Situation Overview & Humanitarian Need

Since the change of power, due to funding gaps, disruptions in services run by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Ministry of Education (MoE) are commonplace. Teacher and health worker salaries are unpaid for months and life-saving activities are severely crippled. Drought continues to affect over 80 per cent of the country and, with ongoing banking challenges and reduced access to money, malnutrition and food insecurity is on the rise. Disease outbreaks are also increasing with number of measles cases rising significantly, reaching 60,000 (23,963 confirmed cases reported by WHO) during the reporting period. Meanwhile acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) cases (including lab confirmed cases of cholera) have surpassed 900 and are rapidly propagating among the population in Kabul city and surrounding districts, facilitated by the decreased access to safe water and deteriorating hygiene conditions in the capital.

In addition to ongoing humanitarian needs, the daily COVID-19 messaging from the MoPH on prevention has decreased and therefore COVID-19 cases remain high with dozens of people in Afghanistan hospitalized. Disruptions in critical COVID-19 vaccination services has left 1.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines unused and at risk of expiry.

During the reporting period, grades 7 to 12 reopened on the 19th of September for only boys and male teachers. While secondary school has opened for girls as well in some locations, the lack of formal announcement of reopening of

Highlights

- With winter looming, during which temperatures can drop to a low of -12° Celsius, an estimated 12.1 million people need urgent assistance.
- Drought continues to severely affect Afghanistan. UNICEF provided water-trucking to 205,973 people affected by drought in 183 communities in Nimroz and Balkh provinces.
- On the 19th of September, the acting Minister of Education announced the opening of grades 7 to 12 (secondary education) for boys and male teachers only, raising questions with regards to the future of girls’ education across all grades. Fortunately, in some provinces, secondary education opened for both boys and girls. UNICEF continues its advocacy to ensure that all boys and girls, across all grades, have access to education.
- Detention, recruitment and use of children in armed groups have, reportedly, increased. The lack of formal reporting mechanisms and of a designated authority for child protection make it challenging to address and respond to violations.

Situation in Numbers

- 9,700,000 children in need of humanitarian assistance
- 18,400,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance
- 665,182 People displaced by conflict
school for girls in secondary school limits access to education for millions of girls and access to work for hundreds of female teachers. There is a critical need to ensure schools and health facilities are resourced to prevent collapse and all populations have access to life-saving services.

**Summary Analysis of Programme Response**

**Health**
In response to the rising measles cases, UNICEF, together with partners, are planning a nationwide integrated measles, polio, and vitamin-A campaign to respond to the measles outbreak. UNICEF is actively engaged with partners in responding to the AWD/ outbreak (that also includes confirmed cholera cases) in Kabul province and is mainly responsible for the awareness raising activities using multiple communication channels and the chlorination of water points in addition to distributing water-purification tablets and soap at household level.

During the reporting period, UNICEF provided essential and lifesaving supplies via mobile health and nutrition teams providing health services to the most vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas. More than 5,000 women and children (including IDPs) benefited from the health care services through 57 mobile teams across 2,000 service delivery points in 14 provinces. In addition, UNICEF supported the continued provision of key health services such as cold chain system, treatment of COVID-19 cases, and new-born care. The distributed health supplies included over 30 metric tonnes of medicines and basic equipment such as clean delivery kits, rehydration supplies for managing AWD cases, infection prevention control (IPC) supplies, including for personal hygiene (such as soaps and chlorine).

This is in addition to over 60,000 patients who are provided with services in three major hospitals in Kabul - Indra Gandhi, Ata Turk and Malalai maternity hospitals. UNICEF also provided over 50,000 litres of fuel to health facilities to maintain electricity critical for the operation of medical devices, cold chain equipment and new-born care.

To address the immediate health needs and sustain the ‘Sehatmandi project’, UNICEF is partnering with WHO under the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) project to maintain the provision of health services for the coming three months. Through this partnership, UNICEF will support more than 1,000 health facilities in 15 provinces that will provide essential health services to an estimated 12 million people, mostly women and children.

