

Kylee Kennedy
Newell-Fonda High School
Newell, Iowa
Afghanistan, Sanitation and Water

Afghanistan's Sanitation and Water

Afghanistan has the worst sanitation and water safety in the world. This country used to be known for its beautiful cities and access to food and water. Over the years of war, this country has lost a lot of its supply. Afghanistan is currently sitting at thirty-nine percent for water and sanitation (Global Waters). I chose sanitation for my paper because of all of the children that have been dying due to unsanitary conditions. Afghanistan has a population of 35.53 million (World Bank). The country is roughly 72 percent rural and 27 percent urban (World Bank). Their government is a presidential system and Islamic republic. Afghan typically grows all of their own food or sometimes buy the food they cannot make themselves. They do this due to their hot summers and cold winters. This country has a lot of mountains and is landlocked. Any water flow they have in is their only access to water. Afghanistan uses snow runoff from mountains to collect water in reservoirs. According to HydrateLife, only thirty percent of the snow run off is caught, which means they are not getting a lot of water. Afghanistan needs new solutions in finding ways around poor sanitation and water, due to the families of Afghanistan struggling. Everything in this country is having issues due to the population overgrowth. This has caused them to lack in different supplies, not only in water and sanitation. They are lacking supplies from war. Afghanistan would be greater with a new piping system, water towers, and teaching the youth about hygiene in school.

A typical family size is seven to eight people, including the parents. This can also include the son's spouses and children. A family typically eats three meals a day, two to three snacks a day, and their meals consist of rice, meat, beans, and vegetables. Lunch is their biggest meal of the day. The family will make their own food. Their meat is usually fish, due to a landlocked country they have to buy from other countries. They don't hunt a ton. Meat is very expensive in Afghanistan because they don't have a lot of options. The family will eat a lot of vegetables because vegetables can get cold and still be eaten (Cultural Atlas). Most of the jobs are farmers and the average yearly wage in Afghanistan is roughly eleven thousand dollars (Average Salary Survey).

The healthcare system is very weak. They can't keep up with the health issues and emergencies. Their healthcare services are horrible. They don't have the right medicine. The waiting list is long, some of the women that go into labor have to be put on a waiting list. The clinics have horrible hours, only open in the morning so if someone is pregnant they have to wait until the morning to have their baby. In Afghanistan, they do have schooling, but they don't have enough room so they created a separate school for kids going into the military. In the schooling, they aren't taught about water safety. So most of the boys go to a school for soldiers. Even with the boys going to separate schooling they do not have enough supplies so many go without or other countries donate to them. Most of the farmers don't have enough land to feed their families so they use what they have and have to buy food. The chronic nutritional deficiency in Afghanistan is due to poor feeding practices (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations).

The biggest challenge in Afghanistan is the sanitation and water. Since they are landlocked they don't have easy access to water. They have the worst water in the world. Eighty percent of the population lack safe drinking water, and ninety-five percent lack access to sanitation facilities. Over 26.6 million do not have proper toilets (Relief Web). There was a diarrhoea outbreak, which this was killing children. This caused a lot of stunting, causing two out of five children to get stunted (Relief Web). This was why kids were not growing to their full potential due to the lack of nutrition. This part of the world does not have great resources. The water quality is poor and most do not have access to the correct piping for the sewer. This is bad not only for the water but their food too. They are washing their food with this water, planting their crops and using this same water for drinking. It isn't safe for anyone consuming this water. This country does not have a lot of cities. Afghanistan has poor waste management (IRIN). "When it rains a lot of waste mixes with rainwater and often reaches drinking-water sources, which causes different diseases," Nasrullah Habibi, a specialist on sanitation with the UN Human Settlements Program in Kabul (IRIN).

The smell in Afghanistan due to the lack of sanitation has caused sickness. A lot of the illnesses caused by sanitation have caused infections. Some of the infections are gastrointestinal and diarrheal. They have experienced the waste not being emptied properly or on time. Back in the day, they would just empty the storage of waste outside of town using donkeys, but now with a high population many times they can't get it out of the town without spilling on the roads. In the capital of Kabul there are only 36 public toilets, which is a small number for a big city (IRIN).

In Afghanistan, they have a dry vault system which is supposed to separately collect solid and liquid waste, but it isn't sanitary (IRIN). Many of these farmers use their own feces to put into their fields. Lots of families do not have electricity so to get toilets like we have, most of these families will have to get electricity. If I could change this, I would make separate piping in general. The United States could send over a plumber and show them how to set it up properly and teach the people of Afghanistan. This would give them the things they need. They could show them how much this usually costs for someone to do it versus you doing it on your own. They would bring over the supplies needed to do this job and show them ways of doing it easier. Speaking of supplies, the Afghan are lacking supplies in every way possible. I think if the United States donated all kinds of supplies they wouldn't be hurting. This could mean school, home, farming, water, and other supplies they would be better. This could save Afghanistan lots of money. I wouldn't keep them together. Most of the time the waste doesn't get collected and people end up drinking their waste. This affects all regions due to the diseases going around. UNICEF wants to change the sanitation problem and the country of Afghanistan has been working on finding ways to help.

