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27 family planning projects given to NGOs

■ Rs 25 million approved, Rs 10 million released for NATPOW

By Vidya Rana

ISLAMABAD: The National Trust for Population Welfare (NATPOW) has awarded 27 projects to local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for reproductive health and family planning in remote areas of the country.

The inauguration of the formal implementation of these projects is likely to be held next week.

NATPOW is an autonomous body working under the Ministry of Population Welfare that was established by the late Benazir Bhutto. The trust remained latent for more than a decade until the current government reactivated it last year.

The government approved Rs 25 million from which Rs 10 million has been released to NATPOW with a pledge of Rs 436 million for the next five years. NATPOW, however, is in the process of reassessing the fund requirements, which may rise to Rs 950 million.

In the first phase, NATPOW scrutinised 27 NGOs working in remote areas of the country, including Gilgit-Baltistan and another 500 would be

involved gradually.

NATPOW would provide half a million rupees to each NGO on quarterly bases, but subject to their performance.

NATPOW Chairperson Suriya Baloch said, "We started this project with a meagre amount as the government is already facing a financial crisis. But we will get financial resources from other donors as well to meet the cost of the project".

Talking about the sustainability of the projects, Iftikhar Durrani, chief executive of NATPOW, told Daily Times that they would keep on assessing the performance of local NGOs through monitoring and evaluation system already in place.

"We will build the capacities of those who are working in the field to sensitise the couples about the significance of family planning and reproductive health.

Free contraceptive would be provided to the NGOs with a permission of selling them on minimum prices. This strategy would help the communities to own the services in letter and spirit", he concluded.