

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP) AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the approval of the transfer by the Budgetary Authorities.

AMOUNT: EUR 180 306 648

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2023/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO¹'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0. MAJOR CHANGES SINCE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

Third Modification – 18/10/2023- Afghanistan, Pakistan

This modification will increase DG ECHO's humanitarian support to Afghanistan with EUR 60 million. 29 million people in the country are in urgent need of humanitarian aid, and more than 17.2 million Afghans (43% of the population) are acutely food insecure (IPC 3 or worse). In October 2023 the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Afghanistan is less than 34% funded. As a direct consequence of this gap, the main food security partners had to cut rations, which could lead to a significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation and push people into famine.

The earthquake of 7 October furthermore affected 1.79 million Afghans in the province of Herat. More than 2 400 people died, and at least 1 700 were injured. 400 people are missing, and at least 3 500 are displaced. 56 settlements were damaged or destroyed. The most affected area is the Zindajan district. The earthquake caused massive infrastructural damage. Many of the victims and displaced are in temporary shelters, with limited water, in congested spaces. Infectious diseases in the aftermath of the earthquake are a big concern, considering the vulnerability of the affected people, and with winter setting in. Short- and medium-term needs have been identified in most sectors. Food security and livelihood support remain a priority, while assistance is also needed for shelter and non-food-items, water and sanitation, as well as emergency healthcare, in particular for the most vulnerable part of the population.

On 3 October, the caretaker Pakistan Government announced the repatriation of 'illegal foreigners', which foresees the return of 1.7 million Afghans residing in Pakistan before 1 November voluntarily, or face deportation. If this plan is implemented, it will entail significant humanitarian support and protection needs for returnees to Afghanistan.

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This modification will furthermore increase DG ECHO's humanitarian support to Pakistan with EUR 1 million. The 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' announcement has led to detentions and evictions and has spread fear amongst Afghans and other refugees in Pakistan. On 10 October, the Ministry of States Frontier Region notified that Afghan refugees with Proof of Registration (PoR) and Afghan Citizen Cards (ACC) would not be forcibly repatriated.

In the absence of a screening and registration system, there is a critical need to reinforce protection, including increased legal aid and information provision for Afghans requiring international protection and access to pathways to safety.

Second Modification – 06/07/2023- IFRC PPP

This modification is intended to transfer EUR 3 568 248 allocated to the IFRC pilot Programmatic Partnership action 'Accelerating local action in humanitarian and health crises'.

First modification – 03/01/2023- Floods response

Pakistan endured severe heavy monsoon rainfall and glacial melt from June to September 2022. This caused an unprecedented disaster with widespread flooding and landslides, having severe repercussions on human lives, property and infrastructure, aggravating the multiple challenges Pakistan has been facing for decades. Moreover, until now the water has still not fully withdrawn causing heavy loss of crops and agricultural land. The Revised Flood Response Plan (FRP) of EUR 816.3 million is only by funded by 34%, and critical humanitarian assistance will remain relevant beyond the timeframe of the current FRP. Three months after the end of the monsoon rains, the conditions in the flood-affected areas in Pakistan are still dire, with water stalled in many parts of Sindh and Balochistan. Out of the 33 million affected by the floods, more than 20 million people continue to depend on humanitarian aid, winter increasing the humanitarian needs of the affected population.

The humanitarian situation is dramatic. Food security and nutrition are the main concern. The pre-flood high food insecurity is expected to significantly worsen in the first months of 2023 and would push an additional 1.1 million people into IPC 4 (Emergency) in flood-affected districts, on top of the 5.1 million people already experiencing IPC 4 conditions in these areas, while inundation of agricultural land will affect the crops in the next season. Malnutrition rates with medical complications have increased and preliminary estimates suggest that, as a direct consequence of the floods, the national poverty rate will increase by 3.7 to 4.0 percentage points, pushing between 8.4 and 9.1 million people into poverty. Health remains a major concern in view of potential outbreak of communicable diseases due to stalled water. Clean drinking water is lacking compounded by the makeshift shelters in return areas where basic infrastructure remains unavailable. There are damages to health facilities and shortages of medicines, malaria treatment and nutrition supplies. Malaria cases are high despite the cold weather conditions, and the rate has increased by 50% compared to pre-flood situation. The damages to household latrines have resulted in increased open defecation in flood affected districts. Climate resilient WASH response is needed in the flood affected

communities. Similarly, 47% of schools are reported to be fully or partially damaged during the floods affecting the enrolment of ca. 2 million children.

Along with the additional funds for the Flood Response in Pakistan, a contribution from external assigned revenue will be allocated to Afghanistan, which is equally incorporated in this HIP modification.

In summary, an additional amount of EUR 10 019 200 will be allocated to Pakistan (including EUR 19 200 from external assigned revenue) and an additional amount of EUR 19 200 will be allocated from external assigned revenue to Afghanistan.

1. CONTEXT

For more than four decades, the successive conflicts and political crises in Afghanistan have generated one of the largest refugee movements worldwide. Successive waves of conflict between rival internal and external powers and their proxies have made the country almost synonymous with insecurity and displacement. Already from 1979 to 1989 6 million Afghans fled to Iran and Pakistan. The numbers have since fluctuated with each significant intensification or weakening of conflict, resulting in mass exoduses followed by limited returns. The two main host countries of Afghan refugees remain neighbouring Pakistan and Iran (an estimated 3.5m in Pakistan and 3m in Iran), with Central Asian countries carrying a smaller share.

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, as well as parts of Central Asia, are also prone to the consequences of climate change, and other natural disasters.

The present HIP targets Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, although its geographic coverage also includes Central Asia² in the event of situations triggering an additional allocation of funds.

Afghanistan

In August 2021, following decades of conflict, Afghanistan experienced a new political spin, as the Taliban took over the country. As a direct consequence of the take-over the Afghan economy contracted by more than 20%, and the humanitarian situation has significantly worsened over the past year. The situation is exacerbated by the effects of climate and other natural hazard-induced disasters, coupled with several outbreaks of epidemics, such as measles and cholera. In addition, an overall reduction in international development cooperation which previously accounted for 75% of public expenditures³ has led to a disruption in the delivery of essential services. International sanctions also had a negative effect on the national economy. As a result, Afghanistan is one of the largest and most complex humanitarian emergencies worldwide with 24.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (up to 30% from last year) with food being the main priority, followed by health and livelihoods⁴. First assessments indicate that more than 28 million people in Afghanistan will need humanitarian assistance in 2023.

² Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan

³ World Bank

⁴ REACH, Mid-Year Whole of Afghanistan Assessment – April 2022, published July 2022

Overtaking displacement, since August 2021 the key driver of need for the Afghan population is the deep economic crisis which affects people regardless of area of residence and displacement status. Variations in basic needs and protection risks are now more likely to be based on place of residence (rural vs urban; drought affected areas) and socio-demographic profiles of households (e.g. households with a member with a disability, female headed households, etc)⁵. Of key concern is food security: despite a massive increase in food assistance in 2021 and 2022, 19.7 million people (47% of the population) faced acute food insecurity over the 2022 lean season (March-May), including 6.6 million people (16% of the population) at emergency levels (IPC 4) and 20 300 people estimated to have been exposed to famine-like conditions over the winter 2022 (IPC 5). It is estimated that almost 19 million people will continue to face emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC 3 and above) due to a deepening socio-economic crisis, disrupted markets and increasing food markets⁶. WFP and FAO have included Afghanistan in the list of ‘hunger hotspots’. The current socio-economic context increases the likelihood of households’ reverting to extremely critical and irreversible coping strategies, further increasing the vulnerability of most vulnerable population, including children and people living with disabilities. Of particular concern is the increased challenge of women’s and girls’ freedom of movement due to new restrictions and reinforced cultural barriers which severely limits their ability to participate in the economic life and to access basic services, including education above grade 6.

