

AFGHANISTAN

Slow-Onset Early Action Plan for Drought

Drought Preparedness

May 2024



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1. Background

Afghanistan remains one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change. According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, Afghanistan is the sixth most vulnerable country and least ready to address the impacts of climate change globally and currently ranked 8/10 on the INFORM Climate Change Risk Index. Between 1951 and 2010, Afghanistan's mean annual temperature increased by some 1.8°C - nearly twice the global average. According to climate change models, future increases in mean annual temperature in Afghanistan are expected to be considerably higher than the global average, resulting in increased risk of drought and annual droughts in many parts of the country likely becoming the norm by 2030.

At the same time, weather conditions have become more erratic. El Niño patterns in late 2023 and early 2024 were expected to bring favourable rain and snowfall. However, Afghanistan instead experienced unexpectedly dry and warm winter conditions during this period. From October 2023 to 30 January 2024, the accumulated precipitation deficit increased, reaching historic levels of dryness with 40-55 per cent less precipitation than average, across eastern and northeastern regions, while moderate deficits of 25-40 per cent less precipitation than average occurred in western, northern and southeastern areas, and mild deficits of 10-25 per cent less precipitation than average in most other parts. Rainfed winter wheat areas, particularly in Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Jawzjan Kunduz, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul provinces of Afghanistan, were affected by dry conditions. Early blooming of stone fruits, primarily almonds, especially in northern, northeastern and central regions, may be adversely affected by late spring frost and freezing temperatures, due to warm temperatures in January 2024. Pasture availability

and planting in rainfed wheat/winter cereal cultivation areas are reported to be significantly lower compared to 2023, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. This could affect the lives of around 90 per cent of Afghans who live in rural areas and gain most of their income from agricultural activities.

With the onset of the spring season in Afghanistan and increased rainfall in February and March, concerns have diminished to some degree. However, concerns remain about a transition from El Niño to ENSO neutral in April 2024, followed by La Niña by autumn of 2024. La Niña events in Afghanistan typically bring below-normal snowfall/rainfall and warmer temperatures across the country, often resulting in drought-like conditions. Amidst these challenges, water and sanitation conditions in Afghanistan remain sub-optimal, with minimal prospects for immediate improvement. The cumulative impacts of prolonged drought-like conditions coupled with pre-existing vulnerabilities place immense strain on already fragile communities.

Given this context, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) decided in January 2024 to closely monitor the climate situation in the upcoming months to assess the risk of drought conditions. At the same time, it is important to enhance the preparedness of humanitarian partners to implement timely and risk-informed measures aimed at mitigating and addressing the humanitarian impact of a potential drought. This Early Action Plan, along with its integrated monitoring framework, serves this purpose.

2. Monitoring Framework

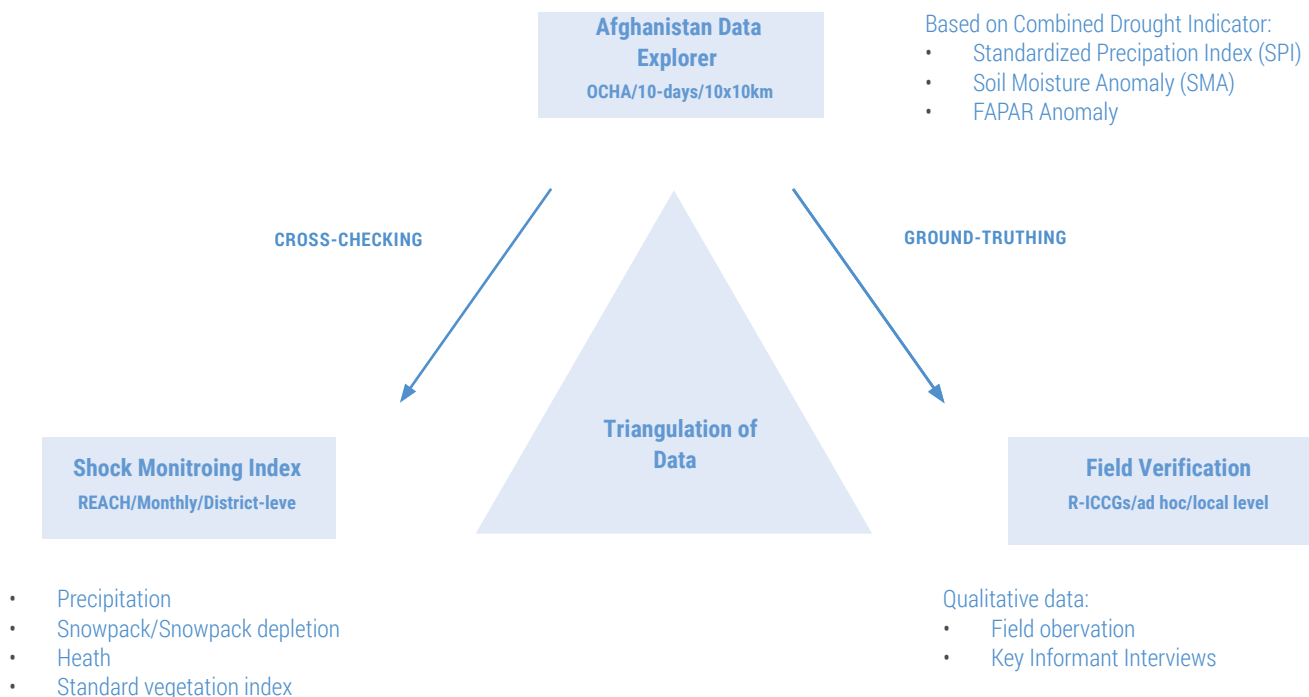
To increase the collective capacity to monitor and detect drought risks at an early stage, the monitoring framework triangulates information from different monitoring systems.