In Afghanistan, they need to work on hygiene. A lot of the problems they have come from them not practicing hygiene practices, they aren't taught how to take care of themselves. Here in the United States we are taught through school, they aren't taught the same as us. They lack water to clean themselves. They savor as much water as possible, so taking care of themselves comes last. I think teaching this in schools would benefit all generations. Teaching the young kids so they could go home and teach their guardians the importance of sanitation and hygiene. I believe if they were taught at an early age the death rate would decrease. So if they were to put in new lines people would have to take care of their toilets and keep them clean. This also means they would have to be educated on how the new piping and on how the toilet system works so they are sure to only put proper things into the toilet. I would have UNICEF give clean water and maintain the water. In 2017, UNICEF gave them clean water and gave them access to this

clean water. This doesn't mean that it was going to last forever. These solutions only last for a short period of time and then they are stuck with poor water quality again. In other countries, like the United States we have city workers that keep everything running. If Afghanistan had people taking care of the towns they would be able to keep things cleaner. Keeping areas cleaner would help them with clean water and sanitation (UNICEF).

In addition to a new piping system, another solution could be installing water towers around to have access to clean water. Currently, Afghanistan only has water towers on police bases (US ARMY). Which only supports some people who are close to the water tower and the police family. This doesn't help everyone. If they were to put one in a town and they could share with surrounding towns they could have access to cleaner water. These water towers can help not just surrounding towns but farmers also. The farmers could add in money and use the water for the fields. This could help the sickness. An organization called WASH could come in and help when the water towers run out or until they gain their water back. WASH is a group that stands for "wash, sanitation, and hygiene" they are a non-profit organization. They typically help in natural disasters (UNICEF). So if they could come in and help when they began to run out of water or when they need more water this could help the bad water problem. Water towers don't only help with getting water out to homes but also can help in emergencies, like fires. These people are obviously going to be limited on their water usage if they decide they want water towers. This means they will have to be smart or they will eventually run out faster and faster each time.

I have looked into adding a dam for the snow run off, but the problem is that is more money than the country can provide. It costs a rough estimate of eleven million dollars. You also have to find workers that are willing to commit to this type of work. No matter how much you try to add a dam you never know how successful it will be. For example, India is creating a dam that is costing them roughly two hundred million dollars. They are doing this to fix an old dam that was damaged in war. The difference is that India has more money that could benefit them. Afghanistan has a rough time finding money for the help they need. Climate change has a big factor in this also, meaning the snow melts early. This means they won't have a lot of water in the summer when they need it. They fear that wells will start to dry up in this country, leading to even less water. The more water they lose in this country the less money they make. They need water for their crops to grow. This will eventually lead to job loss. This is why I believe a new piping system will help. They could have the runoff lead into the new piping system and filter out the bad. Many families in Afghanistan tend to steal water from other countries which starts war with other countries. Afghanistan would have a better outlook if they weren't in so many wars with other countries. Every time another country tries to help, they start a war.

Obviously, I know I cannot solve all the problems that Afghanistan is having but maybe adding water towers and better piping would help. I know everything takes money and if they really wanted their children to live longer and to be able to have safe drinking water, they could all work together to raise this money. So with this being said, they would have to work harder. I know the countries income isn't much, because they will have to raise lots of money. It roughly cost 4.7 million dollars for a water tower. The people of Afghanistan would have to work on their hygiene and keeping their homes and towns clean. This time of year would be perfect for finding areas to put a water tower and began building it. They could start putting in underground piping that is separate. Finding the funding wouldn't be hard. There are a lot of organizations that help in these types of crisis. Overall, there are ways for Afghanistan to fix these

problems but they will have to work hard for it and fund lots of money. Having clean water would allow the diseases and sickness to go away. All the children would quit dying and many families could benefit from this. I believe that Afghanistan would be greater with a new piping system, water towers, and teaching the youth about hygiene in school.

Works Cited

- “ENVIRONMENT-AFGHANISTAN: Goodbye Stinky, Dry Latrines.” *ENVIRONMENT-AFGHANISTAN: Goodbye Stinky, Dry Latrines | Inter Press Service*,
www.ipsnews.net/2007/09/environment-afghanistan-goodbye-stinky-dry-latrines/.
- “Traditional Ecological Sanitation System under Pressure.” *The New Humanitarian*, 17 Feb. 2016,
www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2007/08/12/traditional-ecological-sanitation-system-under-pressure.
- “Education | Afghanistan.” *U.S. Agency for International Development*, 25 Feb. 2019,
www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/education.
- “WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.” *UNICEF Afghanistan*, www.unicef.org/afghanistan/wash-water-sanitation-and-hygiene.
- Smarks. “Afghanistan.” *GLOBALWATERS.ORG*, 19 Jan. 2018,
www.globalwaters.org/WhereWeWork/Asia/Afghanistan.
- “Afghanistan: Poor Sanitation, Bad Toilets Cause Deaths, Misery - Afghanistan.” *ReliefWeb*,
reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-poor-sanitation-bad-toilets-cause-deaths-misery.
- “TRADING ECONOMICS | 20 Million INDICATORS FROM 196 COUNTRIES.” *TRADING ECONOMICS | 20 Million INDICATORS FROM 196 COUNTRIES*, tradingeconomics.com/.
- Pier. “Afghan Culture - Family.” *Cultural Atlas*, culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/afghan-culture/family-26a57ab3-8b08-45e3-b75f-7d0df9a68d89.
- “Afghanistan.” *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*,
www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-dietary-guidelines/regions/countries/Afghanistan/en.
- “Afghanistan | 2018/19 Average Salary Survey.” *Average Salary Survey*,
www.averagesalarysurvey.com/afghanistan.
- “USACE Joint Effort Reinvents Water Towers in Afghanistan.” *Www.army.mil*,
www.army.mil/article/34589/usace_joint_effort_reinvents_water_towers_in_afghanistan.
- “Afghanistan's Water Crisis.” *HydrateLife*, 24 Mar. 2017,
www.hydratelife.org/afghanistans-water-crisis/.