



AFGHANISTAN

Protection Analysis Update

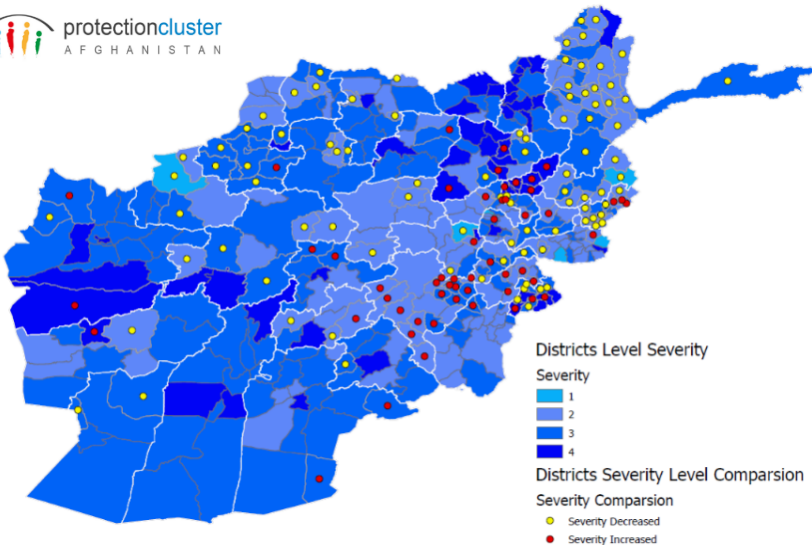
Update on protracted-crisis and climate-related protection risks trends
January - December 2024

January 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, Afghanistan faced a combination of challenges that continue to hinder recovery from decades of conflict, including a shrinking protection space, a fragile economy, inadequate access to essential services, and the impact of natural disasters, climate-related shocks and extreme weather conditions. The DfA's governance and discriminatory laws and policies have worsened the humanitarian situation. Women, girls, boys, persons with disabilities, minorities, older persons, youth, IDPs, returnees, and other groups at risk, facing severe restrictions on their rights, freedom of movement, and access to public life.

These measures have created systemic barriers to education, healthcare, and livelihood, deepening women and girls marginalization disproportionately. 6.3 million people are still displaced, many of whom multiple times. The influx of about 3,406,161 Afghanis from Iran, Pakistan, and Türkiye cross-border returns has overstretched the already limited resources, while people living in informal settlements face the growing threat of eviction due to the de facto authorities' relocation efforts. The delivery of humanitarian aid remains obstructed by bureaucratic delays, strict monitoring, and restrictions, preventing timely support. The humanitarian situation in 2024 is marked by worsening vulnerabilities, limited access to services, and increasing isolation of the most at-risk populations especially women and girls. A significant funding shortage has considerably impeded the delivery of essential humanitarian assistance.



Severity of protection risks in 2024 compared to 2023 at district level

The protection risks requiring immediate attention in the period covered by this analysis are:

1. **Discrimination and stigmatization – denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access**
2. **Presence of mines and other explosive ordnance**
3. **Gender-based violence**
4. **Unlawful impediments and/or restrictions to freedom of movement, forced displacement and threats of forced eviction**
5. **Impediments and/or restrictions to access legal Identity, remedies and Justice**

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

Amidst the continued multifaceted protracted crisis in Afghanistan, urgent actions are needed to reduce, prevent, and mitigate harmful coping strategies. It is of utmost importance to:

- The authorities in Afghanistan should rescind all bans on women and girls to enable them access essential services and opportunities.
- The HCT, in collaboration with donors, should mobilize funding for Mine Action.

UPDATE ON PROTECTION RISKS SEVERITY | JANUARY-DECEMBER 2024

SEVERITY VARIATIONS COMPARED TO 2023

INCREASE	- 54 districts increased from severity 3 in 2023 to severity 4 in 2024
STABLE	- 183 districts remained consistently high at severity 4
	- 72 districts remained consistently at severity 3
REDUCTION	- 92 districts moved from severity 4 last year in 2023 to severity 3 in 2024

CONTEXT

PEOPLE IN NEED IN 2024

20.8M

Source: Afghanistan HNRP 2024

IDPs

6.3M

Source: Afghanistan HNRP 2024

RETURNEES FROM PAKISTAN¹

315'100+

Source: UNHCR

HAZARDOUS AREAS

1'197km²

Source: Mine Action AoR

In 2024, Afghanistan remains entrenched in a deepening crisis, shaped by political, economic, and social instability and exacerbated by Afghans returning from Pakistan, Iran and other countries. The aftermath of the Taliban's takeover continues to reverberate across the country, where widespread poverty, escalating food insecurity, and a struggling healthcare system compound the suffering of the Afghan people. Economic decline, marked by falling household incomes, rising debt levels, and a lack of access to basic services, has created dire living conditions. The country also faces recurring climatic shocks, further aggravating the vulnerability of communities already grappling with the effects of decades of conflict. Despite improvements in the overall security environment targeted violence, widespread discrimination and human rights violations persist, especially against women, girls, and IDPs, returnees, human rights defenders, journalists, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities. The de facto authorities (DfA) severe restrictions have significantly impacted the lives of Afghan people, especially women, girls, and other vulnerable groups. These measures have effectively deprived the rights women and girls of their rights and freedoms, excluding them from participation in social, civic, and public life. As protection and human rights conditions continue to deteriorate, access to education, employment, and healthcare remain severely limited for these groups, depleting their ability to cope, diminishing their capacity for self-protection and leading many to resort to harmful coping mechanisms.

Armed conflict and natural disasters have driven around 6.3 million people into protracted displacement, many of whom have been displaced multiple times. The situation is compounded by about 3,406,161 Afghans who returned from Iran, Pakistan, and Türkiye in 2024, which have placed additional strain on Afghanistan's already overstretched resources and capacities, creating social tensions as communities may compete for basic necessities.ⁱ Simultaneously, around 191,500 people living in nearly 600 informal settlements (ISETs) face high risks of eviction due to DfA's efforts to relocate them to their places of origin and develop state-owned land, driving housing, land, and property (HLP) needs. Although active hostilities have decreased since the Taliban's takeover, Afghanistan remains heavily contaminated with explosive ordnance. As of December 2024, 269 districts still face risks from improvised explosive devices, mines, and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and around 3.11 million people live within one km of identified contaminated areas.ⁱⁱ

The DfA's regulations and monitoring of UN organizations and international/national NGOs continue to disrupt the prompt delivery of humanitarian aid, depriving vulnerable groups and aid recipients from receiving critical and life-saving assistance. On 30 December 2023, the Ministry of Economy issued a letter discouraging public awareness, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, advocacy activities and other activities categorised as "soft activities." As a result, 51% of organisations have reported difficulties in implementing awareness-raising projects in 2024. In addition, approval of MoUs has significantly been delayed by the DfA consequently impacting the implementation of programmes.ⁱⁱⁱ

GOVERNANCE, LAWS AND POLICIES

Since their takeover in August 2021, the DfA have enforced a strict interpretation of Sharia law, imposing acute restrictions on various aspects of life, such as the right to work, right to education, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These restrictions have particularly targeted

¹ Number of returnees from Pakistan in 2024.

women and girls as they have gradually been removed from the workforce, education, and decision-making roles which has led to their near-complete disappearance from Afghan society.

