



UNFPA Works to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled



Reproductive Health



Adolescents and Youth



Population Development



Gender

## Feature Story:

### Afghan Returnee Mothers' Urgent Need for Reproductive Health Care Services

"I examined the mother, only to find out that she had carried her dead fetus for weeks", said Alia Ayar, a UNFPA midwife providing obstetric emergency care in times of humanitarian crises across Afghanistan. "She suffered severe pains and fever and couldn't do the chores around the house, until the family (finally) decided to allow her to see a health service provider."

Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the world: 1291 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (AfDHS 2015).

**“ Approximately 4.5 million Afghans have limited or no access to basic health care services, UNOCHA HNO 2017. ”**

"The beautiful and rugged mountains of Afghanistan provide a big challenge for access to health facilities, especially for pregnant women seeking antenatal and delivery services", said Dr. Bannet Ndyabangi, UNFPA representative in Afghanistan. "This, combined with other social, cultural and economic factors contribute to increased maternal deaths and ill-health among women of reproductive age."

The causes of maternal deaths are many; from limited access to quality health services, to low knowledge about reproductive health, early/child marriage, multiple and consecutive pregnancies, shortages of female health care providers and many other cultural barriers hindering women's access to health services. Furthermore, the recent wave of returnees and the large number of IDPs is posing a further challenge on already over stretched health care facilities and health care professionals in the country.

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#### About UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund

UNFPA is the United Nations agency which leads global efforts to help ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA is mandated by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994, to reduce infant and child mortality, reduce neonatal and maternal mortality, and increase access to reproductive health services including family planning. The Cairo Consensus placed these population and development issues within a human rights based framework, and UNFPA is committed to integrating human rights into its work globally.

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## Reproductive Health

### UNFPA Mobile Health Team Helps Pregnant Woman to Safety from Floods

Under a heavy shower of rain, in a flooded remote village of Daikundi, 24 year old Khadija was stuck under a collapsed wall with no hope for help. Khadija lived with her two underage kids while her husband was away working in Iran.

Summer is the rainy season in the central highlands in Afghanistan with floods flowing down the mountains and at times sweeping away houses and farm land.

Daikundi, in the Afghan Central Highlands, is extremely difficult to reach throughout the year. There is heavy rain fall in the warm months and heavy snowfall in the winter months in addition to being located in a rugged terrain which results in the roads to most of the villages in this area being regularly blocked. With limited to no access to neighboring villages and with households that have limited or no access to any health facility, this area has some of the highest maternal and newborn mortality rates in the world.

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### Giving Life Costs Some Afghan Mothers their Life or a Life of Misery

"I didn't know what happened to me after I gave birth to my first child. I had uncontrollable discharge of faeces and urine," said Arifa, 22.

**“When I first met Arifa, she felt embarrassed, I knew she had been through a lot of suffering.”**

Arifa was afflicted by obstetric fistula, a child birth injury, usually caused by prolonged and/or obstructed labour. It is an injury that affects women who are among the most vulnerable populations in developing countries, mostly illiterate, poor, young women, living in rural areas with no access to healthcare facilities.

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## UNFPA Develops the First Midwifery Helpline in Afghanistan

Midwives save lives. If the need for midwives is met in Afghanistan, around two thirds of maternal and newborn deaths could be averted.

UNFPA is supporting the training of professional midwives in Afghanistan. Recently, UNFPA realized that due to the pressing needs, trained midwives were immediately deployed to work in the field after graduation. However midwives reported the need to acquire expert advice to manage complicated cases so the UNFPA devised a new Midwifery Helpline to help save the lives of more mothers in Afghanistan.

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## Introducing Long Acting Contraceptives Implants into Essential Medicine List

UNFPA Afghanistan's family planning programme has been working with a number of partners, including Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) of Afghanistan to promote family planning in the country. In line with these efforts UNFPA introduced the long acting contraceptive method, known as an implant which has been welcomed by many Afghan couples.

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“ Implant method was welcomed by many Afghan couples ”



## Adolescents and Youth

### UNFPA Supports the Convening of the First Youth Parliament in Afghanistan

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani inaugurated the first Youth Parliament in Afghanistan on 14th August 2016 at the National Parliament's upper chamber. The youth parliament was held from 14th – 17th August 2016 in Kabul. UNFPA supported the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA) and Wolesi Jirga to bring together 122 young men and women aged 18 – 30 from 34 provinces to the Afghan Parliament building to promote youth participation in decision making processes in the country.

Afghanistan has a young population, with 63 per cent below the age of 25 years and 43 per cent below the age of 15. Promotion of education, family planning and a decrease in infant and child mortality for both girls and boys, the country can realize a demographic dividend.

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## Population and Development

### “Investing in 10-Year-Old Girls Could Yield Huge Demographic Dividends, Pump Millions into Afghanistan’s Economy” UNFPA Flagship Report State of the World Population 2016

Forced and early marriage, child labour and other practices undermining girls’ health and rights threaten the world’s ambitious development agenda, warns UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, in The State of World Population 2016, released at the end of 2016. Afghanistan is one of the worlds most affected countries by these harmful practices. [Read More...](#)



### UNFPA Afghanistan helps develop the First National Population Policy for Afghanistan

UNFPA has been supporting the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to develop its national policies and strategies in alignment with the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Afghanistan’s national priorities. [Read More...](#)



## UNFPA Country Representative Visits UNFPA Field Sites

Dr. Ndyabangi visited UNFPA field projects in Bamyan and Herat Provinces to oversee and provide guidance on UNFPA work in the province.

In addition to monitoring UNFPA field work first hand, the visit also aimed to see the challenges facing the people and UNFPA operation on the ground.

“I am very happy to have the opportunity to visit Bamyan and Herat Provinces and see the circumstances under which UNFPA team and our partners work in the provinces”, said Dr. Ndyabangi, “This gives me and my colleagues at UNFPA a better picture of how to provide effective support to the delivery of services to the population.” [Read More...](#)



## Meaningful and Comprehensive Actions by Every Member of the Society to End Violence against Women (#EndVAW2016 / #16daysofactivism)

### National Conference: Gender-based violence key stakeholders to renew commitments to EndVAW

Kabul, 4 December 2016 – Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UNFPA-the United Nations Population Fund in Kabul came together to renew commitments to End Violence against Women and Girls in Afghanistan as part of the campaign for the 16-days-of-activism in Afghanistan, under the local theme of “Meaningful and Comprehensive Actions by Every Member of the Society to End Violence against Women”.

Gender-based violence is one of the most prevalent human rights abuses. Worldwide, an estimated 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. Violence against women and girls is prevalent in Afghanistan, where 1 in 2 ever married women has experienced physical violence since age 15 (AfDHS, 2015). [Read More...](#)

“ Worldwide, an estimated 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime. ”