

Afghanistan

March 2022

Afghanistan continues to face an unprecedented humanitarian crisis due to severe economic situation leading to rising poverty, natural disasters (drought and floods), the COVID-19 and. In 2021, over **700,000** conflict-related internal displacements were recorded -

80 per cent of them women and children. The total number of IDPs due to conflict countrywide is now estimated at 3.4 million. Some 24.4 million people – 59 per cent of Afghanistan's estimated 42 million population- will need humanitarian and protection assistance in 2022.

This is largely influenced by spiralling food insecurity, dangerous levels of malnutrition, eroded livelihood opportunities, as well as displacement and increasingly complex protection risks and needs

KEY INDICATORS

680,000

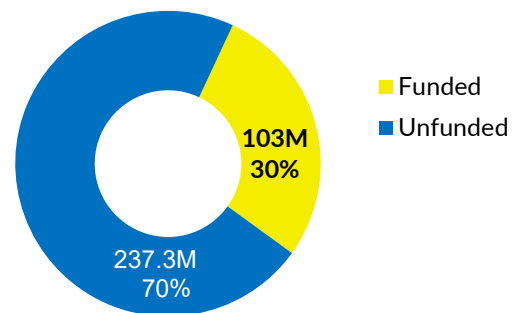
of persons assisted so far in 2022 including 200,000 who received emergency aid as of 31 March

- 121,100 individuals
Provided with cash assistance
- 79,400 individuals
Provided with in-kind and other assistance
- 479,400 individuals
Benefited from services in the 55 PAARs
- 40,000 individuals
Assessed

FUNDING (AS OF 31 MARCH 2022)

USD 340.3 million

requested for the Afghanistan Operation



POPULATION OF CONCERN AS OF 31 MAR 2022

Asylum-seekers and refugees	72,487
Internally displaced Afghans	3.4M*
Refugee returnees	1,494**
IDP returnees	170,124***

*Estimates of IDPs in Afghanistan are provided by OCHA.

**Refugee returnees represent those who have returned from Jan 2021 to Feb 2022 (Source: UNHCR)

***IDP returnees are those who went back to their communities between Jan 2021 and Mar 2022 still under the process of being verified. (Source: UNHCR)



Cash distribution to a female beneficiary as part of some 134 refugee returnee families in support of their reintegration in Urozgan Province, Southern Region in March © Ahmad Dost, UNHCR

Update on Achievements

Operational Context

Afghanistan is still experiencing a staggering humanitarian crisis of an unprecedented level and scale. The severity of the situation is further exacerbated by the potential for insecurity, continued political and economic uncertainties, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 700,000 conflict-related displacements have been jointly verified since the beginning of 2021 – 80 per cent of them women and children. Overall, 3.4 million people are estimated to be displaced internally countrywide due to conflict while more than 2 million are refugees in neighboring countries. According to the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), some 24.4 million of Afghanistan's estimated 42 million population will need humanitarian and protection assistance this year.



The People's Republic of China donated non-food items to UNHCR for the conflicted people of Afghanistan. Photo © Tom Monboe, UNHCR Afghanistan

Key Developments



PROTECTION

UNHCR Afghanistan's Community-Based Protection interventions focus on life-saving assistance through improving access to essential services that enhances protection environment which mitigates further protection risks, as well as support for resilient and peaceful communities. Fostering local integration as well as decreasing pressure on shared resources in communities is important, particularly in the areas of high displacement and return, pursued through interventions that buttress UNHCR's area-based programming in the 55 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs).

As the lead Protection agency, UNHCR monitors the overall protection environment through inter-agency frameworks and its community-based protection monitoring mechanisms. This approach ensures that protection risks are mitigated, specific needs addressed, and that the people of concern including the most vulnerable individuals are able to meet their basic needs through financial, in-kind assistance and referral to appropriate services in response to protection and socioeconomic risks.

Achievements and Impact

- From 01 Jan- 31 Mar, UNHCR provided some 110,725 individuals with protection support and assistance, ranging from various forms of protection monitoring in areas where there are refugee returnees and other locations to interviews during border and household monitoring and assessments. As the key protection assistance and support, refugee returnees received voluntary repatriation grants and in-kind assistance and referrals for persons with specific needs - PSNs. Individuals including persons with specific needs (PSNs) were provided with cash for their basic needs and other support while others received psycho-social support (PSS). 40 (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) DAFI students and some 298 urban refugees also received various support enhancing access to higher education. Under the Communicating with Community (CwC) and Accountability to Affected People (AAP) approach, UNHCR Protection team also handled some 3,284 phone calls, sent 506 tailored email responses, and provided 7,900 queries on general information requested. The interventions have significantly helped to reduce protection risks, restore the dignity of beneficiaries, and mitigate some of the gaps created by the ongoing socio-economic crisis in the country.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- To effectively respond to the growing protection needs of affected populations in Afghanistan, UNHCR plans to assist some 490,000 beneficiaries in 2022 under its community-based protection framework. In addition to the global economic impact of COVID-19, events in Afghanistan after August 2021, have severely affected the coping mechanisms of vulnerable population groups in the country and increased the protection risks of internally displaced people, refugee returnees, as well as some 72,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. UNHCR is continuing its advocacy and mobilizing resources for the protection of all the targeted affected populations in need of protection services.



