

UNICEF Afghanistan

EASTERN REGION EARTHQUAKE UPDATE – *The Fourth Week*

21 – 28 September 2025

Key Highlights

- One month on, the 31 August earthquake has left over 77,000 families (502,000 people) affected in Kunar, Nangarhar, and Laghman; 1,992 people killed (52 per cent women and girls), 3,631 people injured (54 per cent women and girls).
- More than 8,500 houses were destroyed or damaged, leaving 7,600 households in tents and exposed to the elements of harsh weather conditions; many families are moving back to villages to salvage harvests, care for livestock, and begin rebuilding.
- Livelihoods devastated with 7,000 livestock killed, 366 hectares of farmland lost, and 90 percent of grain stores destroyed in Kunar; over 5,600 carcasses removed to prevent disease outbreaks.
- Basic services collapsing, 132 water sources destroyed; 84 per cent of communities now practice open defecation, heightening risks of cholera and other outbreaks.
- UNICEF has scaled up response with 4,900 trauma patients treated, 8,300 children screened for malnutrition (472 treated for SAM), 2.8M liters of safe water trucked to 190,000 people, 186 temporary classrooms serving 5,100 children, 34 separated children reunified, and 4,455 households supported with cash.
- Winterization support is urgent. UNICEF has pre-positioned 5,000 winter clothing and family kits and will provide cash assistance to 15,000 households.
- A US\$11.6 million funding gap in the response plan threatens life-saving winterization and child-focused support.

Situation overview

One month has passed since a 6+ magnitude earthquake and repeated aftershocks devastated eastern Afghanistan, striking hardest in Kunar, Nangarhar, and Laghman provinces. Entire valleys were flattened. In Kunar's Nurgal, Chawkay, and Khas Kunar districts, homes crumbled into rubble, leaving families with little more than tents to shield them from the cold.

The human toll remains staggering: 1,992 people killed and more than 3,600 injured, over half of them women and children. Assessments confirm that over 77,000 families (502,000 people) have been affected. At least 8,500 homes were damaged or destroyed, three-quarters of them completely collapsed.

Families who survived now face a new battle. Ninety-four percent of the affected population are sheltering in the open, with over 7,600 households in tents. With night temperatures already dropping in the mountains, the risk of hypothermia looms large, especially for children. Many families have started returning closer to their homes to salvage the harvest, care for surviving livestock, and begin repairs, knowing that camp life will be unbearable through the winter.

The destruction of livelihoods has been devastating. More than 7,000 livestock were killed, alongside 366 hectares of farmland and 1,900 orchard trees. Partners have already removed over 5,600 animal carcasses to prevent the spread of diseases.

Grain stores – nearly 90 per cent destroyed in Kunar alone – have left families without food stocks just as winter sets in. Nine in ten individuals report they have no money to buy food, and half cannot reach functioning markets. The earthquake destroyed more than 132 water sources, leaving 84 per cent of communities practicing open defecation and most without soap or handwashing facilities.

These conditions compound the threat of waterborne diseases, in a region where outbreaks were already ongoing before the quake. Health facilities, overwhelmed by trauma patients, now face rising cases of respiratory infections, skin diseases and diarrhoea, while shortages of medicines, supplies, as well as medical personnel, in particular female staff, put over 2,300 pregnant women and infants at acute risk.

At this stage of the response, while services have scaled up significantly, major gaps persist in the WASH sector due to underfunding, and the overwhelming scale of humanitarian needs for safe drinking water and sanitation services. Efforts are underway to strengthen inter-agency coordination at the regional level and in site management at camps and displacement sites. Without stronger camp management and harmonized approaches, critical gaps risk being overlooked. Ensuring not only the availability of services but also their quality, accessibility, and safety for women and girls will depend on better coordination among agencies in the weeks ahead.

For parents, fear is no longer only of another aftershock. It is the dread of the winter ahead, when cold, hunger, and disease could claim as many lives as the earthquake itself.

UNICEF Response

Health and Polio

Health needs remain urgent as hospitals and clinics struggle to cope with trauma cases and rising disease outbreaks. Since the earthquake, nearly 4,900 people have received trauma care, including 330 major surgeries across regional, provincial, and district hospitals. At the same time, crowded camps have seen a surge in respiratory infections, skin disease and diarrhoea, straining already limited supplies.

UNICEF-supported facilities are providing critical services: over 1,300 children have been vaccinated against measles, while 90 safe deliveries were recorded during the reporting period. More than 6,000 psychosocial consultations have been carried out, helping families cope with grief and distress.



