

HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND RESPONSE

With 2019 almost over, humanitarian needs continue to grow in Afghanistan due to ongoing violence, natural disasters, internal displacement, growing food insecurity and dropping temperatures. The overall security situation remained tense across the country. Armed clashes affecting civilians continued across many parts of the country against a backdrop of delayed preliminary Presidential electoral results and a possible resumption of talks between the United States of America and the Taliban. Between 2 and 4 November, three separate incidents of pressure-plate Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) attacks occurred killing 20 people and injuring 10 in Paktika, Takhar and Baghlan provinces. The majority of casualties were women and children, including five children killed and four other children injured by a roadside pressure-plate IED in Takhar province who were on their way to school.

From August to October 2019, one-third of people in Afghanistan were facing severe acute food insecurity, according to the latest [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#) (IPC) Alert. While there was some improvement (33 per cent in 2019 compared to 44 per cent in 2018) in the acute food insecurity situation compared to last year, the situation remained very severe with 12.6 million people in crisis (IPC Phase 3) or emergency (IPC Phase 4) situation according to WorldPop-Flowminder population data. It should be noted that the 2019 analysis included urban populations while the 2018 analysis only took into account rural populations.

Furthermore, urban populations were found to be equally or in some areas even more food insecure than rural populations. The main causes of food insecurity were: high unemployment and food prices, natural disasters, and the ongoing conflict in many areas resulting in internal displacement and lack of access to agricultural lands.

The number of people experiencing severe acute food insecurity is expected to rise in the coming months (November 2019 to March 2020) to 13.9 million people or 37 per cent of the population, out of which an estimated 3.4 million people are likely to be in an emergency situation and 10.5 million in a crisis situation based on WorldPop-Flowminder population data.

Despite the obstacles, humanitarian agencies continued to respond to people in need. Life-saving assistance was delivered in 372 of 401 districts (93 per cent of all districts). From January to September 2019, 5.4 million people have been reached with assistance at least once. This included 3.9 million people who received food and emergency livelihoods assistance. To address malnutrition, 880,000 women and children received emergency nutrition services, a significant increase from the 469,000 reached as of June 2019. In addition, 1,060,000 people were provided with access to safe water; 500,000 people were assisted with shelter, emergency relief items and winterisation support; 185,000 children in emergencies were provided with access to education. Some 820,000 people accessed health services and 199,262 people were reached with mine risk education. Over 850,000 people were reached with protection assistance.

By end of year, humanitarian agencies expect to substantially exceed its planned reach for 2019 with over 100 per cent of the target projected, partly due to substantial carry-over funds received in late 2018 for the drought response.

For more information on humanitarian response in Afghanistan, see:

[Afghanistan: Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021: 2019 Quarter three dashboard \(1 Jan - 30 Sep 2019\)](#)

