



AFGHANISTAN DEMOCRACY, GENDER, AND RIGHTS FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, cascading humanitarian and economic crises are reversing the hard-won social and development gains made over the last two decades. Amid significant humanitarian needs, Afghans face constant threats to their civic and human rights—including rights to education and free speech—jeopardizing access to essential services, limiting opportunities to prosper, and disproportionately barring Afghan women and girls from participation in society. Years of conflict and repressive Taliban policies drive additional complex democracy, gender, and human rights challenges such as the Taliban’s restrictions on women and girls’ access to education and work.

OUR PRIORITIES AND IMPACT

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is taking concerted action, working with partners in Afghanistan and around the world to preserve, promote, and protect the human rights of the Afghan people. USAID’s overarching goals in this sector are to promote the rights of women and girls, and protect victims of gender-based-violence, trafficking-in-persons, and early child marriage; strengthen and support Afghans’ basic freedoms of association by supporting civil society organizations and national non-governmental organizations; provide access to independent sources of information by

supporting media outlets and journalists; protect and promote human rights, especially those of ethnic and religious minority groups; and strengthen community resilience.

Empowering Afghan Women

Protecting and promoting women's rights to full civic participation and their access to education and essential services are at the core of all USAID programming in Afghanistan. Despite the Taliban's draconian policies that seek to erase women from society, USAID remains committed to uplifting and empowering women, providing a broad spectrum of tailored support and services. We work with Afghan civil society organizations to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, support women's livelihoods, give women a voice by supporting women-for-women media and women journalists, support women-focused civil society organizations and networks, and sponsor platforms to facilitate discussions on the challenges that disproportionately affect women.

Supporting Vulnerable Groups

Conflict, poverty, exclusionary policies, and the absence of the rule of law exacerbate vulnerabilities, especially for women and ethnic and religious minorities. USAID follows a rights-based approach and works closely with partners and civil society organizations to empower communities that face violence, protect victims of abuse, counter trafficking-in-persons, and raise public awareness to stave off abusive practices and provide services to those who need them.

Protecting Human Rights and Access to Information

Human rights activists and journalists in Afghanistan face constant threats to their lives. More and more civil society organizations and media outlets are forced to close, depriving citizens of needed services and accurate, fair, and transparent reporting. USAID is working to strengthen Afghans' access to independent sources of information. Despite increasing Taliban restrictions, USAID and donor partners continue to explore safe and effective ways to support journalists and ensure access to independent sources of information.

KEY 2022 RESULTS

- More than 3,600 women received health services, vocational training, literacy assistance, instruction in math, English, and computer science, and were offered psychosocial counseling services thanks to USAID-funded Family Resource Centers.
- USAID provided more than 40,000 people suffering from ongoing violence and its effects with food aid, medical assistance, and psychological assistance between 2018 and 2022.
- Building resilience in some of the poorest areas still reeling from decades of conflict, over 11,500 Afghans saw improved food security and livelihoods across 194 communities, thanks to community-based interventions that address some of the root causes of conflict.