



## In this issue

Transforming women-headed households with cash assistance	P.1
An AHF funded programme supports families in need through cash assistance	P.2
Agricultural and livelihoods training for women brings hope to crisis affected rural communities in Afghanistan	P.3
Nargis attends community classes which have helped her recover from the trauma of conflict	P.4
Families in need in the central highlands region are supported with cash assistance from Medair	P.5
Humanitarian support brings a glimpse of hope to people in need	P.6
Clean water supports the wellbeing of rural communities	P.7
Mine Action supported “cash for work” intervention to improve food security in Jawzjan	P.8
Young mother who has been traumatized by chaos and miscarriage finds a lifeline from mobile health teams	P.9

*Since August 2021, Afghanaid has so far reached [over one million] people with humanitarian assistance, including supporting thousands of vulnerable families with multi-purpose cash to lift their families out of difficult circumstances. With continued support, [Afghanaid] can help even more widows, single mothers and female-heads of households keep their children safe.*

## Transforming women-headed households with cash assistance

### *Contribution from Afghanaid*

Whilst life is often tough in her remote village, Zulikha (not her real name) always strove to give her children the best life possible. Living in a small community in Badakhshan with her eight family members, her husband's passing several years ago made it even harder for Zulikha to provide for her family: facing large social stigma, exclusion and a lack of support. Nevertheless, she managed.

Earlier this year, the harsh conditions coupled with the recent economic collapse and change of power made Zulikha's role as a caregiver more difficult than it has ever been: "I didn't have anything to feed my children. There was not even a drop of oil in my home and I didn't have anything to warm them during the winter season." Unfortunately, situations such as Zulikha's are all too common. Almost 100 per cent of women-headed households do not eat enough food to sustain their daily needs, and soaring food and fuel prices made it even tougher to purchase basic necessities.



Photo: Afghanaid

Due to a lack of employment opportunities and restrictive gender roles, households headed by women are often heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance. Living in a remote, hard-to-access community compounds these difficulties; women like Zulikha do not have access to markets, hospitals and other community infrastructure that may provide extra support.

Unable to sufficiently feed her family or herself, the effects of Zulikha's struggle on her mental and physical health were severe: "I had lots of stress, I even got high blood pressure and I didn't want to come home because my children were asking for food from me but I was not able to provide for them."

Luckily, Zulikha was introduced to Afghanaid's support, which had not abated despite treacherous conditions, and their cash assistance scheme transformed her family's situation. Cash assistance gives Afghan men and women the ability to maintain autonomy and agency when receiving humanitarian support, allowing them to allocate these funds in ways best suited to their family's needs, and respond to the multifaceted issues they face in a far less restrictive manner. Zulikha knew how best to ensure her family were fed, kept warm and safe during the winter, and through this support, was able to do just that.

We recently caught up with Zulikha to learn what this cash support meant to her at that very difficult time: "I managed to buy wheat, rice, oil and wood for heating. I also paid my debts which made me very happy, I cannot express my feelings because I am just really happy for their support...Our family is very happy and we thank Afghanaid."

Since August 2021, Afghanaid has reached more than 1.1 million people with humanitarian assistance, including thousands of vulnerable families with multi-purpose cash to lift their families out of difficult circumstances. Support such as this is averting an even worse humanitarian crisis and ensuring millions of Afghan families avoid starvation. With continued support, we can help even more widows, single mothers and female-heads of households keep their children safe.

## An AHF funded programme supports families in need through cash assistance

*Contribution from Justice & Civili Society Support Organization (JCSSO)*

Fatema, 45 years old, is struggling to look after her children (3 boys and 4 girls). She is living in a cave in Panjab district of Bamyan Province. Her living condition is very poor and she can barely provide her children with three meals a day. Fatema's husband is a farmer but due to the serious drought this year, he can't afford to make enough money to look after his family. "it is very hard situation this year for us to survive," said Fatema and added: "this year drought is not the only problem as our lands are affected by the insects too. We will not be collecting any outcome this year." Fatema is worried about how to feed and look after her children without adequate income. "some days I even can't provide my children with three meals a day but thanks to JCSSO we now have some money to eat food and I can buy some medicine for us." She said.

