Humanitarian Aid International
Urgent Appeal for Afghanistan Crisis Response

24 August 2021

Humanitarian Situation And Needs

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has dramatically worsened due to the ongoing armed conflict, withdrawal of military forces and the Taliban advance accelerating in August 2021, resulting in many Afghans being forcibly displaced and a sharp increase in civilian casualties being documented. The Taliban in recent weeks have gained control of many districts and key border posts with neighbours Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan limiting movement of affected Afghans.

Afghans already constitute the largest protracted refugee population in the world. From 1 January 2021 to 9 August 2021, 558,123 individuals fled their homes due to conflict and a total of 32 out of 34 provinces had recorded forced displacement. Among the newly displaced people in Afghanistan this year, 79% are women and children. As the situation in Afghanistan remains complex and uncertain, it is estimated that nearly half of Afghanistan’s population (around 18.4 million people) are currently in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance. Many Afghans desperate to leave remain outside Kabul and far from any airport. With the security situation in the country rapidly deteriorating, many families have been separated and have been unable to get emergency exit visas and flights.

Situation of Afghan Refugees in India

There are over 19,000 Afghan students and over 1,000 patients currently in India on medical visa facing uncertainty on their visa extension. In addition to that, approximately 21,000 Afghan refugees are currently in India, of which 60% have not yet received refugee cards. These refugees arrive on short-term visas but are not

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1 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNHCR Position on Returns to Afghanistan, August 2021, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/611a4c5c4.html
5 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Afghanistan Conflict Induced Displacement, 23 August 2021, available at: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/idps
6 UNHCR, Supra 4.
7 UNHCR, Supra 4.
guaranteed visa extension to remain in India. Moreover, the procedure for grant of refugee cards is often a lengthy process with frequent delays from authorities. Many have faced difficulty in applying for identity cards owing to lack of awareness on procedure and cost and discrimination by local authorities. Lack of recognised identity and protection documents makes it harder for refugees to seek remedies and access essential services. This leaves refugees, particularly women and children, susceptible to harassment, intimidation and threats and deter them from reporting incidents of violations.

In addition to dealing with their personal challenges, restrictions are imposed in movement, housing, employment, education, and access to banking and other public services. Banking systems in Afghanistan have collapsed and many Afghans in India have been left without the financial support of their families. Women and children have been left particularly vulnerable and without support. Further, qualification earned out of country will likely not be recognized, representing another barrier for some refugees to find employment suitable for their skill and experience levels.

Since the Afghan refugee community aims to resettle to other countries due to limited rights and entitlements in India, legal and documentation assistance is urgently required. While in India, Afghans also have to deal with food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, education, and housing, loss of livelihoods, and constraints around legal assistance and identity documentation. While there are some government policies for them, there is no support system to help them develop comprehensively. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these challenges jeopardising the well-being of affected families.

**HAI’s Areas of intervention:**

Urgent support is needed to help Afghan families’ access to:

- Humanitarian assistance including medicine, food, relief items, and interventions for persons with specific needs
- Afghans, particularly those stranded at the Kabul airport are desperate to leave the country. India has started online visa process, but the criteria is still unclear and the process is slow. Facilitation is required to fast track the visa application process. reception/registration support for recent arrivals will also be required.
- Afghan refugees coming from conflict zones are traumatised and in need of counselling and psychosocial care, particularly gender-based violence survivors
- Protection is a concern and there are reported cases of trafficking, which needs to be prevented
- Afghan refugees mainly seek third-country resettlement for which legal and documentation assistance is required
- While they are in India, better access to education and health services is required
- Approximately 19,000 Afghan students are in a vulnerable situation, facing uncertainty for their visa renewal and livelihood opportunities while in India
- Similarly, those on medical visa, will also require support until they are in a position to return to their country
- Unconditional cash transfer to those families, students and patients who have no means now to support themselves until their return or third country settlement

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Preparedness and activities in India:

In the wake of the unfolding crisis in Afghanistan, Humanitarian Aid International (HAI) being a specialised humanitarian organisation with substantial experience on refugee programme, has started preparing to respond to the needs of Afghans in India:

- HAI has already started receiving distress calls from Afghans in India requesting for dry ration and other necessary support and has started its dry ration support from 22 August 2021
- HAI is in contact with the Centre for Afghan Studies, Jindal University, to connect with Afghan representatives and diaspora in India to assess current critical needs
- HAI has also approached UNHCR India office for coordination
- HAI approached Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) to coordinate with Forum for Indian Development Cooperation (FIDC) to explore the role of Indian CSOs’ role in complementing the Indian government’s efforts in Afghanistan response
- HAI, through Alliance for Empowering Partnerships (A4EP), reviewed the current situation and plan for collective action focusing on advocacy to all the signatories of Charter4Change (C4C) and their respective governments, President of the European Parliament, IASC Principals and the Eminent Person of Grand Bargain Mr Jan Egeland
- HAI will coordinate with Community World Service (CWS) which is working in Afghanistan. As the security situation improves, response will be initiated with focus on displaced people particularly women and children. HAI and CWS will collaborate for this cross-border programme

About Humanitarian Aid International (HAI)

Humanitarian Aid International (HAI) is a not-for-profit organization registered under the Indian Trusts Act, 1882 and FCRA. HAI is also registered under 12A and 80G and thereby gets tax exemption. HAI has been founded with the overall mission of working globally as an Indian organization on four thematic areas, i.e., 1) humanitarian response, 2) disaster risk reduction, 3) climate change & adaptation and 4) humanitarian advocacy. HAI has three pillars to work on these thematic areas, i.e., 1) a national platform of frontline organizations, 2) a national pooled fund to make disaster responses timely, and 3) a national roster to provide surge support to smaller humanitarian organizations. HAI is also making constant efforts to integrate technology in disaster management. An informal Drone for Humanity (DH) platform has been constituted with this purpose in order to inform development and humanitarian response programmes to integrate mitigation and resilience features.

HAI is also closely engaged in several global processes including the UN led Agenda for Humanity and Grand Bargain. HAI currently hosts the international secretariat of Charter4Change in India, earlier hosted in London. HAI sits in the Membership Committee of Start Network and steering group of World Humanitarian Action Forum. HAI is one of the founders and one of the two international coordinators of Alliance for Empowering Partnerships (A4EP), which is a global network working on South-South cooperation and strengthening of local NGOs across the global South but in collaboration with the actors from global North. HAI also collaborated and actively supports the Result Group 2 of Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) working on accountability and inclusion, United against Inhumanity which is working on restoration of International Humanitarian Law in the countries facing protracted crises, Climate and Humanitarian Crisis Initiative (CHC) which works on mainstreaming climate perspective in the humanitarian sector and Global Interagency Security Forum working on security needs of humanitarian and development professionals.

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