



UNITED NATIONS
AFGHANISTAN



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UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY
RESULTS REPORT 2022

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Foreword

The year 2022 was another extremely difficult year for the people of Afghanistan, as the country grappled with the compound effects of an ever-greater humanitarian emergency, profound economic crisis, political isolation, natural disasters, environmental shocks, and progressive rollback of human rights, especially for women and girls. The situation of ordinary Afghans deteriorated further and many of the economic, social and development gains made on the path toward the Sustainable Development Goals over the past two decades are being lost as a result.

This Annual Results Report presents the work of the United Nations for the people of Afghanistan in 2022. In the absence of an internationally recognized government, no approved framework of cooperation, international sanctions and a sudden halt to development funding on which the economy depended, the United Nations developed and implemented the Transitional Engagement Framework to guide our joint efforts to deliver lifesaving assistance to the people of Afghanistan in 2022. The three outcomes at the centre of the framework – saving lives, protecting livelihoods, and strengthening systems – reflect our commitment to the Afghan people even in these most difficult and unpredictable circumstances.

With 24.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and more than 9 in 10 living in poverty, the country is in the midst of a crisis on an unprecedented scale. With the support of donors, and the invaluable work of our partners on the ground, our response reached tens of millions of people across all provinces of Afghanistan with emergency food security, nutrition, healthcare, mine action, shelter, education, and protection services, and with support for families to survive and rebuild their livelihoods.

Our work in Afghanistan is not an endorsement of the mounting restrictions on human rights – and especially the rights of women – placed by the de facto authorities. The decision to effectively confine women to the home with a ban on girls accessing secondary and higher education, a ban on working in the non-governmental and other sectors, limitations on dress, free movement, and participation in public life are utterly unacceptable and will have huge adverse repercussions for the Afghan people, development, and economy. We will continue to advocate by all means possible for the immediate lifting of these restrictions, as well as those quelling dissent, shrinking civic space and limiting individual freedoms.

The challenges this year have shown us what is possible when we come together for the people of Afghanistan. I am grateful for the support of the international community and proud of the way the United Nations has responded to the rapidly changing

circumstances – our determination to continue, to stay and deliver, to leave no one behind. Together, we stepped up to the challenge by delivering a major humanitarian response complemented by basic human needs assistance; we continuously reviewed needs and found innovative ways to overcome obstacles to reach the most vulnerable.

When I visited remote communities affected by earthquakes or drought and talked to people who have been displaced all over Afghanistan, I witnessed enormous appreciation of our assistance – providing relief, restoring housing, and restarting livelihoods. And, in every village I visited, the call for support for education and health services for all, and especially for girls, could not have been louder.

Thanks to the generous contributions of our donors and with the substantial support of our partners, the United Nations directly reached more than 22.9 million people – over half of the population – with essential services and humanitarian assistance, effectively preventing critical services from collapsing in the wake of the Taliban takeover of power in August 2021.

We will not stop there. With the trust placed in us comes responsibility not only to continue to deliver humanitarian aid but also to meet the basic needs of the Afghan people, support their development, and use our platform to advocate for their rights. The challenges have been extraordinary but our commitment to the people of Afghanistan will not waver. That is why we continue to hold dialogue with the de facto authorities, to open up access, challenge restrictions, overcome obstacles, support economic recovery, and find areas of joint interest to change the lives of Afghans for the better.

We are counting on your support.

Ramiz Alakbarov

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General
United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator



United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Afghanistan

Resident United Nations agencies, funds and programmes:



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



International Labour Organization



International Organization for Migration



United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan



United Nations Conference on Trade and Development



United Nations Development Programme



United Nations Department of Safety and Security



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



United Nations Population Fund



United Nations Human Settlements Programme



United Nations Refugee Agency



United Nations Children's Fund



United Nations Industrial Development Organization



United Nations Mine Action Service



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



United Nations Office for Project Services



United Nations Volunteers



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



World Food Programme



World Health Organization

Non-resident United Nations agencies, funds and programmes:



International Fund for Agricultural Development



International Trade Centre



The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS



United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Key development partners



Government of the United States of America



Government of Italy



The European Union



Government of Sweden



Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



Republic of Korea



Government of Germany



Government of Denmark



Government of Japan



Government of Australia



Government of Canada



Government of Norway



Government of France



Government of Switzerland



Aga Khan Development Network



Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development



Asian Development Bank

BILL & MELINDA GATES foundation

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance



Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria



Islamic Development Bank



Rotary International



The World Bank

Chapter 1. Key developments in the country

As the tumultuous year 2021 ended, Afghans were confronted with deteriorating living conditions and an uncertain future.

In the aftermath of the Taliban takeover in August 2021, Afghanistan faced major socioeconomic upheaval. Inflows of aid, which had financed three quarters of public expenditure, were suspended. The Central Bank's foreign assets were frozen, precipitating a wider banking crisis. Previously, Afghanistan had relied on imports worth 40 per cent of GDP for essential goods, such as food and energy, but now it was cut off from the formal international payment system. Thousands of skilled personnel sought refuge abroad. The disruption resulted in economic activities contracting by 30–40 per cent. The year 2021 ended with 60 per cent of the population – 22.8 million people, including 3.2 million children under five – facing acute food insecurity.

In 2022, poverty spread further, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

In the midst of economic turmoil that followed the Taliban takeover, as many as one million people were estimated to have lost their livelihoods. Farmers were selling livestock at rock-bottom prices to survive. Though households spent more than 90 per cent of their income on food, 9 in 10 families could still not afford sufficient food consumption. Many were accumulating unaffordable debts.

There was a surge in COVID-19 infections as well as an outbreak of measles, just as the underfunded and understaffed health system struggled to cope with health emergencies.

The incidence of child marriage and child labour rose and there were reports of an increase in the most extreme coping measures, including trafficking in humans and human organs. Desperation resulted in increased drug addiction and gender-based violence.

Natural disasters compounded the crisis, adding to the urgent need for humanitarian aid.

Prolonged drought across the country continued into 2022. According to the Whole of Afghanistan Assessment conducted in July–September 2022, 79 per cent of households did not have sufficient water for their daily needs, including drinking, cooking, and hygiene.

A series of earthquakes struck Badghis Province in north-western Afghanistan in January 2022. The quakes killed 27 people and left up to 1,000 houses damaged or destroyed, forcing many to live in makeshift or traditional tents in cold weather conditions. On 22 June 2022, a 5.9 magnitude earthquake struck Paktika and Khost Provinces in south-eastern Afghanistan, resulting in an estimated 1,036 deaths and 2,924 injuries, and damage to at least 4,500 homes. Over 100,000 people required humanitarian assistance.

Afghanistan is also considered one of the countries least prepared for climate change. In addition to the second consecutive year of drought in 2022, there was a surge in atypical floods during the summer season (June–August). An estimated 130,000 people were affected by floods over the year, with flooding causing damage to some 3,398 homes and seriously impacting livelihoods with 7,000 livestock deaths and businesses, crops, farmland, and irrigation systems destroyed in at least nine provinces of the country.

Plastic wrappers feed a fire around which children gather to stay warm in winter at Shaydayee Camp for displaced families in Herat Province





© IOM/Léo Torréton

Children walk through a street reduced to rubble in Barmal District

'Building back better' – UNHCR builds earthquake-resilient homes in southeast Afghanistan

Following the June 2022 earthquake, UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, built 1,300 houses in the districts of Spera in Khost Province and Barmal in Paktika Province, where 70 per cent of homes had been damaged or destroyed.

The new houses have been constructed to withstand earthquakes – with a wide cement foundation, reinforced 60 cm stone walls, and a steel-braced roof. Their design was the result of consultations with residents: the homes feature two rooms, a kitchen, a latrine, solar panels and batteries for lighting, and *bukhari* stoves for heating and cooking.

UNHCR worked with the Agency for Humanitarian and Development Assistance for Afghanistan (AHDAA) to build the homes using local labour so as to provide

vital income support to communities in this impoverished region.

The earthquake-affected districts of Barmal, Spera and Giyan have also been included in the UNHCR Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARR) initiative. UNHCR is supporting these areas with roads to connect villages, wells for safe water, and flood retaining walls to protect communities. There are plans to construct health centres and schools in 2023.

The PARR scheme also facilitates sustainable reintegration of people who have returned voluntarily. An estimated 3.3 million people have benefitted from UNHCR assistance in the 80 Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration to date. In 2022, UNHCR opened 21 schools, 9 health centres, 7 community centres, and 30 water projects on PARR sites.

Source: UNHCR

Ahmed awaits the construction of a new earthquake-resilient house for his family after they lost their home in Barmal District, Paktika Province



©UNHCR/Dinash Thalawila

Documenting human rights violations

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Human Rights Service has been established by the United Nations Security Council to monitor, report, and engage with relevant stakeholders on the human rights situation in Afghanistan. The Human Rights Service is active countrywide and also serves as the Afghanistan presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Key findings of the UNAMA Human Rights Service for the period 15 August 2021 – 15 June 2022:

- **2,106 civilian casualties** (700 killed, 1,406 wounded) predominantly caused by improvised explosive device attacks attributed to Islamic State–Khorasan Province (IS-KP), with unexploded ordnance causing particular harm to children.
- 160 extrajudicial killings, 178 arbitrary arrests and detentions, 23 instances of incommunicado detention and 56 instances of torture and ill treatment of **former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) and Government officials** attributed to the de facto authorities.
- 59 extrajudicial killings, 22 arbitrary arrests and detentions and 7 incidents of torture and ill treatment by the de facto authorities of individuals accused of affiliation with IS-KP
- 18 extrajudicial killings, 54 instances of torture and ill treatment and 113 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention as well as 23 cases of incommunicado detention of individuals accused of affiliation with the “National Resistance Front”.
- **217 instances of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment** carried out by the de facto authorities.
- 118 instances of **excessive use of force** by the de facto authorities.
- Human rights violations affecting 173 **journalists and media workers**, 163 of which were attributed to the de facto authorities. Among these were 122 instances of arbitrary arrest and detention, 58 instances of ill treatment, 33 instances of threats and intimidation and 12 instances of incommunicado detention. Six journalists were also killed during the period (five by self-identified IS-KP perpetrators and one by unknown perpetrators).
- Human rights violations affecting 65 **human rights defenders**, 64 of which were attributed to the de facto authorities. Among these were 47 arbitrary arrests, 17 cases of incommunicado detention, 10 cases of ill treatment and 17 cases of threats and intimidation.

A 53-year-old labourer with some of his children and grandchildren; the family fled from Nangarhar Province and try to scrape a living in Kabul



While major armed conflict ceased, insecurity persisted for many.

Soon after the capture of Kabul, Taliban forces extended their control across Afghanistan. At the same time, the de facto authorities were unable to suppress a bombing campaign suspected to be carried out by the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (IS-KP), which targeted mosques, buses and other public buildings in major cities around the country.

