

ANNUAL REPORT
2025
AFGHANISTAN



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2025

ANNUAL REPORT

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Delivery of drought resilient seeds
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Acronyms

AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
ACG	Afghanistan Coordination Group
AFN	Afghan Afghani (national currency)
ARTF	Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund
ATS	Associazione Temporanea di Scopo - Temporary Purpose Association
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EMERGE	Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORSAT	Facilitating Opportunities through Revitalization of Settlements and Traditional Assets
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRP	Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
OCHA / UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SAGAS	Department of History, Archaeology, Geography, Fine and Performing Arts – University of Florence
STFA	Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan
TSE	Third Sector Entity
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASC	United Nations General Assembly and Security Council
UN Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSFA	United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WPR	World Population Review



Afghanistan: Geo-Political Context

01

Bamiyan - Gholghola
Photo Credits: UNESCO

Afghanistan: Geo-Political Context

Afghanistan is a landlocked, mountainous country located in south-central Asia, in a geopolitically strategic position. It serves as a crossroads linking West Asia, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent.

Afghanistan shares borders with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; it also borders with China through the Wakhan Corridor, which connects to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

The **Hindu Kush Mountain range**, the westernmost extension of the Himalayan system, dominates the Country's rugged terrain, stretching from east to west across the entire National territory. The **Pamir Mountains** extend from Northeastern Afghanistan towards Tajikistan and China. Both mountain systems feature numerous high-altitude passes which, throughout history, have formed a strategic network of major importance for trade routes.

Afghanistan's geographical position has historically made it **one of the main commercial and migratory crossroads of Central Asia**. Over the centuries, communities characterised by different religions, languages, and ethnic identities have coexisted within the same territory. In the past, Afghanistan hosted Hindu, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian kingdoms, and it continues today to be marked by significant

and dynamic diversity. The country is composed of numerous tribal and ethnic groups, the main ones being Pashtun (42%), Tajik (27%), Hazara (9%), Uzbek (9%), Aimaq (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baloch (2%), Nuristani and Qizilbash (4%).

An element shared by the vast majority of the Afghan population is the **Islamic religion**. It is estimated that around 80% of the population follows Sunni Islam, while 19% adheres to Shia Islam, and the remaining 1% belongs to other religions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Baha'i Faith, and Judaism.

For 2025, the population was estimated at **46 million inhabitants** (UNOCHA, 2024)¹. The capital city of Kabul is the country's main urban centre. The official languages are Afghan Persian (Dari), spoken by approximately 77% of the population, and Pashto, spoken by around 48% (WPR, 2026)².

The climate is characterized by very cold winters and extremely hot summers. In addition, the territory lies along a major tectonic fault line, making it highly prone to frequent seismic events.

Afghanistan is a country rich in natural resources, including oil and natural gas, copper, gold, lithium, and precious stones such as emeralds and lapis lazuli.

Since 15 August 2021, following the Taliban's takeover and the establishment of the

1. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan](#). 2024

2. World Population Review (WPR). [What Languages do People Speak in Afghanistan?](#) Retrieved March 30, 2026



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Map created in Sep 2013.

UN OCHA, 2025³

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Country's institutional and political framework has undergone significant changes, with far-reaching consequences for its external relations. The *de facto* Authorities have not been recognised to date by the United Nations or the international community, with the exception of the Russian Federation. Major donor Countries, including Italy, participate in the Doha Process as a multilateral engagement platform aimed at maintaining a critical dialogue and supporting the Country's humanitarian situation.

As of 1 January 2022, the competencies for Afghanistan portfolio have been transferred from AICS Kabul to AICS Islamabad, in coordination with the activities of the diplomatic mission operating from Doha.

3. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan: Location Map \(2024\)](#). 2025



Socio-Economic Context

02

Distribution of winterisation kits and cash to 450 vulnerable families across three remote villages in Kabul
Photo Credits: INTERSOS / Mohammad Hasib Hazinyar

2

Socio-Economic Context

The economic situation in Afghanistan is currently characterized by a transition towards a **fragile equilibrium**. This condition traps the Country in a state of **persistent poverty**, as any modest economic gains are systematically offset by structural factors such as **population growth, migratory flows, and natural disasters**.

Following the events of August 2021, the economy **contracted by 27%** between 2021 and 2022 (UNDP, 2025)⁴. This collapse was triggered by a “triple shock”:

1. the immediate cessation of international funding supporting institutions,
2. the freezing of approximately USD 9 billion in foreign exchange reserves, and
3. the resulting exclusion of the national banking system from the international financial system (WB, 2025)⁵.

Although the economy has shown a recovery trend since the 2022–2023 biennium, with the economy showing signs of **recovery and growing between 2.7% and 4%**, the **overall economic activity remains approximately 20–25% below 2020 levels** (WB, 2025)⁶.

For fiscal year 2025, initial growth promised to reach 4.3% (WB, 2025)⁷. However, this projection proved largely misleading, as it was driven by a temporary increase in domestic consumption linked to basic subsistence needs among



Photo Credits: UNESCO

more than 2.9 million returnees from Iran and Pakistan. (UNHCR, 2026)⁸. Since the continued inflow of returnees has driven population growth to 8.6%, exceeding the rate of economic growth, **the real GDP per capita has in fact declined by 4%** (WB, 2025)⁹. Consequently, although the economy shows partial growth, overall poverty has increased.

On the taxation front, the *de facto* government has demonstrated a **strict and centralized revenue collection capacity**, reaching approximately USD 363.4 million (AFN 24.1 billion) as of December 2025 (WB, 2025)¹⁰. Despite these results, public expenditure remains heavily unbalanced: **over 90% of the budget is absorbed by operational costs and security spending**, effectively leaving no domestic resources for development projects, social services, and infrastructure maintenance

4. UNDP. [Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review \(ASER\)](#). 2025
 5. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025
 6. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025
 7. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025
 8. UNHCR. [2025 Afghan Returns - One Year Recap](#). 24 February 2026
 9. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025
 10. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Economic Monitor \(AEM\)](#). December 2025



(WB, 2025)¹¹. The stability of the national currency also remains precariously dependent on the continued inflow of United Nations cash liquidity intended for humanitarian interventions (WB, 2025)¹².

In short, financial isolation limits foreign investment and access to markets, while a cash-based informal economy undermines efficiency. Political uncertainty and restrictive social policies, particularly regarding women's education and employment, have a detrimental impact on human capital. Rapid population growth, driven by returns from Iran and Pakistan, places additional pressure on public services and the labour market, further deepening poverty. Weak energy and transport infrastructure also continues to constrain industrial and commercial activity.

Without significant reforms to improve governance, promote private sector growth, and restore international confidence, Afghanistan risks prolonged stagnation, increasing vulnerability, and continued dependence on humanitarian aid.

2.1 Agricultural Sector: Resilience in a Context of Structural Decline

The agricultural sector continues to represent the main lifeline of the Afghan economy, providing direct or indirect livelihoods for nearly 80% of the population (WB, 2025)¹³. The sector showed mixed trends during 2025: while certain products such as dried fruit reached historically high levels, the overall economic value of rural production continued to stagnate.

11. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025

12. UNDP. [Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review \(ASER\)](#). 2025

13. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Economic Monitor \(AEM\)](#). December 2025

In 2025 the country recorded a record wheat harvest of 4.9 million tonnes. This outcome was mainly driven by a substantial international effort that provided certified seeds and fertilisers to more than 2.3 million farmers. Despite this success in grain production, the agricultural sector contracted by 0.5%, following a 6% increase in 2024 (WB, 2025)¹⁴, due to two critical factors:

1. The ban on opium poppy cultivation: enforcement of the ban is seeking to

dismantle the world's largest illicit economy. This is estimated to have caused an annual reduction in rural income of approximately USD 1 billion (UNDP, 2025)¹⁵.

2. Climate vulnerability and infrastructure: Afghanistan is currently the third most climate-vulnerable country in the world. Agricultural productivity continues to be constrained by the degradation of traditional irrigation systems (karez) and the lack of modern water resource management (IMF, 2025)¹⁶.

Focus - Returns and Sustainability: A Demographic Shock

The year 2025 was marked by a “return crisis” of historic proportions. In 2025, 2.9 million Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan. Returnees accounted for a substantial share of population movements during the year. In particular, under the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan (IFRP), launched by Pakistan in 2023, over one million Afghan nationals returned from Pakistan during 2025, while hundreds of thousands also returned from Iran (UNHCR, 2026)¹⁷.

The sudden population increase has created an unsustainable burden on local communities, which are already affected by food and water shortages. Returnees often arrive without assets and enter a stagnant labour market, exerting downward pressure on wages and contributing to an increase in the national poverty rate (OPHI, UNDP, 2025)¹⁸.

14. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). November 2025

15. UNDP. [Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review \(ASER\)](#). 2025

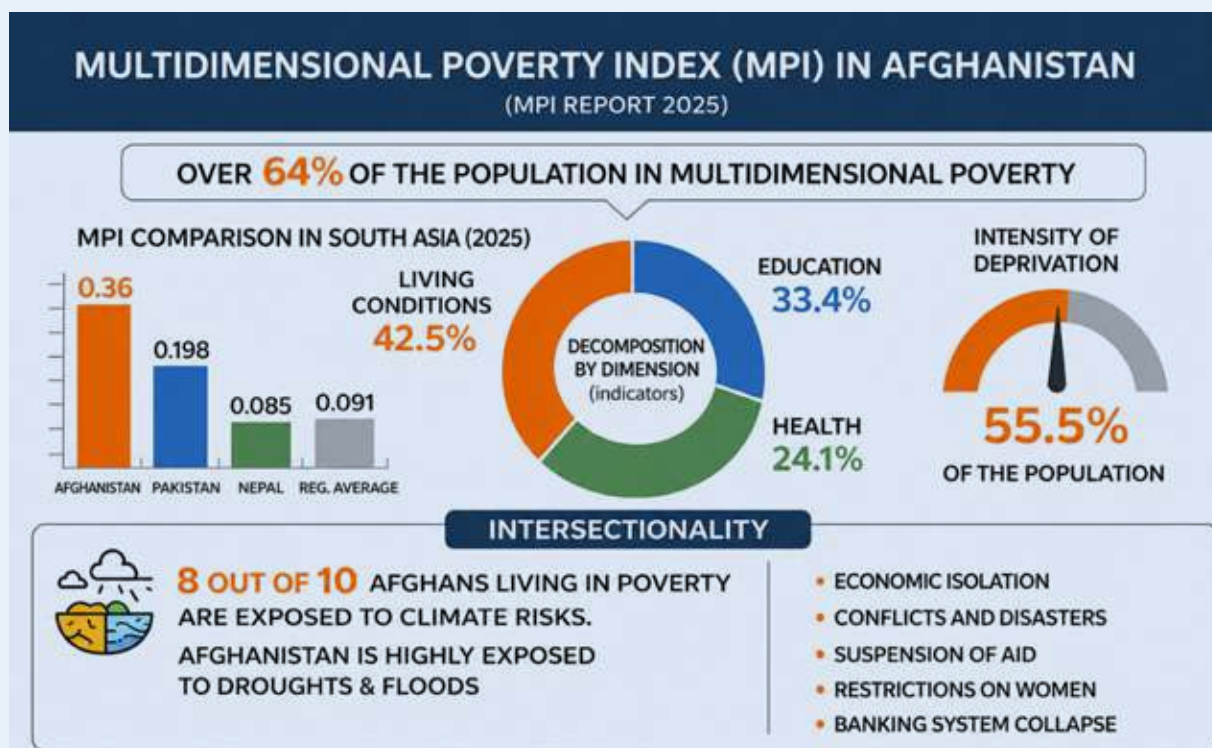
16. IMF. [Working Paper: Afghan Exodus](#). 2025

17. UNHCR. [2025 Afghan Returns - One Year Recap](#). February 24, 2026

18. Traditional methods of calculating poverty rates consider only people living on less than \$2.15 per day in low-income countries. However, the UNDP guidance note on the 2025 Multidimensional Poverty Index highlights that, in the case of Afghanistan, income alone is not sufficient to fully capture the reality of poverty. An individual may earn \$3 per day and still lack access to education, clean drinking water, and electricity, while also being exposed to severe forms of malnutrition. The index captures this intersectional dimension of poverty, which is not reflected in measurements based solely on income thresholds.

Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), UNDP. [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025. Overlapping Hardships: Poverty and Climate Hazards](#). 2025 and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford. [Global MPI Country Briefing: Afghanistan \(South Asia\)](#). 2025

Focus – Multidimensional Poverty in Afghanistan



Infographic: AICS Islamabad. Source: [2025 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index \(MPI\) Report](#)

According to the Global Index of Multidimensional Poverty 2025 (OPHI, 2025)¹⁹, Afghanistan remains the poorest country in South Asia, characterised by “**deep and severe**” levels of deprivation that go far beyond income poverty alone.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index operates on a scale from 0 to 1, where zero represents the absence of poverty. A higher score therefore indicates worse living conditions. With a value of 0.36, Afghanistan shows an extremely critical level of poverty compared to its neighbors: its index is nearly double that of Pakistan (0.198) and more than four times higher than that of Nepal (0.085), highlighting a crisis of exceptional proportions.

The most significant finding emerges from the comparison with the regional average (0.091): Afghanistan’s score is almost four times higher than this value. This stark disparity confirms that the Country is an alarming case in South Asia, with poverty that is not only more widespread but also much deeper. This gap reflects severe structural deficiencies that far exceed the poverty levels observed across the rest of the region.

19. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford. [Global MPI Country Briefing 2025: Afghanistan \(South Asia\)](#). 2025

Key indicators:

- **Poverty rate:** more than **64% of the population** lives in multidimensional poverty.
- **Deprivation intensity: 55.5%.** This means that people in a state of poverty are deprived of **more than half of the aspects analyzed by the indicators considered** relating to health, education and living conditions.

2.2. Challenges and Constraints

2.2.1. Economic Challenges: Isolation and Brain Drain

The economy remains constrained by exclusion from the international banking system. In the absence of a fully operational central bank capable of conducting monetary policy or acting as a lender of last resort, the private sector has no access to credit for investment. Private investment contributes only 0.3 percentage points to GDP growth (WB, 2025)²⁰, reflecting profound investor uncertainty. At the same time, the country is experiencing a massive “brain drain”: according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the exodus of skilled professionals is eroding the human capital essential for any future economic recovery (IMF, 2025)²¹.

2.2.2. Livelihood Opportunities: The Unemployment Crisis

The labour market is in a state of collapse. The IMF estimates that 7.8 million Afghans have emigrated as economic workers abroad as of

now, a 20% increase from 2021 (IMF, 2025)²². A clear shift is observed in the Country from stable wage employment to precarious forms of work and self-employment. This “informalization” of work implies that even those who work often fall into the category of working poor, with incomes well below the cost of a minimum food basket (ICRC, 2023)²³.

The situation of women represents a catastrophic loss of human potential. The 2024 “Law on Vice and Virtue” has further deepened the exclusion of women from public life, including the continuation of bans on secondary and tertiary education. According to UNDP estimates, excluding women from the labor market results in an annual GDP loss ranging between USD 600 million to 1 billion. The labor force participation gap between male-headed and female-headed households has widened to 21 percentage points (UNDP, 2025)²⁴.

2.2.3. Climate Shocks: A Recurring Emergency

Afghanistan ranks 15th lowest globally in climate

20. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025

21. IMF. [Working Paper: Afghan Exodus](#). 2025

22. IMF. [Working Paper: Afghan Exodus](#). 2025

23. In Afghanistan, many informal workers earn around 100–150 AFN per day (approximately USD 1.3–2.2), while the monthly cost of a basic food basket is about 6,300 AFN (USD 94), showing that even those who are employed often remain working poor. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). [Afghanistan: Facing an uncertain economic future and persistent unemployment](#). 2023

24. UNDP. [Afghanistan Socio-Economic Review \(ASER\)](#). 2025

disaster response capacity (R. Gupta et al., 2025)²⁵.

In August 2025, a magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan, causing over 2,000 deaths and affecting up to 1.3 million people. Later, on 3rd November 2025, a second earthquake of magnitude 6.2–6.3 hit Northern Afghanistan, resulting in more than 30 deaths,

hundreds of injuries, and severe damage to homes and infrastructure, particularly in the Balkh and Samangan provinces, further aggravating the humanitarian crisis.

These environmental shocks have resulted in a recurrent crisis condition, with 6.3 million internally displaced persons (WB, 2025)²⁶.

Focus – Earthquake in Eastern Afghanistan - AICS Humanitarian Response



On **31st August 2025**, a **magnitude 6 earthquake**, followed by numerous aftershocks, struck the Eastern Provinces of **Nangarhar and Kunar**, causing **at least 2,164 deaths** and widespread destruction of homes, particularly along mountain slopes and in valley areas (UNOCHA, 2025)²⁷. The earthquake also severely damaged **essential infrastructure**, including health and education facilities, water networks, power lines, and telecommunications systems, exacerbating an already severely compromised humanitarian situation.

25. R.Gupta et al. [Working Paper: Afghan Exodus](#). 2025

26. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025

27. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan: Flash Update #5 Earthquake in Nangarhar Province \(10 September 2025\)](#). 2025

To address the immediate needs of the affected population, **OCHA** launched an earthquake-specific Emergency Humanitarian Response Plan on **9th September, 2025** (UNOCHA, 2025)²⁸. In response to the humanitarian needs identified in the Plan, on **15th September 2025**, **AICS Islamabad Office** launched an immediate [emergency Call for Proposals](#), allocating a total contribution of **900,000 euros** (AICS, 2025)²⁹.

Starting from **13th October 2025**, AICS supported two rapid response interventions, implemented by Italian civil society organizations, with an integrated and multisectoral approach, for an amount of **450,000 euros** each:

- **WeWorld-GVC**, with an intervention focused on **shelter and WASH** for affected populations in Cawkay District, Kunar Province;
- **Pangea**, in ATS with **Vento di Terra**, with an emergency action in the districts of **Dar-e-Noor** and **Chawkay**, focused on **protection, health and WASH**, including safeguarding post-harvest livelihoods.

The implemented activities focused on providing:

	shelters and essential goods , through the distribution of winter items, the repair of damaged homes and temporary support for displaced families;
	water, hygiene and healthcare (WASH) , with the provision of emergency drinking water, the rehabilitation of water infrastructure and sanitation;
	food security and livelihoods , by emergency food assistance and support for agricultural activities and livestock;
	health and education , with mobile health teams, psychosocial support, emergency education in temporary spaces and improvement of thermal insulation in view of winter season;
	protection and inclusion , with a focus on women, girls and minors , through lifesaving multisectoral services, distribution of dignity kits and prevention of gender-based violence.

The emergency response funded by the **Italian Cooperation** through **AICS** helped mitigate the **immediate impact of the earthquake**, strengthening the resilience of affected communities and ensuring timely access to essential services in one of the most vulnerable areas of the Country.

In particular, the interventions made it possible to **repair over 1,800 houses**, provide **winterization kits and essential goods to approximately 15,000 people**, and **rehabilitate water supply systems benefiting more than 45,000 people**.

28. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan: Eastern Region Earthquake Response Plan \(Sep 2025 — Dec 2025\), revised October 2025](#). 2025

29. AICS. [Call for Proposals di primissima emergenza: "Programma multisettoriale a sostegno della resilienza delle popolazioni vulnerabili in Afghanistan" - AID 013073/01/0](#). 2025



2.2.4. Food Insecurity: The Cost of Stagnation

After a prolonged period of deflation, characterized by a decline in prices and an increase in purchasing power, overall inflation rose to 4.7% by the end of 2025. This increase was driven by a 19.3% rise in fruit prices and a 5.3% increase in healthcare costs (WB, 2025)³⁰. As a result, 70% of Afghan households fail to meet basic daily needs (WB, 2025)³¹. Child malnutrition remains at severe levels, with stunting rates threatening to create a “lost generation,” whose cognitive development is permanently compromised by early-life hunger.

2.2.5. Forced Displacement: Pressure on Urban Centers

The massive return of refugees has led to a rapid expansion of informal settlements in urban centers, particularly in Kabul and Herat. These settlements lack essential services such as sewage systems, electricity, and safe drinking water. The pressure

on urban infrastructure fuels social tensions and competition over scarce resources, increasing the risk of secondary displacement, as families attempt to migrate again to neighboring countries (IMF, 2025)³².

2.2.6. Status Of Women: Crime Against Humanity - Persecution on Gender Grounds

The Taliban regime has carried out widespread and systematic attacks on the rights of the Afghan population, primarily targeting women and girls, who are subjected to an institutionalized system of discrimination, oppression, and gender-based domination that permeates all aspects of life. This system restricts their rights to education, work, freedom of movement, health, access to justice, and freedom of expression, association, assembly, and participation in public life, amounting to a crime against humanity and gender apartheid (HRC, 2026)³³.

30. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Economic Monitor \(AEM\)](#). December 2025

31. World Bank (WB). [Afghanistan Development Update \(ADU\)](#). 2025

32. IMF. [Working Paper: Afghan Exodus](#). 2025

33. Human Rights Council (HRC) Sixty-first session, [Report on women's and girls' right to health in Afghanistan: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett](#), February 23, 2026



Italian Cooperation in Afghanistan

03

Seeds Distribution
Photo Credits: WeWorld

Italian Cooperation in Afghanistan

The Italian Cooperation in Afghanistan has played a significant role, particularly after 2001, within the broader framework of international efforts to rebuild the Country. Italy has contributed through development programs, humanitarian aid, and initiatives aimed at strengthening local institutions, with the objective of improving the living conditions of the population.

A key actor in this engagement is the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), which has coordinated numerous projects in collaboration with international organizations, NGOs, and local authorities.

Over the years, the Italian Cooperation has focused especially on the city of Herat and the Western regions of Afghanistan. Interventions have covered several key development sectors, including healthcare, infrastructure, education, and rural development.

In the health sector, Italian programs have supported the improvement of hospital facilities, the training of medical personnel, and access to basic healthcare services, with particular attention to maternal and child health. They have also supported orthopedic centers by providing prostheses and psychological assistance to victims of mines and explosive ordnance.

Another important area of intervention has been **infrastructure and essential services**. Italian Cooperation has supported projects aimed at improving access to safe drinking water, upgrading water networks, and constructing or rehabilitating local infrastructure for communities. These include the Kabul–Bamiyan road, which



is crucial for connecting isolated regions, and the Herat ring road, which has improved urban mobility and facilitated trade with Turkmenistan.

Through these interventions, Italy has sought to promote sustainable and inclusive development, also supporting local agriculture, vocational training, the protection of cultural heritage, and the strengthening of civil society.

Following the political changes of 2021, the situation in the Country has become more complex; however, Italy's humanitarian commitment continues, with the aim of addressing the most urgent needs of the Afghan population.



