A single mother displaced by conflict gets help to survive the winter

Contribution from Afghanaid

Sayed Bibi is a single mother and raising three young children on her own. Unable to earn a living, life for has been particularly difficult. “My husband went to Iran to help us establish a better life, but I have not heard from him since,” she said.

The situation for her and her family worsened further when they were forced to flee their home as a result of escalating conflict. Over 437,000 people were displaced across Afghanistan during 2019 alone, often settling in communities already struggling with poverty and the lasting effects of drought or other natural disasters.

“I couldn’t heat our room. My children cried from being so cold, but there was nothing I could do. We didn’t have anyone to help us.”
- Sayed Bibi, a single mother displaced in Ghor province.

Much of Afghanistan experiences extreme heat in the summer months and the winters can be punishing, particularly where Sayed Bibi now lives in a remote village in Ghor Province, where the temperature can dip to -20°C. “I couldn’t heat our room. My children cried from being so cold, but there was nothing I could do. We didn’t have anyone to help us,” she recalled.
Sayed Bibi received 15,720AFN (approximately US$205) as part of Afghanaid’s emergency response. “I used this money to buy firewood for my heater and stove and now my children are warm and safe,” explained Sayed Bibi. “This is such a relief and I am so grateful for this help,” she added.

For families on the move with very few supplies, winter can be lethal. As increasingly harsh and erratic weather has become the norm with a changing climate, vulnerable families such as Sayed Bibi’s are at most risk.

Last quarter Afghanaid, in coordination with the provincial and local authorities, distributed cash assistance to 862 vulnerable and newly displaced families, prioritising families headed by women, people with disabilities and the elderly. This assistance, funded by the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, was distributed in two instalments: the first instalment was to purchase gas cylinders or heaters; and the second instalment was to be distributed after confirmation that the targeted families have gas cylinders or heaters in their homes. The organisation is also providing long-term support to help displaced families get back on their feet.

A determined teacher’s mission to get children back in school

Contribution from Swedish Committee for Afghanistan

Najibullah Malakzai is a 30 year old teacher Community Based School class in his home village of Babukhail village in Tangi valley, Wardak province. He believed he can help his students learn by making lessons more engaging. “If we don’t make lessons interesting, the lessons will not reach their hearts and brains,” he said. “Children’s brains are very active, always searching to find new and interesting ideas to absorb and retain. I apply this philosophy to encourage and motivate students, forgoing more traditional methods of teaching that can discourage students and result in them leaving school.”

School teacher Malakzai bought 15 metres of cloth with his own funds to. With the help of his wife and brothers, they sewed school bags for all his students, so that the children could carry their books and notebooks to school.

Mr. Malakzai is also an advocate for girls’ education. He convinced people in his village to send their daughters to the Community Based School class. Now 62 girls
attend his class, an astonishing accomplishment in the remote area. “At first, people did not show any interest, but as time passed, people became enthusiastic about enrolling their daughters. A time came when the number of students increased by too much. There are 62 girls that have been officially registered and accepted by SCA, but there are 18 other female students that are not registered but are ready to come to class,” said Mr. Malakzai.

Mr. Malakzai bought 15 metres of cloth with his own funds. With the help of his wife and brothers, they sewed school bags for all his students, so that the children could carry their books and notebooks to school.

Mr. Malakzai said that Afghanistan needs more dedication and hard work, and proudly stated that he has not taken a single day off during the entire educational year. “All Afghan parents should send their children to schools, as we can build our country through education.”

The SCA Wardak Regional Management Office (WRMO) implementing education program in Wardak and Bamyan provinces, supports 553 Community-Based Education classes in 125 locations have, in which some 14,000 students (10,830 girls and 3,678 boys) are provided with an education and 591 teachers are employed.

Small poultry farms empower women

“*We were in a bad state. There was no money to spend on food or my children’s education and my daughter even had to leave school, but now I have my own poultry farm and can afford to send my daughter to school again.*”

- Sabri, a small poultry farmer in Bamyan.

Contribution from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

Sabri is 27 years old and the mother of three children, living in Sayed Abad village, Bamyan Province. She guides us to a room in her modest house where her guests are welcomed with humble furnishings, but Sabri looks visibly pleased when she shows us her savings of 15,000 AFN (US $190) from selling eggs. She wants to establish a shop in Bamyan to meet the city’s demand for chickens and eggs. “This is my future goal,” said Sabri.

Not long ago, Sabri’s 9-year-old daughter was forced to leave school because they could no longer afford to keep her in school. Sabri’s husband works as a labourer and only earns 3,500 AFN ($45) per month which is not sufficient to meet the family’s needs.

In 2018, Sabri was selected as to participate in the Boost Alternative Development Initiatives through Licit Livelihoods (BADILL) project which is being implemented by the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan with financial support of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Bamyan.

Through the project, Sabri was provided with 35 young hens, poultry feed and other supplies, in addition to training on poultry farm management. With her newly gained skills, she was able to increase the number of chickens to 50 while selling about 750 eggs per month, earning 4,500 AFN ($60).

Lack of resources and opportunities for women in Bamyan are among the greatest barriers to getting out of poverty. “I was not able to help my family; we were in a bad state. There was no money to spend on food or my children’s education and my daughter even had to leave school, but now I have my own poultry farm and can afford to send my daughter to school again,” said Sabri.
Sabri is one of hundreds of beneficiaries of UNODC’s BADILL Programme in Afghanistan. The project aims to empower women with economic opportunities by providing income generating opportunities for women while preventing involvement in illicit crop cultivation and related activities.

Emergency livelihoods assistance strengthens agriculture development in Kandahar

Contribution by FAO

Azizullah 38, is a farmer who lives in Arhad village in Arghandab district, Kandahar province. Like many vulnerable farmers, Azizullah was affected by drought in 2018 and floods in 2019. “I was not able to get the best out of my land because of the lack of improved seeds and inputs,” said Azizullah.

According to the 2019 Seasonal Food Security Assessment, nearly 75 per cent of farmers in Kandahar had no access to wheat seed for last autumn's cultivation. In addition, almost all the farmers said that certified seeds were not available on the market.

Smallholder farmers in marginal areas of Kandahar are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, food insecurity and seed insecurity, Declining soil fertility, increased use of marginal and fragile lands, and frequency of drought and floods are also contributing factors. Escalating input costs and unstable market conditions are also severely affecting profitability and sustainability.

Azizullah and other vulnerable farmers in Kandahar were assisted with certified wheat seeds, fertilizer and training on new agriculture practices through a project funded by the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and implemented by FAO which helped farmers get back to their fields and resume their farming-based livelihoods activities.

“The training enabled us to learn about the selection of wheat seeds, harvest and post-harvest handling of wheat and insect control. I applied the training to my land, and it worked well,” said Azizullah. “I will also share this knowledge with other farmers who were not present at the training so that they too can apply it to their land,” he added.

The improved wheat seeds that Azizullah received from FAO were planted on 2 Jerib (0.4 hectares) of land. He believes that he will get good harvest this year, which is estimated to be in June 2020. Azizullah expects he will reap 900 to1000 kilos of wheat out of his 2 Jerib of cultivated land.

The project is providing emergency livelihoods assistance to more than 100,000 drought and flood affected farming families in 16 of the most food insecure provinces of Afghanistan.

For further information, please contact:
Linda Tom, Public Information Officer, OCHA Afghanistan, toml@un.org, Cell: +93 79300 11 10

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