the various activities that have been financed thanks to this project.”