



# Afghanistan

## Humanitarian Situation Report No.3



UNICEF Afghanistan 2021 / Omid Fazel

Reporting Period: 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

### Highlights

- Of the almost 7 million children aged under-five in Afghanistan, an estimated 3.1 million are acutely malnourished in 2021. This implies a staggering 1 in 2 children under-five are in need of acute malnutrition treatment services to save their lives. About 14% of the total acute malnourished burden in Afghanistan is attributed to COVID-19 (HNO, 2021).
- One out of two children are not fully immunised in Afghanistan. Data show that 50% of all health facilities providing vaccination services, reported a decrease of 30% or more of the uptake of immunization services due to conflict and COVID-19. This further led to the outbreaks of measles affecting more than 10,500 children (HIMS, 2020).
- The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of all education facilities in mid-March leaving more than 7.5 million children from public schools and 500,000 from Community Based Education (CBE) out of school. In response, UNICEF supported 860,122 (43 per cent girls) children with self-learning materials to facilitate sustained engagement in learning.
- UNICEF has scaled-up implementation of climate resilient and sustainable water services to underserved communities in Afghanistan in 2020 and as a result 100 per cent of the water supply facilities are now either solar powered or gravity systems with zero carbon footprint.
- Despite COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF continued to focus on regular humanitarian activities on the frontline in addition to COVID-19 response and had been able to provide 1,563,166 people including 933,467 children with integrated services (476,068 boys and 457,399 girls).

### Situation in Numbers



**18.4 M**

People in need of humanitarian assistance (HRP 2021)



**9.7 M**

Children in need (HRP 2021)



**>800,000**

Returnees (IOM, 31 Dec 2020)



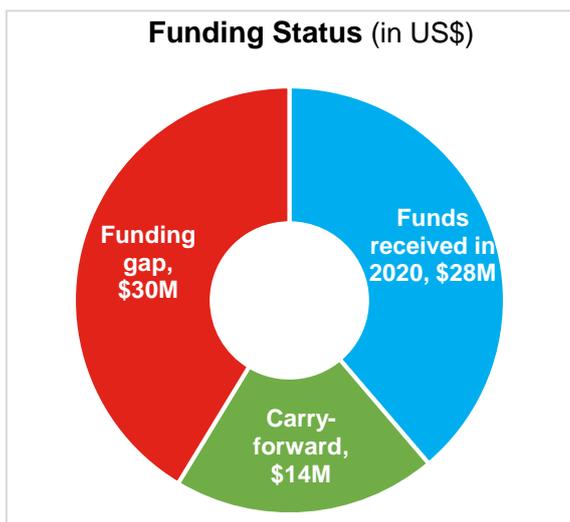
**> 4.8 M**

Internally displaced people since 2012 (HNO 2021)

