

# Afghanistan – Complex Emergency

SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

## SITUATION AT A GLANCE

<b>29.2</b> MILLION	<b>15.3</b> MILLION	<b>21.3</b> MILLION	<b>6.6</b> MILLION	<b>26.3</b> MILLION
People in Afghanistan in Need of Humanitarian Assistance in 2023	People in Afghanistan Experiencing Acute Food Insecurity	Afghans Prioritized for Humanitarian Assistance Under the 2023 HRP	IDPs in Afghanistan as of December 2022	People Reached With Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan between January and July
<i>UN – June 2023</i>	<i>IPC – May 2023</i>	<i>UN – June 2023</i>	<i>IOM – June 2023</i>	<i>UN – August 2023</i>

- Increased Taliban interference and detainment of aid workers in 2023 continues to challenge relief actors' ability to deliver principled humanitarian assistance, according to the UN.
- Humanitarian actors had reached 26.3 million people in Afghanistan with assistance as of July, exceeding target totals for all of 2023.
- Macroeconomic stabilization and recent harvests have resulted in fragile food security improvements in Afghanistan; however, at-risk households are experiencing disproportionate levels of food insecurity and the use of negative coping mechanisms remains widespread.



### TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

For the Afghanistan Response in FY 2023

USAID/BHA<sup>1</sup> \$643,463,263

State/PRM<sup>2</sup> \$200,543,858

*For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 6*

**Total \$844,007,121**

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

### **Detainment of Aid Workers Increased by More Than 70 Percent in 2023**

Taliban personnel detained approximately 110 humanitarian staff members in Afghanistan between January and August, representing a more than 70 percent increase compared to the same period in 2022, threatening the safety of humanitarian staff and hindering the delivery of life-saving, principled humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. This figure includes nearly 30 aid workers detained by Taliban entities in August alone. Furthermore, humanitarian actors—including nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies—reported nearly 1,200 access incidents from January through August, an increase of approximately 25 percent compared to the same period in 2022, the UN reports. Relief actors identified Taliban entities as responsible for the majority of access incidents in 2023, including 99 percent of the nearly 130 access incidents reported during August. Relief actors identified attempts to interfere in the selection of humanitarian beneficiaries and staff members, delays in the signing of memoranda of understanding necessary for humanitarian organizations to operate, movement restrictions on female aid workers, and requests for humanitarian actors to turnover sensitive data as the Taliban's primary methods of interference, according to the UN. Access incidents resulted in the suspension of nearly 110 humanitarian activities during July and August alone; nearly 40 of the approximately 50 activities suspended in August had not resumed as of September, the UN reports. Humanitarian actors, including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), continue to negotiate with Taliban personnel to maintain and expand access for the delivery of principled delivery of humanitarian aid to at-risk populations through female staff.

### **Relief Actors Reach 26.3 Million Individuals With Principled Humanitarian Assistance Between January and July**

Humanitarian actors reached approximately 26.3 million people with principled humanitarian assistance—including agriculture, food, health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance—between January and July, exceeding the revised 2023 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) target of 21.3 million people for the entirety of 2023, despite prevailing Taliban restrictions and ongoing interference in relief efforts, according to the UN. Humanitarian actors reached 22.6 million individuals—including approximately 14 million children and 3.8 million women—with direct food and agriculture assistance, mitigating the adverse effects of food insecurity in Afghanistan as 15.3 million people are projected to experience Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity through October, according to a May IPC analysis.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, relief organizations had reached 9.7 million people with health supplies and services, 6.8 million people with WASH assistance, and 3.5 million people with nutrition support as of July, according to the UN.