**Nutrition**
The provision of nutrition services continues in most service delivery points across the country through the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and non-BPHS humanitarian partners following the funding commitment made by CERF and Global Fund. UNICEF also continues providing nutrition services through integrated mobile health teams for hard-to-reach and IDP communities. During the reporting period an estimated 14,000 children under-five suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) received lifesaving therapeutic treatment. In addition, a total of 75,000 women received nutrition counselling services on maternal and infant & young child feeding.

The Nutrition Cluster, in close coordination with government and partners, conducted series of meetings on development of Humanitarian Need Overview and Response Plan (HNO/ HRP) 2022.

**Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence and PSEA**
UNICEF and partners provided a total of 26,908 (13,597 boys, 9,758 girls, 2,501 men and 1,052 women) affected by conflict and displacement with immediate and life-saving child protection services. More than 16,871 individuals (8,279 boys and 6,997 girls, 980 men and 615 women) benefited from recreation interventions, psychosocial support through child friendly spaces, home visits and referrals. Case management took place for a total of 657 (487 boys and 170 girls) children in several provinces across the country. More than 187 unaccompanied and separated children (13 girls) have been reunified with their parents and caregivers and 1,719 family members including 707 female heads of households were provided with cash assistance, transportation, referral to medical service and other services. A total
of 358 persons (66 boys, 96 girls, 97 men and 99 women) were reached with GBV response, prevention, and risk mitigation.

Food and other immediate items to cover needs were provided to 1,273 children (out of which 208 are female) and an assessment of 27 public and private residential care and orphanages took place to determine needs and response options. As more people return to their places of origin, UNICEF and its partners scaled up Explosive Ordnance and War Remanent (EORE) risk education reaching more than 7,080 individuals (3,798 boys, 1,815 girls, 1,169 men and 298 women).

As part of strengthening UNICEF and partners’ capacity on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), a total of 45 people (15 women and 30 men) drawn from 14 UNICEF implementing partners and 25 UNICEF suppliers were oriented on PSEA integration in their work, including available reporting mechanisms. The trainings will improve on their capacity to integrate SEA in their humanitarian response.

Education
During the reporting period, UNICEF and partners established 380 new community-based education (CBE) classes throughout the country, bringing the total to 4,190 functional CBEs since August 15th, reaching 115,204 children of which 57% are girls. In addition, 123,249 school children (43% girls) received school bags with learning kits in public schools.

Some international partners remain in hibernation due to lack of clarity and/or mixed messages from authorities regarding girls’ rights to education and women’s right to work. Given the uncertainties, anecdotal evidence from the ground suggests a drop in girls’ school attendance as girls and their families continue to express concern about their safety. The UNICEF supported Girl’s Access to Education (GATE) program, providing teacher training for female teachers is still on hold as are Accelerated Learning Centres that were previously under District or Provincial authorities.

WASH
205,973 drought-affected people were provided with access to safe water through life-saving water trucking to 183 communities in Nimroz and Balkh provinces.

A total of 227,353 people benefitted from hygiene promotion in Balkh, Kunar, Nimroz and Nangarhar. Distribution of 874 family hygiene kits and 38,530 soap bars reached 24,086 people affected by drought and conflict in Kunar, Nangarhar and Balkh provinces. Moreover, 18 drums of chlorine powder were distributed to Nangarhar regional hospital, Kunar and Laghman provincial hospitals for infection prevention and control. 17 drums of chlorine, 105 boxes of Aquatabs and IEC materials were distributed under the AWD integrated response to people at risk in Kabul city and Surobi district of Kabul province.

The WASH Cluster AWD taskforce was relaunched, following a Health/WASH inter-cluster joint decision taken on 30th September to move forward with integrated sectoral response plan, without duplicating the national Ministry of Public Health-lead acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) outbreak response plan. Moreover, WASH Cluster “Water Supply in Drought and Emergency” online technical training – led by DACAAR with UNICEF support began on Sept 15 with 110 registrations from 37 organizations (2 sessions per week until Oct 11).

Going forward there are reports that access to water is worsening as the water table is gradually depleting due to drought causing more water points to become dry. In the southern region most of the IDPs have returned to their places of origin and are in urgent need of WASH assistance.