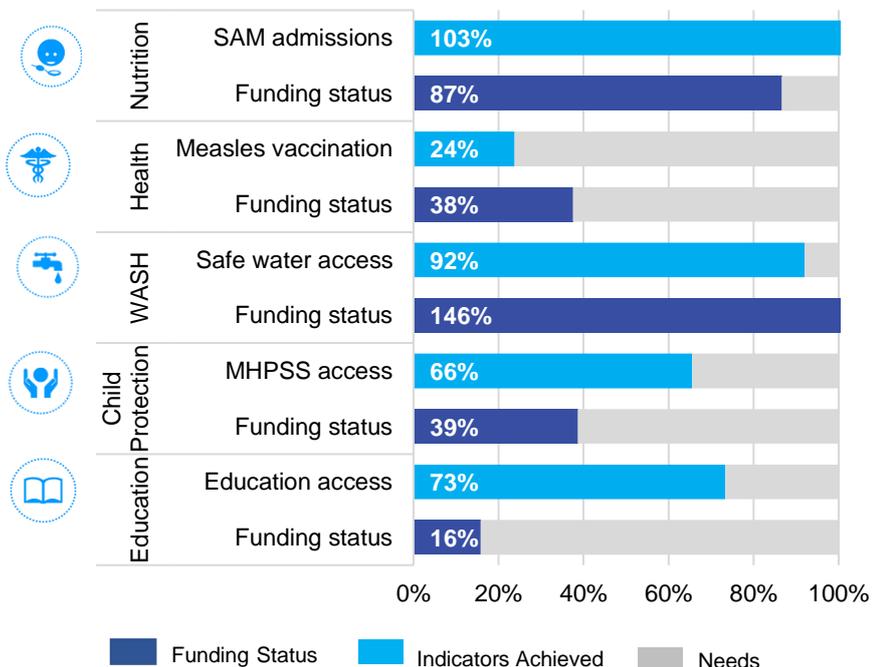
### UNICEF Appeal 2020

**USD 72.05 million**

#### Funding Status (in US\$)



### UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



## Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF appealed for USD70.05 million in 2020 to sustain the provision of life-saving services for children and women in Afghanistan. During 2020, UNICEF received USD27 million including USD14 million of carried-over funds from 2019. ECHO, EU, USAID, CERF, GPE, ECW, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank and Gavi, and the governments of Canada and Japan, generously contributed to UNICEF Afghanistan's humanitarian response. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all donors. By the end of 2020, the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal still had a funding gap of 41 per cent against the appeal. Under-funded programmes include education and health for their regular emergency programmes. Despite some regular emergency programmes and COVID-19 response being complementary, the inadequate funds compromise UNICEF's efforts to provide timely and effective humanitarian actions overall.

## Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic compounded with escalating conflict, recurrent natural disasters, deteriorating economy, continued displacement, unprecedented levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty have exacerbated the existing vulnerabilities of children, adolescent girls, boys and families. The new Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021 reflects a significant increase in the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance – now 18.4m people up from 14m in mid-2020. This includes 1.5 million people with disabilities and 9.7 million children with acute needs. Women, children and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable in the current health, economic, social and security context and an estimated 30.5 million people (>75 per cent of population) need targeted social assistance.

The people of Afghanistan continue to face extreme consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to underlying vulnerabilities, the health system is fragile and under-resourced. The food security situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate with the percentage of food-insecure people doubling. The proportion of people in a crisis or emergency situation has simultaneously increased more than five-fold in the past five years. The most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis shows the food-security situation has further deteriorated during COVID-19 with an estimated 16.9 million people (42 per cent of the population) now assessed to be in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. According to data from the IPC Secretariat, Afghanistan has the second highest number of people in emergency food-insecurity in the world (5.5 million).

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, cumulative precipitation has been below average in most provinces from mid-November to early January 2021 and it shows a worrying La Nina climate outlook. Additionally, findings of the most recent nutrition surveys show that 27 out of 34 provinces are now within the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition. Almost one in two children under five is expected to face acute malnutrition as well as a quarter of pregnant and lactating women in 2021. As per Displaced Tracking Matrix of Afghanistan, nearly five million people remain displaced since 2012 and most of them are living in insecure housing in informal settlements on private land on the fringes of major cities.

Despite the ongoing peace talks, there has been no sign of improvement in the operating environment for humanitarians with violence continuing. Interferences in the implementation of with humanitarian activities has escalated with a 140 per cent increase such incidents compared to 2019 (Humanitarian Access Snapshot, 2020). In 2020, WHO recorded 89 incidents that include direct attacks on hospitals, abductions of healthcare workers, acts of intimidation, looting of medical supplies etc.

## Summary Analysis of Programme Response

### Nutrition

UNICEF in partnership with Nutrition Cluster partners including Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UN agencies, national and international NGOs applied necessary programmatic adaptations in order to continue nutrition programming during COVID-19 in a manner to minimize the risk of transmission of virus for both health workers and beneficiaries. UNICEF in consultation with the Government and nutrition cluster members decreased the frequency of visits for outpatient SAM treatment services from weekly to bi-weekly in all health facilities and increased the bed space to a minimum of 1.5 meters between beds in inpatient SAM services, where applicable. The required programmatic adaptations were also applied on Community Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP), from a weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS), and Maternal and Infant & Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) activities to biweekly basis.