The Afghanistan Data Explorer (ADE), hosted by OCHA, applies the Combined Drought Indicator (CDI). The CDI¹ is an indicator for drought early warning, specifically designed to monitor agricultural drought. Through the combination of spatial patterns of precipitation, soil moisture and greenness vegetation anomalies, the CDI identifies areas at risk of agricultural drought, areas where the vegetation has already been affected by drought and areas in the process of recovery to normal conditions. The CDI has the capability to produce updates at ten-day intervals and at a spatial scale of 10x10 kilometres.

In addition to the ADE, the monitoring framework integrates the Shock Monitoring Index (SMI) developed by REACH. The SMI is designed to monitor various shocks, including drought. It provides updates on a monthly basis and employs comparable indicators to the ADE. However, it utilizes thresholds across these indicators to determine whether a drought shock has occurred at the district level.

In addition to these two mechanisms, which rely on remote sensing data, the framework includes field verification through the coordination architecture at both the national and sub-national level – through the inter-cluster coordination team (ICCT) and the regional-inter-cluster coordination groups (ICCGs). The ICCT and regional-ICCGs can initiate field observations and conduct key informant interviews in potential high-risk areas when required to ground-truth information received through the other systems. A potential ICCT field mission to northern Afghanistan is planned for mid-June 2024.

In the event of heightened risks for drought conditions, the HCT, ICCT, and R-ICCGs will receive regular monitoring updates based on this framework.



1) For more details, please see EDO Indicator Factsheet: https://drought.emergency.copernicus.eu/documents/factsheets/factsheet_combinedDroughtIndicator.pdf

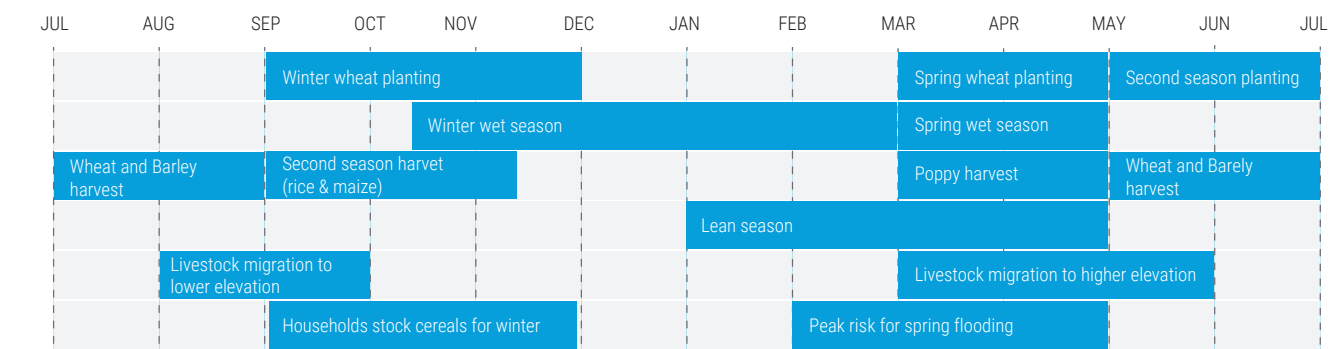
3. Early Warning/Early Action SOPs

| PROCEDURE | LEAD |
|--|---------------------|
| Monitor early signs of drought-like conditions through Afghanistan Data Explorer and field-level updates. | OCHA |
| Triangulate information with other monitoring systems, i.e. Shock Monitoring Index (SMI). | REACH |
| Inform ICCT and relevant regional ICCGs on monitoring results. ICCT and respective ICCG(s) to initiate verification for identified at-risk areas in a rotational manner, alternating their field missions. | OCHA, ICCT, R-ICCGs |
| Discuss monitoring results at the ICCT; review sectoral response readiness and decide on further action. | ICCT, Clusters |
| HCT to provide strategic guidance based on monitoring results and recommendations by the ICCT. | HCT |
| If required: Develop response plan at regional or national level depending on the scale of the anticipated emergency. | ICCT/R-ICCGs |

In the event the HCT sees the need for early action to mitigate the drought-like conditions or direct emergency support for one or more affected areas, it may consider the development of a dedicated response plan at local/regional or national

level depending on the scale of the emergency along with the production key advocacy messages for donors to facilitate resource mobilization.

4. Seasonal Calendar



SOURCE: FEWS NET

5. Strategic Objectives

1. Facilitate drought preparedness and timely interventions through improved climate monitoring systems.
2. Mitigate the potential impact of prolonged drought-like conditions through timely and effective early actions to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable groups and reduce the need for emergency activities.
3. Provide emergency life-saving and life-sustaining multi-sectoral assistance to the most affected communities to address the humanitarian consequences of drought.

6. Planning Scenario

Note: The following disaster scenario and planning figures, including overall and sectoral PiN, are based on historical drought information combined with recent vulnerability data. It is meant to facilitate contingency planning and preparedness for potential severe drought-like conditions in Afghanistan in the latter half of 2024. The scenario does not predict or forecast a most likely scenario. For monitoring and early warning purposes and to identify locations at high-risk over the course of 2024, the ICCT will be informed by regular updates based on the monitoring framework.

