

Emergency in Afghanistan

Situation Report #5

DATE: 22/04/2022

ChildFund Alliance Emergency Lead: WeWorld

Contact: giuseppe.russo@weworld.it

Introduction

Country/Location:

Afghanistan – Herat Province - Kushk-Robat Sangi District

Title:

Assisting the children of the most vulnerable acute food insecure women-headed households in Herat province

Situation Report No.: #5





Overview

With the world's attention elsewhere in Ukraine, Afghanistan continues to suffer from one of the worst humanitarian crisis in decades. Across the country, families are unable to purchase food to feed their children and basic items to survive harsh living conditions. The ongoing banking crisis has halted the circulation of much needed cash. The livelihoods of Afghans have all but dissipated.

Currently, **Afghanistan has roughly 24.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance**, which accounts for over half the population and four times the number of people who were in need three years ago.

Particular alarming are the threats faced by Afghan children and women.

Girls are particularly at risk as they have been prohibited from attending secondary school across the country.

The state had given assurance that girls would be able to receive an education beyond primary schooling; though ever since March 26, the date secondary schools were unexpectedly closed for girls, nothing has changed. Girls who remain at home are often put to work or even worse, married off for financial reasons.

Yet tragically, **education continues to be targeted and children are being killed**. On 19 April, deadly bomb attacks targeted the Mumtaz Tuition Center and Abdul Raheem Shaheed High School in western Kabul, killing at least six (mostly children) and wounding 17 others. As of the morning of 21 April, a roadside bomb injured two children. Ten worshippers were killed and 40 were injured in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. These sequences of attacks have targeted people belonging to the minority Hazaras, who are Shiite and often withstand the worst of attacks from the Daesh-affiliated IS-K group in Afghanistan. However, the deadliest of recent bombings have been attributed to the Pakistani military, who on 16 April killed 47 civilians in eastern Afghanistan, mainly women and children, during bombing raids targeting militants and threatening the border regions of Pakistan. This recent spate of attacks has brought renewed violence to the country after a period of relative calm, adding to the woes of those already suffering from food insecurity, drought and other humanitarian crises.

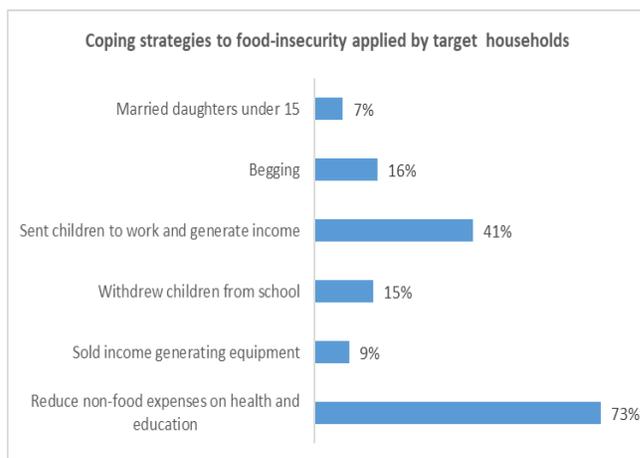
Despite these insurmountable challenges, the international community has dragged its feet in support of the country, in part due to the reluctance of funding assistance in a country governed by the Taliban, but also due to commitments in Ukraine. During the Afghanistan Pledging Summit at the end of March, \$2 billion remained unfunded for the Afghanistan HRP.

In order not to leave vulnerable Afghan girls, children and minority groups to their own fates, the international community must step up efforts to finance and implement humanitarian programmes that reduce the levels of risks they face on a daily basis. At the bare minimum, the Afghan HRP for this year must be fully funded by donors, to address some of the worst effects of the multiple crises hitting Afghanistan.

Overview of WeWorld/ChildFund response

WeWorld is operational in Herat Province where food security has deteriorated since the summer of 2021 with a 12% increase in the proportion of people with insufficient food consumption. The winter period has proven particularly difficult for families, as temperatures can fall as far as -12 degrees. Currently, 15% of households in Herat are run by women, against a national average of 5%, with the average size of a household comprising of 10 people (4 adults and 6 children ranging from 0-17).

We can confirm that 180 widow-led households are being supported via the cash for food project in Northern Herat Province. WeWorld has run an assessment of vulnerable households in Koshk e Rabat Sangi district, in which 479 households were contacted and 180 widow-led households identified for distribution. The results determined that over 95% of households suffered from hunger, with the same percentage reducing the size of meals and over 70% reducing the number of meals per day, to name a few coping mechanisms families have had to endure.



The assessment shows that, **for women and children, the consequences of food insecurity are particularly alarming**; dietary intake is incredibly poor, as well as the quality of food, placing many children under the age of five at risk of malnutrition, as well as pregnant and lactating women. Without any income generated through livelihood, many households have reverted to selling anything of value or **diverting money from paying schools**, just to put what little food they can on the table. Two out of five households have been forced to involve their school-aged children in income generating activities. Most worryingly, 7.2% of respondents have married their daughters

under the age of 15 for financial reasons.

