



BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

The situation in Afghanistan has drastically deteriorated since August 2021 with the political power shift as the Taliban gained control of the country after the withdrawal of international forces – the latest phase in the country's 40 years of war.

In the beginning of 2021, the UN in Afghanistan aimed to reach 18.4 million people for humanitarian assistance. These are the population most affected by conflict, recurrent natural disasters, chronic poverty, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the August 2021 upheaval, ongoing and incoming development assistance halted, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity across the country. Such assistance include the World Bank-funded Sehatmandi Project, which supports the operation of more than 2,000 public health facilities that employ over 20,000 health workers.

The needs have exacerbated and further complicated an extremely challenging operational context. In 2022, the number of people in need has increased by a staggering 30 per cent. The 2022 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan launched in January is now targeting to reach 22.1 million people with a \$4.4 billion funding requirement to address the deepening need of a wider number of people.

While all population groups across the country have been impacted, the consequences for women and girls have been most immediately felt.

Prior to the crisis, 1 Afghan woman dies every 2 hours from preventable pregnancy and childbirth-related complications, and gender-based violence affects 1 in 2 women. With the disruption in health and protection services, these figures are expected to increase.

Over 19 million Afghan women and girls will face increased restrictions on access to life-saving assistance, basic human needs, and essential services on account of discriminatory gender norms related to women's freedom of movement, access to justice, employment and education.

Women with complex health needs, such as those who are pregnant, have reportedly been facing major access issues. Challenges cited include fear and insecurity, mobility restrictions (use of mahram), challenging geographical access to health facilities, lack of safe transport services, and lack of trained female service providers.

The challenges faced by Afghanistan's youth population (67 per cent who are under the age of 25) has also multiplied as a result of the humanitarian crisis. These include high unemployment rates and rise in poverty, which affects their quality of life and impacts their aspirations and morale. Child marriage and teen pregnancy are expected to soar during the crisis.

UNFPA seeks to mobilize \$251.9 million to reach 9.28 million people with the following interventions: reproductive health services, protection for women and adolescents, adolescent and youth-friendly reproductive health services, and emergency reproductive health supplies.