

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The number of drought-affected families who moved to Hirat City has reached a total of 7,400.
- Humanitarian needs in rural areas are high and families need assistance to help them stay close to their homes and fields.
- The ongoing drought will have repercussions that will be felt years to come and humanitarian and development action need to go hand in hand.
- Attacks on health facilities and health workers have become more deliberate and violent this year.
- The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)-Afghanistan allocated \$17 million to the drought response.

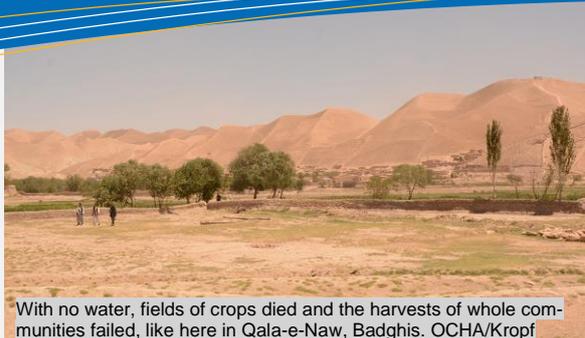
## HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING

29% FUNDED

**546.6 million**  
requested (US\$)

**160.3 million**  
Received (US\$)

<http://fts.unocha.org>  
by 20 June 2018



With no water, fields of crops died and the harvests of whole communities failed, like here in Qala-e-Naw, Badghis. OCHA/Kropf

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## Drought response must bridge the gap

The effects of the ongoing drought that grips large parts of the country will have repercussions that will be felt years to come: families have completely depleted all their material resources, sharing of resources is something only few families can afford to do, traditional coping mechanisms are proving increasingly ineffective and the social structure of communities is profoundly changing. With the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of families in peril, the situation calls for an urgent response that bridges the gap between life-saving humanitarian assistance and more longer-term development action.

Currently, the effects of the drought may be most visible in the outskirts of Hirat City, the economic centre of the Western Region. First families arrived in May from neighbouring Badghis and Ghor provinces (see *Bulletin No 7, May 2018*), putting up makeshift shelters along the road leading to Qala-e-Naw, Badghis. Their number has since grown to nearly 7,400 families or more than 50,000 people. They live on dozens of sites, some hosting twenty families, often hidden behind the walls of unfinished compounds, others hosting hundreds of families in large open spaces. Temperatures near 40 degrees Celsius during the day and constant wind drives dust into the minimal shelters and eyes of the residents.

“When the harvest failed, I sold my animals,” said Mohammed Qadis, a farmer from Muqur District, Badghis, now living in Muslemabad informal site. “The prices were way too low, down to one fifth of the what it would have been a year ago. But I could not wait to sell, 20 sheep had already starved because I had no fodder for them and no water.” He stayed on his plot of land until the money ran out. Then he decided to leave for Hirat City.

### Families have used up the humanitarian assistance provided

Visible signs of humanitarian assistance in the sites in Hirat City are the 1,700 white family tents scattered across the sites that humanitarian partners distributed to families upon their arrival and the small tankers that drive to each site daily to distribute clean water. Mobile health teams have been deployed, too, but despite seeing hundreds of patients every day, they struggle to cover all the sites.

Children show signs of malnutrition and illness, including skin diseases and eye infections. Many families are living on one meal a day, consisting of bread and water, only. Eating fewer meals and the low quality of the food affects the nutritional status of breast feeding and pregnant mothers, many of whom cannot nurse their children.

“Some families received food when they arrived in Hirat. Without the United Nations and the NGOs, these families would have not received anything,” said Dalmat Mahmaed, a village elder living in Hirat representing Mr. Qadis’ and 800 other families from the same district. “The food lasted a few weeks. But now, all the food is eaten and they again have nothing.”



Improvised shelters in the outskirts of Hirat City, where first families arrived in May due to the drought. Photo: OCHA/Kropf



*“My great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father have worked these fields, as have I all my life.”*

*“All families face the same situation; no one has anything left.”*

*“Of 850 enrolled boys, only still 350 show up at school and of 522 girls, only 300 still come to school.”*

*“Government and aid agencies, both those engaged in short- and long-term programmes, need to work together to give the families most affected by the drought a way out of their plight.”*

### With no water, fields of crops died and the harvests of whole communities failed

There is not a single drop of water in the reservoir of the underground irrigation system of Fahestan village, outside of Qala-e-Naw, the provincial capital of Badghis. “In the past two, three years, there was less and less water, this year there was nothing,” the villagers explain.