Despite successes as a result of humanitarian efforts to adapt operations and negotiate access with Taliban personnel, Taliban restrictions have challenged relief actors' ability to deliver assistance, particularly in the protection sector. Humanitarian actors had reached only 1.8 million of the 5.3 million individuals targeted to receive protection assistance under the revised 2023 HRP as of July, the UN reports. Moreover, relief actors have highlighted that ongoing funding shortfalls threaten to result in commodity shortages for critical humanitarian assistance including food, WASH items, and emergency relief supplies, such as blankets, cooking sets, and tarps, ahead of the forthcoming winter season, when

<sup>3</sup> The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity. IPC Phase 5 is referred to as “Catastrophe” when classifying a household and “Famine” when classifying an area. Famine conditions occur when at least 20 percent of the population in a given area face an extreme lack of food; the Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence, measured by weight-for-height z-score, exceeds 30 percent; and the mortality rate exceeds two people per 10,000 individuals per day.

humanitarian needs typically heighten. The U.S. Government (USG) remains the largest humanitarian donor to the Afghanistan Response, providing more than \$844 million in humanitarian assistance in FY 2023, including more than \$643 million in USAID/BHA assistance and nearly \$201 million in State/PRM support.

## **Households in Afghanistan Experience Fragile Improvements in Food Security**

Declining food prices, macroeconomic stabilization, and recent harvests have contributed to modest improvements in food security in Afghanistan in 2023 compared to previous years, according to a January–June UN World Food Program (WFP) analysis released in September. As a result, the number of Afghan households experiencing poor food consumption—the most severe classification on a three-tiered index used to capture the diversity and frequency of household food consumption during the previous week—had reduced from approximately 60 percent of households in June 2022 to approximately 50 percent of households as of June 2023.

Despite moderate improvements in food security, nearly 90 percent of individuals continued to experience inadequate food consumption—classified as either poor or borderline levels of food consumption—as of the same date. Households containing persons with disabilities (PWDs) and households without an income source or reliant on non-agricultural labor for income reported poor food consumption at approximately 20 percentage-point higher levels compared to households without PWDs and those receiving a regular salary, according to WFP. Furthermore, household engagement in negative coping strategies remained widespread as of June, with nearly 90 percent of households relying on less preferred or cheaper foods and nearly 60 percent of households prioritizing food for children at the expense of adult consumption.

The WFP analysis aligns with a September report from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), projecting fragile improvements in food security in certain areas of Afghanistan during the October 2023 to January 2024 period compared to the previous year. Nonetheless, households in central, northern, and northeastern provinces, as well as in urban centers, are likely to experience widespread Crisis levels of acute food insecurity due to improved but below-average harvests, the ongoing effects of acute climatic shocks, and limited livelihood opportunities, with the most at-risk households experiencing Emergency—IPC 4—levels of food insecurity outcomes during the period, according to FEWS NET. USAID/BHA provided nearly \$326 million in food and agriculture assistance during FY 2023 to bolster food security and mitigate worse food insecurity outcomes for at-risk households.

## **Multifaceted Protection Risks Threaten Afghans' Well-Being, Access to Basic Needs and Services**

Protection risks continue to restrict individuals' access to basic needs and services and threaten at-risk populations' physical and mental well-being, according to an August Afghanistan Protection Cluster report.<sup>4</sup> Explosive ordnance, including explosive remnants of war, resulted in death or injury to at least 98 people—including more than 80 children—during the first three months of 2023, threatening the lives of civilians and limiting the scale-up of humanitarian activities in affected areas, according to the Protection Cluster and the UN. Meanwhile, women and girls continue to face disproportionate access impediments to basic services due to Taliban restrictions on freedom of movement, the Protection Cluster reports. Nearly 65 percent of individuals interviewed by the Protection Cluster during 2023

<sup>4</sup> The coordinating body for humanitarian protection activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

reported that women are unable to visit certain gathering places, including schools, markets, health care centers, and water points, further limiting women’s access to basic needs and services and raising protection concerns due to separation from community support mechanisms. Interviewees attributed movement restrictions imposed on women to discrimination; a lack of *mahram*, or male guardian; and concerns about personal security. Moreover, 45 percent of interviewees reported a lack of civil documentation, contributing to housing, land, and property (HLP) rights concerns; increasing the risk of forced evictions; and restricting the ability of displaced populations to return to their places of origin, according to the Protection Cluster.

