

AL-AYN INTERNATIONAL

# Beyond Survival

## Addressing Poverty and Healthcare Needs of Orphaned Children in Afghanistan

Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation



# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| Executive Summary | 04 |
| The Origins & Mission of Al-Ayn | 05 |
| Introduction | 06 |
| Where We Work | 07 |
| Poverty and Orphaned Children | 08 |
| Healthcare Challenges | 10 |
| Strategies and Interventions | 12 |
| Challenges and Insights from a Medical Professional | 14 |
| Conclusion | 17 |
| References | 18 |

# Executive Summary

This research paper examines the challenges faced by orphaned children in Afghanistan, with a particular focus on the intersection of poverty and healthcare access. Decades of conflict, political instability, and economic hardship have left millions of children vulnerable, depriving them of essential services such as healthcare, nutrition, and education.

Orphaned children in Afghanistan are often trapped in cycles of poverty, lacking the support systems necessary to improve their long-term well-being. These hardships are further compounded by inadequate infrastructure, resource shortages, and systemic barriers that hinder access to basic healthcare and educational opportunities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted and sustained approach. Targeted interventions, including financial aid, comprehensive healthcare services, nutritional support, and psychosocial assistance are crucial in breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability among orphaned children.

Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation plays a significant role in providing targeted support to orphaned children and widowed mothers in Kabul, however, more sustained and innovative approaches are needed to address the broader systemic issues contributing to the plight of Afghanistan's orphaned population.

This report underscores the urgent need for continued international attention, policy action, and humanitarian support to safeguard the future of Afghanistan’s orphaned children. By securing access to essential resources and services, these children can be empowered to lead dignified, stable, and self-sufficient lives.



# Origins and Mission of Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation

Established in 2006 in Iraq with a profound sense of duty towards orphaned children and the underprivileged, Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation (Al-Ayn) operates under the ethos that every child deserves the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances.

The foundation's name, "Al-Ayn" (derived from Arabic, meaning "the eye"), symbolises its vigilant role in safeguarding the welfare of orphaned children. Al-Ayn's mission is deeply rooted in providing comprehensive care and long-term support to vulnerable children and their families, alleviating their suffering, and empowering them toward self-sufficiency. In response to enduring crises in Iraq and later expanding to other conflict-affected regions, Al-Ayn has established a robust network of programmes and services. These efforts encompass financial assistance, educational support, healthcare services, psychological rehabilitation, and social integration programmes for beneficiaries.

Through these multifaceted interventions, Al-Ayn not only addresses urgent humanitarian needs, but also works to create long-term resilience, stability, and dignity among the communities it serves.

## Al-Ayn's Comprehensive Care Model

Al-Ayn's approach to supporting orphaned children is holistic, addressing both their immediate needs and their long-term development. This model ensures that children are not only cared for in the present, but are also equipped to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

**1. Financial Support**

Al-Ayn's approach to supporting orphaned children is holistic, addressing both their immediate needs and their long-term development. This model ensures that children are not only cared for in the present, but are also equipped to become self-sufficient, contributing members of society.

**2. Healthcare Services**

Access to healthcare is a central pillar of Al-Ayn's support strategy. The foundation ensures that children receive regular medical check-ups and treatment for illnesses. In regions where healthcare infrastructure is lacking, Al-Ayn steps in to facilitate access to essential medical services, including covering the costs of surgeries and long-term treatments for severe and chronic conditions. This proactive approach to healthcare is vital in preventing and managing health issues that could otherwise become life-threatening.

**3. Sustainable Services Development**

Al-Ayn is committed to building sustainable services in the regions where it operates. In Afghanistan, this means providing immediate care while also investing in infrastructure and local capacity to support long-term independence. Through our seasonal aid distributions, we not only provide essential resources to orphaned children and widowed mothers, but also support local economies by sourcing supplies and engaging local vendors. This approach helps strengthen the resilience of families and the broader community, creating a self-sustaining support network that lasts over time.

