



AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

After enduring decades of conflict, Afghanistan remains a fragile state. In addition to insecurity, the country has recently struggled to cope with a devastating drought, widespread food insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic. The last year has been particularly challenging. Since the August 2021 political transition, Afghanistan has experienced a crippling economic decline, rising poverty, reduced employment opportunities, commodity price spikes and ruptures in essential services. Although Afghanistan has largely fallen out of the headlines in the U.S. media in recent months, the country’s humanitarian situation is growing significantly worse.



According to the [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), 24.4 million people are estimated to be in need, while [19.7 million people](#) are facing crisis levels of food insecurity (Phase 3¹ and above) between June and November 2022. Making matters worse, Afghanistan experienced multiple natural disasters in the first six months of 2022, including harsh winter conditions, two high-magnitude earthquakes and heavy flash floods.

¹ Based on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), which analyzes food insecurity and acute malnutrition situations to inform emergency response and longer-term policy and programming. In IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), households either have food consumption gaps that result in high or above-normal acute malnutrition, or they can only meet their minimum food needs by depleting their assets or using other negative coping strategies.

These compounded crises have caused significant mental distress and physical trauma for many Afghans. The [World Health Organization](#) reports that conflict has left an estimated 800,000 people (2.7% of the population) with severe disabilities. According to the National Mental Health Survey commissioned by the European Union, approximately half of the country's population is already experiencing depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress due to violence. Afghanistan is ranked as the least peaceful country in the world by the Global Peace Index, and the conflict remains one of the deadliest for civilians by global measures. Afghanistan was also ranked [lowest](#), out of 170 countries, on the 2021 Women, Peace and Security Index. Although violence has decreased following last year's political transition, sporadic attacks continue to occur. Prior to last year, conflict was the cause of displacement for three-fourths of the country's [5.7 million](#) internally displaced people (IDPs), but this trend is slowing, with only 7,400 people displaced by conflict in the first six months of 2022. People returning to their homes need help to restore their livelihoods, particularly given the worsening economic crisis and rising prices. More than [508,000 people](#) have returned from neighboring countries, primarily Pakistan and Iran, to date in 2022.

Circumstances are particularly dire for Afghan women and girls, who face tightened restrictions on their ability to work, attend school and travel outside their homes. Most women have limited or no access to basic services, such as protection,² healthcare or education. Particularly during times of displacement, women and girls are at increased risk of violence, early marriage or other threats to their safety and security. Moreover, when families experience food insecurity, women often eat last and least in their households.

Women and girls are most at risk

CARE recently conducted a [study](#) about the impacts of the economic and food crisis on women and girls in Afghanistan. It sought to better understand how they are impacted, what coping mechanisms they use, and how humanitarian actors can better respond to their needs. Of note, the study found that the potential for women to earn an income in Afghanistan has deteriorated considerably since August 2021. Some **87.2% of the women** surveyed reported a **considerable decrease in their household income** over the last year. This loss of livelihoods, coupled with recent restrictions imposed on women's mobility, increased food prices and diminished access to cash, means Afghans, especially Afghan women and girls, have less access to food than before August 2021. Women reported eating less food than other household members, and **80% of the surveyed women** suggested that they had had to **skip at least one meal** in the two weeks prior to the research.

One of the women surveyed in Parwan province said, *"Before August 2021, we would cook three or four food items per meal (rice, chicken, meat, etc.). Now we only cook one item. The food is just too expensive now. Some nights, we...eat nothing and go to sleep hungry."*

For a first-person account from a female CARE staff member on current-day life in Afghanistan, click [here](#).

Thanks to the generosity of CARE's supporters, we are implementing a comprehensive humanitarian response that seeks to address these complex and interrelated challenges. Women and girls remain at the center of our efforts. We are focusing on areas where CARE has an existing presence and where we can build on existing programs and infrastructure. CARE began working in Afghanistan in 1961, and we have achieved high levels of acceptance and respect for our work within local communities over many years.