Needs Assessment

04

Needs Assessment

Throughout 2025, Afghanistan remained the setting of a **protracted and multidimensional humanitarian crisis**, driven by the interaction of structural and contingent factors. More than forty years of armed conflict, widespread chronic poverty, limited access to infrastructure and essential services, high exposure to extreme climate events and natural disasters, and the progressive deterioration of the human rights situation have continued to significantly affect the living conditions of the population.

According to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 (HNRP), approximately **22.9 million people** — nearly half of the Afghan population — **were in need of humanitarian assistance** in 2025 (UNOCHA, 2024)³⁴. The updated plan for 2026 estimates that **approximately 21.9 million people**, representing **45% of the population, will require humanitarian assistance in 2026** (UNOCHA, 2025)³⁵, highlighting a slight decrease compared to the previous year but confirming a still extremely high level of need.

Since 2021, political isolation, restrictions on the financial system, and the sharp decline in international funding have profoundly weakened the Country's economic fabric. In 2025, the contraction of international humanitarian

assistance flows further exacerbated this situation, critically affecting the delivery of basic services.

Recurrent climate shocks have affected agricultural production, with direct effects on food security, nutrition and rural livelihoods.

In 2025, the Country was also struck by **two strong earthquakes**: one in the Eastern Province of Kunar and another in the Northern Province of Balkh, resulting in deaths, injuries, and damage to housing and urban infrastructure. These events confirmed Afghanistan's high seismic vulnerability, further exacerbated by the fragility of buildings and by logistical difficulties that hinder rescue operations.

During 2025, political developments in Iran and Pakistan led to the **involuntary return of more than 2.9 million Afghan citizens** (UNHCR, 2026)³⁶, most of whom lacked regular documentation in the countries of origin.

The **approximately 6.3 million internally displaced persons** living in conditions of prolonged vulnerability placed significant pressure on essential services. Urban and peri-urban areas, as well as some border provinces, experienced particularly critical overcrowding in terms of access to water, housing, healthcare services, and livelihood opportunities.

34. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 \(December 2024\)](#). 2024

35. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 \(December 2025\)](#). 2025

36. UNHCR. [2025 Afghan Returns - One Year Recap](#). 24 February 2026



ID verification of the beneficiaries before winterisation kit and cash distribution
Photo Credits: INTERSOS / Mohammad Hasib Hazinyar

Food security and livelihoods continued to deteriorate in 2025 due to the combined effects of climate shocks, limited access to agricultural inputs, inadequate infrastructure, and reduced humanitarian assistance. The Country experienced a sixth consecutive year of adverse hydro-climatic conditions, with below-average rainfall and a marked soil moisture deficit. Recent analyses indicate that millions of people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity, with some provinces classified as being in emergency conditions.

The health sector has remained severely compromised due to insufficient funding, infrastructural gaps, and a shortage of personnel, further exacerbated by restrictions on women's participation in the workforce. In 2025, hundreds of health facilities either ceased operations or reduced their services, limiting access to essential care for millions of people.

The country continues to record high levels of maternal and child morbidity and mortality, low vaccination coverage, and widespread acute malnutrition among children and pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Afghan women face one of the most severe human rights crises globally, with extremely low levels of economic participation, access to education, and health protection. At the same time, children are exposed to serious violations, including child labor, early marriages, armed recruitment, violence, and trauma linked to conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. Exclusion from formal education and limited access to protection and psychosocial support services further exacerbate these vulnerabilities, particularly in rural areas and among displaced populations.



Strategic Orientation and Priority Sectors

05

5

Strategic Orientation and Priority Sectors

The *Three-Year Programming and Steering Document of Italian Cooperation 2024-2026*, while not including Afghanistan among the priority countries, highlights Italy's commitment to contributing to the international community's efforts to **support the resilience of Afghanistan's civilian population**. In this context, **Italian intervention focuses mainly on humanitarian initiatives**, orienting assistance towards ways that promote the sustainability of interventions and contribute to strengthening the population's self-sustainment and access to essential services.

Overall, the initiatives funded by Italian Cooperation are aligned with the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, developed by the United Nations with the aim of saving lives and alleviating the suffering of the population, protecting the safety, dignity and rights of people, as well as supporting livelihoods and ensuring access to essential services (UNOCHA, 2024)³⁷. They are also consistent with Italy's commitments under the World Humanitarian Summit (2016), the Grand Bargain, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Humanitarian Aid Donors' Declaration on Climate and Environment (2022).

In the absence of recognition of the *de facto* Authorities, the Italian Cooperation does not support government development programmes. Actions aimed at meeting basic human needs in the Country are therefore implemented by

contributing to the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023-2027 (UNSFA) (UN, 2023)³⁸.

In 2025, Italian Cooperation financed humanitarian aid interventions in Afghanistan worth a total of 14 million euros, in addition to the multi-year initiatives financed in previous years. The initiatives are implemented by specialized agencies of the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Projects implemented by CSOs have included activities in the areas of agriculture and food security, disaster risk reduction and health, in Kabul, Herat, Helmand, Kunar, Nangarhar, Laghman and Ghazni Provinces. Under this portfolio, two emergency interventions were also funded in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces, activated in response to the consequences of the earthquake that struck Eastern Afghanistan on the 31st of August 2025.

Funding to United Nations specialized agencies supports UNFPA projects in the areas of health and gender equality and IOM and UNHCR in the area of protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees.

The Italian Cooperation has also made financial contributions to OCHA for the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and to ICRC under the Special Appeal on Disability and Humanitarian Demining.

37. UNOCHA. [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 \(December 2024\)](#). 2024

38. UN Afghanistan. [United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan](#). July 2023



Patients undergoing treatment in the 20-bed female Drug Treatment Centre in Ghazni city
Photo Credits: STFA / Mohammad Omar Kamal

The above mentioned humanitarian assistance initiatives complemented those aimed at **supporting resilience and meeting basic human needs** in the Country, aligned primarily with the second expected outcome of UNSFA: Resilient Economic Opportunities and Livelihoods.

In particular, in 2025, support includes: the contribution to the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF), managed by the World Bank, through the EMERGE (Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth) project, which promotes women's financial inclusion and supports the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and the contribution to the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), managed by UNDP, through the project "Prevention of Drug Use, Treatment

and Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Afghan Women", which combines treatment for drug addiction with socio-economic reintegration. In addition, support is provided through the "Facilitating Opportunities through Revitalization of Settlements and Traditional Community-held Assets (FORSAT)" project, aimed at improving living conditions and strengthening the economic resilience of communities in the Bamiyan Valley, near the UNESCO World Heritage site.

The overall portfolio of AICS Islamabad office for ongoing initiatives in 2025 **amounts to approximately € 54 million**. Of this total, **€ 37.5 million is allocated to humanitarian assistance** through the emergency channel, while **€ 16.3 million supports basic human needs** through the ordinary channel.



International Coordination

06

International Coordination

Key international coordination mechanisms for Afghanistan include:

6.1. Working Groups under the Doha Process

The thematic working groups on counternarcotics (CNWG) and on support to the private sector (PSWG) were established as operational follow-ups to the Third Conference of Special Envoys held in Doha in 2024 ("Doha 3"). Italy supports these working groups as concrete opportunities for engagement with the *de facto* Authorities, with a view to building trust with the international community.

The CNWG met for the first time at the end of 2024, followed by two additional meetings held in 2025. It is structured into three sub-working groups, dedicated respectively to: (1) alternative livelihoods (to opium cultivation) and rural income support; (2) drug addiction treatment and prevention; and (3) law enforcement.

The PSWG was convened twice, in February and July 2025. The two smaller working groups related to the private sector focus on: (1) support to the private sector and (2) governance of the financial sector.

The Working Groups are chaired by UNAMA and comprise countries participating in the Doha Process together with sector-specific experts, representatives of the European Union, the *de facto* Authorities, United Nations agencies, and other technical experts. International financial

institutions and other key stakeholders may also be included.

6.2. Afghanistan Coordination Group (ACG)

Launched in May 2022, it aims to coordinate the efforts of international organizations, donors, including Italy, and civil society to address the complex challenges facing Afghanistan. The ACG is currently co-chaired by the European Union, UNAMA, and the World Bank. In addition to two in-person meetings held annually, weekly donor coordination meetings are also scheduled.

6.3. Humanitarian Donors Group for Afghanistan

Chaired by the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, it is a platform that brings together key humanitarian donors quarterly with the aim of discussing, planning and harmonizing responses to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

6.4. Steering Committees of the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) and the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA)

ARTF, managed by the World Bank, and STFA, managed by UNDP, are Trust Funds for the mobilization and coordination of international funding for the joint donor response to the basic needs of the Afghan population.



6.5. EU+ Coordination Meeting

A forum involving European Union Member States, together with Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom to promote coherence between EU-funded activities and bilateral donor programmes. This mechanism facilitates the alignment of donor strategies for humanitarian assistance and Basic Human Needs, establishing shared priorities and promoting a unified approach.

6.6. EU Development Counsellors' Coordination Meeting

It is a coordination mechanism chaired by the European Union Delegation to Afghanistan. The group promotes a joint analysis of the intervention context and encourages strategic discussion within the EU on key issues.



Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)

07

Cash Distribution in Mastichina-Kabul
Photo Credits: INTERSOS / Mohammad Hasib Hazinyar

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)

7.1. Context

The *de facto* Authorities have introduced extensive and systematic restrictions on human rights, particularly affecting women and girls. These include a ban on education beyond the age of 12, exclusion from various areas of work, limitations on freedom of movement without a male guardian³⁹, the denial of access to public spaces such as parks, gyms and beauty salons, the imposition of dress codes, the silencing of female voices in public, and exclusion from political and public life.

The restrictions in place continue to erode women's rights and capacities, undoing the progress made in previous decades, undermine Afghanistan's development path and its progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (UNGASC, 2025)⁴⁰.

The Gender Index 2024 provides a well-established benchmark for assessing the status of Afghan women and girls across five key dimensions of human development: health, education, work and financial inclusion, participation in decision-making, and freedom from violence. The findings indicate that Afghan women and girls face **one of**

the most severe empowerment deficits and the widest gender gaps in the world, with women achieving only **17% of their potential** and a **76% disparity** between the outcomes of women and men across all measured areas (UNWomen, 2025)⁴¹.

7.2. Needs Assessment

The main challenges relate to **barriers to women's participation and the restrictions imposed on the rights of women, girls, and female children** by laws and decrees issued after August 2021.

During 2025, AICS Islamabad Office conducted a series of technical consultations with partners and executing entities of funded projects, with a focus on gender analysis. These interactions highlighted widespread challenges, including:

- the **shortage of qualified female personnel in general**, and in particular the **limited availability of skilled female health workers and midwives** in remote, rural, and conservative areas, further reduces opportunities to recruit female staff, with additional constraints for night shifts;
- **mobility restrictions** that limit women's

39. In Afghanistan, the *mahram* of a woman is any man whom she is permanently forbidden to marry due to blood relations, breastfeeding ties, or marital connections, such as her father, son, or brother.

After August 2021, the *de facto* Authorities made the presence of a *mahram* a mandatory requirement for various activities (including travel, flights, and access to government buildings), thereby restricting the mobility of many women, particularly those without adult male relatives.