New internal displacement is much lower in 2022 compared to previous years (7 420 people fled their homes between January and June 2022 due to fighting/insecurity, compared to 660 000 having fled over the same period in 2021⁷. Of the 5.9 million people that fled conflict⁸ the majority⁹ remain in need of assistance and protection. UNHCR reports that as of August 2022, over 110 000 IDP returnees have been identified, bringing the number of IDP returnees identified since 2021 to more than 989 000, and 1 576 Afghan refugees have returned under UNHCR’s facilitated voluntary repatriation programme, including 231 from Iran and 1 340 from Pakistan¹⁰. Ensuring that all returns remain voluntary is of critical importance.

Humanitarian partners remain committed to “stay and deliver” and this must be done with respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and humanitarian principles. Safety, security and independent access for humanitarian support remains a prerequisite for DG ECHO’s continued engagement. Unhindered access by female humanitarian staff is particularly important as it is key to reaching female beneficiaries.

Pakistan and Iran

The multifaceted humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is having an adverse ripple effect in its neighbouring countries, especially **Pakistan and Iran**. While large scale movements

⁵ REACH, WoAA end of 2021, April 2022

⁶ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, March – November 2022, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155595/?iso3=AFG>

⁷ OCHA, Snapshot of population movement, 26 July 2022

⁸ IOM

⁹ REACH, WoAA April 2022

¹⁰ UNHCR, External Update: Afghanistan Situation #18, 1st July 2022

from Afghanistan has not unfolded since August 2021, cross-border displacement has nonetheless continued with a reported 182 590¹¹ newly arrived Afghans seeking UNHCR assistance¹².

Ranking third globally, **Pakistan** has hosted refugees for over four decades. There are currently 1.3 million¹³ registered Afghan refugees in the country, in addition to 0.84 million Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders and an estimated 0.9 million undocumented Afghans. Pakistan authorities estimate that over 250 000¹⁴ have arrived since 2021.

In August/September 2022, Pakistan faced the worst floods in its history, affecting 33 million people, killing over 1700 people, and destroying at least 2.2 million houses. The floods are expected to massively impact agricultural production, and harvest yields, in 2023. The floods also created massive needs in terms of WASH, shelter and livelihood support. Displaced population will need medium term support. A substantial and early response was provided by the EU under the 2022 HIP and the evolution of the humanitarian consequences of the floods will be kept under review.

Iran is also dealing with a protracted Afghan caseload of an estimated 3.6 million Afghan nationals¹⁵, many of whom were born in Iran. While the registered number of Afghan refugees stand at 780 000, Iranian authorities estimate that an additional 500 000 – 1 000 000¹⁶ Afghans are new arrivals. In recognition of the steady inflow of Afghan nationals, especially through irregular pathways, the Government of Iran commenced with a headcount of undocumented Afghans in 2022 with an initial figure of 2.3 million¹⁷.

Both countries have generously accommodated Afghan nationals and refugees for decades, yet global and regional geo-political dynamics, the COVID-19 pandemic, and consequences of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine has exerted severe strain on the two countries in their ability to provide key services. **Iran**, moreover, is still under a stringent sanctions' regime, especially by the sanctions imposed by the US, which are having an adverse impact on humanitarian programmes and partners.

A future influx of refugees to Pakistan and Iran cannot be discounted considering the fragility in Afghanistan. Against this landscape in Pakistan and Iran, natural hazards manifest in disasters, further compounded by climate change. These adversely affect the poorest segments of society – host communities, refugees, asylum and migrants alike. In 2022, both countries have been exposed to multiple natural hazards induced crises e.g., earthquakes, heatwaves, forest fires, flash floods, drought and other extreme weather phenomena.

Central Asia

¹¹ UNHCR External Update #19, 1 August 2022

¹² Ibid.

¹³ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/bi_qs_echo_echostat_hub_vp2/ecas/sense/app/58a888cf-fc78-47fe-a0c9-3bc84d99ebf5/overview

¹⁴ Latest figure following the nation-wide joint Government of Pakistan and UNHCR, Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE) in 2021

¹⁵ UNHCR External Update #19, 1 August 2022

¹⁶ Regional Response Plan January -December 2022. The figure is according to Government of Iran.

¹⁷ UNHCR External Update #19, 1 August 2022

¹⁷ UNHCR External Update #18, 1 August 2022.

In recent years, **Central Asia** has been facing multiple crises related to the spread of the epidemic, disease outbreaks, the recurrent natural hazards, the political instability, as well as the inter-ethnic localized conflicts over land and water resources in the fertile Ferghana Valley (located in the territories of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan). Since August 2021, the economic collapse and dynamic evolution of the socio-political situation in Afghanistan have also put significant pressure on the region, in particular on the neighbouring countries (Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Repercussions stemming from the war in Ukraine impact Central Asia, as Russia is their most important trade partner, while remittances from the many Central Asian migrant workers in Russia are dropping. Grain shortages and an increase in prices for staple foods resulting from the war have the potential to further exacerbate the pre-existing economic and socio-political fragility in the region. DG ECHO will stay alert on the situation in Central Asia, where an intervention through the present HIP is possible, in the case of additional funding.

	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Iran
INFORM Risk Index¹⁸	8.1/10	6.1/10	5.1/10
Vulnerability Index	8.5/10	5.8/10	4.4/10
Hazard and Exposure	8.9/10	7.2/10	6.7/10
Lack of Coping Capacity	7.1/10	5.4/10	4.6/10
Global Crisis Severity Index¹⁹	4.5/5	4.0/5	3.6/5
Projected conflict risk	10.0/10	10/10	9.4/10
Uprooted People Index	10.0/10	8.0/10	8.3/10
Humanitarian Conditions	4.7/5	3.6/5	3.9/5
Natural Disaster Index	6.8/10	7.4/10	6.8/10
HDI Ranking²⁰ (Value)	180 (0.478)	161 (0.544)	76 (0.774)
Total Population²¹	39 835 428	225 199 929	85 028 760

2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance:

Population in Need	Afghanistan	Pakistan ²²	Iran
Total number of vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance	24 400 000²³	36 000 000	24 000 000
Refugees (including children in need of Education in Emergencies (EiE))	67 200 ²⁴	3 100 000	3 500 000 ²⁵
IDPs and returnees	Total IDPs: 5 894 220 ²⁶ New conflict IDPs: 7 420 ²⁷	175 311 ²⁸	N/A

¹⁸ INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters (August 2022)

¹⁹ <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

²⁰ Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP

²¹ World Bank data, latest updated 2021

²² Pakistan HRP 2021

²³ Afghanistan HRP 2022, the initial needs assessment for 2023 indicates 28m people in humanitarian need

²⁴ Only refugees and asylum seekers in Afghanistan from other countries (source: UNHCR, External update, July 2022) – Children in need of EiE are reflected above.

²⁵ UNHCR protection dashboard March 2022

²⁶ Cumulative data of people displaced since 2012 (source: DTM, OCHA)

²⁷ People displaced due to conflict/fighting between January and July 2022 (source: OCHA).

