



Difficult Questions Children Ask

1. What is a landmine? Why was a child hurt by the landmine?

A landmine is a weapon used when people fight in wars that is put on the ground or just underneath the ground so that it explodes when a person or vehicle goes by. They are called "mines" because people who put them there dig a hole in the ground. Many people can be killed by mines, including children. (*landmines can also be Improvised explosive devices (IEDs))

In the film, the narrator talks about a child picking up a landmine because it was bright and green and looked like a toy. When the landmine was picked up it exploded. The explosion is so powerful that it can damage hearing and hurt a person.

There are many people around the world that are helping to keep children safe from landmines. In Afghanistan they will often paint rocks white in areas where there might be landmines to help people stay on a safe path. There are also signs about where landmines have been used to help warn people about the danger. Groups like [Unicef](#) help to educate children so they learn to avoid landmines and to play safely. Other groups like the [Halo Trust](#) are demining areas where there have been wars to help make the land safe again.

2. Why do people live in the caves?

When a war or fighting happens in a country sometimes families have to leave their homes to stay safe. In Afghanistan many people had to leave their homes. Some go to other countries to be safe (refugees) and some find a new place to live while they wait for the fighting to end (internally displaced people). In Bamiyan there are many caves that were used hundreds of years ago by Buddhist monks who lived in them. Now, many families live there because they don't have anywhere else to go. Often families are poor because they used all of their money to help them reach safety. Many times, families have to leave in a hurry so they cannot bring their belongings with them. These families hope one day they can return to their homes when the fighting stops.

There are people who are helping those that live in the caves. For example, in the film Ferishta went to school and then came back to her community to teach other children so they can continue to learn even though they are away from home. There are groups like [Amnesty International](#) who are raising awareness about this issue. Another group [CAWST](#) helps to provide training to communities in Afghanistan so they can create clean drinking water for themselves. There are also organizations like [Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan](#) who help provide access to education for women and girls in these communities.

3. Why aren't girls allowed to run in Afghanistan?

Sadly in many parts of the world girls are not treated the same as boys. This is called gender discrimination, which means treating someone differently in a bad way just because they are a girl. Some people believe that girls should stay at home, not go to school and not go outside by themselves. People who believe this are treating girls unequally because it means that girls don't get to have the same opportunities as boys. It can be hard to create change because people are often afraid of trying something new. Often people start to feel more comfortable with a new way of doing things when they see others doing it. The first people to try something new need to be brave.

There are people who are helping girls to be treated more equally. The first step is education. Girls need to know that they have the right to be treated equally. Groups like [Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan](#) help provide access to education for women and girls in these communities. Groups like the [Marathon of Afghanistan](#) and [Free to Run](#) provide safe spaces for women and girls to try out running. People in other sports can also help to speak up for girls rights to run, in fact one of the popular sports for girls in Bamiyan now is skateboarding made possible by a group called [Skateistan](#).



Difficult Questions Children Ask

4. Why do women and girls wear something on their head in Afghanistan?

In Afghanistan it is quite common for women and girls to wear a scarf over their head. Most women and girls make the choice as to whether they wish to wear a headscarf or not but some women and girls are not given a choice. In some parts of the world leaders make rules saying what women and girls are allowed to wear or not allowed to wear.

In Afghanistan when the Taliban ruled women had to cover themselves completely if they left their home. Now the government does not make women and girls wear a headscarf or dress in "hijab" but many still feel pressured by their family or community, others wear it because it is their choice and they want to wear it. For example, some women wear a headscarf because it is part of their religion. In the religion of Islam wearing a headscarf is part of "hijab" or dressing modestly (avoiding attracting attention). For other women they wear a headscarf for cultural reasons just as a French person might wear a beret or a Mexican might wear a sombrero. In hot dry climates having a headscarf can help shield you from the sun and from the dust.

**Please note that hijab means to dress modestly and can include wearing a headscarf, covering to the wrists and to the ankles and wearing clothes which flow out from the body. In the film you may also see women wearing a burqa which covers them completely.*

5. What is Zainab doing now?

After becoming the first Afghan woman to complete a marathon in Afghanistan, Zainab continued to support gender equality in sport through the organisation [Skateistan](#). Skateistan is an international non-profit organisation which empowers children through skateboarding and education in Afghanistan. Zainab became the Country Director for Afghanistan. Zainab is now married and has a daughter and returned to do the Marathon of Afghanistan again in 2019. After the Taliban took over Afghanistan it was no longer safe for her to live in the country so she had to escape and is now living in the USA.

6. Why are children learning and going to school in a cave?

When a war or fighting happens in a country sometimes families have to leave their homes to stay safe. In Afghanistan many people had to leave their homes. Some go to other countries to be safe (refugees) and some find a new place to live while they wait for the fighting to end (internally displaced people). In Bamiyan there are many caves that were used hundreds of years ago by Buddhist monks who lived in them. Now, many families live there because they don't have anywhere else to go. The children of these families often can't afford to go to school and the schools are too far for them to reach. Ferishta, who lives in the caves herself transformed her cave into a school for the children in her community. During the day, children come and learn letters, numbers and basic lessons and at night she sleeps in the same cave with her sister. [Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan](#) are helping provide access to education for women and girls in these communities and others throughout Afghanistan.

7. What's happening now in Afghanistan?

In the summer of 2021 our hearts broke for our friends in Afghanistan as the Taliban regained control of the Afghanistan. Sadly anyone who was outspoken about gender equality was in immediate danger which included all those who had proudly supported the Marathon of Afghanistan. Many have been able to flee to safety in other countries however, they now face the challenge of resettlement, applying for refugee status and trying to carve out a life for themselves in an unknown country. Others have not been so lucky and are still in Afghanistan in hiding, facing hunger as food shortages and rising costs often make it impossible to find even the most basic necessities. Now more than ever, we must show our support for those who have risked so much for a dream of a world where everyone can run free. The future of the Marathon of Afghanistan remains unknown. It is our hope that by supporting this brave community we can help them to rebuild.