

HIGHLIGHTS

- Despite increased efforts of humanitarian partners, living conditions for families displaced by the drought remain harsh.
- Families displaced by the drought have consumed their food assistance and negative coping mechanisms like marrying off girls are on the rise.
- The attack on Ghazni City in August trapped thousands of families in their homes during days of heavy fighting.
- The UN officially launched [Awaaz Afghanistan](#), the first inter-agency nationwide call centre that people in need can reach toll-free by dialling 4-1-0.
- The number of 25 aid workers killed in 2018 has surpassed the total figure of 2017, when 21 aid workers were killed in the line of duty.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING 34% FUNDED

546.6 million
requested (US\$)

185.7 million
Received (US\$)

<http://fts.unocha.org>
by 18 October 2018



The drought in Afghanistan makes water scarce across the country, like here in Badghis. Photo: World Vision

In this issue

[Drought-response in high gear P.1](#)

[Child marriages on the rise P.2](#)

[Call centre for families in need P.4](#)

[Donor Dialogue: Switzerland P.5](#)

Drought response reaches 1.2 million people

In the past six months, the drought which has gripped large parts of the country displaced more than 260,000 people in Badghis, Daykundi, Hirat, Ghor provinces. Most of the displaced families currently live in displacement sites in Hirat City, Hirat, and in displacement sites scattered in and around the provincial capital of Badghis, Qala-e-Naw.

Early on, humanitarian partners started daily water trucking to the sites and food distributions and more recently assistance has been ramped up across all sectors, including distribution of tents and emergency shelter, provision of sanitation and nutrition services, deploying mobile health teams and ensuring referral to health facilities. Child friendly spaces are being put up in the sites, as well as safe learning spaces for students.

To get a better understanding of the population movements and to facilitate the access to assistance, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) established six [flow monitoring posts](#) on major highways connecting Hirat City to the rural areas and the drought affected provinces of Badghis and Ghor in September. Newly displaced families passing by these posts are issued with a registration card and given relevant information on where to request assistance.

Displaced families ate all food, have not found any opportunities to gain a living

Despite the efforts, living conditions for the displaced families in the two cities remain harsh and more needs to be done: "The impact of the ongoing drought spans the north and west of the country leaving communities in deep distress," said Toby Lanzer, Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan. "The drought has forced a quarter of a million people from their land, and for the displaced, the need for shelter is critical as winter approaches."



Toby Lanzer, Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, on Al Jazeera during his visit to Qala-e-Naw.

The biggest concern voiced by representatives of the displaced families at a community engagement workshop in Hirat City in September was food: both the families who had received cash for food or in-kind food rations since they arrived in Hirat City, report that they have since ran out of food. Many of the families who received cash to buy food, paid debts or for health services, or bought material for their makeshift shelters.

Most of the families have not been able to find livelihood opportunities, other than sending children to work, beg or collect trash and women to clean or wash clothes for households in the city, they say. With the little money they make, the families maintain a diet of bread and tea and are unable to buy fruit, vegetables or meat.

According to the discussions, most displaced families are satisfied with the amount and regularity of drinking water on the sites and the hygiene kits they received. There are growing concerns amongst the displaced families, however, regarding the legal tenure of them residing both on Government owned and private land and increased needs of assistance in the coming winter months.



More than three quarters of the food assistance reached people in rural areas, where families depending on agriculture are struggling due to the drought.

Aid both in displacement sites and areas of origin to avoid creating pull factors

Of the 2.2 million people most vulnerable and affected by the drought, humanitarian partners prioritised 1.9 million girls, boys, women and men for assistance from August until end of October. By beginning of October, some 1.2 million people had received some kind of humanitarian assistance, including more than 600,000 people who had received cash, food or livelihood support, according to the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster.



Families gather after a distribution of food by WFP in a displacement site close to Qala-e-Naw, Badghis. Photo: OCHA/ Pazhman

More than three quarters of the food assistance reached people in rural areas, where families depending on agriculture are struggling due to the drought. The approach of delivering assistance both in urban displacement sites and in rural areas of origin, decreases the creation of pull factors that can arise from distributions or assistance being delivered in specific areas, only, and can help families staying in their rural homes.