## Al-Ayn's Regional Impact

In 2021, Al-Ayn expanded its mission to Afghanistan, building on 18 years of successful operations in Iraq. Drawing on our expertise in conflict zones, we were able to quickly establish a presence in Afghanistan and provide critical support to hundreds of orphaned children and families living in poverty.

Our approach in Afghanistan transcends mere financial assistance, aiming to provide orphaned children and their families with essential resources for an improved quality of life. Despite the complex and challenging environment, the foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering continuous, expert-led care. The focus in Afghanistan has been on building sustainable services, ensuring that these initiatives endure beyond the immediate crisis.

# Introduction

Afghanistan, a nation affected by decades of conflict, political instability, and socio-economic challenges, is home to a significant number of orphaned children. While exact figures vary, estimates suggest that millions of children have lost one or both parents, with a considerable portion being paternal orphans. Losing a father often equates to financial instability in Afghan society (UNICEF, 2022). Many of these children live in extreme poverty, lacking access to essential healthcare, education, and social support. According to the World Bank, over 47% of Afghanistan's population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2022), and orphaned children are particularly vulnerable within this demographic. Studies indicate that orphaned children face heightened risks of malnutrition, inadequate medical care, and psychological trauma, exacerbated by the absence of a comprehensive child welfare system (Save the Children, 2021).

Although some social safety nets exist, such as informal kinship care or religious and community-based orphanages, these support systems are often overburdened and inconsistent in their effectiveness. This research paper explores the intersection of poverty and healthcare challenges faced by orphaned children in Afghanistan, drawing on data to illustrate the extent of these issues. Additionally, it outlines potential strategies for intervention, focusing on approaches that are viable within the current socio-political landscape.



**47%**

of Afghanistan's population lives below the poverty line.

World Bank, 2022

# Where we work




**Our Areas of Operation**

Al-Ayn delivers its work across Afghanistan, with established operations in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif. Since 2021, we have operated in some of the country's highest-risk regions, where the needs of vulnerable children are greatest and access to consistent support is most limited. Our long-standing presence has allowed us to build the trust, local knowledge and operational resilience that sustained, high-quality care depends on. We ensure our support is culturally informed and responsive to the realities families face on the ground.

As of October 2026, over 7,300 orphaned children are under our care. Afghanistan continues to face a worsening humanitarian crisis, with the compounding pressures on families and communities intensifying the impact of poverty and placing children at ever greater risk. In this context, our expert-led approach is essential. Our care is delivered by skilled, experienced professionals who understand the specific needs of orphaned children in these regions, ensuring that every child is supported with dignity, consistency and a focus on long-term wellbeing.

# Socio-economic Context and Poverty's Impact on Orphaned Children

Afghanistan ranks among the poorest countries globally, with a significant portion of its population living below the poverty line. This pervasive poverty is multifaceted, encompassing inadequate access to basic services, food insecurity, and high unemployment rates. These challenges intersect with various demographics, including internally displaced persons, rural communities, and, notably, orphaned children. While not all orphaned children in Afghanistan live in poverty, a substantial number do. Estimates suggest that approximately 1.6 million children have lost one or both parents, many of whom find themselves living on the streets, struggling to find food, shelter, and warmth. (Islamic Relief, November 2024)

The absence of a primary caregiver often exacerbates their vulnerability, limiting access to essential resources and support systems. The future prospects for these children are concerning. Deprivation of education, proper nutrition, and stable shelter can lead to long-term developmental challenges. Without intervention, these children face heightened risks of continued poverty, exploitation, and health complications, perpetuating a cycle of hardship that extends into adulthood.

Addressing the needs of orphaned children in Afghanistan requires comprehensive strategies that consider the multifaceted nature of their challenges. This includes not only providing immediate relief but also implementing long-term solutions aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring sustainable development for future generations.

