

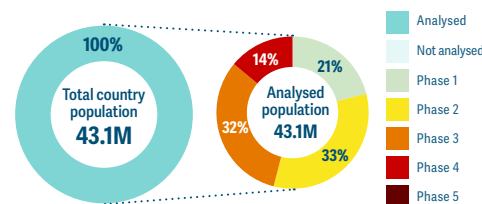
Afghanistan

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY PEAK 2022/23

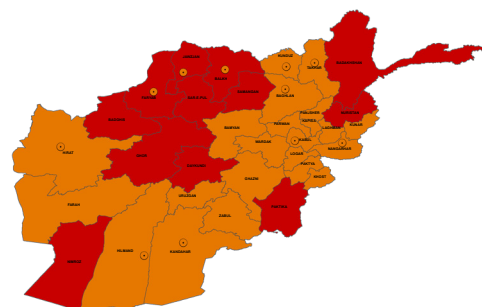
19.90M people or **46%** of the analysed population in IPC Phase 3 or above, November 2022–March 2023



Although no populations were in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) during November 2022–March 2023, there were over 20 000 people in this phase in March–May 2022 (IPC, May 2022).



IPC acute food insecurity situation, November 2022–March 2023



1 - Acceptable 2 - Alert 3 - Serious 4 - Critical 5 - Very critical

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: HNO 2023, January 2023.

Food crisis overview

Between November 2022 and March 2023, 19.9 million people were estimated to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above), representing 46 percent of the country's population. This included about 6 million people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

This is an improvement compared with the 22.81 million people (55 percent of the population) estimated to face high levels of acute food insecurity during the same period one year earlier, though the numbers of people in these phases remain among the highest reported in the world.

Out of the country's 34 provinces, 12 were classified in IPC Phase 4, while the rest were in IPC Phase 3. Approximately 3.9 million people living in urban centres (47 percent of the assessed urban population) were in IPC Phase 3 or above (HNO 2023, January 2023).

The current estimate, which represents the peak for

both 2022 and 2023, reflects a persisting and alarming acute food insecurity situation, underpinned by the lingering impact of decades of conflict on livelihoods, reduced food availability during the winter and the lean season, and sustained high food prices, amid persisting macroeconomic challenges, including reduced income-generating opportunities and high unemployment.

Acute food insecurity since 2016

Afghanistan has been included in all the GRFC editions and always classified as one of the ten worst food crises, with conflict/insecurity and drought as the main drivers.

In terms of magnitude, it is difficult to compare food insecurity levels due to changes in base population estimates and population analysed; in terms of severity, the situation is clearly deteriorating, with the prevalence of people in IPC Phase 3 or above increasing from around 26 percent in 2017 to around 42 percent in 2020 and 46 percent in 2023. In terms of area classification, the situation has constantly deteriorated from no

area classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) in 2017 to 17 in 2022, of which 13 were rural and four urban. The provinces of Daykundi, Badakhshan and Nuristan have been classified in IPC Phase 4 in every year since 2018, and Badghis in every year since 2017 except for 2019.

Areas that until 2017 were classified in IPC Phase 2, such as the provinces of Balkh and Jawzjan, were in IPC Phase 4 in 2022.

Drivers of the crisis, 2022–23

Economic shocks Following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, Afghanistan's economy went into free-fall during the remainder of 2021 and 2022, with the freezing of foreign financial reserves, subsequent currency, trade and banking crises, and the suspension of direct development aid. All these elements had accounted for about 75 percent of public expenditure prior to the takeover. The lack of in-country capital reserves thwarted the country's capacity to import food and other basic supplies (HNO 2023, January 2023).

According to data collected between 30 July and 4 September 2022, more than half of households reported having experienced an economic shock in the previous six months, rising to 81 percent in the southern region. Nearly 90 percent of households reported having limited access to food, which pushed about 75 percent of them to resort to taking on debt to meet their food requirements (WoAA, September 2022).

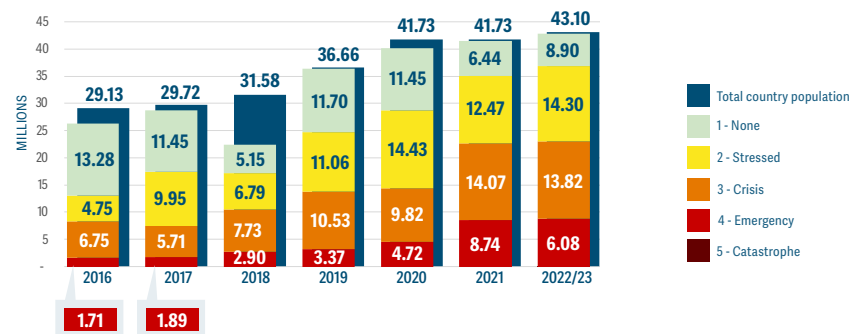
In July 2022, the average price of a litre of diesel across all 34 provincial capitals was more than 100 percent higher than the previous year (WFP, July 2022), while fertilizer prices remained elevated.