“My great-grandfather, my grandfather and my father have worked these fields, as have I all my life,” said 60-year old Sardar. “It is the first time that I experience such a situation.”

Without water from the irrigation system, the seeds he planted did not germinate, and his crops failed. Four months ago, he started selling off his livestock: four donkeys, three cows and 70 sheep. He did not even try to send his sheep to other pastures, knowing that the whole province was affected. He did not make much money, either: prices for sheep have fallen to around AFS1200 (\$17) from around AFS5,000 (\$70) in previous years.

### Traditional coping mechanism fail, leaving families with fewer and fewer choices

His family, like many others, resorted to a historical coping mechanism in the Western Region of Afghanistan and joined the circular migration patterns to neighboring Iran, paying a smuggler to bring family members over the border. “One of my sons is disabled, he cannot work. The two others went to Iran to work and send money home,” Sardar said. “One got arrested and deported, and the other is still hiding in Iran but has not found any work.”

There is little help he can expect from his community: “All families face the same situation; no one has anything left.” Most evenings, he and his family go to bed hungry. But, possibly worst of all, after selling off his sheep, he lost respect in the community. “People listen less to what I have to say. If I do not get any assistance, I will have to go and beg for money in the streets of the city.”

To survive, many farming families have already eaten the seeds for the next planting season, sent children to work or married off girls for the dowry. In Baghak, another village outside of Qala-e-Naw, attendance at the local school has dropped, as the principal explains: “Of 850 enrolled boys, only still 350 show up at school and of 522 girls, only 300 still come to school.”

### Humanitarian aid will not suffice for the drought-affected families

The drought struck communities across Afghanistan whose resources and coping capacities are already weakened by four decades of conflict and chronic under-development. In the past years, the humanitarian community has provided assistance notably to families displaced by conflict. The usual emergency package covers two months, with the hope that families can return to their areas of origin after fighting has subsided. Returning, however, is not an option for families who left their villages due to drought and now live in informal settlements, as their livelihoods in the areas of origin have been mostly lost.

At the same time, families in the rural areas equally need emergency assistance, notably food and water. This can allow them to stay close to their homes and fields instead of moving to urban centres where their vulnerabilities multiply, where they lack shelter, children cannot go to school and access to health facilities is more difficult.

“Government and aid agencies, both those engaged in short- and long-term programmes, need to work together to give the families most affected by the drought a way out of their plight. Stability and economic growth which fosters sustainable livelihoods, coupled with an accent on health and education, is the solution,” said Toby Lanzer, Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan.



The dried out reservoir that in the past irrigated the fields around Fahestan village. Photo: OCHA/Kropf



After selling all his sheep, Sardar (r.) lost respect and influence in the community. OCHA/Kropf



Twitter handles to follow:  
@toby LANZER

## The drought in the voices of people affected

*"We were 400 families who left together. The others went onwards to Hirat City. We had no money to pay for transport, so we stayed here."*

**Asal (name changed), Qala-e-Naw:** "I arrived in Qala-e-Naw from Balamurghab [district, Badghis] in May. We were 400 families who left together. The others went onwards to Hirat City. We had no money to pay for transport, so we stayed here. I had already borrowed money from a shopkeeper. Transport costed us AFS3,000 (\$41) and took five hours. I came here with my two children, two years and six months old. My husband is a drug addict, he abandoned us a long time ago. I do not know where he is. Some families got tents from NGOs. I did not, I do not know why. In the beginning, we had to buy water from the market, now we get water for free every day [via water trucking by an NGO]. We live on private land and the landowner wanted money for every tent. None of us have paid anything, and he has not come back, but we do not know if he will. These two sheep [attached to a tent, feeding on garbage] are not mine, they are the only that all our families still have. All the others died or we sold them. But no one wanted to buy these two, they were too thin and sick so we brought them with us. Maybe one day they will be fat again."



