Highlights

- The number of people displaced due to the drought has surpassed 150,000 in August in the Western Region. Most of them are located in informal sites in Hirat and Qala-e-Naw cities.
- Some 311,000 people received food, cash or livelihood assistance in Badghis, Ghor, Hirat, Jawzjan, Faryab and Kandahar provinces in August.
- Water trucking reached 34,000 people in rural areas of Badghis Province and more than 100,000 residents of informal sites in Hirat and Qala-e-Naw.
- An increase in early marriages and child labour has been noted at informal sites in Hirat City, as the most vulnerable attempt to cope with the situation.
- As the planting season and winter approach, humanitarian partners in the Western Region are preparing a transition plan to i) enable voluntary returns to areas of origin; ii) provide alternative solutions to encourage off-site movement; and iii) provide winterization support.

Situation Overview

Food distributions continue in drought-affected areas of origin across the country. In August, around 311,000 people received food, cash and livelihood assistance across the country. In two districts of Badghis Province, emergency water supplies reached 34,000 people in rural areas. Plans are in place to expand the provision to another 50,000 people in three districts of Hirat Province. There is a need for a scale-up in food and livelihoods assistance in the coming months, supporting people to return to their areas of origin, or remain in their homes and close to their fields to take advantage of the next planting season. Complementary activities in health, nutrition, protection and WASH remain essential.

Drought-induced displacement continues, with an estimated 150,000 people at informal displacement sites. The number of displaced people in and around Qala-e-Naw, Badghis, is estimated to be 66,500, most of them from Muqur and Abkamari districts. Around 5,000 people have reportedly displaced to Abkamari district centre from surrounding villages and small-scale displacement has been reported in the Qadis district centre. In Hirat City, where some 84,000 displaced people were registered in July, another 3,000 family petitions have reportedly been submitted to the authorities, indicating that the total number of drought-induced IDPs in the city may be higher than 100,000. In Chaghcharan City, Ghor, the number of drought-induced IDPs is currently 4,060.

In Qala-e-Naw, operational capacity and existing supplies are insufficient to meet the life-saving needs of newly-arrived families, and an immediate scale-up across all sectors is required to respond. The most urgent gaps are in emergency shelter and non-food items (ESNFI), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and protection. In Hirat City, food, cash and WASH assistance have been provided, and health and nutrition services are increasingly available on the ten informal sites. The response is however hampered by uncertainty regarding the tenability of
the sites, difficulties in registration, and limited capacity to respond. Many families remain exposed to the elements, surviving in make-shift shelters, while some have resorted to self-building mud-brick huts. Serious protection concerns have also been reported from the sites, with a spike in early marriage and child labour.

Humanitarian Response

Food Security and Agriculture

**Needs:**
- In its first phase of response, partner of the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) are targeting a total of 621,000 people across the country, of which 307,000 are in the Western Region. Results of the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) that is underway will inform the scale and targeting of future response.
- Results of the first phase of the Drought Impact and Needs Assessment (DINA) show that 82 per cent of the displaced families in Badghis, Ghor and Hirat provinces have a poor food consumption score and 72 per cent of them have adopted negative coping strategies, including reducing their food intake or the number of meals.
- Results of a multi-sector assessment conducted by World Vision International (WVI) in Badghis Province show that 78 per cent of respondent families’ food security situation was “a lot worse” and 21 per cent were “worse” compared to last year. The assessment also indicates that most farmers lost last season’s harvest and nearly all of them lack seeds for new planting season. Also in Badghis, reports from the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) indicate that some 40 per cent of livestock has been lost due to lack of pasture and fodder.

**Response:**
- Almost 311,000 people received food/cash and livelihood assistance in Badghis, Ghor, Hirat, Jawzjan, Faryab and Kandahar provinces in August 2018 (283,000 received food-in-kind or cash-for-food and 28,000 received livelihood assistance). Of those, almost 167,500 have been reached in the Western Region by DRC-DDG, Oxfam, Tawana Services Development and Cultural Organization (TSDCO) (WFP project) and WVI.
- In Hirat City, WFP commenced cash-for-food distributions to drought-induced IDPs and has reached some 7,000 people.
- In Qala-e-Naw City, WFP, through TSDCO, has distributed food packages with flour, oil and salt to over 13,000 drought-induced IDPs.
- In Chaghcharan City, Ghor, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) provided cash for food to 273 drought-induced IDPs.

**Gaps & Constraints:**
- Around half of the target population for food and livelihoods assistance under the prioritized, three-month response plan have yet to be reached. Existing assessments and information from partners on the ground indicate the need to significantly increase the number of people targeted with food distributions in areas of origin to prevent further displacement.
- The lack of funding is limiting the scale of planned support for seasonal agricultural activities in drought-affected areas that rely on rains.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

**Needs:**
- The WASH Cluster is targeting 480,000 people with water provision, of which 100,000 people will also be reached with emergency sanitation facilities and hygiene kits.
- Some 150,000 drought-induced IDPs are estimated to be in need of safe drinking water in the Western Region for at least three months to come.

