

## **Flash Update 7 – Fighting, displacement and civilian casualties in Southern Afghanistan (5 November 2020)**

### **KEY HIGHLIGHTS**

- Heavy fighting continues in southern Afghanistan across Hilmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces, affecting thousands of people.
- Assessment teams are continuing their work to gauge the humanitarian impact of the situation. To date, 13,970 IDPs have been verified in Hilmand and thousands of people are believed to be displaced in Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces, with assessments ongoing.
- Partners have mobilised assistance to 11,663 IDPs in Hilmand. This includes food, NFIs, WASH items and multi-purpose cash with accompanying COVID-19 prevention support. In Kandahar, partners have the capacity to provide food, emergency shelter and NFIs, WASH items and multi-purpose cash to several thousand IDP households, while plans are underway to deploy assessment teams in Uruzgan.

### **SITUATION OVERVIEW:**

**Hilmand:** Fighting that started on 11 October between the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and a non-state armed group (NSAG) has carried on in Nawa-e-Barakziay, Nad-e-Ali, Lashkargah and Nahr-e-Saraj districts. Military operations and airstrikes are ongoing in these areas. The security situation remains volatile. The road between Lashkargah and Nawa-e-Barakziay; the Lashkargah-Kandahar highway and the roads connecting Lashkargah to Nawa-e-Barakziay, Nad-e-Ali/Marja and Nahr-e-Saraj also remain closed due to the presence of NSAG checkpoints. The presence of IEDs remains a concern with seven civilians killed and two wounded on 2 November alone. People continue to use alternate routes in NSAG-controlled areas to avoid IEDs. Phone networks have been partially restored, albeit with limited coverage and this is still challenging the smooth flow of information.

**Kandahar:** Military operations with the support of airstrikes are ongoing in the north and in the southwest of Kandahar with a focus on Arghandab, Zharey and Panjwai districts. Telephone networks mostly remain down and the key roads between Kandahar city and Arghandab, Panjwai and Zharey districts are partially open but with a high threat of IEDs and many culverts destroyed. People are still unable to use these roads.

**Uruzgan:** Sporadic armed clashes are still ongoing in Dehrawud and Gizab districts. While reports indicate more NSAG checkpoints are being set up in these areas, some roads have been re-opened. Telephone lines remain down in the affected districts.

### **HUMANITARIAN IMPACT:**

**Hilmand:** Some 13,970 IDPs have been verified as being in need of humanitarian assistance so far with assessments ongoing. Some access challenges have been experienced in Lashkargah and humanitarian partners are in discussion with provincial authorities to mitigate such interference in ongoing assessments and to maintain the safety and security of humanitarian staff. According to WHO, three health facilities remain closed, while nine others are reportedly partially open, although this is to be confirmed. According to WHO, the closure of health clinics due to insecurity is directly affecting more than 56,000 people, with more than 195,000 indirectly affected by limited services as health facilities that are only partially open.

**Kandahar:** In excess of 16,000 people have reportedly been displaced into Kandahar city and Dand district, however only 1,228 IDPs have been verified as being in need of humanitarian assistance so far. These people were reportedly displaced from Dehrawud and Gizab districts (Uruzgan), Lashkargah district (Hilmand), as well as Panjwaiy, Zharey, Maywand and Arghandab districts (Kandahar). Reportedly, several thousand more people have also been displaced into NSAG-controlled areas, although this remains to be verified.

The presence of IEDs and ongoing clashes continue to threaten civilian movements as well as the humanitarian response in Kandahar. As of 5 November, five humanitarian partners have temporarily suspended their activities in Zharey, Panjwaiy, Mawwand and Arghandab districts. Five Mobile Health Teams (MHTs) have been temporarily suspended in Maywand and Zharey districts, depriving some 20,000 people of essential health services. Communities have also self-reported the closure of several health facilities.

**Uruzgan:** Some humanitarian partners operating in Dehrawud district have temporarily suspended their activities due to active fighting. The suspension of humanitarian activities in the district will leave people unable to access WASH, protection and shelter support, or receive key COVID-19 prevention messages that promote virus mitigation measures. A health facility able to serve 30,000 people has also been closed, while two schools have also reportedly been affected by clashes.

## **COORDINATION AND RESPONSE:**

OCHA is closely coordinating with the Government to provide assistance to IDPs based on need, ensuring efficient information flows and avoiding duplication of efforts.

Among the verified IDPs in Hilmand, humanitarian partners have provided assistance to 11,663 people. IDPs received food, NFIs, WASH items and multi-purpose cash with accompanying COVID-19 prevention support. Assistance for the remaining 2,307 IDPs will be coordinated with clusters.

In Kandahar, partners have provided food, emergency shelter and NFIs, WASH items and multi-purpose cash assistance to 452 IDPs, while the response for the remaining 776 verified IDPs will be coordinated with clusters once assessment data is received.

In Uruzgan, 185 IDPs have been identified as having humanitarian needs, with assessments ongoing. Despite access challenges, an inter-agency team will be deployed to Dehrawud district in the coming days to assess the needs of new IDPs within the district.

The next update will be published as the situation changes and new information becomes available.