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Reporting Period: 1 August to 20 August 2021

# Afghanistan

## Humanitarian Situation Report

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### Highlights

- The ongoing political upheaval, conflict, internal displacement and drought have heightened underlying vulnerabilities of children and their families in Afghanistan.
- UNICEF is supporting emergency WASH services, including the provision of safe water through water trucking, construction and repair of hand-pumps along with provision of supplies and hygiene promotion.
- Primary healthcare and nutrition services are continuing in health facilities as well as through mobile health teams.
- In sites hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kabul, UNICEF is providing immunization, nutrition screening, child protection interventions and safe water with NGO partners.
- Present in Afghanistan for more than 65 years, UNICEF is committed to stay and deliver the support needed by the vulnerable Afghan population.

### Situation in Numbers



### Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Political upheaval, conflict, and internal displacement has greatly exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Over the past weeks, the Taliban made rapid advances taking control of Kandahar, Uruzgan, Hilmand and Zabul provinces, and ultimately Kabul on 15 August.

The volatile environment has heightened underlying vulnerabilities of children and their families, creating greater need for protection and assistance in the country. Even at the start of 2021, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance stood at 18.4 million, 9.7 million of whom are children.

Since the end of May, the number of people displaced across the country more than doubled, reaching 550,000 people, more than half of them children. Due to an escalation of conflict, many people arrived in Kabul and other large cities, seeking safety from the conflict and humanitarian assistance. Between 1 July and 15 August 2021, the humanitarian community verified 17,600 IDPs who had arrived in Kabul. According to preliminary reports, IDPs are now returning to their areas of origin, especially in the southern region. In addition, shops and markets are now opening in cities across Afghanistan. Some private schools have reopened along with resumption of Community Based Education (CBE) classes in some locations, but formal schools are still closed due to the summer holidays and COVID-19 restrictions.

### Summary Analysis of Programme Response

#### Health

In response to the influx of IDPs to major cities, such as Kabul and Kandahar, UNICEF relocated its mobile health teams to the IDP locations and partnered with other health stakeholders to provide basic health services to the affected population. Some 2,500 children and 1,700 pregnant and lactating women received basic health services and health education in IDP settlements. In addition, UNICEF provided bed nets to 400 pregnant women to protect them against

malaria and, vaccinated children between 6 months to 10 years against polio and measles. UNICEF also supplied 10 tents to establish health services in IDP camps and expand capacity for services in two regional hospitals (Kandahar and Herat).

Prepositioning of health supplies, including COVID-19 vaccines, to the field offices to support provinces is ongoing. To respond to the rise of COVID-19 cases in rural areas UNICEF supplied more than 50,000 PPEs, including N95 masks, to 13 remote health facilities and district hospitals. UNICEF also dispatched medicine, lab consumables and equipment to COVID-19 hospitals across the 34 provinces. Despite the current volatile situation that prevailed, COVID-19 vaccination continues, albeit at a drop in the number of people vaccinated. During the first two weeks of August, 200,000 people received COVID-19 vaccines while close to 2 million have been reached since the vaccination started in March 2021.

To further expand its outreach of integrated health and nutrition services, UNICEF is doubling the number of mobile teams (currently 57).

## **Nutrition**

Nutrition programmes continue throughout the country. While there were some localized disruptions in places with active fighting, services resumed as soon as the security conditions permitted. During the first two weeks of August, an estimated 11,000 children aged under-five suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) were provided with lifesaving therapeutic treatment through the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), health facilities and mobile teams across the country. The figure is slightly lower than expected and does indicate that there has been an impact on access either due to COVID-19 or the conflict.

UNICEF is working with the national authorities and partners for the distribution of therapeutic supplies for the fourth quarter of 2021 and prepositioning of supplies for the winter in the first quarter of 2022. Supplies for SAM will be delivered by road from Pakistan to avoid the logistical challenges at the Hamid Karzai International Airport. UNICEF integrated the nutrition preventive and treatment services into the two mobile health teams working in IDP settlements in Kabul.

