

Each year, Sida conducts a humanitarian allocation exercise in which a large part of its humanitarian budget is allocated to emergencies worldwide. The allocation and subsequent disbursement of funds takes place in the beginning of the year to ensure predictability for humanitarian organizations and to allow for best possible operational planning. In an effort to truly adhere to the humanitarian principles, Sida's humanitarian assistance is grounded in the four humanitarian principles, and in particular **impartiality**, with its compelling urge to ensure that humanitarian action is carried out based on "**needs alone**", giving priority to the "**most urgent cases of distress**". Therefore, Sida's allocation methodology is grounded in several objective indicators such as; the *scale* of humanitarian needs (number of people in need), the *severity* of humanitarian needs (including food insecurity/IPC levels), the number of people targeted for the humanitarian response, the *financial coverage* of the respective humanitarian appeal, *national capacities* to respond and underlying risks, as well as distinct indicators related to *forgotten crises*. Sida also strongly supports the humanitarian coordination structures. Besides this initial allocation, another part of the humanitarian budget is set aside as an emergency reserve for sudden onset emergencies and deteriorating humanitarian situations. This reserve allows Sida to quickly allocate funding to any humanitarian situation throughout the year, including additional funding to Afghanistan, whenever needed.

For 2020, Afghanistan is allocated an initial 131 MSEK. Close monitoring and analysis of the situation in Afghanistan will continue throughout the year and will inform possible decisions on additional funding.

## 1. CRISIS OVERVIEW

### 1.1. A protracted and complex humanitarian crisis

#### Conflict

In June 2019, Afghanistan was named the least peaceful place in the world by the Global Peace Index report. Violence has continued across Afghanistan in 2019, as the Taliban continue to make territorial gains<sup>1</sup>. Over the past year, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province, also known as ISIS-KP, has continued to expand and maintains a presence in several eastern Afghan provinces. The conflict is prompting mass displacement and choking the country's unstable economy. The security situation in the country is more volatile and fragile today than in the early years of the American invasion<sup>2</sup>. The presidential elections in September also contributed to making 2019 a particularly violent year. July 2019 was the single bloodiest month for civilians since UNAMA began systematic tracking in 2009<sup>3</sup>.

Decades of conflict in Afghanistan have brought the country into cycles of violence and destruction that have substantially transformed the social, political, and economic structures. Armed opposition groups control much of the territory. The most illuminated conflict line currently stands between the government and the Taliban, with a high level of interference from other countries in and outside the direct region. The Taliban's military capacity is currently estimated to be between 50,000 and 60,000 men deployed throughout the country and covering at least seventeen provinces, which represents more than 50% of the country. The strength of ISIS-KP has been much stronger than expected. It is estimated that ISIS-KP has between 5,000 to 7,000 active fighters, with a capacity to renew and recruit additional local support.

The conflict needs to be seen in the light of the lack of overall development that characterizes the country. Insecurity and vulnerability define living conditions in Afghanistan where poverty rates are high and rising; about 55 percent of people are living below the national poverty line (2016/17). Years of shocks have eroded coping capacities and has left people with no or little hope for the future. The principal reasons for this situation are the conflict itself, and the poor economy which does not provide people with sufficient livelihoods. Afghanistan is also one of the world's most corrupt countries and corruption constitutes a substantial obstacle to Afghanistan's peace and development.

Gender relations and views on women's rights are a particularly important issue in the Afghan conflict as they divide Afghan society and often represent a clear marker of ideological differences in the country. According to the traditional view of women, women constitute social capital for men.

As a consequence of the lack of development and the conflict, Afghanistan faces one of the world's most acute internal displacement crises. Displacement has become a familiar survival strategy for many Afghans and, in some

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/war-afghanistan>

<sup>2</sup> Humanitarian Action at the Frontlines: Field Analysis Series Fragile Future: The human cost of conflict in Afghanistan, Dec 2018, p 6.

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/10/1049491>

cases, an inevitable part of life for two generations.

### **Natural disasters**

Afghanistan is a country prone to a number of natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, drought, landslides, and avalanches & man-made disasters. Earthquakes are relatively frequent and often trigger landslides. Floods are common in the spring when snow begins to melt, and rainfall is heavy and in south and southeast often trigger drought floods. The country's low level of socio-economic development makes it extremely vulnerable to disasters, resulting in frequent loss of lives, livelihoods, and public and private property.

