



AFGHANISTAN

2024 IFRC network country plan

5 December 2023

Funding Requirement **CHF 160M**

In support of the Afghan Red Crescent Society



34

National Society branches



3,909

National Society staff



24,056

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



2M

Ongoing emergency operations



400,000

Climate and environment



1M

Disasters and crises



2M

Health and wellbeing



100,000

Migration and displacement



500,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multi-year focus

Emergency response

- complex emergency – displacement, drought, earthquakes, floods

Longer term needs

- health • water, sanitation & hygiene • protection, gender and inclusion • disaster preparedness, risk reduction, climate resilience • food security & livelihoods

Capacity development

- humanitarian diplomacy • digital transformation
 - disaster management capabilities
 - National Society development

Key country data

Population **41.1M**

INFORM Severity rating **Very high**

Long-term Climate Risk Index **17**

Human Development Index rank **180**

Population below poverty level **54.5%**

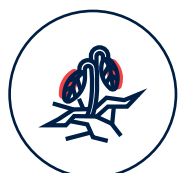
Hazards



Food insecurity



Economic hardship



Drought



Floods



Earthquakes



Violence

Funding requirements

Total 160M CHF

Through the IFRC

100M CHF

Through Participating National Societies

30M CHF

Host National Society

30M CHF

IFRC Breakdown

70M CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

Longer term needs

5M CHF

Climate and environment

8M CHF

Disasters and crises

8M CHF

Health and wellbeing

3M CHF

Migration and displacement

2M CHF

Values, power and inclusion

4M CHF

Enabling local actors

Participating National Societies

Albanian Red Cross

Australian Red Cross*

Austrian Red Cross

Bahrain Red Crescent Society

British Red Cross

The Canadian Red Cross Society

Red Cross Society of China

Danish Red Cross

Finnish Red Cross

German Red Cross

Hong Kong Red Cross, Branch of the Red Cross Society of China

Irish Red Cross Society

Italian Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society

Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Korean Red Cross

Red Cross of Monaco

The Netherlands Red Cross

New Zealand Red Cross

Norwegian Red Cross

Philippine Red Cross

Qatar Red Crescent Society

Singapore Red Cross Society

Slovenian Red Cross

Swedish Red Cross

Turkish Red Crescent Society

** National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the first half of 2023.*

IFRC Appeal codes

Ongoing emergency response:

MDRAF007

Longer-term needs:

MAAAF001

NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Afghan Red Crescent Society was established in 1935 and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1957. Since its formation, the Afghan Red Crescent has established extensive local networks across the country, enabling it to reach vulnerable populations in all areas of the country, including remote and underserved areas. The National Society has 122 branches or local units, including one national headquarters, seven regional or zone offices, 34 provincial branches and dozens of district assemblies. The National Society is supported by 3,909 staff and 24,000 volunteers, of whom 6,700 are female ([IFRC's Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)). The National Society has a long history of providing lifesaving assistance to people across the country.

The Afghan Red Crescent has vast expertise delivering diverse types of humanitarian interventions during disasters and crises, and longer-term programming, supported by the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (Movement) partners, as well as by other partners. This includes programming related to disaster risk management, community resilience – including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and livelihoods, community-based health and first aid, physical rehabilitation for internally displaced persons with physical disabilities, youth development, restoring family links, and dissemination of international humanitarian law, humanitarian values and the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. The National Society's volunteers play a critical role at all stages of programming and are responsible for assessment, identification, and registration of target and/or affected communities, as well as for delivering programme support, such as hygiene / health promotion and community mobilization.

Due to its application of principled humanitarian action, the Afghan Red Crescent enjoys an elevated level of acceptance and access to communities across the whole country. At both national and branch levels, the National Society has teams of

volunteers trained in disaster preparedness and response, as well as mobile health teams and community mobilizers, as part of its CBHFA programme.

The Afghan Red Crescent also provides access to healthcare services through a network of over 200 facilities, which include a 50-bed hospital in Kabul, 46 fixed clinics, one comprehensive health centre, 23 health sub-centres and 101 mobile health teams and/or emergency mobile health teams, active in all 34 provinces in the country. The above 172 facilities (71 of which are fixed) are augmented by additional temporary facilities known as health camps. There are 40 health camps focusing on polio eradication operational in 2023. The Afghan Red Crescent is also the only organization in Afghanistan that provides treatment for congenital heart defects.

Afghan Red Crescent's work for the next three years of this plan is guided by its [Strategic Plan 2021-2025](#), which was updated in May 2022 to realign priorities with the evolving country context. The Strategic Plan, whose theme is "everywhere for everyone", has four goals:

- Goal 1: Communities with strengthened life-saving resources and capacities to respond to and recover from disasters, health emergencies, and conflict-generated shocks
- Goal 2: Communities with higher long-term resilience through risk reduction, improved health and livelihoods, and adaptation to climate change and migration
- Goal 3: Communities respecting the Fundamental Principles, and promoting diversity, human dignity, tolerance, non-discrimination, social inclusion and peace
- Goal 4: Afghan Red Crescent a reformed National Society delivering impartial, neutral, effective, sustainable, relevant, and accountable humanitarian services

IFRC NETWORK ACTION

JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Afghanistan is currently facing a humanitarian crisis resulting from the compounded impacts of multiple events. In 2023, two thirds of Afghanistan's population (28.8 million people) are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance as the country enters its third consecutive year of drought and the second year of crippling economic decline. This is a 16 per cent increase on 24.4 million people in 2022 and a 54 percent increase on 18.4 million people in 2021. While delivery of urgent humanitarian assistance has received substantial donor support, it is imperative that the provision of aid must incorporate longer-term solutions that provide for multiple years and that remaining significant humanitarian funding gaps are addressed to enable humanitarian actors to assist more of the many affected people throughout Afghanistan.

The country is also still reeling from the effects of decades-long conflict and these multiple shocks further complicate humanitarian conditions and make Afghanistan one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Afghanistan has faced four decades of conflict between both internal and external parties, resulting in generations of people living in insecurity. Since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan assumed control in August 2021, there has been some respite in fighting and greater access to previously unreachable areas. However, while hostilities have subsided, the security situation still remains precarious due to the long-lasting effects of years of large-scale armed conflict (for example, weapons contamination) and the continuing impact of sporadic violence.

Afghanistan is also highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as earthquakes, and to the effects of climate change, in particular to floods and droughts.

The current population of Afghanistan is 41.1 million. It is a diverse, multi-ethnic and multilingual society, with ethnic groups including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbeks and smaller groups such as Nuristanis, Aimaq, Turkmen, Baloch and others. The country's population is mostly rural, with 30.18 million people living in the countryside (an increase on 2021) and 55 per cent of the population aged between 15 to 64. The fertility rate for women in 2023 is, on average, four children per woman. Men have a life expectancy of 61 years and women a life expectancy of 67 (UNFPA, world population data).