EDUCATION

As schools for female students at secondary level remain closed, UNHCR and others are continuing their advocacy with relevant officials in Afghanistan as part of broader international efforts to pressure the Taliban change its decision. Some donors including the World Bank during the reporting period suspended projects worth some 600 million dollars in protest of the girls' education ban. However, education remains part of UNHCR Afghanistan's multi-faceted approach implemented to benefit affected communities through construction of schools to facilitate access to an inclusive learning environment for those in need including groups with specific needs. UNHCR's interventions focus on building on past achievements in the 55 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARRs), which seek to build long-term solutions for affected communities.

Achievements and Impact

- As part of its efforts to improve access to education, UNHCR constructed 37 educational institutions in 2021 in 33 of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. Among them were three girls' schools, two internet cafés, and one Youth Learning Centre. In 2022, UNHCR is supporting the upgrading of existing educational facilities and will construct new schools in the 55 PARRs. This support has effectively responded to the education needs of conflict-affected children and continues to promote peaceful coexistence with host communities. During his visit to Afghanistan

in March, UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi visited Jalalabad and witnessed the opening of a UNHCR-constructed 12-classroom girls' school.

- As mentioned earlier, with the support of UNHCR, some 40 Afghan returning refugees students, started courses in February at universities in Kabul. 50 percent of them are women benefiting from DAFI scholarships with a monthly cash grant of US\$ 250. In addition, UNHCR provides US\$ 200 to each student during the academic year as stationery cost. The programme is expected to be expanded to two other provinces – Jalalabad and Mazar for 20 additional beneficiaries. By opening a programme for qualified returnees in Afghanistan, DAFI is supporting returning refugees to continue their education. The DAFI programme serves as a foundation for social and professional development, allowing its scholars to build careers in competitive fields of employment and thereby also contributes to the progress of their respective countries.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Education for women and girls requires continuous advocacy efforts to help them continue their learning. There is also a need to ensure that existing education systems are resourced including supporting teacher and staff salaries – and putting in place appropriate measures to ensure service continuity.



HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- By the end of March, UNHCR provided 3,830 dignity and hygiene kits as part of life-saving assistance. In addition, UNHCR provided 5,114 persons with psycho-social support during the reporting period. In 2021, UNHCR improved access to health services through construction of 10 health clinics and provided Mental Health and Psychosocial Services (MHPSS).

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Risks associated with economic collapse and increase in humanitarian needs are further compounded by armed conflict, climate change, insufficient health services and the COVID-19 pandemic. This could potentially drive additional internal displacements as well as force Afghans to seek refuge outside the country.



FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Achievements and Impact

- UNHCR provided life-saving multi-sectoral assistance to more than 248,562 new IDPs and those affected by the armed conflict by the end of March. In addition, cash for winterization was provided to 85,404 people to support their food security, nutrition, and other needs.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Prices of basic food commodities such as wheat flour, rice, cooking oil, pulses and sugar slightly by the end of March??? increased compared to third week of March 2022. This, according to a World Food Programme monthly assessment finding, was mainly as a result of decrease in supply, global price increases further exacerbated by the depreciation of the Afghan currency. This put further strain on household income and expenditure. Conversely, prices of diesel declined by at least 4 per cent during the last week of March due to increase in supply from market sources. It is estimated that in 2022 some 23 million people - over half of the country's population face acute food insecurity.

WATER AND SANITATION

Achievements and Impact

- In 2021, UNHCR supported some 56,000 individuals in 40 communities through improving access to WASH and infrastructure facilities including construction of two water distribution schemes, and two solar-powered water wells. Between January and March this year, UNHCR provided 15,459 people with core relief items including jerry canes and buckets to store clean drinking water.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Shortage of safe drinking water and water for handwashing have led to watery diarrhoea outbreaks, particularly among children.