Among the most egregious incidents was the 30 September 2022 suicide attack that killed 53 people and wounded 110 others at the Kaaj education centre in an area of Kabul chiefly inhabited by people from the Hazara minority. Most of the victims were female students sitting a practice university entrance exam. In another attack on minority groups, a group of IS-KP fighters attacked a Sikh temple on 18 June 2022, wounding many and killing one worshipper as well as a Taliban guard protecting the site.

The de facto authorities imposed measures to curtail basic human rights, especially the rights of women.

There were allegations of excessive use of force by the de facto authorities, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture. Former Government and security force personnel were among those subjected to ill treatment despite the amnesty issued by the de facto authorities in August 2021.

The de facto authorities issued a series of directives to impose severe restrictions on women and girls, resulting in their exclusion from most aspects of public life and limiting access to justice:

- September 2021: Girls are banned from secondary education.
- November 2021: Women are prohibited from appearing in films and television dramas.
- December 2021: Women are banned from travelling long distance (72 hours or 78 km) without a *mahram* (male guardian).
- May 2022: Women are required to wear the Islamic hijab.
- November 2022: Women are prohibited from the use of parks, gyms and public baths.
- December 2022: Female students are barred from higher education.
- December 2022: All schools and private programmes for girls beyond sixth grade are suspended.

In December 2022, the de facto authorities announced a ban on Afghan women working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This resulted in a number of national and international NGOs stopping or

significantly reducing their operations as female workers play an essential role in delivering aid.

The fundamental rights and freedoms of Afghans were gradually eroded as censorship, stifling of debate, and curbing of dissent became commonplace.

According to Reporters without Borders, Afghanistan lost 40 per cent of its media outlets and 60 per cent of its journalists in the year following August 2021. Three quarters of female journalists lost their jobs. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that overall female employment declined by 25 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022 in relation to the second quarter of 2021, while male employment declined 7 per cent over the same period. Home-based self-employment has become the predominant form of women's participation in the labour market.

The de facto authorities have chosen a path of self-reliance – but at a cost.

In May 2022, the de facto authorities announced the budget for Fiscal Year 1401 (starting on Afghan New Year, 21 March 2022). At approximately US\$2.5 billion, it amounted to barely half of the public expenditure for civilian purposes under the Republic Government.

Cut off from international aid, the de facto authorities had to rely solely on domestic revenues to fund public expenditure. To their credit, corruption decreased and customs revenues increased substantially, though not sufficiently to make up for the lost on-budget support from donors. While self-sufficiency is a laudable economic objective for Afghanistan, limited revenues constrained the de facto authorities' ability to deliver basic services for the population.

In April 2022, the Taliban issued a ban on cultivation of the opium poppy and all narcotics. The 2022 harvest was exempted from the ban, so it will only be possible to assess the impact of this measure in 2023. Opium poppy cultivation increased by 32 per cent to 233,000 hectares in 2022 – the third largest area since monitoring by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) began.

Despite deteriorating conditions, the United Nations and partners committed to staying and delivering for the Afghan people.

International isolation and limited national resources to fund public services resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe in the country, with the United Nations and partners left to provide a lifeline to the people of Afghanistan. While access to all parts of the country improved with fewer armed clashes, political and other impediments remained, especially for NGOs. The United Nations worked with NGO partners to open up access in accordance with humanitarian principles.



©IOM/Paula Bronstein 2021

The lives of women and girls have drastically changed since August 2021, as they endure increasing restrictions on their rights

Advocacy and engagement by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Human Rights Service

Notwithstanding the lack of prior engagement by the de facto authorities with the United Nations on human rights issues, the UNAMA Human Rights Service focused on engaging with the de facto authorities at national and subnational levels, which led to:

- appointments of Human Rights Focal Points in key Ministries, including the de facto Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Interior Affairs; Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice; Ministry of Information and Culture; General Directorate of Intelligence; and the Office of Prison Administration.
- establishment of regular contacts with the Human Rights Directorate of the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which prompted the establishment of a Technical and Coordination Committee on Human Rights chaired by the Ministry to facilitate future consideration of reports by the United Nations or other international organizations.
- organization of 56 human rights norms awareness-raising sessions for senior leaders and staff of the de facto police, prison, intelligence, and defence services, as well as members of civil society, reaching 1,130 individuals, including 206 women (943 members of the de facto authorities and 187 civil society actors, including defence lawyers).
- establishment of a regular information-sharing mechanism with the de facto Ministries of Defence, Interior Affairs, and the General Directorate of Intelligence on allegations of documented violations – for their response and feedback.
- engagement with the de facto prison service leadership in Kabul and the provinces, which enabled regular contact with provincial prison directors, visits to provincial prisons, and, in some cases, confidential access to detainees.
- engagement with the Human Rights Directorates of the de facto Ministry of Interior Affairs and the General Directorate of Intelligence, as well as the Office of the Inspector General of the Ministry of Defence.

In the words of one of the world's most prominent women's rights activists, Mahbouba Seraj: "We are the hope, we are the power keeping Afghanistan together."

"On 15 August 2021, I was in Afghanistan, in my office. The first nights and days were horrible. Afghanistan was turning into chaos – people were running everywhere; offices were closing. It was all happening in front of my eyes: in 24 hours a democracy we worked for for 20 years crumbled. The first thought I had was: what is going to happen to women? 15 August was the day the women of Afghanistan started to become non-human, the day when we knew there was no place for women's rights anymore.

I was forced once to leave my country, in 1978. I was young, I had a lot of energy and I had wanted to stay but because of the forces that came to power I had to leave. This time, it was different – now, I am an Afghan American citizen. I felt it was not time to leave Afghanistan, to leave my sisters, to leave everyone I loved and cared about; I thought my presence would give them strength. I decided to stay; I decided not to be a refugee again.

The lives of Afghan women have changed 180 degrees. As I saw the democracy that we worked so hard for over the last 20 years disappear, it was also the work that we did as Afghan women for our country disappearing. The women of Afghanistan went from existence – from being part of society, from working, from being part of every aspect of life as doctors, judges, nurses, engineers, women running offices – to nothing. Everything they had, even the most basic right to go to high school, was taken away from them.

Afghan women are some of the most resourceful and strong women in the world: their resilience is unbreakable. A lot of work has been done, and then every time we need to start over again from zero – this is killing us. But we have to do what we have to do, and we are going to do it. Simply because they do not want us to exist does not mean we will stop, because we do exist, and we are here. We are going to do anything in our power. And we have the world standing by us – the world has not given up on us. We are receiving help: UN Women is supporting me to run a centre in Kabul, for example. The Afghan women's diaspora is helping; our women friends all around the world are helping.

There is one point that I want to make very clear: what is happening to the women of Afghanistan can happen anywhere. Women's rights being taken away from them is happening everywhere and if we are not careful, it will happen to all the women of the world.

Every single woman in Afghanistan is doing something extraordinary – just by staying alive, feeding her family and by keeping her hope up that maybe, one day, things will be okay.



© UN Women/Olguta Anghel

Mahbouba Seraj meeting with UN Women to discuss a women-centred response to the humanitarian crisis, Kabul, January 2022

The world must look at us as the women of Afghanistan, not just as second-class citizens somewhere. For the last 20 years, we have proven to the world who we are. Help us stand up again. The ones that are standing up in Afghanistan, help us stand up in Afghanistan. The ones of us who cannot live in Afghanistan anymore, help us get out so we can stand up outside our country. Stand up behind us, next to us, and see what we can do. We are the hope, we are the power keeping Afghanistan together.

There were times when the world had gone into dark places, when we thought that the sun would never rise again. But nothing lasts forever. I am hopeful. I have a lot of hope for a better Afghanistan, an Afghanistan which belongs to its people, to all of us.

My hope is that young brave women around the world will tell my story and raise generations of women that speak up, like I did, for centuries to come."

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, supports Afghan women and girls across the country, delivering lifesaving support to women and girls, supporting women humanitarian workers in the delivery of essential services, and providing funding to women-led businesses and civil society organizations.

Source: UN Women

United Nations cash shipments to Afghanistan

Before August 2021, Afghanistan was characterized by a highly aid-dependent economy and a substantially dollarized banking system. Consequently, sudden isolation from the international payment system paralysed the banking sector. To add to the problem, the country's currency is printed abroad and shipments were held up due to sanctions and issues with cross-border payments.

While the international community pledged billions of dollars to support humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, there were no mechanisms to effectuate international transactions. The informal *hawala* system was considered insufficiently robust vis-à-vis anti-money

laundering and countering financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) concerns.

Faced with little choice, the United Nations arranged physical shipments of US dollar banknotes to Afghanistan to fund its humanitarian activities. Between December 2021 and March 2023, 68 shipments with a total value of US\$2.4 billion were delivered to cover the salaries of aid workers, provide funding to NGO implementing partners, and finance other operational costs. The injection of cash into the system not only facilitated humanitarian activities, but also contributed to stabilizing the economy, helping ease the economic hardship of the Afghan people.

Loading up goods for distribution in Paktika Province





©WFP/Hayatullah Rasoli

A loader clears the road of snow to make way for WFP trucks delivering emergency food assistance to the people of Badakhshan Province

The role of the United Nations in protecting the operating environment for non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Often working in partnership with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations implement a range of much needed programmes in Afghanistan – promoting human rights, providing food, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, protection, and education services, and supporting livelihoods. At a time of humanitarian crisis, NGOs often act as implementing partners distributing aid to people in need.

Even before August 2021, NGOs had been subjected to increasing interference in the delivery of aid. More restrictive revisions to the NGO law had been under discussion for some years and NGOs regularly faced interference, including demands to control or alter humanitarian programming; influence beneficiary selection; to share protected data on beneficiaries and staff; or to switch from humanitarian to development programming.

As the security situation improved after the Taliban takeover, many NGOs resumed their operations in response to the impending humanitarian crisis.

The de facto authorities appeared to carry over the previous Government's proclivity to impose control over NGOs. In April 2022, they proposed a new Monitoring and Control Mechanism for NGOs, which lays out a set of regulations for enacting increased control on humanitarian operations, both on the programme and activities. In response, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched a vigorous advocacy and lobbying campaign to protect and expand the NGO operating environment. Subsequently, the de facto authorities addressed some of the concerns raised by the NGO community and flagged by the United Nations, and proposed a new version of the regulations, known as *Tarz-ul Amal* (roughly translated as "codes of operation"), in August 2022.

The United Nations and the humanitarian community formed a technical group to assess if the proposed *Tarz-ul Amal* complied with humanitarian principles. Intensive negotiations with the de facto authorities ensued in September–October 2022. The United Nations made its position very clear: operations would have to cease were humanitarian principles not respected. The final version of *Tarz-ul Amal* was issued in October 2022. While some concerns remained, the United Nations and partners were able to address these at the operational level, thereby allowing NGOs to continue their work in adherence with humanitarian principles.