The de facto Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) and its provincial branches are responsible for setting policies, providing advice, monitoring compliance, resolving complaints, and enforcing these laws. Their goal is to promote virtue and prevent vice in line with the de facto authorities' interpretation of Islamic law.^{iv} During the first years of the DfA governance, many decrees and guidelines were communicated orally or via social media, media interviews, and public announcements.^v While the DfA still rules by decree, a formal legislative process has been established, requiring review board approval before presenting proposals to the supreme leader. Decrees are now published in public gazettes, as social media versions were difficult to verify.^{vi} According to UNAMA, the provincial departments of the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (DPVPVs) have also issued their own instructions in some case.^{vii}

Over the course of 2024, the DfA continued to issue decrees and directives. From July to December alone, at least 15 new decrees and directives were introduced, many of which focus on enforcing social control, particularly regarding the rights of women and girls. Notable actions include the implementation of the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (LPVPV), along with various decrees affecting access to education and access employment and income generation. Other measures include a national-level ban on religious debates between scholars and students, a provincial-level restriction on women and girls entering parks, and a provincial-level prohibition on women and girls using smartphones.² To date, the DfA has not reversed any previous decree.^{viii}

On 21 August 2024, the DfA issued the Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (PVPV law).¹ This law imposes severe personal conduct restrictions on Afghans, especially on women, and expanding powers of the de facto MPVPV staff, such as discretionary powers to review publications and information.^{ix} The PVPV law codifies some pre-existing restrictions, extends certain limitations, and introduces new ones. It formalizes specific dress codes for women, men, girls, and boys such as the requirement for women to wear a hijab, cover their faces and hide their voices when outside their homes, imposition of beard and congregational prayers requirements for men. The law also tightens restrictions on public behavior (bans music in public, prohibits the public display of animated objects), and increases control over the media. While the Mahram requirement existed prior to the PVPV Law, its codification introduces additional restrictions, including a ban on women and girls using public transport if they are not properly covered or accompanied by an *"an adult male who is a close relative and of sound mind."*^x The PVPV law has also heightened scrutiny on NGOs and their female staff, with de facto PVPV officials frequently visiting offices and project sites. For instance, as a result of restrictions on women humanitarian staff, 72% of NGOs reported that only male staff continue to work in their offices, and 27% indicated that women have left their organisations because of DfA decrees. Also 22% reported that the PVPV Law prevent women from going to work where they were previously able to. Regional centers like Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kabul, and Herat were identified by partners as the most impacted areas, with many respondents noting that restrictions were being enforced in both urban and rural locations.^{xi} These gender-based restrictions and regulatory interference threaten to undermine fair and equal humanitarian support, endangering vital assistance to those in need. Additionally, the law has raised operational costs for NGOs, as they are forced to hire extra office space, transportation, and mahram for female staff. The most recent development came on 26 December 2024, when the DfA issued a decision to revoke the licenses of NGOs that continue to employ women across Afghanistan. This presents significant challenges to service delivery, obstructing efforts to reach women and girls with essential aid, exacerbating their isolation, and undermining gender-sensitive responses and policies. The ramifications of this ban are far-reaching, severely impacting the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and the overall well-being of women and girls.^{xii}

Additionally, on 2 December 2024, the DfA issued a new decree barring women and girls from attending private medical institutions, including training programmes. It is also important to highlight that the ban on girls' education

² For a detailed analysis of the latest DfA decrees and directives see: ACAPS, Afghanistan, [Third update on Taliban decrees and directives relevant to the humanitarian response \(July–December 2024\)](#)

beyond the 6th grade remains in effect, denying at least 1.5 million girls their right to education. As a result, women and girls in Afghanistan now have no viable avenues to pursue careers or further their education.

Simultaneously, the lack of inclusive policies and laws also significantly limits persons with disabilities from accessing education, employment, and social welfare services. The focus on visible and physical disabilities, along with unequal entitlements, increases the obstacles they face in obtaining essential services and opportunities they require.^{xiii}

INCREASING FLOODS, DROUGHTS AND OTHER CLIMATE-RELATED SHOCKS

Afghanistan is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, ranking among the countries most at risk from the rising frequency, intensity, and severity of disasters. This exposes millions of people to severe losses in their livelihoods and assets. In 2024, Afghanistan faced significant climate shocks and natural disasters that exacerbated the vulnerabilities of its population, as the country is exposed to various natural hazards, including earthquakes, droughts, floods, heavy snowfall, landslides, and avalanches with all 34 provinces affected by one or more of these events in 2024. Climate disasters have now replaced conflict as the primary cause of people fleeing their homes and relocating within Afghanistan,^{xiv} while the country is one of the least equipped to adapt to climate change.^{xv}

The 2023/24 winter began with dry and warm conditions, but above-average spring rainfall caused widespread flooding. In 2024, floods made up 96% of all natural disasters, affecting 173,300 people (23,000 families). It damaged or destroyed 20,000 homes, agricultural land, health facilities, schools, and irrigation systems. In April, floods in the West, South, East, and Central regions impacted 1,590 families, causing 35 deaths and 47 injuries. Over 930 homes were damaged, along with 63,700 acres of agricultural land and at least 470 livestock were lost.^{xvi} Additionally, flooding also moved several explosive ordnance items from their original places in Baghlan and Paktika, which created new challenges for the communities. In July, flash floods and landslides affected 2,000 families in 29 districts across several provinces, resulting in 58 deaths and 380 injuries. Nangarhar Province, particularly the Omari camp near the Torkham border, was heavily impacted, with 550 tents destroyed and essential facilities damaged.^{xvii} Unfortunately, Afghan women's limited mobility has put them at much greater risk during floods. GiHA situational report highlights that women and girls were trapped inside their homes when heavy rains led to flooding, while men, being outside and engaged in public life, were able to find shelter in more resilient public buildings such as mosques.^{xviii}

At the same time, in four of the last five years, Afghanistan has experienced consecutive drought-like conditions, severely impacting people's ability to cope and leading to an unprecedented depletion of groundwater.^{xix} Rising temperatures are swiftly altering precipitation patterns across the country, further limiting access to water and destroying the livelihoods of at-risk communities that depend on agriculture-based incomes for subsistence. In Kandahar province, widespread drought has forced people to relocate after hundreds of wells and other water sources ran dry.^{xx} The ongoing effects of these extended droughts, combined with pre-existing vulnerabilities, are placing significant strain on essential resources, livelihoods, and the overall resilience of already vulnerable communities.

Harsh winter conditions, especially in mountainous regions such as Badakhshan and Ghazni, bring severe cold, heavy snowfall, and avalanches, isolating remote villages. Heavy snow falls have affected several provinces across Afghanistan in February and March 2024 with landslides and avalanches, disrupting services, blocking roads, damaging to civilian infrastructures and livestock, and causing civilian casualties. The provinces most affected were Badghis, Badakhshan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Helmand and Sari Pul.^{xxi} During this time, roof collapses, hypothermia, and respiratory illnesses increase, particularly among the older persons, pregnant women, children, and displaced people (e.g. IDPs, returnees) living in inadequate shelters.^{xxii} This also heightens vulnerability for

populations already facing food insecurity. Experts have predicted that La Niña conditions would likely continue through January to March 2025 with a 70-80 percent chance.^{xxiii} This phenomenon typically leads to colder winters.³

The compounded impacts of climate shocks, exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation, have increased the vulnerability of groups such as women, girls, rural households, displaced populations, older persons, and those with disabilities. These groups face greater challenges due to pre-existing limitations in resources, healthcare, decision-making power, and their ability to recover from climate-related disasters, leaving them more exposed to harm and with limited access to life-saving services. Additionally, climate change exacerbates gender-based violence, with forced marriages and domestic violence rising in some communities facing droughts and extreme weather, due to the loss of livelihoods and the destruction of property.^{xxiv}

CROSS-BORDER RETURN MOVEMENTS FROM PAKISTAN AND IRAN

The situation in Afghanistan is worsened by regional political dynamics in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan, as both countries have pushed back Afghan nationals, including refugees and individuals in refugee-like situations (such as UNHCR slip holders and asylum seeker certificate holders) to Afghanistan. This has heightened the vulnerabilities of the returnee population, strained their coping capacities, and increased their exposure to protection risks.

