

Afghanistan – Complex Emergency

MARCH 8, 2024

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

23.7 MILLION	17.3 MILLION	32.1 MILLION	15.8 MILLION	6.6 MILLION
People in Afghanistan in Need of Humanitarian Assistance in 2024	Afghans Prioritized for Humanitarian Assistance Under the 2024 HNRP	People Reached With Humanitarian Assistance in Afghanistan in 2023	People in Afghanistan Experiencing Acute Food Insecurity Between November 2023 and March 2024	Total Number of IDPs in Afghanistan as of December 2022
<i>UN – December 2023</i>	<i>UN – December 2023</i>	<i>UN – December 2023</i>	<i>IPC – November 2023</i>	<i>IOM – June 2023</i>

- The 2024 HNRP estimates that 23.7 million people in Afghanistan—more than half the population—will require humanitarian aid in 2024.
- Most of Afghanistan experienced record-low precipitation between October and late January. The unusually dry and warm start to the winter may impact harvests in 2024. Severe winter weather, including heavy precipitation, resulted in at least 39 deaths in late February and early March.
- Afghan returns from Pakistan—which sharply increased beginning in October 2023—had returned to previous levels as of February. Relief actors continue to assist returnees at the border and in destination areas.



TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For the Afghanistan Response in FY 2024	USAID/BHA ¹	\$66,035,660
	State/PRM ²	\$14,060,000
Total		\$80,095,660

For complete funding breakdown with partners, see detailed chart on page 7

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

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

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

2024 HNRP Requests \$3.1 Billion to Meet Needs Fueled by Displacement, Instability, and Climatic Conditions

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) for Afghanistan on December 23, 2023, outlining projected humanitarian needs and funding requirements for the coming year. The HNRP estimates that 23.7 million people across Afghanistan, more than half the country's population, will require humanitarian assistance in 2024. While this total represents a decrease from the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan's estimate of 29.2 million people in need, OCHA emphasized that the reduction is largely due to the 2024 HNRP's application of a more rigorous methodology for estimating the breadth and severity of humanitarian needs. The 2024 figure, which still represents a significant increase since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, does not reflect an improvement of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan compared to 2023, as the effects of decades of conflict, such as protracted mass displacement and poor economic conditions, as well as extreme weather conditions and natural disasters exacerbated by climate change continue to drive widespread needs. In particular, communities in Herat Province continue to recover from a series of earthquakes in October 2023—which resulted in the death of 1,480 people and injury to 1,950 others, according to the UN—and remain dependent on humanitarian aid. While direct conflict has significantly declined since 2021, instability and armed attacks, including the use of improvised explosive devices, continue to pose a significant risk to civilians, and chronic poverty and high unemployment, particularly among women, are expected to continue to drive humanitarian needs in 2024. The HNRP also highlights the ongoing protection crisis in Afghanistan, driven in large part by Taliban-imposed restrictions on the participation of women and girls in activities outside the home, which has impacted their ability to access basic services. In addition, internal displacement and continued cross-border returns from Iran and Pakistan are straining already limited resources and livelihoods in many areas, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in informal settlements are at high risk of eviction.

The HNRP requests nearly \$3.1 billion from donors to meet the needs of 17.3 million people across Afghanistan in 2024, compared with \$3.2 billion requested in 2023. Due to funding shortfalls in recent years, OCHA reports that the 2024 HNRP is narrower in scope compared with previous response plans and is more focused on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable Afghans in areas facing the most severe levels of need. As of March 8, OCHA reports that the 2024 HNRP is only 3 percent funded. Nevertheless, relief actors plan to focus on providing life-saving assistance—including access to food, health care, and safe drinking water—and ensuring the centrality of protection in the humanitarian response in Afghanistan during the year.

Low Precipitation in Early Winter Impacts Planting; Extreme Weather Drives Needs in March

Most provinces of Afghanistan received only 60 to 90 percent of average precipitation levels between October and late January, contrary to previous forecasts that El Niño conditions would drive high precipitation, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). Conditions were particularly abnormal in northern and eastern Afghanistan, parts of which recorded less than 60 percent of average precipitation. Much of Afghanistan subsequently experienced heavy precipitation in late January and early February, and, as of late January, FEWS NET continued to forecast average to above-average precipitation during the remainder of the winter season. However, a lack of water available for irrigation had negatively impacted the growth of crops planted in October in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan as of late January, and many farmers in eastern, northern, and western Afghanistan—

particularly Herat and Nangarhar provinces—had not yet planted wheat, the most important staple food crop in Afghanistan, which is primarily planted in the winter and spring. Additionally, Afghanistan experienced above-average temperatures between October and January, reducing soil moisture and the availability of water—including snowmelt, with snow water volume across the country reportedly at the lowest level on record as of late January—according to FEWS NET. This lack of water may negatively impact the growth of crops planted in the winter and spring, as well as reduce the availability of fodder for livestock. High temperatures in March are also expected to drive an increased likelihood of earlier-than-usual flash flooding due to snowmelt, which could impede farmers from carrying out agricultural activities in early spring, particularly in eastern and southeastern Afghanistan, FEWS NET reports.