KEY PLANNING FIGURES

Low impact scenario: 4.5 million People in Need | 9 provinces affected (Severity 3)
High impact scenario: 13 million People in Need | 20 provinces affected (Severity 1-3)

| CLUSTER | NEEDS |
|---|--|
| EDUCATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Boys and girls need support to continue and maintain access to learning due to pressure to drop out of school as a result of having to spend time in search of water sources, involved in income generating activities related to crop failure, or other drought related disruptions.Boys and girls need safe and protective access to learning environments to reduce the risk of opportunistic diseases like cholera, Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD) and other waterborne illnesses due to inadequate access to safe water sources. |
| EMERGENCY SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS (ES-NFI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Emergency shelter and non-food items (NFI) needs owing to displacement and the influx of affected people into urban and peri-urban areas in search of basic services such as water, food, and opportunities for livelihood and income generation.Possible emergence of formal and informal settlements in urban and rural areas and the need for site selection, settlement planning and design to ensure coordinated, adequate, and centralized access to humanitarian services.Disruption to livelihoods, loss of income generating activities particularly for farmers and pastoralists due to failed crops and loss of livestock resulting in movements to other locations.Increased risks of insecure tenure rights including forced evictions or harassment, particularly among affected people who are displaced to formal and informal settlements due to legal barriers, discrimination, or lack of documentation. |
| FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE (FSAC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduced harvests will diminish the capacity to store food during the lean season, leading to decreased overall food consumption, particularly impacting vulnerable groups such as Kuchi communities, returnees, female-headed households, and those residing in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3+ areas.Drought may exacerbate food prices, heightening the threat of severe hunger and malnutrition.Farmers compelled to consume their entire harvest will be unable to reserve seeds for the subsequent planting season.Smallholder herders will face limitations in pasture availability and fodder storage, heightening the risk of livestock diseases. |

HEALTH

- Increased risk of waterborne diseases due to limited access to clean water.
- Access to comprehensive primary healthcare services and referral systems, especially in remote and rural areas affected by drought.
- Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the loss of livelihoods and displacement.

NUTRITION

- The nutritional well-being of children emerges as a concern, particularly during drought conditions, wherein food scarcity and restricted access to nourishing food can exacerbate malnutrition.
- Communities grappling with drought may encounter challenges in accessing vital nutrition services, including healthcare facilities, supplementary feeding programs, and clean water and sanitation amenities.
- Vulnerable groups, such as children under five, pregnant or lactating women, and residents of rural areas disproportionately impacted by prolonged dry spells, may already experience heightened rates of malnutrition, rendering them more susceptible to the adverse effects of drought.

PROTECTION

- The lack of basic needs or services, such as shelter, food, and household items, may drive families to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including exploitative labour, child marriages, school dropouts, accumulating family debts, and heightened psychological distress for children and their families. This situation also increases the risk of violence, including physical exploitation.
- Women and girls, forced to trek long distances in search of water and food, face heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV).
- Drought exacerbates conflicts over scarce resources, increasing tensions and the risk of domestic violence.
- Displacement often leads to family separation, resulting in unaccompanied and separated children who require identification, documentation, interim care, family tracing, and reunification services (case management services).
- Drought may displace populations to new areas contaminated with explosive ordnance (EO).
- Economic hardships worsened by drought may drive children and families to resort to collecting scrap metal as a harmful coping mechanism to sustain their livelihoods, potentially leading to explosive ordnance accidents/incidents and resulting in maiming or loss of life.
- Women-headed households are particularly affected due to income disruptions, restricted mobility, lack of access to labour, land, and capital, making it challenging to sustain basic survival for themselves and their families.

- Communities face water scarcity due to drying springs and diminishing groundwater sources, leading to challenges in accessing clean drinking water and water for other domestic purposes.
- In rural areas, problems accessing and maintaining water points in times of drought forces negative coping mechanism including use of unprotected wells, springs and surface water points. This increases the risk of water-borne and faecal-oral diseases.
- In urban areas, the impact of drought are increased by limited capacity for operation and maintenance of communal water networks.
- In drought-affected areas, limited access to sanitation leads to increased open defecation, raising the risk of faecal-oral diseases like acute watery diarrhea (AWD). The lack of safe, gender-segregated facilities particularly endangers vulnerable groups, including women and people with disabilities, exposing them to undignified conditions and gender-based violence (GBV).
- The scarcity of drinking water may increase socio-economic burdens on communities, as individuals are forced to purchase water from commercial suppliers.

7. Sector Plans

EDUCATION

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

60K

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

160K

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTION

- Mapping of schools and community-based education (CBE) facilities which could face challenges related to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (i.e. # of schools/CBE in priority provinces, # students enrolled and teachers).
- Developing key health and hygiene messages in coordination with Health Cluster and the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Working Group, including field testing in communities to ensure buy-in and relevance.
- Strengthen partnerships to deliver cross-sectoral/joint cluster services in schools and CBEs (e.g. school feeding and cash and voucher assistance [CVA] with WFP).
- Early engagement and coordination with Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Departments, and District Education Departments on priority response activities.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Conduct awareness raising with children and communities on efficient water usage, preventing wastage, and other key messages.
- Distribution of WASH supplies (water tanks, soap, etc.) and water to schools and CBEs, favouring local solutions such as animal transportation in areas where water trucking is not sustainable.
- Emergency school feeding or cash and voucher assistance to children most in need, in partnership with WFP.
- Enabling teachers to continue teaching by payment of salaries and support to maintain livelihood opportunities.
- Ensure hygiene promotion in schools to minimize the risk of AWD/cholera.