Following the announcement and implementation of the IFRP by the Government of Pakistan in the last quarter of 2023, the number of returnees crossing official border points from Pakistan significantly increased starting in September 2023, with the highest surge occurring in early November 2023. However, since January 2024, the flow of returnees has gradually decreased, although it remains considerably higher than levels seen before September 2023.⁴ Between 15 September 2023 and 31 December 2024, approximately 805,991 Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan, with 315,100 of them returning in 2024. Of the total 805,991 returnees, nearly 38,274 were deported, including around 8,954 in 2024.^{xxv} Of the total returnees, 59% are children and 50% of the returnees are female, out of which 29% are girls, highlighting the significant presence of vulnerable women and children among the returning population. Although the influx from Pakistan has stabilized in recent months, the threat of further push back from Pakistan remains, with many undocumented Afghans being most at-risk. Returnees from Pakistan cited multiple factors driving their decision to return to Afghanistan, primarily the serious protection concerns, including fears of arrest and deportation, as well as instances of abuse by police or government officials.

Simultaneously, the situation in Iran has worsened for undocumented Afghans. From January to December 2024, over 1.1 million undocumented Afghan nationals returned from Iran, of which 66 % were deported.^{xxvi} This trend is expected to worsen in 2025 as the Iranian government's announced plans to deport up to 2 million Afghans by March 2025. This decision has already triggered a significant rise in the number of returnees, with approximately 255,000 Afghans crossing into Afghanistan in September 2024 and more than 219,000 in October 2024. Additionally, there are reports of deportations occurring without due process, leaving deportees with no opportunity to raise concerns about potential protection risks upon their return to Afghanistan. Only 957 returnees have returned from Iran in 2024 through voluntary repatriation process.^{xxvii}

Upon arrival, many returnees struggle with limited resources and face challenges in meeting their basic needs and accessing essential services, including healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and legal aid. Many returnee households across regions expressed being exposed to multiple risks including physical violence, harassment, threats, service denial, limited rights, discrimination, early marriage, and abuses as well as explosive ordnance contamination. Returnees in Kandahar (43%), Takhar (24%), Nangarhar (20%), and Khost (20%) reported experiencing physical violence and harassment. Also, some returnees

³ Several provinces across Afghanistan, such as Herat, Ghor, Bamyan, Sar-e-Pul and Badakhshan provinces have already experience heavy snowfall during the first week of January 2025, with the closure of major transportation routes. See news media: [AmuTV](#)

⁴ Prior the announcement, an average of around 260 undocumented Afghans were returning daily from Pakistan through Spin Boldak (Kandahar) and Torkham (Nangarhar) border crossing points. See: UNHCR, [Afghanistan Border Monitoring Report January-September 2024](#)

who have outstanding debts fear for their safety if they are unable to repay their lenders, which may prevent them from returning to their communities.^{xxviii}

This ongoing large-scale movement of returnees has intensified the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, adding on the existing 6.3 million internally displaced Afghans, many of whom live in the same areas, which lack the infrastructure and resources to support such a large influx. The sheer number of returnees places significant strain on Afghanistan's ability to provide necessary assistance, shelter, healthcare, and employment, further worsening the living conditions for all Afghan, leading to social tensions between host communities and returnees.^{xxix}

PROTECTION RISKS

RISK 1

Discrimination and Stigmatization – Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access

In Afghanistan, 2024 has seen ongoing challenges for marginalized groups, with discrimination and stigmatization being central barriers to accessing essential resources, opportunities, services, and humanitarian aid. Women, girls, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, IDPs, returnees and other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected.

Women and girls in Afghanistan face systemic discrimination that permeates every aspect of their lives. Since the takeover, the DfA have consistently undermined the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls, with the issuance of more than 80 decrees and directives and discriminatory practices.^{xxx} The PVPV law has now reinforced the control on what women and girls wear, limiting their freedom of movement and access to essential services, denying them access to education and career opportunities, silencing their voices in public life and severely obstructing the fulfillment of their basic human rights. Afghanistan Protection Cluster (APC) Protection monitoring data highlights women and girls' continued impediments in accessing to basic services, including healthcare, legal aid, and WASH facilities. Women-headed households are among the most vulnerable to being denied access to essential services, followed by those led by persons with physical disabilities and older persons heads of household. Barriers to accessing services and humanitarian assistance include economic hardship, physical distance, the absence of a mahram, lack of information, and the lack of identity documentation. Women-headed households account for over 10% of Afghanistan's population and face heightened vulnerability due to limited resources and fewer opportunities to overcome the ongoing discriminatory policies and practices that restrict their rights and opportunities. WoAA findings indicate that the income per household member in female-headed households dropped by 40% in 2024, from \$26 (AFN 1,780) to \$16 (AFN 1,062) compared to 16 % in male-headed households.^{xxxi} What is more, in June 2024, a salary cap of AFN 5,000 (USD 70) was set for all female civil servants. In July 2024, it the DfA clarified that the cap only affects women in the public sector who are not regularly attending work due to DfA's restrictions. This policy further strains the financial stability of women already banned from working since 2021. Women headed households will be the most affected, unable to rely on a male relative's income. There is also the risk that more children may have to drop out of school to support their families, which could exacerbate other protection risks such as child labour and early marriage.^{xxxii} The renewed ban on NGO female staff will further hinder women and girls' access to critical and lifesaving humanitarian assistance. It reduces gender-sensitive support, isolates women and girls, and exacerbates their vulnerabilities by preventing organisations from addressing their specific needs.

Afghanistan has one of the youngest populations globally, with around 63% of its people (27.5 million) under the age of 25, and 46% (11.7 million) under 15. This youth demographic faces numerous challenges, including limited access to education, personal development, and meaningful participation, as well as high unemployment, poverty, child marriage, early pregnancies, gender-based violence, and growing mental health issues, all exacerbated by limited access to basic services.^{xxxiii} Around 1.5 million secondary school-aged girls in Afghanistan are still out of

school, which increases their vulnerability to discrimination and limits their opportunities. This educational deprivation, along with the recent decree banning women and girls from attending private medical institutions^{xxxiv}, further restricts their access to crucial services and employment. As a result, they face heightened risks of early and forced marriage, while their economic and social marginalization continues to worsen, leaving them with few prospects for a career, independence, or a better future. Consequently, young people are increasingly vulnerable to harmful coping mechanisms, such as drug addiction, violent extremism, child labor, and economic exploitation. Without opportunities for growth and engagement, many are at risk of falling into these destructive cycles, further destabilizing their prospects.