The cost of WFP's food basket peaked in June 2022 when it was more than 40 percent higher than the previous June before decreasing (WFP, November 2022).

Nevertheless, in January 2023, it remained 6 percent higher year-on-year (WFP, January 2023).

At the same time, monthly household income across

Numbers of people by phase of acute food insecurity, 2016–2023



2019–2022 population estimates are based on Flowminder. Previous IPC reports (as well as the GRFC) employed National Statistics and Information Agency of Afghanistan (NSIA) population estimates.

See Appendix 1, figure 1 for datasets from all analysis rounds between 2019 and 2023.

Source: Afghanistan IPC TWG; HNO 2023, January 2023.

all population groups declined by 17 percent between 2021 and 2022 (HNO 2023, January 2023). Pre-existing gender disparities, the economic crisis, and new restrictions on women's employment and movement critically affected women's ability to earn an income (CARE, August 2022). Restrictions on women's employment mean that women were over three times more impacted than men by loss of employment, with female employment in the fourth quarter of 2022 estimated to be 25 percent lower than in the second quarter of 2021 (ILO, March 2023).

According to the NSIA, annual headline inflation averaged 13.7 percent in 2022 and declined to 5.2 percent by the end of the year. The local currency stabilized from March 2022, after a sharp devaluation triggered by the Taliban takeover, reflecting a stabilization of economic activity as well as an increase in remittances inflows, which are expected to support household food access in 2023.

 **Weather extremes** As of December 2022, Afghanistan was experiencing the first triple-dip impact of La Niña since 1998–2001.

The proportion of households feeling the impact of drought was six times greater than in 2020 (WFP, February 2023). Analysis conducted using the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) shows that 25 out of 34 provinces reported either severe or catastrophic drought conditions, with over 73 percent of rural households and 24 percent of urban households affected (HNO 2023, January 2023).

Unseasonal flooding between July and September in 21 provinces in the southern and southeastern regions disrupted agricultural livelihoods and damaged crops before harvest (HNO 2023, January 2023).


While precipitation was somewhat favourable at the start of the winter wet season in October and November, it was minimal in December, resulting in cumulative precipitation deficits in early winter (October to December) (FEWS NET, December 2022).


The cereal output in Afghanistan was estimated at about 4 percent below the previous year's already drought-affected harvest and 12 percent below the five-year average (FAO, December 2022). In addition to the reduced wheat yields from the 2022 harvests, anticipated shortfalls in 2023 are likely to further impact food security

conditions in 2023. As of late February, the snow water equivalent was below normal over higher elevations in the northeast and central parts of the country (GEOGLAM, March 2023). Extreme cold damaged farmlands in Badakhshan province and resulted in livestock losses (WFP, January 2023).

 **Conflict/insecurity** The overall security environment improved in 2022 with the end of major hostilities and the consolidation of control by Afghanistan's de facto authorities (DFA). According to the 2022 WoAA, the reported experience of conflict in the six months prior to data collection reduced sharply from 60 percent in 2021 to 5 percent in 2022 (WoAA, September 2022).


However, pockets of armed clashes and violence persisted, especially in Panjshir, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul provinces, affecting livelihoods and access to basic services, and undermining the coping capacities of an already vulnerable population (HNO 2023, January 2023).

 **Natural disasters** Afghanistan is prone to earthquakes and three major ones in 2022 caused loss of life and damage to property in Badghis province in January, Paktika and Khost in June, and Kunar in September (HNO 2023, January 2023).

 **Livestock diseases and crop pests** More than 70 percent of Afghanistan's largely rural population keep livestock for livelihood diversification. In the absence of adequate vaccination campaigns, lumpy skin disease affected many cattle-owning households in 2022 leading to lower meat production and reduced milk yields (FAO, February 2023).

As the outbreaks continue in 2023 and in the absence of scaled-up vaccination campaigns, livestock body conditions and production are also expected at below-average levels in 2023 (HNO 2023, January 2023). In addition, localized locust outbreaks are projected in March 2023 due to the impact of La Niña in the region and observations of egg-laying in June–August 2022 (HNO 2023, January 2023).