40. United Nations General Assembly Security Council (UNGASC) [The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, Report of the Secretary-General](#), September 5, 2025

41. UNWomen, [Gender Index 2024: Afghanistan](#), June 17, 2025



autonomy in accessing employment, essential services, emergency shelters, and participating in training sessions, trade fairs, and markets, due to the requirement to be accompanied by a *mahram*, with the resulting **additional costs**;

- the growing need for **mental health support for women**, exacerbated by mobility restrictions and social isolation, which requires additional resources for existing services to be addressed effectively;
- the progressive **reduction in the operational capacity and territorial coverage of women's organizations**, which limits the development of strong partnerships.

A very serious consequence of these discriminatory restrictions is the **progressive replacement of women by men, and the risk**

that this becomes normalized across multiple spheres: in the workplace; in representation and public life; in academia; in training opportunities; in access to information; in trade fairs and markets; in public, political, and managerial roles; in positions of power; in financial management; and in decision-making processes.⁴²

7.3. Approach

Women's economic empowerment is a strategic entry point for advancing gender equality. This approach aims to increase access to resources and to safeguard spaces of autonomy and livelihoods, promoting the protection of the rights of women and girls, including in humanitarian response contexts.

The initiatives supported by AICS promote income generation, particularly for women and girls, in

42. This risk was also analysed within the Strategic Thematic Working Groups (STWGs) on Gender and Human Rights.

compliance with cultural norms and through a Nexus approach⁴³. Indeed, numerous projects implemented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are supported⁴⁴ which include activities providing household livelihoods such as small-scale livestock rearing, kitchen gardening, food processing activities, and the delivery of start-up kits to initiate income-generating businesses.

In addition, Italian Cooperation promotes income-generating opportunities under initiatives financed by the UN Trust Fund STFA⁴⁵ and supports

women's entrepreneurship by contributing to the World Bank Trust Fund ARTF that finances initiatives aimed at improving **women's access to credit and sustaining women-led businesses**⁴⁶.

These interventions confirm **AICS' commitment to creating the conditions for women and girls to be subjects of resilience and agents of sustainable development processes**, recognized as resources of essential value even in contexts of extreme vulnerability.

Focus - Monitoring of Gender Equality

AICS Islamabad Office conducted an in-depth assessment of activities dedicated to gender equality through a monitoring exercise carried out between August and October 2025. The analysis covered 21 projects (**10 in Afghanistan** and 11 in Pakistan), with a total value of nearly **48 million euros**, engaging **23 implementing partners (14⁴⁷ in Afghanistan** and 9⁴⁸ in Pakistan) in a structured reflection exercise. Guided by a questionnaire, the aim was to examine the ways in which the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is being pursued.

As part of this monitoring, the following practices to overcome gender barriers were highlighted:

- Health services are provided by female staff in safe and culturally appropriate spaces, fostering a relationship of trust between clients and service providers, and these include psychosocial support;

43. The Italian cooperation's Nexus approach in Afghanistan is based on the integration of humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding. It goes beyond the provision of immediate assistance such as food, healthcare, and protection, aiming instead to strengthen the resilience of local communities by promoting food security and socio-economic empowerment, while also contributing to stability and social cohesion.

44. "Humanitarian Initiative in Support of Afghanistan's Most Vulnerable Population"

45. Within the contribution of the Italian Cooperation to the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA), the Project "Facilitating Opportunities through Revitalization of Settlements and Traditional community-held Assets (FORSAT)" is implemented by UNESCO and UN-Habitat, and the Project "Prevention of Drug Use, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Afghan Women" is implemented by UNODC, ILO, UNDP, WHO, and UNFPA.

46. Within the contribution of the Italian Cooperation to the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF), the project "EMERGe – Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth" is implemented by the World Bank.

47. UNFPA, WeWorld – GVC, NOVE ETS, Vento di Terra Onlus, CESVI Foundation ETS, People in Need, INTERSOS, EMERGENCY, IOM, STFA - Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (UNODC, ILO, UNDP, WHO, UNFPA), World Bank

48. UNESCO, UNDP, CIHEAM-Bari, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, ILO, FAO, ISCOS, EAD, UNHCR

- Livelihood support interventions promote women's participation by enabling them to contribute to household income within local cultural norms, thereby strengthening their role in decision-making processes;
- In the Afghan context, reception and transit centers are equipped with gender-segregated facilities (safe spaces for data registration, waiting areas, overnight accommodation, sanitation facilities, dining areas, basic health services, psychosocial support services, helpdesks providing free telecommunication assistance, and protection desks addressing rights violations);
- Training and awareness-raising sessions were conducted for community leaders, men, and boys to ensure women's participation, highlight its benefits, and foster the necessary social support;
- The activities and service schedules were organized flexibly to take into account the daily responsibilities of both women and men;
- Gender-sensitive entrepreneurship training programmes were implemented to address some of the barriers women face, particularly in starting and managing a business, including lack of entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, low self-confidence, and gender roles that increase the burden of domestic and family responsibilities.

The **success stories** were shared on the social media channels of AICS Islamabad Office during the Global Campaign of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

The projects examined promoted **models and best practices** for women's inclusion and empowerment. Among these, the **Family Health House** model — featuring **community midwives and a "by women for women" approach** — has ensured equitable access to maternal, neonatal, and reproductive health services. A key challenge remains the recruitment of **female staff** across all interventions, sometimes addressed by employing husband-wife or father-daughter pairs in order to meet the requirement of having a *mahram*. In addition, to retain female staff, dedicated transport services and childcare facilities have been established.

Among the replicable practices identified are the **active engagement of communities and local leaders** to build trust in projects and enable women's participation; the development of inclusive infrastructure; the collection of disaggregated data; and the strengthening of **psychosocial support** services for women and girls.

It was also found that in **70% of the initiatives** (7 out of 10) there is a **gender focal point** in the project team and project staff received **training on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**.

Future recommendations consistently highlight the need to **support women-led initiatives and organizations**, and to promote women's empowerment across all projects. At the same time, there is a strong call for conducting **gender analyses and collecting disaggregated data** to better understand community dynamics. The importance of **increasing men's engagement** is also emphasised — particularly in transformative behavioral change programs and awareness sessions on harassment and equality — in order to reduce resistance and foster shared responsibility.

Finally, the role of **implemented projects is underscored as a key lever to counter restrictions imposed on women**, promote their participation in socio-economic life, and create space and opportunities for greater mobility and improved access to employment.

Focus – 16 Days of Activism, 365 Days of Commitment

The campaign conducted during the **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence** (25 November – 10 December 2025) developed a progressive narrative through **17 posts** published on the social media channels of **AICS Islamabad**.

Each post contributed to reinforcing the campaign's core message, linking the fight against gender-based violence to ongoing humanitarian and resilience efforts in the country, as well as to women's and girls' empowerment.

The projects and stories featured were drawn from findings collected during gender mainstreaming monitoring activities across ongoing initiatives in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in close collaboration with implementing partners. The campaign had **about 10,500⁴⁹** views, twice as many as the previous year.

Following are the posts that include both, general posts and those related to Afghanistan:



Post 1 – Commencement of the campaign

AICS logo has been temporarily coloured in orange, the bright and optimistic campaign color, which represents hope for a better future, free from violence against women and girls.



Post 2 – Institutional launch (AICS)

The opening post, illustrated by a group photograph of Islamabad Office staff (center: Head of Office, Francesco Zatta, with Deputy Technical Director, Giuseppe Cerasoli, on a mission from AICS Rome), reaffirmed Italy's institutional commitment to combating gender-based violence.



Post 3 – Gender-sensitive Humanitarian Response

The content promoted the gender approach taken in emergency interventions in Afghanistan, highlighting support for female-headed households⁵⁰. Interventions such as cash assistance to purchase food are tools to prevent the adoption of forms of subsistence that generate abuse, such as early marriages (UNICEF, 2022)⁵¹, and to reduce the vulnerability of such women and their families.



49. Data updated as of January 20, 2026

50. WeWorld's "Strengthening preparedness and response capacities for food security and disaster risk reduction in crisis-affected Afghanistan" project.

51. "Although child marriage affects both boys and girls, the prevalence is about five times higher among girls." UNICEF. Gender equality: Child marriage. October 2022



Post 5 – Rural Economic Resilience

The reel pertaining to the story of Shukiba, who defines her future as invisible, highlighted the heavy consequences of the ban on university education for Afghan women and girls. It also stressed the link between access to livelihoods, economic resilience, self-determination and prevention of gender-based violence in the context of the Afghan crisis⁵².



Post 8 – Intersectional Approach and Disability

Noorzia is a woman with a motor disability who lives in poverty with her brother's family in a small village in Afghanistan. The audio-story shows how the overlapping of different aspects of her identity and living condition intersect and exacerbate her state of vulnerability. Emergency interventions that provide livelihood help restore dignity and autonomy to those who benefit from them⁵³. The content contributed to awareness-raising on inclusion, women's economic empowerment and gender equality.



Post 9 – Reproductive Health and Safe Spaces

The content of this post gave visibility to the contribution of the Family Health House, a model promoted for years in Afghanistan by the Italian Cooperation, in ensuring lifesaving maternal, neonatal, adolescent and reproductive health services⁵⁴. The post ensured the targeted dissemination of the message on the right to health, particularly for women, girls and children.



52. Project "AGRARIA — Agriculture, Risk Management and Water for Resilience and Inclusion in Afghanistan" implemented by CESVI ETS Foundation in ATS with PIN.

53. Project "Seeds of rebirth: a sustenance pathway for Afghan women -agricultural empowerment and economic growth " implemented by NOVE ETS.

54. With UNFPA's initiative "Support to adolescent women and girls through the enhancement of Family Health Houses (FHHs) as central hubs for the provision of reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent life-saving health services" worth €1.5 million, which ended in December 2025.



Post 12 – Health, Rehabilitation and Dignity

This video post addressed female drug addiction in Afghanistan and rehabilitation as key areas for reducing vulnerability and preventing further forms of violence⁵⁵. The content highlighted the key role of integrated health approaches in resilience interventions.



Post 14 – Economic and Decision-making Empowerment

The content illustrated how women's economic autonomy increases their decision-making power and promotes their recognition, or at least strengthens their resistance to forms of control, contributing to transformation even in highly restrictive cultural contexts such as Afghanistan. The post reinforced the message of women's economic empowerment as a tool for female solidarity and social advancement⁵⁶.



Post 15 – Nutrition and Food Security

Nutritionist Aqila Ibrahimi's video testimony linked women's health, awareness, and empowerment to the prevention of violence. The content recorded 210 views, contributing also to the visibility of health sector support actions in Afghanistan⁵⁷.



Added value of storytelling

The adopted storytelling approach, rooted in real-life experiences and intersectional perspectives (gender, disability, and poverty), contributed to increased empathy among audiences. The sharing of the content by the followers further helped position the campaign as an advocacy and awareness-raising initiative on women's rights and the prevention of gender-based violence, highlighting the importance of daily commitment, integrated policies, and the full recognition of women's transformative role, even in fragile and complex contexts.

55. Project "Prevention of drug use, treatment and rehabilitation of vulnerable Afghan women" implemented by UNODC, ILO, UNDP, WHO and UNFPA, financed through the Special Fund for Afghanistan (STFA).
56. "EMERGE Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth" project implemented by the World Bank along with the Aga-Khan Afghanistan Foundation, Afghan Credit Guarantee Foundation, worth €2 million, as part of the Italian Cooperation's contribution to the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund for Resilience (ARTF).
57. Within the "Humanitarian Initiative in Support of Afghanistan's Most Vulnerable Population", supported by the Italian Cooperation, in particular with the project "Multisectoral assistance for the well-being and dignity of vulnerable communities in the underserved rural areas of Kabul" implemented by INTERSOS worth 1,200,000 euros.