People affected by food insecurity and malnutrition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People in “emergency” levels of food insecurity - Malnourished children under five (MAM/SAM) 	IPC 3-5: 18 920 522 ²⁹ (5.9 million in IPC 4 and 12.9 million in IPC 3) 4 500 000 ³⁰ (1 million SAM and 3.5 million MAM)	6 468 000 ³¹ 5 569 766 ³²	3 737 445 ³³ 2 017 046 ³⁴
People affected by shocks, incl. natural disasters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Of whom displaced³⁵ 	24 400 000 ³⁶ (incl. 400 000 affected by natural disaster ³⁷ of whom 25 000 displaced ³⁸)	36 000 000 ³⁹	24 000 000 ⁴⁰

2.1.1 Refugees, IDPs and returnees

The high number of refugees from **Afghanistan** is one of the dominant issues in the region, with more than 2.6 million registered refugees, of which 2.3 million are hosted in neighboring countries - primarily Pakistan and Iran⁴¹. Beyond the registered refugees it is estimated that at least 6.5 million Afghans live in Pakistan and Iran. In addition, 67 200 refugees and asylum seekers from Pakistan, remain displaced in Afghanistan. Movements in and out of Afghanistan have continued following the Taliban takeover in August 2021. A total of 2 516 105 individuals moved abroad between January 2021 and April 2022⁴². Half a million individuals have returned to Afghanistan from Iran, via Islam Qala (Herat) and Zaranj (Nimroz) in the first six months of 2022. Among them 51% are undocumented deportees. Of the deported population, the majority (98%) stated they went to Iran via an unofficial border crossing.

As for **IDPs in Afghanistan**, despite a decline since August 2021, 5.5 million people remain internally displaced in Afghanistan. Poverty has become the most prevalent driver of displacement and a barrier to returns in 2022. Over the years, many fled to major cities in search of refuge as well as access to basic services, infrastructure such as health care, education, and markets and humanitarian assistance. Pressure is mounting from the de facto authorities to return internally displaced people to their areas of origin, with increasing concerns over forced returns especially from informal settlements. However, due to ongoing human and natural hazards, the economic collapse and the absence of development assistance, the humanitarian response cannot guarantee that the basic needs

²⁸ This number includes newly returned families including 15 000 IDPs families from North Waziristan, 18 850 families from Khost, Afghanistan and 16 000 families from Tirah valley, Khyber district. These families will need humanitarian assistance in 2022-23.

²⁹ IPC, projections for June – November 2022

³⁰ Afghanistan Nutrition cluster, July 2022

³¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2018. Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES); the calculation is based on the 2.9% of the severely food insecure.

³² National Nutrition Survey 2018

³³ National Food and Nutrition Surveillance FNS, Iran 2022. The number include both sever & moderate food insecure in 8 provinces

³⁴ *Ibid*

³⁵ IDMC data (May 2022)

³⁶ HRP 2022 – Total people in need of humanitarian assistance

³⁷ OCHA – people affected by natural disasters between January and July 2022 (source: overview of natural disasters, August 2022 – 39 000 people – and Paktia/Khost earthquake affected population – 362 000)

³⁸ IDMC, data as of December 2021

³⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2018. Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES); Monitoring of Food Supply, Agricultural Livelihoods and Food Security in the Context of COVID and Other Shocks.

⁴⁰ "Joint programmatic offer to IR Iran by UNRC" 2020.

⁴¹ UNHCR, External update, July 2022

⁴² IOM

of people returning to their areas of origin will be fully met. In addition, small pockets of conflict, and therefore displacement (particularly in the northern provinces) remain and should be monitored

Following the Government of Pakistan-led Documentation Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE) in 2021, the latest figure of registered Afghan refugees holding a Proof of Registration (PoR) in **Pakistan** stands at 1.3 million, of which 54% are children and 15% as registered people with disabilities⁴³. An estimated 31% of registered refugees live in villages, while 69% live in urban or semi-urban settings with limited external assistance. The provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan host the most Afghans (81%) with both provinces exposed to multi-dimensional poverty levels⁴⁴. Compounding the refugee figures are the estimated 2 million Afghan Citizen Card holders and undocumented Afghans residing in Pakistan, including new arrivals. In the absence of a national refugee/asylum framework, all three categories of Afghans live in a legal limbo and are exposed to multi-layered protection risks including undermining of their basic human rights, particularly: a) the right to employment and self-reliance being disallowed for all three categories of Afghans, resulting in a large majority of them working in the informal sector (e.g., construction and agricultural) and reliant on daily wage labour earning less than EUR 2/day⁴⁵ as they lack the eligibility for public sector employment due to their legal status; b) access to primary health and education for PoR cardholders is feasible yet multiple barriers to both basic rights remain a challenge, whilst ACC and undocumented Afghans remain extremely vulnerable and unable to access either service without the necessary financial resources and the lack of sufficient services especially in remote areas. The situation is more precarious for the newly arrived Afghans since August 2021. Pakistan officials estimate over 250 000 to have entered the country, however, humanitarian partners continue to be restricted by the Government of Pakistan to assist newly arrived vulnerable Afghans.

For **IDPs in Pakistan**, 175 311 people continue to live in displacement as a consequence of the 2014 military operations in the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA), among whom 7 958 families (27 668 people) are Pakistani refugees residing in Khost, Afghanistan, who returned in December 2021. The return to their place of origin is progressing slowly. According to Provincial Disaster Management Authorities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 93 villages in North Waziristan district have been cleared and around 15 000 displaced families would return in a phased manner. The return of 16 000 families to Tirah valley is likely to proceed this year. Displacement resulting from human and natural hazards continue to occur with 898 245 persons displaced during 2020-2021 including 68 000 IDPs recorded following the 5.9 magnitude earthquake in Harnai, Balochistan in 2021. Due to the floods in 2022, at least 7.9 million people have been displaced, of which 600 000 in relief camps.

Iran hosts some 3.6 million refugees, of whom 780 000 are Afghan refugees with Amayesh cards and 20 000 Iraqi refugees holding a Hoviat card, as well as 600 000 Afghan passport-holders and more than 2.2 million undocumented Afghans (according to the 2022 headcount). An estimated 40% of the Afghan population in Iran are children⁴⁶.

⁴³ Regional Refugee Response Plan, January-December 2022

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ ADSP- Barriers to accessing C-19 health care for Afghan Refugees, April 2022

⁴⁶ Regional Refugee Response Plan, January -December 2022

Only 4% of the registered Afghans live in 20 refugee settlements across 13 provinces while 96% live in urban and rural areas together with the Iranian host population. In Iran refugees are allowed to work in a number of prescribed sectors on a daily wage basis (approx. EUR 61/month)⁴⁷ thus subject to unstable incomes. Regardless of documentation status (refugees, passport holders, undocumented), Afghans have access to Primary Health Care (PHC) at no cost, similar to Iranian nationals. Education is likewise accessible to Afghans and more than 500 000⁴⁸ Afghan children – including undocumented Afghans and those who have newly arrived in Iran – are benefitting from Iran’s inclusive education policies. Despite these progressive policies, in order to retain the refugee status and have access to basic services, several mandatory annual expenses incur (e.g. school enrolment, health insurance premiums, Amayesh renewal, temporary work permits). Iran too has received a new caseload of Afghans since 2021 and the Government of Iran estimates between 500 000 and 1 000 000 new arrivals and, along with a headcount of undocumented Afghans, authorities have gradually started to provide basic services to newly arrived Afghans. The 2022 Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) remains largely underfunded with a 61% funding gap for Pakistan and 69% for Iran respectively.

