

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Children are experiencing the worst of Afghanistan's unparalleled and complex crisis. The political transition, such recurrent disasters as floods, landslides, droughts and earthquakes, the adverse impacts of climate change and increasing restrictions on women and girls have heightened protection risks and humanitarian needs at the household level. Humanitarian needs across all sectors have expanded since 2021 and reveal a lack of resilience among vulnerable communities and the consequences of diminished investment in meeting basic human needs.

Restrictive policies affecting women and girls profoundly impact Afghan society and its future. Continued bans on secondary and post-secondary education for girls, mahram requirements and prohibitions on women working in many sectors limit their participation in communities and their access to services, violating their fundamental human rights. These restrictions lead to social and economic isolation, mental distress and negative coping strategies. Moreover, the operating environment has become more restrictive, with decrees and laws obstructing timely service delivery and creating barriers for specific sectors, agencies and implementation modalities. These impediments are expected to escalate, further increasing humanitarian needs. A robust field presence and a strong capacity to negotiate at the local level couldn't be more important.

WASH needs remain alarming: 27 per cent of rural households rely on unimproved water sources, compared with 13 per cent of urban households, and 36 per cent of rural households use unimproved sanitation facilities, compared with 13 per cent in urban areas.¹⁰ Poor WASH conditions contribute to rising malnutrition, particularly among infants, young children and mothers, a situation exacerbated by diarrhoeal diseases, inadequate water and sanitation services and poor hygiene practices. By 2025, 823,942 children will require treatment for severe wasting.¹¹ A fragile health-care system and unequal access to services, especially in rural areas, severely impacts vulnerable populations, with 91 per cent of households facing barriers to health services in 2024, compared with 77 per cent in 2023.¹²

The education sector continues to experience escalating needs due to restrictive policies, resulting in a growing number of out-of-school children. This trend will persist as girls who complete grade 6 have no options to continue their education, effectively freezing their futures. The impact of policies on community-based education services, combined with economic stagnation, has led 11 per cent of households to deprioritize schooling due to economic challenges, up from 4 per cent in 2023.¹³ Protection risks are paramount, with 23 per cent of households reporting at least one protection incident in the past three months, up from 19 per cent in 2023.¹⁴ Additionally, 21 per cent of households cited community violence as a protection concern.¹⁵

Increasing shocks (e.g., floods, landslides, epidemics and others)¹⁶ further compound vulnerabilities, with 95 per cent of households reporting experiencing at least one such shock, a rise from 87 per cent in 2022.¹⁷ Changing climate patterns and unpredictable rainfall have diminished communities' adaptive capacity. Without adequate investment in WASH infrastructure and rehabilitation, community resilience remains woefully inadequate, leaving millions dependent on humanitarian aid.

SECTOR NEEDS¹⁸



7.8 million
people in need of
nutrition assistance



9.4 million
Children in need of
protection services



8.9 million
children in need of
education support



21 million
People in need of
WASH services

STORY FROM THE FIELD



At just 45 days old, baby Mustapha has already fought for his life twice. He was born six weeks early and his mother, Rubaba, struggled to produce enough milk to breastfeed him. He became severely malnourished, very weak, and was not gaining weight. "He couldn't move his hands or legs. He was too weak to even cry," explains Rubaba.

Mustapha was referred to Ghor Provincial Hospital, where he received F-100 therapeutic milk, supplied to the hospital by UNICEF. He was also treated for a respiratory infection. Mustapha was discharged after gaining a full kilogram.

[Read more about this story here](#)

Baby Mustapha receives therapeutic milk, provided by UNICEF, at Ghor Provincial Hospital in May 2024. In 2025, UNICEF is planning to treat more than 824,000 children suffering from severe wasting.

The multifaceted nature of the crises in Afghanistan highlights the urgent need to address humanitarian needs while investing in meeting basic human needs. UNICEF will continue to implement risk-informed programmes focused on saving lives and building resilience to prevent further deterioration. UNICEF will also to operate through a clear 'do no harm' lens and prioritize preparedness to mitigate against catastrophic outcomes. UNICEF's access and engagement strategy will guide field offices in navigating access impediments to enable timely delivery for children.

UNICEF will scale up life-saving interventions, including integrated nutrition services for early detection and treatment of severe wasting in children. To combat malnutrition and build resilience, UNICEF will leverage its multisectoral capabilities, integrating health, WASH and social and behaviour change programmes. UNICEF will promote climate-resilient technologies, expanding solarization and optimizing water systems to address acute water scarcity, reduce disease outbreaks and combat wasting. To increase access to essential health services for the most vulnerable children and families, UNICEF will maintain and expand support for maternal and reproductive health, disease prevention and management of communicable diseases. This includes procuring essential medical supplies, building the capacity of health-care workers and enhancing vaccination efforts.