EMERGENCY SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

157K

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

433K

PREPAREDNESS

- Undertake an inventory of available resources (stockpiles, partners operational, financial and logistics capacities both in cash and in kind).
- Preparation of cluster response plan (including identifying the population at risk, geographical areas, operating partners, etc.).
- Capacity-building of cluster members through orientations on the identified risk zones, established sub national coordination structures and alert trigger mechanisms, anticipated cluster priority needs and gaps as appropriate.
- Pre-identify partner staff at provincial level available to support and volunteer staff for joint and sector specific assessment teams.
- Preposition shelter kits and NFIs at regional and provincial level and shift supplies from region-to-region based on ongoing risk analysis. Equally define and encourage partners to replenish the stockpiles to maintain minimum levels in high-risk provinces.
- Undertake market assessment to understand the viability of cash transfer programmes in at-risk areas particularly for NFIs, construction materials, and the availability of skilled and unskilled labour.
- Undertake rapid rental market assessment in at-risk urban areas to ascertain their absorption capacities for cash for rent assistance.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Joint advocacy and technical support to the DfA on site selection and settlement design of land for settlement of displaced populations – thus ensuring that basic technical criteria of accessibility, security, topography, water resources, absorption capacity, and adequate terrain for proper sanitation facilities are taken into consideration while selecting potential sites.
- Distribute standard emergency shelter kits, i.e. family sized tents and two pieces of plastic tarpaulin for families residing in formal settlements.
- Provide short-term and long-term rental subsidy for affected vulnerable people displaced to urban areas.
- Provide host subsidy support to affected families residing with relatives and friends in rural and urban areas.
- Distribute standard emergency NFI kits to displaced families (in cash or kind).
- Coordinate with the WASH cluster in the design of emerging formal and informal settlements to ensure centralized access to services including water points, location of sanitation corridors, etc.

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

3.65M

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

9.3M

PREPAREDNESS

- Enhanced early warning system to scale-up drought anticipatory action monitoring and utilize remote sensing and early warning systems to identify food insecure hotspots promptly.
- Creation of non-perishable buffer stocks to be used in the time of slow-onset emergencies.
- Development of rapid assessment tools for each type of slow-onset emergency.
- Monitor markets and food prices.
- Raise awareness on drought risks and mitigation measures to vulnerable populations.
- Provide early warning messaging in relevant areas.

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTIONS

- Provide conditional assistance/food assistance for assets that enhance resilience and productive capacity, such as water catchment ponds.
- Distribute unconditional food or cash transfer for food basket.
- Provide unconditional vouchers for agricultural inputs.
- Distribute drought-resistant seeds and farming tools.
- Early warning messaging and hot spot analysis on a regular basis.
- Awareness-raising on drought risks and mitigation measures.
- Markets and price monitoring.
- Provide livestock protection package and anticipatory animal health support.
- Building and rehabilitation of water infrastructure.
- Pest control initiatives.
- Technical Training to relevant stakeholders on climate change mitigation.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Distribute general food assistance to vulnerable drought-affected people in identified hotspots. Depending on the functionality of markets, assistance will be provided either in-kind or in cash.
- Distribute wheat production package (certified wheat seeds and fertilizers).
- Provide livestock support (livestock feed, water trucking, and poultry support).
- Carcass disposal of animals killed during the disaster.
- Home gardening package (vegetable seeds, fertilizer, and small gardening tools). The benefits include increased household nutrition, dietary diversification, generate extra income designed for women and women headed households.

HEALTH

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

2.1M

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

5M

PREPAREDNESS

- Stockpile medical kits, equipment, medicines, and diagnostic supplies in strategic locations for rapid deployment during emergencies.
- Conduct a public health vulnerability risk assessment and map available resources and capacities, including identifying key partners and stakeholders.

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTIONS

- Procurement and prepositioning of medical supplies and equipment in the affected regions.
- Capacity building of healthcare workers on the health risks associated with drought, the management of communicable diseases, and emergency reproductive health.
- Strengthen disease surveillance systems to monitor disease trends and effectively detect and respond to outbreaks.
- Conduct RCCE activities to educate communities on mitigating the risks of communicable diseases during drought and promoting the importance of hygiene practices.
- Conduct vaccination campaigns in high-risk areas to prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases, such as measles and coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
- Strengthen referral mechanisms to support the timely transfer of patients with complications.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Maintain access to integrated primary healthcare services, including reproductive health and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), through the deployment of new health facilities or support to existing healthcare facilities.
- Distribute medical kits, equipment, medicines, and diagnostic supplies.
- Deploy surveillance support teams (SSTs) to areas reporting outbreaks of infectious diseases.
- Conduct health education campaigns to raise awareness about mitigating the risks of communicable diseases, promoting hygiene practices, and informing communities about available health services.

NUTRITION

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

418K

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

1M

PREPAREDNESS

- Supplies prepositioning: ensure supplementary food supplies are available in advance in areas likely to be affected by drought.
- Partner identification: ensure the partners with capacities are identified and available in advance in drought prone areas.