*"this year drought is not the only problem as our lands are attached by the insects too. We will not be collecting any outcome this year. some days I even can't provide my children 3-times meal per a day but thanks to JCSSO now we have some money to eat food and I can buy some medicine for us."- Fatema, Bamyan Province*



Fatema knits handicrafts to earn some money to feed her children. Photo: JCSSO



JCSSO is implementing a two-time cash assistance project to 1,425 vulnerable families in Panjab District of Bamyan Province. Vulnerable families were identified through a survey done by a selection committee including community members, and a local representative from the authorities.

Fatema's got a little income through knitting for others and work on farms. But it's not a regular job as other people also have financial problems. "we have a small land which is barren this year due to the drought and insects, I've to do other jobs like cleaning, knitting or working on other's land. But it is not feasible always because most of the people are poor and can't afford to hire someone else to work on their behalf," says Fatema. "I received USD 80 through this project which can help us survive for a few months ahead. The rest we've to wait and see." Fatema added with hope.

## Agricultural and livelihoods training for women brings hope to crisis affected rural communities in Afghanistan

*Contribution from Community World Service Asia*

In Afghanistan, agriculture continues to be the backbone of the rural economy – about 70 per cent of the population in rural areas is engaged in on-farm activities. Rural women play an integral role in agriculture and food security and hold the potential to lift their households as well as their communities out of poverty. In the developing world, women comprise over 40 percent of the agricultural workforce (FAO). Since Afghan women often stay in the home and out of public view, we must not lose track of their needs when considering how we approach humanitarian action in Afghanistan.



Photo: Community World Service Asia

In a culture where women bear the brunt of the effects of food insecurity, often feeding their families before themselves, there is a double imperative to support local production, particularly for women-headed households. Women need extensive training to improve their skills. Capacity building initiatives are pivotal to help enhance community understanding and ensure target communities' learn new skills and recognise the important role that women can play in these activities. Shakila, a local farmer from Bamyan's Qala Shah Akram village, has been farming since she was 15 years old. "I had a strong desire to become a farmer. I feel that as women, who are responsible for cooking and feeding our families, we have an important role in agriculture. My husband

*"Many people living in rural areas have limited access to a variety of foods. The kitchen gardens will provide us the opportunity to add diversity in our meals. I feel that every woman should have this information since it will help her family and the environment in the long term. The vegetables and fruits cultivated in the garden will enable families to meet their nutritional needs while also provide an additional income from the surplus they sell in the market,"*  
- Shakila, Bamyan Province

and I make AFN 70,000 (Approx. USD 800) every year from our two-acre farm, where we grow potatoes, wheat, and different vegetables,” Shakila explained.

Shakila was given the opportunity to participate in a capacity-building activity in Bamyán province as part of Community World Service Asia and Japan Platform’s humanitarian assistance project. “We learned about seasonal vegetation development, fertiliser application, seed treatment, pest and disease control, irrigation techniques, and sustainable farming practises during the kitchen gardening training in March 2022. We also spoke about ways to conserve and use available resources without harming the ecosystem.” Shakila prepared a plot of land after returning from the training to set up a food garden in her yard. “Many people living in rural areas have limited access to a variety of foods. The kitchen gardens will provide us the opportunity to add diversity in our meals.” Shakila also shared her learnings from the training with 19 other women in her village.

“I feel that every woman should have this information since it will help her family and the environment in the long term. The vegetables and fruits cultivated in the garden will enable families to meet their nutritional needs while also providing an additional income from the surplus they sell in the market,” added Shakila.

Shakila is a role model for many women since she is actively involved in farming activities with her husband as well as working on her kitchen garden. Women come to Shakila for advice on agricultural methods and resource utilisation since she has extensive expertise in the field of agriculture and is trained in kitchen gardening. She now has hope for a better future and has decided to extend her gardening activities to earn a wholesome livelihood. Under the project, Shakila has received different kinds of vegetable seeds, such as spinach, coriander, onion and tomato after the training. In addition, she was also given a tool kit that proved to be very helpful in setting up a green garden.

## Nargis attends community classes which have helped her recover from the trauma of conflict

*Contribution from Save the Children*

Ten-year-old Nargis (not her real name) and her family fled to Kabul when fighting broke out in their province and a rocket hit their home. Nargis’ mother, Maryam (not her real name), says her children were heavily impacted by the conflict.

