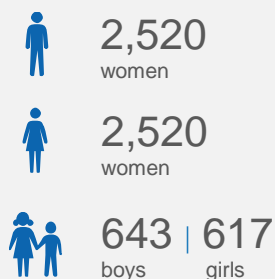


HIGHLIGHTS

- ACF provides humanitarian lifeline during the Ghor winter.
- A family story of life in the Kabul Informal Settlements.
- Humanitarian community appeals for US\$393 million, the absolute minimum to save lives in 2016.
- Getting mines out of the ground in Afghanistan.

ACF BENEFICIARY TARGETS IN GHOR



FUNDING OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

393 million
requested (US\$)

1 million
received (US\$)

(reflects funding on Financial Tracking Service as of 5 February 2016)

Source: <http://fts.unocha.org>

For more on funding, see page 5.



Credit: Andrew Quilty

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- The Kabul Informal Settlements P.2
- HRP to preserve and protect P.3
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Surviving the Ghor winter: an ACF lifeline

Abdul Rahman yearns to return to his farm in the Nalenj area of Charsadra District in Ghor Province, where he managed to provide for his family of seven by harvesting wheat. Ongoing armed skirmishes between the Taliban and Afghanistan National Security Forces forced the family to flee six months ago to the provincial capital of Chaghcharan and Rahman is not sure when his village will be safe enough to return.

“Finding work in Chaghcharan is difficult. It is a very small city with limited opportunities for employment,” says the 50-year-old father of four sons and a daughter. The land around the city is not very fertile, yielding few prospects for the agricultural-related work to which Rahman is most accustomed. Competition is fierce for the few jobs that are available in Chaghcharan, which currently hosts hundreds of internally displaced families.

Family relies on humanitarian lifeline for survival

Most of Chaghcharan’s residents are poor and lack the income required for construction projects that would provide Rahman with an opportunity to work odd jobs as a day labourer. He has no funds to start his own business. “I am going through a very bad time. I am jobless now and rely on external assistance. I have no source of income to buy food for my family or to pay for medical treatment for my sick children,” he says.

Rahman, his wife, their sons Qurban, 10, Mubarak Sha, 7, Abdul Samad, 5, and Abdul Basit, 2 and daughter Sayera 3 managed to find shelter thanks to the kindness of a community elder, who allows the family to stay for free in a one-room house on his property on the northern outskirts of Chaghcharan.

Rahman is a stay-at-home father these days. He cares for his children while his wife attends a poultry farming training course. The couple hopes to establish a small home-based poultry farm once the course is completed that will provide a source of income for their family.

ACF distributes multi-purpose cash

Rahman was one of the beneficiaries deemed eligible for assistance under an Action contre la Faim (ACF) project. ACF received US\$195,000 in funding from the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) to address gaps in winterization assistance to 900 shock-affected and extremely vulnerable households in Chaghcharan city and the Allah Yar area, located on the outskirts of Chaghcharan.



Credit: Ahmad Shakeb (OCHA Afghanistan)
Abdul Rahman used a portion of a cash grant from ACF to treat his children’s acute respiratory infection.

As soon as Rahman received his grant of 7,000 Afghanis (approximately US\$100) from ACF, he paid off the family's 2,000 Afghanis debt at a local shop, where he had previously purchased food on credit.

During the winter, incidents of acute respiratory infection are high among vulnerable families eligible for ACF winterization assistance. Rahman spent a portion of the cash he received from ACF on medical treatment for two of his children who suffered from the infection. He also purchased a 10 kg can of vegetable oil and intends to use the remaining funds on food.

The Kabul Informal Settlements: a family story

Background to the displacement

Faiz Mohammad is a patriot. "I love my country," says the 52-year-old head of a household of 12 who enjoyed a comfortable life in Faryab Province grazing sheep as his Kuchi ancestors had done for countless generations before war and the local militia's theft of his sheep forced him to uproot his family and flee to Iran.