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTIONS

- Contribute to joint dissemination of WASH, Health, and Nutrition messages to prevent waterborne diseases and malnutrition.
- Establishment/maintenance of community and facility-based nutrition surveillance systems to monitor the nutrition status of children and pregnant and lactating women.
- Preventive initiatives: through the blanket supplementary feeding (BSF), ensure immediate access to nutritious food for vulnerable populations at risk.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Screening of children under five to assess their nutritional status in the affected areas.
- Provide outpatient department (OPD) services for the severely and moderately malnourished children (OPD-SAM and OPD-MAM) and pregnant and lactating women (PLW).
- Strengthen referral system between community and health facilities and provide cash for referral of complicated severe acute malnutrition to In-patient department (IPD) Services (IPD-SAM).
- Provide counselling services on Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition to the primary caregivers of children aged 0-23 months in the affected areas.
- Provision of BSF support to children under five and PLWs to prevent spikes in acute malnutrition, in coordination with FSAC partners, complementing food assistance.
- Distribution of multiple micronutrients powder for the children aged 6- 59 months in the affected areas to support complementary feeding.
- Distribution of multiple micronutrient supplements for pregnant and lactating women in antenatal and postnatal care visits to prevent micronutrient deficiency and its consequences on their children.
- Distribution of iron folic acid for adolescent girls to prevent anaemia and its consequences.
- Awareness raising on the prevention of unsolicited donations and distribution of breast milk substitute at the very early days of the emergency declaration complicated SAM cases and children under six months who need in IPD-SAM services.

PROTECTION (INCLUDING SUB-CLUSTERS AND AORS)

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

1.2M

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

2.66M

PREPAREDNESS

- Preparedness and pre-positioning of supplies/stocks required for timely and efficient responses.
- Dignity kits pipeline matrix to preposition supplies by identifying stockpile and gaps to guide response and inform distribution plan during the response period.
- Continue updating service mapping to direct vulnerable women and girls including GBV survivors to timely, quality and confidential services.

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTIONS

- Establishment/strengthening of child protection mechanisms, e.g. child protection committees, Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) and elder women's leaders.
- Build capacity of members of community structures on actions to address child protection issues, including identification, referral pathways and reporting mechanisms.
- Mobilize and engage communities in awareness-raising, promotion of child rights and protection services.
- Build children's resilience's through life skills and vocational skills trainings programmes.
- Distribution of maps and information regarding areas contaminated with EO to humanitarian actors and communities in locations affected by drought.
- EO assessments in anticipation of population movements and displacements. Training of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) teams, rapid response teams, before displacement and actual response.
- Build and sustain capacity of staff on core concepts, guiding principles, GBV in emergencies response and referrals to strengthen capacity and ensure timely and quality service delivery to the beneficiaries.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

- Provision of basic social services for children and referral to other specialized services through case management (MHPSS, livelihood, education, food, etc.)
- Conduct life skills and vocational trainings for adolescent boys and girls for empowerment and self-reliance.
- Provision of EORE to affected population and deployment of mine action quick response teams to respond to the urgent mine action requests/tasks.
- Distribution of dignity kits to displaced women and girls to maintain their dignity during the time of crisis/emergency.
- Promote access to available services to ensure people in need access services in time and know where to find the services.
- Provision of multi-sectoral activities which includes referral to medical and PSS support for holistic care which will ensure integrated support to promote their overall well-being, healing, and recovery.

WASH

PEOPLE IN NEED (LOW IMPACT SCENARIO)

4.4M

PEOPLE IN NEED (HIGH IMPACT SCENARIO)

12.6M

PREPAREDNESS

- Advanced pre-positioning of WASH core supplies combined with simulation exercises of releasing and routing the supplies in drought risk areas.

MITIGATION/EARLY ACTION

Water access, source protection, and conservation measures:

- Rehabilitating the communities' current sources of water and implement measures to protect and preserve remaining water sources, such as springs and groundwater, to ensure continued access to clean water for communities. Activities may include watershed management and community-based water resource management initiatives.
- Rapid assessments of major urban water networks and early warning systems on groundwater scarcity risks, particularly in areas most affected by La Niña conditions.
- Promote water conservation practices at the community level to minimize wastage and maximize the efficient use of available resources.
- Encourage the adoption of rainwater/snow harvesting techniques, water reuse, and efficient irrigation methods to optimise water usage.

Rehabilitation of sanitation infrastructure, WASH NFIs, and hygiene promotion:

- Prioritise the rehabilitation and repair of sanitation facilities, including latrines and handwashing stations, in drought-affected communities, based on rapid assessments to identify damaged or non-functional sanitation infrastructure.
- Implement community-led sanitation initiatives, engaging communities in the construction and maintenance of facilities to encourage ownership and sustainability.
- Distribute WASH NFIs and culturally appropriate hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and hygiene supplies to vulnerable households and communities based on identified hygiene needs of different population groups.
- Alongside distribution, launch hygiene promotion campaigns to disseminate information on disease prevention, and proper sanitation practices.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Emergency water supply:

- Establish emergency water supply systems, such as water purification and water trucking as a last resort to provide immediate relief to communities facing acute water shortages.
- Deploy water storage tanks or bladder tanks in strategic locations to store and distribute emergency water supplies to affected communities.
- Conduct rapid assessments to identify alternative water sources, such as groundwater wells or surface water sources, to supplement existing water supplies during drought emergencies.

