



Quick Facts



- Population: 29.82 million (2012)¹
- Share of youth (15-24 years old) in total population: 55.3%²
- Total unemployment rate: 7.1%²
- Youth unemployment rate: 12%²
- Youth labour force participation rate: 60.26%²
- GDP in 2011: US \$18.03 billion¹
- GDP growth in 2012: 2.2%¹
- Major industries: Agriculture and Services (Transportation)²

Since 1934 Afghanistan has ratified [19 ILO Conventions](#) including these five ILO Core Conventions:

- **Convention 100** – Equal Remuneration Convention
- **Convention 105** – Abolition of Forced Labour Convention
- **Convention 111** – Discrimination (employment and occupation)
- **Convention 138** – Minimum Age Convention
- **Convention 182** – Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

Sources: (1) World Bank; (2) National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/2008 reports

After nearly three decades of continuous conflict, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has become one of the poorest countries in the world. The international community has been actively involved in the country's reconstruction but the future of the Afghan economy is uncertain. As foreign troops withdraw in 2014 the country is likely to face severe economic turmoil because the total amount of aid given to the country in 2010-2011 was approximately US \$15.7 billion, almost 90 per cent of the total GDP in 2011 ([ILO, 2012](#)). Afghanistan has the world's fastest growing population rate of 2.8 per cent, and a rapid rise in the youth population ([Linda Lavender, 2011](#)). Afghanistan's youth face challenges related to unemployment and low wages. These could lead them to work for the narcotics industry, illegally armed groups and terrorist organizations. Therefore, youth employment is a key concern in the development and stability of Afghan society.

Youth Unemployment and Underemployment

As more than 400,000 young people enter the job market annually, Afghanistan has an increasing need to generate employment opportunities ([ILO, 2012](#)). According to the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/2008 report, Afghanistan's youth unemployment rate was 10 per cent for young men and 15 per cent for young women, significantly higher than the national unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent ([NRVA, 2009](#)). Young people tend to occupy temporary and precarious positions (63.8 percent) and work as daily labourers (17.6 percent) because of the lack of education, skills, and experience and the limited job opportunities available in the community ([ILO, 2012](#)).

Young Women

The situation of Afghan girls is of particular concern. Traditional pressures, such as early marriage, make them more likely to drop out of school, which in turn makes it difficult to find decent jobs. Women earn 51 per cent less than men in non-farm occupations and Afghanistan's employment-to-population ratio (aged 15-64 years) shows a large gender difference: 80 per cent for males and 43 per cent for females ([ILO, 2012](#)). Moreover, young, educated women (18 per cent) are approximately twice as likely to be unemployed as young, educated men (8 per cent).

Labour Migration

Many young Afghanistan men find employment in neighboring countries such as Iran, Tajikistan, and Pakistan ([IOM](#)). They generally consider becoming migrant workers as an attractive employment option because they can expect more income and acquire new marketable skills from migration. However, it becomes less profitable due to rapidly declining currencies and tightening immigration controls in the neighboring countries ([ILO, 2013](#)). Since most of them cross the border without legal documentation and are unaware of labour laws and their rights due to the lack of institutional framework for labour migration, they are in danger of exploitation.

Child Labour

In Afghanistan there are still many children working illegally even though the legal age of employment is 15. UNICEF and the Government of Afghanistan estimated that 13 per cent of Afghan children (aged between 6 and 15) work ([UNICEF, 2010](#)). Children work in agriculture in rural areas and in small manufacturing companies, restaurants and shops in urban areas. Due to their early participation in economic activities the children are deprived of opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge that can allow them to find better quality jobs.

Education and Skills Development

The Government of Afghanistan aims to develop the skills of young people through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as well as focused, functional, literacy training. Technical and vocational education at secondary level in public institutions has seen a 10-fold increase in the last five years but it has not been accompanied by improvement in quality of training delivered. Employers still find that there is a mismatch between the demand and supply of skilled workers.



Government Priorities

[The Afghanistan National Development Strategy \(ANDS\)](#) aims to foster a sense of confidence among the young that they can contribute to and benefit from a stable and prosperous country. To assist youth extensive reforms have been introduced in the education sector, which include expansion of the education system and reforms to vocational education. In 2013 the President approved [Afghanistan's first National Youth Policy](#) with 11 intervention plans to tackle Afghanistan's youth employment crisis.

The UN and Youth in Afghanistan

28 United Nations (UN) agencies and international organizations work on the economic, social and cultural reconstruction of Afghanistan under the [United Nations Development Assistance Framework](#) and UNESCO, World Bank and ILO actively run projects on youth employment.

The ILO in Afghanistan

The ILO seeks to promote decent work as a major contributing factor towards post conflict recovery in Afghanistan. As of September 2013, the ILO runs four projects in the country with a total budget of US \$1,753,171, including the Strengthening Labour Administration in Afghanistan and Studies on Afghan Competitiveness for Job Creation - Agricultural Value Chains.

Policy and Programme Recommendations

As part of [the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Youth](#) and Afghanistan's National Youth Policy, the ILO could participate in the following activities.

- Developing a reliable labour market data and information system on youth employment.
- Building employment services and centers for youth.
- Developing a demand driven, coordinated and inclusive TVET system.
- Providing entrepreneurship skills development programmes to promote youth entrepreneurship.
- Strengthening the capacity of the social partners and promoting tripartite solutions for youth employment at the local level.
- Advocating for a national policy on youth employment and promoting mainstreaming of youth issues into the National Employment Programme.
- Providing information sessions and trainings on migration for youths and supporting the creation a legal migration system to prevent exploitation of the Afghan workers abroad.

References

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More information is available at www.ilo.org, kilm.ilo.org



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