SHELTER AND CORE RELIEF ITEMS (CRIS)

Shelter

- A core part of UNHCR's work is providing access to adequate shelter to persons in need. In Afghanistan, UNHCR is responding to the emergency through tent distribution and installation, construction and maintenance of emergency shelter kits and shelter rehabilitation. UNHCR provides cash for shelter support to refugee and IDP returnees to repair their partially damaged homes in their areas of origin. UNHCR also works on repair of essential services infrastructure and public facilities in the PAARs.

CRIs

- UNHCR provides non-food items to internally displaced persons, returnees and vulnerable host communities based on needs. The standard family kit of core relief items is intended for the average household of seven and it comprises high thermal blankets, jerry cans, plastic sheets, kitchen sets and solar lamps. Supplementary and seasonal items are also distributed and can include winter jackets, and hygiene kits.
- On 27 March, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Kabul handed over to UNHCR Afghanistan non-food items worth \$2 million US dollars. The items included emergency shelter tents, core relief items and backpacks to school going children. Nearly 50,000 individuals in Balkh, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar and other parts of affected communities in Afghanistan are benefiting from the Chinese donation. The non-food items were provided through the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund (SSCAF). The Chinese Ambassador in Afghanistan, Mr. Wang Yu and UNHCR Afghanistan Deputy Representative, Yumiko Takashima attended the handing over event.

Achievements and Impact

- Between January and March, UNHCR distributed 3,500 emergency shelter kits, and a total of 1,106 people received cash for rent and shelter repair. The assistance helped beneficiaries address their shelter repair needs and facilitated the payment of rent.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The de facto authorities continue to impose restrictions on female staff in the full spectrum of humanitarian response in some provinces– particularly during assessments, causing delays to operational activities.



ACCESS TO ENERGY

Achievements and Impact

- So far in 2022, UNHCR has provided 1,960 people with clean energy including distribution of solar equipment to ensure reliable lighting, facilitating home-based livelihood opportunities, children's education, fostering safer environments, and mitigating against protection risks including gender-based violence.



COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

Fostering local integration as well as decreasing pressure on the shared resources in communities is important, particularly in the areas of high displacement and return, which is being pursued through interventions that buttress UNHCR's area-based programming in PARRs. Under the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), UNHCR supports refugees who voluntarily decide to repatriate and conducts returnee monitoring to collect real-time information on return trends, reasons for return, their protection situation during the return and reintegration progresses.

Achievements and Impact

- Between January and March this year, UNHCR supported 22,281 individuals with cash assistance for reintegration (CARE), 3,760 persons with entrepreneurship and business support assistance while 25,000 benefited from construction projects including schools, clinics, and other infrastructure.
- UNHCR continues investments in crucial areas such as health and education to support the sustainable reintegration of refugees and IDPs who previously returned to their areas of origin or may do so in the future. The investments also benefit local communities and displaced people living in areas of return.
- Since 2021, UNHCR enhanced livelihood opportunities for 2,300 persons through market-based vocational and technical trainings including job placement and business support.



DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Achievements and Impact

- To leverage on the work being undertaken by humanitarian agencies aimed at strengthening sustainable reintegration, self-reliance, and durable solutions for returnees, refugees, and IDPs, UNHCR is engaged strategically with key donors and supporters of the Core Group of the SSAR Support Platform and other actors. They include the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, UN-Habitat, UN Children's Fund, the Aga Khan Network, BRAC, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labor Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Health Organization (WHO) and various NGOs around key thematic areas. UNHCR also continues to engage with the private sector, members of the host community and civil society organizations to promote inclusion and participation.
- UNHCR will continue to engage on a regional level through the Quadripartite Steering Committee of the SSAR and in Afghanistan through the One-UN and UN Transitional Engagement Framework to support and provide life-saving assistance and facilitate access to basic services for people of concern, as well as identifying and providing support for durable solutions. In addition, UNHCR will continue to lead the Protection Cluster and the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster. UNHCR is also leading the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Working Group, co-leading the Return and Reintegration Working Group with IOM, and co-chairing the Housing Land and Property Task Force with UN-Habitat.



CASH BASED INTERVENTIONS (CBI)

UNHCR Afghanistan implements cash-based intervention (CBI) activities across all 34 provinces, and in the 55 PARRs – adopting a whole-of-community approach that addresses the protection, assistance and solutions related needs of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and members of the host community. Cash assistance is delivered primarily through contracted financial service providers from the private sector. A standardized vulnerability assessment tool is used to collect information on household vulnerability, capacities, and coping strategies. This assessment data is analysed against set indicators to determine eligibility to the different cash programmes. To ensure that cash assistance is used for the intended purposes and delivered in accordance with UNHCR standards, rigorous monitoring mechanisms are in place including third-party post-distribution monitoring. All of these are to ensure quality programming, integrity of processes and accountability to affected populations.