In a complex and challenging landscape, UNICEF remains committed to the education of children through advocacy and negotiations with the de-facto authorities. Despite increasing vulnerabilities in the sector, UNICEF will prioritize the sustainability of community-based education services and continue to support primary education, ensuring that all children have access to quality schooling. UNICEF is dedicated to advocacy efforts for the reopening of secondary schools for girls.²³ UNICEF will also address urgent humanitarian needs of children, women and girls facing critical protection challenges. This includes providing mental health and psychosocial support, case management for unaccompanied and separated children and programmes targeting gender-based violence. By strengthening the social workforce, UNICEF aims to enhance care quality and resilience among these vulnerable groups. Efforts around protection of populations from sexual exploitation and abuse will ensure accessible reporting mechanisms and training for humanitarian staff on essential safeguarding protocols.

In response to the increasing severity and frequency of sudden-onset disasters, UNICEF will strengthen preparedness actions and will meet critical needs through a cash-based Rapid Response Mechanism. To support vulnerable households during the harsh winter months, UNICEF will scale up multipurpose cash assistance programmes, ensuring that families can meet their basic needs and avoid harmful coping strategies. UNICEF will expand its social protection programme to the most vulnerable families to build their resilience to enable quick recovery, help people withstand shocks and stabilize their livelihoods. UNICEF's cluster leadership and expansive field presence, with five zonal offices and eight outposts, provides the ultimate platform to implement effective, multisectoral, community-based and scalable programmes to support vulnerable populations.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/afghanistan/situation-reports>



Health (including public health emergencies)²⁵

- **19,000,000** Number of people accessing health care through UNICEF supported health facilities
- **340,000** children aged 6-59 months vaccinated against measles²⁶



Nutrition

- **824,000** number of children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment²⁷
- **7,460,000** children 6-59 months who received vitamin A supplementation²⁸
- **2,500,000** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months who received infant and young child feeding counselling²⁹



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **245,000** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions³⁰
- **2,918,000** children and caregivers accessing structured mental health and psychosocial support³¹
- **2,000,000** People who have safe and accessible channels to report SEA³²
- **500,000** Number of children and care givers accessing explosive ordinance risk education³³



Education³⁴

- **415,000** number of vulnerable school-aged girls and boys reached through Community Based Schools, Alternative Learning Centers and Temporary Learning Spaces^{35,36}
- **2,050,000** children in public education (including shock affected/vulnerable girls and boys) reached with emergency education support³⁷



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **3,968,000** People accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene³⁸
- **3,407,000** people gain access to gender and disability-sensitive sanitation facilities³⁹
- **4,420,000** people reached with hygiene promotion programmes⁴⁰



Social protection

- **65,000** households reached with UNICEF-funded social assistance⁴¹



Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)⁴²

- **10,000,000** at-risk and affected populations reached with timely, appropriate, gender/age-sensitive life-saving information on humanitarian situations and outbreaks.
- **3,500,000** of children, caregivers and community members engaged in participatory behaviour change interventions
- **300,000** people who shared their concerns and asked questions/clarifications to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms



Emergency response

- **70,000** Households reached with cash assistance to meet winter needs
- **10,000** Households reached with cash assistance through a rapid response mechanism.

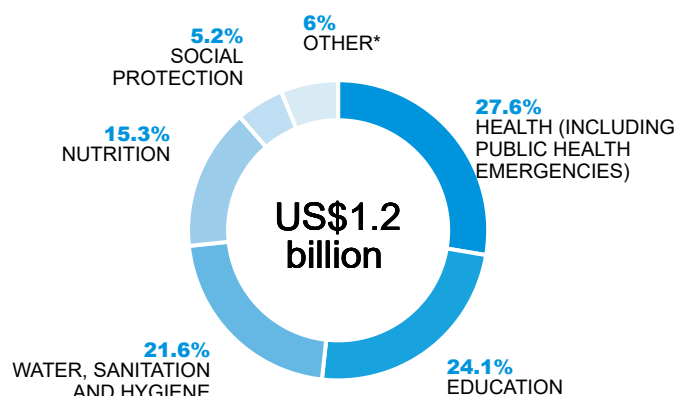


Gender, adolescents and youth development⁴³

- **100,000** Women and adolescent girls accessing an integrated package of information, services, empowerment skills through safe spaces
- **20,000** adolescent girls accessing life skills interventions, including transferable, digital and vocational skills through UNICEF supported programmes⁴⁴

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2025

In 2025, UNICEF is appealing for \$1.2 billion to deliver life-saving humanitarian aid and build the resilience of 19 million people in Afghanistan, including 10.3 million children. Through a continuum of rapid, sustained and scalable programming, UNICEF aims to address the growing needs of children in such crucial sectors as nutrition, WASH and multi-sector emergency preparedness and response. Funding will enable UNICEF to treat more than 824,000 children with severe wasting; provide 3,968,000 people with access to clean water; and support 145,000 households with multipurpose cash.⁴⁵ The criticality of this funding could not be more apparent. As needs remain high, it is urgent to invest in building the resilience of communities to withstand both climate and economic shocks. Ultimately, these funds will help reduce reliance on the humanitarian response and equip communities to meet their basic human needs. The total humanitarian funding requirement has decreased by 19 per cent compared with the 2024 appeal. However, this reduction does not indicate a decrease in needs but reflects a new approach to prioritization. The urgency of the situation remains high. UNICEF is committed to making the most effective use of resources to address critical needs. However, as a result, UNICEF must further prioritize, even among already vulnerable populations. In a context marked by increasing complexities and needs, flexible and predictable funding is more critical than ever for UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable children. Flexible funding has enabled UNICEF to pivot and continue to deliver results for women and children.