There are also increased levels of unemployment and poverty. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 84 per cent of the population fall under the national poverty line, with food inflation and specific local conditions leading to up to 90 per cent falling below the food poverty line. Most households use one or more mechanisms to cope, but this is unsustainable in the long-term. Nearly 80 per cent of affected households have borrowed money, 45 per cent have decreased expenditures on other priorities, such as health and education, 40 percent have used up savings, and up to 34 percent have sold assets, such as animals, land and houses (UNDP 2023, Afghanistan Socio-economic Outlook). Without assistance, negative coping strategies will increase, putting lives at risk.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), in 2023, all 34 provinces of the country are facing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or 4), affecting around 17.2 million people (40 per cent of the population). Nearly 3.4 million people (eight per cent) are facing emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity. Agricultural production levels have been affected by both conflict and climate events, which strongly influences the economic wellbeing of households; around 80 per cent of livelihoods rely directly or indirectly on agriculture (FAO, October 2022 and World Bank, May 2023). More than half of Afghanistan's working population work in the agricultural sector, of whom 54 per cent are women.

The prevalence of malnutrition in children and women is above regional and global averages, with approximately seven million women and children under the age of five acutely malnourished and most provinces reporting growing cases of chronic malnutrition (25 provinces showing very high rates amongst children under five, according to the World Health Organization). This significantly increases longer-term health and developmental risks. Lack of food security and access to basic services is creating a growing number of people seeking to leave Afghanistan, and will impact neighbouring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan.

Multiple shocks are also impacting Afghanistan's health needs and straining already overstretched health systems and services. It is projected that more than 17.6 million people will need humanitarian health assistance in Afghanistan in 2023 (Humanitarian Response Plan, 2023). This is particularly critical in relation to reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health services that are understaffed or restricted, and there

are rises in maternal deaths, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, unsafe abortions, and sexual and gender-based violence. Limitations on women's movements continue to restrict women's access to life-saving health services, while children remain vulnerable to vaccine preventable diseases, malnutrition, and other illnesses. There is also a need for a broad coverage of surveillance activities and response teams, and for joint efforts with WASH actors to ensure access to safe water and sanitation, to prevent and control disease outbreaks.

According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2023, the main reasons for the significant increase in the percentage of the population requiring humanitarian assistance is in large part due to a significant increase in WASH needs (up 40 per cent), which will continue to grow in urban and rural areas, due to the prolonged drought and the drying up of surface water sources and groundwater levels. The other critical area is the significant increase in protection needs (up 25 per cent), due to the increasingly restrictive measures affecting women and girls, including the lack of access for girls to secondary education.

ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

For real-time information on emergencies, see [IFRC GO page Afghanistan](#)

Emergency Operation	Afghanistan - Humanitarian Crises
Appeal number	MDRAF007
Duration	3 years and 8 months (10 April 2021 to 31 December 2024)
Target areas	All 34 provinces in Afghanistan
Funding requirement	Funding requirements through the IFRC Appeal: CHF 120 mil (2024: CHF 70 mil) Federation-wide Funding requirements: CHF 300 mil
Link To revised appeal	Afghanistan Humanitarian Crises Revised Emergency Appeal
Operational strategy	Operational Strategy: Humanitarian Crises Operational Strategy: Khost and Paktika Earthquake Operational Strategy: Protracted Humanitarian Crisis Operational Strategy: Herat Earthquake

Afghanistan is highly prone to intense and recurring natural hazards, including earthquakes, floods, landslides, avalanches and droughts, which often cause disasters. It is ranked fourth in the world's risk index for humanitarian crises requiring international assistance and is in the top 15 countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. To reflect this, the IFRC's Emergency Appeal aims to respond to multiple disasters and crises as they evolve.

A sixth Appeal revision was issued in October 2023, following the devastating earthquake in Herat province, western Afghanistan. During the course of the Appeal, multiple earthquakes have caused large scale humanitarian needs, including for emergency health, food and household items, as well as shelter, cash assistance, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) support, and for the protection needs of children and women, particularly orphans and widows. Details on the needs and the response can be found in the Operational Strategies linked above. This Appeal revision aims to focus more on specific areas not covered by the wider humanitarian system,

to capitalize on the strengths of the Afghan Red Crescent as a local organization with broad access, and to include sustainable support beyond the immediate response. Investments will also be made in strengthening local preparedness and response capacity. In the areas of previous emergencies, the Afghan Red Crescent, supported by the IFRC, participating National Societies and other partners, is focusing on support for recovery and restoration of livelihoods.

As of July 2023, Federation-wide support has enabled the Afghan Red Crescent to reach over 1.7 million people through this Appeal. This includes one million people reached by health interventions, over 115,000 people reached with WASH assistance, more than 500,000 people provided with food and livelihood assistance, 68,000 people who have received winterization kits and 112,000 people who received cash assistance. Beyond the Appeal, the National Society has reached 3.5 million people with services and programmes. After 31 December 2024, the response activities in this Appeal will continue under the Afghanistan IFRC Network Plan 2025.



The Afghan Red Crescent Society providing primary healthcare and immunization services to people in Kandahar province, Panjwayi district. (Photo: IFRC)

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Climate and environment

Afghanistan is a predominantly mountainous, landlocked country, with plains in the north and southwest separated by the Hindu Kush mountains. The mountain ranges create five distinct agro-climatic zones: the mountainous north-east, with the highest average rainfall; the northern plains with moderate temperatures and rainfall; the central and eastern highlands with moderate rainfall; and the southern plateau with high temperatures and little rainfall (CORDEX: Climate Change in Afghanistan).

Afghanistan's climate varies due to its diverse topography from mountain ranges in the northwest to arid or desert conditions in the southwest. As a result, the country is vulnerable to recurrent extreme weather events, in particular floods and droughts. Afghanistan is one of the countries with the highest climate risk index scores, ranking third in its high level of hazard exposure, underlying vulnerability, and limited coping capacities ([INFORM Climate Change Risk Index](#)).

Afghanistan's climate is influenced by the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), which create irregular variations in temperature and influence extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, droughts and floods. The ongoing El Niño is forecasted to be a strong event, reaching its maximum intensity in late 2023 and persisting through early 2024, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Forecast (NOAA Climate.gov).

Temperatures are rising at a higher rate than the global average and the incidence of drought is likely to increase. The primary causes of drought in Afghanistan are meteorological (reduced precipitation) and hydrological (reduced sub/surface water). The current extended drought has been caused by both reduced precipitation and sub/surface water flow ([World Bank Climate Knowledge Portal](#)). The recent drought has been the worst in three decades and has been affecting more than 80 per cent of the country.

Climate-related extreme weather events and natural hazards threaten people's livelihoods, increase poverty and food insecurity, and erode the resilience of communities, households, and individuals. The agricultural sector is the most important livelihood source, employing 42.5 per cent of the population and contributing 25.8 per cent of GDP (Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook). However, rainfall decline, temperature increases and the current drought are causing water shortages that will lead to crop failures (Climate Risk Country Profile, World Bank).

At the same time, Afghanistan is also experiencing extreme cold and environmental degradation, with deforestation due to trees being cut to provide fuel and domestic animals overgrazing the ranges. The result is extensive soil erosion and long-term salination of the soil due to irrigation, reducing the fertility of much of the arable land. Polluted water supplies are also common, except in the high mountain regions, where few people live permanently.

Climate change and environmental stressors contribute to widespread internal displacement and to changing migration patterns. Displacement and rapid urbanization risk exacerbating food and livelihoods insecurity, place additional pressure on environmental resources and increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Community risk management and climate adaptation plans improve livelihoods and reduce impacts of water and food shortages, health issues and displacement

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

As an established local actor, Afghan Red Crescent plays an important role in working towards climate resilience and adaptation in Afghanistan. The IFRC network will continue to support the Afghan Red Crescent to develop and implement climate-smart programming in both its long- and short-term activities and to develop an integrated approach that incorporates risk reduction, early warning and early action, and reduces the environmental footprint of interventions. British Red Cross and Japanese Red Cross are both supporting Afghan Red Crescent in this work.