Persons with disabilities (PWD) in Afghanistan face severe discrimination, compounded by the absence of inclusive policies and laws restricts their access to healthcare, education, social welfare and employment. According to the WoAA findings, households headed by persons with disabilities experience higher unemployment rates (10% vs. 2% nationally) and child labour (31% vs. 15% nationally). It is also reported higher levels of debt, with an average of \$783 compared to the national average of \$558. Additionally, they rely more on inadequate water and sanitation facilities, reporting higher rates of protection incidents (32% vs. 22% nationally).^{xxxv} APC protection monitoring data reveals that persons with disabilities encounter significant obstacles in accessing essential services, including difficulties reaching facilities and service points due to accessibility issues, communication barriers, and negative societal attitudes. Consequently, they are frequently excluded from fully participating in public life. This situation is further exacerbated by limited support for persons with disabilities, stemming from restrictions on Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and considerable gaps in tailored services.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees in Afghanistan face systemic challenges in accessing essential services, including healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and legal protection. These challenges are particularly severe for those who lack civil documentation. A significant portion of returnees and IDPs are unemployed (46%) or work as daily laborers (37%). Both groups face significant challenges in generating income to meet their basic needs, a situation further compounded by Afghanistan's ongoing economic crisis. The competition for resources and jobs between these economically vulnerable groups and host communities heightens the risk of social tensions. Some returnees have reported physical violence and harassment in Kandahar (43%), Takhar (24%), Nangarhar (20%), Khost (20%).^{xxxvi}

Ethnic and religious groups in Afghanistan continue to face violence, repression, discrimination, and marginalization, reflecting historical trends. UNAMA has been reporting on ISKP attacks, notably against targeted minority communities, such as the Hazaras. Between January to September 2024, ISKP has claimed responsibility for various incidents, often targeting Shi'a Muslim communities. On 12 September, armed assailants hijacked a vehicle on the border between Ghor and Daikundi provinces, killing 14 Hazara Shi'a men and injuring four. On 11 August in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi area, an IED attack on a minibus killed one Hazara man and injured 13 others. The victims were traveling to welcome Shi'a Muslim pilgrims returning from Karbala, Iraq.^{xxxvii}

The root cause of the exclusion and discrimination faced by women, girls, and other vulnerable groups lies in deeply ingrained cultural and patriarchal norms, which place them at a disadvantage across all areas of life, including economic, social, and political spheres. As a result, this has heightened the vulnerabilities and diminished the ability of these at-risk groups to cope with crises. To meet basic needs, many are resorting to harmful coping strategies such as borrowing money (31%), sending children to work (14%), engaging in hazardous labor (10%), skipping or reducing meals (10%), and selling assets (9%). Boys are particularly affected, often engaging in exploitative activities such as labour and sexual exploitation, drug abuse, criminal activities, and domestic servitude. Other extreme coping strategies include early and forced marriage of daughters, begging, selling organs or children, and even suicide ideation and suicide. Engagement with communities and strengthening their capacities have been a mitigation and prevention effective strategy.

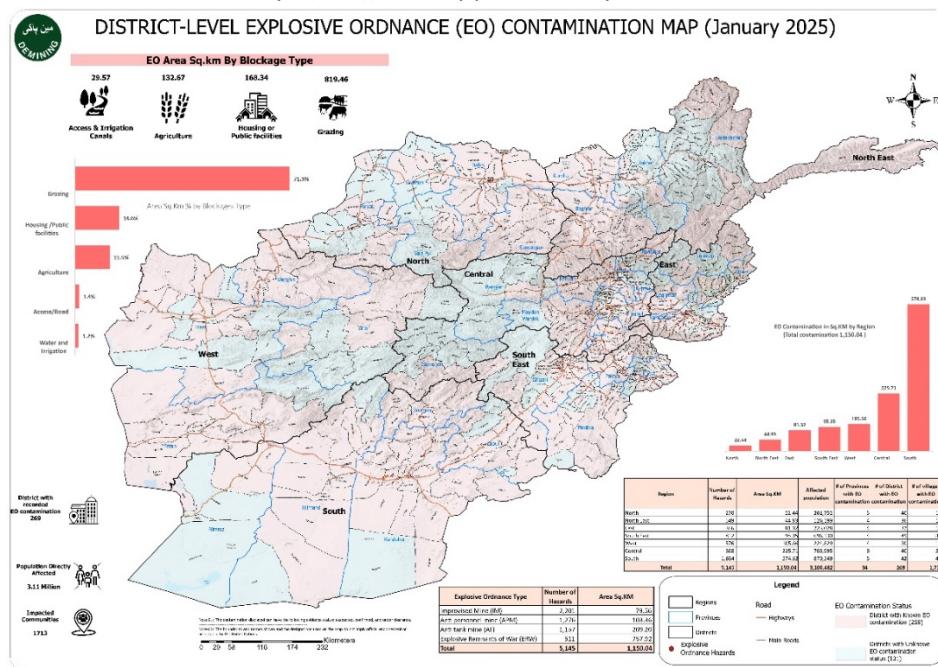
RISK 2 Presence of Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance

Decades of conflict have resulted in Afghanistan having one of the highest levels of explosive ordnance (EO) contamination globally, including landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW), unexploded ordnance (UXO). This extensive contamination significantly hampers the country's efforts toward recovery and stability. Explosive ordnance contamination causes around 50 civilian casualties each month, with 80% of the victims being children (427 casualties out of 539 are children, most of them boys (362)).^{xxxviii} Approximately 50% of the casualties from explosive ordnance occurred while children were playing. Additionally, 7% of these incidents occur during scrap metal collection, a practice linked to the country's escalating poverty and worsening economic conditions. The growing poverty has also contributed to an increase in child labour, with many children working in hazardous conditions, including collecting scrap metal for sale. This practice makes it difficult to distinguish between harmless scrap and live munitions, posing significant risks.

As of December 2024, there are over 5,145 EO contaminated areas across 1,713 communities and 269 districts in Afghanistan, covering a total of 1,150 square kilometres, including areas close to educational institutions and water sources. Approximately 3.1 million people are living within one km of identified contaminated areas. The most contaminated provinces are Helmand, Kandahar, Logar, Ghazni, and Maidan Wardak. Additionally, unexploded remnants of war (ERW) from previous conflicts, which are not included in the mine action database, could be found in any district.

These explosive remnants not only result in injury and death but also present a specific danger to people dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, including farmers, shepherds, and herders, as well as displaced communities. They obstruct access to critical resources such as agricultural land, water sources, and roads, impeding economic recovery and preventing the safe return of displaced population.^{xxxix} Returnees are especially vulnerable to the dangers posed by explosive hazards due to their long absence from Afghanistan, with many having been born outside the country. Many are living in the most contaminated areas, especially in Kandahar and Helmand, which are hosting a high number of returnees. Their unfamiliarity with conflict-affected regions and explosive contamination, coupled with the urgent need to resettle and reestablish livelihoods, heightens their exposure to these risks.

Findings of the APC protection monitoring indicate that more than half of the respondents reported that contaminated areas are not marked. Households surveyed highlighted that explosive ordnance prevents communities from grazing their animals, playing safely, working on agricultural land, accessing services and schools and collecting water. Indeed, the circumstances surrounding explosive ordnance incidents vary. In some cases, children accidentally step on landmines or pick up explosive remnants near their homes, where they play, attend school, or assist their families with tasks such as grazing animals, gathering livestock feed in the fields, or collecting firewood.



Explosive ordnance contamination across Afghanistan as of December 2024

Despite the significant reduction of active conduct of hostilities across the country, targeted improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in populated areas continue to pose a considerable threat to civilians. The Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK), remains a significant menace, having carried out nearly a dozen attacks between January and October 2024. These incidents resulted in injuries to approximately 170 civilians across various provinces, including Bamyan, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, and Nangarhar.^{xi}

The presence of mines and unexploded ordnance continues to have severe and far-reaching consequences across the country. It limits people's ability to move safely and with dignity, disrupting their access to essential services and basic needs, including water and education. It exacerbates food insecurity, undermines livelihoods, and contributes to both physical and psychological trauma. Furthermore, these hazardous areas pose significant risks to humanitarian assistance and its workers, hindering the timely delivery of aid to those in need.

According to APC protection monitoring data, 62% of respondents are unaware of where or to whom they should report the presence of explosive ordnance. Among those who do know, most report mines and explosive ordnance to community leaders (69%), while 26% report them to demining organisations. Investment into work with communities is critical, building on their capacities.