"We had a lot of sheep and were able to move with our herds from grazing area to grazing area. Then the wars started and it became dangerous for us to move around. We were shot at many times," recalls Faiz. He went on to explain that although the militia groups in the area hated each other vehemently, they had one thing in common, "their fighters took our sheep, until none were left. So we decided to leave."

When the Taliban fell in 2001, the family was eager to return to their homeland. They had relatives residing in Chamani Babrak, one of approximately 50 of the Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS) scattered throughout the Afghan capital. "We felt that Kabul was the only secure place for us."

Land access issues thwart aims to integrate

Faiz's aim, like that of an overwhelming majority of KIS residents according to a recent study completed by the KIS taskforce, is to integrate into the local community. But until durable solutions are found to challenges related to access to land and land ownership, KIS inhabitants such as Faiz will face life-threatening humanitarian needs on an enduring basis, and particularly so during the harsh winters.



Credit: Welthungerhilfe
Faiz Mohammad keeps his family home in KIS warm with firewood provided by WHH.

WHH assistance to heating and health

"We are trying to help ourselves wherever possible, but our means are limited.

There is not enough work for all of us, and therefore we don't have enough money to buy firewood. In winter, we often have to burn plastic tires and garbage to heat our rooms and cook, but the fumes make us ill. Our children are always ill," says Faiz, who is grateful for the one-month supply of firewood provided by Welthungerhilfe (WHH).

Access to safe drinking water and affordable health care are constant challenges. Unfortunately a mobile clinic, historically provided by WHH, is no longer available. Treatment at private health care clinics near the family home is costly "and the medicines doctors prescribe are not effective. When you are seriously ill, you have to go to the clinic several times, and every time costs a lot of money, money we cannot afford," says Faiz, adding that the family also lacks adequate shelter and most of Faiz's children do not attend school.

WHH has been providing humanitarian, protection and livelihood assistance in the KIS since 2010. This winter, with funding from the German Foreign Office, WHH distributed more than 1,000 tonnes of firewood to about 4,750 families. WHH also finances child-friendly spaces and recreational activities for around 9,000 children in the settlements.

The KIS are home to an estimated 70,000 Afghans. Residents live in tents and other makeshift shelters. Life is a constant struggle, and particularly so in winter.

KIS HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS



8.6 persons per household



29% under five years old



61% of households with at least 1 pregnant or lactating woman




18% of households with at least 1 disabled person


Source: KIS need assessment, November 2015, which can be downloaded at: <https://goo.gl/otif47>

2016 Humanitarian Response Plan 'to preserve and protect' millions of lives

2016 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN

 **8.3M**
people in need

 **3.5M**
people targeted

 **\$393M**
total required

The humanitarian community in Afghanistan is appealing for US\$393 million to meet, through collective and coordinated action in 2016, the acute life-saving needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized Afghans. Activities to protect civilians from armed conflict; respond to internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees; and provide life-saving trauma care and prevent malnutrition aim to reach an estimated 3.5 million people under the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Afghanistan.

"The HRP represents the most substantial and coordinated mechanisms to preserve and protect the lives of Afghan citizens in emergencies. It is for this reason that each year so many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively support the development and implementation of the HRP," said Charles R. Davy, Managing Director of Afghanaid, who spoke on behalf of the international humanitarian community at the launch of the 2016 HRP on 27 January.

Conflict, natural disasters affected hundreds of thousands in 2015

From January to November 2015, more than 300,000 people in Afghanistan fled their homes due to conflict, marking a 160 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2014. The country is prone to natural disasters such as the powerful earthquake that struck Afghanistan's north-eastern province of Badakhshan on 26 October 2015 and left an estimated 130,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance.

The statistics "believe the suffering that conflict exacts on families and communities. Families bundle up their children and make a harrowing journey through battlefields, often with nothing but the clothes on their backs. They take refuge with families or friends, sometimes in make-shift shelters," said UN Humanitarian Coordinator Mark Bowden, who noted that US\$393 million "is the absolute minimum required to save lives in the next 12 months."