Long-term exposure to stressors—including food insecurity, limited access to basic needs and services, lack of livelihood opportunities, movement restrictions, political instability, and violence—has resulted in heightened psychological distress in Afghanistan, according to the Protection Cluster. Nearly 60 percent of interview respondents reported that at least one member of their household had experienced psychological distress in 2023, representing a nearly 20 percentage-point increase in reported psychological distress compared to 2022. However, access to psychosocial support (PSS) services remains limited, particularly for women and girls. Nearly 50 percent of respondents indicated women and girls lacked access to PSS support in 2023, resulting in increased risk of exploitation, utilization of negative coping mechanisms, and violence. In response to the findings, the Protection Cluster urged the Taliban to support women’s unhindered involvement in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and called on humanitarian organizations to integrate protection activities, including PSS services, throughout the humanitarian response and prioritize explosive ordnance activities and HLP rights.

## KEY FIGURES



**16.8 Million**

People reached with USAID/BHA and other donor-supported WFP food and nutrition assistance since January



**9**

Number of USG implementing partners conducting protection interventions

## U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

The USG supports the delivery of life-saving emergency food assistance across Afghanistan, providing vulnerable populations with locally, regionally, and internationally procured in-kind food assistance; cash transfers for food; and food vouchers. With USAID/BHA support, WFP continues to provide food assistance and nutrition services to support populations in need in 2023. Additionally, USAID/BHA supported international NGO (INGO) partners are providing seeds and livestock feed in at-risk areas to bolster the coping capacity of vulnerable households. USAID/BHA supports the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other partners to deliver life-saving nutrition services and treatment to children and pregnant and lactating women throughout the country. UNICEF, with support from USAID/BHA and other donors, screened approximately 1.3 million children younger than five years of age for acute malnutrition and treated more than 60,000 children for severe acute malnutrition, during August. USAID/BHA also supports coordination and information management among food security actors and assessments in Afghanistan to strengthen humanitarian response efforts.

### PROTECTION

USG partners—such as State/PRM partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—provide protection assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees, and other vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. Additionally, USG INGO and UN partners support mental health and PSS (MHPSS) programs, including

individual counseling, activities to support the development of coping skills, and safe healing and learning spaces for children. USG partners also implement child protection activities and family services, provide legal assistance to returning refugees to access documentation, and integrate MHPSS and other protection measures into education, health, and nutrition programming. With USAID/BHA and other donor support, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) screened more than 13,100 individuals for protection concerns in Herat, Kandahar, and Nimroz provinces and supported more than 200 undocumented returnee households with protection case management services.



**397,000**

People reached with USAID/BHA and other donor-supported WHO health services in August

## HEALTH

The USG supports UN and INGO partners to implement life-saving health activities across Afghanistan to improve community health awareness, bolster outpatient consultation efforts, and complement other donor efforts to provide affordable primary and secondary health care to underserved populations. USG partners aim to increase equitable access to and utilization of health services among IDPs, host communities, and other conflict- and shock-affected populations. USG assistance supports clinics and mobile health teams to deliver emergency and primary health care services, conduct trainings for local community health workers and health care professionals, provide essential medicines, and support vaccination campaigns. Additionally, USG funding supports the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to coordinate emergency health response activities, maintain the continuation of essential health services, and ensure the continued supply of critical health and medical commodities in Afghanistan. With support from USAID/BHA and other donors, WHO provided trauma care services to more than 13,000 people, antenatal care to nearly 10,500 people, and postnatal care to more than 6,200 women during August. During the month, WHO also distributed nearly 800 medical supply kits to health facilities, expected to benefit more than 750,000 people.



