



Afghanistan at the Crossroads

Beyond the Headlines

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world, and the least developed country in Asia. A country at the forefront of some of the world's most critical struggles, Afghanistan seeks to strengthen its healthcare, education and widespread development for life-changing improvement in people's overall quality of life.

While some areas of the country have experienced success in building democratic institutions since the fall of the formal rule of the Taliban, these institutions remain fragile. Insurgents, including a revived Taliban and Al-Qaeda, remain a serious threat, having claimed thousands of lives since 2001.

For millions of Afghans who fled the country because of insecurity, they live as refugees in neighboring Pakistan and Iran; thousands have been forcibly returned to their country, and many more face the same fate.

The statistics bring home the reality: According to the Human Development Index, Afghanistan ranks among the lowest in the world, at 174 out of 178 countries. Today:

- Life expectancy in Afghanistan is 43 years
- More than half of Afghan children are stunted
- One in four children die before their fifth birthday
- Only one in three Afghans has access to clean water
- Less than one in four adult Afghans is literate
- Only one in eight women can read



What You Can Do

- Stay informed about Afghanistan at: www.crs.org.
- Sign up for CRS' Legislative Network to receive information on global issues at www.crs.org/public-policy.
- Share this information with family and friends.
- Find out more about supporting these and other programs at 1-877-HELP-CRS.



Rebuilding Communities, Restoring Hope

Catholic Relief Services has supported vital humanitarian programs in Afghanistan since 1998. In 2001, CRS opened three offices in some of the most impoverished areas of the country to provide emergency shelter, food, relief and vocational training to returning refugees and destitute families who had suffered severely from drought, oppression and war. Today, CRS has offices in Kabul, Herat, Ghor and Bamayan.

CRS supports innovative, sustainable programs that help people rebuild their infrastructure and livelihoods, access education, enhance agricultural productivity, reduce the impact of natural and manmade disasters, and strengthen their means for self-sufficiency. All programs take place in collaboration with partners and communities to reach the poorest and most rural populations, without regard to gender, social status or religion.

CRS Programs in Afghanistan

Agriculture and Agro-enterprise: Supporting farmers in agricultural development, production and food security, identifying profitable crops, improving market linkages and business skills, and innovation with value-added processing.

Water Security: Promoting water and livelihood security interventions in drought-prone areas by improving the capture and retention of precipitation, upgrading irrigation systems, and addressing environmental degradation.

Community Based Education: Collaborating with rural communities in establishing schools, providing basic education for children, and facilitating literacy and accelerated education for women.

Women's Livelihoods: Assisting women's groups to develop businesses that process vegetables and fruits, market the products, and explore alternative income-generating livelihoods.

Catholic Relief Services is the international humanitarian organization of the U.S. Catholic Community, and provides relief and support in 100 countries and territories to people in greatest need, regardless of race, creed or nationality.

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