2.1.2 Population affected by food insecurity and malnutrition

In **Afghanistan**, the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Analysis reports that 18.9 million people (45% of the total population) will face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) by the end of 2022, with close to 6 million at risk of falling into famine-like conditions. Though markets remain functional, increasing prices of essential food and non-food commodities, decreasing remittances from abroad, decreasing livelihood opportunities and stagnant daily wages continue to reduce people’s purchasing power. Households from all population groups report food and livelihoods as the top two priority needs⁴⁹. While a sharp increase in food assistance since the last quarter of 2021 and the first semester of 2022 avoided a catastrophic situation, the food security sector remains largely underfunded, which could result in a deteriorated situation in 2023. 4.5 million children and 720 000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) suffer from acute malnutrition. Compounding the risk is the increase in outbreaks of communicable diseases and a context of limited sanitation which increases the chances of developing complications, as well as increasingly limited access to nutrition treatment and services due to restrictions on women and girls’ mobility.

In Pakistan, the major contributing factors in normal conditions to acute food insecurity include high food prices, extreme weather conditions (drought, heatwaves), livestock deaths, reduced income due to COVID-19 impacts. The proportion of food insecure households is high in Pakistan (71%), with the poorest households (lowest wealth quintile) being most affected. Further, around one-fourth (24 per cent) of the country’s population is living below national poverty line and 39.0 per cent is poor based on multidimensional poverty index (MPI). All complementary feeding indicators are far below acceptable levels. According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), 16.4

⁴⁷ UNHCR, Cost of basic needs for refugees in Iran, December 2021

⁴⁸ <https://iran.un.org/en/178030-unhcr-and-wfp-help-refugee-children-stay-school-and-reach-their-dreams>

⁴⁹ REACH, Whole of Afghanistan Survey 2022.

percent of Pakistanis (38 million people) are moderately or severely food insecure and 1.8% severely food insecure. In some districts, moderate or severe food insecurity affects 49% of the population. Moreover, malnutrition among young children, adolescents and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) was already prevalent in Pakistan prior to the onset of the heavy rains and floods. According to a global report published jointly by FAO, WFP, UNICEF, WHO and IFAD in 2019, the prevalence of malnutrition amongst children aged 6-59 months is also very high, with an estimated 40% children stunted. The largest nutrition survey conducted in Pakistan – the 2018 National Nutrition Survey (NNS) – indicated that prevalence of wasting among young children (17.7%) is beyond the internationally agreed upon emergency threshold (15%). This situation has been aggravated by the floods: the widespread loss of livestock, crops, livelihoods and income as well as damage to critical transport infrastructure for supplying agricultural outputs to markets that has occurred since the IPC assessment was conducted is expected to exacerbate the already frail food security situation and drive even more people into crisis and emergency levels. This is compounded by ongoing price increases in Pakistan coinciding with a surge in global inflation, which is further contributing to increasing the unaffordability of food and other commodities in the market. Preliminary results from an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis of 28 highly vulnerable districts in Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa show that 8.62 million people in assessed districts are estimated to be in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) and 4 (emergency) between September and November 2022, including some 5.74 million people in assessed flood-affected districts – 3.82 million in IPC Phase 3 and 1.92 million in IPC Phase 4⁵⁰. Also a spike in malnutrition is already sweeping across flood-affected areas, as a result of disrupted livelihoods and increasing food insecurity.

In Iran, approximately 11.5 million households are below or just above the poverty line⁵¹, with the Food and Nutrition surveillance (FEWs)⁵² reporting eight food insecure provinces, including refugee hosting provinces. While the trend of stunting is escalating in all eight studied provinces, the prevalence is particularly worrying in Sistan-Balochistan⁵³ (29%) and South Khorasan (16%).

2.1.3 People affected by shocks, including natural disasters

Afghanistan is highly prone to intense and recurring disasters induced by natural hazards due to its geographical location and decades of environmental degradation. High intensity floods are frequent, affecting the eastern, southern and western regions throughout June-August 2022, damaging or destroying at least 4 200 houses, as well as leading to crop destruction and the loss of hundreds of livestock. Earthquakes with an average impact of 560 deaths per year spiked in 2022 with two deadly earthquakes in January in Badghis and in June in Paktika/Khost, reportedly affecting 362 000 people. Sudden-onset shocks are exacerbated by large scale slow-onset disasters, e.g. droughts in 2018, 2021 and 2022. In addition, decreasing water tables and reduced sanitation exacerbates the risks of outbreaks of infectious and diarrheal diseases. Additionally, other environmental problems affect the population, namely rapid deforestation and land

⁵⁰ Revised 2022 Flood Response Plan (October 2022).

⁵¹ UN Iran Socio-economic recovery programme against the impact of Covid-19, 2020.

⁵² Food and Nutrition surveillance, April 2022.

⁵³ Ibid.

degradation, solid waste management issues, overgrazing, water pollution and limited renewable energy alternatives.

Pakistan and Iran are vulnerable to a variety of risks – hydro-meteorological and geophysical hazards, including health risks as witnessed since the global pandemic in 2020-2022. According to the global Climate Risk Index (CRI), Pakistan is the eight most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change and is ranked 15th with a score index of 25, whilst Iran CRI ranking is 18th with a score index of 27⁵⁴. Climate change risks, compounded by socio-economic risks, are affecting the poorest segments of the population, most notably refugees and displaced people. Pakistan also faces regional water shortages, degradation of natural resources, soil erosion, deforestation and contamination of groundwater. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC)⁵⁵, from 2008 to 2021 at least 16.6 million people was displaced due to 94 disaster events reported. In addition, in 2022 summer, Pakistan faced the worst floods in its history, affecting 33 million people, killing over 1700 people, displacing at least additional 7.9 million people and destroying at least 2.2 million houses. The floods are expected to massively impact agricultural production, and harvest yields, in 2023. Iran grapples with similar issues of water scarcity, desertification and soil erosion, poor waste management and air and soil pollution. In 2022 in Iran, 92 267 displaced persons have been recorded as a result of human and natural hazards .

2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1 Protection

In **Afghanistan** it is estimated that more than 16.2 million people (HRP 2022) face several intrinsically interlinked protection risks with women, children, ethnic minorities, and those perceived to be affiliated with previous government structures or those in opposition to the current regime, particularly at risk. Needs encompass general protection and all sub-sectors – SGBV, Child Protection (CP), Mine risk and Housing, Land and Property (HLP). 9 million people are estimated as already exposed or at risk to singular incidents or repeated cycles of violence triggered by inequalities and cultural practices including pervasive SGBV. Access to all protection services is severely restricted by de facto authority mandates, particularly for women and children. Reduced access to education leaves an estimated 5.1 million children exposed to risks of early marriage, family separation and recruitment into armed groups. Since August 2021, child labour has increased; an estimated one million children are currently working, including in hazardous occupations, such as scrap metal collection in areas contaminated by explosive ordnances. More than 4.4 million people live in areas at highest risk of contamination from new and legacy triggers, with 1 in 5 and 1 in 8 newly accessed communities having legacy and new contamination respectively⁵⁶. Explosive ordnance risks are a serious impediment to accessing remote communities by humanitarians and for communities to access humanitarian and basic services. 6.1 million⁵⁷ people are estimated to be exposed to loss of/or dispute with authorities/anti-government authorities over land, homes and

⁵⁴ Global climate risk index 2021, GermanWatch

⁵⁵ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/pakistan>

⁵⁶ <https://ims.unmas.org/portal/apps/sites/#/unmas-afghanistan-donor>

⁵⁷ HRP 2022

other properties, also affecting livelihoods. Displacement or forced returns further create protection risks, not least where conflict drives communities into areas physically secure but environmentally unsuitable for habitation. Accessing personal documentation is currently impossible and systemic barriers and new discriminatory practices further limit and reduce access to basic services and assistance particularly for women and minority groups.

