

Fragile Lives

Newborns are the most vulnerable humans in civilization. Babies born in Afghanistan three years after their nation's liberation from Taliban rule and after 24 years of war are "powerless out of weakness" (POW), and doomed to a life of illness, illiteracy, and instability. The tiniest POWs are the first to be neglected, the first to die, and the best indicators of their country's economic and social conditions. Who will protect them? Who has power over them and whom can trust?

They need protection from exploitation so that they will not be engaged in employment contrary to their physical, mental, or moral development.

The establishment of an Afghan Newborn Initiative protects the babies born today so they can advance Afghan society in the future.

Abandoned Newborns



Afghans for Civil Society
806 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
www.afghansforcivilsociety.org
(410) 385-1445
Address Correction Required

Afghan Newborn Initiative

Recovery and Protection



Afghans for Civil Society

Ellyn E. Cavanagh, Ph.D., RN

806 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
www.afghansforcivilsociety.org
ellynca@aol.com

Rescue Needs

Core principles underlying our strategic framework are urgency, equity for women and unborn babies, treatment and human rights, and sustainability

Donations will be used toward the protection of newborns and their mothers. Cash donations in the form of \$20 will be used for support and education of a breastfeeding mother, purchase of necessary vitamins and clean water. This mother and grandmother needed help in feeding the triplets because the mother lacked adequate breast milk and they were forced to feed them tea. In addition to giving her monetary support, the babies were examined and one was found to have a hip infection. Additional money was needed to transport the baby across town to the children's hospital and buy antibiotics. \$10 funded the necessary intervention, leaving extra money for the grandmother to buy meat in the market.

Kabul, Afghanistan



Family

AFGHANISTAN STATISTICS

Infant mortality rate 165 die in every 1000 births
Maternal mortality rate 1700 die for every 10,000 births

For each maternal death in the United States, there are over 5000 in Afghanistan

National Afghan personality is freedom loving with a rich heritage based on language and knowledge. Parents are having children in a country with the world's highest mortality rates and despite two generations of human sacrifices, their living conditions are among the poorest on the globe, their only export has been violence, and their contribution to international culture has been negative. Their educational system is in ruin, museums and libraries destroyed, and their environment is disorganized. Parents live in fear, illiterate in their own language and dependent on oral transmission of knowledge. The result is a cohort of babies born to illiterate and uneducated parents under the burqa because uncertainty prevails. They doomed to repeat history if they survive.

Abandoned babies are doubly challenged because of their extreme vulnerability. Some Afghan mothers respond to the desperate circumstances of poverty and lack of health care by delivering their babies in hospitals, specifically with intent to leave them there and claim that the baby died. This is a tragic for all concerned and, once the mother leaves her newborn behind, vanishing back into the amalgam of society, there is little hope for survival. Cash donations of \$20 will purchase bottles, formula, clean water and swaddling clothes for the baby. Additional donations of flannel material provide warmth until the baby can be placed with a willing family.

Newborn Resuscitation Program

Most children in Afghanistan die today because of ineffective health care rather than injury or war. Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal, infant, and child mortality rates in the world. The leading cause of death is birth asphyxia – for which there is a cure. In high-income countries, a system of resuscitation and intensive care has extended and improved lives for newborns. In Afghanistan, this has not yet happened. There are decades-long knowledge deficits and reconstruction is limited by a severe lack of human resources.¹ The health care system is non-existent and the list of deficits long: no prehospital management; only one fledgling ambulance system in the city of Kabul; no telecommunications; no trained public servants in first aid; unsafe environments. We propose resuscitation training as an efficient means to offer services, centralize education and equipment, and establish a standard of life-saving health care throughout the area to serve the most vulnerable of Afghanistan's citizens – the babies. We will expand the limits of life by providing space, equipment, and knowledge for the deliverers of essential life-saving care. The beneficiaries will be the unborn children who will be added to the chain of survival.

The goal is to raise neonatal resuscitation practice in urban Kabul to Western standards. It is most cost-effective and capacity building to spend resources within Afghanistan, training Afghan physicians and developing a network to build recipients' capacity to provide infrastructure for problems.

¹ Nearly 2 million Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan since UNHCR started its voluntary repatriation program in March 2002. **Source:** UN High Commissioner for Refugees **date:** 20 Apr 2004

Donations should be made payable to Afghans for Civil Society, Afghan Newborn Initiative. If you are an organization willing to make donations of \$200 or greater, please consider the Newborn Resuscitation Program