



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



AFGHANISTAN

COUNTRY PROFILE

After decades of war, Afghanistan is moving towards a more secure, stable, and prosperous future. With support from the U.S. government and the international community, Afghanistan has made tremendous gains in the past 15 years.

Significant challenges still remain. According to the World Bank, 39 percent of Afghans live in poverty and unemployment remains high. Roughly 55 percent of the population is under age 20 and an estimated 400,000 young Afghans enter the labor market each year. According to the United Nations World Food Programme, nearly one-third of the population is food insecure and many still lack access to basic services. Thousands of children still lack access to education and suffer from chronic malnutrition.

OUR WORK

USAID’s goal in Afghanistan is to promote a stable, inclusive, and increasingly prosperous country. During the past decade, Afghanistan has made remarkable development gains thanks to the whole-of-government efforts of the United States, the international partners, the Afghan government, and the Afghan people. The key elements of USAID’s strategy going forward call for sustaining the significant achievements in health, education, and for women; stimulating agriculture-led economic growth and fiscal sustainability; and supporting legitimate and effective Afghan governance.

COVER IMAGE: USAID/AFGHANISTAN



Two participants in a USAID-sponsored training are introduced to new cultivation techniques and technology.

PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

AGRICULTURE

The agriculture sector accounts for up to 40 percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product. Agriculture is critical to Afghanistan's food security and a driver of economic growth. The majority of Afghans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods and their family's sustenance. Prior to decades of conflict, Afghanistan's agricultural products earned a global reputation for excellence, particularly almonds, pomegranates, pistachios, raisins, and apricots. USAID partners with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock to strengthen Afghanistan's agricultural sector by creating jobs, increasing incomes and productivity, enhancing food security, and expanding opportunities to export Afghan goods to international markets.



A shop owner displays his products.

PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

ECONOMIC GROWTH

In Afghanistan, regulatory and legal hurdles, insecurity, and corruption threaten efforts to establish an inclusive, growing, and self-sustaining economy that attracts investment, promotes trade, and creates jobs. USAID is committed to continued Afghan economic growth by providing access to credit, facilitating business expansion and job creation, increasing market access, encouraging regional trade and integration, and promoting legal and regulatory reforms that attract new domestic and international investment.



Workers install equipment to erect an electricity tower.

PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

INFRASTRUCTURE

Decades of war, a harsh climate, and neglect left much of Afghanistan's infrastructure in rubble. In 2001, most rural villages lacked electricity, running water, or roads to link them to schools, health clinics and government services. Over the last decade, USAID has invested heavily in building and rehabilitating Afghan infrastructure. USAID is now focused on improving the ability of the Afghan government and the private sector to maintain and build upon these investments to expand access to energy for businesses and households, keep potable water systems flowing, care for hundreds of miles of highways and roads, and preserve facilities that offer important public services.



Residents line up in front of a polling center in Ghor province.
PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN



A healthcare worker treats a patient.
PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN



A high school teacher in Khost explains the importance of a microscope to his students.
PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

USAID is striving to enhance the legitimacy and performance of the Afghan government and Afghan public service institutions by supporting a robust civil society and independent media, improving governance and the rule of law, advancing transparent and fair electoral and political processes, and combatting corruption.

HEALTH

Although Afghanistan has seen significant improvements in its health sector since 2002, Afghanistan's public health system is beset by many challenges—tuberculosis, polio, poor maternal health, and one of the world's highest levels of child malnutrition. Development of the health sector continues to be a priority and is one of USAID's three key strategic objectives for the country. Working with the Afghan government and the private sector, USAID provides basic health care and essential hospital services while strengthening the public health system. USAID's health programs preserve and enhance gains made since 2002 while continuing to support Afghanistan in its efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, prevent tuberculosis-related deaths, tackle childhood malnutrition, improve the use of modern family-planning methods, and eliminate polio.

EDUCATION

In 2002, fewer than one million children and virtually no girls were in school in Afghanistan. The Afghan government, USAID, and international donors have worked closely to rebuild Afghanistan's education sector. Today, millions of children are enrolled in school; one out of three of them are girls. USAID has supported the Afghan government to deliver education throughout Afghanistan by training teachers, producing and distributing tens of thousands of textbooks, helping Afghan girls attend community-based education classes, and expanding higher education opportunities.



Attendees at a Promote graduation ceremony.
PHOTO: USAID/AFGHANISTAN

GENDER

USAID supports the women of Afghanistan by enabling them to access high quality healthcare and education and by building on the successes of the past 15 years to help them access credit and build careers through targeted job training. In 2014, USAID launched Promote—the largest women’s empowerment program in the Agency’s history—that advances opportunities for thousands of young Afghan women to become leaders in government, economy, and civil society. To address gender based violence, USAID supports the institutionalization of a treatment protocol developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health in order to provide high-quality and compassionate care to survivors.

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