In **Pakistan and Iran** protection needs have heightened for the reported 182 590 Afghans who fled to neighbouring countries since 2021⁵⁸, over 50% children and nearly a quarter being women. Lack of proper legal status and documentation remains the crux of protection in both countries. The first large-scale refugee verification in 10 years in **Pakistan** provides legitimacy to some and facilitates access to humanitarian assistance, but remains precarious as registration is only valid till June 2023. For ACC holders and undocumented, especially newly arrived Afghans, the situation is far worse with humanitarian assistance and access to basic services thwarted by the Government of Pakistan. In **Iran** access to basic services, labour, access to justice and in particular legal documentation remain critical, especially considering the heightened deportation trend since late August 2021. Given the documentation requirement for official border crossings, movements through unofficial border crossing point are reported to be increasing, thus exposing Afghans, especially women and children, to heightened risks of smuggling and trafficking. Thus, focus on child protection and SGBV remains critical. Advocacy on access and protection-oriented humanitarian assistance remain equally paramount.

2.2.2 Health

In **Afghanistan**, the reduction in international development assistance poses a real threat to the functioning of the country's health care system, resulting in the reduction in provision of basic health care services. The socio-economic crisis and a reduced capacity to meet basic needs also led to a de-prioritisation of people seeking health care services. In addition, restrictions on movement for women (and therefore children) has reduced access for these population groups and those that rely on women for healthcare (the disabled, the elderly, etc). As a result, over 18 million people are in need of healthcare across all levels. Decades of conflict has led to gaps in immunisation, resulting in recurrent outbreaks of diseases such as polio and measles, escalated by challenges in supply chains and capacity in the Ministries⁵⁹. Thus, outbreak mitigation is a significant priority for humanitarian action, in addition to responding to critical primary and secondary healthcare caseloads. A key concern remains recurrent annual outbreaks of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), variants that includes cholera and dysentery. The situation is compounded by limited access to clean water as well as a lack of understanding/implementation of appropriate treatment options. In addition, access to trauma-based healthcare for people remains a priority need, including mental health support (for anxiety, depression and early stages of newly acquired trauma) which is

⁵⁸ UNHCR External Update #19, 1 August 2022

⁵⁹ Humanitarian Access Group – lack of capacity in ministries due to brain drain and intentional appointment of non-technical focal points within ministries by Defacto Authority core challenge noted consistently.

increasingly noted in emergency health responses following sudden onset shocks, e.g. earthquakes, floods, conflict, explosives, etc.

Pakistan suffers from a low level of coverage of public health services requiring support to provision of key primary health care with a focus on maternal and child health care as well as quality service provision. The numerous barriers (e.g. affordability, distance, language barriers, etc) for Afghans to access health care continue to require support and advocacy. Moreover, due to the 2022 floods, widespread standing floodwaters, damaged water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and largescale displacements are aggravating ongoing disease outbreaks in Pakistan and heightening the risk of new outbreaks of water- and vector-borne diseases and respiratory illnesses. Reported cases of malaria, dengue, acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and cholera are on the rise among flood-affected communities, posing a particular threat in areas where floodwaters remain the longest. Pakistan is also one of only two polio-endemic countries remaining worldwide. Without adequate intervention, the public health situation in flood-affected areas of Pakistan is expected to worsen significantly. **Iran's** national health system has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the unilateral sanctions – not limited to the supply and availability of medicines and medical devices but also allocations for existing health care services, including research and development of new therapies and procedures⁶⁰. The economic situation, combined with inflation, is mostly impacting refugees and undocumented Afghans where health care has become unaffordable. Afghan refugees (Amayesh card holders) are eligible to the Universal Public Health Insurance of Iran, however the fee to enrol in the UPHI scheme has increased by 28%⁶¹ and run the risk of many refugees opting to prioritise other needs over enrolment in UPHI. Strengthening health care services in Afghan hosting areas remain critical including advocating on access to health care for undocumented persons. Since the onset of the global pandemic, **Pakistan** and **Iran** have experienced multiple waves of COVID-19, which have put a severe strain on the health systems, warranting health preparedness to effectively counter the cyclical waves of the pandemic. Furthermore, reports of increasing mental health needs resulting from the multiple implications of COVID-19 and also from the current floods in Pakistan need attention.

2.2.3 Nutrition

In **Afghanistan** childhood malnutrition is the main cause of child mortality with one of the world's highest rates of stunting and wasting in children under five, at 41%⁶². Only 12% of Afghan children aged 6-24 months receive the right variety of food in the quantity needed for their age⁶³. Of particular concern is the chronic high rate of malnutrition seen in pregnant and lactating women - which increases the chances of malnutrition in children under 6 months whose nutritional intake is co-dependent during pregnancy and early childhood - and the limited integration of the role of nutrition in female healthcare. The current nutrition situation is exacerbated by increased food

⁶⁰ UN Special Rapporteur – Alena Douhan visit to Iran, May 2022

⁶¹ UNHCR, Cost of basic needs for refugees in Iran, December 2021

⁶² <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/nutrition>.

⁶³ <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/nutrition>.

insecurity across the board which has led to increased negative coping mechanisms including reduced quality foods, fewer meals, fewer foods per meal. In at least 28 out of 34 provinces malnutrition rates are above the emergency threshold for acute malnutrition with concentrations in areas of limited reach. Contingency planning is grounded in loading of supplies as a dynamic preparedness action, to pre-empt loss of life as a direct result of acute malnutrition.

In **Pakistan**, chronic malnutrition is one of the highest in Asia and marked by emergency levels of acute malnutrition. According to the national nutritional survey wasting (acute malnutrition) in children under 5 stands at 17.7%, above international thresholds (15%). According to UNICEF, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, 47 million children were already wasted in 2019 and nearly 12 million children continue to suffer from stunting (40.2%) country-wide. The devastating floods of the 2022 monsoon are expected to massively impact agricultural production and diminish harvest yields, in 2023. This will further worsen the nutritional crisis in Pakistan. A spike in malnutrition is already sweeping across flood-affected areas.

In **Iran**, multi-dimensional causes (e.g. pandemic, disasters, sanctions, inflation) are impacting the food availability and nutrition services for the most vulnerable communities in Iran and notably Afghans who rely on a daily wage. The negative impact is evidenced on the quality of diets and nutrition practices, causing increased malnutrition among the population groups with the highest nutrition needs, including under-five children⁶⁴.

2.2.4 Food Security and Livelihoods

Prevailing La-Niña conditions, COVID-19, and the global food and commodity crisis are exerting pressures on livelihoods and food-insecurity of millions of vulnerable population groups in the region.