RISK 3 Gender-Based Violence

The situation of gender-based violence (GBV) in Afghanistan is worsening, with the number of individuals requiring support rising from 13.3 million in 2024 to 14.2 million in 2025. However, obtaining accurate data on GBV is challenging due to unreported cases, often driven by stigma, lack of trust in systems, and limited access to support services. GBV manifests in various forms, including physical assault, forced labour, sexual violence, child abuse, and economic and psychological violence, such as withholding alimony or depriving women of inheritance. Women, including women headed-households, children, especially girls, displaced women, women with disabilities, as well as religious ethnic, sexual and gender minorities are at high risk of GBV.^{xli}

In many Afghan households, children frequently endure physical punishment, such as slapping, verbal mistreatment, punching, kicking, and being hit with objects like thin sticks, electrical cords, and shoes.^{xlii} Children remain victims of rape, sexual violence, and harmful practices, including *bacha bazi*⁵ and child, early, and forced marriages. The prevalence of early, forced, and child marriages among girls is alarmingly high and is on the rise. Fear of forced marriage to the Taliban is driving families across the country to marry off their young daughters as a means of protection. Additionally, economic hardships are prompting families to use marriage as a strategy to alleviate financial burdens.^{xliii} Since the DfA took control in August 2021, the already widespread gender-based violence against Afghan women and girls, including intimate partner and domestic violence, has escalated, further intensified by women and girls' confinement to their home.^{xliv}

The origins of gender-based violence (GBV) in Afghanistan are deeply rooted in patriarchal cultural norms, historical conflict, political and legal failures. Traditional gender roles, where women are seen as subordinate to men, foster an environment where GBV is normalized, especially in rural areas. Decades of war have weakened social structures and protective systems, while the return of the Taliban in 2021 has further entrenched discriminatory policies that limit women's rights and access to justice.^{xlv}

The economic decline, the subsequent rise in poverty and food insecurity in Afghanistan after August 2021, along with repeated climatic shocks and displacement have weakened the population's capacities and have caused more people to turn to harmful coping mechanisms. This has heightened the vulnerability of women and children, especially girls, to sexual violence. Underage and forced marriages have emerged as a coping mechanism in response to the crisis. In urban areas, some local attitudes have shifted towards younger marriage ages as girls are

⁵ OHCHR, HRC 43rd Session, February- March 2020, Report of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and technical assistance achievements in the field of human rights:

Bacha Bazi: A harmful practice whereby boys are exploited by wealthy or powerful men for entertainment, particularly for dancing and sexual activities. It is criminalized in the revised Penal Code, which came into effect in February 2018.

barred from attending school, universities, and working, and are restricted from leaving their homes without a mahram.^{xlvi} The prohibition of girls' education is a key driver of child, early, and forced marriages, compounded by the loss of employment opportunities. If the Taliban's restrictions on the right to education continue, statistical projections suggest a 25% increase in the rate of child marriage among Afghan girls.^{xlvii} Child marriage has been proven to result in significant adverse effects for girls, including increased likelihood of domestic violence, restricted access to reproductive health services and education.

The DfA's discriminatory restrictions have not only diminished women's autonomy and economic independence but also eroded the legal and protective systems designed to address gender-based violence, hindering women and girls in accessing justice and seeking redress. The DfA disbanded the Department for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and other entities that previously provided justice for survivors of gender-based violence.^{xlviii} Additionally, informal dispute resolution systems, typically ruled by men, have discouraged women from pursuing justice and seeking remedies, especially in cases of divorce or gender-based violence. The lack of women in community governance and dispute resolution bodies, such as shuras, further restricts survivors of GBV from accessing opportunities for justice and redress.^{xlix} UN Women nationwide consultations from July 2024 emphasize that some women reported being excluded from the proceedings, required a male consent to move forward, or had to pay significant amounts of money to advance their cases.ⁱ

Reporting gender-based violence (GBV) exposes survivors to significant risks, including social rejection, where they may face stigmatization and isolation from their communities and may be accused of "moral crimes," such as "running away," as a result of reporting their abuse. Additionally, survivors may be forcibly evicted from their homes, leaving them without shelter and support. In some cases, they may also face the threat of losing custody of their children, further compounding their vulnerability and making it even harder for them to seek help or escape abuse.ⁱⁱ Some women emphasized that the fear of potential retaliation or loss of honour within their communities posed further barriers to accessing justice.ⁱⁱⁱ This forced many women and girls to return to their abusers or remain in situations where they were at risk of experiencing gender-based violence. Consequently, many GBV cases go uninvestigated, and perpetrators operate with little fear of legal consequences, as societal and legal systems fail to hold them accountable.

UN Women nationwide consultations also highlight that 54% percent of women respondents reported limited or no access to safe spaces or women's shelters. Due to DfA's restrictions many protection centers have shut down, leading to a sharp decline in critical GBV services. The PVPV law's stringent mahram requirement further hinders women and girls' access to essential services such as healthcare, including gender-based violence (GBV) services.^{liii}

RISK 4

Unlawful Impediments and/or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Forced Displacement and threats of forced eviction

In 2024, Afghanistan continued to grapple with severe challenges related to freedom of movement, forced displacement, and threats of forced evictions. One of the most significant violations of freedom of movement in Afghanistan is the enforcement of gender-based restrictions, particularly affecting women and girls. The new PVPV law codifies the mahram requirement, enforced since the DfA takeover in August 2021. Women and girls will be subject to greater scrutiny.^{liiv} In addition, the PVPV Law bans women from using public transportation unless they are "properly covered" and accompanied by a "an adult male who is a close relative and of sound mind."^{lii} This regulation further restricts women's mobility and is especially detrimental to women-headed households and widows without a male relative, further hindering their access to essential services and humanitarian assistance, thereby exacerbating their vulnerability. What is more, two provincial decrees were issued banning women and girls from entering parks. On 13 July 2024, the MPVPV in Faryab reintroduced a ban on women visiting three parks in Gurziwaan district. Similarly, on 18 September 2024, the MPVPV in Balkh province enforced a comparable restriction on parks in both the capital and nearby districts. These measures were justified as a means to prevent interaction between men and women in public spaces.^{lii} Furthermore, In Kandahar, the Department of Public

Health issued a letter on 1 September 2024 requiring female hospital staff to be accompanied by a mahram when traveling to and from work. A similar letter was sent in Helmand province, to an INGO-run hospital, mandating that female patients must also be accompanied by a mahram to enter. Additionally, in various areas of the country some taxi drivers did not accept to transport women without a mahram due to stricter enforcement of the requirement under the new PVPV law.^{lvii}

The UN Women nationwide consultations of July 2024 revealed that about 69% of women surveyed felt "not safe at all" going outside alone, while only 13% felt unsafe when accompanied by a mahram. Restrictions on public space access have severely impacted the mental health of women surveyed, with increased depression, aggression and anxiety, intensifying their sense of exclusion.^{lviii}

At the same time, the risk of forced displacement remains high, driven by cross-border returns and deportations to Afghanistan, and rising threats of evictions. Although Pakistan has extended the deadline for Afghan Proof of Registration card holders until June 2025, putting on hold a second wave of returnees, this influx continues to strain vulnerable host communities, placing pressure on already limited services in areas of return, especially in terms of access to services and protection, for both IDP and host communities.^{lix} The competition for scarce resources increases the risk of social tensions. The APC protection monitoring data indicates that 16,5% of households surveyed face rent disputes, and 13% threat of forced eviction. Women and girls, particularly those living in inadequate or non-functional shelters, face increased eviction risks compounded by the fact that their names appear on less than 5% of land documents.^{lx} These settlements are primarily located near urban centres, where many IDP families reside in inadequate shelters with limited access to basic services and insecure land tenure, increasing their risk of eviction. These areas have also seen a significant influx of recent returnees from Pakistan, especially in Kabul, Kandahar, Nangarhar Herat, and Balkh provinces. By October 2024, approximately 191,500 people are living in nearly 600 informal settlements (mostly in Kabul, Kandahar, Kunar, Ghazni and Uruzgan) and are at high risk of eviction due to government initiatives to return them to their places of origin and develop state land. Settlements in high-value urban areas, such as Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif, are especially vulnerable to eviction. In June 2024, 800 families (around 5'600 individuals) have been evicted from ISET PD8 in Kabul, exacerbating their existing vulnerabilities and facing uncertainty for their future. The eviction has forced families to make tough decision, with some selling their belongings to hire a truck and relocate to their place of origin or other settlements.^{lxi}