The Afghan Red Crescent is part of the IFRC's multi-year Global Climate Resilience Programme which aims to foster a scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and to build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. The programme consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of

climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

Planned activities in 2024

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by the IFRC network to:

- Deliver humanitarian assistance to people affected by climate and environmental crises
 - Implement climate-smart risk reduction projects at community level
 - Engage youth and volunteers for climate risk awareness in schools and communities
 - Support green response and community environmental initiatives
 - Mainstream climate-smart approaches into Afghan Red Crescent operations
 - Engage communities in enhanced vulnerability capacity assessments and designing mitigation projects
 - Pursue partnerships on climate resilience programme
 - Institutionalize forecast-based action
 - Work with the authorities on early warning early action measures
 - Mainstream community engagement and accountability and protection, gender and inclusion minimum standards in programming
 - Enhance programme quality and accountability across all programmes
 - Build and enhance the climate action capacity of its staff and volunteers
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Disasters and crises

Afghanistan is highly prone to disasters, and has experienced avalanches, droughts, earthquakes, floods and landslides over the last decade. The country ranks fourth on INFORM Risk 2024. There is high risk of loss of life and property from these recurring hazards - on average, 200,000 Afghans are affected by disasters each year. The recurring crises are compounded by the high levels of vulnerability and low levels of coping capacity in the country.

From 1 January 2023 to 30 July 2023, 22 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces were affected by disasters, with floods the most

recorded natural hazard. Heavy rains and flash flooding affected more than 4,500 people in several provinces in spring 2023. Heavy rainfall also started in July 2023, causing flash floods in 19 provinces - Badakhshan, Daikundi, Ghazni, Helmand, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Logar, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Paktia, Parwan, Uruzgan and Zabul. According to reports from various sources, including Afghan Red Crescent and the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), flash floods have led to the loss of 61 lives and affected 126,000 people.

Afghanistan is also in an active seismic region, with seismic activity a constant threat. Based on the Preliminary Earthquake Hazard Map of Afghanistan, the Chaman fault, Hari Rud fault, Central Badakhshan fault and Darvaz fault are most likely to contribute to seismic hazards. Significant earthquakes have happened in both 2022 and 2023. On 22 June 2022, a 5.9 magnitude earthquake hit the southeast provinces of Paktika, causing widespread destruction and loss of life. In 2023, a 6.5 magnitude earthquake hit Badakhshan Province in northeastern Afghanistan on 21 March, affecting more than 7,000 people and damaging an estimated 200 houses. Again, on 7 October 2023, a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck 40km west of Herat City in Herat Province, western Afghanistan, with the shock and aftershocks felt in neighbouring Badghis and Farah provinces.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

People affected by natural hazards, human-made disasters and health emergencies receive immediate humanitarian assistance

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

With 34 branches and high levels of acceptance across the country, Afghan Red Crescent is a critical first responder during emergencies and disasters.

In addition to the Emergency appeal for Humanitarian Crises in Afghanistan (MDRAF007), the IFRC's Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) provided funding to Afghan Red Crescent to respond immediately to floods in 2023 (MDRAF012). For further details on the Herat earthquake and the related response under the Emergency Appeal, please see the situation report and operational strategy [here](#).

The IFRC network will support Afghan Red Crescent to deliver multi-sectoral response services in relief, shelter, health and WASH, based on the context and needs analysis. The National Society will also continue to put an emphasis on scaling up livelihoods and cash and voucher-based assistance, as a pivotal component of its Disaster Risk Management Strategy, in close liaison with Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners, with a view to enabling a cash-based response in all of its 34 branches. The Afghan Red Crescent will also be supported to make risk-informed decisions when planning its response and recovery activities and will ensure a focus on disaster risk reduction with targeted communities.

The Afghan Red Crescent will also be supported to implement longer-term community resilience building programmes that will have a lasting impact and will improve the resilience of individuals, households, and communities. The National Society will also be supported to promote disaster and health risk reduction messaging in schools and as part of community-

based activities, through the mobilization of youth and volunteers, in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

The IFRC network will continue to support the enhancement of the National Society's capacities and systems for emergency response, in particular through ensuring access to relevant information for decision-making, through timely needs assessments, improved data gathering and information management, and operational learning. The support will also cover the effective mainstreaming of community engagement and accountability, and the application of the minimum standards on protection, gender and inclusion in emergency contexts. The IFRC will also work on reinforcing the National Society's accountability systems and on logistics development, including setting up framework agreements with suppliers, for in-kind and cash-based responses, and supporting pre-positioned stocks at local and regional levels.

Participating National Societies providing support in this Strategic Priority are: British Red Cross,

Canadian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent and Turkish Red Crescent.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement will also support the Afghan Red Crescent to adhere to the Principles and Rules for Red Cross Red Crescent Humanitarian Assistance and other relevant policy frameworks and guidelines, and will support the National Society to fully engage in Movement cooperation and external coordination with the broader humanitarian community at national and sub-national levels (for example, Inter-Agency Standing Committee cluster meetings).

Planned activities in 2024

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by the IFRC network to:

- Deliver humanitarian assistance to people affected by evolving crises and disasters
- Implement household and community-managed livelihoods projects
- Implement safer shelter interventions at community level
- Implement cash and voucher assistance interventions to address multiple needs
- Engage youth and volunteers for integrated programming in schools and communities
- Engage communities in vulnerability and capacity assessments and in designing community risk reduction projects
- Mainstream disaster risk reduction into Afghan Red Crescent operations including shelter interventions

- Develop and update its Disaster Risk Management strategy and disseminate it at all levels
- Pursue partnerships on integrated community-based programming
- Work with the authorities on resilience programming
- Mainstream community engagement and accountability and protection, gender and inclusion minimum standards in all programming
- Enhance programme quality and accountability across all programmes
- Build and enhance the community-based disaster risk management programming capacity of its volunteers and staff



Health and wellbeing

Afghanistan faces significant gaps in the provision of basic healthcare across the country. Prior to 2021, public sector healthcare in Afghanistan consisted of more than 3,500 health facilities, largely supported through international development funding. With the future of funding unclear, many health facilities are struggling to sustain services and the majority are under-staffed, under-trained and under-resourced, with 8.7 physicians, nurses and midwives per 10,000 population. The geographic distribution of health facilities in the country is also uneven and insufficient to meet the needs, especially in under-served rural areas. Some 19 per cent of the households assessed in the “Whole of Afghanistan Assessment” reported not having an active health centre in or close to their village.

Women with more complex health needs, and including pregnancy, are facing major access issues, due to fear and insecurity, mobility restrictions, long distances, lack of safe transportation (i.e., the need to use private cars rather than public transport), and the lack of trained female staff. If solutions are not found to sustain the existing health services for women and girls, the Health Cluster expects to see 10 maternal, 55 neonatal and 112 child deaths each day.