In **Afghanistan**, continuous shocks have exhausted the resilience of displaced people and host communities making it difficult for households to meet their basic needs requirements. The main drivers of acute food insecurity include drought and its impact on crops and livestock, and a severe economic crisis resulting in increased food prices. Reduced income, lower international and domestic remittances and continuing obstacles to humanitarian assistance (e.g. limited physical access during winter) are expected to contribute to the further deterioration of the food security situation. Moreover, the current drought continues to be an aggravating factor. It is predicted that La Niña conditions will result in below average precipitation which will likely further negatively impact food availability and aggravate an already fragile livelihood base.

In **Pakistan**, the 2021 State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report identified Pakistan as a food crisis country with high levels of acute food insecurity. The contributing factors to acute food insecurity include high food prices and extreme weather conditions (drought, heatwave, floods) leading to livestock deaths and agriculture losses, while reduced income due to the longer-term impact of COVID-19 is still a reality. Households have minimal coping capacity to withstand additional shocks

⁶⁴ UNICEF, Iran Country Office, End of year, 2021 situation report

like earthquakes or floods requiring emergency assistance to meet food and basic needs. The devastating floods of the 2022 monsoon are expected to massively impact agricultural production and diminish harvest yields, in 2023. This will further worsen the food and livelihood situation in Pakistan.

In **Iran**, the situation is equally dire, especially among Afghan communities considering the multiple shocks, COVID-19 consequences and high inflation rates. Long term coping strategies for Afghans include purchasing on credit, borrowing money and sending members with disability/health issues, as well as children, to work.

2.2.5 WASH, Shelter and Settlements

In **Afghanistan** WASH infrastructure, especially in previously unserved and remote areas, has faced decades of underinvestment, disruption and destruction. The environmental impact of drought has also significantly increased the stress on water resources, underlining the prevalent need for clean drinking water and environmental sanitation. As a result, an increase of Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) and cholera has been reported with 18 provinces suffering from outbreaks in 2022. Poor shelter as well as a lack of winter clothing and other household items leave people vulnerable to disease and unable to cope with Afghanistan's harsh winters. The earthquakes of January and June as well as unseasonal flooding in July and August 2022 exacerbated the need for winterization aid and shelter (re-)construction and repair. In 2021-2022, an estimated 9.2 million people in need of winterization assistance were considered by winterization plan.

Pakistan and **Iran** suffer from water scarcity which has a serious impact on communities at risk. Given the vulnerability to frequent natural hazards which trigger disasters and displacement thus leaving hundreds of thousands of people in need of emergency water and sanitation support. Poor access to water and sanitation equally has a direct impact on the health and nutrition status of poor communities, especially children. Similarly, shelter and settlement solutions remain critical in both countries especially for Afghan refugees and those who arrived since 2021. In Pakistan, the devastating floods of the 2022 monsoon destroyed more more than 2.2 million houses, and had a massive impact on the sanitary situation in parts of the country. More than 33 million people were affected by the disaster, many of them in need for clean water and sanitary support.

2.2.6 Education in Emergencies (EiE)

In **Afghanistan**, 7.9 million children (incl. 3.8 million girls)⁶⁵ are without access to education. 2022 saw a 172% increase of children in need of education compared to 2021. Following the declaration by the de facto authorities in March 2022 preventing girls and women from attending school or teaching past grade 6, developmental gains are fast eroding. EiE needs include challenges to overcome cultural barriers to equitable access⁶⁶, as well as physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection concerns. EiE needs are likely to increase where unanticipated emergencies will de-prioritise education and increase

⁶⁵https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2022_afg_edu_cluster_strategy_2022-2023.pdf

⁶⁶https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2022_afg_edu_cluster_strategy_2022-2023.pdf

needs for life-sustaining learning environments for children at risk. EiE to be provided in alignment with the basic needs approach promoted by development actors.

Pakistan has the world's second-highest number of out-of-school children (OOSC) with an estimated 22.8 million children aged 5-16 not attending school, representing 44% of the total population in this age group⁶⁷. Moreover 80% of Afghan refugee children are out of school and the figure is likely to be higher among the ACC holders and undocumented Afghan children, for whom access is hindered due to lack of documentation, language barriers, distance, lack of schools and classrooms, poverty and socio-cultural pressure being key drivers.

In **Iran**, the 2015 decree allows all Afghan children to access schools regardless of their status. Yet learning opportunities are hampered due to the lack of schools and classrooms, language barriers, teacher-student ratio, poverty, and socio-cultural barriers which prevail. Girls' access to education as well as children with special needs remain a key concern in Pakistan and Iran alike.

2.2.7 Disaster Preparedness (DP)

In **Afghanistan**, a country already prone to natural and human hazards, decades of conflict and environmental degradation, coupled with low investments in disaster risk management (DRM) strategies, have contributed to people's vulnerability. As a result, the Afghan people are left with very a low capacity to cope with sudden new shocks. In the light of an entirely dysfunctional governance, the infrastructure to cope with disaster is expected to remain extremely poor. As a consequence, DP mainstreaming must be systematically integrated into every humanitarian action.

In **Pakistan**, the prevailing fragile disaster risk management (DRM) system is characterised by insufficient institutional capacity and understanding of multi-hazard risks, weak coordination, lack of resources and institutional frameworks. Investment in targeted preparedness interventions such as strengthening inter-departmental institutions and adaptivity/flexibility of social protection systems of the Government of Pakistan, building on multi-hazard risks analysis combined with socio-economic vulnerability, remains critical.

Iran's DRM system and frameworks present weaknesses, especially in terms of being informed by a meaningful multi-hazard approach, limited availability of financial resources to increase investment in preventive measures and retrofitting, and limited access to disaster risk information (hazard and vulnerability data) to inform planning, preparedness, and prevention interventions. This has been over the last year further compounded by the negative impact of COVID-19 and US sanctions, which put additional strain on national preparedness and response capacities to prepare for and respond to future shocks. In both Pakistan and Iran, it remains therefore imperative to ensure that disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness are scaled up and mainstreamed into humanitarian response, increasing beneficiaries' resilience to future disasters.

⁶⁷ UNICEF

3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National / local response and involvement

In the current situation, developmental gains in **Afghanistan** that would underpin any potential nationalised humanitarian response cannot be expected to persist. Governance is dysfunctional and many public services are partially or fully suspended. Mitigation measures, to prevent further degradation are critical in the current crisis context. Afghan NGOs have been heavily affected by the limitations imposed by the sanction regime and the consequent economic downfall, as well as by the restrictions posed by the new de facto regime on their operational and financial capacities. Afghan NGOs could be associated to the humanitarian response, with the benefits of capacity building and local ownership.

The **Government of Pakistan** (GoP) together with the national armed forces serve as the first responders in emergency settings. The first response is often followed by a cash transfer compensation system to vulnerable Pakistani disaster/displaced persons. Yet, despite the willingness and ability of the government to address the needs of affected population, it encounters multi-layered challenges especially due to the weak disaster risk management system and emphasis on response, rather than on preparedness. Crisis affected Afghans (registered, ACC and undocumented) remain solely dependent on humanitarian organisations, including humanitarian assistance being thwarted by GoP for Afghans who newly arrived since 2021. The consequences of the devastating 2022 floods further burden the local, regional and national response structures.