*Nargis attends one of Save the Children’s community-based education classes in Kabul. Save the Children is running more than 3,300 community-based education classes across the country to support children who don’t have access to formal schools. These classes not only develop children’s numeracy and literacy skills, but they also offer a place of refuge, which is critical for children who have faced traumatic experiences in this crisis.*



Photo: Save the Children

“They were very severe times when we lost our house and we fled. My husband and I were both out of our minds too. We were very frustrated and anxious, and we couldn’t

calm the children,” Maryam says. “The children had nightmares and sleeping problems and they told me they could still hear the sound of the shelling and they’d put their hands over their ears.” Nargis now attends Save the Children’s community-based classes and is studying hard because she wants to become a doctor. “I love reading, writing and drawing at school. My friends call me hard working. It’s good for girls to go to school. I’m happy to go to school to learn something new. I want to be a doctor. I want to cure people and give them medicine,” Nargis says. “Going to school has helped me to feel good and safer. And now I can do basic maths and I can read and write. This is how school is helping me.” Maryam is thankful for the classes as they are close to their home and have helped Nargis to adapt to her new life and to recover from the trauma she experienced. Maryam didn’t have the chance to go to school and is determined her daughters will receive an education so they can advocate for their rights. “In the first days when I came here, I had to take them to school because they wouldn’t walk on their own. Now they walk to school on their own and they don’t have the nightmares anymore. They have positive thoughts. They think about learning, and they want to become doctors. I’ve seen so many positive changes in them,” Maryam says. Since the Taliban took control last August and the economy collapsed, Maryam and her husband’s incomes have dropped dramatically. They can no longer afford to pay their rent and their entire income goes towards buying food. “Before the collapse, we had the chance to save some money for food, for rent and bills. But since the collapse, we only earn money to eat. The cost of food has increased. Everyone is suffering. We buy less food and add extra water to the dishes,” she says. “The children always ask questions about the food. They ask why we’re not eating meat and three different types of food. They’re asking me why this is happening. I tell them we don’t have enough money and we can’t afford it. “Before the collapse, when their father went to work, he would come home each night with plastic bags full of fresh fruit and vegetables. But now, he comes home empty-handed. The children feel their food has been taken away from them.”

Nargis attends one of Save the Children’s community-based education classes in Kabul. Save the Children is running more than 3,300 community-based education classes across the country to support children who don’t have access to formal schools. These classes not only develop children’s numeracy and literacy skills, but they also offer a place of refuge, which is critical for children who have faced traumatic experiences in this crisis. Save the Children is also providing classes specifically tailored for visual and hearing-impaired children and accelerated learning classes to help those who have missed out on months or years of education, to catch up.

## Families in need in the central highlands region are supported with cash assistance from Medair

*Contribution from Medair*

In the Central Highlands, a combination of drought, the lasting effects of decades of conflict, and the economic crisis after August 2021, have caused many families such as Noqra’s to struggle with food insecurity.

65-year-old Noqra (not her real name) is the primary breadwinner of a family of six, and due to the drought has been unable to grow food on her small farmland. Noqra and her family live in a small house and have very limited means of generating income. “With no alternative, my daughter-in-law and I sold fodder we had gathered in the mountains to purchase food items in the market.” However, despite their efforts, Noqra’s family’s diet was restricted to bread and tea, and they were reliant on the generosity of their neighbors and relatives. Noqra often worried about whether her children would have enough food to survive as they went to bed on empty stomachs.

*“With no alternative, my daughter-in-law and I sold fodder we had gathered in the mountains to purchase food items in the market.”-  
Noqra, Daykundi Province*





Noqra and her family discussing the impact of drought and food insecurity in Daykundi province. Photo: Medair

In response to this urgent food crisis, Medair has been providing unconditional cash distributions to drought-affected communities. Noqra first learned of this project after an announcement by community leaders. “One day, the CDC leader summoned everyone to the nearby mosque to explain that Medair was going to be delivering cash distributions to drought-affected communities after registering households. After this meeting, Medair staff started conducting door-to-door visits and asked for my Tazkira [National ID Card]. We were hopeful that this aid would help us survive and from that day forward, we were counting down the moment for the Medair assistance to arrive so that we could finally have a full meal to eat.”