Testimonials

“Now we design and create embroidery for clothing, and we earn an income from it.”

Marzia (18 years old) and Sorya (19 years old), residents of Kabul, faced significant challenges after the regime change, which led to school closures and lack of opportunities for young women.

Determined to change their situation, they looked for a way to gain practical skills to support themselves and their families.

Marzia and Sorya learned from their neighbours about the embroidery course at the Jangalak Vocational Training Center, organized as part of the EMERGE Project.

They progressed step by step, from holding a needle for the first time to mastering complex and detailed embroidery designs.

Thanks to the income generated during their three-month internship and apprenticeship programme, the two young women subsequently established a small workshop, “New Stars.”

Over time, the initiative has progressively expanded. Today, Marzia and Sorya not only fulfil orders for private companies, but also mentor around 20 other women in their community, creating new opportunities and fostering hope.

The **EMERGE** project (Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth), implemented under the **Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF)** contribution funded by the Italian Cooperation through AICS and implemented by the World Bank, has strengthened financial



literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and confidence in starting and expanding income-generating activities.

Nearly 35,800 loans were disbursed (43% to women), alongside support for 726 micro and small enterprises (53.4% women-owned or women-led) now ready to access credit.

This resulted in greater female participation in household financial decision-making and in community economic activities, also thanks to increased recognition by men.

Economic empowerment strengthens the negotiating power of women within the household and community, strengthening their resistance to controlling dynamics, contributing to cultural changes which promote gender equality.

A child born in the middle of the desert

Herat, Afghanistan – “When the baby was born, he wasn’t breathing. I immediately cleared my airways and began mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Moments later, the baby inhaled, let out a cry, and his complexion turned a healthy pink. I felt relieved.” Midwife Khadija of the Family Health House in Masyan village recalled when she answered a call from a desperate man whose pregnant wife had gone into labour in the desert as they drove to the hospital and their car ran out of fuel. In the midst of the panic, he remembered calling the number of midwife Khadija of the nearby Family Health House in Masyan village. Having received the call, Khadija wasted no time, collected the medical supplies and, accompanied by her husband in the car, reached the couple.

After giving birth, the midwife took the mother and newborn to the Family Health House, where she was provided postpartum care and counseling.

Midwives such as Khadija perform **life-saving services in the field of maternal, newborn and reproductive health. The Family Health House**



Photo credits: UNFPA

is a model promoted and funded for years in Afghanistan by the Italian Cooperation through AICS and implemented by UNFPA. In 2025, 26 FHHs were supported, offering over 270,000 health services. Among these, 83% were delivered by women to women. An intervention in defense of reproductive health rights that provides services where women find safe spaces, support and protection.



Portfolio

09

9

Portfolio 2025

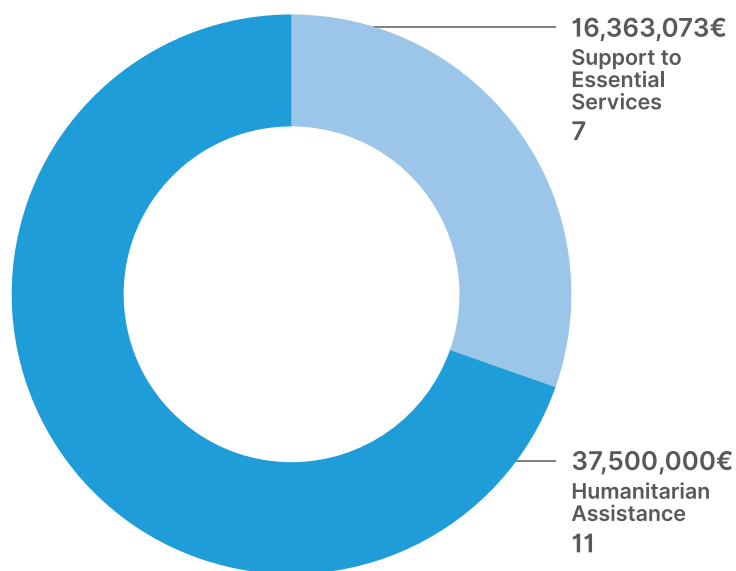
The entire portfolio of AICS Islamabad Office for 2025 comprises **18 initiatives with a total value of approximately 54 million euros**. Among these, **11 are humanitarian assistance initiatives under the humanitarian channel**, with a total value of **37.5 million euros**.

The remaining **7 initiatives** support **basic human needs via the ordinary channel**, for a total of over **16.3 million euros**.

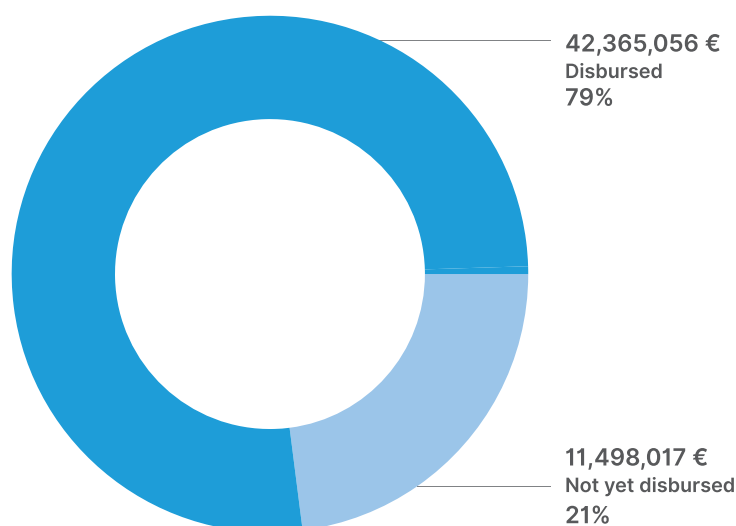
As of December 2025, funding for 14 initiatives was fully disbursed, while that for three additional initiatives reached 90%, 73%, and 45%, respectively.

Overall, 79% of the committed budget for all ongoing initiatives in Afghanistan has been disbursed. The remaining 21%, beyond installments still to be disbursed, includes one initiative approved in December, scheduled to start in 2026.

Portfolio Afghanistan 2025



% Disbursed and Not Yet Disbursed Funds

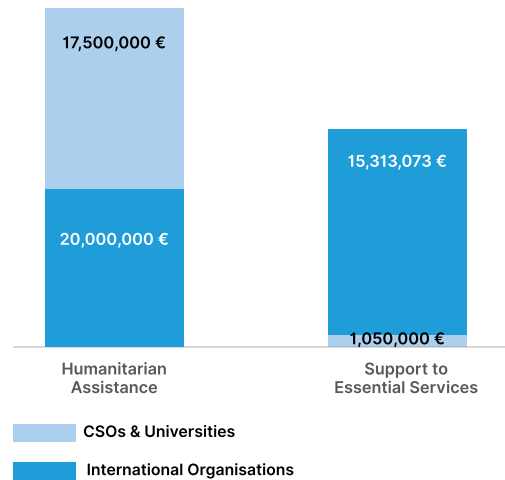


Implementing Partners

The initiatives of the Italian Cooperation in Afghanistan are implemented through strong and effective partnerships with Civil Society Organizations — local, Italian, and international — as well as with Universities, Research Centres, and International Organizations, including United Nations Agencies.

Overall, **61%** of the budget of initiatives under implementation in 2025, valued around 33 million euros, has been entrusted to **International Organizations**, while the remaining share, amounting to **29%** and valued at over 21 million euros, has been allocated to **Civil Society Organizations and Universities**.

Funding Channel and Implementing Partner



Civil Society Organisations:



UN Agencies



Universities and Research Centres:

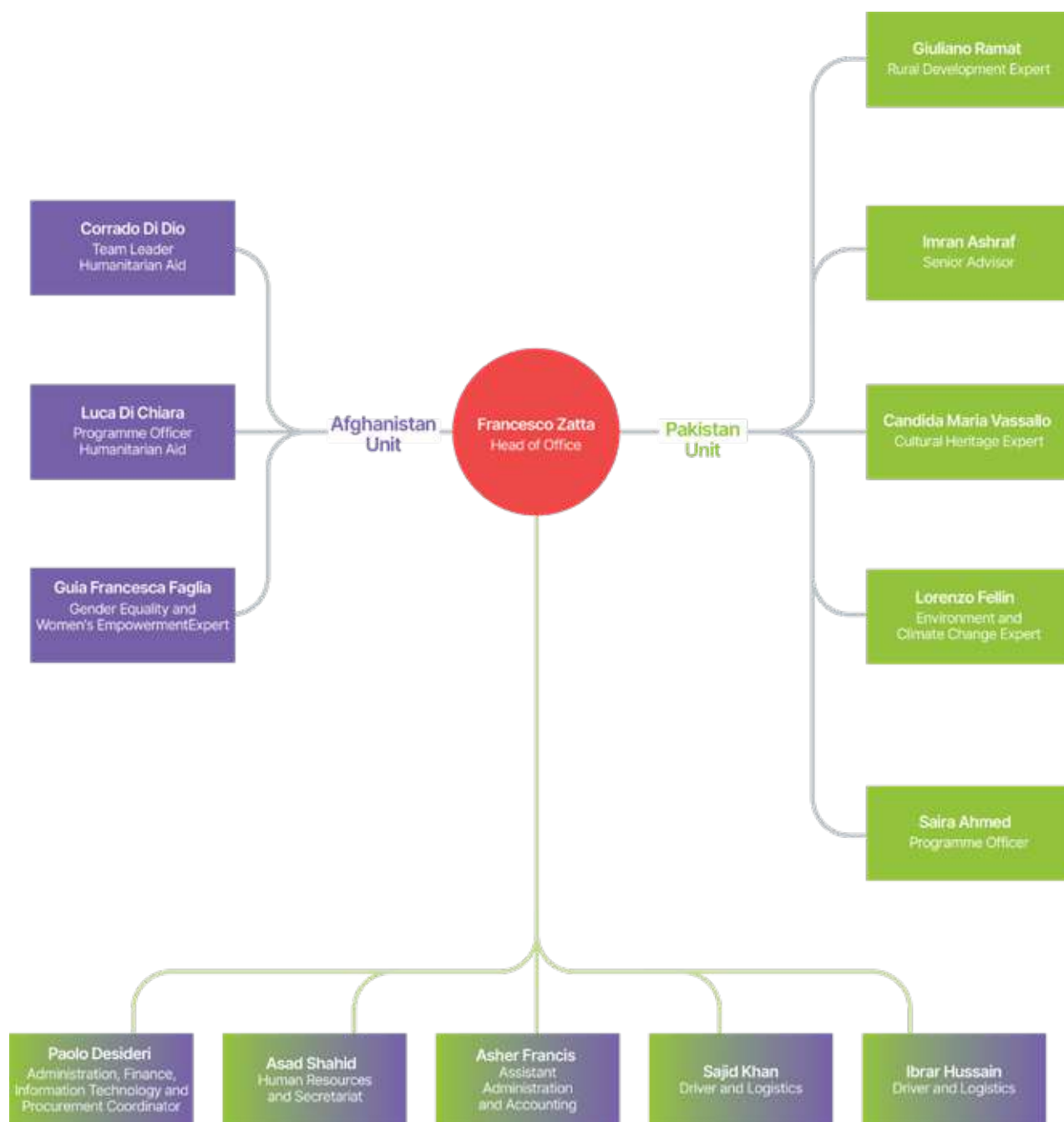


Other International Organisations



11

Organogram



During 2025, Luca Nichetti, expert on environment, agriculture, and climate change in Pakistan, and Emanuela Gasbarroni, expert on communications and visibility, who served at the AICS headquarters in Islamabad, took on new roles outside this office.