**17,700**

Number of people provided emergency shelter support by State/PRM partner UNCHR in 2023

## SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

Shelter needs among populations in Afghanistan remain significant, in part due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, and harsh winter weather. USG partners provide emergency shelter for displaced and otherwise vulnerable people, as well as shelter repair kits, transitional shelter, and multipurpose cash assistance to support the housing needs of affected populations. In addition, USG partners pre-position shelter materials each year for distribution ahead of the harsh winter months and support the heating costs for vulnerable households.



**5**

Number of USG implementing partners supporting livelihoods programming

## LIVELIHOODS AND EDUCATION

With USG funding, partners deliver livelihoods programming and skills training to support refugee reintegration and boost opportunities for vulnerable host community populations through activities such as courses to increase literacy, business knowledge, and skills development. State/PRM

partners support returning refugees, IDPs, and host communities in Afghanistan by providing access to skills training and adult literacy courses, in addition to access to education for Afghan refugees and host community children in Pakistan. Partners also work to ensure IDP and returning refugee children have access to learning spaces and accelerated learning programs to help children prepare for enrollment in formal schools, as well as support initiatives to improve infrastructure in schools within host communities.

## CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- The Taliban seized Kabul on August 15, 2021, following the successive capture of several provincial capitals and territory in early August 2021. Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, economic and political instability has resulted in the deterioration of basic services across the country, increased staple foods and fuel prices, and reduced household purchasing power, affecting many Afghan households' ability to meet their basic needs.
- The cumulative effects of conflict, internal displacement, coronavirus disease (COVID-19), drought and other natural disasters, and economic collapse have drastically increased levels of humanitarian need throughout Afghanistan. The UN predicts that 29.2 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2023, with the severity of needs deepening across all sectors.
- In late August 2021, the USG activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) based in the region outside of Afghanistan to lead the USG response to humanitarian needs generated by the crisis in Afghanistan and a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) to support the DART.
- On October 7, 2022, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker reissued a declaration of humanitarian need for FY 2023 due to the continued impact of the ongoing complex emergency.

## USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE AFGHANISTAN RESPONSE IN FY 2023<sup>1,2</sup>

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
Implementing Partners (IPs)	Agriculture; Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS); Food Assistance—Cash Transfers for Food; Health; Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA); Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA); Natural Hazards and Technological Risks; Nutrition; Protection; Shelter and Settlements; WASH	Countrywide	\$167,900,000
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$500,000
IOM	Shelter and Settlements	Countrywide	\$430,000
OCHA	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$1,200,000
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	HCIMA, Health, Protection	Countrywide	\$8,311,800
UNICEF	HCIMA, MPCA, Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Countrywide	\$35,245,916

WFP	Food Assistance—Cash for Food, Food Vouchers, Local, Regional, and International Procurement; Logistics Support; Nutrition	Countrywide	\$422,100,000
WHO	HCIMA, Health, WASH	Countrywide	\$7,000,000
	Program Support		\$775,547
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING</b>			<b>\$643,463,263</b>
<b>STATE/PRM</b>			
IPs	Health, Protection	Afghanistan	\$51,392,629
	Program Support	Afghanistan	\$2,301,029
	MHPSS, Education, ERMS, Protection	Pakistan	\$4,250,200
IOM	Health, Protection	Afghanistan	\$13,500,000
		Pakistan	\$6,500,000
UNFPA	Health, Protection	Afghanistan	\$28,200,000
		Pakistan	\$5,750,000
UNHCR	Education, ERMS, HCIMA, Health, Logistics Support, MPCA, Protection, Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Afghanistan	\$39,300,000
		Pakistan	\$21,900,000
		Regional	\$20,800,000
UNICEF	Education, Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Pakistan	\$6,650,000
<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING</b>			<b>\$200,543,858</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE AFGHANISTAN RESPONSE IN FY 2023</b>			<b>\$844,007,121</b>

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds.

<sup>2</sup> USG funding for Afghanistan totals more than \$2 billion since August 2021. This includes nearly \$1.5 billion in USAID/BHA funding and more than \$536 million in State/PRM funding.

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed, often in the affected region; reduce the burden on scarce resources, such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space; can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)