On 7 September 2025, Mr. François Goemans (L), head of the European Union's humanitarian aid office in Afghanistan and UNICEF staff inspect relief supplies provided by EU Humanitarian aid to support families displaced by earthquakes in eastern Afghanistan.
@UNICEF/UNI1860039/Azizi

The Polio Programme has redeployed staff and social mobilizers to support outreach. Together, they have visited more than 6,400 tents, conducted 700 health education sessions, and referred over 4,000 women and children for essential health services. To reduce the risk of new outbreaks, children are being vaccinated against polio and measles in camps and affected villages

Nutrition

Children's nutrition remains a top concern as families lose access to food and income. Since the start of the response, 8,292 children under five have been screened for malnutrition. Of these, 472 children (61 per cent girls) were treated for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). In addition, 816 children received Vitamin A supplement, 1,161 received micronutrient powders, and 690 pregnant women were supported with supplements to protect their health and that of their babies

However, critical gaps are undermining the response. Seven of 25 health facilities lack nutrition counsellors, and most are not equipped with breastfeeding corners while service duplication has also been observed in some areas. To build a fuller picture, mass MUAC screenings are underway in displacement camps, with results to be reflected in the next Flash Update. These screenings will help identify children most at risk and sharpen the focus of life-saving interventions.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to safe water and sanitation is still one of the most pressing needs for earthquake-affected families. Over the past week, UNICEF and partners delivered 2.8 million liters of clean water through trucking, reaching nearly 190,000 people in Khas Kunar, Chambial, and Wadir camps. To reduce dependency on trucking, more sustainable solutions are underway, including the installation of solar-powered water systems in Wadir camp and the Khas Kunar area.

Sanitation services are expanding but remain uneven. A total of 154 emergency latrines and bathing units have been built, supported by five Conex facilities each with bath cubicles and ablution taps, and 23 handwashing stations. Families have also received 22,700 jerrycans, 150 boxes of chlorine tablets, and 250 hygiene kits, along with hygiene promotion sessions that reached over 2,500 people. New boreholes are being drilled in Wadir and Khan Kunar to provide safer, more reliable water sources.



*On 27 September 2025, A photo of water bladders provided for people who are affected by earthquake, in Khas Kunar Camp, Kunar province, Afghanistan.
@UNICEF/UNI869747/Azizi*



On 25 September 2025, Khetab, 9, and Hanzala, 5, smile with joy as they receive fresh, clean water in Sawki Zor Kali village, Sawki District, Kunar Province, Afghanistan—part of UNICEF's ongoing efforts to ensure safe water access for children and families. @UNICEF/UNI869744/Azizi

Despite these efforts, gaps are significant. The earthquake destroyed more than 132 water sources, leaving most affected communities practicing open defecation. These conditions sharply increase the risk of cholera and other waterborne diseases in an area where outbreaks were already ongoing before the quake.

At this stage of the response, while there are services gaps, coordination is as critical as infrastructure. In many camps and displacement sites, fragmented site management means WASH facilities are not equally accessible, particularly for women and girls, who need privacy and safety to use them. Without stronger inter-agency coordination and camp management, the growing WASH response risks leaving the most vulnerable behind.

Child Protection

Protecting children remains a top priority one month after the earthquake. Since the start of the response, 34 unaccompanied and separated children (18 girls and 16 boys) have been reunited with their families, each case supported with psychosocial care to help children recover from trauma.

To reach children in need, 31 social workers (12 female and 19 men) are deployed across hospitals, camps, and affected villages. A dedicated child protection hotline is also helping to identify and respond to cases quickly.



On 11 September 2025, children are playing at UNICEF supported child friendly space in Nurgal district, Kunar province. @UNICEF/UNI866085/Karimi

Safe spaces are giving children a sense of normalcy amid the crisis. Sixteen child-friendly spaces are now operational, where more than 12,500 children and caregivers have taken part in recreational activities and psychosocial support. In addition, nearly 2,000 vulnerable children have received case management and referral services, while over 4,600 people have been reached with information on psychosocial wellbeing, child protection, and gender-based violence. Yet, significant gaps remain. Many child-friendly spaces are temporary and lack proper equipment, while access for girls is sometimes restricted due to cultural barriers or limited facilities.

Strengthening coordination with health, education, and WASH partners will be key to ensure services are safe, accessible, and inclusive for all children in the weeks ahead.

Education

The earthquake destroyed schools and left thousands of children without safe spaces to learn. To restore access, UNICEF and partners have established 186 temporary learning spaces in Kunar Province, where more than 5,100 students (2,032 girls and 3,097 boys) are now enrolled and being taught by 186 teachers, including 30 women.



