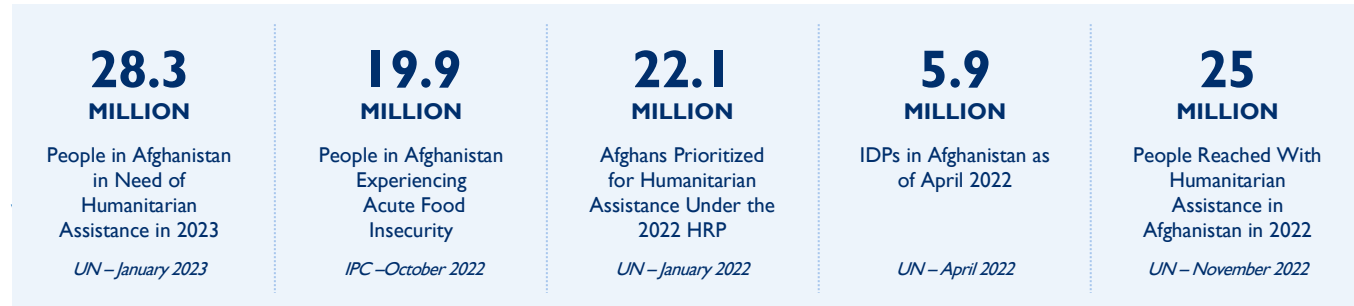


Afghanistan – Complex Emergency

FEBRUARY 1, 2023

SITUATION AT A GLANCE



- The UN estimates that two-thirds of Afghanistan’s population will require humanitarian assistance in 2023, representing a 16 percent increase from 2022.
- Humanitarian operations in Afghanistan remain restricted due to Taliban interference, including the recent edict barring Afghan female NGO staff.
- Nine out of 10 households surveyed across Afghanistan reported insufficient access to food during November 2022, with food access expected to further decline in the coming months.
- Security conditions continue to deteriorate in urban areas, with ISIS-K carrying out three attacks in Kabul during December and early January.



¹ FY 2023 funding for the Afghanistan Complex Emergency will be included in future products when committed/obligated. For information on the U.S. Government’s funding toward the response in FY 2022, refer to Afghanistan Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #9 released on September 23, 2022, available on the USAID website at <https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work>.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Two-Thirds of Afghans Will Require Humanitarian Assistance in 2023

The UN estimates that approximately 28.3 million individuals in Afghanistan—or two-thirds of the country’s total population of more than 41 million—will require humanitarian assistance during 2023, representing a 16 percent increase compared to 24.4 million people in need in 2022, according to the 2023 UN Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Afghanistan. The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 prompted international donors to suspend development assistance—which previously accounted for 75 percent of non-military public expenditure—to the country, contributing to a rapid deterioration of civilian infrastructure and access to basic services and commodities. Consequently, humanitarian needs have surged, with water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs increasing by 40 percent in 2023 compared to 2022, largely an outcome of three consecutive years of drought, and protection needs increasing by 25 percent as a result of the Taliban’s heightened restrictions targeting women and girls, including expanding limits on their access to education and employment, according to the HNO. While humanitarian needs in Afghanistan were previously driven by conflict, humanitarian needs in 2023 are a result of a culmination of factors, including climatic shocks, conflict-related displacement, long-term impacts of war, natural disasters, and protection threats, according to the UN. Multi-year drought and high levels of food insecurity will likely cause an estimated 19.9 million people to face Crisis—IPC 3—levels of food insecurity or worse by March 2023, including 6 million individuals expected to reach Emergency—IPC 4—levels of food insecurity, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA).²

The December 24 Taliban Ministry of Economy (MoEc) directive barring Afghan women from working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will prevent vulnerable women and girls from receiving aid and hamper humanitarian actors’ ability to reach millions of individuals requiring assistance countrywide. The Taliban MoEc directive prompted many relief organizations to either fully or partially suspend humanitarian operations in the country. Overall, approximately 70 humanitarian organizations out of the nearly 90 relief organizations interviewed in a recent Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA) survey acknowledged they had partially suspended relief operations as of mid-January as a result of the Taliban edict, while more than 10 GiHA survey respondents reported that they had fully suspended relief operations as of mid-January. In response to the Taliban MoEc directive, Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths led an Inter-Agency Standing Committee delegation to Afghanistan in late January to convene a series of meetings with Taliban line ministries and advocate for the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. As of early February, humanitarian actors continue to meet with Taliban leaders in an effort to garner support for sectoral or localized exemptions to the Taliban MoEc directive and raise Taliban officials’ awareness of the ban’s adverse outcomes.