While the issue of de facto authority interference was consistently negotiated and addressed at the national and subnational level, both the United Nations and NGO partners continued to encounter impediments, often attributable to limited awareness on the part of de facto local commanders and administrators. The situation deteriorated significantly when the de facto authorities issued an order prohibiting Afghan female staff from working for domestic and international NGOs on 24 December 2022. The ban forced many NGOs to temporarily suspend their programmes, though exemptions were later granted for NGOs working in the health and education sectors.

Unfortunately, at the subnational level, the de facto authorities often did not fully respect the exemptions or attempted to impose additional conditionalities. To address these issues, OCHA and partners continued to advocate on the importance of women's participation through local sensitization efforts and bilateral engagement aimed at solving humanitarian access constraints at various levels. Such sensitization efforts were completed in 306 out of 402 districts by December 2022.

Chapter 2. United Nations system support to the Afghan people through the Transitional Engagement Framework

2.1. Overview

The lack of international recognition for the de facto authorities limits the range of activities the United Nations can undertake in Afghanistan. While adhering to humanitarian principles, the United Nations has ensured that its operations are in full compliance with Security Council Resolution 2615 as well as sanctions imposed by Member States, including licences issued by the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control.

[The United Nations formulated a Transitional Engagement Framework to coordinate its work to reduce the suffering of the people of Afghanistan.](#)

Despite the complex operating environment, the United Nations committed to staying in the country and delivering assistance to the people of Afghanistan. As the de facto authorities consolidated their hold on power, it became apparent that previous national development plans and mutual accountability frameworks no longer applied. International aid flows other than those for humanitarian purposes were suspended. Under these circumstances, the United Nations prepared a Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) as an interim strategic framework for coordinating its operations in 2022.

The Humanitarian Country Team, which comprises United Nations entities as well as NGOs and other humanitarian partners, launched the 2022 **Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)** on 11 January 2022. The aim of the Plan was to reach 22.1 million people in need at an estimated cost of US\$4.4 billion.

The **Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF)** includes the goals of the HRP, as well as programmes to sustain essential social services, such as health and education; to support community systems through maintenance of basic infrastructure; and to maintain critical capacities for service delivery and promotion of livelihoods and social cohesion, with specific emphasis on the needs of women and girls. The additional funding required for those programmes was set at US\$3.6 billion.

[The generous support of donors enabled the United Nations and partners to deliver lifesaving assistance.](#)

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres convened a High-Level Pledging Event on Supporting the Humanitarian Response in Afghanistan on 31 March 2022. The event was co-hosted by the Governments of Germany, Qatar and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

and saw US\$2.4 billion pledged to address the Afghan crisis. By the end of the year, donor funding for the HRP reached US\$3.25 billion of its US\$4.4 billion goal.

Taking advantage of its presence on the ground, the United Nations collaborated closely with other multilateral agencies to deliver aid to the Afghan people. For example, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) administered by the World Bank took the decision to redirect its funds to provide basic services assistance through United Nations agencies. World Bank funding of United Nations programmes totalled US\$861 million in 2022.

[To enhance efficiency and transparency, the United Nations system restructured its funding streams.](#)

The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) and the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) were streamlined to form the two wheels of the One UN funding framework. While the former facilitated swift and strategic humanitarian action in Afghanistan, the latter supported programmes for socioeconomic recovery. This arrangement was devised to provide clarity on the complementarity of the funding channels, along with those provided by international financial institutions (IFIs), namely: the World-Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) which focused on health and education; the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AIF) administered by the Asian Development Bank which focused on agriculture; and the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund (AHTF) administered by the Islamic Development Bank with its focus on South–South cooperation.



A widow and mother-of-five whose family depend on a cow and food aid for survival lights a fire in her home in a remote village in Badakhshan Province

©WFP/Sadeq Naseri

Helping opium poppy farmers switch to licit crops

"I did not know vegetable cultivation could be so profitable," says Gul Agha, a former poppy farmer from Helmand Province. In the more than 20 years that Gul Agha has been a farmer, he never expected he would become a trailblazer and influencer in his community.

Poverty and a lack of options for sustainable livelihoods pushed Gul Agha into poppy farming. Opium poppy cultivation has been a major problem in Afghanistan, with many farmers choosing to grow the illegal crop due to its high profitability; the country is thought to supply 80 per cent of the world market.

The rapid economic downturn following the power shift in August 2021 pushed many farmers into severe poverty; half of the country's population became food insecure. The circumstances worsened for Gul Agha when the de facto authorities suddenly banned poppy cultivation in April 2022.

Farmers such as Gul Agha desperately needed to find another source of income, but with their existing skills and possibilities, the situation looked bleak. The options were to emigrate to a neighbouring country to take up work as a day labourer or to continue with illegal poppy cultivation despite the ban. Neither seemed feasible to Gul Agha.

He decided to approach his village Community Development Council (CDC), which connected him to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Alternative Development Programme. Initially, Gul Agha was sceptical and unsure if vegetable cultivation would help him make ends meet because his previous attempts did not bring the desired results. But he quickly realized this may have been due to a lack of certified seeds and fertilizers.



A farmer growing maize as part of the UNODC Alternative Development Project

©UNODC 2022

The Alternative Development Project provided Gul Agha with training, certified cauliflower seeds and fertilizers to cultivate his half *jerib* (0.1 ha) of land. "I have learned how to sow seeds in a line; how to protect plants from



Gul Agha on his cauliflower farm

©UNODC 2022

diseases, pests, and weeds; and better ways to harvest, store, and market the produce. I have also learned how to prepare natural pesticides," he shares.

The results have been highly positive. Gul Agha can now earn 60,000 Afghani (US\$682) a season from selling cauliflower from his half *jerib* of land. This is 8,000 Afghani more than he made from poppy cultivation on the same plot.

Following the success of his endeavour, Gul Agha's cauliflower farm has become a demonstration plot for other farmers in his village, Lashkar Bazar. Farmers now approach him to learn the techniques he uses for profitable cauliflower production. Gul Agha is proud that he has become a community influencer.

UNODC has been implementing an alternative livelihoods and food security project in the Lashkargah, Nad-e-Ali, and Nahr-e-Siraj Districts of Helmand Province with funding from the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) since March 2022. The aim of the project is to provide vulnerable Afghan farmers with the opportunity to engage in licit farming to improve their household food security and income. The project supports animal husbandry, dairy processing and backyard poultry farming as opportunities targeted at women, as well as the cultivation of drought-resistant varieties of cereal crops, maize, and wheat. Farmer beneficiaries receive certified seeds, fertilizer, and capacity building support on crop cultivation, harvesting and marketing. More than 40,000 people have been supported through this project in 2022.

Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)

Overcoming illiteracy

Fariza Behzad is taking part in a UNESCO Basic General Literacy Course in Bamyan Province. Like 77 per cent of women in Afghanistan, she cannot read or write.

She lost her father when she was only three years old, staying behind with her mother and siblings. Due to the prolonged conflict in the country, Fariza's mother, a widow trying to survive and support her family in difficult circumstances, was not able to buy her books or enrol her in school. Since then, Fariza got married at the age of 16, had children, went through a civil war, economic hardship and forced internal displacement between different provinces. "When I see a female doctor, engineer, or teacher, my heart breaks. Not because of jealousy, but because I am illiterate and feel really hopeless," Fariza said.

Fariza mentions that not being able to read affects her daily life in the smallest details, such as not being able to read the names of doctors on the street or recharge her phone. "I know how difficult it is to be illiterate, and I value literacy as a must for everyone – girls, boys, men and women," she shared.

Her biggest dream is for her children to be educated and to have "a better and brighter future". Her six children are enrolled in school, but she says she feels helpless to support them in their school assignments: "I cannot tell the difference between the different subjects and books for math, Dari, and Pashto. I suffer a lot when I receive teachers' notes in the children's school diary. Both my husband and I are illiterate, and we are not able to communicate with our children's teachers."

Young children from Daikundi Province attend a UNICEF Child-Friendly Space, opened with funding from the European Union; here, they have a space to play, practice crafts, and learn the basics of reading and writing



Fariza shows off her progress in literacy class

© UNESCO 2022

Fariza recalls when she accidentally disposed of her children's school papers, not aware of their importance: "I threw away my children's pre-exam questionnaires and when they returned from school and realized what had happened, they started crying. It was a bitter moment for me."

Fariza believes that it is never too late to learn, and when she heard about the possibility to register for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) literacy courses through her local *shura* (village council), she enrolled. Now, two weeks in, she says, "I learned writing numbers from 1 to 10, and the alphabet, and I can easily write my name." She hopes that she will be able to use her newly acquired literacy skills in her small home-based handicraft business, e.g. when writing down product sizes or client names.

Source: Basic General Literacy Programme, Better Education Systems for Afghanistan's Future (BESAF), UNESCO, 7 March 2023



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2.2. Transitional Engagement Framework priorities, outcomes and outputs

Outcome 1. Saving lives

More people in Afghanistan will have benefitted from lifesaving humanitarian assistance that enables them to live in safety and dignity



22,991,246 acutely food-insecure people received food or cash assistance (US\$325,821,245)



112,874 families assisted with non-food items, emergency shelter and winterization support



247,904 undocumented returnees received multi-sectoral assistance at 4 main border crossing points



217,291 teachers received cash incentives



18,087,627 people accessed primary health care



433,446 young people received health information and counselling



1,170,191 pregnant and lactating women received malnutrition prevention packages



52.88 km² of safe land released from mines

The United Nations in Afghanistan provided **lifesaving humanitarian assistance** across all 34 provinces of the country in 2022. The United Nations and its partners directly reached more than **22.9 million people** – over half of the population – with essential services and humanitarian assistance across multiple sectors, preventing critical and essential services from collapsing in the wake of the takeover of political power by the Taliban in August 2021.

Lifesaving humanitarian assistance included:

- Provision of food or cash-based assistance to more than 22.9 million people.
- Distribution of non-food items such as tents, blankets, hygiene kits and essential household items, and provision of emergency shelter and winterization support, to more than 112,874 families.
- Multi-sectoral assistance at four main border crossing points (Islam Qala and Nimroz on the border with Iran and Torkham and Spin Boldak on the border with Pakistan) for 247,904 undocumented returnees.
- Cash incentives for 217,291 teachers.
- Essential health and nutrition services, including primary health care for more than 18 million people, as well as sexual and reproductive services, mental health services, epidemic response, and treatment and prevention of malnutrition for more than 1.5 million people.
- Protection services, including the clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war.



In remote Ghor Province, WFP food assistance provides a lifeline to vulnerable families

Ghor Province, remote and sparsely populated, has been hit particularly hard by the country's three droughts over the past five years; leaving farmers and families relying on agriculture for their livelihoods in dire need. In 2022, famine-like conditions have been detected in Ghor Province for the first time since the introduction of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification in Afghanistan more than a decade ago.