Asal and her daughter in an informal settlement in Qala-e-Naw, Badghis. Photo: OCHA/Kropf

*"The drought destroyed my crops and my animals were stolen by armed groups."*

**Ibrahim (name changed), Muslemabad site, Hirat City:** "I came from Dolayna [district, Ghor], with my wife and two daughters to Hirat City. I was a farmer. The drought destroyed my crops and my animals were stolen by armed groups. They knew we were poor, but they would come to my house at night and demand food for 20 to 30 of their fighters. We were hungry [ourselves] but we were expected to feed armed groups with the best food we had. We had nothing to survive anymore and decided to come to Hirat. I will not go back to my village anytime soon. Conflict is increasing day by day."

*Those families who had money have left to Hirat. The ones that are still here are either too poor or have a job from the government.*

**Abdul Qadir, Baghak village, Badghis:** "Last year, I planted 80 kilograms of wheat and harvested the double amount. This year, I planted the same amount and got nothing. We ate our seeds. I do not have money to buy new seeds for the coming planting season. I am 55 years old and never have been in this situation. Even if we had seeds, we have no money to pay for the tractor so we cannot plant. I had 130 sheep, 26 died and I sold all the others. Every family in the village got 40 kilograms of animal fodder from the government, but it was far from enough to keep the animals alive. Those families who had money have left to Hirat. The ones that are still here are either too poor or have a job from the government. Many families now have sick children. They have diarrhoea, they do not get enough food and they cough. There is no clinic in our village, we bring them to the hospital in Qala-e-Naw but we do not have the money to buy the medication that the doctors tell us they need to take."



Those who had money, left the village, Abdul Qadir (l.), said. The ones remaining are too poor to leave or have a salary from the government. Photo: OCHA/Kropf

*"I borrowed money from shopkeeper and cannot pay him back. He said he will take my baby from me as payment. I know that if he wants, he can."*

**Maryam, Rageshan displacement site Hirat City:** "I arrived three months ago in Hirat City, we came from Ghormach [Badghis]. I came with my husband and our two children. My mother-in-law also came with us. She has a growth on the throat but we cannot bring her to the doctor. My uncle is still in the village. We did not have enough money for him to travel with us. We came here with two blankets. We sold them to buy food. We have not eaten rice or meat since eight weeks. We eat bread that we mix with water. Five children have died on the site in the past week. At night, there are thieves on the site and I am scared. We cannot go back to our village. There has been no rain for two years and now there is fighting in our area, what would we do there? I want to stay here in the city and learn a trade to make money. I borrowed money from shopkeeper and cannot pay him back. He said he will take my baby from me as payment. I know that if he wants, he can."

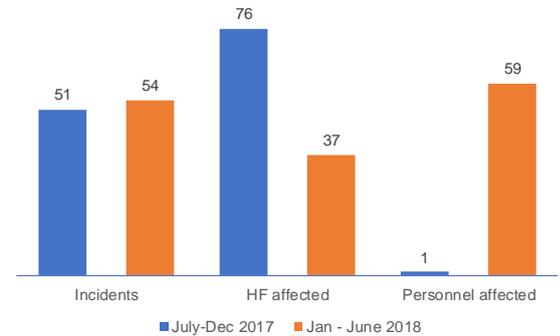
## Violence against health workers on the rise

Amongst all aid workers and humanitarian infrastructure, medical workers and health facilities in Afghanistan are most affected by security incidents and direct violence: of the 16 aid workers killed this year, 7 were health workers and of the 23 aid workers kidnapped, 13 were medical workers (*see next article*).

*“Health personnel in Afghanistan are constantly being harassed, detained, kidnapped or in the worst case killed.”*

From January to June, the [Health Cluster](#) registered 54 incidents against health workers and health facilities, slightly above the 51 incidents registered from July to December 2017. The number of affected health facilities dropped by nearly half from 76 to 37 in the same period.

This is, however, not good news: “This year, the attacks on health facilities and health workers have been much more deliberate and violent,” explained David Lai, Health Cluster Coordinator of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Kabul.



Number of incidents against health facilities and personnel in the first and second quarter of 2018. Data: Health Cluster.

The impact of the attacks has been alarming: 59 health workers were affected in the first half of 2018, compared to only 1 in the second half of 2017. “Health personnel in Afghanistan are constantly being harassed, detained, kidnapped or in the worst case killed,” Lai added.

