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USING RELIGIOUS VALUES TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

VIDEO

WOMEN ON DONKEYS
MULLAHS

BIBI AT HOME / MARKET

BIBI ON CAMERA

AUDIO

NARRATION

Motherhood in Afghanistan is more dangerous than almost anywhere else; most births are at home, and one woman in eight dies during pregnancy or childbirth. Afghan religious leaders are now speaking out against this deadly neglect of women's health, using Islamic teachings. (16.5")

Qurban-Bibi knew she had to give birth in a hospital, since her previous delivery was by caesarean section. But to save money, her relatives took her to a local market instead. (10.5")

QURBAN-BIBI: (Afghan) **F**

"I pleaded with the men, 'I've got to go to the hospital.' But they said, 'Don't worry; God is kind. Everything will be okay.'" (9")

NARRATION

BIBI WITH FAMILY

It wasn't okay. Qurban-Bibi lost her baby and nearly bled to death. She also developed obstetric fistula, leaving her unable to control her bladder. (8")

INTRO TO MAULAWI AMANUDIN.
MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

Maulawi Amanudin of Afghanistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs says denying health care to women like Qurban-Bibi is un-Islamic, whether for reasons of poverty or propriety. (10")

MAULAWI AMANUDIN ON CAMERA

MAULAWI AMANUDIN: (Afghan) **M**
"Access to health services is an equal right." (3")

MOSQUE SESSIONS

NARRATION

A new initiative enlists Afghan mullahs to teach men and boys to protect the health and rights of their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters. It aims to reverse the legacy of decades of conflict and poverty. (13.5")

MEN AND BOYS LISTEN AT
MOSQUE

In Friday prayers and community meetings, the religious leaders preach about the harm done by denial of care, domestic violence, child marriage and spacing births too close together. (11.5")

Mawlawi Saddique Muslem, a senior Supreme Court official, helped develop the programme. (4")

SADDIQUE ON CAMERA

M. SADDIQUE MUSLEM: (Afghan) **M**
"Having a healthy mother and a healthy family is what it means to have a healthy marriage in

Islam.” (5”)

NARRATION

MAULAWI ABDULWALI TALKS IN
MOSQUE

Maulawi Abdulwali leads the training in Badakhshan, which has the highest maternal mortality in Afghanistan. (6”)

MAULAWI ABDULWALI: (Afghan) **M**

ABDULAWALI ON CAMERA

“Because of the war and ongoing tribal disputes, most people live in ignorance. But when issues are raised in light of religious values, it has an impact.” (9”)

NARRATION

WOMAN SHOWS BURNS ON HER
ARM

Reducing violence against women is a key aim. Marzia’s story is not uncommon: her mother-in-law hit her while she was cooking, causing hot soup to burn her arm. (10.5”)

MEN IN MOSQUE

To curb violence in the home, the mullahs suggest ways of managing anger and resolving family conflicts. (6.5”)

MOTHERS IN BURKHAS WITH
CHILDREN

Religious teachings are also used to challenge the mistaken belief that Islam does not allow birth spacing. The average Afghan woman bears seven children, and only one couple in 20 uses contraception. (13”)

M. SADDIQUE MUSLEM: (Afghan) **M**

SADDIQUE ON CAMERA

“The Koran clearly states there should be 30 months between births to protect the health of children and mothers. When religious leaders and

communities understand that this is what the Prophet Muhammad says, misconceptions within families can be resolved.” (14.5”)

MULLAH AND PUPIL

NARRATION

Organizers hope that persuading men to oppose domestic violence and early marriage, practise birth spacing and ensure women’s access to health care will mean a higher quality of life for all Afghans. (11.5”)

UN LOGO

This report was produced by William A. Ryan and Marc Westhof for the United Nations.