Households faced an acute lack of food and often had to resort to desperate coping measures, such as selling household items or, in the most extreme cases, even their own children. Recognizing that immediate action was needed to prevent a further deterioration in the situation, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food to more than 780,000 highly vulnerable people and provided nutrition services to more than 185,000 young children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

Homina, 27, has five children. Her husband is a farmer; their harvest has been affected by the drought. Therefore, food assistance from WFP has proven critical for her family's survival. Each family receives fortified wheat flour, split peas, fortified vegetable oil, and salt. Asked about other food, Homina says she does not remember when she last ate eggs or meat.



Homina collects her food assistance at the WFP site; this is her fourth time receiving food assistance

©WFP/Shelley Thakral

"When you hear, 'I had to sell my son because I had many more children to feed,' this is something you cannot comprehend. If I put myself in their shoes, what would I do?" She adds, "We need to keep the attention on Afghanistan. Now, more than ever, we need to continue the level of assistance that has been provided, scale up where we can, and, if possible, diversify the assistance as well."

Thanks to the generosity of donors, WFP provided 18 million people with lifesaving food and nutrition assistance across the 34 provinces of Afghanistan between January and June 2022.

In addition to US\$90 million in ECHO funding to provide emergency food and nutrition assistance to some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable families, European Union Humanitarian Aid funding also helped keep the WFP-managed United Nations Humanitarian Air Service operating – a critical enabler for the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. UNHAS, which reaches Chaghcharan twice a week, carried out more than 4,300 flights and transported nearly 28,000 aid workers to 20 destinations across the country in 2022.



©WFP/Shelley Thakral

Marianna Franco (far left), head of the ECHO office in Afghanistan, meets women receiving emergency food assistance in Ghor

At a distribution site in the centre of Chaghcharan, the provincial capital, Marianna Franco, who leads the European Union Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) in Kabul, met with community members who were collecting food assistance. People continued to arrive at the site from neighbouring settlements – on horses, motorbikes, and donkeys. "I would have either died or would have had to move," she recalled Homina saying. "There is no other option, no other income opportunity."

"It is heartbreaking to hear from women who talk about reverting to irreversible coping mechanisms because they have no other means of survival," she says.



A UNHAS flight reaching remote parts of Afghanistan

©WFP

Source: 'Keep the world's attention on Afghanistan' warns EU humanitarian chief, by Shelley Thakral, 15 June 2022, www.wfp.org/stories/keep-worlds-attention-afghanistan-warns-eu-humanitarian-chief

Enabling local populations and humanitarian actors to safely use previously contaminated areas

Improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war have been the leading cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan in recent years. In 2022, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) conducted a nationwide explosive contamination survey covering over 3,600 villages in four provinces of the country. As part of the initiative, 4,360 pieces of explosive ordnance were safely destroyed, over 25 km² of hazardous area was released for productive use, and more than 350,000 people benefitted from explosive ordnance risk education.

UNMAS also plays a role in facilitating humanitarian operations. In May 2022, UNMAS responded to emergency requests from UNICEF and WFP in Kandahar Province when construction workers noticed suspected explosive hazards. The UNMAS rapid response team arrived quickly and removed an anti-tank mine from a ditch on the UNICEF site and carried out surface and subsurface clearance on the WFP plot to ensure it is safe for building a warehouse. Similarly, in June 2022, UNMAS removed a rocket and mortar from an IOM flood defence construction site. UNMAS also delivered hazardous environment training to national and international staff of humanitarian organizations working in contaminated areas.

Following the June 2022 earthquake in Khost and Paktika Provinces, mine action partners deployed ambulances, quick response teams, and machinery to support aid delivery; they also shared education materials and maps of explosive-ordnance-affected areas with the humanitarian aid community.



Explosive Ordnance Disposal Level 3 training

©UNMAS 2022

To reduce the deadly effects of explosive ordnance on civilians, mixed-gender UNMAS mine action teams provided explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) to vulnerable and high-risk populations. EORE messaging was also distributed with FAO food packages. To enable maximum interaction with women and girls when assessing community needs, UNMAS teams included more female community liaison officers. Female deminers in Bamyan Province benefitted from English-language courses, and three received Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Level 3 training – the first time for women in Afghanistan. UNMAS also deployed equality and diversity officers to national NGO partners to improve inclusion and gender responsiveness across their work.

During 2022, a risk education mass media campaign conducted with BBC Media Action resulted in the production of 8 television and radio public service announcements and 56 radio magazines. The campaign, which was broadcast through various TV, radio, and social media channels, as well as local buses, reached 22.4 million people across the country.

Source: UNMAS



©UNMAS 2022

Outcome 2. Saving livelihoods

Essential services are sustained that address basic human needs for the people in Afghanistan



18,788,509 people vaccinated against measles, polio, and COVID-19



928,115 children reached through school-feeding programmes



3,161 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and informal businesses received investment funds



876 MSMEs received capacity building training in trade and business development



12,677 jobs created or safeguarded



10,190,518 workdays generated



15,722 people benefitted from improved farm-based livelihood support



350 hectares of land brought under irrigation

The delivery of **essential services** to the Afghan people was under serious threat following the events of August 2021 and associated withdrawal of development funding.

Outcome 2 of the Transitional Engagement Framework recognized that if essential services collapse, the humanitarian needs of the whole population would dramatically increase. At their core, while they benefit the most vulnerable, these services are essential for all Afghans. Therefore, while some activities may be targeted according to vulnerability, others are intended as temporary – yet vital – substitutes for essential services that have been disrupted or suspended following the takeover of power by the Taliban in 2021. Maintaining these services is not only critical to saving lives and sustaining an enabling environment for humanitarian action, but also to preserve dignity and livelihoods, and empower people to make their own

choices and be able to provide for their families and communities.

The scope of work under Outcome 2 covered:

1. activities and services that sustain basic human needs for all people in Afghanistan, particularly health, nutrition, education, food security, protection, and critical elements of infrastructure such as water, sanitation, and energy.
2. activities that prevent people from falling or sliding back into acute vulnerability. The aim of this intervention is to reduce people's dependence on humanitarian aid; to mitigate protection risks; to prevent further displacement; and to contribute to resilient communities by preserving livelihoods and providing social protection that goes beyond humanitarian assistance, including through basic income support.



Thanks to the work of the United Nations and partners:

- 18,090,000 people attended primary health care facilities.
- 1,651,830 children received the measles vaccine; 10,321,160 children received the polio vaccine; and 1,578,487 infants received the Pentavalent 3 vaccine through routine immunization programmes.
- 6,815,519 people were vaccinated against COVID-19, bringing the total number of people who received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to 11,300,000.
- basic primary health care clinics received medical supplies; the cold chain was maintained; and health-related activities monitored across the country.
- 5,500,000 people were reached with HIV, TB, and malaria prevention, testing, and treatment services. The number of reported malaria cases has fallen by 29 per cent since 2019 and there have been no malaria-attributed deaths since 2018.
- 1,950,235 people received bed nets for malaria prevention via mass community campaigns, and 178,761 pregnant women received bed nets during antenatal visits.
- 891,535 women and girls received psychosocial counselling services from qualified health professionals through 45 psychosocial counselling centres, 25 mobile health teams, and 62 women-friendly health spaces.
- 928,115 children benefitted from school-feeding programmes.
- 16,931 people (10,062 males and 6,869 females) at risk or with drug use disorders benefitted from drug use prevention, psychosocial counselling, social support and harm reduction services. In addition, 125 NGO and civil society organization (CSO) service providers benefitted from capacity building on evidence-based and gender-responsive drug use harm reduction strategies.
- 3,161 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) received investment funds and 876 MSMEs benefitted from capacity building in trade and business development.
- 12,677 jobs were created or safeguarded and more than 10 million workdays were generated.
- the livelihoods of 15,722 farmers were supported and 350 hectares of land were brought under irrigation.

Somaya, a UNICEF-supported community health worker, educates mothers about the importance of good nutrition in Daikundi Province



Revitalizing the Sehatmandi Project to keep the health system afloat

The Sehatmandi Project, which aims to expand the scope, quality and coverage of affordable health services across Afghanistan, especially to rural populations, started as the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) Project between 2013 and 2018, and was renamed Sehatmandi in 2018. Based on principles of equity and pay-for-performance, and designed to build capacity in the national health sector, the Sehatmandi Project had been the backbone of Afghanistan's health system, serving millions of people across all 34 provinces through 2,331 public health facilities (64 per cent of the total) and employing more than 24,000 health workers, a third of them women.

The project, together with the Basic Package of Health Services, introduced by the Ministry of Health in 2001 with a focus on maternal and child health and nutrition, and the Essential Package of Hospital Services introduced in 2005, contributed to a relatively resilient health system, resulting in a significant reduction in morbidity and mortality, and substantial improvements in infant, child and maternal health in the country. Between 2000 and 2017, maternal mortality dropped from 1,450 to 638 deaths per 100,000 live births; life expectancy rose from 44.5 in 2004 to 63 in 2020; and the number of functional health facilities increased from 498 to 3,732 between 2002 and 2020.

At the beginning of 2021, plans were underway to create a national Integrated Package of Essential Health Services bringing the two health service packages together. Instead, health services were disrupted as a result of the abrupt takeover of political power by the Taliban in August 2021. Access to essential health care services rapidly deteriorated, severely affecting the lives of the Afghan people, especially women and children. Humanitarian needs escalated while development funding was paused.

As a result, most health facilities either stopped functioning or had to limit services, with funding gaps causing stockouts of essential medicines. Health facility breakdown affected the availability of basic and essential health services, as well as humanitarian assistance, outbreak preparedness and response, and polio eradication and COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

To bridge this major and unacceptable gap in the provision of basic health services, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) relaunched the Sehatmandi project in October 2021. The project is jointly implemented in all 34 provinces together with the United Nations Population Fund (supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) and non-governmental partners.

Working together under the Sehatmandi Project, WHO and UNICEF:

- provided access to lifesaving essential care to more than 30 million people, including hard-to-reach communities
- prevented the disruption in delivery of basic and essential package of health services across major hospitals and primary health care facilities throughout Afghanistan
- supported 2,211 public health facilities (64 per cent of total), covering operational costs, including medicines, medical and non-medical supplies, and winterization costs and fuel for heating and electricity
- retained, and covered the salaries of, approximately 25,000 health care workers (35 per cent women), representing 63 per cent of the total number of health care workers in the country
- maintained the continuity of services and enabled the number of monthly consultations to continue rising in fields such as antenatal care, child morbidity care, family planning, infant and young child feeding, Penta3 vaccination, TB treatment, as well as Caesarean sections and emergency surgery.