"Significant achievements were made last year in responding quickly to humanitarian needs and the fact that the 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan is 70 per cent funded [one of the highest levels of response, globally, to a humanitarian appeal] is a mark of the strong commitment donors have to the people of Afghanistan," said Afghanistan's Chief Executive, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah at the launch of the HRP. "From January to September 2015, life-saving food assistance was provided to 540,000 severely food insecure people; shelter, non-food items or cash were provided to 310,000 people; and 425,000 people received support during emergencies related to water, sanitation and hygiene needs," he noted.



Credit: Alanna Jorde
Media launch of the 2016 Afghanistan HRP, key note addresses from Afghanistan's Chief Executive, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, and the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Mark Bowden.

RELATIVE FUNDING OF HUMANITARIAN APPEALS IN 2015

(ranked by % of request covered)

1) Iraq	75%
2) Afghanistan	71%
3) Nepal	66%
4) South Sudan	65%
5) Syria	64%
⋮	
⋮	
31) Gambia	5%

Source: FTS 9 February 2016

NGOs are critical to humanitarian response

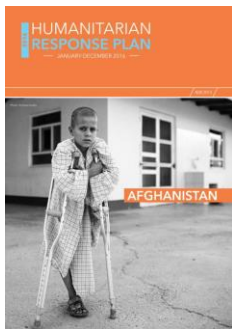
International and national NGOs were vital to humanitarian response in 2015 and will continue to be so in the years ahead.

"Because of the neutrality NGOs work so hard to maintain and our ties to local communities, we enjoy access in many areas that [others] cannot reach; because of our experienced staff and adaptive policies and procedures, we can often respond to crisis more quickly than others; and, because of our proximity to affected communities, we are well placed to assess needs and respond appropriately," noted Davy.

National NGOs also play an important humanitarian role in Afghanistan. But stakeholders "need to work together to build the capacity of national NGOs so more than the current

“The fact that the 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan is 70 per cent funded is a mark of the strong commitment donors have to the people of Afghanistan.”

– Afghanistan’s Chief Executive, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Abdullah



few can meet the expectations of donor publics in their financial and programmatic accountability so they can craft winning proposals and take their place in supporting Afghans in humanitarian crises.”

Tighter focus on life-saving assistance in 2016

With multiple ongoing crises unfolding around the globe, resources available to the humanitarian community are thinly stretched. A tighter focus on life-saving assistance has led to a marginal reduction compared with 2015 in the amount of funds requested for the 2016 HRP.

Priorities for the humanitarian community in 2016 are to address the critical basic needs of people affected by natural disaster and/or armed conflict and to provide life-saving nutritional support to 1.1 million people, including a quarter of a million children under the age of 5 who suffer severe malnutrition. The HRP also will respond to acute health emergencies, contribute to the protection of civilians from violence and abuse by parties to conflict and improve the quality of data gathering, contextual analysis and coordinated needs assessment to inform humanitarian action and expand humanitarian access.

“The HRP gets better every year and this is the best yet. It is a well-focused plan to flexibly meet humanitarian needs. It will need close collaboration to implement, among the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, local government, NGOs and the UN, but if we work together, the strength of each partner will complement and reinforce the other, ensuring that we save lives and keep people on the development track,” said Davy.

ACBAR: ‘Afghanistan must not be forgotten’

Amanullah Jawad is Deputy Director of Norwegian Project Office/Rural Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan and chair of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development, an independent body that represents 142 national and international NGOs working in Afghanistan. Speaking on behalf of the Afghanistan humanitarian community at the launch of the HRP, he said: Humanitarian actions should ensure that those affected by conflict or disaster are not left behind. In the context of continued conflict, propensity to natural disasters, protracted displacement and insufficient access to basic needs, the humanitarian community in Afghanistan must be prepared for a sustained humanitarian efforts for the coming years. Afghanistan must not be forgotten.”

The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (in Dari, Pashto and English) can be downloaded at: <https://goo.gl/NTr2oT>

The HALO Trust: Getting mines out of the ground in Afghanistan

When refugees from Pakistan’s North Waziristan tribal area starting pouring into Gulan Camp in Khost Province’s Gurbuz District in June 2014, most were unaware the area had been mined.