This report shares highlights of our accomplishments over the last year (August 2021-July 2022).

CARE's Response

CARE's humanitarian crisis response in Afghanistan aims to help people meet their basic needs, including health, protection, education, nutrition, and food security and livelihoods. Since the political transition in August 2021, CARE's programs have delivered lifesaving services and support to **416,548 people**. A summary of

² Examples of protection services include counseling, legal support, safe houses for women fleeing abuse, etc.

CARE's reach to date by program area is shown in the table below, followed by highlights and personal accounts that illustrate the overall impact of these efforts.

Program Area	Children				Women	Men	Total
	Under 5		Ages 6 to 18				
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys			
Emergency Cash Response – Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance	6,928	7,211	13,856	14,421	17,492	18,205	78,113
Emergency Cash Response – Cash for Food	1,564	1,628	3,129	3,257	3,951	4,111	17,640
Emergency Cash Response – Cash for Work			2,805	2,883	2,397	2,457	10,542
Education in Emergency	356	370	711	741	898	935	4,011
Emergency Health Response – Mobile Health Teams	29,410	28,440	18,692	9,959	110,429	23,310	220,240
Food Security/Agriculture	1,094	1,139	2,188	2,276	2,762	2,875	12,334
Emergency Non-Food Item (NFI) Distribution	3,154	3,283	6,308	6,565	7,963	8,287	35,560
Dignity Kit Distribution	742	772	1,484	1,544	1,873	1,950	8,365
Winterization NFI Distribution & Cash for Winterization	2,638	2,746	5,276	5,491	6,660	6,932	29,743
Total	45,886	45,589	54,449	47,137	154,425	69,062	416,548

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance: Over the last year, CARE provided unconditional cash assistance to **78,113 people** across 10 target provinces. The cash gave families the power of choice to purchase what they most needed based on their unique circumstances. Moreover, the cash assistance helped strengthen the local economy, as the families spent the money they received in their nearby shops and markets. Each household received the equivalent of \$140, in line with the Afghanistan Cash and Voucher Working Group guidance for cash assistance. Based on feedback gathered by CARE after the distribution, we learned that families spent the money in various ways, including covering the cost of health services and purchasing food and other essential household items.



Cash disbursement in Balkh province

Cash/Food for Work and Cash for Food: Through the cash-for-work activity, CARE has provided employment opportunities benefiting **10,542 people** in Ghazni, Paktia, Herat and Kandahar provinces. People who were physically able to work were paid in cash to rehabilitate community infrastructure, such as cleaning irrigation canals or repairing roads, which allowed them to meet their household food needs while improving their neighborhoods.

To identify the repairs to be made, CARE first consulted with community members to prioritize their primary infrastructure needs. In addition to repairing infrastructure in urban areas, CARE also provided cash-for-work opportunities in drought-affected farming communities,



Measuring pipeline depth in Ghazni province as part of the infrastructure repair work

where people are struggling to put food on the table due to the country's economic decline and lack of employment opportunities.

Similarly, CARE's food-for-work activity paid people with food to repair community infrastructure. CARE also provided cash to purchase food, which benefited **17,640 people** in Kandahar, Herat, Balkh and Paktia. Given the skyrocketing prices of food commodities, the cash-for-food support has enabled families to meet their basic needs with dignity without resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, such as begging or child labor.

Emergency Health Response: CARE's mobile health services reached **220,240 people** across nine provinces last year. COVID-19 prevention and response was a major focus, with activities including risk communication and community engagement, COVID-19 screening and referral of positive cases to local hospitals. In addition, we strengthened the capacity of frontline staff in community health facilities on COVID-19 screening, detection, guidance for home-based treatment of the mild cases, and referrals for more severe cases. Moreover, CARE provided personal protective equipment and guidance in infection prevention and control to the health providers to reduce their risk of contracting COVID-19.

