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Thirteen-year-old Nafissa of Panjsher Valley knows how important education is to her future.

“I am studying in the 12th grade, but now I want to go on to higher education. If we do not go to school, our future will be very bad, but those who study can become teachers or directors and have a good future. If I am educated, I can become an important person in my community.”

Getting girls into school has greater transformative potential than any other single investment the country can make. Reducing gender inequality increases productivity and economic growth. Women who receive an education are less likely to die in childbirth and more likely to send their own children to school. Educated women are more likely to have healthy children: the under-five mortality rate falls by nearly half for mothers with primary school education and the benefits increase with each additional year at school. Healthy, educated and empowered women raise healthy, educated and confident sons and daughters and it is children such as these that Afghanistan needs if it too is to thrive.

State Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity...

Article 28, Convention on the Rights of the Child

Fast Facts — 2011

Under-5 mortality rate per 1,000 live births	199
Delivery care, skilled attendant at birth	14%
Under-5 children underweight	39%
Total population with access to safe drinking water	48%
Total population with access to safe sanitation	37%
Schools with improved access to water	55%
Total child labour (aged 7-14)	13%
Child marriage	39%
Total birth registration	6%
Adult female literacy rate (15+ years)	13%
Girls in primary and secondary school	2.4 mil
Girls out-of-school	2.5 mil
Boys in primary and secondary school	4.6 mil
Number of 2011 polio cases	47
Children vaccinated for polio in 2011	7 mil

Afghanistan Country Programme



Unite for Children

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UNICEF in Afghanistan

UNICEF has been working continuously in Afghanistan since 1949, making the organization one of the longest-serving international supporters to the country. Over the past 60 years UNICEF has promoted the rights of women and children throughout Afghanistan and worked to bring basic services, including: education, health, protection, water and sanitation to those who are most in need. By equipping and empowering communities to develop the inherent potential and resources of the country, the international community has an opportunity to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan. UNICEF's programmes are central to this effort.

Enduring more than 30 years of conflict and a harsh climate and terrain, Afghanistan has had little opportunity to develop strong government structures and services, and generations have grown up in the midst of conflict. This has resulted in already poor communities being isolated for large periods of time, compounding people's lack of access to — and knowledge about — basic education, healthcare, water and sanitation and their rights. In this complex and challenging environment, UNICEF's work with government partners, sister UN agencies, local and international NGOs and communities in developing and implementing programmes that serve the women and children of Afghanistan is enabled by the generous support of a wide-range of donors.

A community-health worker marks the finger of a child who received the oral polio vaccination in Laghman Province.



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Education: Under the Taliban, violence and intimidation were used to prevent girls and women from attending school. After the regime's fall in 2001, UNICEF became the Government's leading partner in the reconstruction of the education sector, a relationship that continues today. This year:

- 8 million children are in school, compared to the less than 1 million in 2001;
- UNICEF provided 2.6 million Teaching and Learning Materials to instructors and students from grades 1 to 3;
- 3,843 Community Based Schools and Accelerated Learning Centres will reach 124,699 out-of-school children, 65 per cent of whom are girls;
- The government has adopted UNICEF's global Child Friendly School strategy;
- 72,500 women are acquiring literacy skills at 2900 literacy centres in 34 Provinces.

Child Protection: UNICEF advocates for the prevention and eradication of violence, abuse and exploitation, early and forced marriage, hazardous and exploitative labour and gender-based violence to ensure children have the space, freedom and safety to enjoy childhood and to grow into healthy adults. Examples of UNICEF activities include:

- A workshop with Al-Azhar University for religious leaders to discuss Islamic teachings on the protection of women and children;
- Providing data and analysis to inform the Secretary-General's Reports on Children and Armed Conflict;
- With the support of the Hunter School of Social Work, developing curriculum and training programmes on child protection for social workers.

Polio: Afghanistan is 1 of only 4 countries in the world where this highly contagious disease remains endemic. To support the global eradication efforts, in 2010 and 2011, UNICEF in Afghanistan:

- Established a joint Polio team with colleagues from the WHO, combining the resources and expertise of the two agencies;
- Supplied over 50 million doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) to the Ministry of Public Health;
- Helped train more than 45,000 community-health vaccinators and 4,055 cluster supervisors on proper vaccine administration.



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Health & Nutrition: Afghanistan has the highest rate of maternal mortality in the world, the second highest rate of under-five mortality and the highest rate of stunting. In 2010 and 2011, UNICEF's health and nutrition programmes have included:

- Assisting the Ministry of Public Health in improving Emergency Newborn and Obstetric Care (EmONC) services by opening 5 regional training centres in referral hospitals;
- Training over 500 health care providers in basic and comprehensive EmONC practices;
- Constructing 6 maternity waiting rooms in Provinces with limited health care facilities;
- Supporting maternal and neonatal child health services that benefitted 454,776 under-five children and 35,566 pregnant women in 53 remote Districts.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH): Afghanistan's semi-arid climate leads to rapid evaporation of surface water, meaning urban and rural communities must rely heavily on groundwater that is hard to access and transport. WASH activities address the lack of clean water, as well as poor hygiene and sanitation practices in the country. On-going projects include:

- Building latrines and handwashing facilities for boys and girls in 500 schools annually;
- Providing equipment to drill 40 deep tube wells, serving people in drought affected areas;
- Coordinating emergency drought relief initiatives of water-tankering, distribution of bio-sand filters for household use and disinfecting wells.