International donors show solidarity with drought-affected communities

In May, the humanitarian community in Afghanistan published the [revised Humanitarian Response Plan](#) to include activities responding to the drought, seeking US\$117 million of additional funding. According to funding reported on [OCHA's Financial Tracking Service \(FTS\)](#), some \$45 million have been received by partners to date and another \$43 million are pledged in response to the drought, including from the CERF and AHF (see [article in funding section](#)). In addition, in October, the European Commission [announced](#) €20 million (\$23 million) in emergency aid to Afghanistan due to the drought.

Families see only option marrying off girls

"If I found a good man, I would marry her off. If I don't receive any assistance I will [have no choice]."

Badro and her family of five left their village in Badghis Province earlier this year after the harvest failed, their animals died and water wells dried up. "At one time we had a real home and a barn full of sheep; but [we lost everything]," Badro [told colleagues from World Vision](#) who visited her in a displacement site in Hirat City.

Coming to Hirat didn't help the family however, in fact, their situation worsened. Her only son went to Iran three months ago to find work. Since, Badro has not heard from him and her voice tightens when she says that she doesn't know whether he is alive or dead. With the decline of the economy in Iran, the plummeting of the Iranian currency and the voluntary returns and deportation of more than half a million Afghan citizens from Iran this year, migration to Iran as a traditional coping mechanism of poor families in Afghanistan is increasingly failing.

Many families who moved to Hirat borrowed money, either to pay for transport, food or health services, and increasingly, they need to resort to negative coping mechanisms like sending children to work or marrying off girls, an illegal but prevalent practice in Afghanistan. Badro, too, is considering marrying off her youngest grandchild, 13-year-old Anisa. "If I found a good man, I would marry her off," Badro says. "If I don't receive any assistance I will [have no choice]. That [would be better] for her and for us too."



Anisa, on the left, is about to be married off if her family does not receive any assistance/support. Photo: World Vision

"Life has never been easy for these people, but they had enough to survive. Because of this drought, that is no longer the case. Normal concerns have now turned to utter desperation."

"Life has never been easy for these people in some of the most remote and insecure areas of Afghanistan, but they had enough to survive. Because of this drought, that is no longer the case. Normal concerns have now turned to utter desperation," said Jim Alexander, Country Director of World Vision Afghanistan.

Seven mobile child protection teams working on the displacement sites in Hirat and Badghis to identify at-risk children and assist them with safe referrals for specialised assistance. According to the Child Protection Sub-Cluster, out of some 300 cases assisted, child marriage was one of the most prevalent issues affecting children, disproportionately girls, and many cases of child marriage go unreported.

Civilians trapped during fighting in Ghazni City

The public hospital was overwhelmed by the number of patients being brought in, remained however operational throughout the fighting.

On 10 August 2018, Taliban launched an attack on Ghazni City, Ghazni, taking control of the locality straddling the highway connecting Kabul with Kandahar. After three days, Afghan military forces dislodged the fighters who gradually retreated from the city. To date, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) **verified a total of 210 civilian casualties** - 69 deaths and 141 injured - from 10 to 15 August.

The first day of fighting, telecommunications networks went down, as well as the water and electricity supply. The public hospital was overwhelmed by the number of patients being brought in, remained however operational throughout the fighting. Once the fighting subsided, aid organisations including the World Health Organization (WHO) were able to resupply the hospital and evacuate patients in serious conditions from the city.

During the heavy fighting, families were forced to take shelter in their houses, unable to leave their homes, even to get water from wells and fountains. Food ran low as shops and markets were closed. Once fighting eased, families moved to surrounding villages for safety.

Humanitarian partners support the hospital, distribute food and cleared mines

A joint mission by the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) and OCHA reached the city on 19 August via road from Kabul and OCHA held the first coordination meetings with NGOs who had been present in the city before the fighting. Partners started rapid needs assessments while the fighting moved to the outskirts of the city.

Within days after the fighting ended, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) delivered nutritional supplies, midwifery kits and clean delivery and new born kits to the health authorities, as well as chlorine to flush the water system. In total, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food for one month to nearly 33,000 people temporarily displaced from their homes in Ghazni City.

