

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AFGHANISTAN IN 2007



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CORE COUNTRY DATA

Population under five (thousands)	5535
U5 mortality rate	257
Infant mortality rate	165
Maternal mortality ratio (1990-2005, reported)	1600
% U1 fully immunized (DPT3)	76
% population using improved drinking water sources	39
Estimated no. of people (all ages) living with HIV, 2005 (thousands)	<1.0
% U5 suffering from moderate and severe stunting*	54
Population under five (thousands)	5535

Source: *The State of the World's Children 2007*
* Ministry of Health/CDC survey

Summary of UNICEF financial needs for 2007

Sector	US\$
Health and nutrition	1,908,636
Water and environmental sanitation	2,093,548
Education	8,013,631
Child protection	275,775
Humanitarian response and coordination	3,670,322
Total *	15,961,912

* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

The consequences of the conflict in Afghanistan over the past decades, periodic natural disasters, extreme weather conditions, impeded access to services, and displacements and hardship caused by the ongoing insurgency continue to threaten the well-being of its people, especially children and women. Against this backdrop, demonstrated peace dividends are hard to come by for this vulnerable segment of the population, causing extreme suffering. While development investments with a long-term perspective are taking place, there is a pressing need to provide humanitarian support to Afghanistan.

With a maternal mortality ratio of 1,600 deaths per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in the world, there is almost one death every half hour. The infant mortality rate is 165 per 1,000 live births and one child out of four does not survive his/her fifth birthday. Among under-five children, 6.7 per cent suffer from acute malnutrition and 54 per cent of them are chronically malnourished (Ministry of Health/CDC survey).

Access to health services is improving; however disparities between provinces and regions remain an issue. Immunization coverage for DPT1, DPT3 and measles1 is estimated at 88, 76 and 64 per cent respectively. Preventable or easily-treated diseases, such as diarrhoea, respiratory infections, measles and malaria remain the main killers of Afghan children. Only 23 per cent of the entire population have access to potable water. Access to sanitation facilities is similarly low, at 12 per cent.

Two million children of primary school age (54 per cent) are out of school with an estimated 1.3 million of these being girls. Attacks on schools have been on the rise and gains made in education in the last five years run the risk of being lost. More than 100 school incidents, including school burnings, missile attacks, explosions and threats against staff and families, have been reported since January 2006. Children eager to be educated and included are being schooled in tents, under trees or canvases, dilapidated buildings, or exposed openly to the harsh climatic conditions of Afghanistan. Despite the approximately 2,000 schools that have been rehabilitated or constructed since 2002, there is a projected need to target the construction of an additional 2,000 schools every year for three years.

The security situation, particularly in the South and South-East, is deteriorating and affecting access to basic services and development assistance. Recent armed conflict in these areas has resulted in the displacement of some 15,000 families, expected to increase over time. Pending a voluntary return, these displaced families who are vulnerable and exposed to all kinds of hazards will continue to require relief assistance including non-food items and social services such as potable water, health care and education. Landmines and unexploded ordnance continue to affect all regions of the country with 100 victims each month.

Afghanistan has an annual cycle of small- to medium-scale natural disasters. Flooding is the most common and frequent one. Caused by the melting of snow as well as rains, it contaminates the already poor water supplies, resulting in diarrhoeal disease outbreaks and the destruction of or damage to livestock, crops, homes, and other infrastructures. Extreme cold weather combined with a lack of appropriate housing and heating systems increases the likelihood of acute respiratory infections and mortality among children. Prolonged conflict has severely reduced the coping capacities of not only the government, but also the communities, thus leaving the demand for relief and humanitarian assistance likely to remain as high, if not increase altogether, until more sustainable development measures are set in place to mitigate the effects of disasters.

Some 2.5 million people in 13 provinces in the North, North-East, West and the South are facing a serious drought, causing displacements, child malnutrition, spread of disease, water shortages and exposure to exploitation due to loss of livelihood.

2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

In close collaboration with local, national and international partners, UNICEF has continued to respond to the humanitarian needs of the population affected by natural and man-made disasters.

As a result of internal displacement in the South and an increased vulnerability to health hazards, 277,700 children were vaccinated against measles and received vitamin A supplements, in addition to 1,000 children who were immunized following a number of localized measles outbreaks. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Public Health in conveying hygiene education messages to over 2 million people in four major cities with the aim to control and prevent diarrhoeal diseases during the high-risk summer months. As of September 2006, non-food items (family kits, blankets, tarpaulin, jackets, water tanks and medicines) were distributed to 4,000 families affected by natural disasters (floods, avalanches, landslides, cold weather, strapping wind and earthquake) and to 2,727 internally displaced families in the South. In response to an outbreak of acute respiratory infections more than 2,000 children were provided antibiotics and additional medicines.