Between November 2021 and January 2022, the Project benefitted from funding from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), as well as WHO and UNICEF resources. Between February and June 2022, the World Bank-managed Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) provided funding for the Sehatmandi Project.



© WHO 2022
Six-week-old Zubaida receiving pneumonia and septic shock treatment at the emergency room of Baghlan District Hospital, which is supported by the Sehatmandi Project

Source: WHO, *Serving the health needs of Afghans during unprecedented crises*

*Supporting 194,000 public school teachers
with emergency cash support*

It takes Tahira an hour to walk over the hills to Chawgani Secondary School in Daikundi Province, where she teaches grades 1–3. When schools are open, Tahira hikes the route twice each day, her own children in tow, to support her family and educate the next generation.

When schools closed in August 2021, salary payments also stopped, and Tahira was unsure how her family would survive. Her husband was severely injured in the Bamyan coal mines just two months into their marriage and cannot work. “He cannot even lift this teacup,” Tahira says. For the last seven years, Tahira has been the sole earner in their family.

After the school closure, Tahira stopped receiving her salary. In desperation, she begged neighbours for food, but they were even worse off than she was. “I felt like life would stop,” she says.

In February 2022, with funding support from the European Union, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) provided 194,000 public school teachers in Afghanistan – like Tahira – with emergency cash support of 9,000 Afghani (US\$100) to cover the month of January. This support was intended to retain dedicated teachers like Tahira in their profession.

“When I received that 9,000 Afghani, I felt like it was 900,000,” Tahira exclaimed. “I felt so relieved. I immediately went to the bazaar to buy food and supplies for my family.”

In March, Tahira received payment for the month of February – another 9,000 Afghani – provided by UNICEF with funding from the European Union.



Tahira with her students

©Tahira's archive

Fortunately, she also received her missing salary payments from the de facto authorities, bringing welcome stability to her family.

“Being a teacher makes me proud,” she says. “And this job is very important to me. There is a huge difference between being educated and being uneducated. I can support myself and my family, while the other women in my community cannot.”

Tahira’s love for her students is evident in her eyes and in her demeanour. She speaks earnestly about how hardworking and intelligent the students are, and how she tries to encourage them to stay positive and to return to school when classrooms reopen.

“I only hope that we can continue to advocate for girls’ education, and for all students to come back to the classroom. I do not believe there should be any discrimination among us.”

Source: *Waiting for a lifeline* by Veronica Houser, 14 April 2022, www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/waiting-lifeline

Children walk home from an accelerated learning centre in Daikundi Province



Polio surveillance review yields results in Afghanistan

A team of experts including virologists and epidemiologists visited Afghanistan in June 2022 to conduct the first comprehensive nationwide assessment of the country's polio surveillance system in six years. Among their recommendations was the need to address gaps in environmental surveillance and expand the number of environmental surveillance sites in areas deemed high-risk for polio, including in the country's east, southeast, south and west regions, to ensure any presence of the virus is quickly detected.

Afghanistan's acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance system which monitors for signs of AFP in children under 15 years of age is complemented by environmental surveillance – the collection of sewage samples at designated sites to check for presence of the virus in the community. Together, the AFP and environmental surveillance systems enable the programme to detect areas where the virus may be circulating to enable a timely response.

In line with recommendations from the review, 7 new environmental surveillance sites have been set up, bringing the total number of sites to 37. One of those sites, at Pezand Pana Dafter in Nangarhar Province, has produced seven positive environmental samples since it was established in September 2022. The programme quickly mounted a series of responses targeting 1.4 million children under five in all eastern provinces – Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan.

World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines stipulate that environmental sites should be located in areas with substantial populations, and with flowing sewage water. In Afghanistan, sites are established in major cities and larger population centres with existing wastewater and drainage systems. Communities with mobile populations are also a focus. Samples are collected regularly and sent to a WHO-accredited polio laboratory for testing.

Afghanistan, one of two countries where polio remains endemic, has made significant progress in interrupting transmission of the virus. With the resumption of nationwide campaigns in November 2021, six national and three subnational campaigns were implemented in 2022. Improved reach with each campaign has reduced the number of unreached children from 3.5 million prior to August 2021 to 0.6 million by December 2022. The number of reported cases of children paralysed as a result of wild poliovirus type 1 fell from 56 in 2020 to 2 in 2022 – in Paktika and Kunar Provinces. Twenty-two positive environmental samples were detected in 2022, all in the country's eastern region.

Further environmental surveillance sites are planned as WHO continues to implement recommendations from the review to ensure Afghanistan's surveillance system is sensitive enough to detect all circulating polio viruses.

Source: WHO

Children receive the polio vaccine and vitamin A supplements during the May 2022 polio campaign in Herat Province



Outcome 3. Strengthening systems

Afghanistan will preserve social investments and community-level systems essential to meeting basic human needs and contributing to resilience, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence



6,283,552 people
accessed safe drinking
water



47,714 adolescents
participated in life skills or
comprehensive sexuality
education interventions



138,227 women and girls
accessed safe spaces



70 meetings
held with rule-of-law stakeholders
to promote access to justice for
vulnerable groups



3 high-level policy meetings
facilitated to elevate the voices
of Afghan women leaders on
women, peace and security
priorities



**153 community-based or
civil society organizations**
trained on participatory and
inclusive community planning

The aim of Outcome 3 of the Transitional Engagement Framework was to protect the gains made over the preceding two decades and help build resilience, especially among the most vulnerable. **Sustaining community-based systems** for meeting basic human needs, the United Nations continued to expand access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services to provide the means for the poorest communities to live in dignity. The United Nations also invested in collecting and disseminating data to help improve the effectiveness of interventions.

The United Nations and partners:

- Supported the delivery of WASH services to the most vulnerable at national and subnational levels in both urban and rural areas. This resulted in approximately 6.2 million people (3.9 million people in rural and 2.3 million people in urban areas) gaining access to safe drinking water.
- Collected and disseminated sex- and age-disaggregated data relevant to the programmes to reflect the realities of Afghan women, men, girls and boys. Examples include the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis and Research on Challenges, Barriers, and Opportunities for Women-Led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Afghanistan Humanitarian Crisis.

- Facilitated 27 meetings enabling Afghan women to brief international decision-makers so they could directly influence discussions on the future of Afghanistan (e.g. engagement of Afghan women leaders with Security Council members resulting in stronger Women, Peace and Security language in the renewed UNAMA mandate).
- Reached 138,227 women and girls with lifesaving information on risk mitigation and integrated services as well as psychological first aid, psychosocial support, case management for gender-based violence, referrals, and life skills and livelihood training through 73 Women's and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS) in 15 provinces.
- Conducted awareness-raising sessions with 152,275 community influencers, women, girls, and their families to help improve safety and reduce vulnerability of women and girls when accessing basic services. In addition, 47,714 adolescents (girls and boys) actively participated in life skills training and peer-to-peer mentoring sessions.
- Developed pre-vocational training modules on health, agriculture, and starting a business, which were integrated with Basic General Literacy courses to help unskilled young people and adults improve their earning prospects.



Bringing water to remote villages

Until recently, the hill village of Asad Khil in Spinghar District, Nangrahar Province in eastern Afghanistan had no water. The nearest source was a patch of open water seven kilometres away, a journey of some five hours by foot. The water was not safe, and waterborne diseases were common, especially in summer.

Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of waterborne disease in the world; diarrhoeal diseases are the second most common cause of death among children under five. Recent findings suggest that around eight in ten Afghans regularly drink unsafe water.

Under the flagship United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Area-Based Approach for Development Emergency Initiative (ABADEI), the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan implemented a water supply project to provide safe drinking water to the 350 households in Asad Khil in August 2022.

Haji Hikmatyar, a 40-year-old member of the Asad Khil Community Development Council (CDC) recalls, "There was no access to safe drinking water in our village. Villagers were often walking miles to find fresh water, and even getting injured on the journey."

"We would regularly complain to the Government. Unfortunately, poor security in the area made it difficult to get help. After a meeting with the ABADEI team, a decision was made to implement the pipe scheme project in our village," says Haji. "We are really grateful that that our voice has finally been heard. The water pipe will not only make life much easier for the women who usually fetch the water, but children will have access to safe drinking water, too."



Asad Khil water tap

©UNDP/Faridullah Salar



Workers on the Asad Khil pipe network project ©UNDP/Faridullah Salar

In addition to being vital for health, access to safe drinking water also supports community cohesion and better attendance at school and work because of fewer sick days.

In Asad Khil, the construction project has had other benefits, too. Under ABADEI, local workers are paid as labourers under a cash-for-work scheme. Although the employment is temporary, it provides a welcome injection of funds into local economies. Here, 4,100 skilled and unskilled labourers were paid a daily rate of 700 Afghani (US\$8) and 400 Afghani (\$4.50), respectively, for an average of 55 days each.

Khan Nazeer, 43, shared, "I lost my job after the collapse of the Government in August 2021. Before that, I was the sole breadwinner for my family of nine children. I was desperately looking for a job but with no success. Eventually, I decided to migrate to another country just to keep my family from starving. That was when I was informed by the community leader about the water pipe project. I got a job in the cash-for-work scheme as an unskilled labourer. I have been working here for the last three months. I now have money to feed my family and meet their needs. I am also very happy that they will have access to safe drinking water at their doorstep when the pipeline is complete."



Asad Khil water reservoir

©UNDP/Faridullah Salar

In 2022, the UNDP ABADEI programme built or rehabilitated more than 500 elements of water infrastructure, bringing water to 2.5 million people.

Source: UNDP, *No life without water*

Providing lifesaving reproductive health care for women returning to Afghanistan

At the Zero Point clinic in Afghanistan's Kandahar Province, on the border with Pakistan, midwife Zul Haja often works late into the night to assist returnees in need of urgent care. "The women are grateful for the services and treatment we provide, which were not easily accessible for them on the other side of the border. We make sure that they understand the importance of meeting their reproductive health needs – and the consequences of neglecting them," she explained.

Ms. Haja is in charge of the maternity unit at the UNFPA-supported clinic, where women can receive family planning information, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, antenatal care, safe delivery referrals, and basic psychosocial support. Nearly all the patients are returnees crossing back into Afghanistan despite the ongoing humanitarian crisis embroiling the country.

With restricted access to services and limited freedom of movement for women, the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls have increased significantly since the Taliban takeover of August 2021. Unmet needs for sexual and reproductive care could result in millions of unintended pregnancies and an increase in maternal mortality.

The risk of unintended pregnancy spikes as exploitation and sexual violence increase during crises and conflict, and when protection mechanisms and social support networks break down. In Afghanistan, longstanding human rights challenges and limited ability to seek or receive reproductive health care have

led to one of the highest maternal death rates in the region. Now, combined with increasingly alarming levels of hunger and malnutrition and a reported rise in protection issues, the situation risks deteriorating further.



