

NRC's operations in Afghanistan

Humanitarian overview

Decades of war, political turmoil, chronic poverty, recurrent disasters such as drought, earthquakes and flooding, as well as an economic crisis have devastated Afghanistan and left it on a trajectory of overall decline. The UN estimates that 29.2 million people (up from 28.3 million at the beginning of 2023) are currently in need of humanitarian assistance – this is more than half of the country's population. Most Afghans now live well below the poverty line, with over 17 million people (40 per cent) experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. This includes nearly 3.4 million people (around 8 per cent) experiencing emergency levels of food insecurity.

The back-to-back earthquakes in western Afghanistan in October 2023, together with the decision of Pakistan to deport 1.7 million undocumented Afghans back to Afghanistan, will escalate the already dire humanitarian situation in the country. Underfunding is still the biggest constraint to maintaining and expanding humanitarian response.

International sanctions continue to affect the functioning of key financial institutions and the private sector. In addition, widespread unemployment, currency deflation and increasing food costs continue to

drive humanitarian needs.

There are around 6.6 million internally displaced people living in precarious situations across the country. Thousands more have been forced to leave their homes over the last year due to economic deprivation, persecution, violence and disasters..

NRC's operation

NRC in Afghanistan seeks to protect and assist vulnerable women, girls, boys and men who are affected by displacement. NRC provides assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, prevent further displacement, and contribute to durable solutions.

We implement programming across all of NRC's core competencies, integrating protection, advocacy and an emergency response team to support preparedness and response.

NRC Afghanistan

Established	2003
International staff	20
National staff	1,385



NRC in Afghanistan

Country office

Kabul

Areas of operation

Badghis, Balkh, Faryab, Parwan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Nimroz, Sar-e-pul, Uruzgan, and Zabul



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Protection from violence

Protection has four strategic pillars: (1) community safety and violence prevention, (2) camp management, (3) specialised protection services, and (4) thought leadership and influence. The aim of bringing these four strategic pillars together with their unique core activities through a single core competency is to better support individuals, households and communities who are negatively impacted by protection problems, conflict and displacement.

In Afghanistan, protection teams implement activities aiming to prevent or mitigate the consequences of protection problems on civilian populations. These activities are within two strategic areas: specialised protection services and civilian self-protection – through case management, protection risk reduction trainings for communities, and facilitating referrals for access to life-saving humanitarian assistance.

Our teams also run community response centres for humanitarian actors and the targeted community to serve as a one-shop stop where displaced Afghans can access services from more than one actor. Within the humanitarian coordination space, we co-coordi-

nate the Afghanistan Protection Cluster, and co-lead the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group and CCCM Working Group.

Education

We specialise in education in emergencies for displacement-affected children, adolescents and youth. Our teams aim to improve access to quality, inclusive and protective education relevant to the cognitive, emotional and psychosocial development of the people we work with. To work towards this objective, internally NRC will improve the capacity of education staff to deliver quality programming and externally will work within three strategic response areas including non-formal education (NFE), support to formal education (FE) and youth education and training.

NRC provides NFE (accelerated education, community-based education) for out-of-school children in conflict and displacement-affected, rural and hard-to-reach areas where government schools do not exist or are far from communities, and support their transition into formal basic education. In 2024, NRC will also support youth with life skills, basic skills and recreational activities.

Within the mentioned strategic response areas, NRC will conduct mobilisations for enrolment, build teacher capacity, implement BLP 1 activities, provide teaching and learning materials, and provide WASH and rehabilitation support to hub schools through the School Improvement Plan.

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

We provide information, counselling and legal assistance to displacement-affected Afghans on a wide range of legal matters within four thematic areas: housing, land and property (HLP); legal identity documentation (LID); employment law and procedure (ELP); and access to essential services, and referrals.

We conduct information sessions on legal rights in communities, NRC community centres and transit centres run by other agencies, and sessions on basic rights to refugee returnees at border points with Pakistan and Iran. We help people through one-on-one legal counselling and provide direct legal assistance and full representation to enable people to claim and exercise their rights, including accessing legal identity documentation; resolving housing, land and property disputes; and claiming employment rights.

