**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Kunduz residents have, for the most part, resumed the lives and livelihoods they had prior to the conflict, according to observations of OCHA mission.
- Conflict took a heavy financial toll on those displaced but most urgent and acute humanitarian needs have been met.
- WFP distributed food assistance; ARCS provided food and non-food items.
- Mine action teams surveyed and cleared the city of UXOs and ERW.
- Civilians remain at risk due to the tenuous security environment.

Displaced return as Kunduz security stabilizes

**90 per cent of families displaced by conflict had returned by end of October**

Non-state armed groups (NSAG) managed to seize and occupy Kunduz city in September and October before eventually withdrawing after two weeks of armed conflict with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

The Kunduz regional airport, health facilities, and schools were closed and water, electrical and communication services disrupted during the conflict, which displaced at least 12,000 families and forced the evacuation of humanitarian actors, including UN agencies and international nongovernmental organizations (NGO).

After ANSF’s return, by the end of October an estimated 90 percent of displaced families had returned to Kunduz city in addition to international NGO, which quickly recommenced operations to support those returning. Residents of the provincial capital city in northwestern Afghanistan appeared to have resumed activities of typical daily life when a joint United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization mission visited in mid-November.

Water and electricity had been restored. The regional airport and hospital both had resumed regular operations. Shops and markets were open with sufficient supplies of food and other essential items, schools and public offices were operating, and for the most part people appear to have resumed the lives and livelihoods they had prior to the conflict.

**Few tangible signs of conflict observed during joint UN mission**

Urgent and acute humanitarian needs resulting from the escalation in armed conflict largely were met immediately after affected populations became displaced and prior to their return to Kunduz city. The joint UN mission team found evidence neither of widespread suffering nor urgent humanitarian needs in Kunduz city.

Though Kunduz residents clearly were shaken by the events that had unfolded in their city, few tangible signs of the conflict were observed during the joint UN team’s visit. “Most of the city did not appear to have been affected. We had to search out damaged houses and the conflict-damaged homes we did find were large private residences that were being repaired because the owners have the means to do so,” said Dominic Parker, head of OCHA Afghanistan.

However, the conflict took a heavy financial toll on many of the displaced. Many were forced to use most

---

**FUNDING OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN**

417 million requested (US$)

69% funded

For more on funding, see page 3. (reflects reported funding on Financial Tracking Service as of 8 December 2015)

Source: [http://fts.unocha.org](http://fts.unocha.org)
of their personal savings to flee the embattled city in public or private means of transportation that cost as much as 10 times the usual fare.

Humanitarian assistance to target IDPs and families with dead, wounded

Based on the observations of the joint UN mission, it appeared that assistance should be provided to families with dead, wounded and/or missing members, particularly if they were the primary income earner, as well as IDPs who had returned to find their homes looted, burned or destroyed and had lost their source of income.

Food assistance provided by the World Food Programme and Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) was targeted to households that had members who were injured or had died; families whose homes were damaged or destroyed; people with disabilities and female-headed households; and, the extremely poor or vulnerable. ARCS distributed to families who had suffered injuries or fatalities as a result of the conflict. The assistance packages contained rice, wheat, beans, sugar, mattress and blanket.

An urgent priority after the fighting had subsided was ensuring Kunduz city was safe and secure for returnees and humanitarian actors. This was particularly the case where abandoned government and NGO facilities had been used for defensive positions. Mine action teams scoured the city to clear unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. Funds from the Common Humanitarian Fund were used to train two teams (each composed of four members) on mine risk education, survey and explosive ordinance disposal operations. These teams began activities in Kunduz on 1 December.

Tenuous security puts civilians at risk in Kunduz and around the world

While overall security has improved considerably in Kunduz city, the situation remains volatile. Sporadic attacks and indirect fire from strongholds adjacent to the city emphasize the continued military ability of NSAGs to threaten the city.