Afghanistan is ranked among one of the most vulnerable countries in the world for the effects of climate change. Desertification and deforestation also affect the country's resilience to natural disasters. Food production, which already today does not meet domestic demand, due to insufficient irrigation, low nutrient content in soil and soil erosion, is weak; currently Afghanistan has the world's highest level of food insecurity.

The food security and livelihoods situation significantly deteriorated over 2018 into 2019, driven by the most severe drought in decades followed by record high flash floods during the spring 2019, resulting in lingering effects in terms of eroded coping capacities and heightened vulnerability of smallholder and landless families. These two extreme weather events in consecutive seasons hampered the capacity of vulnerable people to improve their food security and restore their livelihoods.

### **1.2. Geographical areas and affected population**

As a result of the conflict and the consequences from the drought in 2018 it is estimated that 9.4 million vulnerable people – almost one quarter of the country's total population – are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2020. This increase compared to 2019 (6,3 million) is mainly due a new definition of humanitarian action adopted by the humanitarian country team. The new scope is more in line with international definitions. Emergency needs remain a priority, but the OCHA vulnerability analysis now includes vulnerable people who require resilience and recovery assistance to prevent them slipping into worse humanitarian need.

Between November 2019 and March 2020, around 11.3 million people (37% of the total population) are estimated to likely experience severe acute food insecurity, out of which an estimated 8.6 million people will likely be in a Crisis situation (IPC Phase 3) and nearly 2.7 million people will likely be in an Emergency situation (IPC Phase 4). Furthermore, around 9.45 million people will be in a Stressed situation (IPC Phase 2). In 2020, an estimated 14.3 million people will be in either crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 or 4). Provinces of **Badghis, Ghor, Badakshan, Daykundi, Nimroz, Nuristan and Uruzgan** have the highest percentage of population in phase 3 and 4, respectively, where more than half of population are in these phases. Provinces of **Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, Balk and Badakshan** have the highest number of populations in phase 3 and 4, respectively. An increasing number of returnee-IDPs, primarily from Iran, put additional pressure on host community resources and international assistance. Recent surveys indicate that 25 out of 34 provinces are currently above the emergency-level threshold of acute malnutrition. It is estimated that 1.6 million children below the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition in 2018.

Floods and other types of natural disasters are also key driving factors in terms of displacing the communities. The intensity of armed conflict, and rates of both civilian casualties and forced displacement in Afghanistan have steadily increased over the past five years, with a total of about 262,000 individuals displaced across the country - only this year- mainly due to conflict. According to USAID there are in total 700,000 Afghans displaced by conflict in the country.

**Takhar, Nangarhar, Kunar, Faryab, Kunduz and Balkh** provinces have the highest report of conflict -related insecurity. A total of 32 out of 34 provinces had recorded some level of forced displacement. Constrained humanitarian access hinders assessments, thus preventing verification of the full extent of displacement and undermining the provision of assistance and services. Inadequate shelter, food insecurity, insufficient access to sanitation and health facilities, often result in precarious living conditions that jeopardizes the well-being and dignity of affected families. As per UNHCR and IOM, an estimated 4,700 documented and 305,000 undocumented people returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran in 2019, many of whom may face food insecurity as they likely have difficulties in engaging in normal livelihoods.

The protection environment in Afghanistan remains unstable. At least 6.6 million people are in need of protection assistance due the impact of conflict. 56 percent of the estimated people in need are children. In February 2019, Save The Children listed Afghanistan as one of the ten worst conflict-affected countries to be a child<sup>4</sup>. Children are increasingly at risk from conflict, with more than 2,400 children killed in the first nine months of 2019 – an 11 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2018.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/children-war-casualties-afghanistan-iraq-syria/29771209.html>

Women across Afghanistan continue to be subject to gender-based violence. The high numbers of men killed over the past four decades have disrupted traditional family units, forcing women, the elderly and sometimes children to become heads of their households. At least 11 per cent of the population is estimated to have a physical disability, while an unknown number of people are suffering from mental health issues as a result of their constant exposure to conflict. People who have been displaced multiple times are acutely vulnerable due to their depleted financial and emotional reserves. The revised definition of humanitarian action in Afghanistan attempts to better capture the overlapping nature of vulnerabilities.