After finalizing the list of beneficiaries, Medair identified 4,345 households in need of support in Daikundi province. “Later, the CDC called everyone and said that Medair is conducting the distribution. We went to the distribution point and were grateful to see the Medair staff compassionately helping people in need, particularly those who were weak and disabled. After receiving this money, I went to the market and purchased food. This amount gave us enough food to survive for over a month, and God willing, we hope for conditions to improve.”

After the first phase of distributions reached more than 30,300 beneficiaries in November 2021, Medair followed up with a second round of distributions in April 2022 to the same beneficiaries. “Just before the start of Ramadan, when we again had nothing to eat, the CDC leader informed us that Medair was conducting the second phase of distributions,” said Noqra. “I rushed to the distribution point and was very happy to see the Medair staff helping us to survive. We received the additional support and my family members cried with happiness. We are wholeheartedly thankful to Medair for providing this support to us at the most appropriate time.”

## Humanitarian support brings a glimpse of hope to people in need

*Contribution by Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC)*

HRRAC supports families like Zarlisht, a 44-year-old widow living in an informal setting in the outskirts of Lashkargah city in Kandahar province. Zarlisht and her family lives in one

of the poorest and most conflict affected areas in Afghanistan with the area's control frequently contested by previous government and the Taliban during the past years. In March 2022, an HRRAC protection team visited 319 households, including Zarlisht's family and identified them as having significant humanitarian needs, and especially vulnerable as a female-headed household and with no means of income.

*“When my husband was alive, we were living a decent life, free of any difficulty, my children went to school, everyone perusing their dreams. However, it did not last for long and everything has gone disappeared in a flash.”- Zarlisht, Hilmand Province*



HRRAC PSS specialist providing individual counseling to Zarlisht at HRRAC office in Hilmand province. Photo: HRRAC

At the time of assessment, they had not received any assistance whatsoever from any aid organization. Zarlisht, is a survivor of the deadly conflict, but got displaced from her place of permanent residence. The misfortune did not end with the displacement, as her family was hit by yet another misery. Her only son who is 24, was diagnosed with cancer. Zarlisht, now the only breadwinner for her eight daughters and an ill son and had to find money for her son's costly treatment. She resorted to negative coping mechanisms to cover the expenses of her son's treatment by borrowing money from relatives and her husband's friends. The accumulated loan had reached to a little under 400,000 Afghanis. Since she had limited resources and capacity to pay back the loan, the lenders had started intimidating her. One of the lenders even demanded that she give her daughter in exchange for the debt, however, determined she was, she categorically rejected the proposal.

This chain of events took a toll on her, and she ended up suffering severe psychosocial problems.

“My husband was a government civil servant with a decent income, with his salary we could afford a reasonable life” narrated Zarlisht. “When my husband was alive, we were living a decent life, free of any difficulty, my children went to school, everyone pursuing their dreams. However, it did not last for long and everything has disappeared in a flash” added Zarlisht.

After being selected to receive support by the assessment team, Zarlisht received first round of group counselling. However, recognizing the gravity of her situation, she was referred to receive individual counselling for specialized care. In addition to the psychosocial support (PSS), she was verified to be eligible for individual protection assistance (IPA), a one-time cash assistance of US\$150 in April 2022. This cash assistance and PSS had a complementary effect on her recovery. As she already had good tailoring skills, she purchased a sewing machine along with the necessary tailoring equipment and started sewing clothes in her community. She now takes orders to sew women clothes at a decent price and making enough money from which she can fulfill basic needs of life, and save some money to help pay down her debt. She is slowly, but surely returning to a normal life.



“I have started to live without stress again. There are people who care to the needs of vulnerable and marginalized people”. Zarlisht continued to share how the cash assistance, and PSS positively impacted their lives. “My children are very happy when I receive orders to sew clothes, they now have a glimpse of hope for future. I am relieved when I see my children happy and smiling.”

## Clean water supports the wellbeing of rural communities

### Contribution from DACAAR

In Afghanistan, villages in the most rural and hard-to-reach areas are in dire need of WASH support because they lack access to clean water, sanitation facilities and hygiene items. Among these areas, include Alishing district in Laghman province where people suffer daily because of these issues.

