Afghanistan: An Nine Year View From Outside the Wire

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Afghanistan 2000-2001
Afghanistan

- 20 years of armed conflict and human rights violations
- Soviet Occupation: 1979-1992 with ~ 1 million killed
- Largest single caseload of refugees in the world
  - 1.4 million refugees in Iran and 1.2 million in Pakistan
  - 75% of the refugees are women and children
- Violent power struggles between Mujahedin groups after the Soviet occupation
Afghanistan since 1994

- “Taliban” emerge
  - “students of Muslim religious studies”
  - poorly educated Pashtun refugee youths
  - Led by Mullah Mohammed Omar
- In 2000; controlled 95% of the country
- Claim: restore peace and security through “Islamic law”
- Edicts imposing Taliban interpretation Shari’a law in conflict with international human rights
Women in Afghanistan: Official Taliban Policies

- May only leave home when escorted by close male relative
- Access to health care limited to seeing female physicians
- May not attend school
  - Except religious school up to 8 years of age
- May not work outside the home
  - Prior to Taliban:
    - 70% of all teachers
    - 50% of civil servants
    - 40% of physicians
Health and Human Rights Survey Development

- Needs
  - English and Farsi version
  - Ease of Administration
  - Safety*

- Translated - Back Translated

- Database designed before going into the field

- Data collector training

- Piloted in the field
  - Changes agreed upon by team
Safety Measures Taken

- Coded words or phrases
- No identifiers
  - Data Collectors
  - Respondents
- Letters of safety
- Unidentifiable data sheets
- Questions “buried”
- E-mail database periodically from the field
  - Data entry in the field when possible
Methods

- Informed consent
- Randomized survey:
  - Afghanistan Residents (n=346)
    - Non-Taliban Controlled Area
      - Urban/Rural
      - Women and Men
  - Afghanistan Residents (n=400)
    - Taliban Controlled Area
      - Urban/Rural
      - Women and Men
Sampling

- Women
- Close male relative
- Urban Areas
  - City planning map
  - Sectors randomly chosen
  - # homes/# needed
- Rural Areas
  - Mapped area
  - # homes/ # needed

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2000 Freedom and Needs Survey: Community Development

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Freedom and Needs Survey:
Basic Human Needs versus Individual Freedoms

Rated as "very" or "extremely" important for health and development of community
Mental Health Among Women

- Major Depression
- Suicidal Ideation
- Suicide Attempts

Percent

Pakistan  Taliban Areas  Non-Taliban Areas
Summary

- Afghan women and men believe community development includes basic human needs and individual freedoms.
- Official policies restricting women’s rights are not consistent with opinions and attitudes identified.
- Health practitioners should involve the community in efforts to promote health and well-being.
October 2001
Maternal Mortality in Herat Afghanistan: An Index of the Status of Women’s Rights, 2002
Purpose of the Study

- Provide a rapid and accurate estimate of maternal mortality in Herat, Afghanistan
- Assess women's human rights that may contribute to maternal mortality
- Assess maternal health services in the region
- Present data with MoPH to congressional panel re: women’s health funding post-conflict
Methods

- Females age 15-49, n=5014
- 7 of 13 districts in Herat
  - Random sampling, representing 73% of population
  - 75% rural and 25% urban
  - 34 Villages > 200 households
    - ~5 villages per district
    - 600 household interviews per district
    - Within a 4 hour-drive from Herat city
Respondent Demographics

- Mean age 31 years old (range 15-49)
- 88% married
- 10% widowed
- On average, lived in area 17 years (range .25-50)
- Mean years of formal education 0.35 years (range 0-16)
- 84% ranked lack of food, shelter and clean water as their primary problems
Indirect Maternal Mortality Estimate

- *Indirect Sisterhood Method, n=4886*
- 92% of deaths in rural areas
- 593 maternal deaths/100,000 live births
- 95% CI 557 to 630
Marriage, Family, Reproductive Health Characteristics

- Mean age of actual marriage 15 years old (range 5-39)
- Mean desired age of marriage 18 years old (range 5-30)
- 85% wanted to marry at the time of marriage
- 20% reported feeling pressured by family
Marriage, Family, Reproductive Health Characteristics

