

World Bank rolls out COVID vaccine funds for poor Asian nations

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Internally displaced Afghan girls at a mosque in Kabul amid the spread of COVID-19 disease during the holy month of Ramadan [Photo: Mohammad Ismail/Reuters]

Washington, March 20 (RHC)-- The World Bank has announced financing for Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal to vaccinate their populations against COVID-19.

Afghanistan will receive \$113 million – including \$60 million from the International Development Association (IDA), part of the Washington-based development lender that helps the world's poorest nations – to “deploy safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines,” according to the financial institution.

“The World Bank has worked closely with the Afghan government and development partners to respond effectively to COVID-19, improve testing and treatment, and strengthen the country's health system,” World Bank Country Director for Afghanistan Henry Kerali said.

“This additional financing is a major step forward to provide timely and equitable access to vaccines to millions of Afghans.” The funding package is aimed at vaccinating 17 percent of Afghans and helping the country recover from the pandemic, the lender said.

Through the IDA, the World Bank also approved \$500 million in Bangladesh and \$75 million for Nepal. “In addition to financing, the Bank is providing technical assistance and knowledge-sharing workshops for countries in South Asia on different aspects of designing and deploying fair and equitable vaccine strategies,” the statement said.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal are among Asia's poorest nations by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

In total, the World Bank said it had provided \$12 billion for developing countries to procure and distribute COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments.

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