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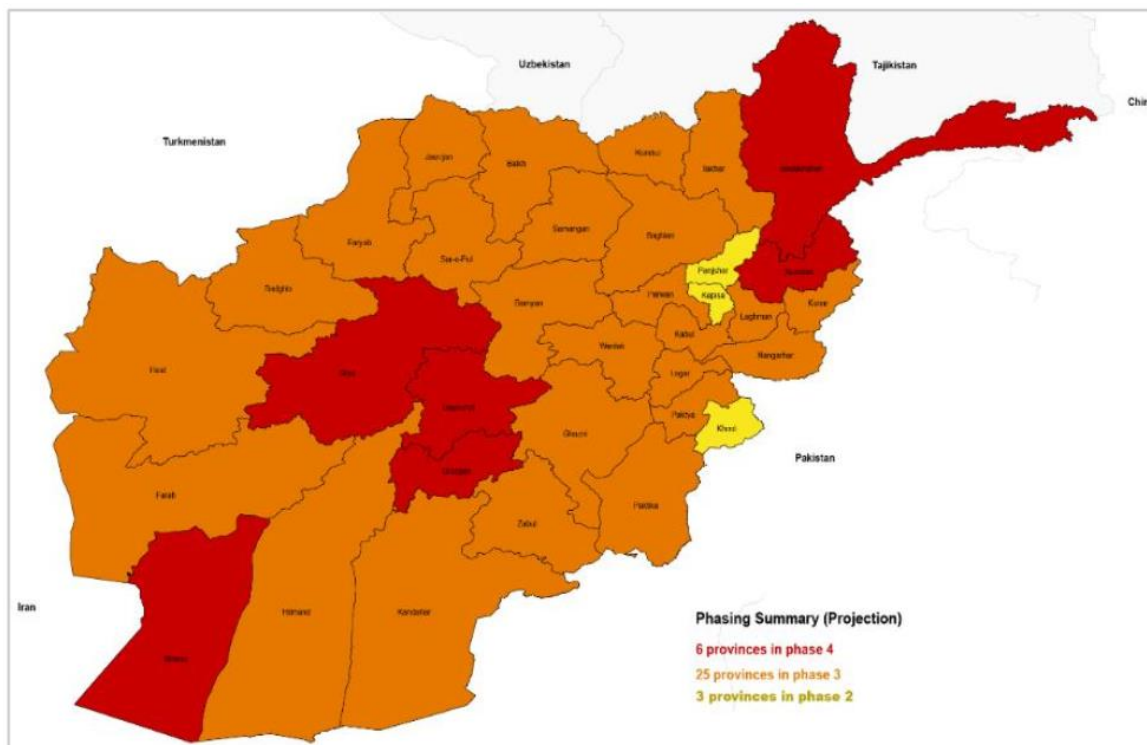
PEOPLE
REACHED

93%

OF DISTRICTS
REACHED

372

DISTRICTS
REACHED



Projected IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

ACCOUNTABILITY TO PEOPLE IN NEED

Looking towards 2020, the humanitarian community in Afghanistan continues to be challenged by increasing and protracted needs. As committed by the signatories of the Grand Bargain in 2016, donors and humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan are working to ensure the voices of the most vulnerable groups (considering gender, age, ethnicity, language, and special needs) are heard and acted upon to create an environment of greater trust, transparency and accountability in accordance with the [IASC Commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations](#).



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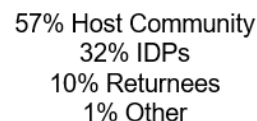
Awaaz Afghanistan is a free and confidential humanitarian helpline connecting people in Afghanistan affected by conflict and natural disaster and Afghan refugees with information on assistance. The call centre serves the whole humanitarian sector, counting 166 partners, and works with all partners involved, including the cluster system, UN agencies, and national and international NGOs. Since the inception of the call centre in May 2018, Awaaz's operators, 50 per cent of whom are women, handled an average of over 5,000 calls per month. Complaints and feedback as well as issues which cannot be resolved by Awaaz on the first call with the information at hand are referred to partners for case management

and resolution. In close collaboration with the partner, the information is then relayed back to the caller until the case is resolved.

In April 2019, a caller from Hirat reported to Awaaz that a community leader was asking the 230 families he represented to share the cash assistance that they received from a humanitarian organisation. The case was referred to the respective organisation who investigated the issue and conducted community outreach on the roles and responsibilities of internally displaced people representatives. In a follow-up call conducted by Awaaz, the caller reported a positive outcome following the intervention.

In another case, by referring a report of diversion during an ongoing registration process for cash assistance, Awaaz relayed community feedback in real-time, allowing the international NGO involved to take action and adjust their programming. Through post-distribution monitoring, they found that some beneficiaries did not feel comfortable reporting programme-related issues directly to the implementer and were more comfortable relaying feedback anonymously. "Awaaz provides a neutral and anonymous platform for affected populations to be able to provide suggestions and complaints, and receive feedback on action taken," said the NGO.

In December 2018, Awaaz received a call from a community leader representing 200 families who had been displaced due to conflict. Many of the children were reportedly sick due to the cold weather, but they were unable to access emergency health assistance. Following Awaaz's referral, health partners sent mobile health teams to assess and support the community. "By contacting Awaaz, we received much-needed health support for our sick children. It gives me hope and I will share our issues with them again in the future," said the caller in a follow-up call.