In addition, one-third of Afghanistan’s 30 million people are acutely and severely food insecure, while 25 per cent of children are severely undernourished and 40 per cent of children are stunted – a sign of chronic malnutrition (UNICEF, USAID, 2016). These patterns are expected to increase in prevalence and number under extreme flooding and drought conditions, which will impact food and crop production and access. The Nutrition Cluster estimates that 1.1 million acutely malnourished children under the age of five will also be left without access to treatment services due to a lack of staffing and accessible health care facilities, which will contribute to around 130,000 deaths among children during the year.

Increased incidence of drought, high temperatures, extreme rainfall and floods will also continue to increase the risks of vector-borne and water-borne diseases (World Bank and

Asian Development Bank, 2021). Surveillance data from June 2023 (Ministry of Public Health database) indicates seasonal increases in cases of acute watery diarrhoea and dengue hemorrhagic fever. Vector-borne diseases such as Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever are endemic to Afghanistan (<https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2508.181491>). Higher temperatures will also increase the risks of heat-related illnesses and deaths, especially in urban areas (World Bank and African Development Bank, 2021). In contrast, colder temperatures are expected to facilitate the spread of leishmaniasis. Similarly, floods and poor groundwater levels over past years have impacted the quantity and quality of available water, increasing the risks of diseases, such as cholera. Afghanistan already has one of the highest rates of under-five diarrhoeal deaths in the world and the risks associated with acute watery diarrhoea will increase as instances of climate change-related flooding and drought conditions worsen (Přivara & Přivarová, 2019; Wasig et al., 2020).

The increased presence of vaccine-preventable diseases will also continue to increase morbidity and mortality of infants and children under five, with low or zero vaccination coverage for vaccine preventable diseases being the critical contributor. Afghanistan remains endemic for polio transmission and sees recurrent outbreaks of measles, pertussis, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, and malaria. The Ministry of Public Health has recorded four polio cases in 2023.

Decades of war and political instability have decimated most of the hydrological infrastructure in Afghanistan. In recent years, this has been compounded by climate change, with a severe drought exacerbating water scarcity: two-thirds of the country is already experiencing severe water scarcity, with the drought projected to continue. Water points in many provinces are drying up, with 53 per cent of water points dry in water-scarce areas, such as Badghis, Ghor and Faryab provinces and aquifers in the central region severely affected. Water availability in urban areas has halved in recent years, with increased contamination from wastewater and increased

salinity in cities like Kabul. Poor capacity in water management has added to the failure of facilities and infrastructure. The current economic crisis also means that few can afford to buy water from private vendors and are forced to rely on unsafe sources of drinking water (13 per cent of assessed households in Afghanistan reported relying on inadequate water sources).

In the “Whole of Afghanistan Study”, 35 per cent of households reported unimproved sanitation facilities (for example, family pit latrine without a slab, open hole, bucket, plastic bag, open defecation or other), while 17 per cent reported no sanitation facilities. More recently, up to 73 per cent of the population living in rural areas and those affected by disasters or migration reported insufficient access to safe water, adequate sanitation, solid waste management, and/or hygiene supplies. The WASH cluster has identified 14 provinces as having high priority needs for full WASH services, with a further 18 provinces as a medium priority. In 2022, UNICEF reported the following “fast facts” on the WASH situation in Afghanistan:

- Around 8 out of 10 people drink unsafe water
- 93 per cent of children (15.6 million) live in areas of high/ extremely high-water vulnerability
- Nearly 4.2 million people practice open defecation
- Five out of 10 people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities
- More than six out of every 10 people do not have access to basic hygiene facilities
- Around 94 per cent of schools lack access to basic handwashing facilities
- Around 35 per cent of health care facilities lack access to basic drinking water supplies

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- **Timely health care, first aid, WASH, and emergency health capacities and response in most vulnerable communities**
- **Community risk management and climate adaptation plans improve livelihoods and reduce impacts of water and food shortages, health issues and displacement**
- **Expanded preventive and primary health care services in communities and among internally displaced persons’ and migrants’ camps are provided**
- **Improved psychosocial and mental health support strengthens physical health and well-being of people**

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

With its strong health capabilities and capacity for integrated programming, Afghan Red Crescent is a leading provider of support to the health and wellbeing of communities. Afghan

Red Crescent is established as a prominent national health actor with unparalleled access and acceptance in underserved areas through its network of primary healthcare clinics, mobile health teams and health community volunteers. The National Society reaches 3.5 million people a year with basic health services and programmes, with the support of its Red Cross Red Crescent partners.

In this capacity, Afghan Red Crescent is fully engaged with the public authorities, especially the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) through coordination mechanisms at national, regional and provincial levels. Most of Afghan Red Crescent’s health activities are articulated to contribute to national goals set by the MoPH (for example, signing Memoranda of Understanding with the MoPH and the IFRC on immunization and WASH). The National Society is also part of any high-level commissions established for emergency situations. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Afghan Red Crescent contributed to the operationalization of the national response and was designated an essential health service provider and is being supported to integrate its work into its ongoing health programmes and develop a pandemic preparedness and response framework.

As part of the national health system, Afghan Red Crescent runs over 200 primary healthcare facilities, including clinics, mobile health teams and a 50-bed hospital, supporting many underserved areas. As the clinics and mobile health teams have proved essential services allowing up to 10 per cent of communities in inaccessible areas to access primary health services, the National Society is looking to scale-up its provision of primary health services, by increasing the number of its facilities, with support from Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners. This includes continued support from the IFRC and the Norwegian Red Cross to set up mobile health teams, clinics and sub-centres, as part of its network. Qatar Red Crescent Society also supports the National Society to deliver primary healthcare services across underserved areas.

However, recent political developments have disrupted the health system, seeing a freeze on funding by from development partners, impacting health facilities and the provision of basic health services. The IFRC will continue supporting the National Society in maintaining and strengthening its health facilities, with a further emphasis on community engagement and accountability approaches and on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, while looking into a primary healthcare service delivery model less dependent on external support.

The Afghan Red Crescent adopted and integrated its new Health (and WASH) Strategy as part of its overall Strategic Plan 2021-2025. The strategy focuses on enhancing access to health care services through its health facilities, increasing immunization, particularly for polio eradication, amplifying community-based health promotion and first aid, contributing

to mother and child health. The National Society will also further engage on health risks related to climate change. The new Health Strategy will look to set up a more comprehensive Memoranda of Understanding with the MoPH to reinforce the National Society's strategic contribution towards achieving MoPH goals. Finally, the Afghan Red Crescent and the IFRC will further engage in joint planning and policy dialogue with external partners and the donor community, in line with health and WASH priorities.

In line with Afghan Red Crescent's Health Strategy and existing Memoranda of Understanding with the MoPH, the IFRC will continue to increase support on immunization in hard to reach areas and most vulnerable communities to address the sizeable gaps in vaccination coverage in many areas (the most severe Essential Programme on Immunization (EPI) gaps were in Helmand, Kandahar, Paktya, Nuristan, Ghazni, Ghor, Urozgan, Zabul, Paktika, Khost, Faryab, Badghis, Farah, Nangarhar and Kunar provinces, recording between 39 and 53 per cent gaps in coverage). The National Society will also be supported to increase its potential contribution in urban areas, using its medical facilities as platforms for additional outreach vaccinator teams to support semi-permanent vaccination camps in urban slums. The Afghan Red Crescent will also strengthen its operating model to provide routine immunization as part of its integrated health care package, including mother and child healthcare, and to manage vaccination resistance.