### Challenged Faced by Orphaned Children

Orphaned children in Afghanistan face unique and compounding challenges that go beyond general poverty. While many Afghan children experience hardship, those who have lost one or both parents often lack not only financial support but also emotional and social stability. In a country where traditional family structures play a crucial role in survival, the absence of a primary caregiver can mean limited access to food, healthcare, and education. Even children with one surviving parent may struggle if that parent lacks financial means, social support, or legal protection, particularly in a society where women's economic opportunities are restricted (UNICEF, 2022).

Malnutrition is a critical issue among children, affecting their physical and cognitive development and limiting their ability to succeed in school or secure employment in the future. Many are also forced into hazardous labour or face a heightened risk of exploitation, including child trafficking and recruitment by armed groups (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Beyond material hardships, the psychological toll of losing parents and growing up in extreme poverty can lead to long-term mental health consequences. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are prevalent among orphaned children, yet Afghanistan's limited mental health infrastructure leaves them without adequate support to process their trauma (WHO, 2022).

**1.6m**

Estimated children who have lost one or both parents

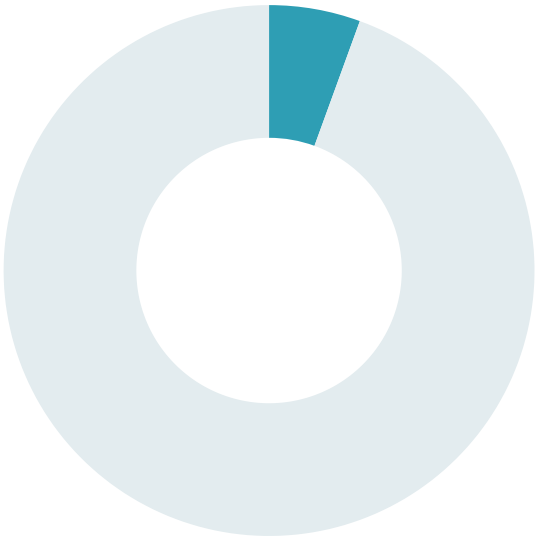
Source in paper: Islamic Relief, November 2024

# Healthcare Challenges for Orphaned Children

**Challenges Faced by Orphaned Children**

Afghanistan's healthcare system is critically underdeveloped, struggling with infrastructure deficiencies, resource shortages, and the impact of political instability. While healthcare services are theoretically free for all children, significant barriers, such as long waiting times, underfunded facilities, and a severe shortage of trained medical professionals, limit effective access. Additionally, frequent government transitions and ongoing conflict have disrupted healthcare programmes, making it difficult to maintain consistent medical care for vulnerable populations, including orphaned children.

The country has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. According to UNICEF,
1 in 18 children dies before their fifth birthday, and the maternal mortality ratio stands at approximately 638 per 100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2023). These alarming figures highlight systemic weaknesses in healthcare accessibility, particularly in rural areas where medical facilities are scarce. Many children, including orphaned children, suffer from treatable illnesses such as respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, and malnutrition-related conditions like stunting and wasting, yet they often receive little to no medical intervention due to logistical and financial barriers (WHO, 2022).



Mental health issues further compound the struggles of orphaned children. PTSD, depression, and anxiety are prevalent among those who have lost parents due to conflict, yet Afghanistan's limited mental health infrastructure offers few resources to address these conditions. Cultural stigma surrounding psychological treatment also discourages families from seeking help, leaving many children without the necessary support to cope with trauma (WHO, 2023).

Despite the existence of some healthcare provisions, systemic failures - ranging from a lack of expertise to inadequate medical supplies, prevent many orphaned children from receiving the care they need. This paper examines these barriers in depth and explores potential solutions to improve healthcare access for this vulnerable population.

**1 in 18**

Children die before their fifth birthday

Source in paper: UNICEF, 2023
Figures are reproduced from the supplied research paper.

# Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare remains a critical challenge for orphaned children in Afghanistan, exacerbated by geographic, financial, and cultural barriers. Rural and mountainous regions lack healthcare facilities, leaving many children without access to essential medical services. Even in urban areas where hospitals and clinics exist, systemic deficiencies, including inadequate medical equipment, medication shortages, and an insufficient number of trained healthcare professionals - limit the quality of care available (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Financial constraints further compound these challenges. While Afghanistan's healthcare system offers free medical services in principle, many families still struggle with indirect costs, such as transportation to medical facilities and the price of specialist consultations or prescription medications. Orphaned children, who often lack financial support, are disproportionately affected, leading to untreated illnesses and preventable deaths (World Bank, 2022).

Cultural and gender disparities also restrict healthcare access, particularly for orphaned girls. In many regions, strict societal norms prevent women and girls from seeking medical care without a male guardian, effectively barring orphaned girls from critical healthcare services if they lack male relatives to accompany them (UNICEF, 2023). These barriers highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve healthcare accessibility for orphaned children.

**Addressing Healthcare Needs: Strategies and Interventions**

Improving healthcare for orphaned children in Afghanistan requires a comprehensive approach that addresses financial, infrastructural, and cultural barriers while integrating mental health support into care models.

**Financial Aid and Subsidies**

Financial constraints significantly hinder access to healthcare. Implementing targeted financial aid and subsidies can alleviate these burdens, ensuring that orphaned children receive necessary medical care. Conditional cash transfer programmes, which provide financial incentives for families to seek preventive healthcare, have proven effective in other low-income countries and could be adapted for Afghanistan (World Bank, 2022).

Additionally, subsidised healthcare services in rural areas would reduce financial barriers and increase healthcare access. Programmes that waive fees for orphaned children at public hospitals and clinics could provide immediate relief, particularly for children suffering from chronic conditions or requiring long-term treatment.

**Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure**

The lack of adequate healthcare infrastructure is a fundamental barrier to medical access for orphaned children, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Addressing this issue requires investments in healthcare facilities, the training of medical professionals, and the consistent supply of essential medicines and medical equipment.

Mobile clinics and telemedicine services have emerged as viable solutions in conflict-affected regions, bringing medical care directly to remote communities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has reported success with mobile health initiatives in similar settings, demonstrating that these interventions can significantly expand healthcare access in regions where permanent medical facilities are unfeasible (UNDP, 2023).

# Access to Healthcare

### Community-Based Health Programmes

Community-driven healthcare initiatives are crucial in bridging the gap between formal healthcare institutions and vulnerable populations. Community health workers (CHWs) play a pivotal role in providing basic healthcare services, health education, and early detection of illnesses. Research indicates that CHW-led interventions in developing countries have successfully reduced child mortality rates and improved vaccination coverage (World Health Organization, 2022).

### Mental Health Support for Orphaned Children and Widowed Mothers

The psychological trauma of losing parents, coupled with extreme poverty and instability, places orphaned children at high risk of developing mental health disorders, including PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Despite the urgency of this issue, Afghanistan's mental health infrastructure remains severely underdeveloped, with an estimated one psychiatrist per 500,000 people (WHO, 2023).

Integrating mental health services into primary healthcare and community programmes is essential. Training general healthcare providers in basic mental health care, establishing peer support groups, and leveraging telemedicine for psychiatric consultations are practical steps toward addressing the mental health crisis among orphaned children.

TWidowed mothers also require mental health support, as they often bear the dual burden of grief and economic hardship. Community-based counseling services and financial support programmes could provide these women with the resources needed to ensure both their well-being and that of their children (UNICEF, 2023).

Additionally, community health programmes can serve as entry points for mental health support. Training CHWs to identify symptoms of trauma, PTSD, and depression among orphaned children would facilitate earlier intervention, helping mitigate long-term psychological distress.



**1 : 500,000**

Estimated ratio of psychiatrists to people in Afghanistan

Source in paper: WHO, 2023

# Strategies and Interventions

**Linking Interventions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Efforts to improve healthcare access for orphaned children align with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):




SDG 1 (No Poverty): Providing financial aid and subsidies reduces economic barriers to healthcare access, breaking the cycle of poverty for orphaned children.




SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being): Expanding healthcare services, improving medical infrastructure, and integrating mental health support directly enhance the well-being of orphaned children.




SDG 4 (Quality Education): Healthier children are more likely to attend school regularly, reinforcing the link between healthcare and educational attainment (UNDP, 2023).

By addressing the healthcare needs of orphaned children, these interventions contribute to broader global efforts to improve health, education, and economic stability in conflict-affected regions.

# Strategies and Interventions

### Community and Systemic Impact

Beyond individual children, these healthcare interventions have wider systemic implications. A healthier population reduces the strain on the national healthcare system and fosters long-term socio-economic development. Educated and well-nourished children are more likely to contribute positively to their communities, creating a self-sustaining cycle of growth and stability (World Bank, 2022).

Moreover, targeted healthcare interventions can help break intergenerational cycles of poverty and disease. By ensuring that orphaned children receive medical care and mental health support, these programmes create pathways toward economic self-sufficiency and social resilience.

### Challenges and Opportunities for Healthcare Interventions

Despite the necessity of healthcare interventions, Afghanistan's volatile political landscape presents significant challenges. Ongoing conflict, economic instability, and shifting governmental policies often disrupt healthcare delivery, particularly in remote areas. The security situation limits the reach of international aid organisations, while resource shortages make it difficult to sustain healthcare initiatives (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

However, these challenges also create opportunities for innovation. Telemedicine, mobile health applications, and community-driven healthcare models offer promising solutions to bridge healthcare gaps in conflict zones.

Successful models from other crisis-affected regions suggest that digital health solutions can provide sustainable, scalable care in Afghanistan (UNDP, 2023).

Additionally, fostering local ownership of healthcare initiatives - through partnerships with Afghan healthcare professionals, community leaders, and civil society organisations, can enhance the resilience of healthcare programmes. Investing in local capacity-building ensures that healthcare services remain available even amidst political and economic uncertainties.



# Challenges and Insights from a Medical Professional

### Healthcare and Poverty Among Orphaned Children in Afghanistan

To gain a deeper understanding of the healthcare challenges faced by orphaned children in Afghanistan, an interview was conducted with a local healthcare expert. Given the sensitivity of the subject, the interviewee's identity remains anonymous. Their insights shed light on the systemic barriers these children face, including limited access to healthcare and the compounded effects of poverty and social factors.

### Healthcare Access for Orphaned Children

Access to healthcare for orphaned children, particularly in rural or remote regions of Afghanistan, remains a significant challenge. The healthcare professional highlighted that while urban hospitals are often overwhelmed with patients suffering from diseases like tuberculosis, malnutrition, and measles, rural areas are even worse off due to limited infrastructure. Clinics in these regions frequently lack essential resources, from basic medical supplies to trained staff. Orphaned children, particularly those in orphanages, often receive only basic care in these under-resourced environments. The gap between the availability of advanced healthcare services in cities versus rural areas continues to leave many children with inadequate care.

### Preventative Healthcare Measures

One of the notable successes in Afghanistan's healthcare system has been the expansion of preventative measures, especially vaccination programmes. Vaccines for diseases like polio, measles, hepatitis, and tuberculosis are widely available and free of charge. However, the healthcare provider stressed that challenges remain in ensuring that children in remote and hard-to-reach areas, particularly orphaned children, receive these vaccines. Despite the progress, there are still significant gaps in the system when it comes to ensuring comprehensive preventative care for all children, especially those who are most vulnerable.

### Common Health Issues and Socioeconomic Disparities

The healthcare professional revealed that congenital heart diseases, respiratory infections, and chronic conditions such as thalassemia and hepatitis are rampant among orphaned children. These health issues are further exacerbated by socioeconomic conditions, with poorer children having less access to specialised medical care. Although governmental clinics offer free healthcare services, they are typically unequipped to address the complex needs of children with chronic or life-threatening illnesses, highlighting the stark disparity between rural and urban healthcare systems. This often results in poorer health outcomes for children in lower socioeconomic brackets.