On 25 September 2025, Abdullah, 9-year-old, is happy that he can study again at Sawki Zor Kali primary school in Sawki Zor Kali village, Sawki district, Kunar province, Afghanistan.

*After the earthquake, Abdullah's house was destroyed and now they live in the Sawki Zor Kali camp, so Abdullah could no longer continue his studies, and he was upset.
@UNICEF/UNI869691/Azizi*

Children have received textbooks, school bags, whiteboards, markers, and recreational kits to help restart their education. For many, these makeshift classrooms are not only places of learning but also spaces of stability and hope after weeks of disruption.

Still, challenges persist. Many temporary classrooms lack drinking water, toilets, and solar power to provide safe and comfortable learning conditions. With winter approaching, tents will be increasingly difficult to use in cold, mountainous areas. More durable solutions are urgently needed to keep children learning without interruption.

Social Protection

Cash Assistance: Cash support has been one of the fastest ways to help families recover. Since early September, UNICEF has provided multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA) to 4,455 households – nearly 37,000 people – in Kunar Province. Female-headed households and families with persons with disabilities received higher transfers to reflect their greater needs.

This cash assistance allows families to prioritize essentials such as food, medicine, or shelter materials, while maintaining dignity and choice. UNICEF aims to reach a total of 5,000 households in the first phase of this intervention, with further scale-up planned as funding allows.

Winterization: As temperatures begin to fall, winterization support is critical to survival, especially in Kunar's mountainous districts where most families are still in tents. UNICEF and partners have pre-

positioned family kits with cooking equipment and tarpaulins, along with 5,000 sets of warm winter clothing and blankets ready for immediate distribution.



On 7 September 2025, a truck carrying family kits for families displaced by earthquakes arrives in Nurgal district, Kunar province. @UNICEF/UNI860035/Azizi

These hygiene kits, procured with UNICEF global thematic funds contain pots, cups, plates, spoons, gas cylinders, flashlights knives and other kitchen utensils.



On 7 September 2025, Mr. François Goemans (R), head of the European Union's humanitarian aid office in Afghanistan in discussion with UNICEF staff at a cash distribution site in Nurgal district, Kunar province. @UNICEF/UNI860054/Azizi

In addition, UNICEF will provide one-off cash transfers to 15,000 households under its winterization programme. This support will help families cover seasonal needs such as heating fuel, warm clothing, and other essentials to withstand the cold months with dignity.

Despite these preparations, needs far exceed available resources. The current US\$10 million funding gap threatens to leave thousands of children without adequate protection against the winter — turning an already dire humanitarian situation into a life-threatening one.

Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) and Community Engagement

Community engagement has been central to UNICEF's response, ensuring families are informed, connected to services, and able to voice their needs. Over the past month, 70 social mobilizers and 20 Community Engagement and Feedback Centers (CEFCs) have been active across Kunar and Nangarhar. Together they have reached more than 33,000 people, including 17,500 women, with messages on safe sheltering during aftershocks, safe water use, hygiene practices, vaccinations, and nutrition.



On 27 September 2025, Gulsom Behesht, 24 years old a female hygiene promoter is giving awareness for females who live in the camp, in Khas Kunar Camp, Kunar province, Afghanistan. @UNICEF/UNI869749/Azizi

These centers also serve as trusted spaces for dialogue. More than 500 people have shared feedback and requests for assistance, while others have been referred or accompanied to health facilities, vaccination points, and child protection services. In camps like Zeyri Baba and Khas Kunar, social mobilizers have screened over 580 children under five for malnutrition and connected families to support.

To reinforce these efforts, UNICEF has run a large-scale media campaign through 16 TV and radio stations, with over 3,000 public service announcements, posters, banners, and flipcharts delivering life-saving messages. These channels ensure families in even the most remote valleys receive critical information on safety and recovery.

The feedback from communities is clear: families need more and better tents to survive the winter, safe toilets, ambulances, safe drinking water, food, basic household items, and psychosocial support. By capturing these voices and linking them directly to the response, UNICEF is helping ensure that interventions are not only delivered at scale but also guided by the lived realities of those most affected.

Coordination and Cluster Response

UNICEF leads and co-leads three clusters – Nutrition, WASH, and Education – and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (AoR). Coordination across these clusters has been critical to scaling up services in the earthquake-affected provinces, but significant gaps remain, particularly in site management and ensuring equitable access for women and girls.