Zero Point clinic for returnees in Kandahar Province

Every two hours an Afghan woman dies in childbirth or from pregnancy complications – in many cases due to a lack of adequate reproductive health care, including trained midwives. Supporting the Zero Point clinic is just one of the interventions UNFPA is undertaking in the country amid a growing humanitarian crisis.

In 2022, UNFPA procured more than 975 reproductive health kits containing medicine and medical supplies that will assist up to 1.22 million women and girls. Mobile health teams, toll-free hotlines for midwifery assistance, family health houses, emergency clinics and protection centres also form an essential part of the response.

Source: UNFPA, *Midwives ensure lifesaving reproductive health care for women returning to Afghanistan*

Afghan families returning from Pakistan at the Spin Boldak crossing



Challenges

The United Nations was operating in Afghanistan at a time of complex crisis and volatility. Among the main operational challenges encountered in 2022 were:

- The increasing **restrictions on the rights of women and girls**, culminating in the ban on Afghan women working for NGOs. This poses a major operational challenge for the delivery of aid. The majority of beneficiaries are women and children and, in light of the cultural norms prevailing in the country, it is not possible to continue providing services to this population effectively without the engagement of female staff. Where exemptions have been granted, these are often informal, undependable, or imply additional operational costs, e.g. for the presence of a *mahram* or establishment of separate office spaces.
- The disconnect of Afghanistan from inter-governmental processes, the **non-recognition**

of the de facto authorities by the international community, and the lack of funding for development programmes in the country led to the elaboration of the 'basic needs' concept while no national development plan is in place. Progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals has stalled and is likely to be reversed.

- International sanctions and the banking crisis resulted in an **increased level of risk** for the operations of United Nations and partners. The situation necessitated direct shipments of cash to pay staff salaries and operational expenses.
- The country is engulfed in a **protracted humanitarian crisis** on an unprecedented scale. The humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate unless multiple underlying risk factors, including vulnerability to climate change and weak agri-food systems, are addressed.

A challenging operating environment for United Nations personnel

For the most part, the de facto leadership of the country has accepted the role of the United Nations and respected relevant international obligations, e.g. around ensuring the safety of United Nations personnel. Nevertheless, United Nations staff, and especially Afghan staff members, encountered multiple infringements of their rights and threats to their safety in 2022. Those incidents included:

- Official claiming to be from the de facto Department of Refugees and Returnees threatened and beat up WFP humanitarian workers in Kabul (February).
- Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development officials harassed UNDP staff and demanded joint missions and the right to approve projects (February).
- United Nations female staff were stopped at an increasing number of checkpoints (reported in May).
- United Nations national staff members' homes were searched (June).
- In Kandahar Province, a female staff member was stopped at the United Nations compound gate and taken to the General Directorate of Intelligence (September).
- A female staff member in Herat Province was prevented from reporting for duty (September).

- In some locations, the de facto authorities demanded lists of United Nations national staff members, copies of their passports, and access to United Nations compounds to inspect office layout and determine whether rules on male/female segregation were being followed on United Nations premises (September).
- UNDP received a request from the de facto authorities to stop providing cash assistance to women and to provide such payments to male members of the family instead (September).
- UNMAS received a request to cover the travel expenses and daily subsistence allowance for de facto authority counterparts (September).

The heaviest toll, however, fell on Afghan staff members working for the United Nations-funded polio vaccination programme. In a clear violation of international humanitarian law, 8 polio vaccination workers (4 women and 4 men) were murdered while carrying out lifesaving work in four locations in northern Afghanistan on 24 February 2022. The victims included 4 members of house-to-house vaccination teams killed in two separate incidents in Kunduz city; 2 vaccinators and 1 social mobilizer killed in Emamsaheb District of Kunduz Province; and 1 member of the vaccination transit team killed in Taloqan District, Takhar Province.

Rangeland rehabilitation through community support

Rangelands – defined as land where the natural vegetation is mainly grasses and similar plants and shrubs that can be grazed by livestock or wildlife – can be a source of livelihood for rural communities. Rangelands can provide firewood, edible and medicinal plants and habitat for wildlife while helping store carbon and preserve the soil. Well-managed grasslands and rangelands can promote sustainable agriculture.

In Afghanistan, by 2006, widespread grazing, deforestation and climatic factors have reduced the vegetation cover and accelerated land degradation resulting in desertification affecting more than 75 per cent of the total land area in northern, western, and southern regions of the country.

While Ghazni Province in southeastern Afghanistan had previously been known for its wide rangeland and abundant livestock, here, too, the dry climate, excessive grazing, and overuse of rangeland products has resulted in serious degradation.

With Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been working with local communities and provincial stakeholders to rehabilitate rangelands in Ghazni Province since 2019.

“Rangelands are getting degraded day by day in Ghazni Province since there are no alternative livelihood options for the resident communities. Uprooting shrubs and selling them in the local market was a good source of income for the community in the past, but it is causing degradation,” said Ghulam Hazrat, head of Ghaiby Rangeland Management Association.

“Thanks to FAO, not only have there been awareness campaigns on the importance of sustainable rangeland

management, but [the organization] has also provided us with backyard poultry farms as a source of alternative livelihood, established woodlots for fuelwood, directly reseeded alfalfa seed for rangeland rehabilitation and fodder for livestock and supplied apple orchard saplings as agroforestry,” he added.

In addition to the 32 ha of rangeland adapted for fuelwood, 40 ha for agroforestry, and 660 ha reseeded with alfalfa, 22,968 ha of rangeland has been selected to be used in rotation to avoid overgrazing, and a further 10,518 ha has been set aside (quarantined) to enable natural regeneration of rangeland plants.

To further decrease pressure on the rangeland, the community, and particularly female-headed families, were introduced to backyard poultry farming, which has the added benefit of reducing malnutrition and poverty, while creating employment opportunities for women.

“My chickens lay 15–20 eggs daily. In a week, I am able to sell 120 eggs at the local market, earning 1,200 Afghani (US\$13.30). The other day, after selling eggs, I purchased notebooks and pencils for my two school-going children as well as some other food items for my family. It is easy and safe to collect eggs laid in my own home compared with collecting bushes and shrubs from the rangeland. Busy with my poultry farm, I noticed I am no longer feeling depressed,” said Adella, a resident of Ghaiby village in Malistan District, one of the beneficiaries of the backyard poultry farm project.

After attending a two-day backyard poultry farm management training organized by FAO with GEF support, she received a poultry farm starter pack: 27 hens, 3 roosters, 150 kg of feed, drinkers, feeders, and other necessary items for chicken house construction. Since then, she no longer goes to the rangeland as she is able to feed her family from the poultry farm income.

Source: FAO

*Rehabilitated and quarantined rangeland
in Malistan District, Ghazni Province*



Creating income generation opportunities for women in Afghanistan

"I was apprehensive about what I should do to generate income and provide for my family's daily needs. I could not go too far for work because I am responsible for caring for my husband and baby." Zadro, 25, has had to support her family since her husband had an accident in 2021. They live with their 10-month-old baby girl in a village in Balkh Province.

When she found out the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) was looking for women labourers, she compared this to a ray of light. She started to work as a labourer watering roadside trees. This was part of a project funded by the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), in which UNOPS organized cash-for-work activities in Balkh and Samangan Provinces between April and December 2022.

She said, "the STFA Project is a great opportunity to work close to my house and earn money to live a better life and come out of poverty".

In addition to providing income generation opportunities for women and men, the project also succeeded in empowering a woman to take a leadership role. Nadera, a 27-year-old mother-of-two, performed the role of the project team leader. She was responsible for overseeing the team's work in filling up potholes, cleaning roadside drains, cleaning and opening culverts, watering trees and plants, and clearing snow-blocked roads.

She remembers the day when she was appointed as team leader: "I felt as if it was almost impossible that the men of the village would accept women as their team leaders... But I proved that women could also work hard, and honesty makes me more powerful; now men also respect me and involve me in community development meetings."



Zadro working as a labourer as part of the UNOPS-STFA cash-for-work project

©UNOPS Afghanistan

Zadro and Nadera's families were among the 904 households that benefitted from income from the project. The project generated 108,310 labour days, and 35 per cent of the participants were women.

In partnership with UNICEF and partner NGOs – the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC) and the Social and Humanitarian Assistance Organization (SHAO) – the project also provided protection, livelihood and life skills training to 5,597 women and girls. UNOPS plans to continue and expand this programming in 2023, generating livelihoods and income generation activities for people across Afghanistan.

Source: UNOPS

Nadera working as a team leader on the UNOPS-STFA project



©UNOPS Afghanistan

2.3. Partnerships and coordination with donors

In light of the new political situation in the country, including the non-recognition of the de facto authorities by the international community and the absence of a national development framework, the previous Government-led aid architecture has been rendered obsolete.

The **Afghanistan Coordination Group (ACG)** was established in May 2022 to coordinate non-humanitarian assistance from international aid partners and to provide a platform for strategic dialogue on programmes, policy, and context. The Afghanistan Coordination Group aims to improve coherence, efficiency and effectiveness among key international partners willing to provide longer-term, more sustainable assistance to support the basic needs of the people of Afghanistan – and advance the 2030 Agenda to the extent possible in a country mired by multiple challenges. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for delivering on citizens’ basic needs lies with the de facto authorities, a draft ACG Joint Framework for International Partner Support in Afghanistan has been developed to guide the collaborative approach to supporting basic human needs of the most vulnerable and at-risk groups in Afghanistan.