Mine action teams, partners of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), surveyed the city and surrounding villages and removed more than 100 explosive remnants of war and munitions. More than 8,000 residents, including girls and boys, participated in mine risk education sessions after the attack on Ghazni.



Mine action teams surveyed the city after the fighting and removed more than 100 explosive remnants of war and munitions. Photo: UNMAS

UNICEF delivered nutritional and medical supplies as well as chlorine to flush the water system and WFP distributed food for one month to nearly 33,000 people.

Heads of UNHCR and OCHA visit Afghanistan

In September, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, visited Afghanistan and Pakistan on a joint mission.

In Kabul, they met President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and other senior government officials, as well as donors, development and humanitarian partners, UN agencies, NGOs, and families affected by the conflict.

At the end of their visit, they **stressed that Afghanistan now more than ever needs the support of the international community**, as it takes steps to pursue peace and stability, and to link humanitarian action to broader development efforts. They further called on donors to urgently increase and sustain support for the humanitarian response in Afghanistan, including to find durable solutions for millions of people caught up in the complex and rapidly evolving displacement crisis.



Mark Lowcock, Filippo Grandi and Toby Lanzer (right to left) interacting with elders from a community of displaced and returnee families. Photo: OCHA/Kropf

Get the full coverage of the joint UNHCR-OCHA mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan here:

In Afghanistan, UN refugee and relief chiefs call for urgent increase in international support <https://goo.gl/Mh8HkA>

Afghan refugees share hopes and fears with UN refugee and relief chiefs <https://goo.gl/6dxH2Q>

Going home after almost 40 years away <https://goo.gl/Jit8J3> (Video)

Afghans need support to rebuild their country <https://goo.gl/JvKU91> (Video)

"The simple act of asking a question can tell us a great deal about the needs in an area."

Humanitarian helpline inaugurated in Kabul

Mid-September in Kabul, the United Nations officially launched [Awaaz Afghanistan](#), the first inter-agency nationwide toll-free call centre in the country. By dialling 4-1-0, anyone with access to a phone in Afghanistan can talk free of charge with one of Awaaz's eight operators who take calls in Dari, Pashto, Urdu, English and other languages. All calls are confidential and callers can choose if they want to speak to a female or male operator.

"Awaaz uses traditional and new technologies to amplify the voice of Afghans to help identify issues and find solutions," said Paul Cruickshank, Director and Representative of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). "The simple act of asking a question can tell us a great deal about the needs in an area. Moreover, operators can provide callers with information they need to withstand a crisis."



Toby Lanzer (centre) and Zlatan Milisic, Country Director of WFP Afghanistan, visit the Awaaz call centre. Photo: UNAMA/Fardin Waezi

Towards higher accountability of the humanitarian system

The call centre was implemented by UNOPS with funding from WFP, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF).

"UN agencies are here to listen to the people of Afghanistan, who can now reach us day or night with feedback or questions about our response to natural disasters or conflict. And, together, agencies will work to get the best answers and the best response to people, on time," said Toby Lanzer, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan.

Since the beginning of the pilot phase end of May, more than 20,000 people dialed 4-1-0 to reach Awaaz.

More aid workers killed this year than in 2018

INCIDENTS IN 2018



308

Incidents



25

Aid workers killed



38

Aid workers wounded



80

Aid workers abducted



54

Incidents against health facilities and workers

During the reporting period, a total of 115 incidents were recorded against aid workers, assets, activities and related to humanitarian access. From July to end of September, 9 aid workers were killed, 15 injured, 34 abducted and 12 detained (see graph).

2018	Incidents	Killed	Injured	Abducted	Detained
July	54	7	7	23	5
August	36		7	8	
September	25	2	1	3	7
Total	115	9	15	34	12

With a total of 25 aid workers killed this year, the number has surpassed the total figure of 2018, when 21 aid workers were killed in the line of duty. The total number of incidents remains below last year's total of 388 recorded incidents.

