Nowhere, perhaps, is the need to improve the health of women and children more apparent—or more challenging to address—than in post-conflict Afghanistan. Yet it is precisely in the context of such challenges that unique opportunities for Afghan midwives have emerged. Once it had been established that midwives would likely be the sole health-care providers for most Afghan women for some time to come, midwifery was virtually given carte blanche to develop, expand and become stronger. Afghanistan's government worked with local and international partners to implement a comprehensive approach to developing and supporting this much needed cadre, which involved: strengthening and expanding midwifery education; creating policies to ensure the pivotal role of midwives in the provision of essential obstetric and newborn care; supporting the establishment of a professional association for midwives; and developing initiatives to increase access to skilled care during childbirth. Although much remains to be done in improving health outcomes for Afghan women and children, efforts to date have succeeded in expanding and strengthening midwifery in Afghanistan, and have paved the way for the professionalisation of Afghan midwives—which may ultimately enable them to be what they need to be to have a significant and sustainable impact on the MMR. These efforts have also underscored the need for strategic decisions in implementing complementary programmes to reduce the country's unacceptable maternal and newborn mortality statistics.