



Monitoring chlorine concentration in drinking water during an emergency situation in Balkh province. According to WHO estimates, deaths due to environmental risks constitute 26% of all deaths in Afghanistan. Household Air Pollution (HAP) is the single most important environmental health risk factor worldwide. In Afghanistan, it is estimated that HAP causes over 27 000 deaths per year, whereas Ambient Air Pollution (outdoor) causes over 11 000 deaths annually. An estimated 3000 Afghans die due to second-hand smoke every year (EMRO/WHO, 2016). Women and children are at particular risk of exposure to household air pollution as they stay at home more than men. Although there is a need for further research, strong epidemiological studies suggest that exposure to HAP contributes to low birth weight, stunting and pre-term birth (WHO, 2016).

Poor access to water and sanitation is another major environmental health risk factor, contributing to increased diarrhoeal disease prevalence. In Afghanistan, diarrhoeal diseases are responsible for an estimated 10 000 deaths per year and 2,971 Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALY, number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death) per 100 000 people, mainly children under the age of 5 (EMRO/WHO, 2016). Despite significant improvements in the past ten years, 35% of Afghans still lack access to an improved water source and only 39% have access to improved sanitation (CSO, 2014). Lack of indoor-piped water affects women and children disproportionately, since water collection is generally their responsibility. Other environmental risk factors that contribute to mortality and morbidity in Afghanistan are either poorly documented or not documented at all. They mainly include unsafe food, exposure to solid waste and wastewater and unsafe working places and environment. According to WHO

estimates, deaths due to environmental risks constitute 26% of all deaths in Afghanistan. Household Air Pollution (HAP) is the single most important environmental health risk factor worldwide. In Afghanistan, it is estimated that HAP causes over 27 000 deaths per year, whereas Ambient Air Pollution (outdoor) causes over 11 000 deaths annually. An estimated 3000 Afghans die due to second-hand smoke every year (EMRO/WHO, 2016). Women and children are at particular risk of exposure to household air pollution as they stay at home more than men. Although there is a need for further research, strong epidemiological studies suggest that exposure to HAP contributes to low birth weight, stunting and pre-term birth (WHO, 2016).

WHO supports the Ministry of Public Health through:

- Establishing an Environmental Health Task Force to develop an Environmental Health Strategy and action plan for Afghanistan for 2018-2020, aligned with the Public Health Policy 2018-2020
- Conducting water quality testing and monitoring using portable equipment and training health staff on environmental health, WASH, radiation protection, health care waste management, food safety and occupational health
- Procuring water testing kits and emergency water treatment products to deliver emergency water supply to people affected by disasters
- Carrying out assessments of environmental health conditions in health facilities

Saturday 17th of May 2025 05:01:37 PM