Projects

12

Cash for work
Photo Credits: Jafar Mosavi/WeWorld

Humanitarian

Multisectoral

Humanitarian Initiative in Support of Afghanistan's Most Vulnerable Population

Humanitarian Channel Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation n. 99 - 10/10/2022

Duration 27 months
(31/05/2024 – 30/09/2026)

Value € 10,000,000

Areas of Intervention Districts of Kabul, Herat, Helmand, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar

Gender Marker Significant Objective

Beneficiaries

- 87,816** persons benefit from primary and specialist health services, nutrition and mother and child services;
- 69,818** beneficiaries of WASH services and access to water;
- 50,439** people benefit from activities in agriculture and food security and agro-forestry and livestock activities;
- 30,830** female heads of household, rural entrepreneurs, beneficiaries of economic empowerment;
- 3,397** local workers and heads of household involved in the rehabilitation of community infrastructure;
- 104,944** persons benefiting from DRR and disaster preparedness.





Photo credits: INTERSOS

Aligned with the priorities of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), this initiative adopts an integrated multisectoral approach aimed at supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population by ensuring protection — particularly for women, children, and persons with disabilities — strengthening food security and livelihoods, enhancing essential health services, and contributing to disaster risk reduction.

Two Calls for Proposals resulted in the approval and funding of seven NGO-led projects implementing multisectoral interventions in Kabul, Herat, Helmand, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar, with a total budget of 8,987,852.50 euros.

The programme has demonstrated significant progress across all sectors of intervention, achieving notable results in strengthening food security, improving access to health services, promoting community resilience to disasters, and enhancing hygiene and sanitation conditions. At the same time, humanitarian assistance and livelihood support activities have contributed to supporting the most vulnerable households, with particular attention to female-headed households and rural communities.



Humanitarian

Multisectoral

Multisectoral Programme to Strengthen the Resilience of Vulnerable Populations in Afghanistan

Humanitarian Channel Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation n. 65 - 10/11/2024

Duration 24 months
(01/07/2025 – 30/06/2027)

Value € 3,000,000

Areas of Intervention Districts of Kabul, Helmand, Kunar, Nangarhar

Gender Marker Significant Objective

Beneficiaries **44,770** people with access to primary health care and nutrition services in 5 facilities in Kabul province;
17,611 people screened for acute malnutrition;
16,971 patients cared for at the Laskar-Gah Trauma Center;
1,890 people benefiting from the repair of damaged homes through cash assistance;
7,084 people benefit from the distribution of winter kits;
49,211 people benefit from the rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems and water purification;
4,760 people benefit from emergency agricultural support, including animal and fodder distribution.





The initiative supports life-saving interventions and the delivery of essential services in the health and food security sectors for the most vulnerable Afghan population, with the aim of progressively strengthening their resilience. In line with the priorities of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), activities include food assistance, livelihood support, and gender-sensitive health interventions.

Within the framework of the initiative, and through an initial Call for Proposals, AICS Islamabad Office selected two project proposals submitted by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), for a total allocation of 1,800,000 euros out of the 2,700,000 euros made available under the call.

In response to the devastating earthquake of 31 August 2025 affecting the eastern provinces of Kunar and Nangarhar, a second emergency Call for Proposals was immediately launched, leading to the approval of two additional CSO projects totaling EUR 900,000.

Immediate emergency interventions included the repair of damaged houses, the provision of cash assistance, the distribution of winterization kits, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems, the installation of temporary community latrines, as well as hygiene promotion activities and the distribution of water disinfection kits.

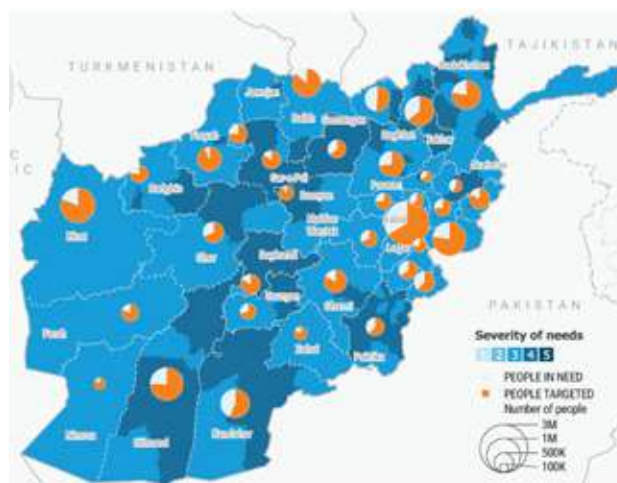


Humanitarian

Multisectoral

Multi-Sectoral Response to the Protracted Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan

Humanitarian Channel	Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014
Executing Entity	CSOs to be identified through a Call for Proposals
Deliberation	n. 39 - 22/09/2025 (VM)
Duration	24 months
Value	€ 7,000,000
Areas of Intervention	To be identified after the selection of implementing CSOs
Gender Marker	Significant Objective
Beneficiaries	Direct beneficiaries will be identified by the implementing entities, in collaboration with local partners and other stakeholders, in accordance with the guidelines developed by the clusters and thematic working groups. The number and typology of direct beneficiaries can only be defined following the selection of project proposals submitted in response to the Call for Proposals.



The initiative aims to respond to the protracted humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan through a 24-month multisectoral intervention, with a total value of 7 million euros. It will be implemented under the direct management of AICS Islamabad Office, with the involvement of Civil Society Organizations selected through a Call for Proposals. Priority areas of intervention include access to water and sanitation services, agriculture and food security, health, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, and child protection. The activities aim to ensure timely and equitable access to life-saving services, strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations, and support the recovery of affected communities, including

AID 013365/01/0



internally displaced persons and returnees, who represent a significant share of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. Direct beneficiaries will include women, men, girls, boys, children, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and returnees, with particular attention to those in conditions of severe vulnerability. Intervention locations will be identified based on the severity of needs, in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

The intervention sectors of the initiative were identified taking into account the experience and specific expertise of Italian CSOs active in the country. For each sector, both humanitarian activities and actions aimed at strengthening resilience and supporting the recovery of affected communities are foreseen. The expected results and planned activities are aligned with the Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 and will be implemented in accordance with the technical guidelines and standardized operational procedures developed by the clusters and sectoral working groups active within the framework of the Plan.

Humanitarian

Health & Gender Equality

Support to Adolescent Women and Girls through the Enhancement of Family Health Houses (FHHs) as Central Hubs for the Provision of Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Life-saving Health Services

Humanitarian Channel	Multi-Bilateral art. 10 L.125/2014
Executing Entity	
Deliberation	N. 50 - 19/09/2024 (VM)
Duration	12 months (01/01/25 - 31/12/25)
Value	€ 1,500,000
Areas of Intervention	Province of Herat
Gender Marker	2 – Principal
Beneficiaries	135,609 (126,571 women and girls)



Description

The intervention aims to increase the provision of essential services for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and the response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Afghanistan, a country with one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world, at 186th out of 192 and with 521 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

The project aims to increase access to life-saving health services for reproductive health, maternity, neonatal care, childhood and adolescence, facilitated by 27 Family Health Houses (FHHs) acting as service delivery hubs, and to improve the availability and accessibility of essential maternal and reproductive health services within the same FHHs.

AID 012901/01/0



The Family Health House is a model adopted by UNFPA that is now part of Afghanistan's National Health Policy 2025–2030.

Results

A total of 276,748 services were delivered, of which 83% were provided to women and girls. Activities included antenatal and postnatal care, skilled birth attendance, family planning services, consultations for neonatal and childhood illnesses, referrals for complications and obstetric fistula treatment, nutrition services, routine immunizations, youth-focused health interventions, and on-the-job training for 45 midwives working across 26 Family Health Houses (FHHs).

Lifesaving Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH-N) Services for Returnees and Crisis-Affected Populations

Humanitarian Channel	Multi-Bilateral art. 10 L.125/2014
Executing Entity	
Deliberation	N. 37 - 22/09/2025 (VM)
Duration	12 months (01/01/26 - 31/12/26)
Value	€ 1,000,000
Areas of Intervention	Province of Herat and Nangharar
Gender Marker	2 - Principal
Beneficiaries	63,000 (70% women and girls; 5% persons with disabilities)



Description

The intervention aims to ensure the provision of essential services in maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent reproductive health and nutrition (RMNCAH-N). These services are available in 26 Family Health Houses (FHHs), which also integrate essential services and responses to gender-based violence (GBV).

The population of the intervention areas includes returnees from Iran and Pakistan, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and vulnerable host communities in the provinces of Herat and Nangarhar. The intervention will be implemented

AID 013369/01/0



through the Family Health House (FHH) model, with a focus on strengthening the role of community midwives, who provide life-saving health services.

During the project, conditions will be created to enhance the economic self-sufficiency of certain essential services managed by community personnel in community-managed facilities.

Humanitarian

Protection of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons & Returnees

Ensuring a Comprehensive Humanitarian Data-driven Response for Vulnerable Returnees in Afghanistan

Humanitarian Channel Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation N.67 - 10/11/2024 (VM)

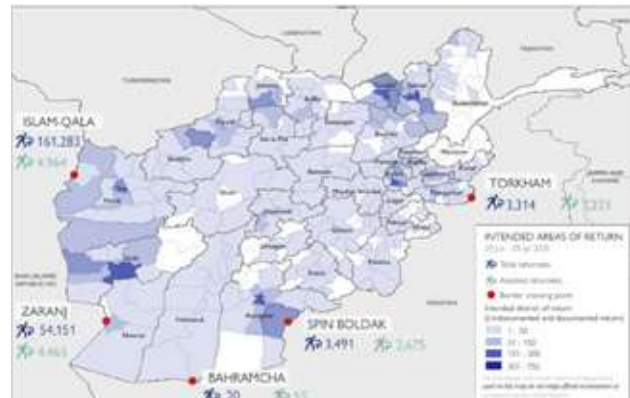
Duration 12 months (01/3/2025 - 28/02/2026)

Value € 3,500,000

Areas of Intervention Districts of Herat, Nimroz, Badakhshan, Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Sar-E-Pul e Takhar.

Gender Marker Significant Objective

Beneficiaries Total estimated single direct beneficiaries: 25,341 (12,471 returnees supported through post-arrival care, including 2,352 beneficiaries of additional protection assistance and 12,870 IDPs and beneficiaries from host communities of health services).



The intervention supports undocumented Afghan people, displaced persons, cross-border populations, and host communities. Through border assistance centres (Torkham, Spin Boldak, Islam Qala, Milak) and transit centres in Herat, Nimroz, Kandahar, and Nangarhar, IOM provides humanitarian assistance, protection, case management, access to basic health services with referrals for advanced care, and monitoring of cross-border flows. The project ensures a rapid response to returning populations, reducing pressure on local services and resources. Beneficiaries, once registered and examined by health workers in transit centres, receive non-food item kits, food assistance packages, hygiene kits, psychosocial support, risk awareness sessions, and access to early childhood education services.



In the first six months of implementation, the project ensured timely and multisectoral assistance to the increasing flows of returnees from Iran. As of 31 July 2025, 15,000 undocumented returnees received post-arrival assistance, and an equivalent number benefited from cash assistance for transportation. In addition, 6,279 households were supported through multi-purpose cash assistance, while 1,061 individuals underwent vulnerability screening, of whom 149 received protection services, including referrals, cash for protection, family reunification, and accompaniment.