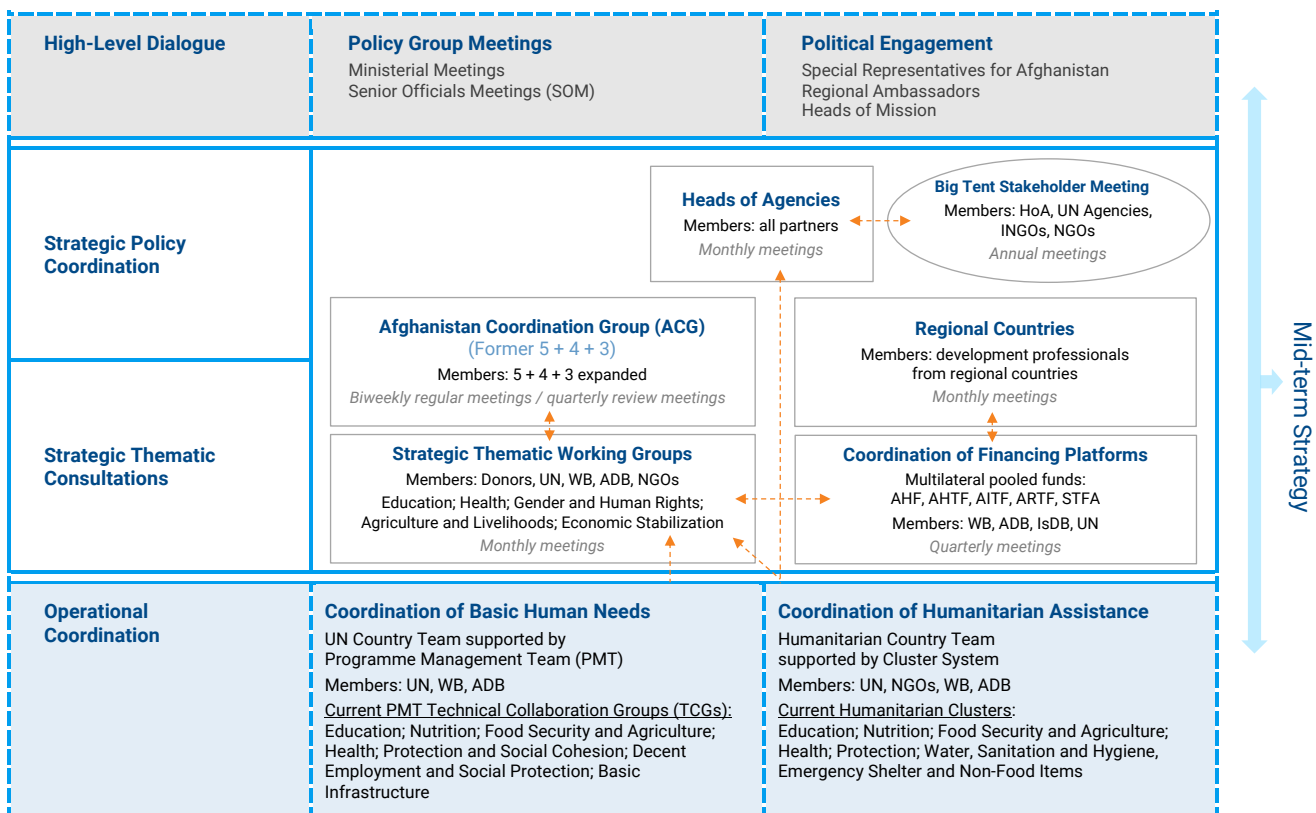
Membership of the ACG includes representatives of the Governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden,

Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as the European Union, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, and the United Nations. The ACG also engages civil society groups, national and international non-governmental organizations, regional partner countries, and the private sector. Five Strategic Thematic Working Groups undertake sectoral-level coordination within the Afghanistan Coordination Group.

In 2022, alongside external partners, including the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) – a consortium covering 182 national and international NGOs as well as other humanitarian, development, and peace partners – ACG Strategic Thematic Working Groups contributed to updating the Common Country Analysis underpinning the draft new United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan.

The drafts of the ACG Joint Framework for International Partner Support in Afghanistan and the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan were put on hold following the issuance of the 24 December 2022 ban on Afghan women working for NGOs. As a preliminary measure, the Transitional Engagement Framework, originally envisaged for 2022 only, was extended for a further six months until 30 June 2023.

Overview of mechanisms for donor coordination (endorsed by the Afghanistan Coordination Group in May 2022)





©IOM/Léo Torrétton

Ghulam stands proudly in front of his gas stove production workshop, which he runs thanks to an IOM grant

A new start back home: supporting Afghan returnees

It has been a long journey for Ghulam to become the successful businessman and community leader he is today.

The sound of pounding hammers and the distinctive smell of metal will reach you long before you enter his gas stove production workshop. He beams at his staff – returning migrants and host community members alike – working hard to produce gas stoves, fans, handicrafts, and more.

Ghulam lived in Iran between the ages of 8 and 21, when the death of his father prompted him to return to Herat to start a new life. He began working at a gas stove manufacturing company alongside his brothers.

In 2015, in light of the security and economic situation, Ghulam decided to seek better prospects elsewhere. He moved to Türkiye with his family, but struggled to get by. While he dreamed of reaching Europe, he eventually moved back to Afghanistan in late 2018. With barely enough money to make ends meet, he launched his stove manufacturing business.

Then, in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Imports from China and Iran stopped suddenly and many businesses collapsed. It was then, at a Community Development Council (CDC) awareness-raising event in Jebreil township in Herat Province, that Ghulam heard about business support offered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

An eligibility assessment recognized that Ghulam's enterprise had growth potential. Soon, he received new machinery and a cash grant that enabled him to pay staff salaries and continue investing in the business.

Today, Ghulam heads his local Community Development Council. CDCs contribute significantly to community welfare, as they form a vital link between returnees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities. Jebreil township hosts approximately 248,000 returnees and IDPs – the highest number in Herat Province.

"I hope to be able to grow my business further and create jobs that will help more people support their families," explains Ghulam.

Against a backdrop of a harsh economic climate, IOM supports resilient and cohesive communities for returnees, IDPs, and host populations across Afghanistan. It supports people to develop skills through apprenticeships and vocational training opportunities and provides grants and assistance to small-to-medium enterprises with potential for growth.

Between 2018 and 2022, IOM supported 524 businesses with cash grants and in-kind assistance, which led to the creation of 10,353 jobs and the retention of 1,924 existing jobs in Afghanistan.

Source: IOM, *Weight of return: Afghans driven to start anew back home* by Léo Torrétton and Lauriane Wolfe

2.4. Results of the United Nations working more and better together – United Nations coherence, effectiveness and efficiency

Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

The **Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)** was established in October 2021 to help address basic human needs and complement the immediate humanitarian response in the country. STFA brings together 17 United Nations organizations and 12 contributing partners to support United Nations entities Delivering as One for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations.

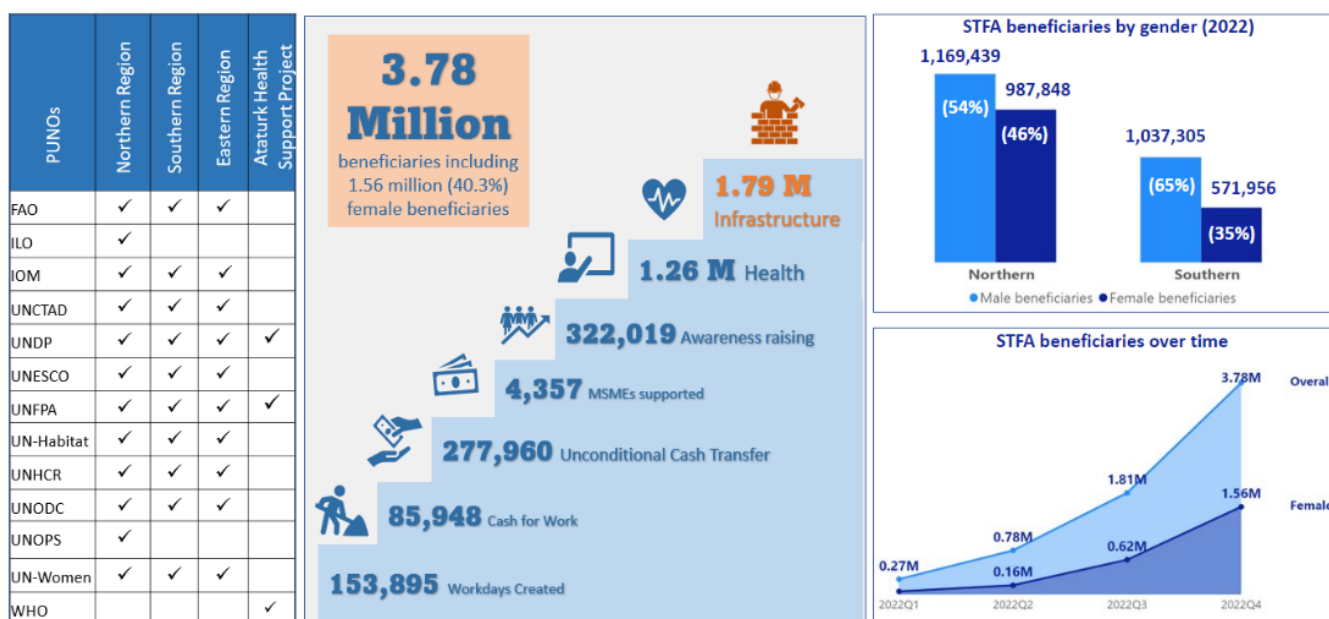
By the end of 2022, STFA mobilized US\$177 million, of which US\$141 million was allocated to joint regional initiatives for the southern, northern and eastern regions, and to health sector support initiatives in Kabul. The number of beneficiaries in 2022 reached 3.78 million people, 41.4 per cent of whom were female.

STFA support in 2022 was primarily allocated to health services and infrastructure projects. Health service support covered child nutrition, reproductive health services, drug prevention and drug treatment services, psychosocial counselling, health education services, and COVID-19 screening and treatment services. Over 1.25 million people (54.6 per cent female) benefitted from this support to basic health services.

Support for infrastructure investments comprised the construction of irrigation canals; provision of solar energy; establishment of water and sanitation networks; construction of shelters, health facilities, and community transportation infrastructure (feeder roads and culverts). Nearly 1.8 million people (40.5 per cent female) benefitted from these infrastructure services.

Furthermore, over 384,000 people (25 per cent female) benefitted from livelihood support. Of those, 278,000 people (32 per cent female) benefitted from unconditional cash transfers; 86,000 people (11 per cent female) benefitted from cash-for-work schemes; and over 20,000 people benefitted from income generation support. In total, 154,000 workdays were created. Furthermore, 4,357 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including 1,192 women-led MSMEs, received in-kind and cash support to sustain their businesses.

Social awareness-raising and training support – mostly related to human rights and gender-based violence – was provided to over 322,000 people. Additionally, over 32,000 people benefitted from community-level disaster resilience and disaster risk management interventions.



Reviving Atatürk Hospital: How the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan provides a lifeline for Afghan children

Kabul's Atatürk National Tertiary Case Paediatric Hospital, one of Afghanistan's major public childcare referral hospitals, was significantly affected by the power shift in 2021. With salary payments halted and insufficient equipment, it was difficult for the hospital to operate at full capacity.

In 2022, the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA) supported WHO, UNFPA and UNDP to provide the hospital with resources that would enable it to function effectively. This included staff salaries and a training budget; medical and non-medical equipment, including outfitting the laboratory; nutrition supplies; food and medicine for patients; as well as heating costs and renovations of parts of the hospital. As a result, 38,977 people, including 16,128 girls and women, received urgent care at the hospital in 2022.

Among those was Nargis, a ten-year-old schoolgirl from Saghar Kheil District in Ghor Province. The girl had not found adequate treatment for her pain and fever at local facilities. Once she started to lose consciousness, her family travelled to Atatürk Hospital in Kabul. Here, she was accurately diagnosed, treated, and provided with medicine and food at no charge.