Thanks to funding from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF), DACAAR is implementing a project in the district to rehabilitate water points, provide hygiene education sessions and distribute hygiene kits.

Fazlullah is 60 years old and lives in Alishing. He is the head of a family of seven people. His family was in need of support because they were getting sick very often due to the use of unsafe water and because of the lack of hygiene awareness and items.

*“Fortunately, DACAAR staff came to our village, rehabilitated the non-functional well, hence now we can access safe drinking water and because of it our children are not continually sick anymore”-Fazlullah, Laghman Province*



Photo: DACAAR

DACAAR has rehabilitated a community well which was non-functional due to lack of proper operation and maintenance in their community and to ensure future operation and maintenance of the well, DACAAR established a water user group and trained the community mechanic and a caretaker in the target communities. To enhance hygiene behaviour change, DACAAR provided three rounds of hygiene awareness sessions to the community members with major topics included but not limited to environmental hygiene, personal hygiene, proper handwashing with soap, safe handling of drinking water, keeping food safe, prevention and treatment of diarrhea and COVID-19 risk information and importance of being vaccinated. As a result of DACAAR interventions, the situation has drastically improved.



Fazulallah said “Fortunately, DACAAR staff came to our village, rehabilitated the non-functional well, hence now we can access safe drinking water and because of it our children are not continually sick anymore.”

Communities in hard-to-reach areas often find it difficult to raise money to repair water points once they break down. Similarly, a lack of sufficient and continuous income means that they prioritize food over hygiene items which often meant that family members became ill. Mr. Fazlullah currently makes an average monthly income of USD 110 from his farming business most of which he used to spend on food stuff for the family.

“We did not know that our health was mainly affected due to drinking unsafe water or having poor hygiene. Thanks to DACAAR for providing a durable solution to our problem. Now all the people have access to safe drinking water and awareness about hygiene. By expending small amounts to buy basic hygiene consumables (e.g. hand washing soap, laundry soap, toothpaste) we are now saving on hospital bills, and this has contributed significantly to the family wellbeing not only health wise but also economy wise,” said Fazlullah.

## Mine Action supported “cash for work” intervention to improve food security in Jawzjan

*Contribution from UNMAS*

Tepa village in Jawzjan, Afghanistan was once a frontline battlefield between the former Afghan Government and the Taliban. A long water stream passes through the village feeding 7,000 families living around it. Community members used to irrigate their agricultural plantations with the water, until 2021, when the Taliban built a military base along the stream. As a result of fighting, part of the stream was contaminated by explosive hazards. Local markings were placed to alert each other of the potential contamination and many areas were deemed unsafe to approach thereafter.



Photo: UNMAS

At the beginning of 2022, UNMAS received emergency requests from community members as well as the project implementation partner of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for survey and clearance of a suspected contaminated area as a “Cash for Work” project was planned in the area, which would involve hiring almost 100 local residents to rehabilitate the irrigation system in order to restore agricultural activities for sustaining livelihoods.

From 13-17 March 2022, UNMAS deployed a quick response capacity from the Mine Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) who surveyed and cleared a total area of 4,236 m<sup>2</sup> along the water stream and found and destroyed nine items of unexploded ordnance (UXO). In this process, teams delivered explosive ordnance risk education to 118 Tepa villagers around the task location including to 102 children, so that they understand the meaning of official markings for explosive hazardous areas, as well as how to recognize, mitigate and report suspected explosive hazards. This operation gave community members immediate access to the water stream once again and enabled the “Cash for Work” project to start right away.

From 13-17 March 2022, UNMAS deployed a quick response capacity

Amid the alarming socio-economic outlook for Afghanistan since last August, the United Nations has utilized “Cash for Work” interventions to boost employment by providing income support to poor, vulnerable, unskilled, and/or semi-skilled men and women through short term employment opportunities which help build or rehabilitate community assets and infrastructure that are vital for sustaining livelihoods. The mine action operation in Tepa village not only facilitated the employment of 96 community members,

but also enabled 250 kitchen gardens to be irrigated from the stream, feeding 250 families, as well as five Jiribs (equivalent to one hectare) of plant nurseries to be cultivated to green the area and to support agricultural activities.