**Response:**
- Around 133,000 drought-induced IDPs have been reached with safe water and sanitation services by cluster partners in Hirat and Qala-e-Naw cities.
- Close to 34,000 people are being provided with emergency water supply in the most severely drought-affected rural districts of Abkamari, Jawand, Muqur and Qadis in Badghis.
• Across the informal sites in Hirat City, some 84,000 people are being provided with emergency water supply by UNICEF/PRRD and DACAAR through water daily trucking. Forty hygiene promoters are conducting hygiene-awareness sessions at all sites.
• In Qala-e-Naw, safe drinking water is being provided for some 18,500 drought-induced IDPs by UNICEF/PRRD, WVI and Norwegian Refugee Committee (NRC). In addition to 50 latrines built by NRC, UNICEF/WVI started the construction of another 4,000 latrines and baths for 8,000 people.

Gaps & Constraints:
• Due to continuing high numbers of IDPs arriving in Qala-e-Naw, a significant scale-up in WASH response is required in the city. The current operational capacity of partners is insufficient to meet the needs. Sustained availability of water for trucking is a concern.
• There is a significant gap in the number of latrines in the informal sites, with around 30 per cent targets met. Some 48,000 IDPs are in urgent need of hygiene and water kits (jerry cans and buckets) in Hirat and 57,500 in Qala-e-Naw.
• Some 50,000 people in three drought-affected districts of Gulran, Kohsan and Kushk of Hirat Province urgently need emergency water assistance, without which displacement to Hirat City may occur.
• In the medium and long-term, rain water harvesting should be seen as a key sustainable solution to narrow the water gap in areas of origin.

Health

Needs:
• A total of more than 1.6 million people in the Western Region are in need of health assistance, including an estimated 150,000 drought-induced IDPs in Hirat City and Qala-e-Naw City.

Response:
• Health Cluster partners UNICEF/DoPH, WVI, UNFPA, Handicap International, Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and WHO are responding to the needs of drought-induced IDPs. Nine mobile health teams are deployed across displacement sites in Hirat City, providing integrated health, nutrition and psychosocial support and referral systems have been rolled out to health facilities close to the informal settlements. However, the consistency and predictability of mobile health teams visiting the sites needs to be strengthened, and additional more teams need to be deployed to cover existing needs. Further, available services and scheduling need to be effectively communicated to the affected communities.
• In Badghis, four mobile health teams are responding to the needs of IDPs in Qala-e-Naw City, one is covering Abkamari and Muqur districts, and one is deployed in Qadis district.
• A medicine kit and a delivery kit have been delivered to two health centres and the regional pediatric hospital located close to IDP sites in Hirat City.

Gaps & Constraints:
• Access in Badghis Province remains a challenge. In Balamurghab and Jawand districts, armed groups have impeded the provision of supplies to at least 17 health facilities over the past three months, which has adversely affected the polio vaccination and health response in general.

Nutrition

Needs:
• According to the results of the DINA carried out in late July, 24 per cent of children in the assessed IDP households in Hirat, Chaghcharan and Qala-e-Naw were acutely malnourished, with 15 per cent of them in a state of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and 9 per cent with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). A WVI Multi-Sector Rapid Needs Assessment in Badghis Province in June had found that nearly one third of all children under-five were acutely malnourished (17 per cent had MAM and 16 had SAM). Another assessment, conducted by ACF in the Balamurghab district in Badghis, found 20 per cent of children under-five were acutely malnourished.
• According to the Nutrition Cluster, over 33,000 acutely malnourished children under five require life-saving treatment in the drought-affected provinces in Western Region.
Response:

- Across IDP sites Hirat City, over 5,600 children under five have been screened for acute malnutrition by the nine MHTs, of which 900 were reached in August. Some 500 children have been reached with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) treatment and some 970 have received treatment. Around 1,450 mothers have received infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counseling services, and almost 8,400 children have received Vitamin A supplements. Twenty-four hygiene promoters and 18 social workers have been trained on mass acute malnutrition screening and referral to MHTs.
- In Qala-e-Naw, targeted supplementary feeding programme is targeting all IDP children-under-two alongside food distributions. All five MHTs have a nutrition screening and treatment component.
- In areas of origin across Badghis, Farah, Ghor and Hirat provinces, 107 nutrition facilities are providing treatment services to acutely malnourished children and women. The activities are part of regular programming by partners and are indirectly supporting drought response. Over 2,200 children with SAM have been admitted for treatment since July.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Additional 11 MHTs with an integrated nutrition component are required to scale up response in areas of origin (six in Badghis Province and five in Hirat Province). The number of in-patient and out-patient malnutrition treatment sites should be increased in Ghor.

**Protection**

**Needs:**

- Up to 170,000 drought-induced IDPs in the Western Region require protection monitoring and assistance.