FEWS NET and relief actors continue to monitor the potential impact of the abnormally dry and hot conditions recorded between October and January on food security in 2024. The most recent IPC analysis, released in October 2023 under the assumption that precipitation would be above-average during the winter months, projected that 15.8 million people across Afghanistan—or 36 percent of the population—would experience Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity between November and March, including nearly 3.6 million people facing Emergency—IPC 4—conditions; in particular, more than half the population of Badghis and Herat provinces were expected to experience

IPC Status November 2023–March 2024	
Phase 5	0 people in Catastrophe
Phase 4	3,570,083 people in Emergency
Phase 3	12,253,597 people in Crisis
Phase 2	16,389,218 people in Stress
Phase 1	12,319,702 people Minimally Food Insecure

Crisis or worse conditions.³ In addition to delaying planting, the UN World Food Program (WFP) reports that the lack of precipitation between October and January led to a significant decline in the availability of agricultural work opportunities, reducing incomes for households dependent on this type of labor. Approximately 45 percent of households surveyed in a December WFP assessment reported a significant decrease in their income, which indicates the adverse impact of reduced seasonal labor opportunities at the end of the harvest season, as well as the delayed onset of the winter planting season, according to WFP.

In late February and early March, following months of above-average temperatures, much of Afghanistan experienced heavy rainfall and snowfall and extremely low temperatures, resulting in the death of at least 39 people and injury to 30 others as of March 4, international media report. According to international media, citing the Taliban National Disaster Management Authority, the severe weather had also led to the loss of more than 13,000 livestock and damaged or destroyed approximately 600 houses as of the same date, and many major roads were closed due to flooding, landslides, or snowfall. The

most affected provinces include Badghis, Badakhshan, Faryab, Helmand, Jawzjan, Kandahar, and Sar-e-Pul, according to the European Commission’s Department for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Previously, on February 18, heavy precipitation triggered an avalanche in Nuristan Province’s Nurgram District, resulting in at least 25 deaths, international media report. USAID/BHA partners continue to monitor severe weather conditions and resulting humanitarian needs.

³ 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.

Taliban Impediments and Restrictions on Women Continue to Limit Humanitarian Access

Taliban restrictions on the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate freely continue to limit humanitarian access in Afghanistan. Relief actors in Afghanistan reported 137 incidents that disrupted humanitarian access in January—representing a 30 percent increase compared to December but similar to levels in October and November—of which 113 resulted from Taliban-imposed impediments, according to OCHA. Taliban restrictions and interference in January included requests for sensitive information on staff and operations; delays in signing memoranda of understanding, which are required for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to carry out programs in Afghanistan; interference in beneficiary selection; and restrictions on the participation of female aid workers. In particular, relief actors reported 22 incidents in January which female staff were restricted from delivering aid and participating in assessments. In total, relief actors reported nearly 1,800 access incidents in 2023, of which nearly 460 involved female participation in aid programs. According to ACAPS, Taliban directives in 2023 focused on social control and access to education and employment and have exacerbated protection risks for women and girls, severely impacting their mental and physical health and disrupting the well-being of families, particularly women-headed households. Despite the hostile operating environment in Afghanistan, relief actors—including USAID/BHA partners—continue to adapt their activities to ensure the inclusion of women and girls, including engaging with Taliban representatives to secure assurances or exemptions that allow female staff to participate in the delivery of aid.

Relief Actors Continue Supporting Returnees as New Arrivals From Pakistan Subside

The Government of Pakistan (GoP)'s announcement in early October 2023 that all undocumented Afghans residing in Pakistan—an estimated 1.3 million people—would be deported beginning November 1 led to a surge in Afghans returning from Pakistan. Between September 15, 2023, and February 10, 2024, approximately 515,000 Afghan returnees crossed the border from Pakistan, with as many as 25,000 people per day entering Afghanistan by early November, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). However, by early February, the flow of returnees from Pakistan had returned to levels recorded prior to the surge, with an average of 200 to 300 people entering per day. Relief actors operating at the border, including U.S. Government (USG) partners IOM and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), continue to provide assistance to people entering Afghanistan. IOM reports that nearly 90 percent of returnees entering Afghanistan have expressed an intention to return to their provinces of origin, which were predominantly Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar as of early February. Humanitarian organizations, including USAID/BHA partners, are working to integrate returnees into existing assistance programs in destination areas.

