

Achievements

- In 2022, UNHCR improved access to healthcare by **initiating the construction of 9 health facilities, all of which completed in 2023.**
- In 2023 UNHCR, started the **construction of 16 health facilities** in Afghanistan, with 2 completed the same year and 14 in 2024.
- In 2024, UNHCR has commenced construction of 17 new comprehensive health clinics, with 2 completing the same year and 15 completing in 2025.
- In 2024, **UNHCR is providing midwifery training to 797 midwives, of which 297 have completed the training program.**
- **UNHCR is constructing health centers in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARR) districts.** These health facilities represent a sustainable approach to healthcare as they complement other interventions to further strengthen the overall healthcare system in Afghanistan.
- Since 2022, **UNHCR's education assistance programs has benefitted an estimated 1,164,077 persons**, including returnees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities.

52 % of those assisted are **women and girls.**



A nurse on duty at a clinic built by UNHCR in Afghanistan. © UNHCR/ Samand Ibrahim

UNHCR AFGHANISTAN

Health Fact Sheet

October 2024

Health Approach

The 2024 HNRP estimates that 17.9 million people in Afghanistan require health assistance in the same year, within a context characterised by a fragile and under-resourced healthcare system, fraught by unequal access to services, ongoing communicable disease breaks, critical unmet maternal and child health needs, high rates of malnutrition, and significant morbidity and mortality rates as result. Acute disease outbreaks continue to challenge Afghanistan's health sector, including measles, acute watery diarrhea (AWD), dengue fever, pertussis, Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), and malaria. UNICEF has reported Afghanistan having one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates with 638 mothers dying for every 100,000 births, exacerbated by acute shortages of qualified birth attendants in the country. Health outcomes are further hampered by an under-resourced healthcare system and poor infrastructure, disproportionately affecting rural and under-served communities.

Despite efforts to improve the country's healthcare infrastructure, Afghanistan continues to grapple with systemic issues that hinder effective healthcare delivery. Analysis of underserved areas shows that 13.2 million people in 34 provinces reside in areas where primary healthcare services are not accessible within a one-hour walking distance.

UNHCR's approach to health is aligned with the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, and is based on a multifaceted approach aimed to address core gaps in services linked to critical protection gaps, resulting in barriers to durable solutions. Health programs delivered by UNHCR centres on sustainable outcomes and improving access to quality healthcare services for returnees, IDPs, and vulnerable host communities.

Interventions are based on consultations with key local stakeholders to accurately identify and address gaps in essential services, and integrate gender considerations and variances in needs and protection risks faced by women, men, girls, boys, and other diversity groups from the outset. Health interventions are further delivered through UNHCR's Priority Areas for Return and Reintegration (PARRs) area-based approach, ensuring that activities lead to sustained essential healthcare services benefitting IDPs, returnees, and host communities, contributing to strengthened community resilience, self-reliance and social cohesion. Under this framework, UNHCR delivers essential health infrastructure, including equipping facilities, training of new staff, and close coordination with key health stakeholders for complimentary programming and operationalization of facilities for sustainable outcomes.

Scope of interventions

Construction of health facilities with protection dividends to addresses critical gaps in access to quality healthcare infrastructure in line with specific needs and priorities of target communities. Infrastructure projects are derived from robust consultation processes with communities and local stakeholders, combined with data gathering on needs on the ground to identify core service gaps. Construction processes are guided closely by UNHCR country-level Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), feasibility assessments, and technical surveys, ensuring standardized, accountable, and quality assured processes and outcomes.

Midwifery training initiatives* address critical gaps in qualified birth attendants across the country and ensure that female patients have access to gender-sensitive care. The midwifery training initiative is a structured 3-year program that provides theoretical and practical education for women, facilitating access to employment and encouraging local investments in the success of health facilities through active participation of community members. UNHCR's programs work to integrate these midwives into health facilities, ensuring sustainable healthcare provision and strengthening of the healthcare workforce in Afghanistan.

Delivery of regular health outreach sessions within communities, raising awareness on the importance of accessing maternal healthcare for prenatal, delivery, and postnatal care. This initiative enhances understanding and awareness, ensuring that communities are well-informed and engaged, and facilitates supportive environments that encourage the use of maternal health services, contributing to successful and impactful health service delivery.