**Response:**

- Western Region Protection Cluster members IRC, DRC, NRC, UNICEF and WVI have formed a Protection Monitoring team (PMT) and have agreed on a joint monitoring framework, geographic division and standard operating procedures. Protection monitoring is on-going at all IDP sites in Hirat City.
- In Qala-e-Naw City, the Protection Cluster plans to establish a systematic protection monitoring with the support of partners on the ground, including the assignment of geographical responsibilities.

**Gaps & Constraints:**

- UNHCR, through protection partners, has identified 25 cases of persons with special needs (PSN) in life-threatening situations, but partners do not appear to have the resources or capacity to respond. Considering the high number of IDPs and their vulnerability, it is expected that many would be entitled to PSN support. However, only UNHCR and DRC-DDG report having some resources to provide it.

**Child Protection in Emergencies**

**Needs:**

- Over 100,000 drought-affected children need protection assistance in the Western Region.
- In Hirat informal IDP sites, more than 100 Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) are required to address the psychosocial support needs of the 15,000 vulnerable IDP children. Considering the significant increase in IDP families in Qala-e-Naw City, child protection activities need to begin there without delay.
- Child Rights Monitors from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) reported on increasing gender-based violence incidents in the informal IDP sites including child marriage, early engagement and child trafficking/ selling of newborn babies and young girls. To address the rapidly deteriorating situation for young girls being sold and married off, there is an urgent need for targeted livelihood support activities.

**Response:**

- Almost 9,300 children and caregivers have been reached with Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) assistance. In Hirat City, seven Mobile Child Protection Teams operated by CPiE members Hirat Legal Clinic, War Child UK/Child Helpline, WASSA and Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre have reached some 2,150 children and 415 children received psychosocial support.
4,000 caregivers displaced by the drought with psycho-social support and community awareness-raising sessions. In August, 136 child protection cases have identified through child protection monitoring activities. A total of 415 affected children (165 girls, 250 boys) received psychosocial support and 32 cases were referred for provision of basic services such as health, nutrition, legal assistance and specialized mental health and psychological services.

- Four child friendly spaces and four Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres providing psychosocial support and awareness raising sessions have been established in four IDP sites in Hirat City and are operated by War Child UK, DRC, IRC and WASSA funded by UNICEF.

Gaps & Constraints:

- Funding gaps are affecting the response. The estimated funding gap for CPIE activities for the upcoming three months is US$ 900,000.
- There is a lack of social workers at the Department of Social Affairs (DoLSA). To provide timely and adequate case management services to the at-risk girls and boys, recruitment of additional social workers and training are urgently required.
- Protection mainstreaming is a gap and a minimum protection checklist should be developed and implemented across all sectors of the response.
- Accountability mechanism should be put in place in the informal settlement sites immediately to monitor and address complaints and feedback from the affected population including children.
- Specific protection issues were not captured in the DINA and it is recommended to be supplemented with adequate situational analysis and qualitative findings from focus group discussion conducted by trained protection partners with balanced participation of women.

Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items

Needs:

- An estimated 150,000 people displaced by drought in Hirat City and Qala-e-Naw City are in need of emergency shelter and NFI assistance.

Response:

- To date, ESNFI partners IOM, IRC, DRC, NRC, IRC and IFRC/ARCS in the Western Region have provided emergency shelter assistance to over 10,000 drought-induced IDPs, of which 8,370 were reached in Hirat and 1,650 Qala-e-Naw.
- Over 10,400 IDPs have been reached with NFI kits by IOM, IRC, NRC and UNHCR in Hirat and Qala-e-Naw cities.

Gaps & Constraints:

- The gap in ESNFI response is the most significant across all sectors. Partners are experiencing constraints in relation to the availability of supplies and targeting.
- Some families have begun building mud houses using water supplied by humanitarian partners, ostensibly due to lack of emergency shelter assistance.

Education in Emergencies

Needs:

- Some 40,000 drought-affected children and adolescents in the Western Region do not have access to education in places of origin and displacement.
- The first result of the DINA show that school enrollment rates had been reduced by at least 87 per cent because of the displacement.

Response:

- Some 2,500 drought-affected children from 5 to 18 years have access to 60 temporary learning spaces established in five IDP sites in Hirat City.
- Assessments are on-going to gauge the scale of the need of Education in Emergencies activities for drought-induced IDPs in Qala-e-Naw City where learning spaces are expected to commence operation in the next weeks.
Gaps & Constraints:

- Some 32,000 drought-affected children remain in need to regain access to learning spaces in the areas of origin in Western Region and IDP sites in Hirat City. In light of increase in IDPs in Qala-e-Naw, assessment and response required there.

General Coordination

The large number of displaced people across multiple informal sites in Hirat and Qala-e-Naw calls for improved site management and coordination. The fluidity of movements across the different sites and the viability of some sites themselves is hampering effective response.

The Humanitarian Regional Team in the Western Region has established a temporary Community Engagement Working Group, with OCHA and UNICEF as co-leads. Immediate priorities are the preparation and dissemination of key messages from each cluster, as well as the establishment of a two-way communication mechanism and site-liaison function.

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