

HIGHLIGHTS

- Four aid workers from Save the Children were killed in an attack on the NGO's office in Jalalabad.
- Thousands of Kuchi families are unable to cross the border into Pakistan with their livestock.
- More than two million people live in informal settlement. The vast majority of has not enough to eat.
- The Afghan health care system has achieved remarkable progress over the past years, despite deepening conflict.
- The number of access-related and aid worker incidents in 2017 was nearly double that of 2016.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING 1% FUNDED

430 million
requested (US\$)

2.5 million
Received (US\$)

<http://fts.unocha.org>
by 13 February 2018



Security forces engaged the attackers in Jalalabad in a firefight that lasted several hours. Photo: Tolo News

Attack on Save the Children office in Jalalabad

On 24 January, members of an armed group attacked the office of the NGO Save the Children (SCI) in Jalalabad, Nangarhar. The first attacker detonated a vehicle carrying explosives at the gate of the compound, followed by several other attackers storming the compound firing automatic weapons.

Afghan National Security Forces responded to the incident and engaged the attackers in a firefight that lasted for several hours. All attackers were killed, according to the authorities. The Islamic State of Khorasan subsequently claimed responsibility for the attack.

In total, four members of the SCI-team were killed and as many wounded. Three civilian bystanders also lost their lives in the attack, and more than 30 people were injured, including five children.

Dozens of SCI staff members sheltered in the bunker of the building's basement, until security forces had cleared the compound.

Following the attack, SCI temporarily suspended all activities in Afghanistan.

During the fighting, a building in the neighbouring compound belonging to the NGO Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) caught fire. All SCA staff members had been able to evacuate the building before the blaze.



During the fighting, a building of SCA in the neighbouring compound caught fire. Photo: SCA

Worldwide condemnation of the attack on a humanitarian NGO

"I am appalled and outraged by this attack (...). Humanitarian workers are not a target," said Adele Khodr, the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan [in a statement](#) the same day. "I renew our calls on all parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and humanitarian workers."

The same sentiments were reflected in a [statement by the head of the UN in Afghanistan](#), Tadamichi Yamamoto, and a [statement of the UN Secretary General](#), António Guterres: "Humanitarian organizations provide life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable men, women and children in Afghanistan. Aid workers, and their premises and assets, should never be a target."

All 67 national and international NGOs members of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) equally condemned the "atrocious attack" in the strongest terms and warned that "any attack, intimidation, violence or threat against aid workers will ultimately result in delays in implementation of programmes and will cause negative impact on the welfare of the people of Afghanistan".

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WE REMAIN
STRONG FOR
CHILDREN
#NotATarget

Save the Children



“We want to stay. We want to deliver the assistance programmes the communities require.”

Humanitarian community committed to stay and deliver

SCI will continue to work in the country: “Our humanitarian work in Afghanistan reaches almost 1.4 million children. We remain committed to resuming our operations and life-saving work as quickly as possible, as soon as we can be assured that it is safe to do so,” the NGO said in statement issued the evening of the attack.

“What happened on 24 January was a shock and a disgrace. But it happened,” said Toby Lanzer, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, in a recent interview with Tolo News. “Everybody is taking a moment to stand back and evaluate the situation.”

“We want to stay. We want to deliver assistance to the communities,” he said. “I have met with the country directors of the big NGOs and humanitarian UN Agencies and collectively we feel a very strong affiliation with the people of Afghanistan and the institutions of this country,” he added.

The Humanitarian Coordinator further stressed the importance of building capacities amongst Afghans and Afghan institutions, so that management, leadership, ownership and delivery of basic services can increasingly be taken on by national aid workers and authorities.



HC Toby Lanzer talking about the attack in Jalalabad with Tolo News. Photo: OCHA / Kropf

Thousands of Kuchi families stranded in Khost

Action contre la Faim (ACF) and Johanniter contributed to this article

Thousands of nomadic Kuchi families are [stranded in Khost Province](#) and unable to cross into Pakistan as the border is closed. The families are scattered across Khost (Matun), Gurbuz and Jajimaydan districts, according to local authorities who say their number is between 2,000 to 2,500 families or up to 17,000 people. The estimated numbers shared by humanitarian partners are substantially higher.

Khost province is part of the route of the Kuchi nomads moving from cold areas in provinces like Ghazni, Wardak, Logar and Paktya into northern Pakistan during the winter months. This year, after reaching Khost, the Kuchis found the border closed by Pakistan and unable to move on.

