



Case Study 2: Zarmina*, 10 (Afghanistan)

This case study looks at how conflict affects children's access to education, especially for girls.

10-year old Zarmina lives in Afghanistan which has experienced 30 years of conflict. Many children couldn't go to school during this time but now, thanks to support in part from the UK government, Zarmina is one of 6 million children, including 2 million girls, who are getting an education.



A group called the Taliban controlled most of the country from 1998 until 2001. They are followers of Islam but their beliefs are much more extreme than those of many Muslims. They banned many things including education for girls, non-religious music, movies, and photographs of people and animals. Anyone found to be taking part in banned activities could be punished very severely.

Zarmina is too young to remember life under the Taliban but she and her family suffered during that time. They had to leave their village and she and her sisters were stopped from going to school, simply because they were girls.

Following a war, in 2001 the Taliban were removed from power. A new elected government came into power,

and change arrived at last. The family returned to their village and Zarmina finally found herself back in school.

"Some of my friends want to become doctors, some want to become teachers, some want to become nurses and some want to do IT. I'd like to be a policewoman who can serve this country and its people."

The building they study in now was destroyed during the war, but has now been rebuilt by the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), who are supported by the UK government.

"In the past, girls and boys used to study under tents in hot weather, but, now that NSP have rebuilt the crumbling school building and it's fully equipped, we can study peacefully in a good atmosphere."

Life is still tough, but Zarmina's father shares her hope for the future.

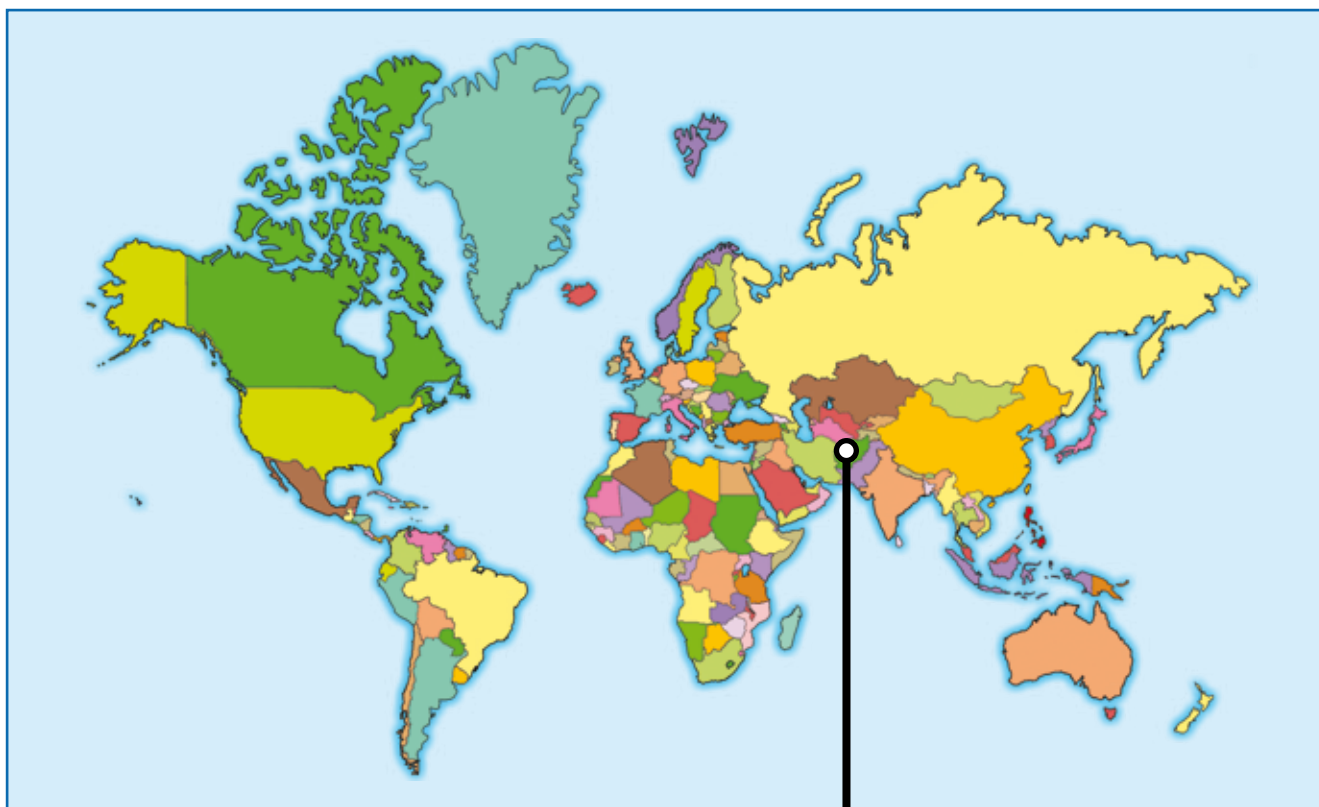
"We are free," he says, "and everyone can go to school, girls and boys. We are an educated family and we always wanted an education for our children so they can serve their country in the future."




Photo: Leslie Knott

* Her name has been changed to protect her identity

Afghanistan



 **Fact Box**

- **Population: 32 million**
- **Population under 18: around 16 million**
- **Number of children out of school: 2,082,000**
- **Number of children dying before they reach the age of 5: 1 in 5**
- **Percentage of children underweight: 39%**
- **Female life expectancy: 48**

Context:

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and has faced 30 years of conflict. The fall of the Taliban (the ruling power) in 2001 ended the conflict but millions of Afghans remain refugees in Iran and Pakistan. Followers of the Taliban have now re-grouped and control much of the south and east where children are often caught up in the fighting. Under the Taliban girls were not allowed to be educated and only 900,000 kids went to school – all boys.

What is being done:

The UK government is taking part in a huge international effort with the Afghan government to rebuild the country. We are spending £800 million over the next five years to improve the lives of the Afghan people. For example, the UK has given money to pay the wages of 100,000 teachers so that today 6 million children go to school, including 2 million girls. We are supporting vaccination programmes for diseases such as measles, which are estimated to save the lives of 30,000 children a year. We also support the National Solidarity Programme, which helps local communities to meet their own needs such as building a new school or health clinic.

Save the Children has worked in Afghanistan for over 30 years. We're currently helping 50,000 children get a better education by training teachers, running education drop-in centres and working with the Ministry of Education to provide more and better school facilities. We run workshops with parents, teachers and police and community leaders to prevent physical abuse of children. We have also set up two hospitals and nine health centres, which provide healthcare to a quarter of a million people.

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