CROSS-CUTTING AREAS:

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP), GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION (GIHA), DISABILITY INCLUSION, AND PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PSEA-H)

- To ensure that community preferences effectively shape the humanitarian response, the AAP Working Group will establish a dedicated monitoring mechanism. This mechanism will seamlessly integrate with the existing Community Voices and Accountability Platform, incorporating vital components such as PSEA, Gender, and Inclusion.
- Develop and distribute key messages and awareness materials regarding access to humanitarian services, risks, vulnerabilities, and existing feedback and complaints mechanisms, ensuring accessibility for all affected population groups, including persons with disabilities. Simultaneously, undertake awareness-raising activities and provide training for frontline responders on available toolkits, guidance, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure a cohesive approach among humanitarian partners, paying particular attention to supporting PSEA focal points in ensuring the safe intake and referral of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).
- Provide support for joint assessments aimed at identifying the distinct needs of at-risk and marginalized groups, including women, girls, women-headed households, persons with disabilities, and older persons. Ensure accurate recognition and addressing of their specific challenges while removing barriers to inclusion. This may involve conducting SEA risk assessments, community voices assessments, consultations with organizations of persons with disabilities, and issuing gender alerts to highlight unique needs, risks, and gendered and disability-related barriers to access.
- Collaboratively assist Clusters and their partners in customizing approaches to effectively and securely reach all demographics, with a particular emphasis on people with disabilities, women, girls, and women-headed households. This support aims to ensure that aid efforts are inclusive and accessible to those most in need.
- Provide assistance to Clusters in devising safe strategies for involving women staff in all aspects of the humanitarian response to the drought, including active participation in related initiatives. Collaborate with the Humanitarian Access Working Group (HAWG) to advocate for the active involvement of women staff. Additionally, support Cluster partners in strengthening the engagement of organizations representing persons with disabilities and other representative groups in the humanitarian response.
- The Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Coordinator to collaborate with partners to develop mechanisms aimed at safeguarding female staff from sexual harassment and misconduct within the humanitarian response context. This comprehensive approach includes ongoing training, support, and the establishment of reporting mechanisms to prioritize their safety and well-being.
- Engage with clusters on joint monitoring missions to ensure the safe accessibility of essential services and aid for all at-risk and marginalized populations. These missions play a vital role in tracking and ensuring the well-being of at-risk groups throughout the provision of assistance.

In early 2024, El Niño conditions were anticipated to bring favorable weather to Afghanistan in the form of increased snow and rainfall. However, the country experienced unexpectedly warm winter weather and low precipitation during this period, leading to record-low levels of snow water across the nation in January. Most regions in the northeast, east, and some parts of southern provinces received only 45 to 60 percent of the average precipitation, disrupting the planting of winter wheat and impacting livestock health. In mid-February, rainfall and subsequent snowfall volumes began to increase, facilitating the growth of winter wheat and aiding in the planting of spring wheat.

Affected Regions:

In January, dry spell conditions gradually emerged in the Western, Northern, and North Eastern regions of the country, intensifying in severity in these areas throughout February and March. The provinces most severely impacted were **Hirat, Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan, Baghlan, and Kunduz**.

Throughout February and March, regions that were moderately affected, such as the southern parts of Hirat, Farah, Nimroz, Hilmand, and most areas of Kandahar, began to recover from drought conditions. However, additional pockets of dry spell developed simultaneously in **Uruzgan and Kandahar** (Southern Region), as well as **Nangahar and Kunar** (Eastern Region).

Methodology:

The Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) for Afghanistan is adapted from a methodology used by [Copernicus European Drought Observatory \(EDO\)](#) and is an indicator for drought early warning designed to monitor areas that are affected or at risk of agricultural drought. The CDI combines three parameters – rainfall, soil moisture, and plant health, based on remote sensing data to flag areas as:

Watch: Rainfall deficit (measured over one-month and three-month periods)

Warning: Low soil moisture content, usually linked with rainfall deficit (measured over a one-month period)

Alert: Negative anomaly of vegetation growth, usually linked with rainfall deficit and low soil moisture (measured over a ten-day period)

All indicators are measured as change from average conditions based on long term data. In addition to the three conditions, CDI also identifies areas that show recovery from the above conditions. The indicator is updated every month for each ten-day period in the month. The same methodology has also been adopted for the Horn of Africa in the [East Africa Drought Watch](#) platform.

Data sources: Standard Precipitation Index (SPI) – calculated by OCHA based on UCSB/CHC [CHIRPS Daily](#) rainfall data; Soil moisture (SMA) and Fraction of Absorbed Photosynthetically Active Radiation (fAPAR) anomalies – [Copernicus Global Drought Observatory](#)



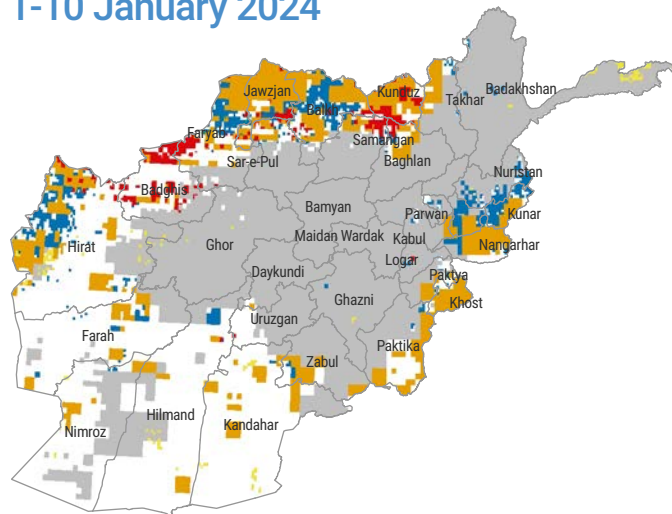
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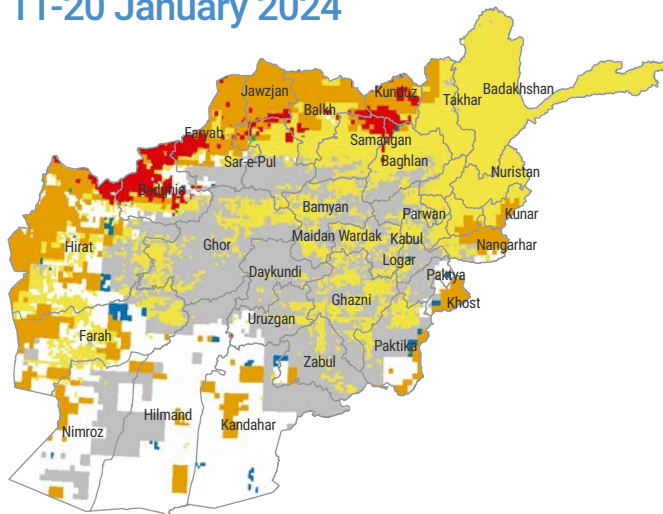
Dry Spells Monitoring (Jan - Feb 2024)