### Health workers detained during night raids, a clinic destroyed in an aerial attack

A record high of 37 health personnel on duty were detained in past six months, many of them during night raids. “All parties to the conflict must respect the inviolability of health facilities and personnel,” reiterated Lai.

In March, a health facility in a rented house in Nika district, Paktika, was completely destroyed in an aerial attack. No staff members or patients were hurt, as the incident happened during the night. The clinic stopped all services for around 40,000 people and has to date not been reopened.



The health facility in Nika district, Paktia, was destroyed in an aerial attack in March. Photo: Health Cluster

### Continued trend to deprive communities from access to health care

In the past year, armed groups closed down more than 140 health facilities denying two million people access to health care, in most cases as part of efforts to extract improved trauma care in areas under their territorial control.

At time of writing, most, and perhaps all of the health facilities in Zabol Province have been shut down since July 16, including the Shah Joy District Hospital, the only district hospital.

Sultan Mohammad and his wife are amongst the estimated 300,000 people currently deprived of essential medical services in Zabol: she was experiencing severe labour pains when he packed her, barely conscious, onto a tractor to the main road from where they hitched rides to the district hospital, the only health facility said to have remained open.

The 25-bed facility is just down the road from the district administrative offices, but the gates of the hospital were shut and the two joined the crowd of people waiting in vain. “It took us more than two full days to get to the hospital where we hoped for help. The hospital was closed. My wife gave birth in front of the locked gate. We now return without any treatment or vaccination of the baby.”

The NGO contracted by the Ministry of Public Health to deliver health services in Zabol are working closely with community elders and influential people in the province to convince the armed group to allow the health facilities to re-open.

*“All parties to the conflict must respect the inviolability of health facilities and personnel.”*

*“It took us more than two days to get to the hospital where we hoped for help. My wife gave birth in front of the locked gate.”*



Twitter handles to follow:  
 @WHOAfghanistan  
 @DavidLaiMD

## INCIDENTS IN 2018



194

Incidents



16

Aid workers killed



23

Aid workers wounded



46

Aid workers abducted



54

Incidents against health facilities and workers

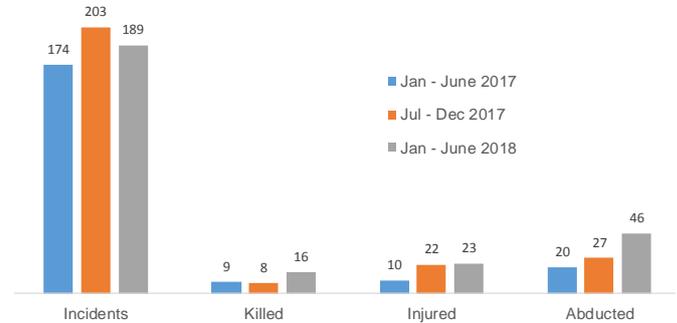
The Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) is the primary forum in country for operational coordination, analysis and discussion of humanitarian access issues. If your NGO wishes to participate in the HAG, contact [ridges@un.org](mailto:ridges@un.org) or [melody.knight@nrc.no](mailto:melody.knight@nrc.no).

Nearly half of the attacks on schools were related to the upcoming elections, as voter registration centres are located in educational facilities.

## Overall aid worker incidents stable in 2018

In June 2018, 25 incidents against aid workers, assets, activities and related to humanitarian access were recorded, less than half the 57 incidents recorded in the previous month. In June, 2 aid workers were killed, 2 abducted and 4 detained.

In the first six months of the year, a total of 194 incidents was recorded, 16 aid workers were killed, 23 injured, 46 abducted and 33 detained. The total number of incidents is one fifth higher than the three-year average of just less than 160 incidents per half-year. The number of killed, injured and abducted aid workers also shows a trend upwards in the past 18 months (see graph).



Comparison of incidents over the past 18 months. Source: OCHA

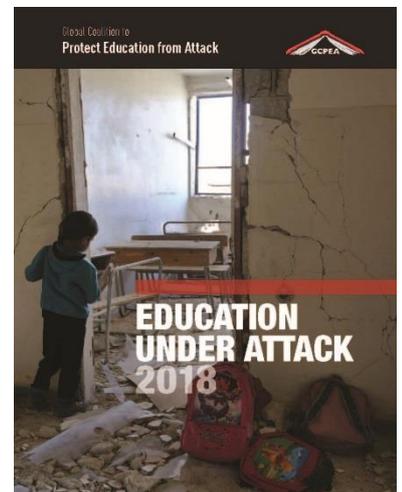
Focusing on the first six months of 2018, the number of incidents dropped in February, to climb month by month from February to May before it dropped to its lowest in whole of the year in June, possibly due to reduced humanitarian activities in the month of Ramadan and the unilateral ceasefires of the Government and the Taliban for the Eid celebrations.