The **Government of Iran** (GoI) and its inclusive and progressive policies towards Afghan refugees continue, despite new arrivals since 2021. At the same time, GoI equally has the highest number of Afghan deportations compared to neighbouring countries. Against this backdrop, the government-initiated headcount of undocumented Afghans from April to June indicates another positive step of a forward leaning policy frame. Yet the capacity and willingness to support Afghans in Iran is running the risk of reversal as the GoI is adversely affected by economic challenges, the unilateral sanctions regime and COVID-19. In terms of frequent natural hazard induced disasters Iran faces, the authorities together with the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) are the first responders. Disaster response is challenged due to the secondary implications of sanctions despite humanitarian waivers (lengthy procurement timeframes, banking channels, etc.) and the national disaster risk management is at a nascent stage. However, the GoI has set DRM as a priority and requested international support.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Iran	Other Countries (Central Asia)

	HRP 2022*	RRRP 2022	RRRP 2022	RRRP 2022
Needs (USD, billion)	4.44	0.310	0.259	0.054
Funding Level	54%	63%	43%	21%
Top 5 Donors	US, UK, Asian Dev. Bank, European Commission, World Bank.	US, Germany, European Commission, Italy, Australia		

* estimations for Afghanistan indicate that needs in 2023 will exceed USD 4.6b

The 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan indicated needs of USD 4.44 billion. By November the HRP remained strongly underfunded (54% funded).

In **Afghanistan**, the UN Resident Coordinator /Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) and Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General lead the humanitarian response, supported by a dedicated Deputy HC. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meets weekly and provides strategic direction for the collective response, while the donor community has regular exchanges with the Humanitarian Coordinator and OCHA. Humanitarian aid remains insufficient to respond to current humanitarian needs. In 2022, with a request of 4.44 billion USD, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is about 3.5 times higher compared to 2021 and of the highest requirements worldwide, although only 54% funded by November 2022. Nearly 24.4 million people have required humanitarian assistance in 2022. Initial data for 2023 estimate that requirements will increase to USD 4.62 billion.

Pakistan and Iran

For the 2022 (Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP) a total of USD 623 415 539 have been requested (Pakistan USD 310.4 million and Iran USD 258.8 million). The RRRP remains likewise largely underfunded (Pakistan funded by 63%, Iran by 43%). There is no humanitarian coordination architecture in either Pakistan or Iran. The 5 top donors are the US, Germany, EU, Italy and Australia.

In Pakistan, on 4 October 2022 the UN launched a revised appeal of USD 816.3 million to help the victims of the devastating monsoon floods which is largely unfunded.

3.3 Operational constraints

3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space:

In **Afghanistan**, while the cessation of open conflict resulted in a considerable increase in physical access across the country, particular access challenges persist and are expected to continue. Despite an overall improvement in the security situation, violent attacks continue to be reported including incidents directly targeting frontline workers and instability persists in certain areas. The presence of explosive ordnances continues to constitute a high risk, particularly in areas that have been out of reach to the humanitarian community for the past decades. Regulations and approach from de facto authorities

towards humanitarian organizations remains uncertain despite assurances to allow their operations in the country, increasing the risk of interference. Challenges also persist with regards to movement into and across the country, in particular for female humanitarian staff. Airports, including Kabul, are still with very limited operations, impacting movement of staff as well as supplies. At present, international commercial air operators are not flying to Kabul for security reasons, with severe consequences on supply chains. The ECHO humanitarian air bridge (HAB) continues to bring high value medical supplies to Kabul, to support humanitarian partners. Severe seasonal climatic conditions, natural and human-induced disasters, logistical constraints, such as poor infrastructure and inability to maintain the airport, further hinder movement of humanitarian staff and supplies.

In **Pakistan**, humanitarian operations continue to be hindered by a complicated registration process and national counterterrorism regulations that allow the Government to deny or cancel permissions of NGOs and INGOs to operate. Access constraints remain high across Pakistan as a result of insecurity between armed non-state actors and government. During the 2022 floods eased up visa delivery for humanitarian aid workers.

In **Iran**, only a limited number of international organisations are allowed to operate within a controlled operational environment. The bureaucratic restrictions and impediments imposed by the Government of Iran moreover undermine timely and effective responses.

3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground:

Despite the changes in political context in **Afghanistan** and its complex environment, humanitarian organisations are still able to operate throughout the country. Regulatory attempts from de facto authorities, such as the signature of Memorandum of Understanding, risks hindering the timely delivery of assistance, and heighten the risk of interference. Cultural tensions, technical training and the “brain drain” following August 2021 challenge the recruitment of qualified national staff, particularly in previously unreachable areas. Since August 2021, the safety of female aid workers and their participation in the full spectrum of the humanitarian response remains a major concern. Increased staff presence outside of Kabul, including with international staff, is key in supporting critical humanitarian access negotiations to ensure scale-up and outreach of the response is done in a principled way. The complexity of the operational environment requires organisations to work with a high degree of flexibility. Despite some improvements, humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan continue to face challenges in transferring foreign funds into the country because central banks continue to follow low-risk policies, in compliance with the sanctions’ regime. While organisations in the meantime find solutions, in-country liquidity remains an issue and can have a significant impact on the effective delivery of humanitarian aid.

In **Pakistan**, the humanitarian landscape has starkly changed over the last years. The footprint of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in-country has significantly reduced, due to declining funding trends and operational constraints. The UN is still present in country with UNHCR being one of the main actors, whilst OCHA has a minimal presence. However, the 2022 monsoon floods, which had a impact on at

least 33 million people and the consequences of which will need to be addressed in 2023, underpin the need for a functioning structure to deliver humanitarian assistance.

In **Iran**, the humanitarian footprint is limited to a number of UN agencies including the Resident Coordinator Office, two international organisations and less than a handful of INGOs. Overall, humanitarian partners have the operational capacity despite the restrictive operational environment. In Iran, humanitarian partners also highlight the consequences of sanctions (mainly by the US) and the adverse impact on humanitarian operations. In particular, suppliers/manufacturers are being reluctant to engage and provide deliveries to Iran. Consequently, bringing key humanitarian commodities into the country require a long, expensive and cumbersome process.

4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

Developments in **Afghanistan** have altered the development strategies originally envisioned. Since the August 2021 events, EU development assistance and investments to Afghanistan remain suspended. The non recognition of and Taliban regime has also implications on operationalising the “peace” side of the nexus triangle. The nexus setting has therefore fundamentally changed. In line with its commitment to the Afghan people, the EU has mobilised sizeable development funding to address the basic needs, i.e. in education, health, livelihood and other beyond humanitarian nature, of the Afghan people, including those displaced inside Afghanistan and in the region.

In the context of an increasingly unstable and unpredictable political environment, DG ECHO (in co-operation with DG INTPA), will ensure that to the extent present the Humanitarian-Development-Peace policies work together, while protecting the humanitarian space, principles and parameters. DG ECHO funds will continue to focus on providing an urgent life saving support combined with life sustaining interventions addressing the most vulnerable population. A coordinated Team Europe Approach to “saving and safeguarding Afghan lives and livelihoods”, ensuring joint work, coordination and advocacy, is critical in the current context of Afghanistan. The EU will also continue to advocate for operationalising of the nexus approach within the international community, and in the context of the new emerging aid architecture.

For example, regarding *livelihood and food security* DG ECHO considers to address lifesaving support with a focus on the most vulnerable populations (in particular women and children). Development funds will focus on food/cash for work in agriculture, and income generating activities, with a focus on women.

For *health, nutrition and WASH*, DG ECHO will focus on primary health care (including mobile health teams). This can include humanitarian air support and logistical support to reach remote areas. Development funds consider to mitigate the health, nutrition and WASH impacts of COVID-19 and other epidemics, with a focus on women and children. Polio eradication could also be funded.