The Afghan Red Crescent community-based health programme has been expanding across provincial branches over the past year, supported by the British Red Cross and Finnish Red Cross. The IFRC network supports the National Society to deliver quality, sustainable community-based health activities through its volunteers and staff and through its grandmother and community health committees. The programme provides health education, first aid, psychological first aid, reproductive health, referral services, epidemic control, nutrition screening and training of volunteers. The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported in strengthening this programme and to expand it into schools, as part of a broader school safety initiative, linked to immunization, first aid and work to understand climate-related health risks, in coordination with the MoPH.

WASH interventions will also target schools and communities at risk of or recently affected by waterborne diseases, with a focus on underserved areas, in line with the One WASH approach. The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported with materials, engagement of contractors to construct WASH facilities, technical guidelines, and training/coaching of staff and volunteers. The Afghan Red Crescent's first aid activities have mostly focused on training and equipping of CBHFA volunteers and the National Society now has the potential to leverage these CBHFA volunteers and other groups to train and equip communities and schools to carry out life-saving-first aid. This potential will be strategically harnessed as part

of the health strategy, as will be the expansion of commercial first aid as a sustainable income generating activity.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities will continue to be supported by Danish Red Cross, with support from both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the IFRC, to address the overwhelming needs across the country. The mainstreaming of MHPSS will be bolstered by a new dedicated structure within the health department, which will include a training of trainers and master trainers to enhance the National Society's skills and capacities to deliver MHPSS across its facilities via community volunteers. It will also include the establishment of a nationwide psychosocial support hotline.

The participating National Societies supporting this Strategic Priority are: British Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, Red Cross Society of China, Red Cross Society of China – Hong Kong Branch, Danish Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross and Qatar Red Crescent.

Planned activities in 2024

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by the IFRC network to:

- Deliver emergency health and WASH assistance to people affected by disasters and crises
 - Strengthen the delivery of primary health, immunization, maternal, newborn and child health, and emergency health services through static and mobile health facilities
 - Strengthen its capacity to provide the emergency transfer of casualties and patients to appropriate health facilities
 - Implement MHPSS interventions in communities and schools, as well as for responders
 - Scale up community-based health and first aid activities
 - Institutionalize commercial first aid within the National Society
 - Scale up the WASH programme in schools, including the construction of facilities, provision of hygiene items for girls, and hygiene promotion in nearby communities
 - Engage young people as agents for behavioural change including around substance abuse
 - Strengthen its capacity to provide institutional mental healthcare
 - Expand risk communication and community engagement
 - Guide and accompany the National Society in engaging with the MoPH in formulating national health priorities and strengthening its auxiliary role for health services
 - Enhance the health and WASH programming capacity of its volunteers and staff
-



Afghanistan has suffered conflict and insecurity for more than four decades and that, as well as recurring disasters and climate shocks, have meant that displacement has become a common coping strategy for many Afghan people over the generations. As of December 2022, nearly 6.6 million people were internally displaced in Afghanistan, two-thirds due to conflict and violence and a third due to disasters. This is the second largest number of internally displaced people in the world after Syria.

Since 15 August 2021, however, conflict and related displacement have reduced significantly, with the number of internally displaced persons dropping from 723,000 in 2021 to 32,000 in 2022. The reduction in violence has also led to an increase in returns, with more than 4.6 million people coming home between January 2021 and April 2022 (nearly half the figure recorded since 2012), however, it is not possible to ascertain the sustainability of such returns nor the situation of internally displaced persons as figures are changing again in 2023.

In 2021 and 2022, over 1.39 million internally displaced people returned to their place of origin (approximately 1.13 million in 2021 and 259,000 in 2022). However, as of 1 August 2023, only some 1,900 internally displaced persons returned to their place of origin (United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Rapid Assessments, 2021 – 2023), although it is expected these figures may increase once assessments are upscaled again in 2023. In 2023, 8,029 Afghan refugees voluntarily returned (95 per cent from Pakistan, 4 per cent from Iran and 1 per cent from other countries). The returnee figures in the first seven months of 2023 are five times higher than for a similar period in 2022 and higher than the total number of returns for 2022 (6,424).

From 15 September–15 October 2023, the UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimated that 59,780 people returned through the Torkham and Chaman border crossing points into Afghanistan (of which 1,567 people (2 per cent) were facilitated by UNHCR and 1,011 people (2 per cent) were forced to return. Current UNHCR and IOM contingency planning estimates figures of around 620,000 returns (150,000 forced returns, 20,000 assisted returns and 450,000 spontaneous returns) and 200,000 internally displaced persons moving to urban areas or refugee villages, during the rest of 2023.

Along with the rest of the Afghan population, these internally displaced persons and returnees will face one of the world's

most acute humanitarian crises, unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, with women and girls particularly vulnerable, with restricted access to services. With 5.9 million Afghan people living abroad, one in 10 families depends upon overseas remittances. As agriculture becomes less viable due to extreme weather and drought conditions, migration from rural to urban areas is expected to increase.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Communities reach higher long-term resilience through risk reduction, and improved health and livelihoods

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported to prioritize the needs of internally displaced and returnees across its emergency interventions, by further integrating their needs into the National Society's sectoral response areas (disaster management and livelihoods support, health and WASH services). This will focus on delivering assistance to internally displaced persons and returnees in underserved areas.

The Afghan Red Crescent will also be supported to continue mainstreaming community engagement and accountability, to enhance the resilience of internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities across all emergency operations and longer-term interventions. This will include developing preferred feedback mechanisms and using feedback to inform decision-making on programmes. The National Society's planning monitoring and evaluation team will also include disaggregated data on internally displaced persons and returnees when reporting on emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities.

In line with IFRC's Global Migration Strategy, and other IFRC or Red Cross Red Crescent Movement frameworks, the IFRC will support the National Society in developing its cross-sectoral action plan and linked implementation and monitoring plans on displacement. These will be disseminated within the National Society and training will be given at national and sub-national levels. The National Society will be supported to actively engage in technical and knowledge hubs, including the Red Cross Red Crescent Migration Leadership Group.

The participating National Societies supporting Afghan Red Crescent in this Strategic Priority are British Red Cross and Turkish Red Crescent.

Planned activities in 2024

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by the IFRC network to:

- Deliver humanitarian assistance to people on the move
- Implement interventions to strengthen the economic resilience of returnees
- Establish humanitarian service points in branches in the border provinces
- Engage young people from internally displaced, returnee and host communities as agents for behavioural change, including in promoting social cohesion
- Mainstream community engagement and accountability and protection gender and inclusion minimum standards in migration and displacement programming

- Engage with the authorities on possible involvement of Afghan Red Crescent in social protection
 - Enhance programme quality and accountability across migration and displacement interventions
 - Pursue partnerships on migration and displacement programming
 - Work with the authorities on migration and displacement solutions
 - Enhance the migration and displacement programming capacity of its volunteers and staff
-



Values, power and inclusion

While the hostilities in the country have subsided significantly, the security situation still remains unpredictable. This is due to the lasting effects of years of large-scale armed conflict, including weapons contamination, ongoing sporadic violence and wider socio-economic and political tensions. Protection concerns, such as the exposure of civilians to unexploded ordnance, targeted attacks, and the wider economic concerns are leading to more vulnerable people resorting to harmful coping mechanisms to survive.