UNICEF remains the sole provider of RUTF and therapeutic milk for all children under five who require services for SAM treatment, with an approximate cost of USD25 million annually in Afghanistan. With the funding challenges, UNICEF in consultation with government and partners, proposed a revised simplified SAM treatment dosage protocol in line with global findings. The current average dosage is 136 sachets per child which will be minimised to 90 sachets per child per treatment cycle. UNICEF began implementing the revised dosage through a phased approach starting in 5 provinces. With the revised protocol, the SAM treatment cost per child is reduced by 40% (from 55\$ to 35\$ per child.)

From January to December, UNICEF and partners treated 310,470 children (138,047 boys, 172,423 girls) with SAM reaching 80 per cent of the target and only 40% of the total children in need. The treatment services achieved an acceptable level of performance during 2020, with cured, default, death and non-cured rates at 86.2%, 11.1%, 0.5% and 2.2%, respectively. The nutrition services are being delivered through Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) health facilities and integrated mobile health and nutrition approach.

UNICEF has supported delivery of lifesaving nutrition and health services for the underserved population in the hard to reach areas of 14 provinces and as well as for the displaced population in the IDP settlements through 55 mobile health and nutrition teams (7 in Kandahar, 6 in Helmand, 2 in Faryab, 4 in Kunduz, 7 in Ghor, 8 in Badghis, 4 in Bamyan, 4 in Daikundi, 2 in Paktya, 1 in Paktika, 2 in Zabul, 2 in Nuristan, 1 in Laghman, 2 in Uruzgan and 3 in Herat provinces). Services provided through the mobile health and nutrition teams included antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning, new-born care, integrated management of childhood illnesses, immunization services, nutrition services and health education sessions. Over one million of the population were covered including around 40,000 pregnant women and 200,000 children under five.

In terms of Vitamin A supplementation for the emergency affected population, UNICEF and implementing partners reached a total of 22,058 children aged 6-59 months mainly through mobile teams which represent around 30% of total target (78,000) of 2020.

## Health

Throughout most of 2020, the focus of UNICEF's health interventions centred around the COVID-19 response. UNICEF is part of the National Technical Working Group, Health Cluster, provincial COVID-19 taskforces, and high-level oversight committee where members discuss updates and strategic and technical issues on the response. UNICEF received over USD40 million from World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), GAVI, Government of Japan and Pandemic Emergency Facility (PEF) for COVID-19 response. 1200 oxygen concentrators were provided to 81 district hospitals allowing them to manage more than 1,200 confirmed COVID-19 cases per month. UNICEF continued to supply medical oxygen in three main regional hospitals of Herat, Balkh, and Nangarhar, benefiting a total of 2,028 critical patients (1,223 male and 805 female) confirmed with COVID-19 infection.

More than 21,000 health care providers working at COVID-19 centres in all 34 provinces were provided with 570,000 pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and non-COVID-19 health facilities (health facilities only with outpatient services for COVID-19) were supported with 14,000 PPEs, to ensure continuation of essential RMCNAH services. 1200 oxygen concentrators and medical oxygen through oxygen balloons were also procured and distributed to all COVID-19 centres (centres with inpatient and outpatient services) at the initial stage of the pandemic which was required for critical treatment in the major cities where the high COVID-19 caseload existed at the initial stage.

To ensure physical distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic especially between patients as well as staff at health facilities, UNICEF distributed more than 70 tents to the health facilities in Kandahar and Helmand. These provided enough social distance space for outpatient care in health facilities and helped prevent health staff and clients from infection while receiving essential RMNCAH services.

