

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND RESPONSE: JANUARY TO JUNE 2019

In the first half of the year, 4.2 million people targeted in the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2019 were reached with assistance at least once. This included 3.2 million people who received food and emergency livelihoods assistance. In September alone, the UN and partners assisted 851,879 people in need with 8,447 metric tons of food and distributed US\$939,361 in cash transfers to cover families' food needs. To address malnutrition, 469,000 women and children received emergency nutrition services. In addition, 835,000 people were provided with access to safe water; 492,000 people were assisted with shelter, emergency relief items and winterisation support; 44,000 children in emergencies were given access to education; 656,000 people accessed health services, and over 254,000 people were reached with mine risk education. Through support from humanitarian partners, life-saving assistance was delivered to 93 per cent of the total planned people to be assisted in 332 out of 401 districts across the country.

4.2M

PEOPLE REACHED

93%PEOPLE REACHED
OUT OF TOTAL
PLANNED PEOPLE TO
BE ASSISTED**332**

DISTRICTS REACHED

Humanitarian needs continue to grow in Afghanistan due to ongoing violence, natural disasters (droughts and flash floods), internal displacement, growing food insecurity and the upcoming winter season. Hunger and malnutrition are at dangerously high levels and the lingering impact of the 2018-2019 drought continues to be felt by millions of people across Afghanistan. The most recent nutrition survey across Afghanistan showed that 22 out of 34 provinces are currently above the emergency level threshold for acute malnutrition. Food insecurity is at an alarmingly high level; based on the latest assessments, an estimated 13 million people are in crisis and emergency (IPC 3 and 4). Badakhshan, Ghor, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Nuristan and Daykundi are now among the most affected provinces. A recent nutrition survey across Afghanistan showed that 22 out of 34 provinces are currently above the emergency level threshold for acute malnutrition.

For more information, see the [Afghanistan 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan: Mid-Year Review of Financing, Achievements and Response Challenges](#).

IMPACT OF RECENT VIOLENCE ON CIVILIANS

The overall security situation across Afghanistan remained volatile in the lead-up to and on the day of the much-anticipated 28 September presidential election, impacting civilians across the country, especially children. Similar to the last presidential election in 2014 and the parliamentary elections in 2018, hundreds of security incidents affecting civilians were reported across all regions. The highest volumes occurred in the East, South and North-East of the country. According to UNAMA, 277 civilian casualties were verified, including 249 injuries and 38 deaths on election day. Overall the last quarter from July to September 2019 recorded the highest level of civilian casualties since UNAMA began systematic tracking civilian casualties in 2009. According to UNAMA, the highest number of civilian casualties to date was recorded this year in July when more than 1,500 civilian casualties occurred.

Children made up more than a third of civilian casualties on election day with 55 children injured while at home. From January to September 2019, women children represented 41 per cent of all civilian casualties according to UNAMA. The most recent UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict report found that over 14,000 grave violations against children were recorded in Afghanistan from 2015 to 2018, equal to nearly 10 violations per day. Women across Afghanistan also continued to be subject to threats to their lives and physical safety from conflict-related violence and other forms of violence related to their gender.

Further to the above, during the election period, key roads across the country were reportedly closed to civilian traffic, and electricity and mobile phone networks were interrupted before and during the presidential election; particularly in the North (Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Sar-e-Pul, and Samangan) and North-East (Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Faryab and Badakhshan) of the country. On 24 September, a Non-State Armed Group (NSAG) reportedly warned private mobile companies to shut down their networks in the North until after the presidential election; all networks resumed service by end of September and early October. Communication issues also affected Farah in the West.

Given the high number of civilian casualties this quarter, humanitarians have raised concerns over the excessive use of force by all parties and the impact on civilians. Although the specific contexts in which civilians are killed or injured varies,

*As reported by the Health Cluster, per WHO guidelines, attacks include destruction of healthcare delivery, removal of personnel, armed or violent search, assault, militarisation of health facility, removal of healthcare assets and other forms of violence.

