AFGHANISTAN FLOODS UPDATE

01 July 2024

UNHCR distribution to flood affected families in Ghor Province, Western Region. ©UNHCR/Caroline Gluck

IMPACT [1]:

Northeast Region: At least 4,163 homes damaged or destroyed.

Northern Region: At least 2,137 homes damaged or destroyed.

Western Region: At least 4,283 homes damaged or destroyed.

UNHCR Protection Assessment Preliminary Findings[2]:

44% of HHs report severe shelter damage and 48% of HHs report partial shelter damage.

12% of HHs are female headed.

15% of HHs report lost legal documentation.

Afghanistan Floods – Overview

The month of May saw heavy flooding across Northeastern, Northern and Western regions of Afghanistan, brought on by unprecedented rain fall. In June, responding actors conducted inter-agency assessments across flood-affected areas to determine humanitarian needs on the ground and to inform response. In the Western region alone, OCHA's MSRAF assessment indicates that more than 60,440 households have been affected. Across affected areas, response has been coordinated through relevant clusters to ensure aid reaches those in most need.

While emergency response is largely nearing completion by end June, affected areas remain vulnerable to recurrent flood events. Flash floods were reported in Guzargah district of Baghlan Province on 27 June, affecting two villages and destroying/damaging an estimated 150 homes, underscoring pervasive vulnerability to floods in this region.

Access has been largely restored across affected areas, however the recent flash flood on 27 June has rendered some areas unreachable by responding agencies. Assessment teams will deploy as soon as access is restored. Similarly, some areas in the Western region continue to remain inaccessible due to road conditions.

Widespread damage to public infrastructure continues to be reported, including to roads, health centers, water networks, and education facilities. Moreover, more than 2,200 acres of land have been damaged in the Western region, while over 5,500 individuals supporting their families have lost access to livelihoods in the Northern and Northeastern regions.

Protection assessments indicate high levels of psychosocial stress caused by experiences of loss and trauma. These require urgent protection services across the flood-affected regions. Concerns include, but are not limited to, support for persons with specific needs, psychosocial first aid, and civil documentation.

[1] Homes damaged/destroyed across flood affected areas continue to be verified throughout the inter-agency assessment process.

[2] Preliminary findings from the UNHCR Protection Assessment, to date surveying 3,835 flood-affected households.

UNHCR's RESPONSE

UNHCR and partners have actively participated in the inter-agency joint assessment teams deployed to conduct surveys to identify the humanitarian impact of the floods across the Northern, Northeastern and Western regions of Afghanistan.

SHELTER & NFI:

At the outset, UNHCR pre-positioned emergency tents, non-food item (NFI) kits, and clothing, to support families affected by the floods. In the Northeast, UNHCR has provided 619 emergency family tents, 1,115 NFI kits, and 1,898 sets of clothing, across affected districts of Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan provinces. In the Northern region, UNHCR has delivered 149 emergency family tents, and 504 NFI kits to affected households in Faryab and Sar-e-Pul provinces; while in the Western region, UNHCR has reached 150 households with emergency family tents, 652 with NFI kits, and 797 with clothing in Ghor province.

The emergency response continues, with family tents a key provision for households that have lost their homes. This is to ensure their access to shelter for improved physical safety and protection outcomes. NFI kits and clothing assistance have also been delivered to ensure that families have access to essential and basic household items, linked to improved health, hygiene, and protection outcomes for families. NFI kits that include blankets, jerrycans, gas cylinder, kitchen sets, buckets,plastic sheets, soap and plastic buckets.

The Shelter/NFI Cluster led by UNHCR, and IOM as co-chair continues to coordinate the emergency shelter response, engaging with partners in addressing the immediate needs of the affected people. In the Northeast, North and West regions, more than 10,100 homes have been affected by the flash floods and heavy rainfall where the provinces of Baghlan and Ghor, have been the hardest hit and reporting the highest shelter needs. Despite the efforts of the Shelter Cluster and its partners in providing emergency shelter and core relief items to over 7,700 families across the three regions, the lack of resources for long-term support remains a critical issue. Affected families remain in dire need of assistance to repair and rebuild their homes, with more 6,100 families requiring support to repair their homes, and another 3,750 families in need of support to rebuild their homes. An estimated USD 14.6 million is required to support the most vulnerable families and ensure they have safe housing before winter sets in.

