

Flash Update 1 – Fighting, displacement and civilian casualties in Southern Afghanistan (13 October 2020)

Key Highlights

- Fighting in southern Afghanistan, near Lashkargah city in Hilmand province, has displaced thousands of people and interrupted critical health services.
- Assessment teams have been deployed to assess the humanitarian impact of the situation.

Situation Overview:

Fighting between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and a non-state armed group (NSAG) that started on 11 October continues to intensify near Lashkargah city in Hilmand province. The most affected areas are Nahr-e-Saraj, Bolan, Babaje, Nad-e-Ali/Marja and Nawa-e-Barakzaiy districts in Hilmand province, while some parts of Maywand district in Kandahar have also been affected. The highway between Kandahar and Lashkargah has been inaccessible due to the presence of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

Anticipated Humanitarian Impact:

Local authorities report that some 35,000 people (around 5,000 households) have been displaced into Lashkargah city. Health facilities also report hundreds of casualties. Since 12 October, two humanitarian assessment teams have been working in areas of displacement to assess needs and have so far verified nearly 500 internally displaced people. Initial observations from assessment teams show that some IDPs may require immediate food, water and temporary spaces for living.

Electricity and telecommunication lines have been disrupted in some affected areas. This has affected people's ability to communicate and humanitarian partners' ability to conduct assessments. Health facilities have also been affected – either closed or operating in a reduced capacity (focusing on trauma services only). As a result, it is expected that some tens of thousands of people living in these areas will be deprived of access to critical health services.

Coordination:

The Operational Coordination Team (OCT) has so far deployed two joint needs assessment teams to assess the needs of the IDPs. The OCT is exploring the possibility of deploying more teams as needed. The Provincial Governor has advised ANDMA to proceed with purchasing food and NFIs for the 500 families verified as being displaced. A PDMC meeting will be held on 14 October. To address trauma needs, health partners have trauma kits able to serve up to 10,000 people for three months. Other partners are mobilising internal resource and response capacity to meet new needs created by these clashes and overcome technical and access related challenges delaying needs assessments.