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Policy Brief - #2.9 Case study – Afghanistan

The impact of tax abuses on Determinants of Health
and Mortality rates in Afghanistan



The consequences of tax abuse

Tax abuse (evasion and avoidance) is increasingly being recognised as a significant barrier to development. Government revenue in low and middle -income-countries relies more heavily on corporate tax than in high-income-countries, and tax abuses by international players can have a much more significant impact on their ability to accrue government revenue and invest in healthcare and education ([Moore, 2015](#)). African countries particularly suffer from the consequences of tax abuse. Many countries have signed unfavourable double tax agreements, which deprive the countries of their rights to accrue revenue from taxes ([Tax Justice Network Africa, 2020](#)). Our [peer-reviewed research on Government Revenue and Development \(GRADE\)](#) has demonstrated that an increase in government revenue in low-income-countries (e.g. through curtailing losses to tax abuse) can have a significant impact on their ability to provide Determinants of Health (e.g. sanitation and drinking water) and reduce under-5 (U5) and maternal survival rates.

The impact of tax abuses on Afghanistan

In 2020, the Tax Justice Network released [a report on the State of Tax Justice \(SOTJ\)](#). For the first time, the report revealed an account of how much each country loses annually to tax abuses. From the SOTJ report, we know that Afghanistan suffers annual tax losses of \$2.9 US Million. We deflated this value into 2010 US Dollars (\$2.4 US Million), as the GRADE uses 2010 constant US. We then ran this figure through our visualization tool as an increase of annual government revenue to estimate the impact that curtailing these losses would have on Afghanistan's ability to provide health determinants and increase survival rates. The figures we provided are analysed from 2003-2017, with the assumption that effects on health determinants and survival rates are not accrued for the first 5 years following an increase in revenue. This means that the results are projected over a ten-year period from 2008-2017.

Impact on drinking water in Afghanistan



Figure 1 Projection for Afghanistan: Basic drinking water

Using our GRADE tool, we can demonstrate that over a ten-year period, on average 801 people (of which 131 are children and 181 are women of reproductive age) would have access to basic drinking water if the revenue lost to tax abuses in Afghanistan were curtailed.

Impact on sanitation in Afghanistan

Using our GRADE tool, we can demonstrate that over a ten-year period, on average 5,041 people (853 of which are children and 1,116 are women of reproductive age) would have access to basic sanitation if the revenue lost to tax abuses in Afghanistan were curtailed.

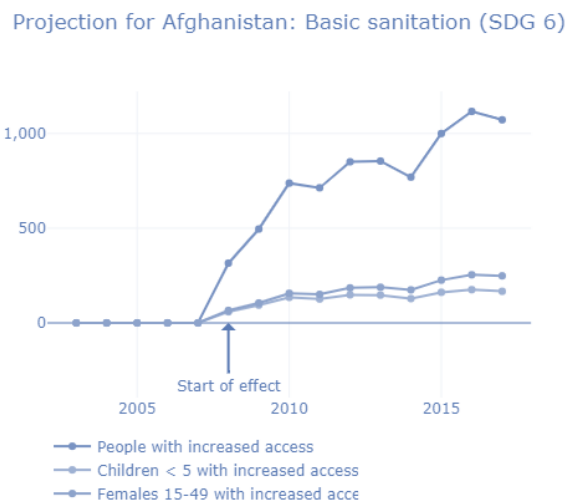


Figure 2 Projection for Afghanistan: Basic sanitation

Impact on additional school years in Afghanistan

Using our GRADE tool, we can demonstrate that over a ten-year period, 472 children would attend school for an additional year if the revenue lost to tax abuses in Afghanistan were curtailed.

