



## FIRST PERSON

# Helping Mothers in Her Sister's Name

**USAID helps develop and rebuild a national midwifery education system in Afghanistan**



[USAID/HSSP]

***“I will never forget that night. My sister was in labor and near death. It was then that I decided to learn more about midwifery and help all mothers in Afghanistan.”***

- Sadeqa Khavari, a 28-year old single mother and a midwife

Sadeqa Khavari's older sister died while giving birth and now she feared her pregnant, younger sister Masoma would suffer the same fate.

Masoma had become seriously ill from hypertension. A visit to the hospital offered no relief. After returning home, the expectant mother suffered convulsions and fell unconscious. The family rushed Masoma back to the hospital, where her premature baby was delivered by caesarean section and the young mother survived. The experience left a lasting impression on Sadeqa and set her on a new path to learn more about midwifery and helping mothers in Afghanistan.

Sadeqa followed through on her decision. In 2007, she graduated from a midwifery school in Bamyan province, 1 of 13 across Afghanistan, supported by USAID. Since 2002, when USAID support helped develop and rebuild a national midwifery education system in Afghanistan, more than 2,000 new midwives have graduated from accredited schools, many of them returning to their communities to care for women and their families.

Sadeqa worked for two years as a community midwife and then left her home province of Bamyan in north central Afghanistan to work in one of Kabul's private hospitals that employs several graduates of the USAID-supported schools.

Working as a midwife, the 28-year-old single mother is able to provide for her son and contribute to the improved health of mothers and newborns in her country. Reflecting on her sister's death, Sadeqa emphasizes that Afghanistan needs more midwives to reach expectant mothers in remote and mountainous areas where transportation to adequate health care is difficult.

Since 2003, more than 2,800 midwives have received training, graduated, and been deployed to their communities that need them the most. With continued training post and increased access to and use of skilled Community Midwives to deliver maternal and newborn care in communities, more lives will be saved in Afghanistan.