
Afghanistan

**Total area:**

652,230 km²

Population:

33,332,025 (2017)

Literacy:

20%

Official languages:

Dari (Persian), Pashto

GDP (PPP) per capita:

\$2,000 (2017 est.)

Life expectancy:

49 years

Religions:

99% Muslim, 1% Zoroastrian, <1% other religions

Prayer points

Afghanistan's 16-year War

Recent attacks in Kabul mark one of the most violent periods in Afghanistan's 16-year war. They are reminders that in spite of the Government's efforts, security is elusive. Attacks have intensified, striking locations that were previously considered safe. As the Taliban and ISIS claim more lives in this vulnerable country, peace may seem like a distant hope for Afghanistan, but God is moving. Afghan refugees in nearby countries are more open to the gospel than ever before. Dozens of Muslim-background Afghans have become followers of Jesus Christ, and their numbers are multiplying. Pray for God's kingdom to come in this country, for solutions to the threats of violence and for the political stability needed for a healthy economy and just government. (Frontiers - March 2018)

the Dari dialect

At age 14 Zia already had memorized the entire Qur'an, even though he was blind. He mastered English by listening to Christian radio broadcasts, which led him to accept salvation in Christ. He eventually shared with a few people that he had received Jesus as Saviour. Zia wanted to study Islamic Law so that he could defend fellow believers who might be persecuted for their faith. He therefore entered the University of Kabul, from which he graduated with his law degree. Zia also translated the New Testament from Iranian Persian into his own Afghanistan Dari dialect. Pray for the peoples of Afghanistan to experience these blessings when they seek and find Him. (Frontiers - March 2016)

Maternal healthcare

Health ministries have been a key aspect of BMS' approach to integral mission. Many breakthroughs

have occurred and we are believing for more. Pray for maternal health work amongst remote communities in the remote mountains of Afghanistan. Pray especially that men would own responsibility for ensuring that their wives have access to safe birthing conditions. (BMS World Mission - November 2015)

The Chalou

The Chalou are a people group in Afghanistan that has traditionally been greatly despised. They are often even thrown out of the mosques. When aid is being distributed they are mostly overlooked. Our partners were recently able to provide food for six hundred Chalou families living in complete poverty in a camp in Kabul. They would love to have more opportunities to help so pray please for open doors to return to the Chalou. Ask for protection on His people. Pray for the poor, the despised and downtrodden. (AsiaLink - July 2015)

Hope for women in Afghanistan

A 21-year-old woman was awarded the 2015 International Women of Courage award in Afghanistan for her role as the first female air force pilot in her nation. Despite death threats from insurgents, and even her own extended family, she refuses to be intimidated or silenced. Pray for her safety. Ask that her case could be an example of perseverance and courage for many women struggling under heavy burdens, giving other young women hope and inspiration. Ask the Lord today to bring more women to Himself in Afghanistan. Pray for effective workers among them. (AsiaLink - May 2015)

Secret of Life

Christianity in Afghanistan is growing rapidly right now. Following the great demand for programs focusing on everyday issues affecting all Afghans, SAT-7 PARS are releasing *Secret of Life*. The program focuses on important topics such as the role of women in society, family life and drug addiction problems. It is risky for people in Afghanistan to call SAT-7 PARS programs. Viewers could be imprisoned or even killed for choosing to follow Christ. Despite this threat, many do call. Please pray for the launch of *Secret of Life* and its impact on viewers, pray for their safety, and pray for lives to change through discipleship. (SAT-7 - March 2015)

Praying for stability

Thank God for those who are responding to the call and offering themselves for service in this nation. Pray that there will be a steady flow of people to sustain the work and fill the various vacancies. Pray for stability in the nation and for the government, as the draw down of foreign troops and the security handover to Afghan National Security Forces continues. Pray without ceasing for the Spirit of God to impact and minister to the lives of the Afghan people. (BMS World Mission - January 2015)

Signs of spiritual growth

Afghanistan's landslide in the northeast briefly made international news but thousands still suffer. Over 2,500 are believed to have died, but searching for bodies has stopped and the area declared a mass grave due to overwhelming levels of mud and rock. Pray that those who've lost everything, from home and livelihood to loved ones, will reach out to the One who can meet their need. There have also been encouraging signs of spiritual growth in the country. Locals are beginning to tackle the responsibility of teaching and training the few new believers, but face serious harm if discovered. Pray the believers would be protected from harm and strongly equipped, united in faith, and filled with His power, courage, and wisdom. (AsiaLink - July 2014)