CARE also expanded our emergency health response through the provision of mobile primary healthcare and basic nutrition services. CARE deployed more than **30 mobile health teams** across the nine target provinces to provide a range of essential services. These included the treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases and reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health-focused services, such as the integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses and immunization services for children and women. The mobile teams also provided mental health and psychosocial support services.

Given Afghanistan's worsening food security situation, the teams screened children under age 5 and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers for malnutrition. Individuals found to have moderate or severe acute malnutrition received counseling and support to improve their nutritional status, as well as referrals when needed to local health centers. In addition, the mobile teams taught caregivers about good feeding practices for infants and young children.



Food Security and Livelihoods: Through CARE's food security and livelihoods program, we are providing support to small-scale farmers, including seeds, tools, fertilizer, livestock, materials, and training on greenhouse and chicken coop construction, along with crop and livestock production, to improve nutrition and increase incomes. Other activities include training women in food processing and production techniques, as well as establishing demonstration farms to help farmers learn to produce certified seed. In total, **12,334 people** have benefited from these activities.

Looking ahead, we plan to distribute vouchers that can be used to purchase agricultural inputs, such as seed, equipment, materials, and fertilizer, to IDPs and others who need assistance.



Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Item Distribution: CARE reached **35,560 people** in Kabul, Herat, Parwan, Kapisa, Paktia, Khost, Kandahar, Balkh and Ghazni provinces through the distribution of NFIs, including blankets, gas for heaters, pots, plates and other cooking items, to improve the living conditions of IDP and vulnerable host community households. In Khost province, CARE also distributed **dignity kits**, which included items such as soap, sanitary pads, toothbrushes, and toothpaste, benefiting **8,365 people**.

Winterization Support: To help families make it through the harsh winter months, CARE distributed winterization kits in Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa, Paktia, Ghazni and Balkh, benefiting **29,743 people**. The kits included warm blankets, gloves, hats and other essential items to help vulnerable families face freezing winter temperatures. One of the recipients was Deeba (not her real name), who is pictured at right with her kit of warm clothes, including sweaters, shawls, winter shoes, coats and other cold-weather gear.



Education in Emergencies: As a result of a number of factors, including the political transition and the worsening economic situation in Afghanistan, access to education – especially for girls – remains a challenge. To help make ends meet, some parents have had to resort to pulling their children out of school and putting them to work. To ensure education remains an attainable priority, CARE supported vulnerable students in various ways, such as providing cash assistance for education. A total of **573 students** each received the equivalent of \$159 in cash assistance, which helped them continue their education while enabling their families to meet their basic needs. This assistance benefited a total of **4,011 people** (students and family members) and helped minimize the use of child labor.

Ensuring Accountability: During the implementation of our humanitarian response, CARE ensured that accountability standards, such as CARE’s Humanitarian Accountability Framework and SPHERE Standards, were followed and that participants had opportunities to share complaints and feedback. Program participants, particularly women, were consulted on meeting locations and times to ensure their safety and protection. CARE also conducted post-distribution monitoring surveys to inform our future response efforts.

Funding Update

CARE has raised **\$33.3 million** of our **\$43 million target** for the Afghanistan humanitarian response, leaving a gap of **\$9.7 million** still to be secured. Additional support is needed to continue meeting the urgent needs of Afghan families and to help them rebuild on the long road ahead. In addition to raising funds to support the efforts described above, CARE is also engaging in advocacy efforts to ensure that the U.S. and other donor countries take action to address gender inequality and prevent and respond to the worsening humanitarian crisis.

Conclusion

Afghanistan’s humanitarian situation – already dire a year ago – has continued to worsen. In this challenging context, CARE is helping vulnerable families meet their immediate needs and begin the long process of recovery. We thank you for supporting our efforts to deliver lifesaving humanitarian assistance and to build hope for people like Kandahara and her family. On their behalf, we thank you for your generosity.

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