



USAID

AFGHANISTAN HEALTH SECTOR FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, cascading humanitarian and economic crises are threatening the hard-won social and development gains made over the last two decades. Amid significant humanitarian needs, Afghans face constant threats to their human rights, jeopardizing access to essential services, including health services, limiting opportunities to prosper and disproportionately barring Afghan women, girls, and other marginalized groups from full participation in society.

These complex challenges seep into all aspects of Afghan society, including in health. Afghanistan's health, water, and sanitation sectors are increasingly fragile, with Afghan women and girls facing disproportionately limited access to these services. Health assistance provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supports a network of health clinics that provides a basic health service package to more than 70 percent of the population. Our health assistance includes support for maternal and child health, reproductive health, tuberculosis, COVID-19 prevention and response, procurement of essential healthcare supplies and commodities, and private sector engagement. We also work closely with United Nations agencies, including the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in areas such as basic health service delivery, polio eradication, support for national disease surveillance and rapid response, immunizations, and water, sanitation, and hygiene. We use data to inform our work and reach locations where we can make the greatest impact.

OUR PRIORITIES AND IMPACT

USAID's health assistance in Afghanistan focuses on three primary objectives: preserve the health gains made in Afghanistan over the past 20 years, stabilize the healthcare system, and improve Afghans' overall health. Despite a complex, constantly shifting environment since the Taliban takeover, USAID remains committed to the people of Afghanistan and continues to reach Afghans across the country with essential health services.

Strengthening Afghanistan's health system remains a critical priority. Inadequate health facility infrastructure, far too few female health care workers, and a dearth of critical infrastructure have long constrained Afghanistan's health sector. Since the August 2021 Taliban takeover, new challenges have taken root. A worsening liquidity crisis, declining donor investments, and a more unpredictable operating environment further strain an already fragile health system. Against these immense challenges, USAID and donor partners worked together to prevent the sector's collapse and are focused on sustaining a resilient health system through the Health Emergency Response (HER) initiative. With funding from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), the HER initiative supports over 2,300 health facilities across all 34 provinces to provide basic health services. USAID is lead donor to the ARTF and has contributed over \$220 million to the ARTF for health sector activities alone since 2014.

USAID is leading donors and partners' efforts to stand-up Afghanistan's health sector, serving as co-chair of the Health Sector Thematic Working Group. Co-led by USAID, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization the working group coordinates partners' technical health and policy discussions to build a new Health Sector Transitional Strategy, 2023-2025. USAID partners served as lead writers for three of the strategy's technical sectors, including urban health, the private sector, and innovation. This strategy will shape donors' long-term strategic and operational investments in Afghanistan's health sector, a critical first step toward building a sustainable, resilient health system for the people of Afghanistan.

KEY 2022 RESULTS

- Through the ARTF, USAID improved the quality of the basic package of health services and essential package of hospital services in over 2,300 health facilities.
- USAID provided 5,614 health staff from 548 rural and 65 urban health facilities with training in several technical areas, including maternal, newborn and child health, nutrition, family planning, tuberculosis, and routine immunization.
- USAID facilitated the administration of more than 5.2 million doses of COVID vaccines.
- USAID established "nutrition corners" in 47 urban health facilities to screen and refer children for malnutrition treatment.
- More than 101,000 people in 42 locations gained access to safely managed drinking water, thanks to newly-constructed and -rehabilitated water supply facilities and systems.
- Thanks to the USAID-funded Rural Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene activity implemented by UNICEF, 1,129 communities were verified as open defecation free.