Projection for Afghanistan: Child school years (SDG 4)

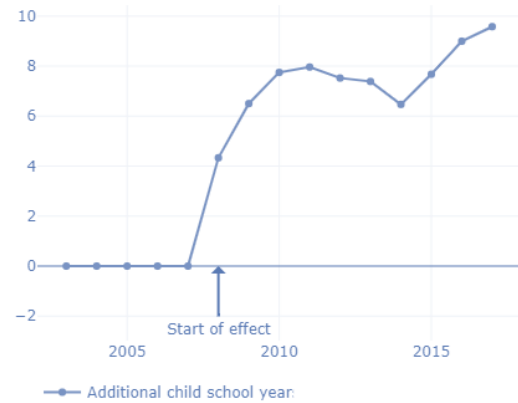


Figure 3 Projection for Afghanistan: Child school years

Impact on child survival in Afghanistan

Projection for Afghanistan: Under-5 survival (SDG 3)

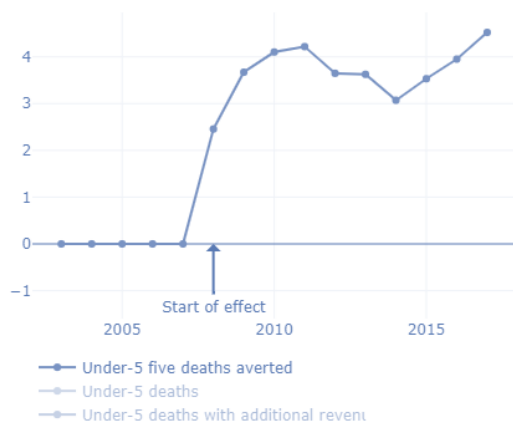


Figure 4 Projection for Afghanistan: Under-5 survival

Using our GRADE tool, we can demonstrate that over a ten-year period, 234 child deaths could be averted if the revenue lost to tax abuses in Afghanistan were curtailed.

Impact on maternal survival in Afghanistan

Using our GRADE tool, we can demonstrate that over a ten-year period, 50 maternal deaths could be averted if the revenue lost to tax abuses in Afghanistan were curtailed.

Projection for Afghanistan: Maternal survival (SDG 3)

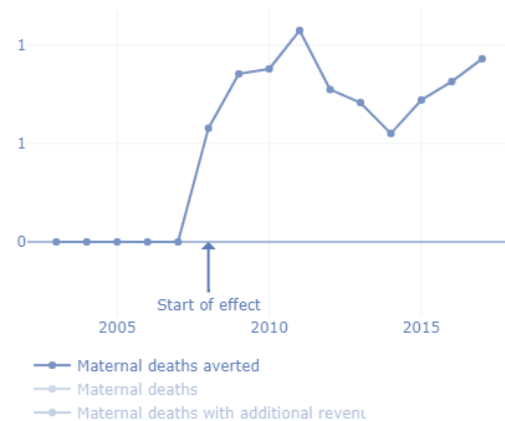


Figure 5 Projection for Afghanistan: Maternal survival

Total harm caused to Afghanistan through tax abuses

To summarise, we estimate that over a ten-year period, 234 Under-5 deaths and 50 maternal deaths would be averted, 472 children would attend school for an extra year, 801 people (of which 131 are children and 181 are women of reproductive age) would access basic drinking water and 5,041 people (853 of which are children and 1116 are women of reproductive age) would have access to basic sanitation. These figures demonstrate that tax abuses have significant human consequences for people in Afghanistan and must be carefully reconsidered and validated the huge potential for children if these policies are reviewed.

The impact of curtailing these losses could make a great difference in Afghanistan's ability to provide healthcare and education and reduce mortality rates. A minor increase in government revenue within low-and middle-income-countries will assist in the promotion of fundamental human rights, a condition of treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child, it is vital that the impact of tax abuses is recognised.

Call for Action

These figures demonstrate that tax abuses come with a serious human cost and impact the right to health for many children in Afghanistan. It is essential that governments worldwide recognise the impact tax abuses have on the Determinants of Health and mortality rates, particularly within low-income-countries. Allowing tax abuses to continue actively undermines fundamental human rights, which stands in direct opposition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child. We are calling for action from leaders worldwide to take measures to prevent policies which allow tax abuses to continue.

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