In line with the cash-based food basket recommended and agreed upon by the Food Security Cluster, the cash for food distributions amount to \$90 on a monthly basis per household, distributed by WeWorld and RRAA to the 180 households from two suitable distribution points. Many welcomed the financial support and were grateful to hear that it will be sustained through the upcoming months; having faced immeasurable hardships with feeding their families.

It is the imperative of WeWorld to support all vulnerable households identified in the original needs assessment through the cash for food project and therefore is seeking further funds to cover the updated overall appeal of \$600,000.

SECTIONS BELOW ARE FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

1. Security & logistics

WeWorld has opened its mission in Herat and contracted a National Coordinator, acting as Country Representative under the direct management of Middle East & Asia Regional Director.

The WeWorld registration with INSO Afghanistan is fully reactivated and we receive regular updates on security. In Afghanistan, while the humanitarian community is committed to stay and deliver, increasing humanitarian needs are accompanied by heightened risks of collateral damage, attacks, access challenges and political interference. The unpredictability of the situation is expected to lead to increased humanitarian needs.

The operating environment was dominated by a multitude of factors translating into specific risks affecting NGOs and the public in the first half of December. Apart from the persistent IED (Improvised Explosive Device) attacks in Kabul and some attacks with small arms against Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (Government) forces in the Eastern Region, both the provincial capitals and rural areas saw a further increase in criminality. The collapsing economy is assessed to be the main driver behind such an increase.

At logistical level, UNHAS flights are active and connect Kabul to Herat to support humanitarian operations.

The disruption in the financial system has affected humanitarian operations, caused cash and liquidity issues impeding local procurement and affected salaries for staff and contractors as well as the processing of payments to implementing partners, suppliers, and service providers. The banking crisis has affected the capacity of financial service providers to deliver cash transfer across the country. Some suppliers are now asking for contract revisions to account for increased service charges as well as requesting to be paid in cash instead of through bank transfer.



The launching of the WeWorld operations in Herat required careful mediation with all relevant stakeholders involved with its validation and coordination, including local and national authorities, international organizations, as well as the Mullahs and village leaders who represented the communities reached.

2. Partnership and coordination

WeWorld is now a member of the Food Security Cluster and directly in touch with WFP to coordinate and avoid any duplication and participates in local coordination mechanism at Herat Province level. Monitoring plan and system is ongoing. Coordination with AICS (Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation) is well established and WW is negotiating further funds to improve the livelihood programs moving from pure relief (cash assistance) to more durable solutions to increase the sustainability of the Cash for work programs.

A team of Expatriates will move to Kabul and Herat in late April to monitor and expand the operations.

3. Program

Thanks to the increased support of Child Fund Alliance members, WeWorld has been able to increase the number of beneficiaries of 80 more women-headed households, reaching the total number of 180 beneficiary families, which numbers 827 individuals.

In line with the cash-based food basket below, recommended and agreed within the Food Security Cluster, cash4food distributions amount per family is of 90 USD equivalent in AFN on monthly base. Five members of ChildFund Alliance, namely ChildFund New Zealand, ChildFund Germany, Barnfonden, ChildFund Australia and Educo, have responded to the emergency appeal.

We have covered now little less than the 50% of the overall initial appeal and we are able to serve 180 widow-headed households for 6 months. In this way, we will be able to support them until the end of June 2022. WeWorld has designed and is implementing a 6 months emergency response project with the fund available. The actual response plan is still insufficient compared the need assessed and WeWorld strategy in the next future keeps to enlarge the number of widow-headed households beneficiaries up to 400 (with around 1,500 children benefitting for the action) until the end of the year starting from May.

Details on the response plan and related budget are available for interested members.

4. Funds and funding needs

Thanks to Child Fund New Zealand, ChildFund Germany, Barnfonden, ChildFund Australia and Educo, we have developed and we are implementing a Cash4Food project covering the needs of 180 women-headed households for 6 months (Jan '22-June '22).

The budget necessary to cover the updated need assessed and support 400 women-headed households until the end of the year amount to a total 600.000 USD and we have secured now only 28% of the needed amount. Ideally, **a further amount of 430.000 USD** would be necessary to serve additional 220 very vulnerable women-headed households starting from May and support all of the 400 families until the end of 2022.

Discussions are ongoing with ChildFund Korea to further increase WeWorld/ChildFund response in Herat.

5. Next steps

- Continue to run the monthly Cash4Food distribution to the 180 women-headed households identified for the next months.
- Organize Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) activities and collect data to evaluate the impact of the Cash4Food Assistance also to inform next steps.

- Identify the additional 220 women headed families through a home-to-home assessment and scoring based on the indicators recognized within the IPC as direct outcome indicators and typically best used to measure the level of acute food insecurity, namely: Household Diet Diversity Score (HDDS), Household Hunger Scale (HHS), Food Consumption Score (FCS), Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) and Livelihood Coping Strategies.
- Run an assessment on livelihood activities to be implemented as sustainable continuation to the support given to the actual beneficiaries to look for additional institutional funds.

Education is considered as the new sector to be assessed, being an underserved sector at the moment and part of WW core expertise.