*The future of midwifery training programs is pending further information following the reported new DfA directive to block women and girls from attending private medical institutions. UNHCR aligns with [UNAMA's statement](#) on the new reported directive.

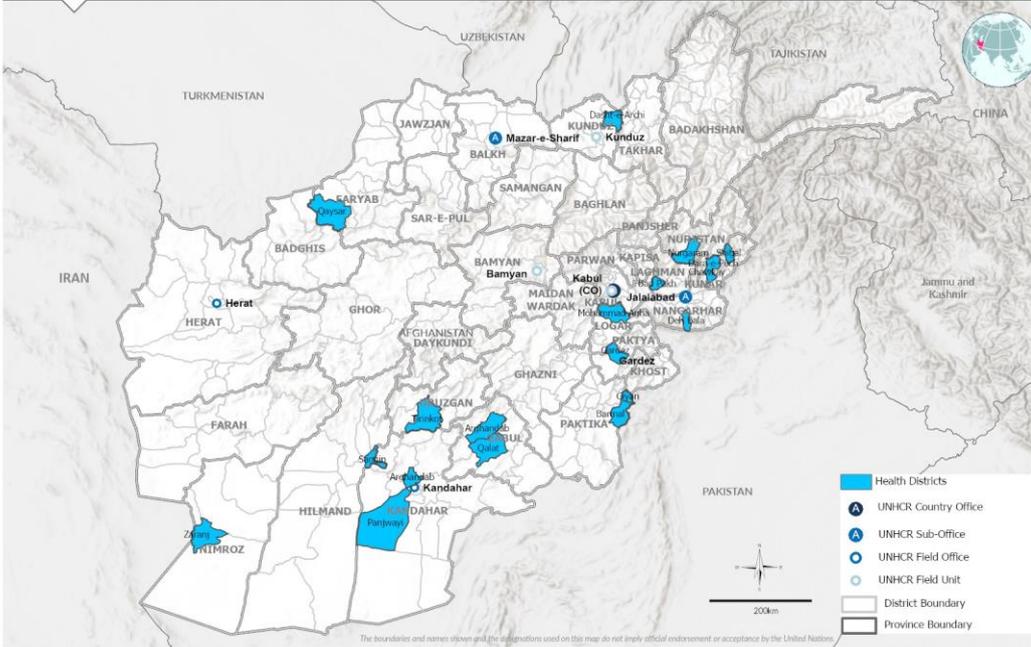
Relevance and Effectiveness: In line with its commitment to effective and efficient delivery, UNHCR's cross cutting strategy in Afghanistan relies on evidence-based programming. This entails conducting rigorous gap analyses and needs assessments, gathering comprehensive data and insights to inform the development of targeted and well-informed interventions across various sectors. Evidence-based programming ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed and where they can generate the greatest positive impact for affected populations. To ensure the effectiveness and impact of health initiatives and support, UNHCR conducts regular follow-ups, monitoring, and evaluation processes. This includes scheduling monitoring activities to maximize coverage without disrupting healthcare services. The process aims to assess the progress and impact of health projects, with contractors and partners providing necessary support and cooperation.

Where are we supporting?



AFGHANISTAN

UNHCR's areas of intervention in Afghanistan on Health, Oct 2024



Priority Areas for Return and Reintegration:

In line with the regional Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) and its Community-Based Protection and Solutions Programme Response (Co-PROSPER), UNHCR is undertaking interventions to create conducive solutions for returns, improving health services and facilities, or rehabilitating community infrastructures in Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs) in Afghanistan. These activities aim to support the sustainable return and reintegration of forcibly displaced Afghans (refugee returnees and IDPs) and strengthen community resilience within the areas of return.

Working with partners

UNHCR places a strong emphasis on partnerships as a core strategy, collaborating with various actors to ensure a coordinated and sustainable response to address the needs of refugees, returnees, displaced persons, and host communities. UNHCR coordinates with key stakeholders, including UN agencies such as UNFPA, WHO, and UNICEF, to align its approaches with national health objectives and local community needs. Close coordination further enables leveraging of complimentary funding streams, maximizing impact on the ground and promoting sustainable outcomes. Regular monitoring and evaluation activities, conducted by UNHCR in partnership with local entities, further ensure the effectiveness and impactfulness of health projects.



Nurses taking care of an infant as part of their duty at a clinic built by UNHCR in Afghanistan. © UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

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