HIGHLIGHTS (20 Dec 2019)

- With the onset of the winter season, people in need have become more vulnerable
- The joint winterisation strategy for 2019-2020 integrates shelter, food, health and WASH
- How the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund is helping
- Case study: the perils of the winter season

KEY FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People in Need</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.3M 2019</td>
<td>9.4M 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9M 2021</td>
<td>37.6M</td>
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</tbody>
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FUNDING (2019)

- Required: $611.8M
- Received: $454.3M
- Progress: 74%

CONTACTS

- Ian Ridley
  Head of Office
  ridleyi@un.org
- Noroarisoa Rakotomalala
  Deputy Head of Office
  rakotomalala@un.org
- Linda Tom
  Public Information Officer
  toml@un.org

BACKGROUND (20 Dec 2019)

Providing support for winter to affected people

Humanitarian context

Conflict and insecurity, recurrent natural disasters continue to force people to be on the move in Afghanistan. In the first ten months of the year, over 400,000 people fled their homes due to conflict, with a total of 32 out of 34 provinces affected. In addition, nearly 300,000 people were affected by natural disasters in 32 out of 34 provinces resulting in at least 149 people killed and 165 injured; and over 39,000 houses were destroyed or damaged. With the onset of the winter season, people in need have become more vulnerable compounding the effects of displacement as many people have exhausted their coping mechanisms as decades of war have eroded people's resilience. The combination of conflict with repeated displacement, poverty, and the wide-ranging consequences of under-investment in services has resulted in many families to be burdened by burgeoning debt. For example, it is estimated that it will take 16 years for returnees in Badghis to repay the debts they incurred while displaced during the drought.
Furthermore, about half a million people from Afghanistan returned from Pakistan, Iran and other countries in 2019. As in previous years, many returnees are returning with minimal assets and are in need of humanitarian assistance upon arrival as well as income-earning opportunities. Without assistance, people have little capacity to cope and recover. Next year, humanitarian needs are expected to increase with almost a quarter of the population or 9.4 million people estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance; 56 per cent of people in need are children. Humanitarian organisations will need US $733 million to reach 7.1 million people in need in 2020.

BACKGROUND (20 Dec 2019)

Overview of needs

Shelter needs

As the temperature continues to drop in 2019, shelter needs for the winter is of highest priority to save lives and help people survive the winter season. As 70 per cent of Afghanistan is predominantly mountainous, people living in these areas are more vulnerable to winter conditions due to prolonged periods of freezing temperatures and snow. The vast majority of internally displaced people (IDPs) fled their home without adequate clothing, many are staying in make-shift shelters that do not provide adequate protection from the elements. 95,000 households (approximately 665,000 people) are estimated to need support over winter to alleviate their exposure to the elements due to inadequate shelter. Almost two thirds of the displaced population is estimated to be living in sub-standard shelter and nearly two in three households own less than one blanket per household member. Needs assessments also revealed that people, both internally displaced and host communities are in need of heating, blankets, winter clothing, basic household items, as many displaced people have left most of their belongings behind. Humanitarian partners will also be investing in more durable transitional shelter solutions in an effort to build community resilience, particularly to the winter cold in accordance with the 2020 HRP.

Health implications

Responding to health needs will also be critical to helping people survive the winter. Diseases such as respiratory infections are more likely to occur among communities with inadequate shelter during the winter months. For example, a 43 per cent increase in respiratory infections during November to February was observed from 2015 to 2018 compared to the yearly average. Furthermore, across many parts of the country, access the health services will likely become restricted as major roads are blocked during the winter months which not only prevents people from
accessing health facilities but also limits the provision of timely medical supplies to isolated communities. In response to communal displacement due to severe weather, the provision of safe water and sanitation services and hygiene promotion materials/supplies is also needed in areas that are likely to be affected such as Badakhshan, Bamyan and Daykundi Provinces.

Food and Security Agriculture

Winter in Afghanistan is also the peak hunger period as food production and income generation opportunities become more limited. Small-scale farmers exhaust their production during the post-harvest summer and early winter months. Agriculture makes up over a third of Afghanistan's economy and employs about three quarters of its population. Up to 85 per cent of the country's food comes from irrigated farming. After three years in a row of failed rains, Afghanistan suffered a devastating drought that resulted in failed crops, livestock deaths, dried up pastures and the displacement of thousands of farming families. As precipitation improved last winter, many farmers were able to return their places of origin and resume their agriculture-based livelihood activities, but they will need support in resume agricultural activities.

Many households are expected to deplete their limited post-drought food stocks prior to winter especially in high elevation areas. Humanitarian food assistance will be necessary through the upcoming winter to mitigate food consumption gaps and prevent malnutrition. From November 2019 to March 2020, the number of people experiencing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity is expected to rise to 14.3 million people compared to 12.6 million in the previous period, based on Flowminder 2020 population projections. Surprisingly, urban populations were found to be equally or in some areas even more food insecure than rural populations. Highly food insecure families will have little ability or opportunity to increase their income during winter, which may force them to borrow, sell assets, migrate and skip meals, making them even more vulnerable.