Humanitarian Access Constraints Rise Due to Taliban Interference in 2022

Afghanistan’s complex operating environment continues to challenge humanitarian access, with relief actors most commonly citing Taliban interference and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets as their top access constraints, according to OCHA’s bi-annual Access Severity Exercise for Afghanistan conducted in October. According to the assessment, Taliban interference in aid operations—including attempts to influence beneficiary selection and staff recruitment, and pressuring organizations to share sensitive data, such as beneficiary information and staff names, addresses, and salaries—violates humanitarian principles and has contributed to a decline in humanitarian access, with more than 190 of approximately 400 districts surveyed reporting medium-to-high severity of Taliban interference. Furthermore, relief actors note that the Taliban code of conduct introduced in August 2022 to legitimize the Taliban’s control over humanitarian operations has exacerbated existing challenges. Overall, OCHA reports that the Taliban’s rate of interference in humanitarian operations increased nearly 30 percent between October 2021 and 2022.

In addition, Taliban-imposed movement restrictions have limited aid workers’ ability to reach vulnerable populations, with humanitarian actors in more than 140 of the approximately 400 surveyed districts

² The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity.

experiencing moderate-to-severe access challenges due to movement restrictions between April and September, according to the OCHA assessment. In particular, the Taliban directive requiring women to be accompanied by a mahram—or male relative—as a condition for moving freely was cited as the leading factor hampering women’s participation in aid delivery and women’s access to humanitarian commodities and services. Furthermore, aid workers are often exposed to safety risks and threats due to the volatile security situation in the country. Relief actors reported at least 125 incidents involving arrests and detentions and 35 incidents of physical attacks and threats against aid workers during the period. Violence against humanitarian staff is the second most frequently reported access challenge in the country, with more than 30 percent of districts reporting high access severity due to violence perpetrated by the Taliban or other armed groups

Extreme Winter Conditions Result in Nearly 170 Deaths During January

Freezing temperatures in Afghanistan have resulted in the deaths of at least 166 individuals in January, according to a spokesperson for the Taliban Afghan National Disaster Management Agency. In early January, temperatures dropped to below minus 29 degrees Fahrenheit, marking one of the country’s coldest winter seasons in more than 10 years, according to international media. Leading causes of death include hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning and gas leakages due to insufficient heating systems. USAID/BHA partners prepared for Afghanistan’s harsh winter season by prepositioning humanitarian commodities for distribution. With support from USAID/BHA and other donors, the UN World Food Program (WFP) had prepositioned nearly 100,000 metric tons (MT) of food assistance in mountainous, hard-to-reach areas of the country as of December to address the emergency food and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations countrywide, the UN agency reports. Furthermore, with USAID/BHA funding and other donor support, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) prepositioned 34,000 newborn kits containing warm clothes and heating materials to protect newborn babies from hypothermia, during November. In the same month, the UN agency prepositioned additional heating materials and health supplies with mobile health and nutrition teams as well as health facilities to provide health and nutrition assistance for vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas.

Ninety Percent of Households Reported Insufficient Access to Food

Food insecurity remains a significant concern for populations across Afghanistan, with nine out of 10 households reporting insufficient food consumption for a fifth consecutive month, according to the UN World Food Program’s (WFP) Afghanistan Food Security Update for November. The UN agency expects food access to continue to decline during the current winter season, likely resulting in the further deterioration of food security. Additionally, more than 60 percent of Afghan households reported a decrease in income during November, with approximately 50 percent of Afghan households reporting a reduction in income for six consecutive months, WFP reports. Moreover, households spent nearly 88 percent of their incomes on food in November, representing a marginal decrease from the 90 percent of income households spent on food from June to October. As a result, more than half of all households have adopted crisis-level coping mechanisms to survive, including borrowing food and eating reduced meals to allow others in their household to have food. The loss of access to income generating activities is the primary concern for surveyed households, followed by food shortages and increasing food prices, according to the report. As of January 18, WFP has provided nearly 1.4 million individuals with emergency in-kind food assistance and provided nearly 66,000 pregnant and lactating women and children ages five years and younger with specialized nutritious food. In response to escalating food needs, WFP plans to reach 16.8 million people with emergency food assistance in 2023, including 1 million metric tons of in-kind food and \$268 million in cash-based transfers for food.