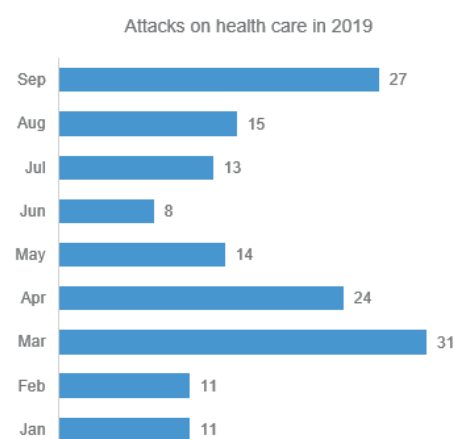
parties must be held accountable for alleged violations of international law, to ensure justice for the victims and to prevent future violations. UNAMA monitors civilian casualties in Afghanistan through their quarterly [Protection of Civilians reports](#).

Repeated attacks on healthcare in Zabul

As in previous elections, schools and a few health facilities were damaged on election day, although to a far lesser extent than previous years. Reports indicate that 12 schools were impacted by election-related violence compared with 92 verified attacks and threats in 2018. On election day, in yet another attack on healthcare in the Southern province of Zabul, a health facility near Qalat city was hit by a mortar, wounding three civilians. Less than two weeks earlier on September 19, explosives were detonated outside a provincial hospital causing extensive damage to the building. At least 15 people were killed and 80 were injured in this incident, the majority of who, were patients, doctors, and hospital staff.



Photo: WHO



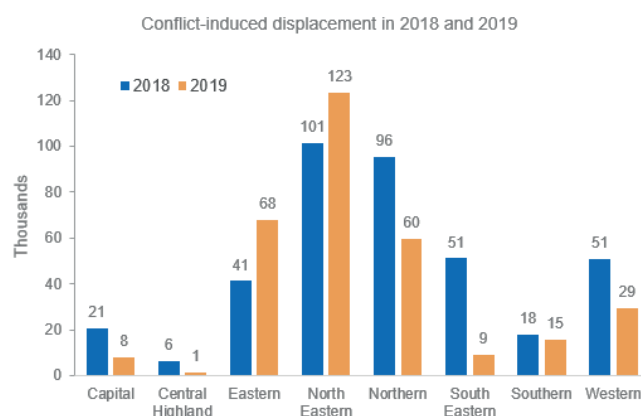
On 30 September, five other health facilities in Zabul were reportedly closed following NSAG warnings to close the facilities. Fighting between the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) and an NSAG in Shah Joi city was also reported in during that period. Following negotiations, the health facilities reportedly resumed operations on 17 October. Zabul is among the most under-served provinces where 60 per cent of the population are more than two hours away from any health facility.

The UN provided logistics support such as ambulances to support the transferring of critical patients from the 19 September incident, as well as medicine and emergency trauma kits. The UN is also working with partners to further identify and prioritise healthcare needs and start to rebuild the hospital in the next few months. After a temporary closure, the provincial hospital in Zabul was able to accommodate patients the next day in a limited capacity.

NEW HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

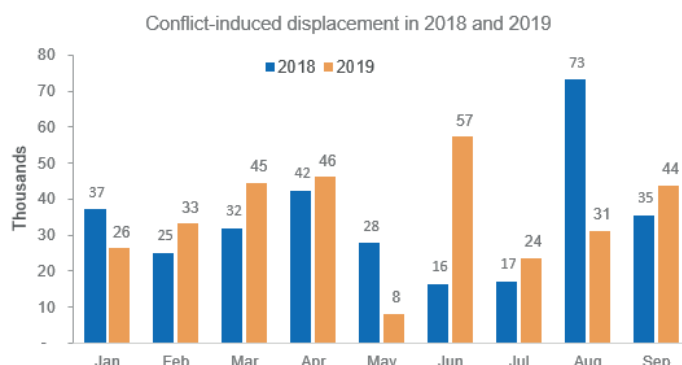
While the number of people displaced by conflict in 2019 is comparable to figures in 2018, the overall pattern of conflict and displacement has changed across the country. Armed clashes between the ANSF and an NSAG displaced people in the North (59,822 people), North-East (123,480 people) and East (67,726 people) of the country and are triggering new humanitarian needs in 2019. Many of those displaced, especially into urban areas, have no short-term prospect of return to their areas of origin either because of ongoing conflict or because they lack the resources to return and restart their lives.

