



UN and humanitarian partners scale up life-saving response to crisis in Afghanistan and call on all donors to urgently turn pledges into reality

(Kabul, 6 October 2021) UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs in Afghanistan are in a race against time to deliver life-saving aid to crisis-affected people and preposition supplies ahead of winter.

Millions of people in Afghanistan have been deeply affected by decades of conflict and displacement, chronic poverty, the COVID-19 pandemic, a severe drought, a failing health system, and an economy on the brink of collapse. The rights of women and girls, and of minorities in Afghanistan, are seriously under threat.

The UN and humanitarian partners are sparing no effort to overcome financial shortfalls, logistical challenges, and an increasingly complex geo-political situation to support the millions of women, men, and children in Afghanistan who depend on humanitarian assistance and protection.

In [September](#), more than 3.8 million people received food assistance, 21,000 children aged 6-59 months and 10,000 women received treatment for acute malnutrition, 32,000 people received non-food items including blankets and warm clothes for winter, 10,000 children were reached with community-based education activities, 450,000 people were reached with primary and secondary healthcare, 160,000 farmers and herders were provided with livelihoods support, 12,000 people received emergency psycho-social and mental health support, 186,000 drought-affected people received water, and 150,000 people received hygiene promotion and hygiene kits.

At the beginning of 2021, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan was already one of the worst in the world, with nearly half of the population – [some 18.4 million people](#) – in need of humanitarian assistance. Conflict and insecurity have displaced nearly 700,000 people within the country this year, with more than 3.5 million Afghans uprooted by conflict in total. Existing needs and vulnerabilities have deepened following recent events, and economic shocks are tipping more people in Afghanistan into crisis.

On 13 September 2021, the humanitarian community [launched the Afghanistan Flash Appeal](#), calling for US\$606 million to provide priority life-saving aid to 10.8 million of the most vulnerable people in need by the end of the year. Despite the outpouring of support and global attention to the dire situation in Afghanistan, the flash appeal remains only 35% funded.

Pledges and commitments by donors must urgently be turned into reality to ensure humanitarian organizations can respond before it is too late. UN member states are requested to allow the swift and unfettered movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel into and out of Afghanistan, and to provide humanitarian financial exemptions to allow funds to reach aid organizations in the country.

The free and safe movement of humanitarian goods and personnel in the country must be guaranteed, and necessary steps must be taken to ensure an inclusive response where all aid workers, including women, are free to perform their life-saving work. The humanitarian community in Afghanistan reiterates its commitment to deliver unconditional aid to millions of people on the basis of needs, in line with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

Without urgent action, the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate into 2022. The de facto authorities, UN member states, donors, humanitarian organizations, and other stakeholders must mobilize immediately to prevent a further humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan.

Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan, said: “The people of Afghanistan must not pay the price of collective failures. They deserve a normal life in peace and dignity. We will spare no effort to respond to the needs of all women, men, and children in Afghanistan. We will continue to advocate for the rights of women and girls, and of minority groups, as well as the rights of all to employment, food, healthcare, education, and safety.”

Mary-Ellen McGroarty, Representative and Country Director of WFP Afghanistan, said: “Afghanistan is on borrowed time. In my long career with WFP I’ve never before seen a crisis unfold at this pace and scale. We are witnessing a new depth of destitution as the drought and the economic crisis drives up food and fuel prices. Getting food to families across Afghanistan before the cold and harsh winter is what we must do now!”

Lisa K. Piper, Director of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development, said: “The NGO community is committed to staying and delivering an equitable and safe humanitarian response. We know that at least half of the people in need of humanitarian assistance are women and girls; and so to have a response that is based on actual identified needs, female aid workers must be able to work, move freely, and access communities.”

Marin Din Kajdomcaj, UNHCR Deputy Representative in Afghanistan, said: “If the commitments made by the international community are not delivered on now, millions of displaced Afghans will struggle to survive over the coming winter. A lack of immediate action will inevitably lead to a deeper humanitarian crisis and further displacement that will have not only regional, but global implications.”

Astrid Sletten, Country Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Afghanistan, said: “As the economy spirals and the banking system is at risk of collapse, the impact on Afghans across the country who are already struggling to survive will be catastrophic. NRC stands ready to scale-up our response to meet growing needs but we need unhindered humanitarian access, including our female staff, to be able to do so. Member states must also urgently find ways to stabilize the economy and address the liquidity crisis so that we can continue supporting the Afghan people.”

Stuart Simpson, IOM Afghanistan Chief of Mission said: “Now more than ever, we need commitments from the international community to materialize so we can support those displaced, the local communities, while also giving Afghans a chance at living with dignity through decent work.”

Dr Luo Dapeng, WHO Country Representative in Afghanistan, said: “Access to health for Afghans is falling further out of reach just as winter approaches. Outbreaks of measles and acute watery diarrhoea are expanding. COVID-19 transmission continues across the country. The immune systems of children are increasingly compromised by malnutrition. This deeply troubling combination of factors will lead to an increase in preventable illness and death unless urgent action is taken.”

Abdul Khaliq Zazai, Executive Director of the Accessibility Organization for Afghan Disabled (AOAD), said: “The inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian and development assistance is a critically important cross-cutting agenda recognized by the United Nations. Afghanistan has one of the largest populations per capita of persons with disabilities in the world, most of them conflict-affected people who need physical rehabilitations, prostheses, orthoses, assistive devices, or food support.”

Hervé Ludovic De Lys, UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, said: “As more families struggle to put food on the table, the nutritional health of mothers and their children is getting worse by the day. Children are getting sicker and their families are less and less able to get them the treatment they need. Rapidly spreading outbreaks of measles and acute watery diarrhoea will only exacerbate the situation.”

Abdallah Al Dardari, UNDP Resident Representative for Afghanistan, said: “In addition to immediate assistance to save lives, the international community must act to save livelihoods and local economy, enhance resilience of communities, and prevent a total economic and social breakdown in the country.”

Richard Trenchard, FAO Representative in Afghanistan, said: “FAO is deeply concerned about the rural crisis affecting 70 per cent of the Afghan population. 80 per cent of Afghans depend directly or indirectly on rural livelihoods. The importance of agriculture in keeping the people of Afghanistan fed, alive, and self-reliant cannot be overstated.”

Notes to editors

- The Afghanistan Flash Appeal can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/3uKBQpw>
- B-roll video is available by request and hand-out photos are available here: <https://bit.ly/3oxWFes>
- The cumulative figures for the humanitarian response in September are available here: <https://bit.ly/3mrB8l8>
- A snapshot of key humanitarian facts and figures is available here: <https://bit.ly/3DglyON>
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