With insufficient grazing land and unused to the cold temperatures, animals have fallen ill or died and healthy animals had to be sold below value on local markets to survive, according to ACF and Johanniter.

As a result, Kuchi families who rely on dairy products and wool from their animals for livelihoods, cannot provide for themselves. Livelihood opportunities in the area are few and wages low, as the day labour market is oversaturated with men from both local and displaced communities. Psychological pressure on the Kuchi families is mounting, too, according to humanitarian partners, as they live under permanent risk of being evicted from the public land that they live on and their animals graze.

The NGO Afghanistan Center for Training and Development (ACTD) is providing emergency health services via mobile clinics in three districts, but most families lack adequate winter shelter and firewood, drinking water and food for families and livestock, according to partners. Some of the families sheltering close to the border are however inaccessible for humanitarian workers.



The transitory route of nomadic Kuchi families into northern Pakistan is blocked, leaving thousands of them stranded in Khost Province. Photo: Johanniter / Vijay Raghavan

With insufficient grazing land and unused to the cold temperatures, animals have increasingly fallen ill or died.

The day labour market is oversaturated with men from both local and displaced communities.

Unmet needs in informal settlements

REACH contributed to this article, CHF-Afghanistan financed the REACH study

Across Afghanistan, an estimated 2.2 million people from displaced, returnee and refugee families live in more than 1,600 informal settlements – often clusters of mud-brick constructions or tents on private or public land with little or no access to services. The main pull factors of these settlements are the security and the prospect of jobs and livelihoods offered by their mostly urban settings.

The level of hygiene in informal settlements is often dismal and local residents will not allow adults from the settlements to enter the mosques or their children to go into the schools, according to humanitarian partners working in the settlements.

Women and girls especially vulnerable, faced with perceived insecurity

While elevated vulnerability of families living in these conditions comes with no surprise, a Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment conducted by the REACH initiative shows the extent of needs across all sectors and highlights some stark differences across the regions.

The main priority for two fifths of all surveyed households is better and less crowded shelter: every room will be occupied by an average of five people. Nearly four fifths of all surveyed households further have no space reserved for women and girls.

“There is no safe space for women because [our] houses do not have enough room,” said one woman in a focus group discussion in Paktya. “Some houses do have space for women, but they are not safe outside in the settlement,” a man in Kabul noted.

Across all informal settlements, nearly three quarters of all households include at least one breastfeeding woman, and more than one quarter count at least one pregnant woman. Further, more than two fifths of these households care for at least one chronically ill family member.

Households with up to double the average family size used to calculate assistance

Based on the REACH data, the average number of people living in one household in an informal settlement is 12 – nearly double the national average of seven people per family that is often used for humanitarian programming in Afghanistan and for which aid delivery is calculated. Overall, most households count between five and 20 people.

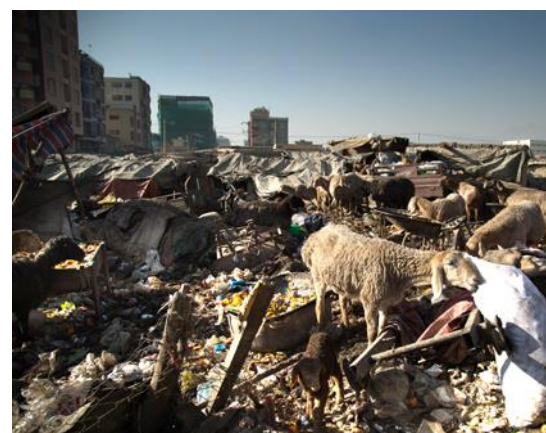
Looking across the country, the average number of people per family in the Western Region is seven people, while in the Eastern Region the average was 14 people. With more than 120,000 people displaced in Nangarhar Province since the beginning of last year, more than one quarter of all residents of informal settlements have been recently displaced.

In the Western Region, the situation is reversed with nearly three quarters of the residents living in prolonged displacement.

This shows how important durable solutions for communities in prolonged displacement are, as displaced families in Afghanistan are considered only once for humanitarian assistance within six months of their initial displacement.

The level hygiene in informal settlements is often dismal and local residents will not allow adults from the settlements to enter the mosques or their children to go into the schools.

“There is no safe space for women because [our] houses do not have enough room.”



The level hygiene in informal settlements is often dismal and families are forced to share the space with their animals, amidst trash and faeces. Photo: IOM / Eva Schwörer

The fieldwork for the **Joint REACH Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment in informal settlements** was conducted in August 2017 in 19 provinces selected by the Clusters based on their relevance for humanitarian programming.