PROTECTION:

UNHCR, under the umbrella of the Protection Cluster, is leading a protection assessment across flood affected areas to address information gaps on protection risks and concerns resulting from the floods, and to inform the delivery of targeted protection services. The assessment covers all the flood affected regions.

Preliminary findings from the 3,835 initial protection assessments (conducted in Takhar, Faryab, Badakhshan, Herat, Baghlan, Badghis Ghor), indicate that 12% of respondents are female-headed households, 12% of households have at least one family member with a disability, and 45% have a pregnant or breastfeeding mother in need of additional support for their children. Out of respondents, 44% indicated that their homes have been severely damaged and 48% that their homes are partially damaged as result of the floods, while the top three needs indicated include cash, food and permanent shelter. The assessment further indicates that 15% have lost legal documentation as a result of the floods, including Taskiras, birth certificates, passports, land titles, and others. According to respondents, this loss already resulted in barriers to access basic services and to freedom of movement. UNHCR and partners on the ground further report high needs for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, resulting from exposure to trauma and loss. It is important to note that some of the persons affected by the floods are recent returnees from Pakistan. The floods were highly detrimental to their reintegration, and some of those that UNHCR spoke to indicated desperation and frustrations because they had just started to re-integrate, abut have now been significantly pushed back in this regard. Assessments are continuing in all the affected provinces.

UNHCR and partners have initiated a comprehensive protection response to ensure services reach those in need, including provision of psychosocial first aid, identification and support of vulnerable individuals and persons with specific needs (PSNs), dissemination of information through community outreach volunteers (COVs), and awareness raising on available humanitarian services, complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM), and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Referrals to relevant service providers are also being conducted through static services, mobile response, and community engagement teams.

OTHER SUPPORT NEEDS

The situation facing flood affected communities urgently demands response, with critical needs including shelter, non-food items, medical aid, hygiene kits, and other basic relief items. Response teams are working to provide immediate and life-saving assistance, with the objective to inter-link first line response with long-term resilience and recovery initiatives for a region repeatedly affected by natural disasters. While inter-agency assessments near completion across affected areas, findings raised by assessment teams indicate that key gaps requiring response include:

1. Immediate need for life-saving emergency shelter and NFI assistance, including emergency shelter kits (e.g., tents and plastic tarpaulin), repair tools kits, and other core relief items (CRIs), to protect affected families from the elements and to replace basic household items.

2. Shelter repair and rebuilding assistance for families whose homes have been destroyed or damaged, supporting their quick recovery and the restoration of infrastructure, prior to the onset of the winter season. Currently, partners do not have sufficient funds to support recovery efforts beyond the initial emergency phase. Longer-term recovery efforts are crucial in supporting families to rebuild their lives and underpin self-reliance for resilient communities.

3. Emergency stockpiles of tents and NFI kits needs to be replenished, ensuring Agency response and Cluster capacities are adequate in-country to respond to sudden onset emergencies.

4. Structural and non-structural disaster risk reduction approaches at the household and community level must be implemented to reduce the risk of floods. Key high impact interventions include construction of embankments, inclusion of flood-control elements in shelter design, establishment of early warning systems, and zoning regulations to prevent construction and/or settlements in flood-prone areas.

5. Site selection and settlement planning support to enable the relocation of communities residing in flood-prone areas, as part of broader disaster and risk management strategy.

6. Concerted recovery efforts to restore access to essential services in flood affected areas are critical for strong protection environments and community resilience. Recovery initiatives must include restoration of infrastructure, including health centers, education facilities, provision of water supply networks, and road repairs, among others. In parallel, rebuilding livelihoods is paramount for recovery at the household and community levels, underpinning self-reliance and sustainability.

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