Water surveillance and water scarcity early warning system for rapid response through water trucking and treatment – part of the WASH Cluster Drought Response Strategy & Plan – were integrated in 10 AHF (2RA 3RA) WASH projects proposals covering the 14 high risk priority provinces. Advocacy raised at ICCT/HCT level for to urge governments,
donors and development actors to increase water surveillance capacity and investments in longer-term climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes.

**Social Protection and Cash Transfers**

UNICEF started registration of more than 1,000 households in Samangan for a new Multi-Purpose Cash (MPC) response, targeting households with children with disabilities, families with pregnant and lactating women, and female headed households in drought affected areas. UNICEF’s Humanitarian cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) captured all household registration data to ensure that personal identifiable data is securely stored and handled. During this period, three new partners received training on the use of HOPE, supporting the scale up of humanitarian cash transfers across the country. UNICEF established new partnerships with Financial Service Providers (FSPs) to continue to deliver assistance despite challenging financial conditions.

As part of the integrated winterization strategy, UNICEF’s cash for winterization assistance will be designed to cover child specific expenditure at the household level, including winter clothing kits and blankets. This value is set at 105 USD per household, reaching 35,000 households with once-off winter assistance. In addition, UNICEF proposes to provide 35,000 of these households with social cash transfers, to help support households meet their essential needs during the current emergency, in a dignified way.

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

UNICEF is reaching communities with key lifesaving messages through community engagement interventions, media, and U-report. A total of 77 community health workers, 50 religious leaders and 161 school management Shura members were oriented on the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine to increase knowledge of communities and engagement people on increasing vaccine uptake during the reporting period. 30,000 community members were engaged on COVID-19 risk communication and vaccination demand generation.

The poll on community needs through U-Report continues with 128,066 people currently participating. The main objectives of the poll are to gain a better understanding of community needs and provide information about where to receive assistance.

A media campaign launched on 26 September, and will continue until 9 October, broadcasting key messages about COVID-19 vaccination and acute watery diarrhoea, reaching approximately six million people across the country. 15 Radio programs and five round-table discussions on TV regarding COVID-19 vaccination reached 346,423 people. Over 100 callers were provided with additional information about the benefits of the vaccine, its effectiveness, side effects and debunking rumours.

As AWD cases increase, C4D supported the response through integrating AWD TV spots into ongoing COVID-19 campaigns, supporting production of Behavioural Change and Communication (BCC) materials, and launching community engagement intervention in Kabul together with health section.

**Gender and Adolescent Development and Participation**

25 women and girls received life skills sessions in Bagrami Safe space in Kabul accompanied by psychosocial support and life-saving information on available basic services. 28 multi-purpose adolescent groups (MAGs) and five adolescent and youth networks (AYNs) were established. Through these adolescent platforms, 280 adolescent girls and 320 adolescent boys in Herat city, Żenda Jan, İnjl and Karokh districts of Herat province were reached with awareness on education, GBV and child marriage preventions and various life skills education. 63 influential community elders, community members and local authorities were orientated on women and girls’ vulnerability to GBV risks and community leaders’ role on protection of women and girls.
Most of the women and girls’ friendly spaces have scaled down significantly or closed completely until there is clarity on female empowerment and GBV programming. This continues to compromise women and girls’ access to life saving information and services. Jointly with female led CSOs, to maintain operations, modifications, and adaptations to some activities in terms of language and approach are underway. In Bagrami, women and girls’ friendly space, life skills sessions such as English courses, are done online with targeted female beneficiaries.

**Human Interest Stories and External Media**

The communication and advocacy section continues engaging with local and international media to ensure the situation of children in Afghanistan is highlighted, in addition to supporting ACO fundraising activities. Multimedia materials provided by UNICEF to UNIFEED (the United Nations broadcast quality video news content platform) was amongst the top performing again and was used 669 times by broadcasters from Romania, Finland, Switzerland, Germany, BBC World, Sky News and more.

During the reporting period a [statement by UNICEF Executive Director](mailto:hdelys@unicef.org) welcoming the reopening of schools and highlighting the importance of including girls in higher education, a [news note on UNICEF supplies](mailto:fackebo@unicef.org) arriving through the EU humanitarian airbridge, and [b-roll on vaccine delivery](mailto:smort@unicef.org) to Ghor province were issued.

**Next SitRep: 22 October**

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