Achievements and Impact

- For the first three months of 2022 (Jan-Mar), UNHCR provided cash assistance to 121,100 affected individuals. The assistance which covered a wide range of services helped beneficiaries address their protection, assistance, and solution needs.



LOGISTICS

Achievements and Impact

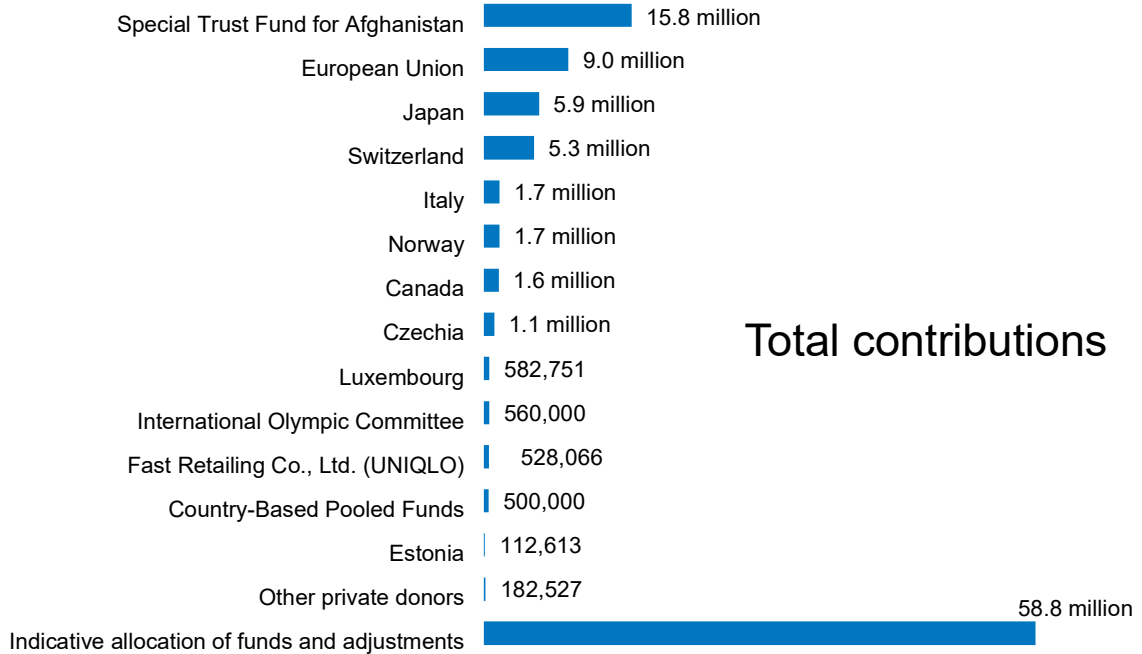
- UNHCR scaled up its winter response programme to support and IDPs, refugee and IDP returnees as well as affected host communities.

Working in partnership

- UNHCR has expanded its partnerships with diverse actors in Afghanistan, including UN agencies –United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Habitat, International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UN Women, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the private sector - Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (ACCI), Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) and international non-governmental organizations -Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) BRAC, and development actors – the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). In this regard, UNHCR signed Letters of Intent (Lols) with UNDP, ILO, UN-Habitat, UN Women, FAO, UNODC, AKDN/Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), BRAC, and AWCCI aimed at “strengthening cooperation between the organizations in addressing the complex challenges of displacement and achieving the collective objectives in the PARRs as well as other areas of origin and or areas of displacement”. To operationalize the partnerships, corresponding action plans have been devised for each Lol outlining key areas of complementarity and the joint programmes are currently ongoing. Alongside, UNHCR engages with the de facto authorities to ensure the access to persons of concern and to provide timely assistance to meet their needs.

Financial Information as of 31 Mar 2022

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.



Earmarked Contributions | USD

Earmarked contributions for the operation amount to some **US\$ 64 million**.

Other Softly Earmarked Contributions | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked contributions that can potentially be used for this operation due to their earmarking to a related situation or theme, or to the region or sub-region.

Netherlands 4 million

Norway | Private donors

Unearmarked Contributions | USD

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions.

Sweden 95.2 million | Norway 72.5 million | Netherlands 37.2 million | Denmark 35.6 million | Germany 27.6 million |

Switzerland 18.4 million | Private donors Spain 12.3 million | Belgium 11.9 million | Ireland 11.8 million

Algeria | Armenia | Bulgaria | Canada | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Monaco |

Montenegro | Peru | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors Private

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donors

UNHCR Afghanistan is grateful for contributions by the following donors



UNHCR AFGHANISTAN OPERATIONAL MAP 2022