In response to the drought, UNICEF supported the Government of Afghanistan to provide potable water to 110,000 people in drought-affected areas of Northern provinces through water tankering. UNICEF also provided 23 collapsible water tanks in the collection points and distributed 250 drums (50 kg/drum) of chlorine and 2 million water purification tablets to high-risk areas. More than 15 water yards (including drilling of deep borewells) were initiated in strategic areas covering a large population in order to provide access to safe drinking water within affordable reach, covering at least 600,000 people.

Immediate assistance was provided to the schools damaged following school burnings and attacks, and floods, to resume school functionality. Support included the provision of teaching/learning supplies, tents, floor mats as well as the rehabilitation of four schools. More than 461 school tents and 1,800 floor mats were distributed to address school incidents and lack of appropriate learning spaces.

UNICEF also provided emergency preparedness and response training to 175 government/UNICEF staff to enhance their capacity, particularly on the issues concerning children and women during emergencies.

3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

Coordination and partnership

Emergency response is coordinated by the Government of Afghanistan, through its Emergency Response Commission, incorporating eight line ministries. UN system support is provided through this Commission, along with NGO inputs, and coordinated by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA). A Combined Disaster Management Team (CDMT), consisting of UN agencies, NGOs and local authorities, is tasked with the practical implementation of emergency response and reports to the Commission.

Regular programme

Emergency preparedness and response activities are fully integrated into the main programme sectors of the UNICEF Country Programme 2006-2008. In addition to mainstreaming support to national and area-based capacity-building, each programme sector is responsible for ensuring that a humanitarian response element is included in its annual work plan to support the development of emergency response capacity and management among government counterparts.

Health and nutrition (US\$ 1,908,636)

Some 200,000 vulnerable children among the displaced, host communities and impoverished will benefit from the following key activities:

- Distribute essential emergency drugs and equipment to 200,000 children, particularly to internally displaced and drought-affected children through health centres;
- Continue assessment, technical support and provision of nutritional supplies to therapeutic feeding centres previously established and run by partners for 2,000 severely malnourished children in drought-affected areas;
- Administer vitamin A to 100,000 internally displaced and drought-affected children;
- Vaccinate 100,000 children against measles, particularly internally displaced and drought-affected children;
- Provide rapid response to diarrhoeal and acute respiratory disease outbreaks with a planning figure of 200,000 children in high-risk areas.

Water and environmental sanitation (US\$ 2,093,548)

Some 200,000 people from internally displaced and drought-affected communities, focusing particularly on children and women, will be reached through the following key activities:

- Provide water purification tablets at the household levels for 10,000 families;
- Support water tankering for a population of 200,000 in drought-affected areas of the North, North-East, South and Western regions;
- Chlorinate 10,000 wells in high-risk areas;
- Construct 10,000 family latrines;
- Repair 1,500 water points in drought-affected areas, mainly in schools;
- Promote hygiene education and hygiene awareness programmes amongst 10,000 families, schools and surrounding local communities;
- Provide collapsible water tanks.

Education (US\$ 8,013,631)

A total of 2.2 million children will benefit from the following key activities:

- Construct 600 cost-effective schools/classrooms in remote areas for 24,000 children, including latrine construction, water point establishment, hygiene education and training of teachers on participatory approaches to promote healthy behaviour among children;
- Procure teaching/learning materials for 2.2 million primary school-aged children;
- Procure supplies for temporary learning spaces for 40,000 children;
- Distribute supplies for children in remote areas and for temporary learning spaces.

Child protection (US\$ 275,775)

Children affected by armed conflict and natural disasters are targeted through the following key activities:

- Create child-friendly spaces and interim care centres;
- Establish child rights monitoring committees with women's participation in disaster-affected areas;
- Trace and reunite separated children;
- Sensitize the community on child abuse, violence and exploitation through local media channels and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
- Provide mine-risk education to schoolchildren of affected communities.

Emergency relief items and coordination (US\$ 3,670,322)

In coordination with the Government/UN emergency preparedness and response mechanism, UNICEF will pre-position relevant supplies in its zonal offices and other strategic locations. This will cover 30,000 families with a standard package of family kits, tarpaulins, jerrycans, blankets and warm clothing for women and children.