People face forced eviction due to government policies, insecure tenure, and land disputes in the aftermath of conflict. Already in July 2022, the DfA announced plans to relocate residents of 47 KIS sites, claiming displaced people must return to their places of origin. Many, however, have lived there for years and have no safe place to return. The APC protection monitoring data indicates that more than half of IDPs respondents (53.5%) intend to integrate in their current location, 19,8% do not know what they intend to do and 15.8 % are not sure yet. Only 5.8% plan to move onward and 5.1% wish to return. For those intending to integrate, reasons include access to better economic and education opportunities, family, safety, friends, relatives, access to humanitarian assistance and social cohesion.

Evictees often experience heightened vulnerability as they lose their homes, assets, and income, disrupting their livelihoods. This instability exposes them to health issues like stress, anxiety, and physical illnesses. Multiple displacement also erodes social support, disrupts education, and results in the loss of identity and culture, making it harder for IDPs and returnees to cope in the long term.^{lxii} The unlawful restrictions on movement, coupled with the threats of displacement and eviction, have created a climate of intense insecurity for many Afghans. Without access to basic services, legal protections, and safe shelter, they are left vulnerable and marginalized.

RISK 5 Impediments and / or Restrictions to Access Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice

In 2024, the lack of civil documentation remained a significant challenge, affecting millions of individuals across Afghanistan. Years of conflict, political instability, and displacement have led to widespread gaps in civil registration, leaving many people without essential documents such as birth certificates, Tazkiras (national ID cards), marriage certificates and death certificates. Vulnerable groups, such as women, children, internally displaced persons, ethnic or religious minorities, nomadic are disproportionately affected as they often face additional barriers to obtaining the necessary documentation. APC protection monitoring data reveals that more than half of households surveyed have at least one member lacking essential civil documentation, such as an electronic Tazkira (28.6%), passport (20%), paper Tazkira (16.8%), birth certificate (13.2%), or marriage certificate (13%), with most having never been able to obtain these documents. Barriers to access civil documentation include insufficient financial resources, lack of information, issues with online applications and long and unclear procedures. This lack of documentation particularly impacts women (25.2%) and children (46.2%), girls (24.4%) and boys (21.8%). Several factors, including displacement status, gender, and education levels, are linked to limited access to documentation. Women face restrictions such as the mahram requirement and limited access to registration offices occupied by men. This situation is worse for women headed households, including widows, as they may not account for male family member and must seek representation through a community representative (*malik*) to acquire confirmation to be able to request identity documents.^{lxiii} Without civil and legal documentation, women headed households face even greater barriers in accessing essential services and humanitarian assistance, further isolating them from healthcare, education, and social support.

Displaced persons and returnees often lack documentation that has been missing for generations and face significant financial and logistical barriers to obtaining it. Children rely on their father's Tazkira for legal identity and without a Tazkira, children cannot enroll into school. This is worse for unaccompanied minors. Ethnic and religious minorities express concerns over their ethnicity and religion being disclosed in the e-Tazkira, fearing it may result in violence and discrimination. Nomadic communities struggle with a long-standing lack of documentation and frequent movement, making it difficult to trace lineage and secure the necessary witnesses.^{lxiv}

Decades of conflict have undermined governance, causing irregularities in birth registrations and the issuance of civil and legal documents. Following August 2021, domestic laws governing civil registration were suspended. The process of obtaining documentation has been further obstructed by expensive fees, the need to travel long distances to registration centres, and bureaucratic hurdles, all compounded by the ongoing humanitarian crisis, poverty, and displacement. The absence of formal documentation severely limits individuals' ability to access basic rights and services, including healthcare, education, and legal protections along with the overall capacity for economic self-sufficiency, reintegration, and sustainable durable solutions.

Insecurity of tenure is another pervasive issue across Afghanistan in 2024, closely linked to the challenges in securing legal documentation. The lack of civil documentation, such as birth certificates, Tazkira, or legal proof of land ownership, prevents these individuals from asserting their housing, land, and property (HLP) rights. Many individuals, especially protracted IDPs and returnees, live in informal settlements without formal property rights or legal agreements, leaving them at constant risk of eviction. Women, children, older persons, people with disabilities, and ethnic or religious minorities, are particularly affected, as they often lack the documentation needed to secure stable housing or legal protection. Access to justice and remedies for individuals dealing with housing, land, and property (HLP) issues, including forced evictions, remained particularly constrained in Afghanistan. The absence of a legal framework for Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) administration, coupled with ambiguity surrounding the enforcement of property law since 2021, further exacerbates the risks faced by these vulnerable groups. The lack of a strong legal framework has compelled many individuals to turn to informal dispute resolution methods, such as local councils (*shuras*) and religious leaders, which often suffer from inconsistency and a lack of transparency.

RESPONSE

PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

In 2024, the Protection Cluster reached 80% of the target population with protection services across all districts. The cluster engaged in strategic efforts including the development of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Centrality of Protection strategy, the Protection Cluster Strategy 2025-2027 and its Advocacy Strategy 2025-2027, including respective action plans. The cluster also actively engaged with different de facto line ministries at the Kabul level, including Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), Ministry of Repatriation and Refugees (MoRR), and Ministry of Economy (MoE). Also engaged are donors on a quarterly basis with the HCT and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Team (ICCT) on protection issues. Protection monitoring tools, dashboard, and reporting systems were revised, and are currently being rolled out. The cluster also developed guidance for safe referrals in emergencies, Cash for Protection SOPs, and data protection and information-sharing protocol. Services mapping was updated and harmonized coordination was strengthened through recruitment and capacity-strengthening efforts, including training of sub-national coordinators, Protection Cluster partners, as well as training protection mainstreaming and integration for health and FSAC sub-national coordinators. Monthly learning sessions were also conducted, covering over six key protection topics and reaching over 1600 persons. It also developed the Protection Analysis Updates (PAU) and thematic reports on displacement, returns, and safety in areas of return, in collaboration with ACAPS. The Cluster contributed to emergency responses, including floods, returnee needs, and winterization efforts, and advocated for AHF funding for civil documentation and legal assistance.

ACCESS-RELATED CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS

In 2024, the DfA issued 135 directives impacting the humanitarian response in Afghanistan, while 1421 access incidents were reported, with the majority involving interference in humanitarian activities. In December alone, 11 directives, including a reminder letter on the female ban by the Ministry of Economy, were issued across various regions. These included requests for staff lists, illegal taxation, occupation of facilities or assets, delays in MoU signings, restrictions on women's participation, and interference in beneficiary selection and procurement. Violence also affected the response, with three aid workers killed, three injured, 128 arrested, and 236 gender dynamics related incidents reported, compromising the safety of humanitarian personnel.^{lxv} Despite these challenges, the Protection Cluster maintained engagement with de facto authorities to improve protection understanding and partners pursued local negotiations, including financial incentives for the mahram requirement, separate workspaces, and designated distribution times for men and women to preserve operational space, albeit at additional costs.