UNICEF ensured that integrated mobile teams can be scaled up rapidly, with planning in place to deploy nearly 50 more teams over the next quarter. UNICEF is in the process of doubling the number of nutrition extenders in the field to further support, coordinate and monitor the nutrition programmes at the field level.

Nutrition programmes by some of the cluster partners were constrained by the inability to provide cash for the transport and accommodation of caregivers traveling with SAM children with medical complications who needed inpatient treatment. Implementing partners were guided to provide food-based in-kind assistance instead to alleviate malnutrition.

## **Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence and PSEA**

In August 2021, UNICEF scaled up its child protection response by providing immediate and life-saving services to children affected by conflict and displacement. At the time of writing, immediate cash assistance, transportation, referral to medical service and other services have been provided to a total of 330 children, including 83 boys and 247 girls. Psychosocial support was also provided to 1,462 children (762 boys and 700 girls) and their caregivers or parents. These children are from the conflict affected IDP families including separated children as a result of the recent active fighting in North, Northeast, South, Eastern and West Region provinces.

Furthermore, UNICEF supported integrated case management for 327 children (280 boys and 47 girls) and family tracing and reunification services for 169 children (112 boys and 50 girls). 65 unaccompanied and separated children have been registered in Kabul airport before departure to other countries/destinations. Additional support to children on family tracing and reunification continues along with advocacy on prevention of family separation at all levels. In Kabul, 300 out of 900 households were registered in Kobo for child protection case management and cash transfer support. However, cash transfer has been delayed due to the current suspension of banking services.

UNICEF is working, with other sectors and NGO partners, to support survivors of sexual violence with urgent assistance. UNICEF also referred 60 children (47 boys and 13 girls) to other needed services. With continued risk of unexploded ordnance, UNICEF and partners disseminated Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) for increased awareness and prevention of injury and harm to 284 people (204 male and 80 female).

The UNICEF Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) taskforce has revised and translated the PSEA materials into Pashto and Dari for staff, partners and beneficiaries and these materials are currently being reprinted. The materials will increase awareness on SEA and new reporting guidelines.

## **Education**

During the first two weeks of August, midterm and end-of year exams (class level) were finalized. Schools remained closed, either due to summer holidays or awaiting formal communication from the Ministry of Education on re-opening of schools after COVID-19 lockdown. Preparatory activities aimed to support the resumption of education activities were affected by the ongoing political developments. In areas under their control, the Taliban has started to appoint provincial and/or district education directors. UNICEF continues to engage with all actors to advocate for the reopening of schools and continued access to education for girls. During the reporting period, UNICEF distributed textbooks, classroom materials and tents in six provinces benefiting 7,503 children, including 3,902 girls.

## **WASH**

As the Cluster-Lead Agency and Provider-of-Last-Resort, UNICEF provided safe water through water trucking to 12,500 drought-affected people in Chakhansor district of Nimroz province. Nimroz is one of the water-stressed areas where ground water is either not available or not drinkable due to high salinity and people rely on rainwater. The intervention has been ongoing since for the past two months to avoid displacement of people from their places of origin.

In six districts of Balkh province, UNICEF assessed 27,700 families affected by the drought who are in need of safe water. Water trucking will commence shortly to support them. Safe water was also provided to 5,520 people in informal settlements in Kabul through the rehabilitation of 12 hand-pump wells and construction of six new hand-pump wells. In Kandahar city, 1,141 IDPs were provided with safe drinking water. UNICEF is also supporting the operation and maintenance of sanitation facilities and services in Kandahar. In the current drought and water scarcity context, UNICEF is also advocating with local authorities to use innovative mechanisms such as the use of explosives for deepening wells as bedrock aquifer method to increase access to safe water.

3,144 people in Balkh province participated in hygiene promotion interventions with further supply distributions planned next month. During the reporting period, 3,720 families affected by the conflict and drought in eight provinces received family hygiene kits. 17,500 people in informal settlements in Kabul province were also provided with hygiene supplies and received hygiene messages.

WASH partners, including UNICEF, have emergency stocks, including 26,460 hygiene kits, 5,679 water kits, 1,865 latrine kits/slabs, 31 water storage tanks of different capacities and 3.3 million Aqua tabs, in 44 locations across 26 provinces. These can cover the needs of 185,000 people for a period of one month.