“We met and talked to families displaced from current fighting who sought refuge in Kunduz who had clear IDP needs for after having to escape the ongoing conflict with no belongings,” said Parker, adding that the families had fled contested areas to the north-east and south-west of Kunduz city. “In one small two-room house we visited, we counted 50 to 60 people, at least 33 women and children inside, and men outside in the garden. They had fled Dasht-e-Archi two weeks earlier. One of the woman’s husband was an Afghan Local Police commander who had been killed in the fighting.”

Kunduz city was the first provincial capital to fall to opposition forces since October 2001, signaling a shift in tactics towards a more conventional form of territorial warfare with the focus on largescale engagements. Further evidence of the evolving nature of armed conflict in Afghanistan is that NSAGs have managed to briefly capture 23 district administrative centres in 2015, compared to only three in 2014.

“The sound of artillery and the extent of force evident on the streets suggests that the long-term situation is still not resolved,” said Parker.

Afghanistan’s tenuous security environment is reflected in an unprecedented joint warning issued on 31 October by UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, about the impact of conflicts on civilians. Both men appealed for urgent and concrete action to address human suffering and insecurity in their joint statement.
KIS winter assistance to target most vulnerable

The Kabul Informal Settlements (KIS) taskforce carried out a needs assessment exercise in November in anticipation of the delivery, late in December, of targeted humanitarian assistance to help vulnerable KIS families cope through the winter.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was gathered in an effort to capture “a nuanced and holistic vision of needs and vulnerability levels in the KIS community” prior to the distribution of targeted assistance, said humanitarian affairs officer Moqamuddin Siraj, who represents the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the KIS taskforce.

Due to constraints in funding, the KIS taskforce recommended that the most vulnerable KIS households be targeted for assistance for the winter, when low temperatures and snowfall makes life difficult in the settlements.

Needs assessment included random sampling of 400 households

KIS residents have been asked to identify vulnerable community members, in close collaboration with KIS taskforce members, based on a vulnerability criteria that included the following indicators: food security; characteristics of food insecure households by income source; household head and food consumption; income per week/month; and, the existence of non-food items and livelihood coping strategies.

Four hundred households in 50 KIS locations, selected at random, were assessed using a multi-sectoral household survey questionnaire. Training was provided to KIS taskforce members on carrying out needs assessment, including staff from the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and provincial Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation with support from the World Food Programme (WFP), Welthungerhilfe and Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

80 per cent of most vulnerable to receive food and fuel

KIS taskforce partners agreed that food and fuel would be covered for 80 percent of the most vulnerable KIS families for two months over the winter. WFP, DRC and National Federation of UNISCO Association of Japan have committed to providing food to 5,700 targeted families. Discussions are under way with WFP to provide an additional 700 families with food through vocational training activities.

Community outreach and sensitization activities will be launched on 13 December and carried out in each KIS location to establish Beneficiary Selection Committees (BSCs), to raise awareness and to build consensus on community-based targeting.

Beneficiary lists provided by the BSCs subsequently will be physically verified by KIS taskforce members, who will visit each household to verify the identity of each beneficiary, her or his residency in the KIS, and the vulnerability criterion or criteria that was used to justify her or his inclusion on the list. Verification will take place in teams that include both male and female community mobilisers.

KIS taskforce partners are expected to begin distribution of assistance during the last week of December, once beneficiary lists have been verified. KIS taskforce members will coordinate the distribution as well as monitoring activities during and after distribution.

Cash assistance to help Western Region IDPs

Humanitarian actors have begun to roll out multipurpose cash assistance of US$100 to vulnerable communities in the Western Region, where temperatures are known to drop as low as 26 degrees Celsius in the winter.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), its humanitarian partner the Ansari Rehabilitation Association for Afghanistan, and Action contre la Faim are expected to assist at least 5,000 households. Due to projections of early winter, the goal is to have distributions completed by mid-December.