From 19 to 20 March 2022 in Haroon village, 30 kilometers away from Tapa village in Jawzjan, UNMAS also conducted a similar operation. The quick response team surveyed a total of 67,256 m<sup>2</sup> of former battlefield and conducted an emergency clearance of a 400 m<sup>2</sup> strip along the water stream, facilitating community members' immediate access to the stream. One grenade was found and destroyed through the emergency clearance operation, and the battlefield was placed with official explosive markings, waiting to be cleared at a later stage. The clearance allowed 41 community members to be employed by WFP's "Cash for Work" project to rehabilitate the irrigation system, which will be used to restore agricultural activities for sustaining livelihoods in the village.

## Young mother who has been traumatized by chaos and miscarriage finds a lifeline from mobile health teams

*Contribution from UNFPA*

In the southern part of Kandahar province, internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Zhari district have to walk hours to reach health facilities. The situation has worsened since August 2021 when the Taliban took control of the country and development assistance halted, including a project that funded the operation of more than 2,000 public health facilities.



Photo: UNFPA

Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal death rates in the Asia and the Pacific region at 638 deaths per 100,000 live births, and the situation is expected to deteriorate without timely and appropriate interventions for maternal health.

Anisa (not her real name), 19, was among the IDPs in Zhirai affected by the closure of the health facilities. She was pregnant and suffered a miscarriage because she lost access to maternal health care.

"I had a miscarriage and my two-year-old daughter also got sick, so we both needed medical care," Anisa recalled. The loss of her baby and the uncertainty of the situation in the country also affected her psychologically.

"We did not know where to go until one day in September, an ambulance came to our community and we were told to come for free health services," Anisa said. "I immediately ran to our house to take my two daughters so the three of us could get a check-up."

The ambulance that visited Anisa's community was one of the Mobile Health Teams (MHT) that UNFPA mobilized in various locations in Afghanistan to bring reproductive and other basic health services to remote areas affected by the severe disruption of health services across the country.

The deployment of MHTs, along with other interventions such as the Family Health Houses, emergency clinics at the borders with Pakistan and Iran, mobile and static facilities that provide psychosocial support and protection services, as well as toll-free hotlines for midwifery assistance and adolescent and youth reproductive health comprise UNFPA's integrated reproductive health and protection response to the deepening crisis in Afghanistan.

In its 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), UNFPA is seeking to raise USD 251.9 million to continue and expand the services. The response aims to address the



reproductive health and protection needs of 9.3 million Afghans, including 2.2 million women of child-bearing age, 2.3 million adolescents, and 289,000 women expected to give birth during the year. UNFPA's target reach covers 42 per cent of the overall UN target population for assistance under 2022 Afghanistan HRP, which requires USD 4.44 billion funding.

UNFPA Representative Dr. Aleksandar Sasha Bodiroza emphasized the serious impact of the unprecedented crisis among women and girls who suffer the most. Dr. Bodiroza cited the fact that every two hours, an Afghan woman dies from preventable childbirth and pregnancy complications, which could only get worse without timely action. Various reports since August 2021 also indicate increasing prevalence of gender-based violence.

From August to December 2021, UNFPA reached over a quarter million people with reproductive health and protection services through various service delivery points. Anisa and her two young daughters are among those who benefited from the assistance.

"The Mobile Health Team is good. I was examined by a midwife who advised me to delay another pregnancy as I just had a miscarriage. She explained how I can plan for pregnancy and I decided to go for it so that my husband and I can also plan for the future of our family," Anisa said. She also received psychosocial counseling as she talked about the trauma of losing her baby.

Anisa happily shared that since September, the MHT has been visiting her community at least twice a month and they are setting up the mobile clinic just next to her house. The availability of free health services helped the young mother gain some optimism despite the difficult situation.

"I grew up not knowing where I was born, my family kept moving from one place to another. Now I am married and have kids. I dream to see my family live in peace."

For further information, please contact:

**Katherine Carey**, Deputy Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, [carey2@un.org](mailto:carey2@un.org)

For more information, please visit: [unocha.org](https://unocha.org) | [reliefweb.int](https://reliefweb.int)  
[facebook.com/UNOCHAafghanistan](https://facebook.com/UNOCHAafghanistan) | [twitter.com/OCHA Afg](https://twitter.com/OCHA Afg)