An estimated, 2,300 families (1500 families from Khwaja Ghar and 800 families from Yangi Qala districts) were displaced following violence that began just prior to the presidential elections. Hundreds of internally displaced families took refuge in the Dasht-e-Robat area of Taloqan City, the capital of the northeastern province of Takhar with some internally displaced persons (IDPs) reportedly living in the open air, while others were staying in rooms, which were already available at the site. As the site was not equipped with basic services, IDPs were in urgent need of blankets, core relief items, water, and latrines. There was only one mobile clinic that was not sufficient to cover the needs of all IDPs.



A needs assessment conducted by NGOs in early October identified 264 households as being in need of humanitarian assistance after being displaced by conflict. The assessed households were mainly from Baharak and Khwaja Ghar districts who had begun to arrive at the camp on 26 and 27 September. Many households had been at the location for over a week at the time of the assessment. Of those displaced, 41 per cent said they thought they could return to their place of origin, while the remainder stated that it was still not safe for them to return. The assessment revealed that their sudden displacement prevented many households from earning an income as the majority of households have not only suspended their livelihood activities when they were forced to flee their homes, but also took on additional debt.

From 5 to 7 October, an NGO operating in the area distributed cash and relief items to 750 families and winter clothing for 377 families who had been identified as being in need of humanitarian assistance. Furthermore, education in emergency classes were set up by an NGO at the request of the Ministry of Education. Other humanitarian partners provided additional relief items, emergency shelter, water and food.



Helping people who have left everything behind



Photo: Concern Worldwide

Leila (not her real name) arrived at Dasht-e-Robat camp over a week ago, with her three daughters and son, aged between five and 18-years-old, after they were forced to flee the fighting that broke out in their district. Her husband works at the local clinic and had to stay behind because of the increase of patients during the conflict. “We were scared. I quickly took my children and left with my neighbours. Once we arrived at the camp, I saw hundreds of nervous families from my village and from others. It was all very sad,” said Leila.

While grateful to be safe, Leila described the many challenges her family faces at the camp. “My 11-year-old son, is responsible for bringing us the food and water, but he often returns with nothing—there are too many of us to feed. We only thought about our safety, we did not have time to bring anything or prepare. We have nothing.”

Since arriving at the displacement site, the family has received emergency shelter, carpet, and food from various international organisations. Following a needs assessment, Leila and her family were provided with cash assistance of 6,500 AFN—approximately US\$85. “We are using this money to rent a room and buy warmer clothes—the weather has just been too cold. This is not nothing, it has helped us a lot.”

The lingering effects of the drought are continuing to have an impact on food security and the well-being of people in Badakhshan, Ghor, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Nuristan and Daykundi which remain the most food insecure provinces. In the West, protracted displacement is contributing to increased protection issues at informal IDP sites such as child labour, child marriage and abuse. Some 84,516 people remain in seven informal sites since they were displaced by a combination of factors such as drought, conflict and other drivers in 2018 and early 2019. The vast majority of those remaining in displacement sites are in Hirat as most displaced people in Badghis have returned to their homes. While protection monitoring is ongoing, many of those remaining in displacement sites face additional challenges as the temperatures has begun to drop. Humanitarian partners are planning for sustainable solutions for shelter, permanent access to water and other basic services.

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