In terms of health care, the project provided 14,296 primary healthcare consultations and facilitated 199 hospital referrals for critical cases, in addition to delivering 1,933 psychosocial support sessions at Basic Health Centers. At the same time, the flow monitoring system produced 19 reports and analytical tools (including weekly and bi-weekly updates, bimonthly analyses, dashboards, and story maps), thereby strengthening data-driven response capacity. Overall, the results demonstrate significant progress towards project objectives in a context characterized by a rapid increase in forced returns and growing protection needs.

Humanitarian

Protection of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons & Returnees

Support for Returnees and Vulnerable Host Communities in Return Areas of Afghanistan

Humanitarian Channel Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation N. 38 - 22/09/2025 (VM)

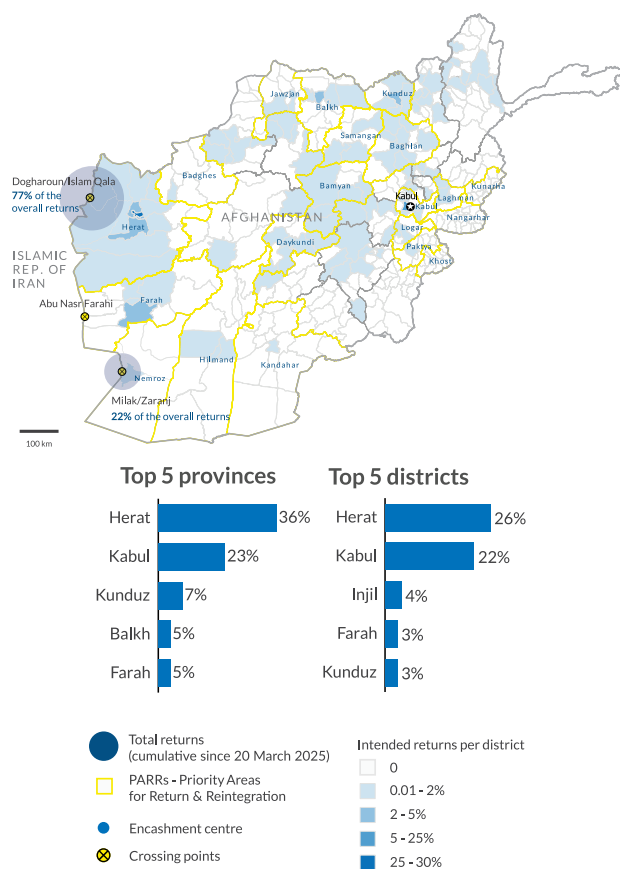
Duration 12 months (01/11/2025 -31/10/2026)

Value € 2,000,000

Areas of Intervention District of Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, and Bamiyan.

Gender Marker Significant Objective

Beneficiaries The target population will be approximately **20,616** individuals. Of these beneficiaries, over **11,000** will be women and girls. The main target group will consist of returnees, alongside a smaller proportion of vulnerable members of host communities, in order to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.



AID 013372/01/0



Through this intervention, UNHCR aims to support returnees from Iran and Pakistan as well as vulnerable host communities, promoting sustainable integration and the strengthening of livelihoods, also with a view to fostering social cohesion. The project includes: (i) immediate assistance upon return; (ii) specialized protection services; and (iii) livelihood-strengthening interventions based on an inclusive and dignified approach. The integrated and multidimensional approach aims to support durable reintegration.

The project is aligned with the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025 and is part of the Integrated Response Plan for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan (2025). It aims to restore resilient livelihoods, improve access to essential services, and strengthen productive infrastructure, in compliance with gender-sensitive protection principles.

Humanitarian

Multisectoral

Italian Contribution to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund - 2024

Humanitarian Channel	Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014
Executing Entity	 OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Deliberation	N. 66 of 10/11/2024 (VM)
Duration	12 months (20/12/2024 – 19/12/2025)
Value	€ 4,500,000
Areas of Intervention	Nationwide
Gender Marker	Significant Objective
Beneficiaries	Food security and agriculture: 15.8 million people; Health: 12.8 million; WASH: 9.7 million; Protection: 6.1; Nutrition: 5.6 million; Shelter and non-food items: 1.7 million; Emergency education: 1.4 million.



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Map created in Sep 2013.

The Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund contributes to the achievement of the objectives and targets of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) by providing targeted and integrated assistance in areas with the most acute needs, while taking into account the country's high exposure to shocks and widespread fragility. The intervention also aims to mitigate the impact of the policies of the de facto authorities on women, girls, and vulnerable groups, while strengthening advocacy on the structural drivers of increasing needs and promoting the centrality of protection. In close collaboration with partners active in key sectors such as health, WASH, agriculture, and education, the Fund ensures the continuity of basic services.

AID 013072/01/0



The 12-month initiative contributes to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF) by responding to the growing complexity of the crisis through timely interventions for the most urgent needs, closing funding gaps and supporting coordination, early action, preparedness and resilience-building activities.

Most of the assistance was directed towards life-saving activities and rapid emergency response, including health, nutrition, food security, protection and WASH (water, hygiene, health services). Interventions included several key sectors such as health, nutrition, protection, water and sanitation, shelter/essential goods, food security and cash assistance.

Humanitarian

Multisectoral

Italian Contribution to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund - 2025

Humanitarian Channel	Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014
Executing Entity	 OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Deliberation	N. 40 - 02/10/2025 (VM)
Duration	12 months
Value	€ 3,000,000
Areas of Intervention	Nationwide
Gender Marker	Significant Objective
Beneficiaries	Direct beneficiaries will include women, men, girls, boys, children, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees.



Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Map created in Sep 2013.

The initiative provides a **financial contribution to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF)**, one of the **Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs)** managed by OCHA, with the aim of strengthening the effectiveness and impact of the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. The AHF is a highly flexible and responsive funding mechanism capable of rapidly allocating resources in line with the priorities identified in the **Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP)** and in **Flash Appeals** launched in response to sudden crises.

The Fund primarily focuses on addressing the **most urgent humanitarian needs, bridging funding gaps and ensuring timely support in the event of new or unforeseen emergencies**. In line

AID 013367/01/0



with the HNRP, activities financed by the AHF aim to ensure **timely and equitable access to life-saving services, strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations, and support the recovery of affected communities, including internally displaced persons and returnees**, who represent a significant share of those in need of humanitarian assistance. Intervention locations will be identified based on the severity of needs, in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

AHF resources are allocated to interventions implemented by United Nations agencies, international and national NGOs, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator and with the support of a multilateral Advisory Board.

Humanitarian

Disability and Humanitarian Mine Action

Italian Contribution to the 2024 Special Appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on Disability and Mine Action

Humanitarian Channel	Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014
Executing Entity	 ICRC
Deliberation	N. 72 - 19/12/2024 (VM)
Duration	12 months (19/02/2025 – 18/02/2026)
Value	€ 1,000,000
Areas of Intervention	Districts of Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad, Gulbahar, Faizabad & LashkarGah.
Gender Marker	Significant objective
Beneficiaries	Estimated total number of unique direct beneficiaries: 110,030 persons



The initiative contributes to the 2024 Special Appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross on “Disability and Humanitarian Mine Action” in Afghanistan, Mali, and Somalia. It promotes specialized rehabilitation assistance and the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly victims of mines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW).

Thanks to its operational presence and its role under international humanitarian law, the ICRC strengthens both prevention and response to the effects of explosive ordnance, ensuring access to assistive devices, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation services through seven centers in Afghanistan, with expanded coverage reaching remote areas.

AID 013206/01/0



Photo credits: ICRC

The intervention also includes strengthening the technical and managerial capacities of staff, the direct employment of persons with disabilities, the improvement of services for spinal cord injuries and childhood disabilities, and the gradual transfer of expertise to local institutions, with a view to sustainability.

In parallel, measures are promoted to support social and economic inclusion, education, and livelihoods, as well as sports and psychosocial activities.

Humanitarian

Disability and Humanitarian Mine Action

Italian Contribution to the 2025 ICRC Special Appeal on “Weapon Contamination and Victim Assistance”

Humanitarian Channel Multi-Bilateral – art. 10 L. 125/2014

Executing Entity



ICRC

Executing Entity N. 51 - 05/12/2025 (VM)

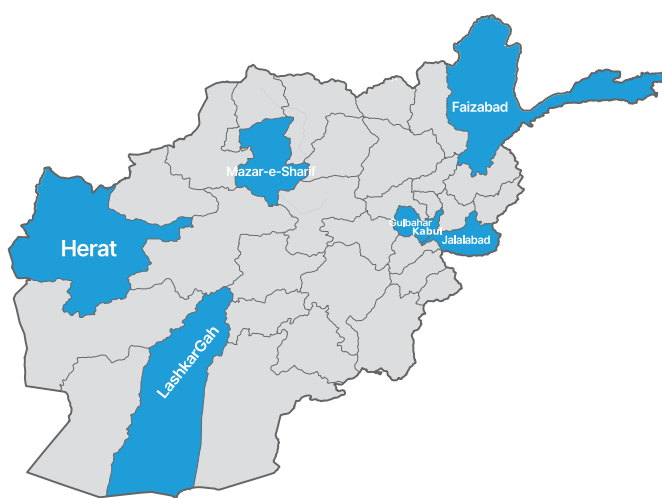
Duration 12 months
(Under the 2025 Special Appeal)

Value € 1,000,000

Areas of Intervention Districts of Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad, Gulbahar, Faizabad and LashkarGah.

Gender Marker Not targeted

Beneficiaries By supporting 27 physical rehabilitation and social reintegration projects, the International Committee of the Red Cross seeks to assist more than **90,000 beneficiaries** by strengthening seven rehabilitation centers and enhancing access to care for persons with disabilities, especially the most vulnerable. The intervention also includes support to education for children and youth, the promotion of social inclusion in collaboration with local actors, and activities aimed at restoring livelihoods. Sports initiatives are also planned as a tool for physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support.



The initiative contributes to the 2025 Special Appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan on explosive ordnance contamination and victim assistance, through integrated activities including risk education, mapping of contaminated areas, specialized healthcare, and the socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly victims of mines and explosive remnants of war. Leveraging its operational presence and humanitarian mandate, the ICRC applies a multidimensional approach that combines physical rehabilitation (prostheses, physiotherapy) with economic and social reintegration programmes, as well as awareness-raising initiatives on the risks associated with explosive ordnance.

AID 013392/01/0



Photo credits: ICRC

The Italian contribution to the Appeal is also consistent with the *Three-Year Programming and Policy Document of the Italian Development Cooperation 2024–2026*, which envisages support for integrated humanitarian mine action programmes, including clearance of contaminated areas, direct assistance to survivors, risk education activities, and advocacy efforts for the banning of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, in line with relevant international conventions.

Basic Human Needs

Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

STFA- Contribution to the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

“Drug Use Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Afghan Women – Area-based Approach for Sustainable Impact”

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Multi-Bilateral art. 5 L.125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation

Joint Committee
N. 31 - 27/01/2023

Agreement

Signed on 06/05/2024

Duration

24 months (20/09/24 -19/09/26)

Value

€ 4,850,000

Areas of Intervention

Logar, Ghazni, Khost

Gender Marker

1 - Significant

Beneficiaries

84,390 persons in a state of vulnerability - especially women and children

SDGs



Description

The contribution to the STFA in question was negotiated within the Steering Committee, with a preference for supporting vulnerable groups affected by drug dependency, particularly women.

