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Socio-Economic Research and Applications (SERAP)  
& Action for Development  
**AFGHANISTAN BULLETIN**



*This newsletter aims to highlight urgent development challenges in Afghanistan and collaborate with development practitioners, economists, scientists, and civil society representatives to overcome those by providing state of art technical knowledge and project development expertise.*

The pandemic was clearly a setback for Afghanistan's economy and the attainment of the A-SDGs in the short-term, but this does not put out of reach neither the attainment of A-SDGs, nor Afghanistan's long-term commitment to sustainable development. Based on the findings of the Notes, the Afghan government would need to allocate resources equivalent to 15% of the current GDP for immediate interventions in the health sector, along with social protection measures, including SDGs attainment in 2020. As per our GTAP-CGE model simulations for Afghanistan and its major trade partners, governance reforms would make it possible to raise \$300 million necessary to fund the SDG attainment as early as next year.

While the donor funding is declining, the Government of Afghanistan needs to opt for policies and programmes to generate more revenue to address these immediate needs. It could mobilize resources through more efficient tax collections by focusing on strengthening institutions (SDG-16). The government could also generate more revenue by legalizing and regulating the mining sector and tapping on the country's rich natural resources. Expansion of regional trade would also significantly increase GDP growth. For example, if the cost of trade between Afghanistan and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries decreases by 10%, it would boost Afghanistan's GDP by around 4% in 2020. This additional revenue could finance SDG attainment and will provide additional resources to address the adverse impact of COVID-19.

## Data & Statistics

As of October 15, 2020...

**Total Population: 37.6 Million**

Source: WHO, UNDP

↑ **40,026**  
Confirmed Cases

↑ **1,028**  
Cases per 1  
million  
population

**44%**  
Test-Positivity Rate

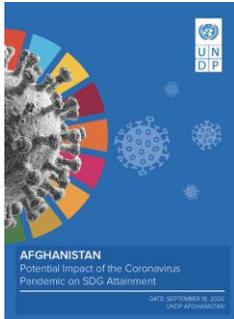
**-6.25%**  
Real GDP 2020  
Projected Change

## Potential impact of the COVID-19

In the following section, we provide snapshots to some recent analytical reports on the Socio-Economic development of Afghanistan and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Afghanistan Coronavirus Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

**(October 3)** *Sebnem Sahin and the UNDP Afghanistan Office*



Coronavirus crisis has proved, once again, that sustainability is tightly linked to society's well-being as well as global approach to address the gaps towards achieving SDGs. The main cause of transmission of COVID-19 to humans has been recognized by many as illegal, unregulated, and high-risk wildlife markets. Health links to SDG-15 (Life on Land) would require global action in reversing land degradation and habitat destruction and taking action to address the demand for and supply of illegal wildlife products (SDG-15.7).

In Afghanistan, health links to environmental pollution (SDG-3.9) are particularly important. High levels of air pollution in many Afghan cities were an important factor in the spread of COVID-19 by increasing the citizens' pre-existing vulnerabilities to respiratory diseases. Access to clean water (SDG-6) is a prerequisite for being able to hand wash frequently; living in substandard, unsanitary and overcrowded conditions such as IDP camps and slums (SDG- 11) increased the risk of exposure to the virus; and pre-existing health conditions such as non-communicable diseases (SDG-3) tend to worsen disease outcomes.

Reducing the intensity of conflict and therefore its cost (SDG-16.1), will also reduce current levels of corruption (SDG-16.5), and an improved trade environment (SDG-10.a.) would enable Afghanistan to address the adverse impact of the Coronavirus on the economy and SDGs attainment. Reforms would include among others accelerated implementation of the anti-corruption strategy, starting with the customs and revenue reforms to boost Afghanistan's trade performance, and finalization of legal reforms to improve the overall business environment.

To better understand the real impact of the pandemic and help the Government make informed decisions on the allocation of shrunk resources, UNDP Afghanistan has produced a series of comprehensive assessments of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The first Country Note <<https://bit.ly/2CSefUY>> was developed in Mid-April 2020, in which we presented updates and proposed Social Protection measures in alleviating the immediate adverse impact of COVID-19. The second Note < <https://bit.ly/36tdrCH> > was produced in July 2020, which consisted of an evidence-based analysis where we combined an economy-wide analysis with infection transmission scenarios developed by the Ministry of Public Health.



### How to improve Afghanistan's devastated maternal healthcare system amid COVID-19 and the peace process(August 31)

*Shariq Farooqi/ Atlantic Council*

When healthcare infrastructure starts collapsing in the middle of COVID-19, maternal healthcare becomes the most sensitive sector of the healthcare system in Afghanistan therefore; succeeding a sustainable maternal healthcare system is an fundamental contribution to the achievement of transformative justice for Afghan women and the growth of Afghanistan's social institutions amid the ongoing peace process. The current situation of the government and international organizations focusing on the healthcare system at a high level of concentration is a glimpse of hope to the maternal healthcare sector to get sustainable infrastructure. A multi-sectoral approach is a leading solution that could initiate transformation toward this rising issue.

# Community response to COVID-19



[Afghanistan: Innovative education models in COVID-19 pandemic. \(August 13\)](#)  
*JRS/USA*

During the difficult times of COVID-19, JRS is maintaining its education programme for children and youths dislocated by war in the isolated regions of the country with the help of innovative education models. Even in the remote mountainous area they are spreading their lesson through radio stations in places such as Bumiyan and Herat.



[WHO delivers essential COVID-19 medical supplies and equipment to Afghanistan \(July 5\)](#)  
*WHO*

The WHO has brought crucial COVID-19 equipment and supplies to Afghanistan which are worth US\$1.6 million and an additional US\$15.4 million worth of shipment is planned. This shipment will improve the working condition of frontline medical staff as well as the testing capacity.



[Alumna focuses on community health in Afghanistan during COVID-19 \(September 3\)](#)

*Jessica Drouet*

Arifi who is one of Afghanistan's young female scholars overcame the barriers of male-dominated society to gain an education, now working at the WHO as an international health regulation officer. Her contribution to the Afghanistan community during COVID-19 is to prevent cross border and national spread also being a female epidemiologist in this time is one of the innovations and contributions to her country.



[Afghanistan's frontline healthcare workers continue fight against COVID-19 at great personal risk \(September, 4\)](#)

*IOM*

Selfless commitment of frontline healthcare workers are definitely a silver lining in countries around the world, especially in low-medium income countries like Afghanistan. Two of those courageous doctors who are devoting themselves have shared their thoughts and hopes on the real situation in Afghanistan.



[In Afghanistan, COVID-19 demands warring sides unite against a common enemy, UNDP report says \(August 18\)](#)  
*Sebnem Sahin and the UNDP Afghanistan Office*

According to UNDP this pandemic could be an opportunity for Afghanistan to transform and strengthen their economy fundamentally by implementing socio-economic protection programs. However, in order to make these programs and aids effective, conflict with the opposing side should be reduced to save lives from COVID-19 and to create a more sustainable economy.



[Afghanistan: Republic of Korea and WHO join forces to support COVID-19 response \(September 14\)](#)

*WHO*

As one of the countries supporting Afghanistan, the Republic of Korea is going to implement a six-month project to build up access to quality health care among the most vulnerable populations. The main aim of this agreement is to raise awareness about COVID-19 via better communication as well as highlighting other urgent COVID-19 health needs to provide a more resilient health care system in the long term.

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