The CHF-Afghanistan financed the study to inform the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

More than 7,000 household-level surveys were then conducted across nearly 370 informal settlements.

The results can be found here:

Food Security
<http://bit.ly/2n0AA73>
WASH/ESNFI
<http://bit.ly/2G50HCl>



2.2 million displaced people are living in 1,600 informal settlements across the country. Photo: REACH

Two thirds of all families in informal settlements anticipate imminent eviction.

Overall, 84 per cent of all households in informal settlements are severely food insecure.

In some cases, residents chose open defecation over the use of dirty latrines, despite their availability.

Fragile legal status and constant fear over imminent eviction

Half of all surveyed households rely on either verbal permission or customary tenure for living in an informal settlement and two thirds of all households surveyed say they anticipate imminent eviction.

The lack of a Tazkera – the main Afghan identity document – further perpetuates the vulnerability of households. Some four per cent of all surveyed households had no Tazkera-owning adults, making access to services, employment and assistance more difficult.

The proportion of households without a Tazkera rose to 17 per cent in the Western Region, indicating significant vulnerability. Female-headed households were also significantly more likely to exhibit this vulnerability, the lack of a Tazkera affecting 18 per cent compared to only ten per cent of male-headed households.

Food insecurity and not enough clean water

Only five per cent of all households in informal settlement reach an acceptable food consumption, according to the REACH research, with lack of food peaking in the Western Region.

Overall, 84 per cent of displaced informal settlement households are severely food insecure. Food insecurity correlates with family size: The bigger the household, the more likely the family members are food insecure.

Between 9 and 38 per cent of all households have insufficient access to drinking water. Most of these households rely on public and private hand pumps, often provided by humanitarian organisations.



Children living in informal settlements often lack basic commodities for survival like shoes or sufficient winter clothing.
Photo: IOM / Eva Schwörer

Lack of gender segregated latrines and open defecation

Some 15 per cent of the households in informal settlements were found to resort to open defecation. “We have no facilities for men and women. People are so poor they cannot provide sanitation facilities for anyone at all”, said one man from Nangarhar.

In some cases, residents chose open defecation over the use of dirty latrines, despite their availability. “Latrines have very bad smells, bringing mosquitos and causing malaria in the settlement,” one man remarked.

Refugees from Pakistan amongst the most vulnerable

An extremely vulnerable segment of people living in informal settlement are the estimated more than 1,000 refugee households, mostly from Pakistan, that have settled in the South Eastern Region. Some 91 per cent of all these households experience severe food insecurity, their settlements are furthest from nearest markets (more than 4 kilometres) and they are the least likely to have an adequate amount of water to meet their household needs.

Refugee households were also the most likely group to have received some level of assistance, often however limiting itself to basic hygiene supplies, indicating that they may be in need of targeted durable solutions-based interventions rather than short-term humanitarian assistance. Female-headed refugee households are also less likely to be registered with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Despite health progress, SDGs remain distant

Under-five child mortality dropped from 257 dead children per 1,000 live births in the year 2000 to 55 in 2015.

The Afghan health care system has achieved remarkable progress over the past years, despite ongoing conflict and fragility, according to data analysed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The modern Afghan health care system led by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and financed by international donors was introduced 15 years ago with the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) (see *Humanitarian Bulletin 65, June 2017*).

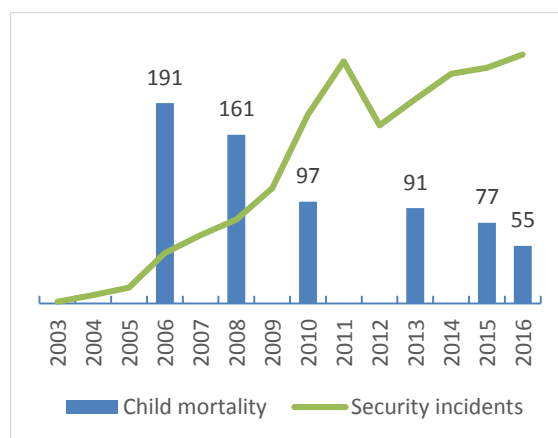
Strong progress has been made regarding under-five child mortality: the indicator dropped from 257 dead children per 1,000 live births – more than one quarter – in the year 2000 to 55 in 2015. This is however still far from the health targets of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) that aim for all countries to reduce the rate of under-five mortality to at least to 25 per 1,000 by 2030.

