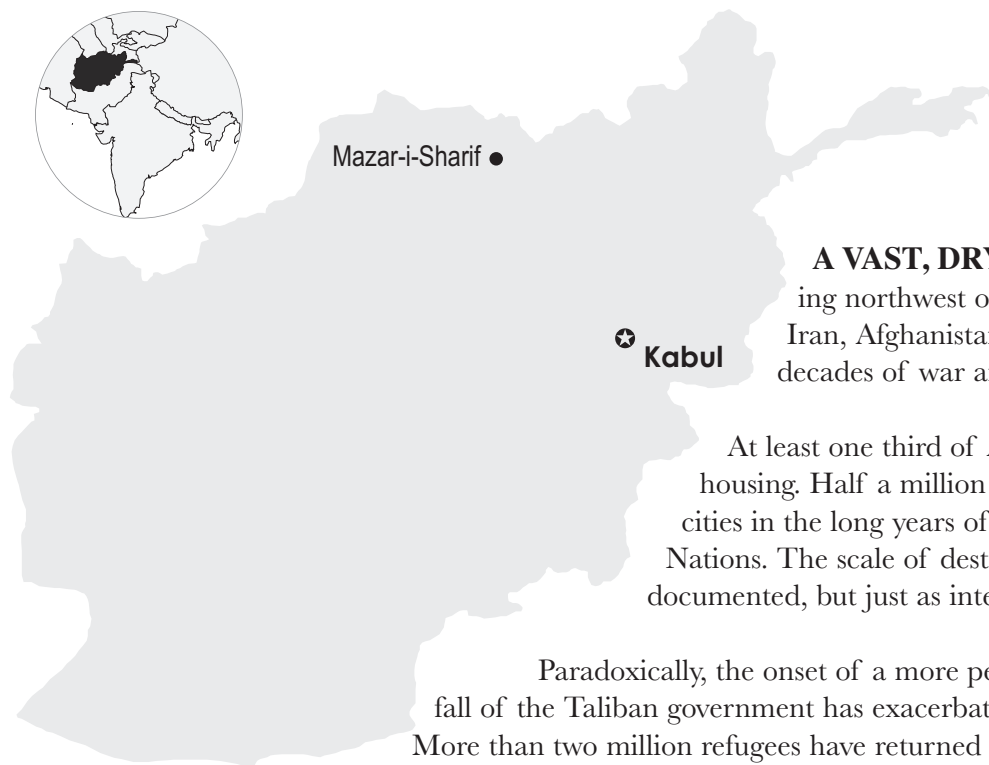


Afghanistan

Country Profile

📍 Capital • 🏢 National Office



A VAST, DRY and mountainous land stretching northwest of Pakistan and to the east of Iran, Afghanistan is tentatively emerging from decades of war and civil unrest.

At least one third of Afghans live in sub-standard housing. Half a million homes were destroyed in major cities in the long years of war, according to the United Nations. The scale of destruction in rural areas is less well documented, but just as intense.

Paradoxically, the onset of a more peaceful environment since the fall of the Taliban government has exacerbated the demand for housing. More than two million refugees have returned from overseas; others, displaced to other parts of Afghanistan, have also returned to their homes.

The influx has pushed up the prices of land and construction materials. These pressures are particularly acute in urban areas where three-in-four Afghans live in poverty. Lack of clean water is common. Electricity is intermittently available in urban areas and non-existent in most rural areas.

Since there is no formal loan or banking system, poor Afghans cannot apply for assistance for housing. Property titles are rare.

Habitat for Humanity began its Afghan program in the northern province of Balkh in 2002. Habitat provides "First Shelter" homes to meet the demands of families in desperate need of immediate shelter. With no mortgage repayments available to finance First Shelter homes, costs are kept low by involving families and communities in construction.

First Shelter homes use traditional mud bricks, mud and straw plastering, wooden doors and windows. Each house measures about 36 square meters. The buildings are designed to include two large areas where people can work and earn a living, say, by carpet weaving, with a traditional domed roof to enhance temperature control.

HFH Afghanistan plans to establish a building and training center to make concrete blocks and a "Save & Build" concept where groups of families can save together and building can start quickly.

COUNTRY FACTS

Population: 28,513,677

Capital: Kabul

Area: 647,500 sq km.

Languages: Afghan Persian (Dari) 50%, Pashtu (official) 35%, Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, 30 minor languages (primarily Balochi and Pashai) 4%.

Religions: Sunni Muslim 80%, Sunni Shi'ite 19%, others 1%

HABITAT FACTS

Families Helped

334

Cost Of One House*

US\$3,080

As of April 2005

* international sponsorship cost

Habitat Highlights

- Some 330 families in Balkh province have been assisted in "First Shelter" in programs; including 135 families in Timorak in 2003.
- "Save & Build" concept to be introduced in Mazar-i-Sharif city.



HFH Afghanistan

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