The funds have therefore supported the project **“Drug Use Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Afghan Women”** in the South-Eastern region of the country, where the prevalence of drug use is highest and where prevention and treatment services for drug dependence are limited, especially for women. The initiative also aims to contribute to the social reintegration of beneficiaries by enhancing access to livelihood and employment opportunities.



Photo credits: STFA

The intervention is aligned with the following expected outcomes of the **United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023–2027 (UNSFA)**:

1. Essential services are sustained; and
2. Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods are strengthened.

Results

The protection of approximately 9,000 vulnerable or affected by drug dependence individuals (including 626 women), has been improved through increased awareness of the harmful effects of drugs, as well as through the training of 50 healthcare workers and 52 professionals, including psychologists, counsellors, and social workers.



Access to drug dependence treatment and relapse prevention services has increased for approximately 7,000 clients (including 564 women).

The negative health consequences of drug use have been reduced through the provision of basic health services to 4,230 people affected by drug dependence (including 116 women), as well as through the delivery of HIV testing and counselling to 1,249 individuals (including 116 women) in the Ghazni prison.

STFA- Contribution to the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan

“Facilitating Opportunities through Revitalization of Settlements and Traditional community-held Assets (FORSAT)”

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel Multi-Bilateral art. 5 L.125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation Joint Committee
N. 92 - 03/10/2025

Agreement Signed on 06/05/2024

Duration 24 months (10/12/25 - 09/12/27)

Value € 2,430,970.76

Areas of Intervention Province of Bamiyan

Gender Marker 1 - Significant

Beneficiaries 46,900 persons (including 23,010 women and girls)

SDGs



Description

The STFA contribution approved in 2025 was negotiated within the STFA Steering Committee with a preference for the project “**Facilitating Opportunities through the Revitalization of Community-Based Settlements and Traditionally Held Assets (FORSAT)**”, aimed at improving living conditions in existing informal settlements within the Bamiyan UNESCO World Heritage site and enhancing the economic resilience of vulnerable communities living in the area.

The planned activities aim to improve access to essential services for residents of these settlements, ensure safe accessibility to the site, and strengthen protection against climate change-related hazards. In addition, the initiative

AID 012043/01/1



Photo credits: UN Habitat

will provide training and employment opportunities for skilled labour. This action will also contribute to the development of the cultural and creative industries and sustainable tourism, with particular attention to the inclusion of women, displaced and refugee populations, fostering durable solutions.

The intervention is expected to contribute to the achievement of Outcome 2, “Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods” (particularly in relation to private sector development), of the **United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023–2027 (UNSFA)**.

Basic Human Needs

Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

ARTF – Contribution to the Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund

“EMERGE - Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth”

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Multi-Bilateral art. 5 L.125/2014

Executing Entity



THE WORLD BANK

Deliberation

Joint Committee
N. 27 - 09/04/2024

Agreement

Signed on 03/06/2024

Duration

12 months (20/06/24 - 19/06/25)

Value

€ 2,000,000

Areas of Intervention

Provinces of Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamiyan, Daikundi, Faryab, Herat, Jowsjan, Kabul, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Parwan, Samangan, Sar-e-pol and Takhar

Gender Marker

1 - Significant

Expected results

31,200 loans (40% to women) and 800 small and micro enterprises enabled to access credit (50% women-led)

SDGs



Description

The Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) is a multi-sector trust fund managed by the World Bank to support the provision of basic services to the Afghan people through programmes implemented by United Nations agencies and partner NGOs. The Italian contribution was negotiated with a preference for the project “**Empowering Microfinance and Enterprises for Resilience and Growth (EMERGE)**”, which aims to support both the demand and supply of financing for micro and small enterprises in Afghanistan, with a particular focus on women's financial inclusion to promote job creation and private sector growth.



Photo credits: UNESCO

The intervention is aligned with Expected Outcome 2, “**Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods**,” of the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023–2027 (UNSA). The Italian contribution was fully disbursed within 12 months, and the project has been extended until the end of December 2025.

Results

The main beneficiaries of the project are private microfinance providers (MFPs) and their borrowers, as well as micro and small enterprises. Two MFPs successfully rebuilt their capital through Capital Support Grants (CSGs) provided under the project, which enabled them to stabilise their operations and support the growth of their loan portfolios. Since the beginning of the project, the **total number of loans disbursed by MFPs has exceeded the established target, reaching 35,798, of which 43% were issued to women**. Business development training courses enabled 726 micro and small enterprises (53.4% women-led or owned by women) to become ready for access to credit, two months after the end of the project.

Basic Human Needs

Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

Local Community Empowerment and Preservation of Shar-e-Gholghola, the World Heritage Site in Bamiyan.

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Multi-Bilateral

Executing Entity



Deliberation

Joint Committee
N. 143 - 23/12/2016

Agreement

Signed on 10/07/2017

Duration

10/07/2017 - 18/10/2025

Value

€ 1,000,000

Areas of Intervention

Bamiyan, Central Plateau Region

Gender Marker

Not assessed

Beneficiaries

1,518 direct beneficiaries

SDGs



Description

The project aims to preserve the historic site of Shahr-e-Gholghola and enhance the **conservation of cultural heritage through cash-for-work activities, while promoting sustainable tourism** in the Bamiyan Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since 2021, UNESCO has adapted its activities to ensure a principled approach, focused on providing direct support to the Afghan people.

The intervention is aligned with Expected Outcome 2, **“Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods,”** of the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023–2027 (UNSAF).

AID 011044/01/4



Photo credits: UNESCO

Results

Improvements were made to the development and preservation of visitor infrastructure at the **Shahr-e-Gholghola** site through the implementation of a conservation plan, ground and ruins consolidation works, maintenance of drainage systems and protective coverings for archaeological structures, and the construction of a visitor pathway to facilitate and guide access to the site.

Local capacities for the management of responsible and sustainable tourism at the Bamiyan site were strengthened, alongside enhanced economic and social resilience, by safeguarding the site's cultural value. This was achieved through **workshops promoting the handicraft sector, creative industries, and heritage-based tourism**, involving approximately 100 participants from Bamiyan (80 women and 20 men), as well as through **Project-Based Learning (PBL) training on marketing, production techniques, literacy improvement, and management**, which engaged 100 women. In addition, **four documentaries** were produced during the implementation of activities at the site.

Overall, the project reached a total of 350 households (approximately 2,590 individuals).



Basic Human Needs Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

Local Community Empowerment and Preservation of Shar-e-Gholghola, the World Heritage Site in Bamiyan.

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Multi-Bilateral

Executing Entity



Deliberation

Joint Committee
N. 117 - 15/11/2018

Agreement

Signed on 17/12/2018

Duration

01/04/2019 - 07/05/2027

Value

€ 4,092,102

Areas of Intervention

Bamiyan, Central Plateau Region

Gender Marker

1 - Significant

Beneficiaries

1,500 direct beneficiaries

SDGs



Description

The objective of the initiative is to improve the operational framework for the safeguarding and management of the cultural heritage of Bamiyan by strengthening local communities through the **creation of public cultural spaces and employment and training opportunities in the cultural sector**, with a particular focus on the conservation and enhancement of the Bamiyan Valley Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The intervention is aligned with Expected Outcome 2, "Economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods," of the United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan 2023–2027 (UNSFA).



Photo credits: UNESCO

Results

1. A **Management Plan for the Bamiyan Valley** has been developed in coordination with local stakeholders, communities, and international experts. The Plan constitutes a critical step towards revising the site's "in danger" status, assigned at the time of its inscription in 2003.
2. Local communities have been strengthened through the **creation of an "archaeological park"**, conceived as a public space accessible to both national and international visitors. The works provided **employment to 207 beneficiaries**, amounting to a total of 60,000 paid working hours.
3. **A risk map has been developed to support the long-term maintenance of the Buddha niches**, and a study has been conducted on the methodology for the stabilization of the Western Buddha niche.

The enhancement of the site has been achieved through a permanent **video exhibition at the Bamiyan Cultural Centre**, training activities on the management of the Centre itself, and the **installation of signage across the eight sites** that make up the Bamiyan Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This was complemented by the production of documentaries uploaded to UNESCO's global website and YouTube channel.

Basic Human Needs

Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

Redevelopment of Informal Settlements and Population Flow Management in Bamiyan and Herat

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Bilateral - art. 24 L.125/2014

Executing Entity



Deliberation

AICS Director N. 96 - 24/12/2019

Agreement

Signed on 07/05/2020

Duration

01/01/2021 - 31/07/2026

Value

€ 1,050,000

Areas of Intervention

Bamiyan, Central Plateau and Herat Region

Gender Marker

1 – Significant

Beneficiaries

33,000 direct and 700,000 indirect beneficiaries

SDGs



Description

The intervention is intended to help make cities and human settlements in Herat and Bamiyan inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The specific objective is to eliminate cases of encroachment at World Heritage sites and improve the quality of informal settlements in Bamiyan and Herat.



Results

The project has produced concrete results in heritage protection and socio-environmental sustainability through urban analyses and strategic plans that guide the upgrading of informal settlements and the management of the cultural landscape.

Research on tourism demand and supply has informed strategies for sustainable tourism development and territorial planning, helping to balance the protection of cultural values with the economic inclusion of local communities.

Finally, capacity-building initiatives and support for women-led start-ups in the tourism and handicraft sectors have promoted women's economic empowerment and the integration of local activities into the tourism value chain.

The SAGAS Centre of the University of Florence supported these activities through training, mentoring, and practical workshops for local women, encouraging their participation in cultural heritage management and in the development of sustainable tourism and handicraft micro-enterprises

Basic Human Needs

Health, Economic Opportunities & Resilient Livelihoods

Ecosystem Services and Job Creation

Grant-funded Project

Ordinary Channel

Multi-Bilateral – art. 5 L.125/2014

Executing Entity



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Deliberation

Joint Committee
N. 113 - 18/12/2019

Agreement

Signed on 11/02/2021

Duration

01/07/2021 - 30/06/2026

Value

€ 940,000

Areas of Intervention

Afghanistan, Albania, Kyrgyzstan
Montenegro and Pakistan

Gender Marker

1 – Significant

Beneficiaries

2,800 direct beneficiaries (25%
women and girls)

SDGs



Description

The initiative aims to improve the living conditions of rural communities through the sustainable management of natural resources, particularly in mountain areas, across five countries belonging to the FAO Mountain Partnership (Afghanistan, Albania, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, and Pakistan). The project seeks to contribute to reducing land degradation, restoring biodiversity, and enhancing ecosystem services in the selected areas through methodologies designed to analyse environmental and socio-economic conditions and identify actions to address vulnerability in the mountain regions of the target countries. The intervention, implemented by FAO with technical support from the University of Rome "La Sapienza," adopts a strategy aimed at strengthening institutional capacities in the target countries which, in the case of Afghanistan, does not directly involve national institutions but rather specialists from Kabul University, and benefits from collaboration with the Italian NGO CESVI.

AID 012006/02/4



Photo credits: FAO

Results

1. The national-level analysis of the main environmental and socio-economic conditions, as well as potential environmental and livelihood-related threats, has been completed. Two districts have been identified as pilot areas for further in-depth activities in the next phase and for the development of work plans.
2. The provincial/local-level analysis of environmental and socio-economic contexts, including an assessment of the risks driving livelihood vulnerability in the pilot areas, has been completed.
3. Consultations with the national teams were conducted to gather their feedback on the reports, verify whether they provide a comprehensive overview of the areas, and incorporate any missing information.
4. The development of an action plan based on the discussions of the meetings, including objectives, outcomes and activities to be undertaken, as well as the related roles and responsibilities of FAO and partners, is ongoing.



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