

## Food Security and winterization in Afghanistan Situation Report

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### Introduction

Country/Location: Afghanistan – Herat Province - Koshk and Robat Sangi District

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

Situation Report No.: 2



### General overview

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is rapidly deteriorating, calling for an urgent assistance to prevent more dramatic consequences. Humanitarian needs are expected to increase drastically in the coming weeks, adding to the already very dire situation due to decades of conflict, drought, a sustained drought, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The food security situation is further deteriorating. While as of October highly food insecure people are already representing 18.8 million people, the situation expected for November to March will be marked by 22.8 million people in extreme situation (55% of the population).

The ongoing humanitarian assistance in the country remains insufficient compared to the huge and increasing needs. As at 3 November, the Flash Appeal remained 54 per cent funded and aid delivery is considerably low in the West region compared to other regions representing only the 3% of the overall population served during the last 2 weeks according to OCHA Weekly Humanitarian Update.

The western region, where Herat Province is located, is under particular stress: the needs of IDPs and people on their way to Iran are summed to the very precarious living conditions of local population.

Household's demographics analysis (source: Food Security Cluster) shows that at national level 6% of households are women-headed, but this rate being more than twice as high in the province of Herat (15%). Household's



average size is 10 people composed by: 4 adults (>18 years old), 2 teenagers (12-17 years old), 2 children (5-11 years old) and 2 children (0-5 years old). Since Herat's 2021 population is estimated at around 640,000, the number of women-headed households easily overcome 10.000 unit, meaning over 50.000 children in need.

### **Overview of WeWorld/ChildFund response**

WeWorld, with the support of its local partner RRAA, has selected 100 very fragile widow-headed households in Robot Sangi District (also called Kushk District) situated in the northern part of Herat Province.

Herat province is located in the western part of the country and borders with Iran and Turkmenistan. Around three quarters (77%) of the population lives in rural districts. Robot Sangi District total population is estimated at 120,000 and the number of women-headed households could reach the 2.000 units, meaning around 10.000 children in need. Very vulnerable women head of households are currently not able to work, having no source of income and left without any assistance to ensure food and basic commodities for themselves and their kids. It is the case for instance of Riza Gul, a widow we have met during the need assessment run in the Do Aab Sufla Village at the beginning of November. She lost her husband a year ago and she lives with her daughter and grandchildren. She was used to work, traveling to other villages and helping with houseworks, cleaning of cloths and any other possible work. "Now even that is not possible with the mahram restriction and economic situation. What should we do, where do we go to, and how could I feed them? God help us" shared Riza Gul with us while pointing at her grandchildren. "Our neighbors do sometimes help us, but ever since my husband died our family's living condition is deteriorating and the country is only becoming worse and worse. Nowadays even the common food items are becoming too expensive". When asked when it was the last time she received assistance, Riza Gul answered "I am not sure why my luck is bad, every time there is some assistance it comes and goes. I wish someone would come and see my situation. My son had a job but now he has lost his job after the collapse of the government and now we have nothing".

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### **1. Security & logistics**

WeWorld has opened its mission in Herat and contracted a National Coordinator, acting as Country Representative under the direct management of MiddleEast&Asia Regional Director. The WeWorld registration with INSO Afghanistan is fully reactivated and we receive regular updates on security. The number of security incidents is decreasing in Herat Province. On the economic front, prices of food and basic commodities keep increasing despite the decision of the Finance Ministry to suspend import duties three weeks ago.

Logistics keep being a major challenge in a country where the whole system has collapsed including the banking one. Inability to access cash not only impacts the Afghan population for the day to day life and the functioning of ministries but it also inhibits humanitarian partners from mobilizing timely salary payments, procuring critical humanitarian supplies from local markets and providing rapid and flexible cash-based assistance.

Humanitarians remain concerned about "conditional humanitarianism" or attempts to "leverage" humanitarian assistance for political purposes. Further, the humanitarian community in Afghanistan keeps advocating and asking donors to ensure transactions and other activities required for humanitarian operations are excluded from the scope of sanctions regimes to allow humanitarian activities to continue without impediment.

The IEA leadership in Herat Province has demonstrated an awareness of the role NGOs play in this difficult situation and appear willing to take measures to reduce risks in aid delivering.