For *displacement and protection* DG ECHO considers to assist IDPs at the Iranian border and in urban centres. Protection of women and children is one priority. Displacement and protection in Iran and Pakistan can be part of the portfolio. Development funds will focus on more durable solutions (education, health, economic opportunities) for IDPs and

refugees in Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia; also unaccompanied children returning/transiting through Afghanistan can be supported. Funds will also support human rights and civil society organisations, with a view to protecting the rights of the population.

DG ECHO funds will support *education* in emergencies, including community based education. Focus is primary education for displaced population, and areas not reached by public services. Development funds can focus on social safety nets for teachers, also school meals and take-home rations (addressing the public education system).

The new **EU Pakistan** Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 focuses on i) Green Inclusive Growth; ii) Human Capital; and iii) Governance, including the Rule of Law and Human Rights and one integrated Team Europe Initiative (TEI). Actions under this MIP will be both gender mainstreamed and targeted for implementation of Gender Action Plan III, working towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Furthermore, it is foreseen to extend these initiatives to refugees and returnees. The EU will also continue to advocate in its policy dialogue for a comprehensive and holistic migration policy, adequate legislation, as well as administrative and financial capacities. The **humanitarian-peace-development nexus** will be addressed by targeting humanitarian/development interventions in provinces affected by conflict and/or heavily impacted by climate change. Moreover, assistance to the floods response will be provided in a coordinated manner that ensures synergies, avoids overlaps and reinforces the transition from short-term support to early recovery. In **Iran**, building and continuing to strengthen complementarities of the humanitarian-development nexus will likewise be pursued. Furthermore, in **both Pakistan and Iran**, under the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugee (SSAR) framework, the nexus will continue to be fostered and pursued through close coordination, combined with joint advocacy on the protection of Afghans.

5. ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

General conditions for all interventions

The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in the HIP policy annex. Mainstreaming of protection, gender (including mitigation of risks of SGBV), age, disability and diversity inclusion, as well as mitigating environmental impact in line with the minimum environmental requirements should be duly reflected in all proposals.

Mutiannual support can also be provided through programming partnerships with selected partners, in particular in settings where the need for longer term support is evident.

5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response

5.1.1 Afghanistan

In **Afghanistan**, DG ECHO will continue to address humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations, prioritizing as much as possible underserved areas and to further advocate for unhindered access, to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Principled humanitarian engagement and needs-based interventions will be central to DG ECHO's response and strengthening the inclusion of vulnerable groups will be a key component. The representation of women as beneficiaries of aid and humanitarian actors to ensure equitable and wider access to assistance among the whole population will be a priority. Particular attention will be paid to coordination between humanitarian and basic human needs actors⁶⁸ and programmes to promote longer-term solutions.

DG ECHO intervention strategy will support humanitarian assistance, protection, and advocacy in the best interest of the affected population and will include:

- Response to lifesaving and life-sustaining needs, prioritizing integrated responses to maximize the impact of interventions. This will encompass:(i) delivery of food assistance and livelihoods' protection; (ii) WASH services, shelter and non-food items assistance, EiE activities and protection services; (iii) support to primary and secondary health care and treatment of severe and moderate acute malnutrition ;
- Response to sudden shocks triggered by natural and human hazards, including epidemics, in a timely, efficient and principled way; this will be done by mainstreaming preparedness across proposals, so that these are systematically: (i) supporting evidence/risk-based assessments and information sharing; (ii) embedding flexibility into proposed actions to strengthen early response capacity, which can for example be achieved through crisis modifiers, with a view to facilitate rapid (iii) supporting contingency planning so to prepare for a response as soon as possible.
- Targeted protection programming using integrated approaches, with a specific focus on gender, age, disability and diversity, along with measures to reduce/mitigate exposure to violations and increase the availability of basic and specialised protection response services.
- Support to humanitarian coordination, with particular attention to strengthening decentralized coordination and centrality of protection, as well as common humanitarian services.
- Promotion of a balanced, principled humanitarian assistance and advocacy (grounded on IHL, IHRL and humanitarian principles) in the best interest of the affected population.
- The contribution to Country Based Pool Funding (CBPF), with view to enhance flexibility and to further localise humanitarian assistance.

5.1.2 Pakistan and Iran

For both Pakistan and Iran, DG ECHO will focus on the refugee crisis meeting the protection and humanitarian needs of Afghans, regardless of their status. In addition, DG ECHO will also focus on addressing the humanitarian consequences of the devastating floods of 2022 in Pakistan, which affected at least 33 million people. Upholding the Do No Harm principle, attention will be on sectors that benefit Afghans and host community

⁶⁸ Basic human needs actors refer to traditional development partners in Afghanistan

alike. Complementing the targeted disaster preparedness engagement, natural hazard induced disasters should likewise be addressed when needed through mainstreaming a preparedness approach across proposals:

- **Protection:** Strengthening protection services, including referral pathways as well as access to justice and legal assistance for Afghans and vulnerable population. Prevention of and response to SGBV, child protection and case management will remain a key priority. It also includes joint advocacy for Afghans in country as well as issuance of key documents (birth certificate, driving licenses etc) as envisioned under the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) workplan for Pakistan and Iran.
- **Health and Nutrition:** Integration of vulnerable population, including refugees and host communities, to primary health care and nutrition services. In the context of Iran, procurement of life-saving medical drugs and equipment can be considered if well justified and coordinated with humanitarian organisations engaged in the same sector.
- **Education in Emergencies:** Access to education for children at risk of school dropout or out of school children will continue to be a priority. Partners are expected to address to education barriers, while equity for girls and boys will be pursued with a clear definition of needs and appropriate responses.
- **Livelihood support:** Integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approaches that aim at supporting livelihoods of vulnerable population, including Afghans, will be pursued, on the basis of vulnerability criteria. DG ECHO prioritises multipurpose cash transfers (MPCT) to meet food and other basic needs, complemented by other modalities, as appropriate, and timely referrals, to meet specific sectoral outcomes. Enhanced coordination and coherence across sectors among the humanitarian agencies will be required.
- **Disaster Preparedness:** Building on the experience and work undertaken in 2022 under the dedicated DP Budget Line, and taking into account the devastating floods in Pakistan and the need to “build back better” and promote human-centered climate resilience, the strategy aims to foster the institutionalisation of multi-hazard approaches through strengthening DRM governance and ownership for risk-based preparedness within a framework for effective and timely responses. Building and enhancing the shock responsiveness of existing social safety nets will likewise remain a priority. Joined up multi-risk analysis, thematic complementarity, connectivity and harmonization of models should be demonstrated by agencies as a pre-condition so to foster efficiency though division of labour.

5.2. Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options. In case of major and sudden onset disasters, such as the 2022 Pakistan floods, recognized governments of the countries covered by this HIP (for example in Central Asia), or International Organisations, may activate the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

In view of the importance of logistics for humanitarian operations, DG ECHO remains also committed to contribute to logistics operations, via funding or any other tool, such as the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), at its disposal. DG ECHO considers the continuation of the Humanitarian Air Bridge (HAB) for high value relief items, to Afghanistan.

The European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC) is a global initiative, aiming at supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance with a gap-filling approach. Under the EHRC, the Commission has at its disposal several tools that can be activated in case of sudden onset disasters, e.g. a series of Common Logistics Services (including air operations, warehousing services, last-mile ground transportation, etc.), and a stockpile of emergency WASH and shelter items to be pre-positioned in regional warehouses worldwide.