### **1.3. Critical assumptions, risks and threats**

The civilian population and the country's infrastructure remain under deliberate and consistent attack; squeezed in the middle of international military operations, persistent hostilities, insurgent groups, criminality, and systemic forms of police and political violence. Civilians are consistently vulnerable to forced recruitment, child labor, early and forced marriage, movement restrictions, as well as gender-based violence and violence related to criminal activity. Further exacerbating these protection risks are the hazards inherent in cyclical "negative coping mechanisms to which civilians turn in order to mitigate the effects of insecurities for themselves and their families.

### **1.4. Strategic objectives and priorities of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)**

In 2020, at the mid-point of the four-year HRP (2018–2021), the humanitarian strategy in Afghanistan will adjust course to reach more people in need with a broader range of assistance. In 2020, humanitarian partners will aim to assist 7.1 million people with emergency, protection or recovery assistance, requiring \$732.6 million. The increase in the anticipated requirement is due to the greater number of people targeted and the inclusion of a modest range of resilience and recovery activities in several sectors, which, while more expensive in the short term, will create savings and reduce suffering in the long term. However, food security costs have been kept low, with assistance being offered for a shorter period during the lean season, in order to bring the total requirements down. The 2020 HRP has three priority areas: emergency, life-saving responses to shocks caused by conflict and natural disasters; protection responses aimed at improving people's safety and reducing violations of international humanitarian law; and building the resilience of vulnerable people.

## **2. IN COUNTRY HUMANITARIAN CAPACITIES**

### **2.1. National and local capacities and constraints.**

Afghanistan has suffered from on-going conflicts for more than four decades. The security situation has therefore always overshadowed other priorities for the Afghan government. Limited attention has previously been given to humanitarian needs and the government lack capacities and resources to address the humanitarian needs. The Afghan government has a nation-wide Citizens' Charter programme with a whole-of-community approach, which includes focus on IDPs and returnees. However public facilities are still under-developed and ill-adapted, and acute humanitarian needs remain a prominent reality.

### **2.2. International operational capacities and constraints**

Humanitarian coordination is led by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) with the support of UN OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). Humanitarian donors at the HCT are ECHO, DIFD, USAID and when feasible Sweden. Donors have regular meetings among themselves and with the HC. The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), where Sweden is member in the Advisory Group, is a mechanism for timely response to emerging needs and for coordination.

However, coordination remains a challenge for agencies. The Kabul Coordination consist of more than forty humanitarian groups meeting on a weekly basis. Frequent turnover of staff also contributes to limited results of the coordination and joint strategies. Programming has been done in silos, without adequate monitoring of UN programs and NGOs, including international and local actors<sup>5</sup>, but is improving.

Humanitarian actors face difficulties accessing remote areas of the country to assist populations in need and/or areas that require transit across conflict lines. According to ACAPS<sup>6</sup>, Afghanistan's overall access ranking as of May 2019 is 4 (nearly inaccessible) due to many contested or Taliban-controlled areas. Poor road conditions, remoteness, and mountainous terrain restrict access, as has severe flooding in February and March 2019. Humanitarian agencies struggle continuously to access areas in which State authority and territorial control is limited, contested, or under the influence of Non-State Armed Groups. Despite these challenges, in 2019 humanitarian partners were able to provide support to people in need in 372 of the country's 401 districts. This could be the result of the "Humanitarian Access Group" (HAG) that has been revitalized to address the urgent needs of affected populations and strengthen

<sup>5</sup> Humanitarian Action at the Frontlines: Field Analysis Series Fragile Future: The human cost of conflict in Afghanistan, Dec 2018, p 45.

<sup>6</sup> ACAPS is a non-profit, non-governmental project with the aim of providing independent, ground-breaking humanitarian analysis to help humanitarian workers, influencers, fundraisers, and donors make better decisions.

humanitarian negotiation. An access strategy has been developed and trainings of staff on humanitarian negotiation have taken place.

Looking forward, it seems that the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan will largely depend on funding and security. Without adequate resources, there is no way for humanitarians to address the scale of humanitarian need in Afghanistan. Conflict between the Taliban, ISIS-KP and government forces will only continue to increase displacement and humanitarian needs.

Afghanistan is still a challenging place to work in, even if safety incidents for aid workers (kidnapping, threats, killings, injuries) has slightly decreased in recent years (2017-2018). The Aid Worker Security Report 2019 places Afghanistan as one of the top three most dangerous countries in the world for aid workers, after South Sudan and Syria.