- **Nutrition:** Weekly cluster coordination meetings are guiding the roll-out of services through 25 nutrition service delivery points, with real-time updates from technical extenders in the field. Partners have jointly screened over 8,000 children and referred cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition for treatment. Yet, seven facilities lack nutrition counsellors, and most are without breastfeeding corners – gaps the cluster is working to address through partner redeployment and improved service mapping.
- **WASH:** The WASH Cluster is scaling up a multi-partner response with UNICEF as lead. Over 2.8 million litres of water have been trucked in the past week, and more than 150 emergency latrines and bathing units constructed. However, coordination challenges at camp level continue to result in uneven coverage of services, particularly affecting women and girls. A new partner has joined to fill gaps in underserved sites, and efforts are underway to transition from emergency trucking to solar-powered and borehole water systems.
- **Education:** A joint assessment of 218 schools in Kunar and Nangarhar confirmed extensive damage and the urgent need for temporary learning. In response, UNICEF and partners established 168 Temporary Learning Spaces in six IDP camps, reaching 4,832 children (2,005 girls). UNICEF also provided textbooks, bags, and teaching materials. To support children's wellbeing, partners set up 20 Child-Friendly Spaces, benefiting nearly 3,800 children, and began delivering psychosocial support and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE), with plans to reach tens of thousands more. The Kunar Education Directorate has also activated temporary schools for 4,764 children, which will transition to local partners as capacity allows.

Despite these efforts, most temporary classrooms lack water, toilets, and heating, making them unsuitable for the coming winter. Sustained coordination is needed to ensure children can keep learning in safe environments.

- **Child Protection:** By 28 September, child protection services reached 134 communities in Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar, identifying more than 33,000 vulnerable children – including 993 killed and over 50 unaccompanied or separated. The Child Protection AoR, co-led by UNICEF, has reunified 34 children (65%) with their families, deployed 38 social workers, and established 20 child-friendly spaces serving nearly 3,800 children. In addition, over 17,000 people received cash for

protection, 13,200 accessed psychosocial support, and 2,300 parents and caregivers joined awareness sessions on child wellbeing, GBV, and explosive ordnance risks.

Despite progress, gaps in safe and accessible services remain, particularly for girls, requiring stronger inter-sector coordination.

Cross-cutting issues

Gender

During the third week of the response, a rapid gender assessment was carried out in earthquake-affected communities through direct observation, consultations with women and men in camps and informal settlements, and discussions with frontline workers. The assessment examined access to services, protection risks, and the inclusiveness of the response for women, girls, and boys.

Findings showed that protection risks remain high. Women and girls face serious barriers to accessing WASH facilities, shelter, and assistance distributions. Privacy is limited around tents, and there are no separate queuing areas for women and men. In many cases, distributions are managed by male staff, and women without Tazkira (ID) struggle to access aid.

Service availability is also limited. Hygiene kits and sanitary pads — including culturally appropriate items such as hijabs and abayas — are insufficient. Health and nutrition services are often mobile or temporary, located 15–30 minutes from camps, and lack female staff and delivery care.

In education, temporary learning spaces are not yet fully gender-sensitive, while women and girls also report lacking information on available services. The assessment highlighted the need to adapt information and communication materials (IEC) to ensure accessibility for all.

PSEA and Psychosocial Support

Ensuring protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and addressing gender concerns remain central to the response. Over the past week, UNICEF's PSEA and Gender teams, working with the Afghanistan PSEA Network (UNFPA) and UN Women (GIHA), carried out joint field visits to Chawkay and Nurgal districts. The missions assessed living conditions in informal settlements, reviewed the setup of the new humanitarian hub, and engaged directly with frontline workers and affected families to identify risks and gather recommendations.

Two dedicated sessions on gender and PSEA were also held for 23 frontline staff (15 women, 8 men), while UNICEF provided a refresher session for 20 of its own frontline workers. These initiatives strengthen safeguarding measures and ensure that gender and protection concerns are embedded across the earthquake response.

External Communication

- Interview with the biggest German speaking web and email portal "UNITED INTERNET", including call for donations <https://web.de/magazine/unicef/verwesungsgeruch-luft-unicef-schildert-erschuetterndes-41405236>,
- Video on all global social media channels on the importance of CFS in the disaster zone, <https://x.com/unicef/status/1971608075166519505?s=46&t=zft3XJ88Ej7efxCUuSCmrw>

- Social media posts on UNICEF Afghanistan channels
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPA1ZuKjA0M/?igsh=MWJhenltYjBtemw0OQ==>

Funding Requirement

UNICEF requires US\$ 21.6 million to support a six-month response plan of which US\$ 10 million is currently available, leaving a funding gap of US\$ 11.6 million.

Next Update: 12 October 2025

For further information:

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