



M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health

Organized by the M8 Alliance
under the leadership of the Sapienza University of Rome

How can we improve access to care in Afghanistan?

15 January 2024

14:00 – 15:30 CET

Link: <https://uniroma1.zoom.us/j/85867167341>

Webinar in cooperation with
EMERGENCY¹ and CRIMEDIM²

The M8 Alliance Webinar Series on **Migrant and Refugee Health**, is a **new format** which aims at bringing together experts from across the M8 Alliance to discuss global, develop innovative and collaborative answers and promote science-based policy advice. Each lecture will last 90 minutes and different speakers from within the M8 Alliance and beyond.

¹ <https://en.emergency.it/>

² <https://crimedim.uniupo.it/>

Description

Following the change of government in August 2021, Afghanistan's international assets have been frozen, the current authorities banned from international institutions, international forces withdrawn and most diplomatic delegations, mainly Western ones, evacuated from the country. In a country that formerly depended on international aid for 75% of public spending³, the impact on Afghan civilians, who are bearing the brunt of a rise in poverty and a dearth of essential services, is severe.

The inheritance of a long war, a staggering economic crisis, natural disasters, and climate change, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, have caused unprecedented levels of need. Out of a population of approximately 40 million⁴, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has estimated that in 2023 28.3 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian aid, in order to survive⁵. This means that, despite the end of the conflict, Afghans continue to struggle to access basic needs, including healthcare.

Distribution of health facilities is uneven across the 34 Afghan provinces, which has left 13.3 million people underserved in 2022 (WHO Afghanistan). The shortage of health workforce is long-standing, with only 8.7 physicians, nurses, and midwives per 10,000 inhabitants⁶. Access to specialised care is even more critical, as specialists mostly concentrate in urban areas. More than 1 in 10 health facilities is partially functioning or non-functioning, the main causes of dysfunctionality being the lack of equipment, finances, medical supplies, and staff⁷.

Due to conflict and remoteness of rural areas, health data and statistics have been scattered and incomplete, which in the past has made it difficult to form a clear picture of the health needs of the Afghan people, including the true extent of barriers to care⁸. Since August 2021, areas that were restricted due to conflict have become more accessible, offering a unique opportunity to achieve a more thorough understanding of the situation of access to care in Afghanistan. For this reason, in March 2023, EMERGENCY and CRIMEDIM published a report on a mixed-methods study entitled "Access to care in Afghanistan: Perspectives from Afghan people in 10 provinces", which combined the point of view of both health seekers and providers. The objective of the study is to provide an up-to-date assessment of access to care to help inform the discussion on adjustments to planning and financing of health services in Afghanistan.

Building on the study results, the panel will bring together the expertise of a non-governmental organization with a 24-year presence in Afghanistan, a research centre with a long-lasting experience in global health, the former Acting Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan, and two distinguished representatives of the M8 Alliance with expertise in the country. The panel will offer a picture of the current situation on the ground and a multidisciplinary overview of the main barriers to access to care in Afghanistan. The aim is to draw pragmatic recommendations for relevant national and international stakeholders, in order to increase access to care in both urban and rural areas and improve health service provision, to make the Afghan health system more sustainable and resilient.

³ World Bank, Afghanistan Development Update: "Towards Economic Stabilization and Recovery", April 2022

⁴ OCHA, Afghanistan - Subnational Population Statistics, Afghanistan Data Grid, 2021
<https://data.humdata.org/dataset/cod-ps-afg>

⁵ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview Afghanistan, Humanitarian Programme Cycle, January 2023

⁶ UN OCHA, 2022 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview, <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-january-2022>

⁷ World Health Organization Afghanistan, HeRAMS, Health Resources and Services Availability System (HeRAMS) – WHO Afghanistan Health Information Hub (whe-him.org)

⁸ Stoddard, A., Harvey, P., Czwarno, M. & Breckenridge, M. (2020). Humanitarian Access SCORE Report: Afghanistan. Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid

Programme

Welcome by *Luciano Saso*, Sapienza University of Rome, Coordinator of the M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health

Panel Session chaired by *Rossella Miccio*, *President of EMERGENCY*

Access to care in Afghanistan: Perspectives from Afghan people in 10 provinces by *Rossella Miccio*, EMERGENCY, and *Martina Valente*, PhD, CRIMEDIM, Italy

Afghanistan Health Sector; the dilemma of ownership and sustainability, **Dr. Wahid Majrooh**, MD, MSc, MA, PGDS, Former Acting Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan, Afghanistan

The resilience of the health system in Afghanistan: not so many bad news!, **Prof. Karl Blanchet**, Director of the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies and Professor in Humanitarian Public Health at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Geneva, Switzerland

Sustainable Healthcare Financing for Afghan Refugees in Iran, **Prof. Amirhossein Takian**, Vice Dean and Head of Department of Global Health Policy, School of Public Health Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran

Discussion

Rapporteur: Prof. Stephen Matlin, Visiting Professor, Institute of Global Health Innovation, Imperial College London, UK

Background

This webinar is part of the **M8 Alliance Webinar Series on Migrant and Refugee Health**, organized by the M8 Alliance under the leadership of Prof. Luciano Saso.



The **M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centres, Universities and National Academies** is a unique international network of 30 leading international academic health centres, universities, and research institutions, all of which are committed to improving global health and working with political and economic decision-makers to develop science-based solutions to health challenges worldwide.

Migrant and Refugee Health has been a focus topic of the M8 Alliance since 2016. Regular sessions at the World Health Summit and dedicated expert meetings have laid the basis for effective international research networks. The webinar series builds on this tradition and uses the opportunities of digital technologies to involve even more experts from around the world.

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Further information:

<https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/m8-alliance/topics/migrant-and-refugee-health.html>

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