THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Forty years of war, recurrent natural disasters, chronic poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be a deadly combination for people in Afghanistan. Nearly half of the population (some 18.4m people) are in need of humanitarian and protection assistance in 2021. More than one third of people are facing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity and nearly half of all children under-five are expected to face acute malnutrition in 2021. Needs are being further compounded by emerging threats such as drought conditions and escalation of conflict, with some 13.2 million people anticipated to have immediate needs during the spring alone. Protection and safety risks to civilians, particularly women, children and people with a disability, are also on the rise.

FUNDING IS URGENTLY NEEDED

The humanitarian community is encouraged by signals of additional support to come but the funding gap remains huge. It is critical for donors to accelerate delivery on these pledges so that services are not interrupted. Donors are also urged to consider additional commitments wherever possible. Any donation - no matter how small - is welcome and will help increase delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

$1.3 BILLION
FUNDING REQUIRED FOR 2021

$166.8 MILLION
FUNDING RECEIVED
WHAT IF…
WE FAIL TO MOBILISE SUFFICIENT AND TIMELY FUNDS?

Severe hunger will increase and 700,000 people will not receive monthly food assistance. Each day without food has physical, emotional and cost implications for the 14.1 million people currently living in emergency and crisis levels of food insecurity. Already, 42 per cent of people are employing the most severe coping mechanisms – such as selling assets or taking on unsustainable levels of debt – which keeps them trapped in situations of protracted need.

The 3.1 million children under the age of five with acute malnutrition in 2021 will face life-threatening health risks. A staggering 895,000 children are expected to suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) during the year. Without specialised food and medical treatment, children with SAM are at nine times higher risk of dying than their healthy peers. Additionally, without assistance, 720,000 undernourished pregnant and lactating women will have children pre-disposed to low birth weight, short-stature, have low resistance to infections, and a higher risk of disease and mortality.

One-third of the population (mostly in hard-to-reach areas) will not be able to obtain critical health services. COVID-19 has disrupted essential services such as trauma, antenatal and reproductive health care, as well as vaccinations and urgent support is required to overcome deficits. 500,000 babies require routine immunisation and an additional 320,000 children who were not fully immunised in 2020 will require supplementary immunisation. With Afghanistan being one of the three countries in the world where wild polio remains endemic, inability to provide vaccination means children will be exposed to polio-induced disability.

One million children will miss out on education and be at risk of permanent drop-out. This is in addition to some 3.7 million children already out of school in Afghanistan. These children will be left at increased risk of recruitment by parties to the conflict, trafficking and exploitative work.

Life-saving protection assistance will be discontinued. More than one million people will be at risk of injury and permanent impairment due to loss of mine risk services.

Some 750,000 people will not have access to life-saving emergency shelter and basic essential items, exposing vulnerable groups – women, children, people with disability and the elderly – to extreme protection risks and heightened dangers from COVID-19 and other disease transmission.

500,000 people will be cut off from monthly water and sanitation support. Some 3.6 million people currently lack access safe water. This will only get worse due to the current La Niña weather impacts. Inability to provide hygiene materials may heighten the chances of people contracting the COVID-19 and facing serious medical complications and even death.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

IMMEDIATE FUNDING
Well into the fifth month of the year, the HRP remains only 13 per cent funded. This has strained humanitarians’ ability to respond to existing and new threats. Urgent mobilisation of resources is critical to avert preventable deaths and unnecessary suffering.

EARLY ACTION TO ADDRESS CLIMATE-DRIVEN RISKS
As outlined in the Spring Contingency Plan, urgent mobilisation of resources is needed to prevent vulnerable families in IPC 3 areas from slipping into IPC 4 levels, mitigate against children with MAM from falling into SAM, and avert the need for a more complex and prolonged response.

ADDRESSING THE PROTECTION CRISIS
Afghanistan has endured over four decades of war. Without a durable peace agreement, the humanitarian crisis will only deepen while humanitarian operations will become increasingly constrained.