DISPLACEMENT

 **IDPs** In Afghanistan, an estimated 5.89 million people were internally displaced by the first half of 2022. About 1.4 million were displaced in 2021 and an additional 0.4 million in the first four months of 2022 (IOM, July 2022). The new displacements were driven by conflict and poor security conditions in 2021 and economic shocks coupled with weather hazards in 2022, including dry spells and floods.

Approximately 690 000 people are expected to be displaced in 2023 – about 80 000 from conflict, 233 000 from natural disasters including drought, and the remaining 378 000 by a combination of economic stress, natural disaster, conflict and protection challenges (HNO 2023, January 2023).

Over one-third of IDPs are hosted by a family, just under one-third own their home and another third rent. Around 5 percent live in informal settlements (IOM DTM, April 2022).

Displaced households, particularly in urban areas, struggle to pay rent and find it hard to access services and earn livelihoods, particularly women. Land and housing without the threat of eviction and disputes with host communities are difficult to find. Consequently, many live in makeshift shelters in informal settlements (HNO 2023, January 2023).

According to IOM's Emergency Community-based Needs Assessment, 2.85 million IDP households are in debt and 69 percent of IDP households cannot afford to meet basic food needs. Around 16 percent eat one meal or less per day, rising to 37 percent in Faryab province (IOM DTM, April 2022).

Women – who represent 54 percent of the conflict-induced displaced population according to DTM – are unable to move freely, in a context where they may have lost support systems and economic opportunities. On average, 81 percent of women-headed IDP households indicated not being able to work and cover daily expenses compared with 72 percent of male-headed households (WoAA, September 2022).



Returnees Improved security is encouraging IDPs displaced by conflict to return – but they often find communities devastated by conflict and chronic vulnerability. Loss of remittances, loss of livelihood opportunities in places of origin, gender discrimination and loss of family support networks all add to their vulnerability (HNO 2023, January 2023).

During the first quarter of 2022, deportations from the Islamic Republic of Iran increased month-on-month. In 2023, an estimated 1.1 million Afghan refugees are expected to return, just under 1 million from the Islamic Republic of Iran and the rest from Pakistan. Cross-border returnees are frequently forced to share limited resources with host populations in urban areas or have lost access to their land through usurpation or occupation. According to UNHCR monitoring, 54 percent lack shelter, 32 percent job opportunities and 26 percent land. A lack of documentation for 19 percent of them means they are not able to access services and assistance (HNO 2023, January 2023).

The WoAA found that an increasing share of recent returnee households reported barriers to water access (59 percent in 2022) predominantly due to water point functionality issues and lack of containers to carry water. Returnees face increasing difficulties to access health services, with 24 percent reporting they did not have access to an active health facility in the three months prior to data collection, and with women having the least access (WoAA, September 2022).



Refugees Approximately 52 400 refugees live in Afghanistan, the vast majority of them displaced from Pakistan in 2014 and residing in Khost and Paktika provinces in the southeastern region.

According to the WoAA 2022, 74 percent of refugees experienced an economic shock in the six months before the survey, and 82 percent cited not having enough money to obtain food in the previous 30 days. Some 81 percent of refugee households scored poor or borderline levels of food consumption. Nearly all (89 percent) of refugee respondents indicated having debt mainly to purchase food and healthcare (WoAA, September 2022).

Refugees live in poor quality or damaged shelters that leak when it rains and fail to protect them from the cold.

Unstable or non-existent rental agreements make them highly vulnerable to eviction. Around 15 percent have no latrines and 77 percent use unimproved latrines, raising the risk of disease outbreaks. Some 69 percent reported that they did not know how to access humanitarian assistance (WoAA, September 2022).

NUTRITION



Over 4 million children and women were projected to need urgent treatment for acute malnutrition through April 2023. An estimated 3.22 million children under 5 years were suffering from wasting, of whom about 875 000 were severely wasted. In addition, there were over 800 000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) suffering acute malnutrition and in need of urgent treatment (IPC, January 2023).

During September–October 2022, two provinces (Badakhshan and Paktika) were classified in Critical (IPC AMN Phase 4) and 23 in Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3), according to a nationally representative SMART survey conducted from March–September 2022. During the November 2022–April 2023 winter season, the situation was expected to deteriorate. Some 24 provinces were likely to move to a worse situation – nine from IPC AMN Phase 2 to IPC AMN Phase 3 and 15 from IPC AMN Phase 3 to IPC AMN Phase 4. In other words, half of the country’s provinces were expected to face Critical levels of acute malnutrition (IPC AMN Phase 4).

The prevalence of acute malnutrition among PLW ranged from 3.8 percent to 50 percent, which reflects an alarming nutrition situation. In 19 out of 34 provinces, more than 20 percent of PLW were acutely malnourished.