Kabul
Hirat
Nangarhar



FSA
ESNFI
Protection

In October, the call centre received over 7,000 calls (including follow-up and feedback calls). A third of all calls were made by internally displaced people and returnees. The highest volume of calls in October was from Helmand and Kandahar provinces in the southern part of the country, accounting for 11 per cent of all calls. The top humanitarian concerns among these callers were cash and food assistance. With the onset of winter, a slight increase in calls about the need for winterisation support and core relief items was also noted. Overall the top calls originated from Kabul, Hirat and Nangarhar; and top humanitarian needs were food, core relief items and protection.

As part of its efforts to enhance increased community engagement, in January 2019 Awaaz began surveying caller perception of humanitarian assistance processes. In October, while more than a quarter of callers said that information on humanitarian assistance was sufficient, only 30 per cent

of respondents said that two-way communication with service providers was working well and 56 per cent said that no such channel existed. Furthermore, a gender gap still exists in that on average only 20 per cent of callers are female. Through Awaaz, regular reports are produced outlining issues raised by callers and published on their website: www.awaazaf.org.

While the call centre has demonstrated the impact it is having on the responsiveness of humanitarian programming, it is just one tool that aims to meet accountability to affected population responsibilities. This year the [Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund](#) (AHF) partnered with Awaaz for remote call monitoring where partners provide the phone numbers of beneficiaries, who have granted their permission, and Awaaz monitors the project through a series of questions provided by the Fund. This initiative, along with third-party monitoring and on-site visits will enable the AHF to monitor the performance of partners and increase accountability to affected people.

Information and communication-systems can serve as a life-saving service. However more needs to be done to enable people and communities to make decisions that protect their lives and livelihoods, access assistance more effectively, express their needs and develop their capacities on their own terms.

SUPPORTING LOCALISATION OF ASSISTANCE

As agreed upon in the Grand Bargain in 2016, the international community committed to ensuring that more national partners are involved in decision-making processes in humanitarian response where local actors often have the best understanding of the context and access to people in need of assistance and protection. Therefore, a goal was set that at least 15 per cent of all humanitarian funding should go to national NGOs directly or via Country-Based Pooled Funds.

In Afghanistan, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) runs a Twinning Programme to help address this goal. Launched in 2015, the programme aims to help national NGOs qualify for AHF funding by pairing them with advisors (international NGOs and national NGOs) to build their capacity. On 13 November, a memorandum of understanding was signed for the second Twinning Programme. It also seeks to address the increased need for funding across critical sectors specifically in hard-to-reach areas where national NGOs have access and are better suited to respond. The Twinning Programme focuses on national NGOs which have a proven ability to implement at scale.



NCRO speaking at the signing of the memorandum of understanding for the second Twinning Programme on 13 November.

The first Twinning Programme commenced 15 February 2015 and finished 31 March 2019. 21 of the 25 national NGO partners graduated from the programme when they passed the UNOCHA Capacity Assessment and were added to the AHF partner base; 22 of the partners passed the due diligence review. For example, the national NGO New Consultancy and Relief Organisation (NCRO), active in humanitarian activities for more than two decades, was paired with the German NGO Welthungerhilfe (WHH) at the end of 2016.

“WHH contributed to our policy review, training of staff, the assessment of our M&E and finance departments,” said Sayed Ghufran, NCRO’s country director. “In one of the projects funded by WHH, they worked together with us on procurement and reporting.” And the international partners benefit too. ACBAR’s Director Fiona Gall said: “We can see that

our international NGOs have benefitted from finding new national NGO partners to increase humanitarian access in hard-to-reach areas, to widen their portfolio of expertise and to meet their international commitments to local partnership.”

The second Twinning Programme was launched on 1 August 2019 with 19 partnerships starting on 1 November 2019 and one additional partnership expected to begin in December. This year, 20 national NGOs will be paired with 13 advisors, 3 are national NGOs that successfully graduated from the first twinning programme that have implemented AHF projects and 10 are INGOs.

Training provided through the Twinning Programme includes Sphere standards, disability awareness, anti-corruption measures, and gender mainstreaming. The programme also includes proposal writing, integrity in NGO management, financial management, and project cycle management.

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