Following years of trauma, Afghanistan has one of the world's highest proportions of people with psychological, cognitive and physical disabilities. People with disabilities are likely to face high levels of stigma, discrimination, and marginalization and higher poverty rates. (<https://www.disabilityinnovation.unsw.edu.au/people-disability-and-crisis-afghanistan>).

After the transition of August 2021, there has been a specific increase in restrictions on women and girls accessing education. The suspension of education for girls above the sixth grade has added concerns about their future engagement and inclusion. Wider protection concerns are also on the increase in relation to the situation of women. While reliable data on the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence is scarce due to systemic weaknesses, engrained social norms, a fragile health system, and a lack of social safety networks, sexual and gender-based violence is still being reported. Family separation is also impacting the lives of women, with men leaving to find work in urban areas or neighbouring countries and other women being widowed by the conflict or disasters. This

means that thousands of women are left as single-headed households. While the international community set standards for women's economic empowerment through the UN Sustainable Development Goal Five on gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, the reality for most women in Afghanistan is that they engage in unpaid work in the household or in caring for children or elderly family members. They are thus prevented from engaging in economic activities, such as farming, trading, or professional skills, or in training or continuing education.

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- **Communities experience stronger protection, gender and social inclusion components across all services**
- **Branches build more social inclusiveness, equity, and peace in communities, especially those hosting returnees, displaced persons and migrant population**
- **Branches' services implement minimum standards in gender, diversity, empowerment of women and humanitarian values**
- **Economic empowerment and integration of women and people with disabilities leads to stronger well-being and livelihoods**
- **The Afghan Red Crescent marastoons (social welfare centres) have more capacity to empower the admitted families (headed by women) and to admit the most-**

needy people; and the number of marastoons have increased in Afghanistan

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The Afghan Red Crescent strives to promote the Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, including promoting protection, gender-sensitive and inclusive (PGI) programming. The ICRC has worked extensively on the rehabilitation and inclusion of people with orthopaedic injuries and Afghan Red Crescent is committed to ensuring the dignity, access, participation and safety of people with disabilities in all its programmes.

In 2024, Afghan Red Crescent plans to work with the IFRC and participating National Societies to scale up its socio-economic resilience initiative, targeting women-at-risk, to reach a wider range of women and support their socio-economic inclusion. This will include the provision of vocational training, livelihoods support, income-generating activities and savings groups, and will aim to integrate CEA and PGI to enhance inclusion and protection to improve social cohesion. Feedback mechanisms will be established to ensure two-way communication channels, including face-to-face communication. Referral pathways will also be set up through trusted channels to allow for sensitive feedback and complaints through safe PGI and safeguarding focal persons and trained volunteers and staff. The National Society will also be supported to expand the number and quality of its marastoons ("places of assistance", where vulnerable people receive shelter, protection and training) in 2024.

The Afghan Red Crescent will also be supported by partners to roll out and raise awareness on its Gender Policy and to disseminate the Minimum Standards on PGI in Emergencies. It will also be supported to develop a specific policy on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) and child protection, and to establish an internal system to address the misuse of power or unethical behaviour. The National Society will work with partners to set up a training component on PGI, including on PSEAH and sexual and gender-based violence prevention, to be integrated across all its activities, starting with health services and disaster response operations. This component will be linked to technical

capacity development in CEA and feedback mechanisms. On a practical level, Afghan Red Crescent will be supported to further promote the participation of women in the National Society's national and branch disaster response teams and in programming.

The participating National Societies supporting Afghan Red Crescent in this Strategic Priority are British Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross and Kuwait Red Crescent.

Planned activities in 2024

The Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by the IFRC network to:

- Mainstream community engagement and accountability and protection gender and inclusion minimum standards in emergency operations and longer-term programmes
 - Establish women-led support activities in Afghan Red Crescent to engage young women in service delivery
 - Enhance programme quality and accountability across socio-economic resilience interventions
 - Promote access and inclusion for people with disabilities, marginalized people and the most vulnerable and to promote child protection safeguarding
 - Implement interventions to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of widows and women who head households
 - Expand the number of marastoons, improving the quality of existing and new marastoons, and ensuring dignity and a safe environment for those using the marastoons
 - Engage with the authorities on possible involvement of Afghan Red Crescent in social protection for widows
 - Strengthen safeguarding mechanisms within the National Society's structures and programmes
-

ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Afghan Red Crescent is committed to pursuing institutional strengthening and carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2018. The self-assessment is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. The Afghan Red Crescent is also committed to the Preparedness for Effective Response (PER) process, and is at the action and accountability phase. The PER Approach is a continuous and flexible process that enables National Societies to assess, measure and analyse the strengths and gaps of its preparedness and response mechanism, and ultimately take necessary action to improve it.

The IFRC network is committed to support the National Society in its development, according to its priorities.



Strategic and operational coordination

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Be a reformed National Society delivering impartial, neutral, effective, sustainable, relevant and accountable humanitarian services

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

Cooperation and coordination between Afghan Red Crescent, the IFRC, the ICRC and participating National Societies working in Afghanistan will continue to be strengthened in 2024, to support delivery of the priorities in the National Society's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, Consolidated Operational Plan 2022-2024, and emergency operational plans. In addressing the key drivers of vulnerability due to conflict, climate change

and migration/displacement, the Afghan Red Crescent will be supported by partners to strengthen relevant services and programmes, responding to multiple crises. They will also be supported to develop programmes and modalities that go beyond emergency response and provide practical activities that build community resilience, in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The Afghan Red Crescent is well recognized as a principled humanitarian organization with unparalleled access to and acceptance in underserved and unsafe areas nation-wide. Through its branches and community volunteers, the Afghan Red Crescent has long been involved in influencing communities to adopt safer behaviours, in the face of health or disaster risks. As auxiliary to the public authorities, the National Society has also developed Memoranda of Understanding and good contacts with the public authorities, which help contribute to achieving common goals in health or disaster contexts. The National Society's unique position and potential influence will be further leveraged in 2024, at national, regional and branch levels.

The IFRC network will support Afghan Red Crescent to:

- Implement the National Society's Strategic Plan and develop an operational plan for 2024 and engage key stakeholders in a partnership meeting to agree outcomes
- Support a review of Afghan Red Crescent's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 to date and start work on the development of the next Strategic Plan
- Bolster coordination with public authorities, the humanitarian community and donors, as well as with Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners

Participating National Societies supporting the Afghan Red Crescent this area of work are: British Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent Society and Turkish Red Crescent Society.



Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- The Afghan Red Crescent is a trusted and transparent organization, having enough resources for sustainable humanitarian services
- Financial management has accountable, transparent and standard systems and experienced human resources, to provide timely services, based on the needs of operations at all levels
- The Afghan Red Crescent has enhanced readiness and effectiveness in responding to emergencies
- The acceptance, access and support of the Afghan Red Crescent as a leading organization with credibility in the field of humanitarian services among the people, national and international organizations have increased
- The legal base of the National Society has been strengthened in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, Afghan Red Crescent Society Law, other related laws, the National Society Statutes and the relevant standards of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC network is committed to continue its support to the Afghan Red Crescent to enable it to develop its capacities across all areas of its institutional growth in 2024. This will include working with the National Society to identify priority areas to strengthen their response and organizational development capacities. The key priorities are:

National Society Development (NSD)

- Operationalize the Afghan Red Crescent Strategic Plan 2021-2025 by developing a consolidated operational plan and related roll out actions
- Guide and support Afghan Red Crescent to develop, approve, and disseminate its NSD initiative/plan
- Provide material support and capacity to enable the National Society to deliver sustainable programming and services
- Assist the Afghan Red Crescent to improve its legal base and auxiliary role status and to develop organizational skills in legal matters, governance, management

- Guide and support the National Society to improve its wider systems, processes and procedures and enhance service delivery and support innovation
- Work with the National Society to strengthen the capacity of its zone offices and branches
- Develop youth leadership skills and capacity on youth engagement
- Strengthen resource mobilization capacity of the National Society

Strengthening local response capacity

- Strengthen its level of preparedness for future disasters and crises, including pre-positioning of relief items and winterization kits in strategic locations
- Increase the skillsets of staff and volunteers to better deliver future disaster and crisis operations and sustainable programming and services
- Train and equip disaster response teams at headquarters and branch levels
- Focus on volunteer development in readiness for disaster response and other programmes and provide a clear duty of care for all volunteers
- Strengthen the institutional disaster and crises readiness of state agencies, especially ANDMA and MoPH

Planning monitoring evaluation and reporting (PMER), information management (IM), learning, CEA, PGI, communications and digitalization

- Conduct PGI and CEA trainings and workshops
- Conduct workshops and training sessions to enhance the communication skills of Afghan Red Crescent staff
- Strengthen the PMER/IM capacity of National Society staff and volunteers in headquarters and branches through training, coaching, cross learning and deployment
- Provide designated PMER/IM staff and/or volunteers at all levels
- Scale up the digital transformation of the National Society at national and subnational levels

The participating National Societies supporting Afghan Red Crescent in this area of work are: British Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent and Turkish Red Crescent.



Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

Humanitarian diplomacy, cooperation, and partnership with the components of the Movement, national and international partners, to provide effective and continuous humanitarian services, has been strengthened and developed in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC aims to support the Afghan Red Crescent to strategically position itself as a leading humanitarian agency, ensuring effective communication, media coverage, and communications capacity building. This work will focus on:

- Collaboratively producing communication materials to showcase Afghan Red Crescent's activities and achievements and to build communications capacity amongst the National Society's staff and volunteers
- Developing strategies to profile the National Society's work and expertise in the local and international media
- Disseminating stories highlighting humanitarian needs and the impactful work of Afghan Red Crescent and the IFRC network in Afghanistan
- Working with the National Society to build the capacity of its internal and external communications channels
- Strengthening communication partnerships between Afghan Red Crescent, participating National Societies, the wider IFRC network and the ICRC

Humanitarian diplomacy is set to be further developed as part of Afghan Red Crescent's Strategic Plan and will aim to influence decision and policy makers, international and national partners, as well as community organizations at national and sub-national levels. Building on the National Society's humanitarian diplomacy approach and goals, the leadership will be supported to position the National Society and promote key stakeholder engagement in priority areas. The National Society will be helped to manage its work in a context with the increasing presence of domestic military and other security forces in the humanitarian space, with the

intention of preserving its reputation and delivering principled humanitarian action.

This work will focus on:

- Strengthening advocacy and communication of key messages on National Society priorities and enhance humanitarian diplomacy and representation with national and international stakeholders
- Developing awareness, knowledge and skills on the appropriate ways to engage with domestic military and other security forces
- Providing strategic advice to support coordinated humanitarian diplomacy efforts
- Promoting IFRC's active profile as a key humanitarian organization in Afghanistan

The Afghan Red Crescent leadership and the IFRC will continue to engage in advocacy to influence diplomatic missions and donors operating within Afghanistan or in other countries to highlight the humanitarian and development needs, and influence policy and funding allocations. This will include top level discussions on the evolution of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and prioritizing the humanitarian/development nexus activities to benefit the most vulnerable people. Diplomatic missions and donors have already flagged that resources and public support for Afghanistan are diminishing due to competing crises. Afghan Red Crescent and the IFRC will continue to focus on the Grand Bargain commitments and prioritization of national/local actors who are respected and can deliver on the ground.

The IFRC will work closely with the Afghan Red Crescent to support public agencies/institutions responsible for coordinating responses to disasters, crises and public health emergencies, within the contextual limitations of direct action under the UN Security Council (UNSC) and Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions. This will include support on disaster risk management regulatory frameworks and climate action. The IFRC will also continue to engage with the authorities in line with its own legal status agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will include confidential discussions in favour of affected populations and to support the auxiliary role of the National Society and the Fundamental Principles.



Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- **Afghan Red Crescent is a trusted and transparent organization, having enough resources for sustainable humanitarian services**
- **Financial management has accountable, transparent and standard systems and experienced human resources to provide timely services, based on the needs of operations at all levels**
- **Afghan Red Crescent has enhanced readiness and effectiveness in responding to emergencies**
- **The acceptance, access and support of the Afghan Red Crescent as a leading organization with credibility in the field of humanitarian services among the people, national and international organizations have increased**

Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC will continue to engage with the Afghan Red Crescent and the IFRC membership to demonstrate accountability and improved business processes. The National Society will be supported to submit its annual externally audited financial statement. Active steps will also be taken to facilitate the adoption of IFRC's "Working with Project Partners" framework to manage all financial transfers to the National Society, in line with supported, accountable practices and standards. Overall quality assurance processes and accountability will also be further enhanced across the whole programme cycle.

The IFRC's newly established risk management, compliance and safeguarding unit will support the National Society's risk management focal point to integrate a risk management culture across all aspects of programming and development. A Risk Management Framework is being established to identify and assess challenges in a timely manner, and a new risk register and regular updates will lead to an effective risk management system and proactive response mechanism in the National Society. The IFRC is also engaging with National Society focal points to streamline a safeguarding and risk management initiative, which includes the development and finalization of the PSEAH policy, assessment procedures, safeguarding training materials and whistle bower protection training materials, translated into local languages.

The envisioned digital transformation for Afghan Red Crescent in 2024 and beyond will cover all critical organizational aspects

of the National Society, including governance and management, accountability systems, branch development, youth and volunteering development, PMER, communications and resource mobilization. Building on an assessment conducted in 2022, practical steps will be taken to make progress on basic digital capability and to tackle critical gaps, while trying to advance data and systems management capabilities across the whole National Society network. Some "quick wins" should enable the National Society to have a revamped website, an institution-wide digital system for internal communication (e.g., domain names for emails, equipment) and capacity to organize virtual meetings with regional and branch offices. It should also support the National Society to set up an effective volunteer management system and to consider innovation in other areas of its work.