More girls and boys vaccinated, fewer mothers die during delivery

Even though less than 60 per cent of all children were fully immunised in 2015, progress has been made in some areas, notably in regards to measles vaccination coverage that went from 24 to 70 per cent.

The trend in maternal mortality has also shown steady progress and dropped from 1,100 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to around 400 in 2015. This is due to increased availability and use of antenatal care and institutional delivery as well as skilled birth attendance. Despite the improvements, the current state is still extremely high and far away from the SDG standard of 210 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

Nevertheless, this progress is remarkable notably against the backdrop of a decade of growing conflict with incidents hitting a record high in the past years (see *graph*).



Despite a constant rise of conflict incidents, child mortality in Afghanistan has dropped remarkably within one decade. Source: WHO, conflict incidents not to scale.

The trend in maternal mortality has also shown steady progress and dropped from 1,100 maternal deaths to 400 per 100,000 live births in five years.

Number of trauma cases increased by more than one quarter from 2016 to 2017

While some important public health indicators show progress, war surgery and trauma care are not keeping up. Trauma care outside of regional hospitals is not part of the regular services provided by the MoPH.

Last year, health partners reported more than 48,637 trauma cases, a 28 per cent increase on those recorded in 2016. In December 2017, more than 100 patients were treated every day in First Aid Trauma Posts run by partners of the Health Cluster in rural areas.

Even in the capital Kabul, public health facilities alone cannot cope with mass casualty situations: After the recent Kabul ambulance bombing in January, many of the victims were rushed to the hospital in the centre of the city run by the Italian NGO EMERGENCY and WHO provided seven trauma kits to health facilities to cope with the injured. With the number of trauma cases likely to increase further in the coming months, it is difficult to imagine the already overwhelmed health system cope with the caseloads.

Overstretched health services in the Eastern Region

Already under massive strain are the health services in the Eastern Region, due to conflict displacement and the arrival of more than 600,000 Afghan returnees from Pakistan since mid-2016 (see *Humanitarian Bulletin 68, September 2017*). Every week, partners of the Health Cluster provide consultations to more than 8,000 displaced people or returnees. Other partners bringing some relief to the public health system by running additional clinics or reaching people via mobile teams, like in Khogyani district from where more than 60,000 people had been displaced end of last year.

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Launch of the Humanitarian Response Plan

“The HRP will serve to provide timely, life-saving assistance to families in need of urgent support across the country.”

On 15 January, the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Abdullah Abdullah and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), Toby Lanzer, jointly launched the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2018 – 2021 in Kabul.

With more than three million girls, women, boys and men in Afghanistan in need of life-saving assistance due to current or very recent man-made and natural disasters, the humanitarian community is asking for US\$430 million from international donors (see *Bulletin No 71, December 2017*).



Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah at the launch of the HRP 2018 – 2021. Photo: CE press office

More than two million people were directly affected by conflict in Afghanistan

“The international community has proven its continued commitment to the people of Afghanistan with generous humanitarian funding in 2017,” said Abdullah Abdullah. “The Humanitarian Response Plan launched today will serve to provide timely, life-saving assistance to families in emergency shelters or in need of urgent support across the country.”

Last year, armed clashes were the highest in a decade and civilian casualties remained near record levels. More than two million people were directly affected by the conflict, 448,000 of whom had to flee their homes.

“I remember their names and faces: Boys who were wounded by an improvised explosive device when they helped herding goat, girls and women I met at clinics. People are suffering in Afghanistan. That is why we are here,” said Toby Lanzer.



Government officials, donors, diplomats, humanitarian partners and journalists attended the HRP launch. Photo: OCHA/Kropf

“I call on international donors to stand by 2.8 million people whose lives have been ruined by conflict or natural disaster and to help people returning to Afghanistan,” the Humanitarian Coordinator added.

The joint response plan puts forward activities of more than 150 humanitarian partners - national and international humanitarian NGOs and United Nations entities - delivering assistance to families and communities in need across the country.

Bringing humanitarian and development action closer to reach more people

“Sweden welcomes the (...) particular focus on acute humanitarian needs, hence stressing the principal humanitarian mandate of ‘saving lives’,” said Ms. Mette Sunnergren, Head of Development Cooperation Section of the Embassy of Sweden in Afghanistan.