CRITICAL GAPS IN FUNDING AND POPULATION REACHED

While the protection cluster has reached 80% of the targeted people with services delivered in all districts across Afghanistan. In 31 districts, partners reached a total of less than 20,000 people in total. This is an average of 600 people per district. This is even though in 28 districts, partners delivered more than three activities in each of the districts with some districts receiving about seven different services. It is in only three districts where only one service was delivered. This limited coverage needs to be urgently addressed.

Across all areas, there is a critical need for PSS, legal aid and civil documentation, case management, and specialized protection services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures should be taken by all humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan and donors to reduce the exposure to and mitigate the impact associated with the protection risks identified in this analysis:

- Make consistent use of gender, age and disability-inclusive approaches when providing assistance to those affected by the identified protection risks;
- Ensure sustained delivery of protection services through multi-year programmes;
- Prioritize multi-year and multi-sectoral funding, including for national partners/local NGOs.

RISK 1

Discrimination and Stigmatization – Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access

HC and HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Strengthen collaborative engagement at the highest level of the DfA to advocate for increased space for protection and the unimpeded access of all protection responders to all population groups, with a particular focus on women, girls, persons living with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- Advocate for inclusive policies that address the needs of marginalized groups, especially women as well as minority groups, with focus on education for girls.
- Strengthen the knowledge and skills of humanitarian partners and relevant ministries for improved access and delivery of services.
- Enhance assessments considering age/sex and disability for improved data collection and analysis, guiding programming and advocacy.
- Enhance integration of programs targeting women and girls, including into livelihood interventions. Strengthen referral among service providers to enable the most vulnerable groups effective access to services.
- Increase support and advocacy for young people to enable them to identify and address harmful coping strategies.

HC/HCT

- Strengthen joined up UN and INGO engagement with the DfA and advocate for increased acceptance of protection services, the unimpeded access of protection responders to all communities and to ensure equitable and inclusive access for vulnerable populations.
- Enhance multi-sectoral, integrated programming to address the full spectrum of vulnerabilities in implementation of the HNRP 2025.

DONORS

- Engage with the DfA on the impact of access restrictions and advocate for solutions to improve humanitarian reach.
- Support area-based vulnerability assessments at the district level especially in districts with high numbers of returnees to understand regional needs and target interventions more effectively.

RISK 2

Presence of Mines and Other Explosive Ordnance

DfA

- In 2025, collaborate with humanitarian agencies to implement mine clearance and other prevention and response initiatives.

Humanitarian community

- Integrate EO risk education in all projects as part of implementing the 2025 HNRP.
- Ensure victim assistance programs are accessible to all, regardless of gender, age, or disability.

- Encourage peer education among communities where individuals affected by unexploded ordnance may give informative sessions within their communities about EO risks.

HC/HCT

- The HCT to recommend integration of demining and other mine prevention and response initiatives in fundraising opportunities.
- The HC/HCT to coordinate with UNAMA Mine Action and UNMAS to raise resources for mine initiatives.
- Adequate funding to be allocated for EO assessment and clearance during the project's design phase, ensuring that any EO risks are addressed early on, enabling safer and more efficient project execution.

DONORS

- With the decline in funding, the donor community is strongly urged to enhance and sustain their funding to support mine action services.

RISK 3 Gender-Based Violence

HC/HCT

- Sustain advocacy with the DfA to rescind the bans on women and girls including education of girls.

HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Advocate with the DfA to allow implementation of programs aimed at enhancing the protection and empowerment of women and girls. Conduct comprehensive GBV analysis to understand the root causes and develop tailored interventions accordingly.
- Strengthen referral pathways to ensure survivors have access to timely, safe, and quality GBV services.
- Develop and strengthen protocols for responding to GBV incidents, including investigations, disciplinary actions, and case management.
- Engage men in prevention efforts using contextualized messaging and a community-led approach at the community level by largely targeting community leaders.
- Prioritize support for young, displaced women, adolescents, and girls, ensuring disability inclusion.
- Integrate information sharing/messaging on GBV and community mobilization for GBV prevention and response in other programs.
- Design and implement economic empowerment programs targeting survivors to regain financial independence.
- Encourage multi-sectoral, integrated programming to address the needs of all genders and reduce family vulnerabilities, in collaboration with BHN partners.

DONORS

- Enhance advocacy with the DfA to rescind all bans on women and girls, especially the PVPV law.
- Support research on access to justice especially for women and girls.

RISK 4 Unlawful Impediments and/or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Siege and Forced Displacement

HC/HCT

- Engage the DfA to remove legal barriers, including discriminatory laws that limit female lawyers from practicing, that hinder access to property rights, especially for women and groups at risk

HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Advocate for the identification and removal of legal barriers, including discriminatory laws, that prevent access to property rights.

- Re-emphasize the need to abide by international human rights laws, legislation against forced evictions and non-discriminatory policies with the DfA to address evictions.
- Support legal aid and access to services for unaccompanied minors and adolescents to resolve disputes and access issues.
- Conduct legal rights training with DFA while maintaining observance of humanitarian principles.
- Advocate for legal safeguards with donors and support agencies offering legal aid, awareness campaigns, and mediation efforts.

DONORS

- Engage the DfA to remove all impediments that limit access to services.

DfA

- Strengthen coordination mechanisms between DfA and HLP partners on key programmatic areas:
 - Access to HLP documents for vulnerable groups.
 - Enhanced resolution mechanisms for vulnerable groups engaged in land conflicts.
 - Communal HLP strengthening initiatives in informal settlements and areas of return.
 - Integrated HLP programmes that link humanitarian aims to longer-term outcomes, including climate resilience, enhanced livelihoods, and access to critical services.

RISK 5 Impediments and / or Restrictions to Access Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice

HC/HCT

- To lead efforts to address legal constraints by engaging with the DfA for building the institutions and capacity needed to provide legal and civil documentation services.

HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

- Strengthen provision of legal aid services and implement public awareness campaigns to provide communities with necessary information about their rights and available legal resources.
- Provide cash assistance and support for the issuance of civil documents, including facilitation for the most vulnerable especially women, children, and children with disabilities.
- Update service mapping to identify gaps in legal aid providers and advocate for additional funding and support to address these gaps.

BHN PARTNERS AND DONORS

- Mobilize resources to provide nationwide services to the population while strengthening institutional capacity in-country for long-term sustainability.
- Donors to support BHN partners to build local institutions and offer legal and civil documentation services.

Methodology

This publication was done in collaboration with ACAPS and thanks to the contribution of the Protection Cluster and some partners. The analysis is based on both quantitative and qualitative data from existing secondary data sources, protection assessments and reports covering events from January to December 2024, including data from key country-wide protection monitoring tools e.g. the Afghanistan Protection Monitoring tool, and in consultation with Areas of Responsibility, Protection Cluster Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) members and sub-national coordinators.

Limitations

Data collection and case management have proven to be challenging for humanitarian protection services due to ongoing interference and restrictions from the DfA, particularly regarding the hiring of women staff, the mahram requirement, and access to women community members. These operational constraints and challenges affect the level of protection data that can be collected and used in understanding protection risks. In addition, some issues are perceived highly sensitive, therefore the data gathered may not offer a definitive assessment of the extent of the protection risks.