- Mean desired age of having children 19 years old
- Mean desired number of children = 6 children
- 11% of women received prenatal care
- 74% could not afford prenatal care
- 95% reported needing permission for health care;
  - Less than 1% were refused permission to seek care
- 12% of women used birth control
- 23% desired birth control
- 88% reported that timing and spacing of children was decided equally between husband and wife
Figure 1: Proportion of Women With Trained and Untrained Attendants Present at Birth

- 97% Delivered Alone
- 2% Untrained Traditional Birth Attendant
- 1% Health Professional
- 1% Delivered Alone
Figure 2: Attitudes and Beliefs about Marriage, Family, and Women's Roles in Society

- A husband has the right to beat his wife if she disobeys him
- It is a wife's duty to have sex with her husband even if she disagrees
- A “bride price” is a custom that should remain in Afghanistan
- A woman should have the same right as her husband to decide the number and spacing of children
- A woman should have the right to freely choose a husband
- It is a wife’s duty to have sex with her husband even if she disagrees
- A husband has the right to beat his wife if she disobeys him
Key Recommendations (2002)

- Maternal health must not be considered a luxury or second stage priority and must be integrated into a public health plan.
- Protect Afghan Women’s Rights
- Address Security Gaps
- Extend Women’s Health Services
- Expand Medical Education
- Provide for Basic Needs
- Family Planning Services
- Protection and Promotion of Human Rights
Afghanistan Talking Health Book
Afghanistan Talking Health Book
Afghanistan Talking Health Book: Results

- Ceiling effect on knowledge
- Developed at HHS by Afghan Americans
- Translations poor
- No coordination with MoPH
- 80,000 made before testing
- Afghans liked the idea but preferred to have administration with a community health worker
August 2009

- Met with Afghan Surgeon Generals of ANA and ANP
- Discussion of possible traumatic brain injury study among military/police
DoD Health Efforts

*The Department of Defense’s Involvement in Civilian Assistance: A Quantitative Description of the Projects Funded by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Overseas Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster and Civic Aid Program. Disaster Med Public Health Prep. (In Press)*

- **Military to Military**
  - Military medical school
  - Train the trainers in emergency care, professionalism, first responder
  - Improvement in ANA/ANP hospitals and clinics

- **Civilian healthcare supported by few authorizations**
  - OHDACA (58-85 million +)
    - HCA – can only be used for projects involved in training of MHS personnel
    - CERP – more common in conflict, commanders intent – may not be coordinated

- **OHDACA projects since 2001***
  - 102 projects in Afghanistan – second to Iraq
  - Primarily school construction and refurbishment, health/water infrastructure, disaster response infrastructure, and disaster response training projects
  - 15% projects were health infrastructure, 40% schools
Today......
Observations

- More than 35 restaurants/bars
- 2 Shopping malls
- 10 hotels; several “4Star”
- “Afg-cranes”
- Airlines (international and domestic)
- International terminal
Shopping in Kabul

You can get everything you want

The Kabul City Center, near the Star in the Park, has lots of very smart shops.

Roshan Plaza
It has some very expensive clothes shops.

Chicken Street
A trendy spot for modern cafés, restaurants, bars, etc., and plenty of CDs/DVDs.

Chelsea Supermarket
With every type of Western food and produce.

Supreme Supermarket
On the ground floor, near the British army hotel, but not very pleasant.

Spinneys
Near the British and German Embassies and next to the Sheraton.

Shah M Book Co.
It is a bookstore in the city. It is its place to browse in one of the small, but also very interesting shops.

Ameri Afghan, which is a small Afghan shop near the Supreme Supermarket.

The street was the subject of the recent film The Kite Runner. Prices are high, but you’ll regret no other selections.

Kabul

Sleep

1. Mustafa Hotel

12 rooms in one building. Rates and facilities. Single rooms from $65.

2. Salsal Guesthouse

A quiet guesthouse near the main road. Single rooms from $65.

3. Le Monde Guest House

Kabul. A quiet guest house near the main road. Single rooms from $65.

4. Park Residence Hotel

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

5. UNICA Guest House

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

6. Golden Star Hotel

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

7. Heetal Plaza Hotel

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

8. Intercontinental Hotel

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

9. Kabul Serena Hotel

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.

10. Safi Landmark Hotel & Suites

A nice spot, and it has a nice outdoor pool. Single rooms from $65.
“Ten years ago I would have laughed if you told me I would be buying Lego in the Kabul Airport Duty Free”
Questions?