An end to bloodshed

"The vast majority of the Afghan people want an end to the bloodshed and a negotiated settlement. After three decades of war people want to get on with their lives. Mothers and even Kalashnikov-carrying fathers want their children to have a better life than they themselves had," says an agency staff member reflecting on the future of Afghanistan. Pray for stability in the nation to be maintained over the coming months as presidential and provincial elections take place, foreign troops pull out

and security is transitioned to Afghan National Security Forces. (BMS World Mission - May 2014)

Under pressure

All Afghan Christians come from a Muslim background. If their conversion to Christianity is discovered, they will be put under huge pressure to recant their faith, both from Muslim clergy and local authorities. Tribal values are deeply entrenched and anyone embracing something new and maybe even foreign will be looked at as a traitor and excluded from the community. Pray too for the Afghan government - presidential elections are to be held in April. With the withdrawal of international forces in 2014, the regime will have to deal with the threat of the Taliban as well as the different ethnic factions in the country. (Open Doors UK and Ireland - March 2014)

Hidden effects of war

As well as the obvious physical impact, years of war and instability have had a devastating effect on the mental health of the people of Afghanistan. A recent study of 300 children in Kabul showed that a staggering 90% believed they would die in war and 80% said they felt frightened, sad and unable to cope with life. Psychotherapy and counselling are practically unheard of to the majority of the population. Please pray for progress in the vital work of mental health training so that more doctors, nurses and healthcare workers will be equipped to make a difference to peoples lives. Pray too for those currently suffering from mental health issues, that they would be able to receive the help they need. (Tearfund - January 2012)

Making cheese

If you were asked to name some countries that produce cheese, Britain and France might readily spring to mind. The chances are that Afghanistan wouldn't. Nevertheless, cheese-production in Afghanistan is proving a valuable, if unlikely, way of combating poverty. So far, nearly 1,000 dairy cows and 900 goats have been provided across three districts through a revolving livestock loan scheme in which vulnerable families and widows receive either a cow or goat. The recipients receive training on caring for the animals, making cheese and selling their produce, much of which now goes to a nearby market. At peak times selling milk and cheese can create an additional income of £35 per month for a family. Praise God for the lives being transformed by this programme and pray for more sustainable ways of overcoming poverty in Afghanistan. (Tearfund - July 2011)

Lost childhood

A recent study has suggested that up to 40% of Afghanistan's 15 million children might be involved in some sort of paid labour. War, poverty, widespread unemployment and large family sizes have meant that millions of Afghan children are being stripped of their childhood and denied their right to an education. Pray for the government to make wise decisions in order to create more jobs for adults, so that parents would not have to choose between sending their children to school or to work. (Viva - March 2011)

Discrimination against women

A nurse working in the mountains of central Afghanistan describes the discrimination against women that she has witnessed: "The area of education, especially in rural areas (the situation in urban Kabul is becoming very different), is one where discrimination is all too prevalent. Girls are often kept at home to work, or not allowed to walk the distances to school without a male relative to escort them. In some traditional families, girls are married very early and it is not considered an option to allow them an education. Once married, a woman becomes the property of her husband and his family and they can do what they like with her. It is often because women are not educated that they do not realise how badly they are discriminated against and treated. There are high incidences of domestic violence and/or mental health problems seen at our clinic." Please pray for the women of Afghanistan who are suffering mentally or physically because they do not have free and easy access to education. (BMS World Mission - January 2011)

The Qizilbash

The Qizilbash people in Afghanistan live in urban areas such as Kabul, Herat and Qandahar, as well as in certain villages in Hazarajat. They are an important and politically influential element of society and many are involved in some form of trade. Much prayer is needed for the Qizilbash people; there are very few gospel resources available in their language and there are currently no known believers. Pray for workers willing to go and minister to the Qizilbash and for opportunities to share the truth of Jesus. (Frontiers - May 2010)

Peer pressure

Every one of Afghanistan's people groups is regarded as among the least-reached in the world today. They have a relatively open government which may well be somewhat tolerant of an 'outside' faith, but at grassroots it is very different. The oppression is from within, from one's peers, from family members all around. The shame and family retribution against a son leaving Islam for faith in Christ has led to many losing their lives. Women too face persecution from within their own homes if they turn to Christianity. Pray for the Lord to build His Church among the Pashtun and the Hazaras, the Uzbeks and Tajiks and among so many where today there is still no knowledge of the all-surpassing grace of God. (AsiaLink - January 2010)

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