Women in Global Health: Statement on situation in Afghanistan

Women in Global Health (WGH) is deeply concerned about the deteriorating conditions of women and girls in all areas of Afghanistan under Taliban control, as documented by the continued and substantiated reports of grave violations of human rights, including all forms of discrimination and restrictions placed upon them.

At times of unrest and transition, access to healthcare can become challenged. It is imperative that this access remains secure, unhindered and readily available for all, and in particular for women and girls. This includes ensuring that female healthcare professionals who are critical to maintaining operational, resilient health systems, remain in their professional positions and are retained in post to deliver training and education for the next generation of healthcare practitioners. This includes - but is not limited to - physicians, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, and Afghanistan’s inspirational community health workers who are instrumental in providing primary healthcare services.

The training of future healthcare professionals must have an equity of access for students of all genders. We echo concerns across the international community that access to education for women and girls must not be impeded.

As WGH, we remain steadfast in our commitment to all global health champions in Afghanistan and continue to work for improving women’s representation within global health both nationally and internationally. Gender equality is not only a question of upholding individual human rights; it is about creating a better society for all.

Healthcare in Afghanistan has experienced continuing challenges over the last 20 years, and the current disruption will further strain Afghanistan’s fragile health system, especially as it responds to COVID-19. Limitations on the autonomy of women and girls threaten access to, and delivery of, equitable health and care services for men, women and children.
Addressing these challenges begins by ensuring visible solidarity with global health and other healthcare providers and professionals in Afghanistan. Now more than ever, maintaining contact and providing humanitarian support is imperative.

On behalf of Women in Global Health and our community of 25 chapters*.

*WGH chapters have been established in Australia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, Malawi, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Somalia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA, and Zambia. WGH also has regional affiliates in Europe and West Africa.

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