All assessed provinces reported a high (eight provinces) or a very high (24 provinces) prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age, as per WHO’s thresholds (IPC, January 2023).

Drivers of undernutrition

High levels of acute food insecurity combined with high prevalence of communicable diseases, and underpinned by factors such as low socioeconomic status, harmful social and cultural norms, years of conflict, displacement, weather extremes and natural disasters, in a context

Number of children under 5 years old with wasting, September 2022–April 2023



Source: Afghanistan IPC TWG, January 2023.

marked by low access to WASH services, are driving an alarming malnutrition crisis in Afghanistan.

Food insecurity and lack of access to healthy diets The high levels of acute food insecurity in Afghanistan contribute to the poor quality of foods consumed by children and women. The projected deterioration in acute malnutrition during the lean season is partly linked to lower availability of nutritious foods.

Inadequate maternal and child-feeding practices Only 16 percent of children aged 6–23 months old are fed with a Minimum Acceptable Diet that meets both the recommended dietary diversity and frequency thresholds (17 percent in urban and 13 percent in rural areas (WoAA, September 2022)).

Limited access to health and nutrition services The late 2021 suspension of direct international development assistance, which previously accounted for 75 percent of public expenditure, further weakened the already fragile public health system. Most health facilities have poor infrastructure and there are fewer qualified healthcare workers due to emigration, restrictions on women’s movement and employment, and reduced funds to pay salaries and keep facilities open (HNO, January 2023). Access to health services is also very limited due to long distances to travel and other additional costs for patients, such as transport, medicines and treatment in a context of severely squeezed purchasing power (HNO, January 2023). The December 2021 de facto authorities’ decree that women must travel accompanied by a male has limited access to what health services remain after

aid cuts. As women cannot be treated by male health workers, the limitation on female employment is a further obstacle to them receiving treatment. Following the June 2022 earthquake, the lack of female health workers prevented women from receiving urgent medical attention (UN Women, June 2022).

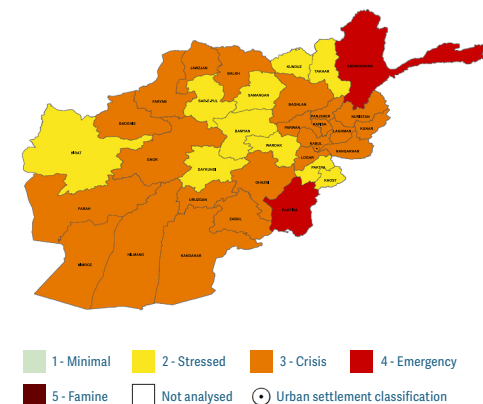
The projected winter season deterioration in child nutrition was partly linked to challenges accessing health and nutrition services (IPC, January 2023).

High prevalence of infectious diseases Infectious disease outbreaks, including measles, acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and malaria/fever are overwhelming the increasingly strained health system and contributing to malnutrition. A seasonal degradation in common diseases that affect child nutrition, such as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infection, were expected to contribute to the higher burden of acute malnutrition during the winter (IPC, January 2023).

Poor household environment As a result of the ongoing drought and water crisis, 79 percent of households do not have enough safe water, reaching over 90 percent in ten provinces. Around 26 percent of rural households use inadequate water sources with the prevalence varying widely by province, reaching 84 percent in Nuristan (WoAA, September 2022). Lack of supplies, including chlorine, fuel, spare parts and equipment, and repair capacity following the cessation of direct international development funding has significantly hampered operational capacity in major urban areas (HNO, January 2023).

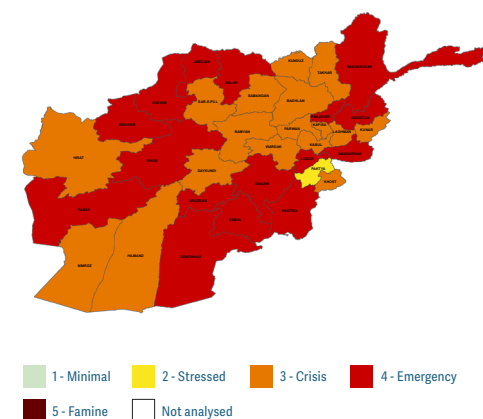
About half (46 percent) of households reported using unimproved sanitation facilities, but the prevalence was far higher in 19 provinces (WoAA, September 2022). With drought conditions expected to continue into 2023, a stretched water system could negatively impact the health of an already vulnerable population.

IPC acute malnutrition situation, September–October 2022



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Projected IPC acute malnutrition situation, November 2022–April 2023



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