A total of 23,781 health care providers from different level of health facilities were trained on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and to detect, refer and appropriately manage COVID-19 cases in children, pregnant and breastfeeding women. UNICEF also supported MoPH's Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health programme with development of key messages and financially on printing of messages to include COVID-19 key messages in the existing guides and tools. A total of 50,000 new-born kits and clean delivery kits were distributed to pregnant women and new-borns mothers in hard to reach areas, which enabled more than 20,000 pregnant women to give birth safely.

## WASH

UNICEF, in collaboration with WASH cluster partners, including government counterparts at national and provincial levels and civil society organisations (CSO), delivered essential life-saving WASH services to affected people across Afghanistan. As of 31 December 2020, UNICEF provided safe drinking water to 230,000 people in 66 districts of 26 provinces against the annual target of 250,000 people while over 49,000 people accessed through emergency sanitation facilities/services against the annual target of 100,000 people. In addition, over 125,000 people affected by conflict and natural disasters were reached with hygiene promotion activities including over 10,000 families with hygiene kits.

Of the total reached (230,000 people) with water supply services in 2020, about 224,000 (97%) people benefited from sustainable and climate resilience water supply systems equipped with renewable energy (solar- power). This is a solid achievement and display good example of humanitarian- development linkages in water supply provision.

In addition to the COVID-19 response, around 910,000 people were supported with essential WASH supplies and services. Key interventions included upgrading of WASH facilities/services at 365 COVID-19 treatment hospitals/ isolation centres and four border crossing points with Iran and Pakistan. Distribution of hygiene supplies along with

promotion of key hygiene messages to contain the spread of COVID-19 in high risk areas in 30 provinces was important.

## Education

Despite various COVID-19 related challenges in 2020, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) through the implementation of Community-Based Education (CBE) in response to the immediate needs of emergency-affected children, including returnees, refugees, internally displaced, and vulnerable host community children, who were unable to access public schooling due to insecurity, inadequate school infrastructure and capacity, poverty, and far distances between communities and school buildings. 157,342 children (90,428 girls, representing 57 per cent of the total) were enrolled in 4,300 CBE learning spaces. Throughout the year, UNICEF continued capacity building activities aimed at ensuring quality delivery of Education in Emergency (EiE), and resulted in training of 4,245 volunteer teachers (1,740 females) on the standard service-entry package; and sensitization of 8,187 community and School Management Shura members on the importance of education, especially girls' education and child protection.

To support the MoE COVID-19 response plan, UNICEF, as Education in Emergency Working Group (EiEWG) co-lead, established and led two sub-taskforces on alternative learning pathways and teacher engagement. Teachers were oriented on their tasks which included distribution of learning materials and monitoring of children's engagement; support to COVID-19 prevention and protection measures' awareness with community mobilizers and distribution of hygiene kits; basic psychosocial support to children and their families.

In 2020, with UNICEF support, the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) was finalized as well as a risk communication and community engagement strategy. This is an important step in harmonizing and unifying efforts of education partners to work more effectively and applying the same standards to ensure safe places learning spaces for children. The framework provides a comprehensive approach to reducing risks from all hazards to the education sector and guidance for partners to develop their own safety plans. The signing of a technical workplan to ensure access to hard to reach areas, across 13 provinces, will result in a further 120,000 children, including at least 24,000 (20%) girls, able to access learning through an expansion of the Community Based Education (CBE) initiative.

## Child Protection

In partnership with 15 national and international NGOs, a total of 137,583 children and adult (62,563 women/girls) benefitted from child protection services including community-based psychosocial support through door-to-door service provision. 18,839 (6,140 girls) children at risk were provided with integrated case management services including 5,916 (14 girls) Unaccompanied and Separated Minors (UASM) predominantly returning from Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Europe and Gulf States. Winterisation kits were provided to over 104,510 children in the most vulnerable areas. UNICEF supported the establishment of two Multi-purpose Centres in Logar as an entry point for providing integrated Child Protection and GBV (Gender Based Violence) services to adolescent girls and women.