By supporting formal and informal justice actors with capacity-building training and mentorship, we provide knowledge and skills to resolve disputes and facilitate access to rights. Our teams also conduct research and assessments to better understand displacement-affected people's challenges in claiming and exercising their rights. As the co-lead of the HLP Taskforce within the Protection Cluster, we advocate for displacement-affected people's housing, land and property rights.

Livelihoods and food security

We aim to ensure that the food needs of displaced populations are met, their essential productive assets are protected, and the coping capacity of vulnerable households is improved to sustain their basic livelihoods during conflicts and disasters.

We focus on supporting the displaced population meet their immediate food needs during emergency situations, assist in improving the food production systems and strengthen local markets to work for the affected population through capacity enhancement, engaging them through market-based activities in our interventions. We design our interventions following the Safe and Inclusive Programming (SIP) approach that enables women and people with disabilities to access the basic food needs and improved livelihoods.

Shelter and settlements

The shelter response in Afghanistan is based on three principal pillars:

1. First-line response shelter. This involves immediate interventions to provide temporary shelter interventions during crises or emergencies.
2. Non-first-line response shelter. This includes transitional and permanent shelter solutions implemented during the recovery and reconstruction phase.
3. Infrastructure. This pillar encompasses the enhancement of temporary and transitional infrastructure, as well as the development of temporary and permanent educational facilities.

These three pillars address the essential needs of affected populations, ensuring immediate lifesaving, long-term housing options, and vital infrastructure for sustainable recovery.

To ensure timely and effective response during humanitarian crises, NRC will seek to preposition emergency shelter items and non-food items (especially during winterisation) to strategic safe and accessible locations in areas of high displacement. We also aim to sustain our rental assistance programme to assist vulnerable households that are under imminent threat of eviction – this intervention remains vital in mitigating unlawful evictions.

We will explore energy solutions that are environmentally friendly, hybrids with grid systems, as well as advocat-

ing for solutions aiming to reduce the carbon footprint. These solutions will be provided at household and community levels. The 2023 shelter strategy focuses on strengthening links with emergency, WASH, humanitarian access, ICLA, livelihood and protection for a holistic and informed response.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

We aim to improve the health of Afghan communities through access to safe water, sanitation and public health promotion, and reducing the impact of public health risks. Internally displaced people (IDPs) living in protracted displacement, in deteriorating conditions with limited or no WASH services, will be targeted for the provision of new WASH facilities or upgrades to existing facilities in informal settlements.

Sustainable WASH interventions such as water resource management, sustainable sanitation options and positive hygiene behaviours are prioritised as part of community-led programming. We also support in the construction, repair and maintenance of water supplies, latrines and bathing facilities, designed alongside affected communities and with an understanding of protection risks. Our WASH programmes are focusing on the following thematic areas:

- supplying safe water for drinking, cooking, personal hygiene and household cleaning
- providing and maintaining latrines or toilets segregated by gender, or family units that are safe for women, girls, men and boys to use at all times
- active disease surveillance and increased vigilance on water quality and sanitation practices during disease outbreaks
- solid waste management and site drainage activities, to reduce standing water and garbage where disease-carrying mosquitos or vermin can breed
- hygiene promotion and community mobilisation to promote safe hygiene and health-seeking behaviours, and to empower displaced people to take an active role in WASH operations

Gender mainstreaming

Women have always faced barriers in Afghanistan and this situation has only worsened following recent events. Our teams integrate gender considerations in programming and strive to engage women and girls in a meaningful way, providing them with safe access to adequate assistance and services.

Moreover, a gender lens is applied to programming to better understand the specific risks and concerns that women, men, girls and boys face in Afghanistan and to ensure that their voices are heard. NRC believes that humanitarian action cannot take place without women and that they must be included in the workplace. We have maintained this principled stance despite a ban by the authorities on female aid workers.

Emergency response

We provide access to humanitarian assistance for IDPs, extremely vulnerable host communities and returnees devastated by extreme weather and conflict. We are scaling up our emergency operations to provide emergency humanitarian assistance across our operational areas through a broad set of measures including winterisation, emergency shelter response, non-food items, vulnerability assessments, capacity building and multi-purpose cash to support IDPs during displacement, both when settling and integrating in a new place and upon return.

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- Liechtenstein
- Education Cannot Wait (ECW)
- The United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM)
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- Quadrature Capital Foundation (QCF)
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