



# Afghanistan Policy Page

*A one-page brief on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.*

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## The State of the Afghan People

### Take Aways

- Afghanistan is a **critical issue** for America and the international community.
- The Afghan people have **suffered over thirty years of war**.
- For over 10 years, with U.S. support they battled the Soviets and their allies, in which over **1 million Afghans were killed** and a further 1.5 million were displaced.
- The Afghan people are war weary. Over 30 years their **economy was destroyed** – as was all basic services such as education, healthcare, police and security.
- The Afghan State is **fragile and requires international support**.
- Women and children lead truly horrible lives in Afghanistan, international support, **working with the grain of Afghan society**, can achieve **major successes in changing lives for the better**.

### Key Issues

**Children** - the average age of Afghan is just under 18 (in the US its 37 yrs old ). Afghanistan has huge problems with youth unemployment and in providing education.

**Literacy** - only a maximum of 28% of the population is literate – this mean over 20 million Afghans are illiterate. This has a large impact on recruitment to the police and army and creating a professional civil service.

**Women's Issues** – Afghanistan has the second highest rate of maternal mortality in the world, 1,600 out of every 100,000 pregnant women die each year because of poor health facilities.

15% of all births in Afghanistan result in the death of the child and a staggering one in every four of children die before they are five years old.

**Religion** - 80% of Afghans are Sunni Muslims, around 19% are Shia. There has been no history of significant religious violence.

### Possible Questions

- What are the employment schemes? How effective are they?
- How do we change women's lives while working with the grain of Afghan society?
- What is being done to improve children's education, and how effective is it?
- Are there adult literacy courses outside cities?

### Top Key Facts

Afghanistan is 652k sq KM – **slightly smaller than Texas**.

Afghanistan has about **28m people** (although there has been no census since 1979) – this is **around 4m people more than Texas**.

It is estimates that the Soviets and their allies **killed over 1 million Afghans and displaced over a further 1.5 million** between 1978 -1992.

**Life expectancy is still only 44 years**, this compares to 65 in Pakistan and 78 in the US.

**80% of the labor force works in Agriculture**. There is **40% national unemployment**.

### In the News:

New Ministry of Refugees and Returnees (MoRR) figures from all 34 provinces indicate that 82,778 households (413,890 individuals) are currently internally displaced.(UNHCR 4 Jan 2010)

### Further Reading

[www.unicef.org/](http://www.unicef.org/)  
[www.afghan-web.com](http://www.afghan-web.com)  
[www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)  
[www.undp.org.af](http://www.undp.org.af)  
<http://www.and.s.gov.af/>

***Don't forget ! the national adjective is AFGHAN ..... Afghani is the currency in Afghanistan.....***

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