### **2. Partnership and coordination**

RRAA is member of the Food Security Cluster and WFP partner and participates in local coordination mechanism at Herat Province level. Monitoring plan and system has been agreed between RRAA and WeWorld.



### **3. Program**

WeWorld has finalized the agreement with the local implementing partner RRAA.

The beneficiary selection has started, 100 very vulnerable widow-headed households have been identified in Robat Sangi District (also called Kushk District) situated in the northern part of Herat Province. The first distribution is planned in the next weeks (in the document some pictures of the households taken during the identification phase). This action will support women to provide food for their kids, protecting from malnutrition and other diseases around 500 children. More details on women and children living conditions will be available with Post Distribution Monitoring info and data.

Two members of ChildFund Alliance, namely ChildFund New Zealand and ChildFund Germany, have promptly responded to the first emergency appeal and we have planned with them to extend the support to the already identified 100 widow-headed households for the next 3 months. In this way we will be able to support them until February 2022. WeWorld has designed a 4 months emergency response project and detailed budget and shared it with CF NZ and CF DE.

The actual response plan is still insufficient compared to the need assessed and WeWorld strategy in the next future is the following:

- a) First ensuring the support to the identified beneficiaries until the end of the winter season, so ideally until June 2022.
- b) Possibly enlarging the number of widow-headed households beneficiaries up to 400 starting from January.

WeWorld has developed a response plan and detailed budget both for case a) and b).

The above information is available for interested members.

#### Protection

Women and girls are presented with unique additional risks, notably due to emerging conditions characterised by a roll-back on fundamental rights and more restricted access to services – due to both active fighting and movement restrictions.

#### Food

The country is currently facing the second drought in four years and the worst of its kind in 27 years. The recently updated Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis shows the food security situation has further deteriorated with worrying implications for the winter lean season ahead. An estimated 22.8 million people, or 55 per cent of the population, are expected to be in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3+) between November 2021 and March 2022, a nearly 35 per cent increase from the same season last year (16.9m). No provinces have been included under IPC 1 and 2 during the projected period till March. Some 9 million people projected to be in IPC 4 – the highest number in the world.

In rural areas, this is largely driven by the drought. Assessments show that even after harvest, 57 per cent of households do not have food reserves that would last for 3 months. In urban areas, income loss (driven by economic shocks) has contributed to the rapid deterioration in food insecurity. Sharp drops in income, surging food and other commodity prices, growing unemployment and severed remittances are expected to contribute to the deterioration of food security. No population group had a net positive income in 2021. Assessments show that more households have higher than average debt this year. This is increasingly concerning as food basket costs are steadily rising, constituting more than 82 per cent of the average HH income. While markets continue to function, prices for key commodities remain well above pre-pandemic levels and the purchasing power of casual labourers and pastoralists remains significantly reduced. It is anticipated that current political uncertainty, devaluation of the Afghan currency, import challenges and cash availability may lead to further inflationary impacts.

#### Nutrition

Modelling suggests that more than half of children under five may face acute malnutrition in 2021, with a more than 16 per cent increase in projections for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and an 11 per cent increase in projections for moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) since the start of the year.

#### **4. Funds and funding needs**

Thanks to Child Fund New Zealand and Child Fund Germany, we have developed a 42,000 USD Cash4Food project covering the needs of 100 women-headed households for 3 months (Dec '21-Feb '22).

Compared to the budget necessary to cover the need assessed and support 400 women-headed households to overcome winter season we have secured now only 15% of the needed amount.

Additional 44,000 USD would be needed to at least ensure the continuity of the ongoing cash4food assistance until the end of the winter season to the 100 women-headed households already beneficiary.

Ideally, a further amount of 206,000 USD would be necessary to serve additional 300 very vulnerable women-headed households until the end of winter season (June 2022).

#### **5. Next steps**

Run a monthly Cash4Food distribution to the 100 women-headed households identified for the next 3 months. Organize Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) activities and collect data to evaluate the impact of the Cash4Food Assistance also to inform next steps. Possibly run an assessment of the nutritional status of the children and woman beneficiaries of the ongoing response (this is based on the availability of additional funds).



*The pictures are taken in Do Aab Sufla Village, Robot Sangi District, Herat Province, Afghanistan 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021*