ISIS-K Attacks Continued During December and Early January

The frequency of armed attacks, particularly in the country’s capital city of Kabul, continued during December and early January, reflecting a broader trend of increased security incidents in urban areas of Afghanistan. On December 12, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan (ISIS-K) actors claimed responsibility for the detonation of a person-borne explosive device outside of a hotel in central Kabul. This incident resulted in nearly 40 civilian casualties—the majority of which were Chinese nationals—and injuries to more than 30 others, according to international media. In a separate incident on January 1, ISIS-K actors detonated an explosive device outside of a military airport in Kabul, resulting in 20 deaths—including two civilians—and injuries to at least 30 others, international media reports. In a separate incident less than two weeks later,

ISIS-K actors detonated an explosive device outside of the Taliban MoFA in Kabul on January 11. International media reported an unknown number of civilian deaths and injuries to at least 40 individuals as a result of the incident. USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) and U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) partners continue to monitor security conditions countrywide and exercise heightened vigilance in Afghanistan.

KEY FIGURES



22.6 Million

People reached with USAID/BHA and other donor-supported WFP food and nutrition assistance between January and November 2022



9

Number of USG implementing partners conducting protection interventions



7

Number of USG implementing partners supporting health programming

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The U.S. Government (USG) supports the delivery of life-saving emergency food assistance across Afghanistan, providing vulnerable populations with locally, regionally, and internationally procured (LRIP) in-kind food assistance; cash transfers for food; and food vouchers. With USAID/BHA support, WFP expanded food assistance and nutrition services to support populations in need in 2022. Additionally, USAID/BHA partner the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and international NGO (INGO) partners are providing seeds and livestock feed in at-risk areas to bolster the coping capacity of vulnerable households. USAID/BHA also supports coordination and capacity-building activities among food security actors in Afghanistan to strengthen humanitarian response efforts.

PROTECTION

USG partners—such as State/PRM partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—provide protection assistance to refugees and returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. Additionally, USG INGO and UN partners support mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programs, including individual counseling, activities to support the development of coping skills, and safe healing and learning spaces for children. USG partners also implement child protection activities and family services, provide legal assistance to returning refugees to access documentation, and integrate MHPSS and other protection measures into education, health, and nutrition programming.

HEALTH

The USG supports nine partners to implement life-saving health activities across Afghanistan to improve community health awareness, bolster outpatient consultation efforts, and complement other donor efforts to provide affordable primary and secondary health care to underserved populations. USG partners aim to increase equitable access to and utilization of health services among IDPs, host communities, and other conflict-affected populations. USG assistance supports hospitals, clinics, and mobile health teams to deliver emergency and primary health care services, conduct trainings for local community health workers and health care professionals, provide essential medicines, and support vaccination campaigns. Additionally, USG funding supports the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to coordinate emergency health response activities, maintain the continuation of essential health services, and ensure the continued supply of

critical health and medical commodities in Afghanistan.



6

Number of USG implementing partners supporting shelter programming

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

Shelter needs among populations in Afghanistan remain significant, in part due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, and harsh winter weather. USG partners provide emergency shelter for displaced and otherwise vulnerable people, as well as shelter repair kits, transitional shelter, and multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to support the housing needs of affected populations. In addition, USG partners pre-position shelter materials each year for distribution ahead of the harsh winter months.



5

Number of USG implementing partners supporting livelihoods programming

LIVELIHOODS AND EDUCATION

With USG funding, partners deliver livelihoods programming and skills training to support refugee reintegration and boost opportunities for vulnerable host community populations through activities such as courses to increase literacy, business knowledge, and skills development. State/PRM partners support returning refugees, IDPs, and host communities in Afghanistan by providing access to skills training and adult literacy courses, in addition to access to education for Afghan refugees and host community children in Pakistan. Partners also work to ensure IDP and returning refugee children have access to learning spaces and accelerated learning programs to help children prepare for enrollment in formal schools, as well as support initiatives to improve infrastructure in schools within host communities.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- The Taliban seized Kabul on August 15, 2021, following the successive capture of several provincial capitals and territory in early August 2021. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, economic and political instability has resulted in the deterioration of basic service provision across the country, increased staple foods and fuel prices, and reduced household purchasing power, affecting many Afghan households' ability to meet their basic needs.
- The cumulative effects of conflict, internal displacement, coronavirus disease (COVID-19), drought and other natural disasters, and economic collapse have drastically increased levels of humanitarian need throughout Afghanistan. The UN predicts that 28.3 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2023, a 16 percent increase compared to the 24.4 million people in need identified in 2022, with the severity of needs deepening across all sectors.
- In late August 2021, the USG activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) based in the region outside of Afghanistan to lead the USG response to humanitarian needs generated by the crisis in Afghanistan and a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) to support the DART.
- On October 7, 2022, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., Karen Decker redeclared a disaster for FY 2023 due to the continued impact of the ongoing complex emergency.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)