KEY FIGURES



18.6 Million

People reached with USAID/BHA and other donor-supported WFP food and nutrition assistance in 2023

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY

The USG supports the delivery of life-saving emergency food assistance across Afghanistan, providing at-risk 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 2024 after reaching 18.6 million people across Afghanistan in 2023. Additionally, USAID/BHA-supported international NGO (INGO) partners are providing seeds and livestock feed in areas at risk of food insecurity to bolster the

capacity of vulnerable households, along with food and other assistance.

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 more than 1.1 million children ages five years and younger and provided treatment for severe acute malnutrition to more than 45,600 children during January. USAID/BHA also supports coordination and information management among food security actors and assessments in Afghanistan to strengthen humanitarian response efforts.



9

Number of USG implementing partners conducting protection interventions

PROTECTION

USG partners—such as State/PRM partner UNHCR—provide protection assistance to IDPs, refugees, returnees, and other vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. Additionally, USG INGO and UN partners support mental health and psychosocial support (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 and provide legal assistance to returning refugees to access documentation. As of January 15, with USAID/BHA and other donor support, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and its NGO partners had reached more than 77,100 earthquake-affected people in Herat with maternal health, MHPSS, and reproductive health, as well as the distribution of essential supplies such as blankets and other shelter items.



1.9 Million

Number of people WHO and other partners reached with health services between October 2023 and March 2024

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. WHO and other health actors reached nearly 900,000 individuals across all 34 provinces of Afghanistan with health services—including maternal, newborn, and child health services, as well as immunizations; MHPSS services; and primary and secondary health care consultations—in January. Furthermore, UNICEF and other partners provided MHPSS services, primary health care consultations, surgeries, and treatment for trauma cases

for earthquake-affected individuals in Herat.



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 shelters, and multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) 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 heating costs for at-risk households. With USAID/BHA and other donor support, IOM distributed emergency relief and shelter kits, as well as winter items, including blankets and clothing, reaching approximately 84,000 individuals affected by earthquakes in Herat through late November.

WASH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM partners—including IOM, UNICEF, and NGO partners—are working to meet water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs in Afghanistan through the provision of safe drinking water and essential hygiene items, the rehabilitation of water and sanitation systems, and hygiene promotion activities. With support from USAID/BHA and other donors, UNICEF provided safe drinking water to nearly 82,000 people across 12 provinces in January through the repair, rehabilitation, and drilling of boreholes and the installation of solar-powered water supply systems. The UN agency also provided hygiene promotion awareness sessions that reached more than 71,000 people across 15 provinces during the month.



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, returnees, 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. 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, earthquakes and other natural disasters, and poor economic conditions have drastically increased levels of humanitarian need throughout Afghanistan. The UN predicts that 23.7 million people will require humanitarian assistance in 2024.
- 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 9, 2023, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker reissued a declaration of humanitarian need for FY 2024 due to the continued impact of the ongoing complex emergency.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE AFGHANISTAN RESPONSE IN FY 2024^{5,6}

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
USAID/BHA			
Implementing Partner (IP)	Health, MPCA, Nutrition, Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Countrywide	\$3,000,000
IOM	Shelter and Settlements, WASH	Countrywide	\$31,000,000
OCHA	Humanitarian Coordination, Information Management, and Assessments (HCIMA)	Countrywide	\$1,200,000
UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	HCIMA	Countrywide	\$500,000
UNICEF	MPCA, Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Countrywide	\$30,245,916
	Program Support		\$89,744
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING			\$66,035,660
STATE/PRM			
IPs	Multi-Sector	Afghanistan	\$9,060,000
UNHCR	Economic Recovery and Market Systems, HCIMA, Health, Logistics Support and Relief Commodities, Protection, WASH	Afghanistan	\$5,000,000
TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING			\$14,060,000
TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE AFGHANISTAN RESPONSE IN FY 2024			\$80,095,660

⁵Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of March 8, 2024.

⁶ USG funding for Afghanistan totals more than \$2 billion since August 2021. This includes more than \$1.5 billion in USAID/BHA funding and nearly \$550 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)