Many of the key priorities for 2024 are part of the development of a common accountability framework and will include:

- Enhance compliance, by screening IFRC and Afghan Red Crescent staff and vendors against UN sanction lists to ensure funds from the IFRC do not go to ineligible individuals and entities
- Track and ensure IFRC staff have taken all mandatory training on security, information technology and other key areas
- Ensure compliance with donor conditionality and with current policies and procedures
- Institutionalize fraud and corruption prevention by ensuring all IFRC project staff and managers have completed mandatory online training, including on integrity and whistleblowing protection; all training will be recorded on a tracking system
- Institutionalize risk management practices based on the IFRC's Risk Management Framework and ensure that the IFRC Country Delegation keeps an up-to-date risk register (updated quarterly for organizational and office risks)
- Strengthen safeguarding and improve duty of care for all staff and volunteers, through putting in place a senior IFRC safeguarding officer and safeguarding communications strategies, tools and guidance, to prevent and respond to any exploitation, abuse or misconduct issues; and through the development and delivery of safeguarding training to staff across the IFRC network in country
- Provide strategic support to the National Society to enhance knowledge and understanding of safeguarding

issues and support the establishment and strengthening of safeguarding systems within the National Society

A number of initiatives are planned to enhance quality and accountability, both within the IFRC and in support of the National Society. This includes plans to strengthen the PMER/IM capacity of the National Society, by rolling out the PMER Framework across the National Society, engaging a third-party for independent monitoring, and expanding the use of a centralized data/information management system/tools and software, such as the RedRose App, across all programmes and operations. This links to plans to strengthen and expand feedback mechanisms and mainstreaming PGI approaches across all sectors. Steps will also be taken to support the

financial management development and capacity of the National Society and improve the financial system for all levels. Finally, a global and regional learning initiative will promote tools and learning culture for all programmes/operations and services.

Participating National Societies supporting Afghan Red Crescent in this area of work are: British Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent and Turkish Red Crescent.



The Afghan Red Crescent Society facilitating relief work in Maidan Wardak, one of the nine provinces impacted after the July 2023 flash floods. (Photo: IFRC)

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC has had a country delegation in Afghanistan since 1990. It supports the National Society in disaster and crisis humanitarian operations, primary health care and immunization services, and longer-term resilience-building programmes. It coordinates the activities of IFRC network partners, represents the Afghan Red Crescent internationally, and supports its organizational development. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme. In recent years IFRC supported the Afghan Red Crescent through a number of Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeals operations in relation to floods, droughts and earthquakes.

For the complex emergency operation, the IFRC provides membership coordination, and other services for the operation such as procurement, transportation, accommodation and security management services. It has also engaged two

financial service providers, which channel cash transfers to community members. A quality and accountability team has been put in place to ensure that community engagement and accountability measures are applied for close monitoring of implementation, and to enhance measures that will improve organization-wide performance. The IFRC is strengthening compliance and risk management activities, through the recruitment and empowerment of a talented, diverse and inclusive team.

The IFRC is supporting the National Society in joint advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, and coordination with the authorities and other humanitarian actors – to ensure that humanitarian crises in Afghanistan are profiled. Collaboratively, they will also seek to influence policy and investment decisions, to ensure they address humanitarian needs.

IFRC Membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, of development assistance, and of efforts to reinforce the auxiliary role of National Societies in their respective countries.

The IFRC provides the membership with strategic coordination. In-country partners have been engaging within the framework of IFRC's Agenda for Renewal's "New Way of Working" and will continue to do so going into 2024 and beyond. Some participating National Societies have agreed to pursue a shared leadership approach in supporting Afghan Red Crescent in implementing the Emergency Appeal operation, leveraging their expertise and technical capacities in a joint response. In this regard, an agreement was signed with the Turkish Red Crescent in August 2022 to take the lead in supporting the National Society to provide food assistance and WASH, using funds mobilized via the IFRC Emergency Appeal.

An Emergency Response Taskforce is responsible for developing and monitoring the Afghan Red Crescent's operational strategy, with the National Society at the centre and the IFRC providing strategic coordination of the IFRC's membership. IFRC and Afghan Red Crescent also maintain frequent partners' calls with participating National Societies to keep them updated on the current humanitarian context and operational situation on the ground and to highlight any new risks in security or operations. These have been well received and will continue in 2024 to provide information to inform back donors and other actors, with specific partners representing the network in "best-placed" situations e.g., Danish Red Cross attending meetings on child protection and MHPSS.

The Afghan Red Crescent receives support from 23 National Societies. Strong support from IFRC network partners ensures that the National Society receives financial, material and technical support at a local level. The Danish Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent and Turkish Red Crescent all have a physical presence in Afghanistan. These partners bring a long-standing country knowledge and expertise in protracted crises, enabling them to work together to address the country's humanitarian challenges.

Participating National Society Support

National Society name	Funding Requirement	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling local actors
Albanian Red Cross							
Austrian Red Cross							
Bahrain Red Crescent Society							
British Red Cross							
Canadian Red Cross Society							
Danish Red Cross	7M						
Finnish Red Cross							
German Red Cross							
Hong Kong Red Cross, Branch of the Red Cross Society of China							
Irish Red Cross Society							
Italian Red Cross							
Japanese Red Cross Society							
Korean Red Cross							
Kuwait Red Crescent Society							
Netherlands Red Cross							
New Zealand Red Cross							
Norwegian Red Cross	4.6M						
Philippine Red Cross							
Qatar Red Crescent Society							
Red Cross of Monaco							
Red Cross Society of China							
Singapore Red Cross Society							
Slovenian Red Cross							
Swedish Red Cross	1.3M						
Turkish Red Crescent Society							
Undefined support	17.1M						

Total Funding requirement

30M

Movement coordination

Coordination and cooperation mechanisms in Afghanistan are anchored under a Movement Cooperation Agreement. The Movement Platform Meeting involves the Afghan Red Crescent, the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) leadership, focusing on strategic level engagement. Movement Operational Coordination Meetings bring together the Afghan Red Crescent, the IFRC, the ICRC, and other National Societies working in Afghanistan. Technical working groups focus on specific technical areas of common interest and bring together specialists from each organization. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

For the complex emergency operation, the IFRC contributes to Movement coordination through the established in-country mechanisms.

The ICRC has a strong historical presence in Afghanistan, and works in collaboration with Afghan Red Crescent and other International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners. It is responding to the humanitarian crisis by providing health care and rehabilitation support, supporting health care infrastructure, assisting people in establishing livelihoods and incomes, helping families who have been separated to reconnect, and improving access to clean water, sanitation and energy

Coordination with other actors

Afghan Red Crescent maintains close coordination with the ANDMA, the MoPH and with local authorities, in line with its role as auxiliary to public authorities, in support of neutral and independent humanitarian action. For example, the National Society works closely with the MoPH on the mobilization of healthcare personnel, medicine and medical equipment. The IFRC supports the National Society by providing briefing sessions and sharing of information with government and institutional donors.

IFRC and Afghan Red Crescent continue to engage in advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, and coordination with other humanitarian actors, including agencies in the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The IFRC is an observer to the HCT and

an active participant in the Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT) and relevant Cluster or Inter-Agency Working Group meetings/forums. These platforms are useful for information sharing, planning, analysis and strategic coordination.

IFRC and Afghan Red Crescent have engaged regularly with Kabul-based embassies and key stakeholders to keep them informed of the latest developments in the National Society. In these meetings, the new strategic priorities of Afghan Red Crescent have been presented, placing focus on humanitarian and development activities, including the need to re-focus on the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan, such as women at-risk, including war widows, people with mental health conditions due to trauma, and children's health



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\)](#) data
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)
- [Evaluations database](#)

This plan reflects the priorities of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2024 and subsequent years. It is aligned with IFRC [Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process. It will serve for joint monitoring and reporting, and will be revised on an annual basis, to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

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