“We didn’t know there were mines here until we started putting up the tent the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) gave us, and then we found a big anti-tank mine. One of our neighbours was killed by a mine when he was looking for firewood in the hills, and two boys we know were hurt by an unexploded ordinance (UXO) near here,” a refugee family who sought refuge from airstrikes in North Waziristan in Gulan Camp told the HALO Trust.

“People say some cars and cattle have been blown up by mines here too. The HALO Trust cleared all the land where we put our tents, and they cleared the land around the houses and the shops, too. They found lots of



Credit: HALO Trust
A HALO Trust de-miner surveys a hillside in Balkh Province’s Charkint District. Afghanistan is one of the most mined countries in the world. HALO Trust estimates up to 640,000 mines have been laid since 1979.


The HALO Trust’s presence in Afghanistan dates back to 1988 and its Afghan operation remains the oldest and largest in the world.

THE HALO TRUST'S ACTIVITIES IN 2015

 **21.8km²**
minefield cleared

 **144,168**
families benefited

Mines located & destroyed:

 **3,741**
Anti-Personnel mines

 **322**
Anti-Tank (AT) mines

 **483**
Unexploded Ordnance

CHF CONTRIBUTIONS BY COUNTRY IN 2015



mines. Now the area is safe and we've built our own house. We can't go back to North Waziristan because our home there was destroyed," the family said.

Life-saving mine clearance facilitates education and health

Once the ground was made safe by the HALO Trust mine clearance personnel, a school and a clinic were constructed in the camp and water tanks provided to supply safe water to camp residents. "We've got no more problems from land mines in the camp," says the family, including four adults and 10 children. "We're living off the money we make collecting firewood and selling it in the bazaar. The women in our house make baskets and sew to make extra money. We've been living off our savings too, and the UNHCR provides us with food."

With funding provided by the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), the HALO Trust cleared and excavated close to 2 million square metres of land at the Gulan Camp, which is home to nearly 12,000 refugee families.

Legacy mines and current conflict – a deadly mix

As the refugee community expands, mine action clearance operations will have to expand beyond the confines of the camp to the high ground in nearby hills where Soviet forces held defensive positions during the 10-year occupation.

Afghanistan was heavily mined by Soviet forces during its occupation from 1979 to 1989. Mines subsequently were placed during conflict between the Najibullah Government and Mujahideen groups in the mid-1990s and again during armed skirmishes from 1996 to 2001 between Taliban militia and the Northern Alliance. Mines were laid to protect main supply routes, airfields, military posts and frontlines. Shifting battlelines during the three decades of conflict meant that various factions have mined the same geographical areas at different times.

In addition to legacy minefields, the current conflict continues to deliver a UXO threat to civilians. The HALO Trust was the first demining organization on the ground after the September 2015 Kunduz crisis. The Afghan Government, through the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination, requested the deployment of HALO Trust explosive ordnance disposal teams as part of a coordinated emergency response to explosive remnants of war that posed a significant threat to civilian lives and hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid delivery to the embattled city.

CHF critical to timely humanitarian response

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) was critical to the strategic and timely delivery of humanitarian response to multiple emergencies in 2015, which included the displacement due to conflict of hundreds of thousands and a 7.5-magnitude earthquake on 26 October that left an estimated 130,000 people in need of assistance.

"The funding mechanism enabled the humanitarian community to respond nimbly to meet the needs of large scale displacement and natural disasters," said United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator Mark Bowden.

The CHF allocated US\$37.9 million to 58 projects that supported approximately 3.4 million people in Afghanistan in 2015. Since the CHF prioritizes support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have proven track records in supporting communities during emergencies, 57 per cent of the CHF went to NGOs in 2015.

Life-saving health services provided to vulnerable populations

The health sector received the largest share. Funds were used to provide life-saving primary and secondary health services to vulnerable populations. The second largest recipient of funds was the nutrition sector, which treated the acutely malnourished in provinces where malnutrition levels exceeded emergency thresholds and where response to malnutrition remains constricted by inaccessibility to services as well as a lack of resources and nutritional supplies.

