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Information bulletin Afghanistan: Drought

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) is coordinating closely with Afghanistan authorities, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), other Movement partners with in-country presence, and humanitarian actors regarding potential humanitarian intervention. As of now, no external assistance is determined yet.

[<click here for detailed contact information>](#)

The situation

After decades of conflict, the current intensification of fighting and growing insecurity are hampering the Afghan population to have access to humanitarian aid and essential services. In the current unstable and volatile context, the civilian population is paying the highest toll of the protracted conflict in Afghanistan.

On top of the conflict related humanitarian needs, below average precipitation and above average temperatures since October 2017 have resulted in significant reductions in snow depths, river flows, water level in dams, water tables and soil moistures. These conditions have negatively and irreversibly impacted the winter of 2017-2018 agricultural season and are expected to also negatively impact the spring and summer of 2018 agricultural season in Afghanistan.

Cumulative precipitation for the season through February 2018 was well below average in most areas, with record low snow accumulation in some basins. Moderate (50-100 mm) to locally heavy (200-300 mm) precipitation occurred over central, north-western, and eastern parts of the country during the months of March and April. However, cumulative seasonal precipitation deficits remain significant in most areas, especially in the north and southwestern parts of the country. Despite increased precipitation in March and April, initial estimates from field reports indicate that area planted for rainfed wheat is smaller than last year, reflecting dry soil conditions and the use of extended areas for grazing.



Communities in affected areas are losing their livestock, which is a major source of nutritious food and income for vulnerable farmers especially women headed households. *(Photo by radio Nariman FM 89.1 Facebook page)*

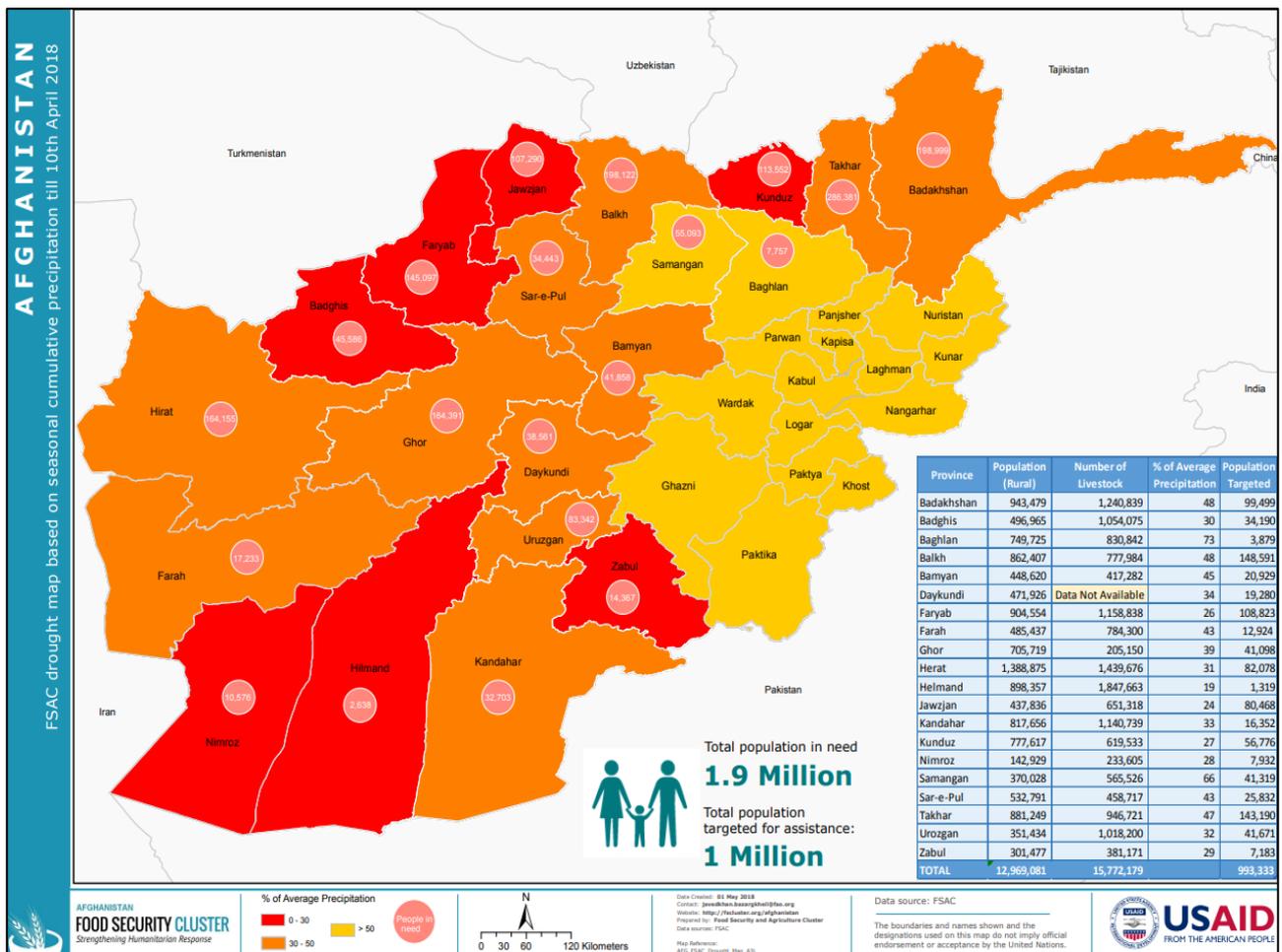


Figure 1: Drought map based on cumulative precipitation

The overall combined effect is a significant shortage of water for rain-fed agriculture, irrigated agriculture, and pasturage. Based on satellite imagery and data analyses by Information Management and Mine Action Programs (IMMAP) and Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET), combined with observations by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), this shortage could affect up to 2 million rural population in 20 provinces who are reliant on agriculture, livestock, or agriculture-related wage labor for their food security and livelihood.