## **Social Protection and Cash Transfers**

Preparations for multipurpose cash distribution were underway following the roll out of the Humanitarian Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) management information system in July 2021, but the evolving situation has delayed the registration and distributions. In Samangan Province, the registration of 1,000 vulnerable households is ongoing and distribution is expected to start as soon as the financial sector reopens. In Jalalabad (Nangarhar Province), an additional 360 households were registered, and distribution will take place once the financial service provider resumes operations. Existing caseloads from previous Humanitarian Cash Transfer programmes in Herat Province (2,500 households) and Ghor (300 households) are being considered for further support. These are households previously reached through the winterisation programme and support to vulnerable households of children living in the streets and working in brick kilns.

## **Communications for Development (C4D), Community Engagement, and Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)**

A rapid information needs assessment was conducted through U-Report to assess priority information needs of at risk and affected populations. The assessment covered over 100,000 people across the country and focused on their access to humanitarian assistance and preferred complaints and feedback mechanisms.

Approximately 1,200 IDPs in Padola camp in the outskirts of Kabul City, received information on hygiene, health, nutrition, protection and COVID-19 prevention measures, along with humanitarian assistance.

AAP and C4D related questions have been integrated in WASH End-User Monitoring and Programme documents to ensure interventions are coherent and well monitored over the next four months. Furthermore, the Integrated Emergency Booklet which contains key lifesaving information was revised and will be distributed to civil society partners and communities during the last quarter of the year. As part of the Spotlight Project, 46 interagency staff participated in the orientation and development of IEC materials for GBV prevention and response.

## Gender and Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF, in collaboration with local partners, supported adolescent girls and young women affected by current crisis to access lifesaving information and services unique to their needs through women and girls' safe spaces. In August, 893 adolescent girls, youths and women came to Bagrami Safe Space in Kabul to receive information on gender roles, GBV risk mitigation and available basic services (GBV and health). They also benefitted from various services offered at the safe space, such as literacy classes, on-site library, access to computers and the internet, English classes, awareness programmes and vocational learning. 27 beneficiaries, including adolescent girls, youth and women, received psychosocial support during the period at the Bagrami Safe Space. A total of 383 beneficiaries (331 women) and (50 adolescent girls) received awareness-raising information about GBV prevention and available services through house-to-house visits by case workers in Bagrami. 250 (170 men and 80 women) Community Development Council (CDC) members were sensitized about GBV prevention in Bagrami villages.

In addition, UNICEF supported the establishment of seven men and boys' networks in Kandahar and Herat. Members engaged in activities related to the prevention of GBV and to promotion of child rights. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the establishment of seven Multi-purpose Adolescent Groups (MAGs) and 7 Adolescents and Youth Networks (AYNs), using these adolescent platforms. A total of 23 males and 37 females received key messages on GBV and information that promotes positive behaviours in their own communities. In Herat, 16 mentoring sessions, with a focus on child marriage and GBV, were conducted for 320 adolescent boys and girls.

## Human Interest Stories and External Media

Since the onset of the current crisis, ACO communication and advocacy section has been highlighting the impact of the triple crisis of instability, drought and COVID-19 on children in Afghanistan and positioning UNICEF as a credible voice speaking on behalf of children from inside the country.

Coverage of a [briefing by the UNICEF Afghanistan](#) representative includes [Voice of America](#), [Forbes](#), and more. Geneva Palais briefing includes two stories by Reuters on [UNICEF delivering aid](#), and [on girls education](#) with wide pick up including by [US News](#), [Daily Sabah](#), [Haaretz](#) and more. Other coverage includes [The Telegraph](#) [Al Jazeera](#), [AFP](#), [TRT World](#), [EFE](#), [CGTN](#), [Washington Post](#), Independent, [NPR](#) and more.

Continued coverage from Afghanistan includes several broadcast interviews by Sam Mort and Mustapha Ben Messaoud from UNICEF Afghanistan with [BBC Radio4](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [NPR](#), [BBC Radio Asia](#), [CNN International](#), [ITV](#), [NPR](#), and more.

## Next SitRep: 5 September 2021

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