UNICEF and UNAMA as co-chairs of the Country Taskforce on Monitoring and Reporting intensified their advocacy efforts for protection of children in armed conflict with Groups of Friends, UN Security Council Working Group and Members of States. Through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) monitors in the field, more than 1,485 grave violations with 79% verified. 187 children in 34 provinces were prevented from recruitment by the National Police through Child Protection Units.

UNICEF co-led the coordination of the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) at national and sub-national levels and strengthened partnerships with a range of Civil Society Organizations, Government and other UN agencies. Child protection responses were scaled up, including the development of guidelines and procedures. Moreover, UNICEF provided leadership through the Child Protection Sub Cluster to develop and roll out the Case Management Standard Operating procedures (SoPs) which has been endorsed by the Government of Afghanistan. The adoption of the SoPs will lead to improved case management if children require specialized support.

## Communication & Advocacy and Communication for Development (C4D)

As a lead agency for risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), UNICEF developed the RCCE strategy and plan, package of key COVID-19 messages, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) package (poster, flyer, billboards, TV and radio spots) myths and rumours response guide in order to increase awareness of the communities on proper preventive practice. Thirty-one (31) different types of BCC material, containing different messages were produced for mass and social media; Together, TV and radio spots aired 151,954 times on 180 channels, reached seven million individuals while the social media posts had more than 15 million views. Furthermore, the community engagement reached 4.7 million people as result of mobilization of more than 82,814 mobilizers/members from different groups, including community health supervisors, community workers, religious leaders, Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) members, adolescent and youth members, women of CSO networks, nutrition counsellors, community influencers, volunteers, school management Shura and sports federation members.

## Gender and Adolescent Development and Participation

In order to respond to the unique needs of women and girls during the pandemic, UNICEF in partnership with three Civil Society Organisations for women and girls such as Voice of Women Organization (VWO), Women Activities &

Social Service Association (WASSA), and Action Aid Afghanistan (AAA) for women and girls, tailored interventions. Of a total of 1,073,653, reached with tailored information on COVID-19, GBV prevention, and available services through channels of communication preferred by women and girls, 370,678 were women, 329,661 men, 192,046 girls, and 181,268 boys with Similarly, over 19,008 people (10,307 women, 3,395 girls, 1,800 boys, and 3,506 men) were provided with emergency psychosocial supports and referrals, 37 of these were GBV survivors. A total of 4,380 service providers, consisting of 440 men and 3,940 women, were trained on GBV and PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation Abuse) risk mitigation to ensure the safety and protection of beneficiaries during various emergency interventions.

### **Cash transfers, accountability to affected populations and disability inclusion**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the deteriorating socio-economic situation in Afghanistan in 2020, UNICEF reached 33,698 people (including 24,070 children) with cash-based assistance (CBA) using a 'cash plus' approach combining cash transfers with other modalities or activities. A total of 287 households with persons with disabilities were reached, out of 3,106 households, with cash transfers.

A framework on Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) has been developed to strengthen integration, principles and approaches in UNICEF Afghanistan supported programs. The framework will be operationalized in 2021 to improve engagement and accountability to affected populations.

Work on strengthening data collection systems for cash transfers to improve the transparency of registration processes and support the development of shock responsive social protection systems is ongoing. In addition, a situation analysis of children with disabilities was initiated in 2020 and the final report will be released in the first quarter of 2021 to contribute to the development of the UNICEF new Country Programme Document.

### **Communication Advocacy and Civic Engagement**

UNICEF continued to win the support for the cause of children in Afghanistan from policy makers and the general public by sustaining itself as the leading advocate and voice for children in Afghanistan, as well as enhancing supporter engagement across social media channels. UNICEF published 27 press releases and conducted more than 206 interviews with major international and national media outlets, including New York Times, Al-Jazeera, NPR, BBC, and VoA, among others. UNICEF updated its social media strategy and published more than 60 advocacy videos and hundreds of social media posts. Across its digital platforms, UNICEF reached 163.3 million people and engaged 3.2 million people exceeding the target of 1.8 million.