The consistency in the numbers of incidents is a strong indicator that the Access Monitoring Framework (AMRF) introduced in 2017 has gained wide acceptance within the humanitarian community in Afghanistan and access constraints and security incidents are reliably being shared within the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) (see box).

## High number of attacks on schools

By end June, the total number of attacks on schools this year had reached 131, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Most of the attacks were reported from the Central and Eastern regions of the country. Nearly half of the attacks were related to the upcoming elections, as voter registration centres are located in educational facilities.

According to the latest report [Education Under Attack 2018](#) published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), Afghanistan counts amongst one of eight countries heavily affected by attacks on education and military use of schools from 2013 to 2017. Globally even more affected were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, Philippines, Turkey, Syria and Yemen.

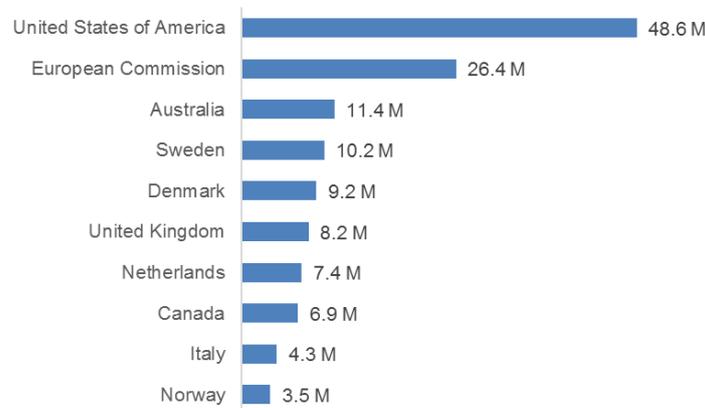


## Humanitarian Financing Update

OCHA's **Financial Tracking Service (FTS)** aims to present a complete picture of all international humanitarian funding flows. The system relies upon the commitments to the Grand Bargain from donors, UN agencies and implementing partners regarding improved transparency through the comprehensive and timely reporting to FTS on the funding allocated to partners in Afghanistan.

More: <https://fts.unocha.org/>

As of 24 July 2018, **OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS)** reported a total of US\$192.6 million total humanitarian funding for Afghanistan, of which \$160.3 million were reported against the **revised 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)** calling for \$546.6 million to assist 4.2 million people. More than halfway into the year, the HRP is currently funded with 29 per cent.



Ten donors have to date funded the 2018 HRP. The three biggest donors are the United States of America, the European Commission and the Government of Australia, followed by Australia, Sweden, Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Italy and Norway (see *graph*).

*“UN agencies work as one and coordinate closely with relevant authorities, in particular the ministries of agriculture and health.”*

## CHF allocates \$17 million for drought-response

On 25 June, the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)-Afghanistan under guidance of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, Toby Lanzer, **allocated \$17 million** to non-governmental organisations and UN agencies delivering life-saving aid to families affected by the drought.

The emergency assistance will include: cash for families to buy food on local markets; trucking of drinking water to villages and schools where fountains have dried up; and treatment of malnourished girls and boys. “UN agencies work as one and coordinate closely with relevant authorities, in particular the ministries of agriculture and health,” stressed Lanzer.

The CHF, backed by donors such as Qatar, Sweden and the United Kingdom, is a key source of quick funding and complements resources from other donors such as Japan, the United States and the European Commission.

Pledged funding for the CHF-Afghanistan in 2018 includes \$9 million from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), \$7.9 million from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), \$764,000 from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and \$400,000 from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), complimented by \$2 million for 2018 and 2019 from the newest donor to the CHF, the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD).

Twitter handles to follow:

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 @DFID\_UK  
 @Sida  
 @dfat  
 @SwissHumAidUnit  
 @swiss\_un  
 @qatar\_fund



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