Better tracking of attacks on health workers and facilities in Afghanistan

Faced with increasing numbers of attacks on health workers and health facilities across the country (see [Bulletin No. 77 June 2018](#)), WHO introduced a [new data collection system](#) in Afghanistan end of August. The system will help to better understand and document this kind of attacks so that the partners can respond and solve the problems more effectively, according to WHO. From June to end of September, a total of 15 attacks were recorded.

The new system is part of WHO's [Attacks on Health Care Initiative](#) that tracks attacks on health workers and facilities since end of 2017 in Iraq, Mali, Syria, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Yemen and now Afghanistan.



Mélanie Büesch, Program Manager of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Kabul, arrived in Afghanistan end of 2015, after working for several years as a researcher and scientific collaborator for the Swiss Foreign Ministry. She holds a Master's Degree in international relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and has also worked as a human rights observer in Colombia. (Picture: SDC)

"It is important to also look at positive developments happening in the country, like the rise of women's participation in the public life."

"The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund offers donors, regardless of the size of the contribution, an important platform of exchange and discussion, but also of advocacy."

Donor Dialogue: Mélanie Büesch

Swiss Development Corporation (SDC)

What are the perspectives and priorities of our donors? In this series, OCHA sits down with the people who support the humanitarian response in Afghanistan.

What is Switzerland's perspective of the current situation in Afghanistan?

The Swiss Government remains highly concerned about the security situation in the country, and the impact it has on the Afghan civilian population and the protection of its basic rights.

Have you seen any improvements in the overall situation in the country or in any particular sector in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan continues to face immense humanitarian, social and political challenges. Despite this however, it is important to also look at positive developments happening in the country, like the rise of women's participation in the public life, the increased number of children going to school, or the increased of people's awareness on human rights.

What are Switzerland's priorities when funding humanitarian action?

The core mandate of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid worldwide is to save lives and alleviate suffering. Swiss humanitarian action in Afghanistan is in line with this core objective, with a specific focus on strengthening the protective environment in the country.

What is the funding strategy of Switzerland in Afghanistan? Does SDC fund humanitarian NGOs, UN entities or international organizations directly?

Humanitarian needs are multiple and various, like challenges to provide adequate humanitarian assistance are. Within its thematic priorities, SDC chooses the most appropriate combination of implementation modalities, such as multilateral or bilateral contributions, secondments [of personnel to UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes], mandates and collaborations with national and international NGOs.

How does Switzerland promote the localization of aid in Afghanistan?

Whenever possible and relevant, Switzerland works with local partners and organizations that often have better access to vulnerable communities. Moreover, through its support to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), Switzerland advocates for the capacity building of local organizations, and the increased allocation of funds to these.

The Swiss Government is a consistent donor the Afghanistan HRP in the past years with contributions between \$540,000 to \$6.3 million. Will this continue?

The Swiss Government is committed to stay engaged in its support of the Government of Afghanistan's aspiration to improve the lives of its women and men, girls and boys. Within its new strategic framework for the period 2019-2022, and given Afghanistan's protracted crisis situation and high humanitarian needs, Switzerland's humanitarian engagement will be maintained and even increased with yearly \$7 to \$9 million humanitarian funding.

Switzerland started funding the AHF in 2016. What is the value of funding a Country Based Pooled Fund for you as a donor?

The AHF, through its funds allocation system has proved to play an instrumental role for disbursing funds in a timely and flexible manner to the most immediate and urgent humanitarian needs. Moreover, the AHF offers to donors, regardless of the size of the contribution, an important platform of exchange and discussion, but also of advocacy. For these reasons, Switzerland's support to the AHF will remain an important component of its humanitarian engagement in the country, and will continue beyond 2018.

With numerous countries like Iraq, Somalia, Syria or Yemen in crisis, is it difficult for your office in Afghanistan to get the support in headquarters to allocate funding to humanitarian action in Afghanistan?

Despite the increased number of humanitarian crisis around the world, Afghanistan is not being forgotten. On the contrary, humanitarian funding for Afghanistan has been constantly increasing during the last few years, from 5 million in 2015, to 7 million in 2018, and yearly 9 million CHF are planned for the period 2019-2022.