### **Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy**

UNICEF continues to lead Nutrition and WASH Clusters and Child Protection Sub-Cluster and Co-Lead EiEWG and participate, and contribute to Humanitarian Country Team, Interagency and Inter-Cluster initiatives, Humanitarian Access Working Group, Cash and Voucher Working Group, Disability Inclusion etc. UNICEF maintains a strategic partnership with key donors and represents Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) as an advisory board member.

### **Human Interest Stories and External Media**

The nutrition revolution in Afghanistan

<https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/nutrition-revolution-afghanistan>

Cash transfer supports girls' education in Afghanistan

<https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/cash-transfer-supports-girls-education-afghanistan>

Sakina, championing women in the fight against polio in Afghanistan

<https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/sakina-championing-women-fight>

Children in Afghanistan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aglg5BU7aRk>

Reaching the hardest to reach in central highlands of Afghanistan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61BQbaX05KQ>

Most vulnerable children in Afghanistan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2pwMRe0ImE>

An education advocate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzfZvj8Cey4&t=10s>

Clean water for internally displaced people

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyLrBdwcN8c>

UNICEF Afghanistan Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/>

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## Annex A

### Summary of Programme Results

Sector	Overall needs	Cluster/Sector Response			UNICEF and IPs		
		2020 target	Total results	Change since last report ▲▼	2020 target	Total results	Change since last report ▲▼
<b>Nutrition</b>							
Number of children under 5 with SAM admitted for treatment*		377,000	251,826	▲154,540	300,000	310,470	▲185,691
Number of children 6-59 Months received Vitamin A			8,860	▲6,797	78,000	13,198	▲5,309
<b>Health</b>							
Number of children (9 months - 10 years) who received measles vaccination					150,000	35,708	▲16,053
Number of pregnant/lactating women and children benefited from essential health services and health education					150,000	450,384	▲418,176
<b>WASH</b>							
Number of people affected by humanitarian crisis accessing safe drinking water.		2,053,765	1,216,289	▲688,016	250,000	230,003	▲136,878
Number of people affected by humanitarian crisis accessing sanitation facilities.		794,150	314,037	▲225,956	100,000	49,390	▲1,352
<b>Child Protection</b>							
Number of Children accessing psychosocial supports through child-friendly spaces			30,755	▲24,622	210,000	137,583	▲80,071
Number of children protected and supported through case management and family reunification			3,472	▲2,551	15,000	18,839	▲12,389
Number of people affected by conflict and natural disaster received winter clothes and other non-food items					240,000	104,510	▲64,821
<b>Education</b>							
Number of emergencies affected children and adolescents who accessed quality education		349,372	194,117	▲20,179	210,000	157,342	▲4,388
Number of children supported with self-learning materials.		4,539,000	924,677		750,000	860,122	▲122,183

## Annex B

### Funding Status

Appeal Sector	2020 Requirements (USD)	Funds Available		Total Funds Available in 2020	Funding Gap	%
		Funds Received in 2020	2019 Carry Forward			
Education	23,700,000	3,555,921	181,922	3,737,843	19,962,157	84%
Nutrition	22,500,000	15,933,353	3,542,473	19,475,826	3,024,174	13%
Health	8,150,000	2,207,130	850,070	3,057,201	5,092,799	62%
WASH	8,000,000	3,503,456	8,159,192	11,662,648	+3,662,648	+46%
Child Protection	6,500,000	1,469,000	1,041,926	2,510,926	3,989,074	61%
Cash transfers and accountability to affected populations	2,000,000	655,199	520,047	1,175,246	824,754	41%
Cluster/sector coordination**	1,200,000	636,935	0	636,935	563,065	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,050,000</b>	<b>12,802,416</b>	<b>14,295,630</b>	<b>27,098,046</b>	<b>29,793,375</b>	<b>41%</b>