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AFGHANISTAN FLOODS FLASH UPDATE #2

21 May 2024

IMPACT

Northeast Region[1]:

2,948 homes damaged or destroyed.

215 deaths and 257 injured.

Significant damage to public infrastructure reported, including health services, schools, water and sanitation facilities, and roads.

Widespread loss of livelihoods.

Western Region[2]:

More than 3,150 homes damaged or destroyed.

Over 2,500 shops destroyed.

50 persons reported to have lost their lives in Ghor Province.

In Badghis Province, preliminary assessments indicate that 1,460 families have been affected.

Flooding has resulted in significant damage to infrastructure and livelihoods, as well as disrupted accessibility to affected areas.

Northern Region[3]:

1,200 homes damaged or destroyed.

48 deaths and 31 injuries.

Afghanistan Floods – Overview

From 10 to 11 May 2024 unprecedented heavy rainfall caused flash floods in the Northeast region of Afghanistan, resulting in significant loss of life and widespread destruction across Badakhshan, Baghlan, and Takhar provinces. Inter-agency assessments indicate 1,143 homes have been destroyed, 1,805 damaged, and 215 persons have lost their lives.

On 17 and 18 May 2024, heavy rains in the Northern and Western Regions of Afghanistan caused further flooding incidents, affecting Faryab Province in the Northern Region, and Ghor, Herat, Badghis, and Farah Provinces of Western Region. In Faryab Province, the floods reportedly damaged or destroyed over 1,200 homes across eight districts and resulted in 48 deaths and 31 injuries. Casualty figures remain to be confirmed.

In the Western Region, Ghor Province was severely affected, with initial reports indicating 2,000 homes destroyed and 400 damaged. An estimated 50 persons have lost their lives. Public infrastructure has further been critically impacted, including damage and temporary closure of the Ghor-Herat highway.

Joint assessment teams continue to be deployed on daily basis to affected areas to carry out inter-agency assessments to identify humanitarian needs and inform response.

[1] Damages and casualty figures continue to be verified throughout the inter-agency assessment process.

[2] Damages and casualty figures as reported by de facto local authorities and preliminary assessments. Figures are preliminary and may be subject to change.

[3] Ibid.

UNHCR's RESPONSE

UNHCR and partners are actively participating in the inter-agency joint assessment teams currently on the ground to conduct surveys to identify the humanitarian impact of the recent floods across the Northern, Northeastern and Western regions of Afghanistan.

In the Northeast, in Baghlan Province, UNHCR has distributed 216 emergency tents, 304 non-food item (NFI) kits, and 204 sets of clothing to flood affected families in six districts, namely in Baghlan Jadid, Pulikhumri, Dushi, Deh Salah, Puli Hesar, and Tala wa Barfak districts. In Takhar Province, UNHCR has distributed 10 emergency tents, 40 NFI kits, and 40 sets of clothing to families affected by floods in Taluqan and Kalfgan districts. UNHCR has delivered emergency tents to flood-affected families that have lost their homes, providing immediate shelter for improved physical safety and protection outcomes of recipients. NFI kits and clothing assistance have been similarly 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 are composed of blankets, jerrycans, gas cylinder, kitchen sets, buckets, and other key items.

To address gaps in assessing protection concerns of affected populations, UNHCR is currently in the process of developing a rapid needs assessment with a specific focus on protection to understand and monitor the needs of populations impacted by the floods in all affected provinces. The assessment will allow UNHCR to gather comprehensive and up-to-date information to guide its response efforts effectively. Among the thematic areas covered by the assessment, special attention will be given to civil documentation and MHPSS, which continue to be identified as primary protection concerns expressed by affected populations.

Further, in the Western Region, UNHCR has initiated a comprehensive Protection response, involving the deployment of UNHCR and partner mobile teams through provision of integrated protection services and conducting protection assessments on-site. Concurrently, 13 mobile response teams are being mobilized in Ghor, Herat and Badghis provinces to address a spectrum of protection needs in the emergency, including provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, Psychological First Aid, identification and support with individual protection assistance to persons with specific needs (including family separation, unaccompanied and separated children, GBV), community feedback mechanism/outreach and facilitating referrals. More than 700 individuals have benefitted from the protection services so far. Protection monitoring findings with analysis of protection needs and hotspot areas are shared on regular basis with OCHA and respective clusters for timely follow-up. Through the Protection cluster UNHCR ensures coordination of protection activities and mainstreaming of protection principles in the responses.

The Protection Cluster, led by UNHCR, has gathered preliminary information on the protection concerns and needs faced by flood-affected populations. Key concerns include mental health and psychological distress, psychological first aid (PFA), and civil documentation. Critical activities identified as priority include, but are not limited to, cash for protection, psychosocial support, family tracing and reunification, case management, group and individual therapy sessions, training for caretakers and community leaders on life skills, mental health and psychosocial support services, civil documentation, and establishment of complaint feedback mechanisms.

Protection Cluster partners, including UNHCR, IMC, ACTED, ABWSO, NRC, IRC, WAW, AWSDC, AKAH, Mission Aid, Concern Worldwide, ORCD, IOM, OHW, HALLO and ARCS, are actively delivering protection response to affected populations, including psychological support services, positive parenting and resources on individual therapy for resilience, awareness and counselling sessions, community dialogue, and have established child friendly spaces. Mine Action partners have additionally been engaged under

Protection response to deliver information on explosive ordinance contamination around flash flood impacted areas, to offer explosive ordnance risk education, and other urgent response.

The Shelter Cluster, co-led by UNHCR, continues to coordinate the emergency shelter response to flood affected areas. The humanitarian response following the natural disasters in Baghlan, Takhar, and Badakhshan provinces has been significant and is ongoing. As of 20 May 2024, more than 3,100 families have been assessed by humanitarian partners, with 2,209 families identified eligible for assistance, 1,143 homes reported as destroyed and 1,805 homes reported as damaged. Within in-accessible districts, partners estimate that an additional 250 families will need emergency shelter and NFI support.

The collaborative efforts of Shelter Cluster partners, including IOM, CWW, IMC, AKAH, ME, ACTED, WAW, and UNHCR, have been instrumental in providing emergency shelter and non-food item (NFI) assistance to affected families across the affected provinces. Shelter Cluster partners continue to volunteer staff to participate in joint assessment teams and respond to the needs of affected people. Across the three provinces, 1,934 families have received emergency shelter and NFI assistance including tents, tarpaulin, nonfood items, MPCA, clothing and others.

In Baghlan province alone, nearly all families eligible for assistance have received emergency shelter assistance. Out of the 1,436 families selected for assistance, 1,423 families have received emergency shelter and NFI assistance. In Takhar Province, out of the 449 families selected for assistance, 417 families have received emergency shelter and NFI assistance while in Badakhshan province, 94 families have received assistance. Assessments are underway in 5 districts of Badakhshan.

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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 are underway across affected areas, preliminary findings raised by assessment teams indicate that key gaps requiring response include:

1. Immediate need for live-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 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 built infrastructure, prior to the onset of the winter season. At this time, 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 must be replenished, ensuring 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 election and settlement planning support to enable the relocation of communities residing in flood-prone areas, as part of broader disaster and risk management strategy.

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