Forecasts indicate below-average to average precipitation for the remaining weeks of the spring wet season. Along with cumulative precipitation deficits, the below-average forecast is reflective of a low frequency of storms entering the region, increasing the risk for extended periods of dryness that could further impact agricultural production.

Livestock products are major source of nutritious food and income for vulnerable farmers especially women headed households. As it is difficult for people to maintain livestock in absence of fodder and water, livestock production has gone down and livestock sale prices have decreased on average between 20-30 per cent since October 2017. Concurrently, agricultural labour opportunities have declined, and combined with increasing migration of rural workers, have resulted in reduced casual labour wages throughout the country. Limited or no harvest and reduced livestock production can lead to food insecurity and reduced income for those households that are reliant on agriculture. Monitoring of the situation should start immediately and continued during winter 2018 to avoid asset depletion migration and malnutrition.

The latest figure published on 1 May from Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) shows that around 1.9 million people in 20 provinces (Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan, Daykundi, Saripul, Badakshan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, Nuristan Badghis, Farah, Ghor, Herat, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan and Zabul) are affected by the prevailing drought conditions. The map of the 20 affected areas is as shown in Figure 1.

Badghis, Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Hilmand, Nimroz, Uruzgan, Kubduz, Takhar, Herat, Ghor and Farah are among the worst affected provinces. The population in these dry spells affected provinces, which are most

likely to need support in the areas of nutrition and food security, water and sanitation, emergency shelter and non-food items.

The Government of Afghanistan requested the international community's support in mid-April 2018. A technical committee composed of the Ministry of Relief & Rural Development (MRRD), Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), ARCS, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC), WASH, and nutrition clusters has been established to develop a detailed response plan. According to MAIL available data and field observations, lifesaving and agriculture livestock protection needs are massive across the country. The government launched a USD 100 million appeal in mid-April through MAIL for immediate livestock protection for an initial two months of assistance for fodder/feed support and an overall demand of USD 550 million for a 10 months fodder / feed support throughout the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

ARCS remains vigilant and has been monitoring the situation since the start of the dry spell. The National Society has been in coordination with ANDMA, MOPH and FSAC, observing the deteriorating situation since the last week of April. ARCS national headquarters requested all its 34 provincial branches to submit primary information reports regarding drought situation in their respective provinces.

The emergency operations centre (EOC) at headquarter level has been activated to coordinate with relevant stakeholders and update on the situation on a regular basis. Based on the situation and request for assistance by the Government of Afghanistan, in the first week of May, ARCS called for a meeting with in country Movement partners and updated them about the ongoing dry spell situation. Afterwards, ARCS decided to launch an operation aimed at providing humanitarian assistance in the worst affected areas. The ARCS operations team is currently developing a six-month response plan to cover the six worst affected provinces¹. The plan will cover key needs in the areas of nutrition, food security and livelihood, water and sanitation, emergency shelter and non-food items, with procurement of 2,000 food parcels now in progress.

The response plan of ARCS is being developed in close coordination with Afghanistan authorities, all relevant ARCS departments, IFRC and preliminary discussions have started with the ICRC and movement partners in the country. Below table is the current in country capacity of ARCS.

Table 1: Summary of ARCS response capacity

Areas	Description
Response HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 84 Disaster Response Unit (DRU) members in 7 regions. 229 Branches Disaster Response Team (BDRT) members in 9 branches. 120 doctors and nurses in 34 Medical Health Teams (MHT). 362 doctors, nurses and pharmacists in 44 clinics. 102 CBHFA trainers and 24,000 volunteers.
Food stocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,000 food packs are in the pipeline.
NFI stocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tents 8,805. Blanket 96,001. Tarpaulins 37,629. Jerrycans 34,805. kitchen sets 15,566.
Medical kits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MHT medicine for one year. Clinics medicines for three months. First Aid kits (in 7 regions and 34 provinces). 9,840 Dignity kits.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is having regular coordination and communication with ARCS and movement partners regarding the drought situation and ARCS response planning. The IFRC, ICRC and Partner National Society (PNS) with in-country presence have been part of the situation update and response preparation meetings hoisted by ARCS. A particular attention shall be given to the analysis of the prevailing security situation in the country and on the ARCS access to the conflict affected areas.

¹ 15,000 most vulnerable families (approx. 105,000 people) in 6 provinces (which the government has difficulties to get access; the target is out of the 1 million people in 20 provinces affected). These targets are subject to revision based on assessment results and are identified based on coordination with the Government, OCHA and other humanitarian actors.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All FRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives.
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.