### **2.3. International and regional assistance**

In Afghanistan, nearly 60 donors provide development cooperation and there are approximately 28 donors providing humanitarian assistance. The global development cooperation volume to Afghanistan amounted to 3 804 MUSD in 2017, out of which 13% was humanitarian assistance<sup>7</sup>. The five largest bilateral donors are USAID, DIFD, Japan, Germany, and Sweden. The EU, the World Bank and ADB are also important and large donors.

## **3. SIDA'S HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN**

### **3.1. The role of Sida**

#### **Earlier assistance and results:**

In recent years Sida has reduced the amount of humanitarian partners in Afghanistan, in order to achieve a more effective humanitarian assistance and to counteract fragmentation of aid in Afghanistan. The consolidation of the portfolio has proven positive and Sida recognizes that the increased resources that has been allocated for follow-up and dialogue with partners is a direct consequence of the reduction in partnerships. Sida has simultaneously strengthened its capacity to have a constructive and qualitative dialogue with OCHA on the CBF-funds (Country Based Pool Funds) on global level, which has had positive implications also on the support to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF). The recently finalized evaluation of the AHF indicates that the fund has contributed to better coordination of the humanitarian response; strengthened leadership by providing a source of funding to support and operationalize the HC's priorities; and provided opportunities for a strategic response to country-level priorities in coordination with other sources of funding. With reference to the reduced portfolio Sida will continue to support a small but strategic group of partners in Afghanistan in 2020.

The ongoing support to the reduced group of partners have delivered important results to people in need in Afghanistan. However, since 2020 is the last year of the current humanitarian strategy and the humanitarian unit will review the ongoing strategic partnership ahead of a new set of partners in 2021, it is foreseen that the same organisations as last year will be considered for support in 2020, with one exception. As a specific response to the ongoing food security crisis it is proposed that an additional partner will be added to the current portfolio with a focus on people in need of improving their food security situation.

### **3.2. Response Priorities 2020**

Sida will maintain focus on the response to the most acute humanitarian needs with priority to new needs arising from the conflict and the food insecurity situation. This implies that Sida will support organisations that are present where the humanitarian needs are the greatest and where Sida is able to have a close dialogue and possibility to follow up. All Sida's contributions, except for the contribution to ICRC and SRC/ARCS, will be within the framework of the HRP and its identified Strategic Objectives. Sida will prioritize multi-sectoral approaches leaving the choice of modalities to humanitarian actors near the response. In addition, Sida will during 2020 carry out 1-2 field trips. Provinces to follow up on: provinces with IPC classification 4. A special focus will be to follow up on food security as a specific focus area for the portfolio.

### **3.3. Partners**

- **NRC:** NRC is a prominent humanitarian agency that has been operating in Afghanistan since 2003. Its programmes include shelter and settlements, information counselling and legal protection (ICLA), education, and it is also active in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), livelihoods and food security (LFS), and camp management. It places significant importance on helping displaced people in hard-to-reach areas and empowering women. A recent evaluation of NRC's shelter program concludes that the temporary shelter solutions NRC provides are relevant and adequate. Ninety-three per cent of the beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation said the assistance they had received was appropriate and that they were satisfied with its

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/aid-at-a-glance.htm>

quality. **Based on good results from previous years Sida proposes to support NRC with 26 MSEK.**

- **ICRC:** ICRC’s role and protection activities are very relevant and crucial in Afghanistan. ICRC opened a delegation in Kabul in 1987 and has recently fully resumed operations in Afghanistan after being banned by the Taliban in April 2019. The ban was lifted in September. Although operational adjustments and the suspension of some activities made the ICRC’s work more challenging during 2019 (, thousands of people affected by armed conflict continued to benefit from the ICRC’s efforts to address humanitarian needs. **Based on ICRC’s special mandate and scope Sida proposes to support ICRC activities with 22 MSEK.**
- **Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund:** The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) support the highest-priority projects of the best-placed responders (including international and national NGOs and UN agencies) through an inclusive and transparent process that supports priorities set out in HRPs. This ensures that funding is available and prioritized locally by those closest to people in need. In 2019 an evaluation was conducted of the fund. The overall finding of the evaluation is that the AHF is making a positive contribution to the lives of people affected by humanitarian crises in Afghanistan. Despite difficulties in the past, the fund now provides a vital source of funding for coordinated and principled humanitarian action in alignment with HRP priorities. **Based on the complementary and flexible possibilities the fund provides, Sida proposes to support AHF with 58 MSEK.**
- **OCHA:** OCHA has an extremely important coordinating role in a tremendous complicated context. Donors and humanitarian organizations rely on the information OCHA collects and analyzes and its products in making strategic decisions. OCHA leads the process and production of the Humanitarian Needs Overview and the HRP. OCHA coordinates and supports joint needs assessment, inter-sectoral analysis and prioritization, monitoring and evaluation of collective responses. **Sida assesses that the coordination function of OCHA is needed for an effective humanitarian response in Afghanistan why Sida proposes to support OCHA with 5 MSEK.**
- **FAO:** **In response to the persistent effects of the 2018 drought and 2019 floods, Sida proposes to support FAO with 20 MSEK.** FAO plans to target 1.92 million people (i.e. 275 000 households) - which is 80 percent of the total 2.4 million people identified in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis of September 2019 who are in need of agriculture and livestock assistance.

