

THE UNITED STATES AND AFGHAN WOMEN: AN ONGOING COMMITMENT



Since 2001, the majority of Afghan women and girls have achieved dramatic gains. Today more girls than ever are enrolled in school. Women from all walks of life are opening businesses, running for office, and living longer and healthier lives – to the benefit of their families, communities and country.

SUPPORTING PROGRESS

The United States, partnering with the Afghan government, civil society and the international community, is a strong and enduring ally for Afghan women. We commend Afghan women and girls for their remarkable achievements and reiterate our unwavering commitment. Women's human rights are essential to reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan and any potential for peace will be subverted if women's voices are silenced or marginalized. We will continue to focus on supporting Afghan women at all levels – national, provincial and local – as decision makers in rebuilding their nation.

ADVANCING HEALTH

For more than a decade, the U.S. has supported comprehensive efforts to provide basic health and hospital services to women.

- Today there are 2,000 health care facilities, up from fewer than 500 in 2001.
- Today a woman's life expectancy is 64 years, up from 44 years in 2001 and infant mortality has been reduced to 327 per 100,000 births, down from 1,600 per 100,000 births in 2002.
- Today 34 percent of births in provinces have a skilled attendant on hand to assist, up from only 14 percent in 2002.

EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S., in partnership with the Afghan government, funds literacy programs and community-based education, and supports teacher training. We provide university scholarships for women in areas such as law, public administration, business, and computer science.

- Female literacy increased to nearly 13 percent nationwide; 30 percent among girls from ages 15 to 24; and 40 percent for young urban women.

- In the last five years, nearly 120,000 girls graduated from secondary school, and about 40,000 are enrolled in public and private universities.

ENHANCING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women have an increasingly greater role in economic growth, with increased focus on empowering women-owned business through challenges, such as cultural restrictions on mobility and security.

- USAID supported 2,300 women-owned enterprises, helped establish 400 new businesses, and trained more than 5,000 women in local handicrafts, value-chain, and fine-arts businesses.
- In 2013, the Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industry signed an agreement with the U.S. to address barriers to women's entrepreneurship and develop initiatives that enable women to start businesses.

IMPROVING RULE OF LAW AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The U.S. provides women's rights awareness training for Afghan law students, police officers, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges, as well as training through NGOs for imams linking women's human rights to Islamic teachings.

- Since 2011, the number of women's shelters has increased from 10 to 29 and the number of provinces with a shelter has gone from six to 18.
- Today there are about 165 female judges, up from 50 in 2003.
- Prosecution Offices on Elimination of Violence Against Women have been established in 8 provinces.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Afghan women continue to participate in political processes both nationally and provincially, despite ongoing challenges.

- Three women are serving as Cabinet ministers.
- Women hold 68 out of 249 seats in the Afghan National Assembly.
- Women constitute, at a minimum, 25 percent of the elected Provincial Councils.