



AFGHANISTAN

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Total EU humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in 2017

€30.5 million

Estimated number of people internally displaced in:

2016: **623 000**

2017: **286 000**

(Sep 2017: UNOCHA)

Number of Pakistani refugees registered since June 2014:

55 000 (UNHCR – July 2016)

Estimated number of registered Afghan refugees living in Iran and Pakistan:

2.45 million (UNHCR)

Total EU humanitarian aid to Afghanistan since 1994:

Over €756 million



The EU funds emergency medical care in the conflict-torn country. ©EU/ECHO/Pierre Prakash

Key messages

- Almost four decades of conflict in Afghanistan has caused thousands of civilian casualties and large-scale displacement within the country and to neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. Intensified conflict continues to force people out of their homes: in 2016 alone, more than 623 000 people became internally displaced. Projections foresee **at least 450 000 more being internally displaced in 2017, and therefore dependent on humanitarian assistance.**
- The European Commission provides humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict and natural disasters, **offering emergency health services, shelter, water and sanitation, food assistance, protection and education.** The EU also funds various support services, such as humanitarian flight and security information services, that help provide the humanitarian community safe and principled access to all areas of Afghanistan.
- In order to maintain its focus on response to the most acute humanitarian needs in the country, **the Commission made available more than €30.5 million in 2017.** This EU funding helps ensure much-needed relief assistance is provided to the most vulnerable populations. The total EU funding in Afghanistan to date exceeds €751 million since 1994.

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Humanitarian situation and needs

Insecurity linked to almost four decades of conflict in Afghanistan is increasing as fighting persists between government forces and armed opposition groups. The partial withdrawal of international forces in 2014 has led to a further deterioration of the security situation. Civilians bear the brunt of these heightened confrontations: according to the UN, close to 8400 civilians were killed or injured between January and September 2016, over 2400 of whom were children. In 2014, military activities in neighbouring Pakistan's North Waziristan Agency also pushed tens of thousands of Pakistanis to seek refuge on the Afghan side of the border where many still remain.

Since spring 2016, a drastic shift has been observed in the dynamics of the conflict. Ground offensives launched by Armed Opposition Groups against government forces have increased both in intensity and frequency; they now include urban centres with high population density. The civilian population is paying an increasingly heavy toll through both civilian casualties and population displacements. The situation can no longer be considered a "stabilisation phase", but has rather reverted to an increasingly acute humanitarian crisis.

The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimates that 623 000 people were newly displaced in the country in 2016. However, there could be many more as accurate data is missing due to the lack of access to some provinces. There is therefore an urgent need to improve data gathering as well as analysis.

Devastated by the long-drawn conflict, people living in affected areas are reliant on humanitarian assistance and need protection from violence, including gender-based violence, and recruitment of children in to armed groups. Basic services like health care, drinking water and shelter are needed in many areas. At the national level, eight million Afghans are food insecure, and a strong need for livelihood support remains throughout the country.

Some 5.8 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan since 2002, including some 620 000 who returned from Pakistan in 2016 alone. The influx of the returnees has strained the capacity of existing services and caused concerns over the living conditions of those returning, often after many decades. Meanwhile, a further 4-5 million Afghans are still living as refugees in neighbouring [Iran](#) and [Pakistan](#) (only 2.45 million of which are formally registered). In 2014, a reverse refugee movement was observed with the arrival of an estimated 240 000 Pakistani nationals following military operations in neighbouring North Waziristan, across the Pakistan border, since then some of these have returned to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

Moreover, frequent droughts and regular natural disasters including floods, landslides and earthquakes further erode the resilience of millions of Afghans. The United Nations estimates that over 250 000 people are affected by natural disasters every year in different parts of the country.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

The European Commission has been funding humanitarian operations in Afghanistan since 1994. Funds are allocated strictly on the basis of the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.

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This year, the EU-funded interventions focus on providing emergency medical care, food and drinking water, protection, shelter, sanitation and hygiene promotion to people affected by conflict and natural disasters in general and to the displaced in particular. With an aim to restore access to education for children caught up in conflict, [emergency education](#) projects have been introduced in targeted areas.

The Commission also facilitates access for humanitarian organisations to people in need through air transport services.



In order to meet the growing humanitarian needs and to alleviate suffering in view of the onset of winter, an additional allocation of €12 million was made in December 2015.

Emergency Response Mechanism (ERM)

The Commission also funds the Emergency Response Mechanism programme which ensures that a network of international aid organisations, with operations across Afghanistan, have sufficient prepositioned resources (trained teams, cash, non-food items, emergency shelter and emergency water and sanitation equipment) to allow a timely response to urgent humanitarian needs arising from localised disasters and conflicts. In addition, the most vulnerable among these beneficiaries also receive dedicated protection assistance. This is done in close cooperation with existing UN coordination mechanisms. Following large displacements of populations in the north during the spring of 2015, for example, Commission-funded humanitarian organisations were able to respond quickly to the needs of the people, thanks to the Emergency Response Mechanism. In 2016, the ERM reached and responded to the urgent needs of over 224 000 people across the country.

Assistance to Returning Refugees and Undocumented Afghans

The most vulnerable returning refugees and undocumented Afghans require assistance in terms of immediate humanitarian needs, health and protection. Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan benefit from EU-funded care and maintenance support in host countries as well as support for a dignified return to Afghanistan. The Commission funds the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and NGOs in host countries to provide a range of essential humanitarian assistance to Afghans living in camps or urban settings. Repatriation mechanisms are also supported through the maintenance of required infrastructures and services, as well as targeted protection assistance upon return to Afghanistan.

Assistance to Pakistani Refugees

In order to respond to the needs of displaced Pakistani refugees staying in camps or hosted in Afghan communities, assistance has been provided for emergency shelter and non-food items, food assistance, water, hygiene and sanitation, access to education and protection for the most vulnerable ones.

Advocacy

The EU remains committed to the respect of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, which are advocated to all parties to the conflict. Safeguarding humanitarian principles is essential to ensure access to people in need of assistance.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The Commission has allocated €1 million in 2016-2017 to reduce the risks arising from [natural disasters](#). Funded projects are often implemented by the communities themselves and include, among other things, setting up of local early warning systems, building adapted infrastructure and contingency planning. Overall, the Commission has contributed over €6.8 million since 2007 to this end.

Education in Emergencies (EiE)

In 2016, the Commission allocated over €1.7 million to deliver basic and quality education to vulnerable children, including Pakistani refugees, who had dropped out of school due to displacement. The initiatives have been introduced in the conflict-torn provinces of Khost, Nangarhar and Jawzjan, benefiting 9500 students and over 150 teachers. In 2015, similar education initiatives provided close to 7500 displaced boys and girls in Nangarhar province with a chance to resume their learning activities and restore a sense of normality in their lives.