“For confirmed cases of corruption by funded projects and partners, Switzerland applies a zero-tolerance policy.”

How high are the risks the Swiss Government is willing to take regarding misuse and misappropriation of aid?

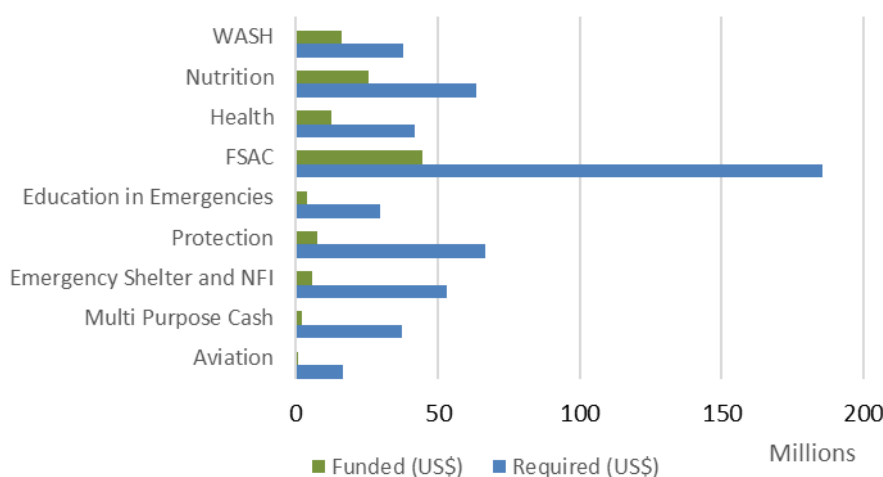
Switzerland puts high importance on the close follow-up of the programmes implementation, as well as on the assessment and capacity building of its partners. That way, Switzerland ensures that objectives are reached and risks of misuse of funds are minimized. For confirmed cases of corruption by funded projects and partners however, Switzerland applies a zero-tolerance policy [and will stop funding any activities by the partner].

In 2002, Switzerland opened a cooperation office in Kabul. How important is it to work in the country, instead of remotely?

Switzerland's presence in the country allows not only for direct dialogue with government and relevant authorities, like-minded donors and partners, but also for exchange with its vulnerable people and beneficiaries. This is the only way to set up relevant strategic actions, which respond to the needs of the populations, but also to ensure their effective implementation and results performance.

Humanitarian Financing Update

As of 18 October 2018, [OCHA's Financial Tracking Service \(FTS\)](#) reported a total of US\$253.8 million humanitarian funding for Afghanistan, of which \$185.7 million were reported against the [revised 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#) calling for \$546.6 million. The HRP is currently funded with 34 per cent thanks to contributions from 28 donors, including the United States of America, the European Commission, Australia, Sweden, the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#), the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Norway and Denmark. The contributions of the three biggest donors – the USA, ECHO and Australia – account for just over half of the total received funding this year.



The sectors with the highest coverage of funding requirement are the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster with 43 per cent of \$37.7 million required, the Nutrition Cluster with 40 per cent of \$63.3 million required and the Health Cluster with 30 per cent of 41.6 million required (*see graph*).

They are followed by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) with 24 per cent of \$185.3 million required, including to respond to the needs due to the ongoing drought.

UN allocate \$35 million for drought response via 22 NGOs

To boost the response, the United Nations' [Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund \(AHF\)](#) (formerly known as the Common Humanitarian Fund - Afghanistan) and CERF have [allocated \\$34.6 million](#) in emergency aid to support 2.2 million people affected by a severe drought. With these funds, 7 national NGOs, 15 international NGOs and 4 UN agencies started to distribute food and seeds, maintain primary health services, provide emergency shelter, safe drinking water, improve hygiene and sanitation, treat severe malnutrition, and help farmers protect their livestock.

For further information, please contact:

Ian Ridley, Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, ridleyi@un.org

David Throp, Deputy Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, throp@un.org

For latest updates, please visit www.unocha.org | www.reliefweb.int

<https://twitter.com/OCHAAfg> | <https://www.facebook.com/UNOCHAAfghanistan>