*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Child protection, GBViE and PSEA (3.5%), Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (1.7%), Gender, adolescents and youth development (<1%), Emergency response (<1%).

Sector	2025 requirements (US\$)
Health (including public health emergencies)	328,586,029
Nutrition	181,921,628
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	41,773,260 ⁴⁶
Education	286,319,400
Water, sanitation and hygiene	256,945,770 ⁴⁷
Social protection	61,320,482
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	19,803,000 ⁴⁸
Emergency response	5,159,235 ⁴⁹
Gender, adolescents and youth development	6,949,500
Total	1,188,778,304

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ENDNOTES

1. Provisional figures from the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
2. Provisional figures from the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
3. The numbers of people in need and children in need are slightly lower than in 2024 because the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 will focus on the most acute needs. A prioritization exercise helped to distinguish emergency needs from structural/systemic needs.
4. Ibid.
5. According to the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025, children make up 54 percent of the population.
6. The total number of people to be reached is calculated based on the number of people accessing primary and secondary health care services, both fixed and mobile facilities, to avoid duplication with other sectors. This includes 10,260,000 children (including 4,940,000 girls), 4,370,000 women and 1,520,000 people with disabilities, including 820,800 children with disabilities.
7. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
8. The overall target has decreased by 2 per cent mainly because of the reduction in the number of people in need, as the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 will focus on the most acute needs.
9. Children make up 54 percent of the population.
10. REACH Initiative, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2024.
11. Provisional figures from the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
12. Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2024.
13. REACH Initiative, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2024.
14. Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2024.
15. Ibid.
16. These mainly include floods, landslides, drought, earthquakes and disease outbreaks (e.g., measles, polio, acute watery diarrhoea/cholera).
17. REACH Initiative, Whole of Afghanistan Assessment 2024.
18. Provisional figures from the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
19. This appeal is aligned with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.
20. UNICEF is committed to supporting the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response through its leadership or co-leadership of cluster coordination for the WASH, Nutrition and Education clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. All cluster coordinator costs are included in sectoral programme budgets.
21. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
22. UNICEF will conduct district-level targeting and efficient prioritization to ensure maximum impact for nearly 5 million girls. The primary focus will be on delivering life-saving health, nutrition, WASH and child protection assistance as well as education and social protection services. UNICEF will also uphold principles of accountability to affected populations, disability inclusion, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and gender considerations. Ensuring education access for Afghan children, especially girls, remains a priority, through support for community-based education and innovative learning methods.
23. UNICEF is actively developing hybrid initiatives, based on contextually enabling factors to reach out-of-school children.
24. Beyond the UNICEF targets for these interventions, other humanitarian partners are expected to reach the remaining children/families in need.
25. Health care services consist of both primary and secondary health care.
26. The target includes children under age 5 who will be reached through outbreak response covered under the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025, which calls for 15 million children aged 9 months–10 years to be reached with preventive measles vaccine campaigns as part of the basic human needs programme.
27. This target is included in the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
28. This target is included in the target contained in the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan for the period 2023–2025.
29. This target is included in the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
30. This target is lower than in 2024 largely due to a combination of reduced operating space, bans on female humanitarian staff and bureaucratic impediments. However, funding constraints are also impacting the planned coverage of services. This target is included in the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
31. Ibid.
32. This target is included in the Afghanistan Humanitarian needs and Response Plan for 2025.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. The target includes 50 per cent girls and 50 per cent boys.
37. The draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 target is 250,000 children and the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan target is 1,800,000 children.
38. The draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 includes 3,146,000 people and the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan includes 822,000 people. The target is lower than in 2024 due to a constrained operating environment, the ban on female humanitarian workers and funding constraints.
39. The draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2025 target is 2,027,000 people and the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan target 1,380,000 people.

40. The draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2025 target is 3,040,000 people and the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan target is 1,380,000 people.
41. This target is included in the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan. This indicator focuses on social assistance cash transfers, which are part of the basic human needs programmes.
42. These cross-sectoral targets are all included the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
43. This target is included in the draft Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025.
44. This target is included in the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan.
45. This includes 65,000 households reach through social assistance programmes focusing on basic human needs; 70,000 households supported through winterization programmes; and 10,000 households reached through the Rapid Response Mechanism.
46. The figure includes among other things \$3,385,000 for the response to gender-based violence and \$570,000 for interventions around protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
47. In general, WASH interventions have an increase in the cost per beneficiary of \$8 compared with 2024. This is meant to ensure quality programming, especially regarding female participation. This includes expenses for transportation, separate distribution points and adequate office space, all of which are vital to maintaining programme integrity and inclusivity.
48. This includes \$14.4 million for social and behaviour change/risk communication and community engagement and \$1.7 million for accountability to affected populations.
49. This includes \$4,194,500 for emergency stocks, which include winter cloth kits (18,000), blankets (90,000), family kits (15,000) and tarpaulins (9,000).