For further information please contact:
Valerie Svobodova - svobodov@unhcr.org |
Stephen Katende - stephen.katende@nrc.no

Endnotes

- ⁱ Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA), [Gender Alert: Returns from Iran and Pakistan, July 2024](#)
- ⁱⁱ UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Afghanistan Humanitarian Access Working Group (HAWG)—GiHA survey Round 9, 2024
- ^{iv} UNAMA, [De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024](#)
- ^v UN Security Council, [The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, January 2022, para. 6](#); ACAPS, [Afghanistan: Taliban directives and decrees affecting human rights and humanitarian actors, April 2023](#); UNAMA, [De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024](#)
- ^{vi} CTC Sentinel, Rahimi, H. and Watkins, A., [Taliban Rule at 2.5 Years, January 2024](#); Heinrich Böll Stiftung, [Afghanistan: Ruling by Decree, April 2024](#)
- ^{vii} UNAMA, [De Facto Authorities' Moral Oversight in Afghanistan: Impacts on Human Rights, July 2024](#)
- ^{viii} ACAPS, [Afghanistan, Third update on Taliban decrees and directives relevant to the humanitarian response \(July–December 2024\)](#);
- ^{ix} *Ibid*; Global Protection Cluster, [Global Protection Update November 2024](#); GiHA, [Humanitarian Access Working Group, Tracking Impact Report on The Ban and Other Restrictions on Women for NGOs, INGOs and UN - Ninth snapshot \(September 2024\)](#)
- ^x *Ibid*; Afghanistan Analysts Network, [The Official Gazette, Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law, August 2024](#); UNAMA, [Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: July–September 2024 Update](#)
- ^{xi} GiHA, [Humanitarian Access Working Group, Tracking Impact Report on The Ban and Other Restrictions on Women for NGOs, INGOs and UN - Ninth snapshot \(September 2024\)](#)
- ^{xii} UN, [UN News, 31st December 2024](#)
- ^{xiii} UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#)
- ^{xiv} *Ibid*.
- ^{xv} INFORM INDEX, [INFORM Report 2024](#); Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, [Country Index, 2024](#)
- ^{xvi} UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Floods Update 17 April 2024](#)
- ^{xvii} UNOCHA, [Afghanistan: Humanitarian Update, July 2024](#)
- ^{xviii} GiHA, [Gender Alert- Floods in Northeastern region of Afghanistan, May 2024](#); AfghanAid, [The impacts of natural disasters in Afghanistan are not gender neutral, 2024](#); Afghanistan Protection Analysis Update July–December 2023
- ^{xix} UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#)
- ^{xx} Save the Children, [Afghanistan: extreme weather forces more people from their homes in the first six months of 2024 than all 2023](#).
- ^{xxi} IFRC, [AFG: Cold Wave - 02-2024 - Extreme Weather](#)
- ^{xxii} HNRP; WFP, [video post on X on WFP delivery during harsh winters, 2nd January 2025](#)
- ^{xxiii} UNOCHA: [Afghanistan: 2024 ICCT Winter Prioritisation - September 2024 \(Issued 9 September 2024\)](#)
- ^{xxiv} IOM and Samuel Hall Research Brief: [Displacement Trends and Challenges in Afghanistan since 2021 - Climate Change, 2022](#)
- ^{xxv} UNHCR data portal, [Situations, Afghanistan](#)
- ^{xxvi} IOM, Story: [Every Step of Resilience: The Unwavering Spirit of Afghans Navigating Life Through Crises, December 2024](#)
- ^{xxvii} UNHCR, [Afghanistan Border Monitoring Report January–September 2024](#)
- ^{xxviii} UNOCHA, [Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment of Afghan returnees, April 2024](#); ADSP, Samuel Hall, [Briefing Note: Solutions for Afghan nationals ordered to return from Pakistan, May 2024](#)
- ^{xxix} GiHA, [Gender Alert: Returns from Iran and Pakistan, July 2024](#)
- ^{xxx} USIP: [Tracking the Taliban's \(Mis\)Treatment of Women, 2023](#)
- ^{xxxi} REACH, [Whole of Afghanistan Assessment \(WoAA\), 2024](#)
- ^{xxxii} ACAPS, [Afghanistan, Third update on Taliban decrees and directives relevant to the humanitarian response \(July–December 2024\)](#); Centre for Information Resilience, [Confusion after Taliban decree to cap women's salaries, July 2024](#); Afghanistan Analysts Network, [A Pay Cut for Afghan Women Working in the Public Sector: "What can you do with 5,000 afghanis?", July 2024](#)
- ^{xxxiii} Adolescent and Youth Working Group, [4Ws Service Mapping of the Adolescents and Youth Programs in Afghanistan - Adolescents and Youth Working Group \(AY WG\) 2023](#)
- ^{xxxiv} OHCHR, [Press releases, Afghanistan: Ban on women medical training must be repealed](#)
- ^{xxxv} WoAA, 2024; UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#)
- ^{xxxvi} UNOCHA, [Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment of Afghan returnees, April 2024](#)
- ^{xxxvii} UNAMA, [Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan \(quarterly updates January to September 2024\)](#)
- ^{xxxviii} [UNMAS in Afghanistan](#)
- ^{xxxix} UNOCHA, [Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025](#)
- ^{xl} UNAMA, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: January – March 2024 Update](#); UNAMA, [Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan: July – October 2024 Update](#)
- ^{xli} AIHRC, [Report on Violence Against Women in Afghanistan \(the first 10 months of 2020\), November 2020](#)
- ^{xlii} EUAA, [Country Guidance: Afghanistan, May 2024](#)

-
- ^{xliii} ODI, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan, Data on repression and resistance under the Taliban February 2024*
- ^{xliv} UN Women, *Afghanistan Gender Country Profile 2024* ; IOM, Samuel Hall, *Mental Health: Displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021, Research Brief, 2023*
- ^{xlv} UN Women, *Afghanistan Gender Country Profile 2024*
- ^{xlvi} ODI, *Changing social norms around age of marriage in Afghanistan, Data on repression and resistance under the Taliban February 2024*
- ^{xlvii} UN Women, *Projections for Afghan women and girls, February 2024*
- ^{xlviii} UNAMA, *The Handling of Complaints of Gender-Based Violence against Women and Girls by Afghanistan's de facto Authorities, 2023*
- ^{lx} UN Women, *Afghanistan Gender Country Profile 2024*
- ⁱ IOM, UNAMA, UN Women, *Summary of Countrywide Consultations with Afghan Women, July 2024*
- ⁱⁱ OHCHR, A/HRC/55/80: *Situation of human rights in Afghanistan - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan*
- ⁱⁱⁱ IOM, UNAMA, UN Women, *Summary of Countrywide Consultations with Afghan Women, July 2024*
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ UNOCHA, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2025*
- ^{liv} Afghanistan Analysts Network, *The Official Gazette, Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law, August 2024*
- ^{lv} Centre for Information Resilience, *Taliban's new vice and virtue law targets women, minorities and media, September 2024*
- ^{lvi} ACAPS, Afghanistan, *Third update on Taliban decrees and directives relevant to the humanitarian response (July–December 2024)*
- ^{lvii} UNAMA, *Update on the human rights situation in Afghanistan: July-September 2024 Update*
- ^{lviii} IOM, UNAMA, UN Women, *Summary of Countrywide Consultations with Afghan Women, July 2024*
- ^{lix} ADSP, Samuel Hall, *Research Brief, Durable Solutions Analysis, Jalalabad/Nangarhar, August 2024* ; UNHCR, *Protection Interventions for Afghan Returnees from Pakistan April 2024 to December 2025, May 2024*
- ^{lx} NRC, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, 2020, *A Brief Guide to Women's Land Rights in Afghanistan*
- ^{lxi} NRC, *Evictions fuel crisis for Kabul's internally displaced people, August 2024*
- ^{lxii} Ibid.
- ^{lxiii} NRC, Samuel Hall, *Access to Tazkira and other civil documentation in Afghanistan, 2016*
- ^{lxiv} IOM, NRC, Samuel Hall, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, *Research Report, 2023, Documentation and Legal Identification in Afghanistan ; Afghanistan Protection Cluster, Legal Identity and Civil Documentation in Afghanistan, May 2024*
- ^{lxv} UNOCHA, *Afghanistan Humanitarian Access Snapshots (monthly) 2024*