Nargis and her mother at Atatürk Hospital. ©WHO/Zakarya Safari

"Although bringing my daughter to Kabul cost a lot in transport, I have been impressed with the service we received at the hospital. My daughter received quality services for free, and the medical staff were kind to us," Nargis' mother shared.

"I am happy that I feel better, and I am ready to go back to school and have fun with my friends again," said Nargis after more than two weeks in the hospital.

STFA support enabled 257 doctors, nurses, lab technicians, pharmacists, and administration and support staff to receive their salaries without delay.

In addition, UNFPA built an Integrated Youth Centre at the hospital. Since its opening in October 2022, 8,268 young people, including 3,377 young women,



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Zuhal Latife (second from left) facilitates an intergenerational dialogue on HIV and AIDS with girls, mothers and doctors in the new Integrated Youth Centre at Atatürk Hospital

benefitted from the Centre's counselling services, referrals and awareness-raising sessions on topics such as the dangers of early pregnancy and how to lead a healthy lifestyle, including staying free of drugs.

"We need to learn from the experiences of people from different generations and different places to promote a better understanding of issues that affect Afghan youth and help them better navigate life's challenges," said Zuhal Latife, an Intergenerational Dialogue Officer who plays an active role in organizing Youth Centre sessions. She hoped that the dialogues would spark conversations in schools, homes, and the community.

Among other upgrades undertaken at the hospital is an overhaul of the hospital's water, sanitation and hygiene systems carried out by UNDP to bring the hospital up to global standards.

The **Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)** is an inter-agency mechanism and United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund formed in 2021 to support United Nations agencies to jointly meet basic human needs in Afghanistan. Its work is made possible thanks to the generous contributions of donors, including the Governments of Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Qatar, Luxembourg, Turkey, the Czech Republic and Iceland, as well as UNDP.



©WHO/Kiana Hayeri

Mothers and children at Atatürk Hospital

Source: Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

Coordinating risk management

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2626 specifically called on UNAMA and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to *coordinate the overall risk management approach of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including monitoring, analysis and escalation of risks* related to carrying out the humanitarian and basic human needs mandate in the country. In response, the United Nations Country Team took a number of concrete measures to reduce the risk of fraud and diversion of funds. A Risk Management Coordination Unit was established under the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General to coordinate the risk management approach among United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes. The Country Team agreed to adopt a common approach to assessing potential implementing partners and strengthened the existing online information-sharing system on partners and contractors. A joint workshop with donors with a view to developing common risk assessment methodology is planned for early 2023.

Business Operation Strategy (BOS 2.0)

In December 2020, the United Nations Country Team adopted the second iteration of the Business Operation Strategy, BOS 2.0, to enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness. The efficiency gains resulting from establishing common services for administration, information and communication technology (ICT) and logistics amounted to US\$13.9 million in 2020 and US\$12.6 million in 2021. At the time of drafting, the efficiency gains for 2022 have been estimated at US\$14.3 million despite a highly fluid and volatile operational environment throughout the year.

Monitoring aid flows and results with UN INFO

In line with the Resident Coordinator's commitment to streamlining reporting of aid flows and results across the United Nations system, the scope of UN INFO, an internal digital reporting platform, was extended to cover the entirety of United Nations programming in the country. The platform had previously been used for reporting on the United Nations COVID-19 response, with good feedback from donors for enhancing transparency over aid flows and the results achieved.

Acting on sexual exploitation and abuse and gender inequality

The Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force resumed its work by reviewing its policies and tools with regard to the altered country context. A PSEA Strategy and Integrated Action Plan for the United Nations were developed and endorsed. The Inter-Agency Strategy Standard Operating Procedures for referring incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse were revised as part of the implementation of the Action Plan. Work began on a contextualized Inter-Agency Training Package and the recruitment of a full-time PSEA Coordinator. A PSEA Community Consultations tool on complaints and reporting mechanisms and PSEA messaging at community level were developed for rollout in 2023.

The United Nations Country Team established a Gender Theme Group to provide a platform for discussing all gender-related issues across the United Nations in Afghanistan. The Gender Theme Group developed a workplan of priority actions and led activities to mark the annual *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence* international campaign, which started on 25 November 2022.

Workers near the water dam in Bagrami District, Kabul Province



2.5. Financial overview and resource mobilization

Financial overview, 2022 (US\$)

<i>Transitional Engagement Framework Outcome</i>	<i>Required</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Funding gap</i>	<i>Expenditure (2022)</i>
1. Saving lives	7 572 103 764	3 842 956 036	3 729 147 728	2 554 672 612
2. Saving livelihoods	1 569 808 782	1 082 803 360	487 005 422	624 938 128
3. Strengthening institutions	241 777 500	192 283 108	49 494 392	39 784 408
Total	9 383 690 046	5 118 042 504	4 265 647 542	3 219 395 148

Funds by United Nations agency, 2022 (US\$)

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Required</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Funding gap</i>	<i>Expenditure (2022)</i>
UNICEF	4 186 750 235	1 566 502 830	2 620 247 405	781 554 293
WFP	2 566 312 842	1 752 670 175	813 642 667	1 328 238 258
WHO	508 991 719	324 334 989	184 656 730	220 590 253
IOM	500 320 000	217 062 250	283 257 750	83 392 014
UNHCR	340 345 538	224 632 170	115 713 368	220 139 527
UNDP	319 106 550	303 453 962	15 652 588	170 911 427
FAO	293 910 000	270 510 993	23 399 007	236 426 702
UN WOMEN	158 648 918	109 041 185	49 607 733	6 127 951
UNFPA	152 475 450	146 168 083	6 307 367	56 422 443
UNESCO	128 427 952	41 851 072	86 576 879	4 597 232
UNOPS	112 190 000	106 817 920	5 372 080	77 324 153
ILO	48 461 813	6 190 393	42 271 420	2 291 124
UNMAS	24 558 331	24 558 331	–	20 627 859
UN HABITAT	21 926 736	9 963 735	11 963 001	3 043 533
UNODC	10 531 187	7 341 840	3 189 347	3 867 804
UNCTAD	10 248 775	6 458 576	3 790 199	3 537 841
UNIDO	475 000	475 000	–	293 734
UNAMA	9 000	9 000	–	9 000
Total	9 383 690 046	5 118 042 504	4 265 647 542	3 219 395 148

Funds by thematic area, 2022 (US\$)

Thematic area	Required	Available	Funding gap	Expenditure (2022)
Food security and agriculture	2 358 164 713	1 771 586 020	586 578 694	1 340 094 207
Health	1 850 033 342	1 077 527 757	772 505 585	660 693 856
Basic infrastructure	1 509 086 414	396 726 056	1 112 360 358	205 723 877
Education	1 030 267 427	481 843 711	548 423 716	187 674 350
Nutrition	931 232 994	411 176 851	520 056 143	250 108 464
Protection and Social Cluster	871 776 844	504 566 426	367 210 418	359 046 519
Decent employment and social protection	833 128 311	474 615 684	358 512 627	216 053 875
Total	9 383 690 046	5 118 042 504	4 265 647 542	3 219 395 148

Note: The 'Required', 'Available', and 'Funding gap' columns in the tables above also include 2023 figures.

All data have been taken from UN INFO and are correct as of 10 April 2023, <https://uninfo.org/location/21/unct-overview>.

Sisters, 9 and 3, in their temporary accommodation in Kabul; their family of eleven, originally from Jalalabad, received cash assistance from UNHCR to help with additional costs during the coldest months, such as fuel for heating



Chapter 3. United Nations Country Team key focus areas for 2023

Despite increasingly restrictive and discriminatory measures introduced by the de facto authorities, particularly those relating to women's rights and participation, the United Nations and partners delivered significant levels of assistance in 2022. The United Nations systematically targeted the most vulnerable through a principled approach, including the delivery of assistance to women by women. Unfortunately, the patterns of restrictions imposed by the de facto authorities to date do not provide much hope for a more conducive operating environment in 2023. At the same time, the suffering of the Afghan people continues. In 2023, 28.3 million people (two thirds of Afghanistan's population) will need urgent humanitarian assistance in order to survive, up from 24.4 million people identified in the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan.

To manage these challenges, the United Nations will continue its role as the interlocutor between the international community on the one hand and the de facto authorities and the people of Afghanistan on the other.

To the international community, the United Nations will continue its advocacy and convey the imperative of assisting people in dire need of assistance. Given the intransigence of the de facto authorities on fundamental issues, such as human rights and women's rights, and multiple other emergencies arising elsewhere in the world, the precarious situation of Afghanistan risks being forgotten. At the end of March 2023, only 5 per cent of the Humanitarian Response Plan requirements for 2023 were funded. The World Food Programme, for example, will likely have to revise its April 2023 targets for provision of general food assistance down from 13 million people to 9 million due to severe funding constraints. If additional funds are not urgently received, WFP will be forced to cut assistance by a further 4 million people in May.

In relation to the de facto authorities, the United Nations will continue its engagement to build consensus on a shared human agenda for the people of Afghanistan and to enable the safe and efficient delivery of essential services and the humanitarian response. The most urgent priority is the reversal of the ban on Afghan female staff being employed by NGOs. As this report goes to print, the ban has been extended through verbal communication to Afghan women working on United Nations premises. This announcement is not only another violation of international human rights law and fundamental women's rights, but also a violation of Article 8 of the United Nations Charter as well as United Nations staff privileges and immunities. While strongly advocating with the de facto authorities for the reversal of this decision on the ground, the United Nations is counting on the international community's support to find an urgent solution to this unprecedented situation.

The latest crisis once again puts the adoption of the new United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework, planned as the successor to the current Transitional Engagement Framework due to expire mid-year, into jeopardy. Nevertheless, the development of a new framework is the key priority for the first half of 2023, to be accompanied by a strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanism to provide accountability on the response, including on the participation of women in the planning and implementation of the response, and as key beneficiaries.

While the challenges remain immense, the people of Afghanistan deserve and require our undivided attention. As humanitarian needs continue to grow, funding of the Humanitarian Response Plan is essential and must be increased. At the same time, funding for basic human needs and community resilience is just as important to support the people and help bring Afghanistan back onto a positive pathway toward sustainable development.

People wait to receive emergency food assistance in Kabul





**United
Nations**

United Nations Afghanistan

April 2023

Cover page photo ©UNICEF/UN0627014/Haya Burhan

Meher, 16, top of her class, was due to start eleventh grade when in March 2022 the Taliban announced that schools would not reopen for girls in grades 7–12, while boys would be allowed to return to school. She says, "Schools were closed before because of COVID-19, but that did not hurt as much as now that we are not allowed to study while the boys our age are. This is not fair." Meher's favourite subjects are math and chemistry: "I love chemistry because I want to be a doctor in the future. I wish the school would reopen so I can go to school and study hard to achieve my goals." She adds, "Since I became aware that we are not allowed to go to school, I feel disappointed and sad."