Post-distribution monitoring following the distribution of winterization assistance in 2014 found that vulnerable populations who received multipurpose cash assistance used it to purchase a variety of items that helped them cope with harsh winter conditions such as blankets, plastic sheets, charcoal, fuel, sleeping mats, soap, kitchen supplies and warm clothing.
Winter needs expected to increase due to spike in IDPs

Conflict-induced internally displaced people (IDP), destitute returnees, families headed by women, the elderly, physically challenged and children all have been identified by the humanitarian community as the priority for assistance. The need for winterization support is expected to increase in the Western Region due to a spike in the number of people who have been internally displaced by conflict in north-eastern Afghanistan. The Western Region is currently hosting an estimated 230,000 IDPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerable Categories</th>
<th>Number of families in the provinces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protracted returnees in Sadat Township and Tuhghundi</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returnees from Pakistan in 2015</td>
<td>129 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntarily repatriation (2015)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deported refugees from Iran</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and asylum-seekers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs living under the tents</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs assessed during 2015 by UNHCR IP</td>
<td>150 147 1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protracted IDPs living in tents</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with Specific Needs (PSN)</td>
<td>70 23 61 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs assessed during 2015 and 2014 in Ghor</td>
<td>1,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,006 389 1,873 1,222</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harsh Winter Vulnerable Caseloads in Western Region - November 2015. Source: UNHCR.

To inform planning, has led a systemic gap analysis while the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority has consolidated data on preparedness measures in all of the Western Region’s provinces.

Concurrently, a concerted effort is under way to preposition lifesaving emergency stocks that may be used to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to people adversely affected by severe winter conditions. Efforts also are ongoing to lobby for support to cover a gap in winterization assistance to about 400 households in Ghor Province.

Seven projects to address disaster needs

Allocation of $2.6 million in UN funds for earthquake response

Seven projects, valued at approximately US$2.6 million, have received funding under a Second Reserve Allocation of the Afghanistan Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF). The Humanitarian Coordinator directed the allocation of up to US$3 million from the CHF in response to humanitarian needs resulting from the 26 October Afghanistan earthquake.

Project proposals were reviewed for strategic relevance and technical merit on a rolling basis to ensure funds could be dispatched as quickly as possible, in close collaboration with the Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster Coordinator. Moreover, proposals were vetted judiciously to confirm humanitarian response activities reach the most severely earthquake-affected districts and coordination.
mechanisms are in place to ensure humanitarian activities will not overlap or be duplicated. Immediately after approval from the Humanitarian Coordinator was granted, CHF partners with pre-financing mechanisms in place launched their activities.

The funds will provide unconditional cash assistance to families affected by the earthquake in the provinces of Badakhshan, Baglan, Nangahar, Kunar, Panjsher, Parwan, Takhar and Kapisa. Activities will be carried out through the following humanitarian partners: Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, People in Need, Relief International and AfghanAid, which will extend the reach of its operational coverage with its implementing partner Focus Humanitarian Assistance to cover even more affected districts.

Meanwhile, a UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) rapid response fund application by UN agencies, submitted to respond to needs related to the 26 October earthquake and post-conflict Kunduz crisis, currently is being finalized. Totaling approximately US$5.8 million, the application includes activities to address needs related to emergency reproductive health; protection and restoration of agriculture and livestock; cash for food and food. Proposals were developed to complement activities funded under the Second Standard Allocation of the CHF for 2015, which was finalized on 26 October, with approximately US$8 million to be distributed across all sectors for the North and North East regions. Funding provided under the CHF and CERF pooled funds will represent the most critical life-saving humanitarian response to the two complex emergencies.