Sida monitors each partner’s adherence to gender marker codes, conflict sensitivity, resilience, and accountability as well as their capacity to contribute to the protection of people affected by the crisis irrespective of their sector-specific expertise.

SIDA’s HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO (AFGHANISTAN) in 2020		
Recommended partner for Sida support	Sector/focus of work (incl. cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming) and response modalities (e.g. in-kind, services, CVP or a mix)	Proposed amount
NRC	cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming	26 MSEK
ICRC	cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming	22 MSEK
AHF	cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming	58 MSEK
FAO	in-kind distribution of productive livelihood packages	20 MSEK
OCHA	coordination	5 MSEK
		<b>TOTAL: 131 MSEK</b>

#### 3.4. Strategic funding in protracted crises

- **SRK/ARCS:** This support is provided with the objective to strengthen the results achieved by the SRC/ARCS during 2018-2019 when they received multi-year funding. The funds for 2020 for SRK/ARCS should be seen as a *phase out* support. **In order to provide SRK with the opportunity to develop an exit strategy for the Sida support Sida proposes to support SRC/ARCS planned activities with 3 MSEK.**

#### SIDA’S MULTIYEAR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO (CRISIS)

*(Insert total sum allocated to country. If another sum is proposed, please indicate that sum with a second/separate table)*

Recommended partner for Sida support	Sector/focus of work (incl. cross sectoral/ multipurpose programming) and response modalities (e.g. in-kind, services, CVP or a mix)	Category: a) Protracted crisis b) Exit/phase-out	Time-span (2020-2020)	Proposed amount
SRK/ARCS	Health	a + b	2020	3 MSEK
				<b>TOTAL: 3 MSEK</b>

### 3.5. Synergies and Nexus

Sida will continue to strengthen the links between humanitarian aid and the long-term development cooperation. Given that the national conflict and local conflicts play a crucial role for the possibility of a sustainable development in Afghanistan, and the need for humanitarian assistance, Sida will further strengthen the cooperation between the different strategies addressing humanitarian needs, development and peace in Afghanistan. The future operationalization process for the Afghanistan strategy will include a joint analysis and possibly increased cooperation, which also can entail joint contributions and/or joint partnerships. As indicated, this is an ongoing task and there are good experiences to build on; the before mentioned bilateral support to the WB/ARTF Citizens' Charter programme is one, where development funding is turned into operations in humanitarian settings. The long-term support to NRC's Education in Emergencies programme, geared towards underserved and displacement-heavy areas, is another.

In addition to this, the humanitarian unit and Sida's unit for Afghanistan have been engaged in a dialogue on support to FAO during 2019, due to the ongoing food security crises which need to be addressed with a long-term perspective. The humanitarian funding to FAO for 2020 could consequently be a candidate for a partnership with the unit for Afghanistan as from 2021 within the frame of a new cooperation strategy for Afghanistan.

As suggested in Sida's proposal to the new bilateral long-term cooperation strategy for Afghanistan there are new possibilities to enhance synergies within the nexus triangle. By strengthening people's resilience to natural disasters and conflicts in Afghanistan, for instance through cash support to poor families or by working with risk reduction for natural disasters, local cohesion could be strengthened, and humanitarian action improved. It is Sida's assessment that any future triple nexus efforts should be carried out at local level with the objective to contribute to local development and to mitigate humanitarian needs, which also could contribute to social cohesion and peaceful conflict resolution. The triple nexus operations however, must always be carried out with respect for the special mandate of humanitarian aid and carefully consider the risks of eroding the humanitarian principles.