Afghanistan: Dry Spell Monitoring | 2

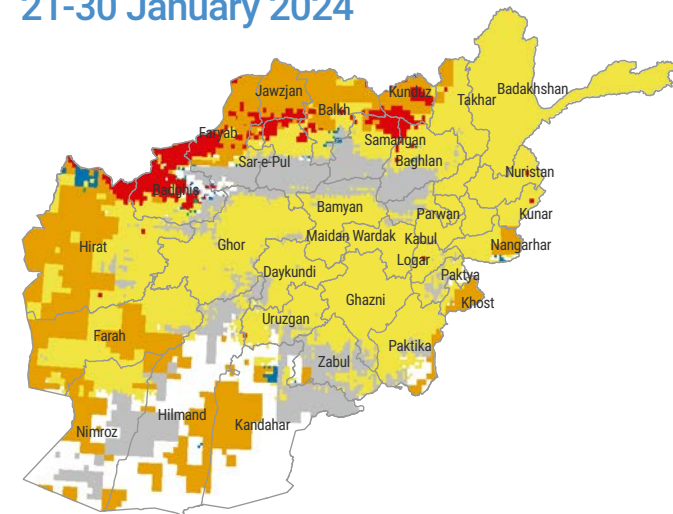
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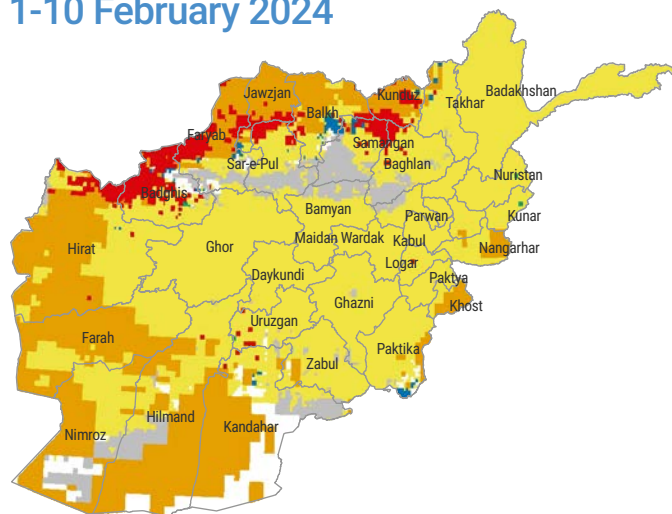
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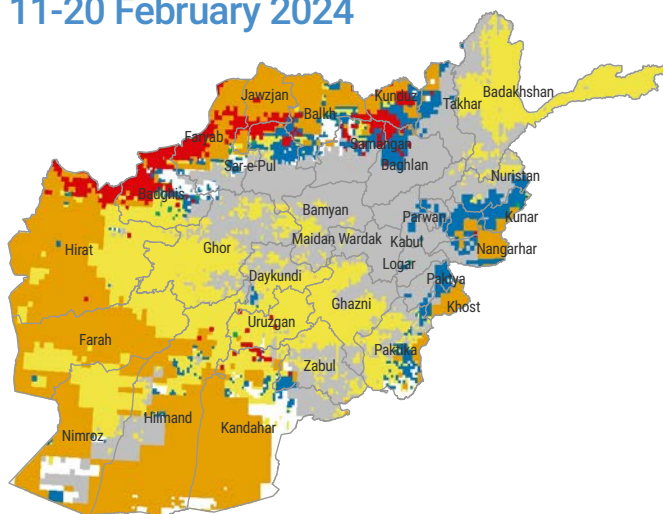
21-30 January 2024



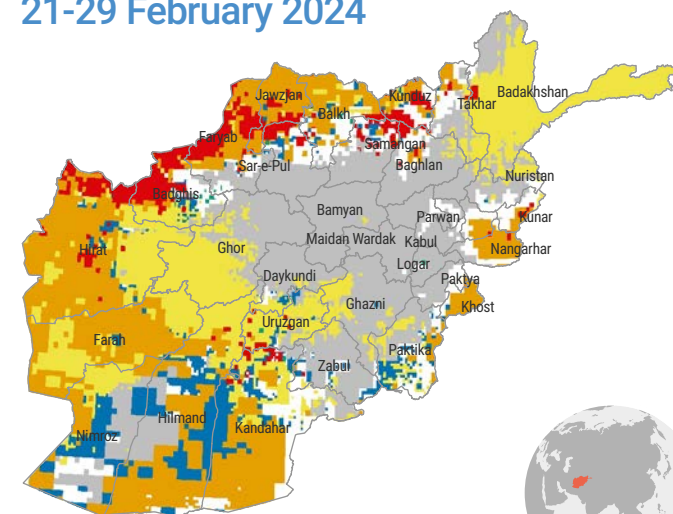
1-10 February 2024



11-20 February 2024



21-29 February 2024



Combined Drought Indicator (CDI)

