

THE COST OF INACTION

AFGHANISTAN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

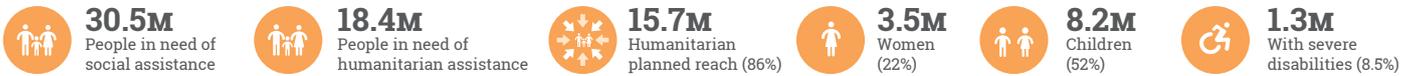
AS OF 25 MAY 2021



Photo: OCHA/Charlotte Cans

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.



CONFLICT FORCES THOUSANDS TO FLEE

500k people projected in 2021
Conflict has forcibly displaced more than 110,000 people across 29 provinces so far in 2021 with 500,000 people projected to flee over the year.

HALF OF CHILDREN U5 ACUTELY MALNOURISHED IN 2021

1 in 2 under-5 children & **1 in 4** pregnant & lactating women
27 out of 34 provinces are now within the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition, 10 of which are facing critical situations.

UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES FLOOD BACK TO AFGHANISTAN

654k people projected in 2021
Close to 445,000 undocumented people have returned to Afghanistan since the start of the year, surpassing the record number of returns during the same period last year.

CONSTRAINED OPERATING SPACE

620 access constraints
In the first four months of 2021, 11 aid workers were killed, 27 injured, and 36 abducted. Conflict and targeted attacks have seen the closure of life-saving humanitarian services.

NEW THREATS FURTHER COMPOUNDING NEEDS

13.2M in **25** provinces in urgent need over Spring
Drought-like conditions induced by La Niña weather patterns; a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic complicated by new variants; escalating conflict and high risk of flash floods are compounding already acute needs.

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY CRISIS

14.1M people in IPC3+
More than 35 per cent of the population is now facing emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity. Markets continue to function but prices for key commodities are well above pre-pandemic levels. Wheat production is expected to be down by 31 per cent. The next lean season is expected to be more intense and arrive earlier.

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



13%
FUNDED

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 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.



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.



Some 654,000 undocumented returnees to Afghanistan will not receive sufficient assistance. 100 per cent of the undocumented returnees present high levels of immediate need and require basic health and protection support upon arrival.



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.



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 **1.4 million women** will be left without safe places to receive comprehensive support. GBV needs have grown since the onset of the pandemic and specialised protection services, including clinical management of rape and psychosocial support are in high demand.



Without specialised protective services, more than **1.2 million children** will be more vulnerable to violence, separation from their families, risks of recruitment, severe psychosocial distress, child labour, early and forced marriages, and sexual exploitation.



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?

1

IMMEDIATE FUNDING

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

2

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.

3

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.