“Sweden strongly supports the efforts of the humanitarian community in reaching out to the Government of Afghanistan and to development partners in a joint effort to reach the approximately 8.7 million people in need because of chronic issues, such as long-standing insecurity, poverty or climate change.”

Adding the perspectives of an Afghan woman helping other Afghans, Ms. Palwasha Hassan, Executive Director of Afghan Women’s Education Centre (AWEC) and chairperson of the ACBAR steering committee said: “Humanitarian assistance needs to prioritise girls and women across the country by implementing gender sensitive measures, also reaching out to children via education and nutrition.”

The Afghanistan HRP is one of more than two dozen such plans launched in 2018, requesting a total of US\$22.58 billion to assist 90.9 million people globally.

The plans ensure joint humanitarian action in crises caused by conflict or natural disasters and are the humanitarian community’s main tool to raise funding with donors and ensure accountability towards the people served and donors.

“Sweden strongly supports the efforts of the humanitarian community reaching out to the Government and to development partners.”

“Humanitarian assistance needs to prioritise girls and women across the country by implementing gender sensitive measures.”

Humanitarian access and aid worker incidents

INCIDENTS FROM JAN TO DEC 2017



388
Incidents



21
Aid workers killed



33
Aid workers wounded



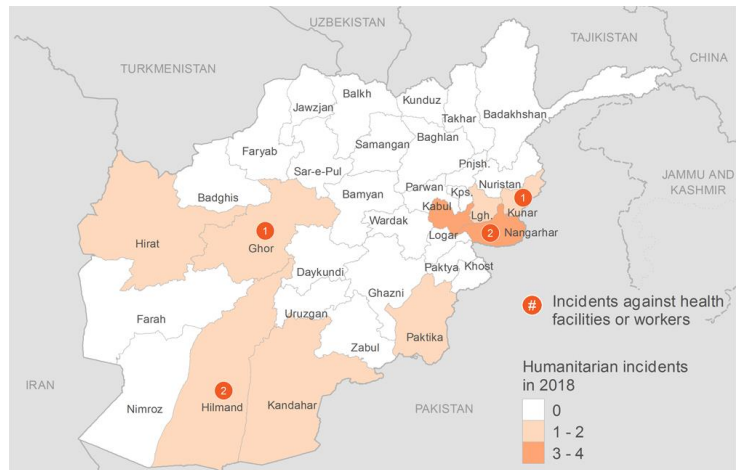
149
Aid workers abducted



143
Incidents against health facilities and workers

In January 2018, 22 incidents against aid workers, assets, activities and related to humanitarian access were recorded, compared to 17 incidents reported in December of last year.

Six aid workers were killed, as many injured and ten kidnapped. Four incidents were recorded against health facilities or health workers (see map on next page).



Incidents against health facilities and health workers in 2018. Source: OCHA, Health Cluster

Number of incidents doubled in 2017 compared to the previous year

The total number of incidents in 2017 had to be adjusted up from 377 reported at the end of last year to 388 as more information on incidents became available during the past weeks. The 388 incidents are nearly double the 200 incidents reported in 2016.

The higher number can be attributed partly to the protracted nature of the conflict in certain areas of the country as well as to improved reporting. Last year, 21 aid workers were killed, 33 injured and 149 abducted.

Humanitarian Financing Update

The Humanitarian Coordinator, Toby Lanzer, has called on the international donor community to contribute towards the \$430 million funding requirement in order for NGO and UN agencies to provide timely and crucial humanitarian aid and protection in 2018 to 2.8 million people affected by acute crises.

Already in January 2018, the Government of the United States has heard the call and contributed \$2.5 million towards UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene activities, as reported on OCHA's [Financial Tracking Service](#) (FTS) (see box for details).

The 2018 – 2021 HRP prioritises humanitarian action for families and communities who are survivors of immediate conflict, forced to move or struck by a recent natural disaster.

The plan reflects efforts to better distinguish between acute humanitarian needs arising from a sudden shock, and chronic needs generated from years of underdevelopment and poverty.

Last year's response plan calling for \$409 million received \$317.5 million or 78 per cent of the funding request, making the Afghanistan HRP the world's second best funded response plan.

OCHA's [Financial Tracking Service](#) (FTS) aims to present a complete picture of all international humanitarian funding flows (<https://fts.unocha.org>).

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.

In 2018, the FTS team continues their work with OCHA Afghanistan to reconcile all 2017 transactions.

The United States were the first donor in 2018 to transfer funding towards activities in the HRP.

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