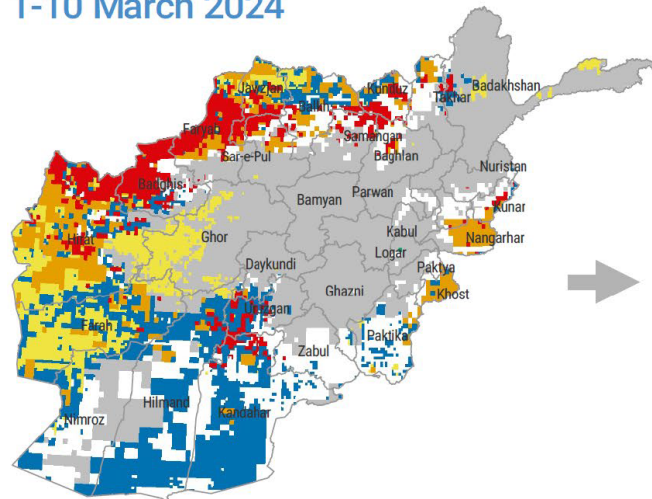
 No drought
 Watch
 Warning
 Alert
 Recovery
 Temporary soil moisture recovery
 Temporary vegetation recovery
 No data

0) No drought: Normal conditions **1) Watch:** Precipitation deficit **2) Warning:** Negative soil moisture anomaly, usually linked with precipitation deficit **3) Alert:** Negative anomaly of vegetation growth, usually linked with precipitation deficit and negative soil moisture anomaly **4) Recovery:** After a drought episode, both meteorological conditions and vegetation growth return to normal **5) Temporary Soil Moisture recovery:** After a drought episode, soil moisture conditions are above the drought threshold but not enough to consider the episode closed **6) Temporary vegetation recovery:** After a drought episode, vegetation conditions are above the drought threshold but not enough to consider the episode closed **7) No data** or no drought.

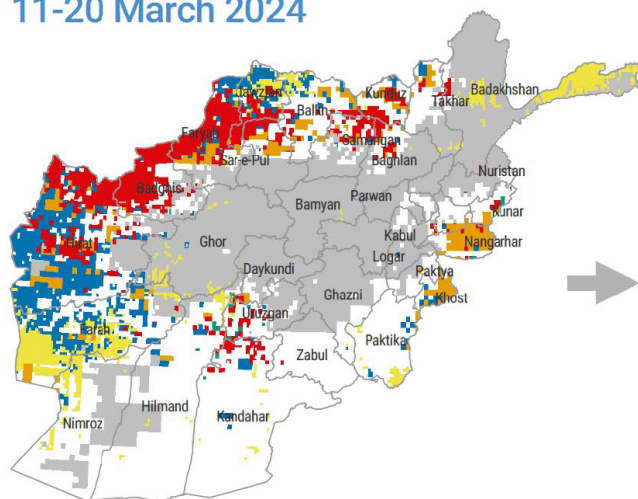
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



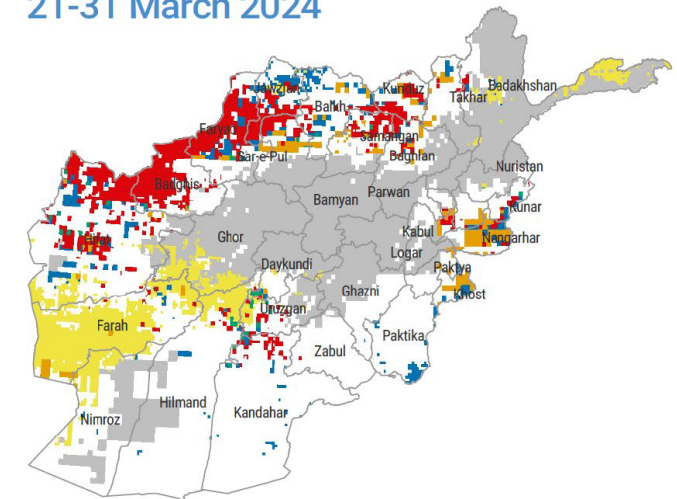
1-10 March 2024



11-20 March 2024



21-31 March 2024



Combined Drought Indicator (CDI)

□ No drought
 □ Watch
 □ Warning
 □ Alert
 □ Recovery
 □ Temporary soil moisture recovery
 □ Temporary vegetation recovery
 □ No data

0) No drought: Normal conditions **1) Watch:** Precipitation deficit **2) Warning:** Negative soil moisture anomaly, usually linked with precipitation deficit **3) Alert:** Negative anomaly of vegetation growth, usually linked with precipitation deficit and negative soil moisture anomaly **4) Recovery:** After a drought episode, both meteorological conditions and vegetation growth return to normal **5) Temporary Soil Moisture recovery:** After a drought episode, soil moisture conditions are above the drought threshold but not enough to consider the episode closed **6) Temporary vegetation recovery:** After a drought episode, vegetation conditions are above the drought threshold but not enough to consider the episode closed **7) No data:** No data or no drought. **Data sources:** SPI - calculated by OCHA based on [CHIRPS Daily](#); soil moisture and fAPAR anomalies - [Copernicus Global Drought Observatory](#). The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.



AFGHANISTAN

Slow-Onset Early Action Plan for Drought

Drought Preparedness
May 2024