### Impact of Poverty on Physical and Mental Health

The link between poverty and poor health outcomes was a recurring theme in the interview. Malnutrition, worsened by inadequate living conditions, contributes to a range of health problems among orphaned children. Conditions like fractures, congenital deformities, and skeletal disorders are common due to poor nutrition and the lack of early medical intervention. The interviewee also noted that poverty takes a heavy toll on the children's mental health, leading to widespread issues such as chronic stress, anxiety, and depression. The psychological strain is intensified when caregivers are unable to afford necessary treatments, further exacerbating the children's mental health challenges.

# Challenges and Insights from a Medical Professional

### Nutritional Deficiencies and Health Outcomes

Nutritional deficiencies are a critical concern for orphaned children in Afghanistan. Limited access to key nutrients like calcium and vitamins A and D leads to long-term complications, including developmental delays and weakened immune systems. Conditions such as vitamin C deficiency, which compromises immune function, and cerebral palsy are becoming more common among impoverished children. Malnutrition in the first two years of life is especially concerning, as it has profound, lasting effects on both physical and cognitive development.

### Healthcare Education and Public Awareness

A major challenge for orphaned children is the lack of healthcare education. The interviewee highlighted that efforts to educate children and their guardians about hygiene and basic health practices are often hindered by geographical isolation and lack of resources. In remote areas where access to media and technology is limited, children receive little to no information on preventative care, perpetuating a cycle of poor health outcomes.

### Recommendations for Improving the Healthcare System

Based on their experience, the healthcare professional recommended several improvements to the healthcare system for orphaned children. Key among these was increased funding for healthcare services, particularly in rural areas. Establishing better systems to register and monitor the health of orphaned children was also highlighted, as such systems could help ensure more targeted care. Additionally, expanding comprehensive healthcare services that address both acute and chronic conditions in underserved areas was identified as a priority for reducing healthcare inequalities.

### Mental Health Services for Orphaned Children

Mental health services in Afghanistan, especially for children, remain severely limited. The healthcare professional emphasised that in larger urban centres like Kabul, some mental health services exist, but rural areas have virtually none. Orphaned children, in particular, face significant mental health challenges, including PTSD from losing parents and trauma from ongoing conflict. The general healthcare system, however, has yet to prioritise mental health as a central component of care for children, leaving many without the support they need to recover from emotional and psychological trauma.

### Long-term Health Outcomes for Children in Poverty

The healthcare professional expressed grave concerns about the long-term health outcomes for orphaned children, especially those living in poverty. Chronic illnesses such as respiratory diseases and malnutrition-related disorders are commonplace. In addition to these physical ailments, the likelihood of mental health issues persisting into adulthood is high, with many children at risk of developing chronic anxiety, depression, or substance abuse problems. Early-life exposure to poor healthcare services and living conditions places these children at risk of long-term health challenges.

### Supporting Widowed Mothers and Single Parents

To improve the well-being of orphaned children, the healthcare professional also suggested providing more support to widowed mothers and single parents. Parenting education programmes and emotional support services would help these caregivers provide better care for their children. The interviewee emphasised that empowering families through both social and psychological support is crucial to improving long-term outcomes for orphaned children.

# Challenges and Insights from a Medical Professional

### The Impact of Conflict on Healthcare and Education

Ongoing conflict continues to severely disrupt healthcare and education for orphaned children. The interviewee noted the strain on hospitals and the lack of specialised services for women and children. Financial barriers, such as the cost of transportation and medication, further impede access to care. Additionally, the collapse of educational systems in conflict-affected areas poses a long-term threat to the well-being of these vulnerable children.