The CHF also provided urgently required multi-sector humanitarian assistance to Pakistani refugees and Afghan returnees along national borders and in congested areas of the country and addressed critical needs in Afghanistan's northern and north-eastern provinces following a surge in 2015 of people affected by conflict and natural disasters.

“The CHF is critical to our work. It gives us the flexibility to step in immediately to provide life-saving assistance. The Common Humanitarian Fund is saving lives.”

– Mark Bowden,
Humanitarian Coordinator

To protect the lives and dignity of those affected by crises by and to ensure the limited CHF resources were used as efficiently as possible in 2015, direct cash transfers were made available across all CHF allocations. Transfers took the form of multi-purpose grants, cash for food and cash for work following an assessment of access constraints, market functionality and the level of vulnerability of beneficiaries.

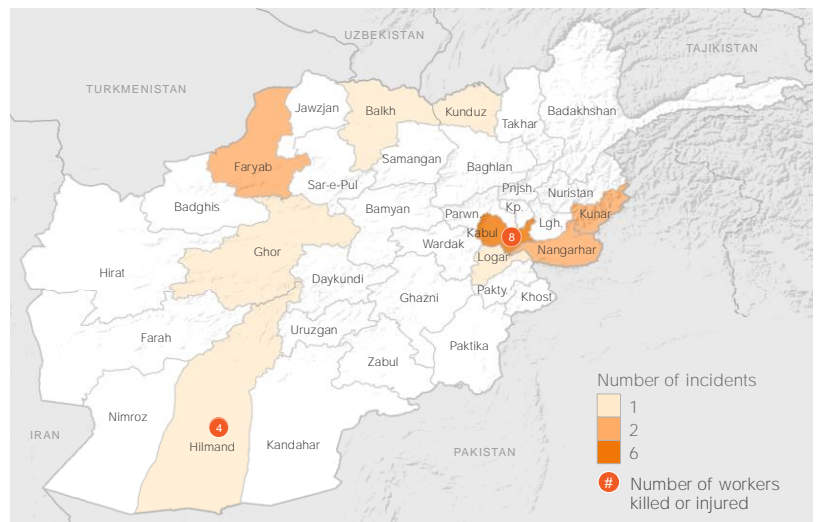
UN Humanitarian Coordinator urges donors to continue supporting CHF

The United Kingdom, Sweden, Australia, Denmark, Norway, Germany and the Republic of Korea all contributed to the CHF in 2015. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan urged donors at the launch of the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 on 27 January to continue supporting the CHF. The need for flexible and fast response and humanitarian reserves that can be mobilized rapidly and quickly disbursed to meet sudden needs of either manmade or natural disasters is expected to continue in 2016. “The CHF is critical to our work. It gives us the flexibility to step in immediately to provide life-saving assistance. The Common Humanitarian Fund is saving lives,” noted Bowden.

Humanitarian access

Incidents affecting humanitarian action in January 2016

There were 17 incidents reported against national and international NGOs and international organizations in January that resulted in violence against aid workers, damage to assets or facilities, and disruption of humanitarian activities. There were 5 reported killings and 19 abductions.



Incidents against aid workers and assets in January 2016. Data sources: Various

INCIDENTS IN JANUARY 2016

-  17 Incidents
-  5 aid workers killed
-  7 aid workers wounded
-  19 aid workers abducted

UNMAS condemns killing four de-miners in Helmand Province

Unknown militants on 27 January shot dead four de-miners while a fifth was reported missing in Helmand Province, one of the most heavily mined areas of the country. The attack took place in Abbazhai village of Nahr-e-Saraj District as demining teams were conducting regular mine clearance activities and there is no known motive for the unprovoked killings. The UN Mine Action Service condemned the attack in a statement as a “breach of the understanding that de-miners are neutral, humanitarian workers providing a service to communities in Afghanistan.” Landmines, unexploded ordnance and other arms claimed at least 23 civilian casualties in 2015, according to Helmand provincial records. The province is heavily affected by unexploded ordnance, with 109 known minefields covering 68 square kilometres.

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