COORDINATION (20 Dec 2019)

Responding to people in need

The joint winterisation strategy for 2019-2020 in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan integrates shelter, food, health and WASH to help affected people decrease their vulnerability and ensure that they are adequately protected from harsh weather conditions during winter. The delivery of winter support has begun across the coldest parts of the country under the joint plan. To date, enough funding has been raised to reach just over 69,000 households (approximately 483,000 people). A further US$15 million is needed to cover a remaining gap of 26,000 households: $6 million for emergency shelter/relief items and $9 million for food security and livelihoods support.

In addition to reaching the most vulnerable families, priority has been given to those living in critical climatic conditions due to altitude, temperature and weather, including the following: families living in open space, families living in damaged, makeshift and poor shelters conditions, families at risk of forced eviction, families living in informal settlements, families forced to relocate and in urgent need of shelter assistance.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE (20 Dec 2019)

How the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund is helping

The Third Reserve Allocation was released to directly respond to urgent needs and the limited capacity of internally displaced people to cope with the onset of winter and who require basic assistance in order to survive. The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund allocation addresses the dire humanitarian situation and is aligned with strategic
objectives outlined in the 2020 HRP to improve humanitarian responses through an inclusive and coordinated process. About a third of the $33 million allocation or $10.2 million was allocated towards 16 projects that are providing winterisation assistance.

As many IDP families are hosted by their relatives and friends who often lack coping capacity and their own resources, additional support is being provided through the distribution of cash, relief items, and winter kits. This assistance is aimed at newly displaced and returnees and those who are living in open spaces. In addition, to help farmers through the winter, the AHF is supporting livelihoods projects to mitigate the impact of the poor winter planting season through the distribution of improved varieties of seeds and fertilizer. Improved varieties can deliver higher yields compared with traditional local seeds and are more resistant to mild drought conditions. The allocation recognizes that it is critical for rural farmers to receive adequate seed and fertilizer in time for the October to December planting window to ensure a good yields in the summer of 2020.

For example, the need for seed assistance – particularly to support the winter wheat planting season – was identified one of the top three priorities for small-scale vulnerable farmers affected by conflict and natural disasters across Afghanistan.

With funding from the AHF and donors, humanitarian partners working in the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster have been able to provide time-critical support to 117,193 rural households (or 820,351 people) during the 2019 winter wheat planting season. To date, wheat seeds and fertilizers were delivered and handed over to partners in 78 districts of 17 provinces: Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Bamyan, Daykundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Hilmand, Hirat, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nimroz, Nuristan, Samangan, Sar-e-pul and Wardak.

**VISUAL (20 Dec 2019)**

**AHF support to winterization**
**EMERGENCY RESPONSE**  
(20 Dec 2019)

**Case study: the perils of the winter season**

Sultan Mohamed is from Labeshir village in the Karashihi area of Faryab province. His village was home to around 200 to 300 families. In Labeshir, he worked as a wheat farmer to support his family, where he was paid a percentage of the harvest, but a steady income was not always guaranteed as the area was flood prone.

He fled his home with his family about six months ago due to fighting in his village. "We escaped at night and we just took a blanket," he said. They found refuge in Nahr-e-Shahi village, set in barren land about 20 kilometers away from Mazar-e-Sharif city. Hundreds of families fled from conflict-affected areas of Faryab and Balkh and settled in IDP sites around the city. As the conflict is still ongoing, they have not been able to return home.

While they are now safe, shelter is the primary concern for Sultan, his wife and their five children. "We cannot go back. Just a few day ago, we hear that two civilians were killed and two others injured," he said. Some people remain but most have fled to Balkh, Jowzjan or even Hirat. "Those who can walk or run away have gone," he added. Sultan went to Iran to work for several months, but he was captured by the authorities and returned back to Afghanistan. Sultan said that he was lucky to have found a job cleaning the river, as part of a UN cash for work project.

However, he is worried about surviving the winter. "It gets very cold and the children cannot go outside." To prepare for the upcoming winter, like many of the 1,200 families in the area, Sultan has borrowed money to buy a small plot of land and is building a house with assistance from an NGO through a project funded by the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. The family is currently living in a tiny room without windows while he is constructing his new house. With a cash grant to upgrade shelter for winter, he is able to buy materials for the construction of his house such as windows, roofing materials and doors.

As for other priorities, Sultan said that both his daughters are going to school. His eldest, nine year old Asma, helps around the house, but she is also attending grade three classes. "Now we understand that an illiterate person is limited, so everyone needs to be literate to make something of their life. I have seen many changes over the years, now we must consider both boys and girls," he said.

"I am happy with this support, but new displaced people keep arriving and they will need help too," he added.

**BACKGROUND**  
(20 Dec 2019)

**Aid already reached many families in need**

Families in Balkh and Faryab were identified to receive cash for shelter upgrades to the value of 23,840 AFN (equivalent to USD $300). In the fall, many IDP households in Balkh and Faryab had already started construction of shelters in informal settlements and target communities. Throughout the implementation period, beneficiaries will also
be provided technical advice on housing construction, from how to make mud bricks to disaster reduction strategies such as ensuring that they do not layout their shelter on flood or earthquake prone areas.

The distribution to assist 158 families in the Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province began on 12 December and on 13 December in Faryab for 294 rural families. The following districts in Balkh were covered: Dehdadi, Mazar-e-Sharif and Nahr-e-Shahi; in addition to the following districts in Faryab: Almar, Andkhoy, Dawlatabad, Maymana, Pashtunkot and Qaysar.