### Gender Disparities in Healthcare and Education

The interviewee also emphasised the gender disparities in healthcare and education, particularly for orphaned girls. Cultural norms often prioritise boys' treatment over girls', and early marriage limits girls' access to both healthcare and schooling. Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions and policy changes to ensure equal opportunities for all children.

### Effectiveness of NGOs and International Aid

Finally, the expert acknowledged the important role of NGOs and international organisations in improving healthcare access for orphaned children. However, they noted that more could be done to enhance the reach and impact of these efforts, particularly in remote regions. Collaborating with local communities and improving communication channels were identified as ways NGOs could better serve the needs of orphaned children.



# Conclusion

The plight of orphaned children in Afghanistan underscores the country's profound socio-economic and healthcare challenges. Endemic poverty, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and systemic barriers to essential services create a cycle of deprivation that exacerbates health disparities and limits opportunities for these vulnerable children (World Bank, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that integrates healthcare reform, financial aid, and mental health support within a sustainable and equitable development framework.

Strengthening healthcare systems is a critical priority. Investments in medical infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas, would ensure more equitable healthcare access. Expanding community-based health initiatives, such as mobile clinics and community health worker programmes, has demonstrated success in improving child health outcomes in resource-limited settings (WHO, 2022). Additionally, targeted financial aid and conditional cash transfer programmes can reduce economic barriers to healthcare, improving preventive and curative care uptake among orphaned children (World Bank, 2022).

Mental health support must also be an integral component of healthcare interventions. The psychological trauma experienced by orphaned children, often compounded by conflict-related displacement and chronic poverty, necessitates the integration of mental health services into primary healthcare frameworks (WHO, 2023). Capacity-building initiatives that train local healthcare providers in trauma-informed care can ensure that mental health services reach those in need, while public awareness campaigns can mitigate stigma surrounding mental health treatment (UNICEF, 2023).

Al-Ayn Social Care Foundation exemplifies the role of targeted, community-driven interventions in addressing these pressing issues.

By providing monthly financial aid, access to healthcare, and seasonal assistance, Al-Ayn directly improves the well-being of orphaned children in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif. These initiatives serve as models for integrating sustainable development principles into humanitarian responses, demonstrating that localised, culturally sensitive solutions can yield meaningful change.

For long-term impact, such efforts must be embedded within a broader, multi-sectoral strategy aligned with national policies and global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Collaborative partnerships among NGOs, international organisations, and governmental bodies can amplify the effectiveness of these interventions, creating systemic solutions that extend beyond short-term relief (UNDP, 2023). Policy-driven commitments to gender equity, education, and poverty alleviation must complement healthcare efforts to ensure comprehensive support for orphaned children.

Ultimately, breaking the cycle of poverty and ill health among orphaned children in Afghanistan requires sustained commitment, evidence-based interventions, and innovative solutions. With coordinated action and long-term investment, it is possible to build a resilient healthcare system that guarantees every orphaned child in Afghanistan the opportunity to thrive - physically, mentally, and socially.

# Reference

Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2022). Afghanistan: Urgent Need for Action on Rights. Retrieved from HRW

Islamic Relief. (2023). Orphan Sponsorship Program. Retrieved from Islamic Relief

Save the Children. (2023). Afghanistan: Protecting Children Affected by Conflict. Retrieved from Save the Children

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2023). Health and Development in Afghanistan. Retrieved from UNDP

UNICEF. (2022). Children in Afghanistan: The State of the World's Children. Retrieved from UNICEF

UNICEF. (2023). Afghanistan: Statistics. Retrieved from UNICEF

World Bank. (2022). Afghanistan Development Update: Navigating Uncertainty. Retrieved from World Bank

World Health Organization (WHO). (2022). Child Health in Afghanistan. Retrieved from WHO

World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Afghanistan. Retrieved from WHO

World Health Organization (WHO). (2022). Primary Health Care in Afghanistan. Retrieved from WHO

## “Collaborating with local communities and improving communication channels”

Excerpt from the supplied interview account



AL-AYN
INTERNATIONAL