

You have the opportunity to make a difference in Southwest Asia. Are you up for the challenge?

Herat

Afghanistan



The famous Jama Masjid in Herat

“for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

— 1 Corinthians 16:9 —



The bustling city of Herat in western Afghanistan, about 100 kilometers from the Iran border, is today, as in ancient times, an important center of regional commerce. The third largest city in Afghanistan, Herat is home to about half a million residents, with the population of Herat Province as much as 1.8 million. Residents of Herat are from a variety of regional ethnicities and tribal groups. Dari, the local Persian variant, is the main language spoken, with Pashtu, the language of ethnic Pashtuns, also heard. As in most of Afghanistan, the majority of the people of Herat are Sunni Muslims, but with a sizable minority of Shias. Though at one time the city and area were controlled by the Taliban, since 2001 it has been somewhat safer and more prosperous than other large cities in Afghanistan.

Quick Facts

Population: Approximately 500,000

Main ethnic groups: Dari-speaking Tajiks and Farsiwan (65%), Durrani Pashtuns (30%)

Languages: Dari, Herati Pashtu

Main industries: agriculture, wool, marble, Persian carpets

Gospel resources: Jesus Film, mobile media in Dari and Pashtu



Nuts and dried fruit for sale in a local market

Opportunities to Engage

Beginning in the 1980s, a large informal settlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) named Maslakh formed on the western outskirts of Herat. Over the next decade its population grew to more than 300,000 and it became a de facto suburb of Herat. Since 2002 population resettlement reduced Maskakh dramatically to perhaps fewer than 20,000 people. According to [Forced Migration Review](#) four other settlements of displaced persons are in and near Herat, made up of more than 6,000 families and 30,000 individuals. Residents of these places are generally working poor or unemployed and without good education and employment prospects. These groups of IDPs are largely unreached with the gospel but may be more approachable and receptive to the biblical message via workers assisting them with education, medical, and livelihood opportunities than more established demographic groups.

In recent years there have been several foreign workers attached to humanitarian organizations working in Herat; some of these possibilities may remain open.

Herat University, with a student body of about 10,000, may accommodate expatriates as members of their faculty.

“I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

— Isaiah 43:19 —

Prayer Points

- Pray for greater access for foreign workers to live and work in Herat, and with new and creative platforms for long-term work opportunities, which provide greater relationship-building opportunities with local people that open more witnessing opportunities.

- Pray that the Jesus Film and Bible recordings would become available in the local Herati Dari dialect. Pray that the presently available Jesus Film in the “standard” or Kabuli Dari would also be viewed and understood in Herat.

- Herat is near the Iran border, with regular cross-border traffic. There are recent reports of Iranian believers starting Bible study groups in the Herat area. Pray that the Discovery Bible Study (DBS) method of Bible study used would spread and result in a movement to Christ in Herat and the surrounding areas.

- Decades of war, political instability, and extremism have left many Afghans, including in Herat, disillusioned with Islam and their Muslim leaders. Pray that this disaffection would be answered by the gospel, however delivered, and lead to faith and new life in Jesus Christ for many Heratis.



Children from displaced families wait for food handouts from an aid agency on the outskirts of Herat City

Is God calling you to live among the Muslim peoples of Southwest Asia? Contact us. We would love to help you get there!