**Reconciliation of FTS to improve accuracy of aid monitoring**

Afghanistan has the best-funded consolidated appeal (at 69 percent as of 8 December). Since vigilant financial monitoring and tracking of aid contributions is intrinsically linked to transparency and accountability in financial reporting, OCHA Afghanistan’s Cluster Coordination Unit (CCU) is currently engaged in a reconciliation exercise to ensure figures registered in the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) accurately reflect the level of humanitarian funding received in 2015. This exercise includes the following: confirming that cluster-related funds have been accurately captured in the FTS; verifying that funding reported as “Other Humanitarian Funding” in the FTS is not, in fact, aligned with Cluster activities specified in the Afghanistan HRP for 2015; and making certain that any revisions to the FTS subsequently are communicated with donors and UN agencies.

The FTS is a global, real-time database that records all reported international humanitarian aid contributions (including non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, bilateral aid, in-kind aid, and private donations). FTS focuses on HRPs and refugee response plans because these plans are designed to cover major humanitarian crises and their funding requirements are well defined. Tracking these funds allows the FTS to gauge the extent to which populations in crisis receive humanitarian aid in relation to need. The FTS is managed by OCHA and all FTS data is provided by donors or recipient organizations.

**Earthquake splits mountain in two**

**Quick action keeps casualties low in earthquake-prone district**

The 7.5 magnitude earthquake on 26 October was powerful enough to tear Ali-big Mountain in two and damage or destroy nearly half of the traditional mud households that flank the remote hillside community of Wakhshi in Badakhshan Province.

But casualties were remarkably low given the destructive force of the earthquake because residents of the disaster-prone village located in western Keshem District are familiar with feeling the earth shake.

“At the first slight tremor, people quickly fled their homes,” which explains why the number of casualties was so low compared to the level of destruction, concluded the five-member ACF assessment team.

The 26 October earthquake created a chasm in the mountainside village above. Photo credit: ACF
A team from Action Contre La Faim (ACF), which was asked by the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority to assess the impact of the seismic event on the Wakhshi. Villagers are keeping a watchful eye over the chasm that now divides Ali-big Mountain. They are measuring the distance of the fault and there are fears that it may result in a landslide that could bury as many as 650 families. If the split continues to increase, houses will need to be relocated, ACF pointed out in its rapid assessment report.

Landslides, triggered by the earthquake, ripped through a pipeline that carried water from a natural spring 50 kilometres away, filling the pipe with mud and leaving 850 households with limited access to water. Children had to walk hours to fetch water suitable for consumption as a result of the breach in the water supply. The quake also uprooted 400 pistachio trees, which the community relied on as a means of livelihood.

In addition to ACF, Concern World Wide (CWW) was one of the first humanitarian partners to assess the impact of the 26 October earthquake and respond to humanitarian needs near the epicentre in Badakhshan Province and in Takhar Province, where the quake claimed the lives of 16 people and injured 49. The international NGO was able to commence rapid assessments within two hours of the earthquake and began responding to needs the following day. CWW currently is analyzing the winterization needs of quake-affected families following the distribution of tents and non-food items to affected communities.

**Humanitarian access**

**Incidents affecting humanitarian action drop in November**

The number of incidents against national and international non-government organizations decreased in November. Only 12 incidents were recorded that included one reported killing and one injury, representing a significant drop both in the total number of incidents recorded for the previous month and in comparison to the same period in 2014.

An Access Advisory Group (AAG), established in May 2015 at the request of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) with support from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, is currently developing an access toolkit for Afghanistan to enhance humanitarian access in the country. The AAG also is developing an Access Monitoring and Reporting Framework and conflict actor mapping while continuing to brief the HC and Humanitarian Country Team each month on access issues as they emerge to ensure people have access to assistance during emergencies.

For further information, please contact:
 Dominic Parker, Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, parker@un.org, Cell +93 790 3001 101
 Michael Cole, Deputy Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, cole6@un.org, Cell +93 79 3001 104
 Alanna Jorde, Public Information Officer, OCHA Afghanistan, jorde@un.org, Cell +93 79 3001 110

For more information, please visit www.unocha.org www.reliefweb.int