


Information bulletin

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Afghanistan: Severe Winter

Information bulletin n° 01/2008
GLIDE AV-2008-000003-AFG
18 January 2008

This bulletin is being issued for information only.

Extreme cold conditions, accompanied by heavy rains and snowfall, affected large parts of Afghanistan during December 2007-January 2008, causing death and destruction across the country. These conditions have particularly affected communities living in remote areas and internally displaced people/returnee families, who are in urgent need of assistance.

Based on a joint assessment carried out by the Afghan Red Crescent Society, in coordination with the Federation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Afghan National Disaster Management Authorities and UN agencies, at headquarter and provincial levels, emergency humanitarian assistance, consisting of food and non-food items, is being provided to the targeted population in the affected areas.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society, with the support of the Federation, has determined that external assistance is not required, and is therefore not seeking funding or other assistance from donors at this time.

[<click here to view the map of the affected area, or here for detailed contact information>](#)



A campaign organised by the ARCS' Herat branch in Herat city, to collect donations for families affected by the severe winter

The Situation

Afghanistan has faced a very harsh winter this year with severe cold, accompanied by heavy rains and snowfall, affecting large parts of the country during December 2007-January 2008. The extremely cold conditions and snowfall have made life very difficult for the country's vulnerable population. This includes communities living in remote areas, which have become inaccessible due to road blockages as a result of heavy snowfall, as well as the large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees from abroad. All these groups are in urgent need of assistance.

According to the Afghan National Disaster Management Authorities (ANDMA), United Nations agencies and the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), the situation across the country is as follows:

Northern region: Heavy snowfall since 8 December 2007 in the northern region affected 112 IDP families that had been displaced due to the drought in August 2007, killed one person and injured two people in Sari Pul province. Another 85 families in Baghlan province, who had also been displaced due to the drought, were given refuge in Shamarq refugee camp set up by the Afghan government in Baghlan. In Jawzjan and Balkh provinces, heavy snowfall caused several road blocks.

Western region: Heavy snowfall since 6 January 2008 in the western region killed seven people and injured 15 others in Zinda Jan district of Herat province. The snow also blocked roads between Herat and other provinces and damaged 100 houses in Ghorian district of Herat. In Pasaband district in Ghor province, 11 people died and 25 were injured due to a snow slide. In Ghormach district of Badghis province, four people died and 900 sheep were lost due to extreme cold.

Eastern region: Heavy rainfall in Nangarhar province killed six people and destroyed one house. In Doulatsha district of Laghman province, three houses were destroyed because of heavy rain.

Central region: Snowfall killed one person, injured 15 others and destroyed seven houses in Paktika province, as well as destroyed 11 houses in Jani Kheil district of Paktya province.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Based on a joint assessment carried out by the ARCS, in coordination with the Federation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), ANDMA and UN agencies, at headquarter and provincial levels, emergency humanitarian assistance, consisting of food and non-food items, was provided to the targeted population in the affected areas.

Northern region: The ARCS' Baghlan branch deployed an emergency mobile unit, with adequate medicines, to provide timely medical services to affected communities. In addition, the branch distributed 10 sleeping bags, 30 blankets and 300 kilograms of dates to affected families. The ARCS branch in Sari Pul province distributed four blankets per family to each of the 112 IDP families that were affected by the heavy snowfall in the region. In Jawzjan and Balkh provinces, the ARCS took part in the distribution of non-food items (blankets and family kits) provided by UNHCR and UNICEF for 902 returnee families.

Western region: The ARCS' Herat branch organized three assessment teams, including trained volunteers, to conduct assessments of the situation in the province. In Ghorian district of Herat province, the ARCS provided 318 pairs of shoes, 530 jackets and overcoats to affected families, while the Federation contributed 212 blankets and 106 plastic sheets. The ICRC in Herat provided relief items including rice (7,950 kilograms), oil (1,590 kilograms), tea (106 kilograms), beans (7,950 kilograms), salt (106 kilograms), sugar (225 kilograms) and 106 jerry cans in the affected areas. The Federation covered the operation costs of the assessments and distributions, while the ICRC covered the travel costs.

The ARCS' Badghis branch arranged its trained volunteers in four districts to assist affected communities through the distribution of relief items and organizing of donation campaigns. The branch provided non-food items including blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets and heaters for 200 affected families. The national society's Ghor branch assisted the affected families with food and non-food items already available in its stocks.

Eastern region: The ARCS deployed a team to assess the situation in the eastern region.

Central region: The ARCS assisted 50 affected families in Paktya province with non-food items.

Coordination

In Jawzjan and Balkh provinces in the northern region, the non-food items distributed by the ARCS to 902 returnee families were provided by the UNHCR and UNICEF. UNHCR also arranged transportation to move these relief items to distribution points in six districts. The World Food Programme will also transport wheat to each distribution point in the near future. In addition, in Balkh province the UNHCR provided non-food items for 142 IDP families who had recently been moved, by the UNHCR, from Mazar to Sholgar district. These families are now in need of food items.

How we work

All International Federation 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 is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

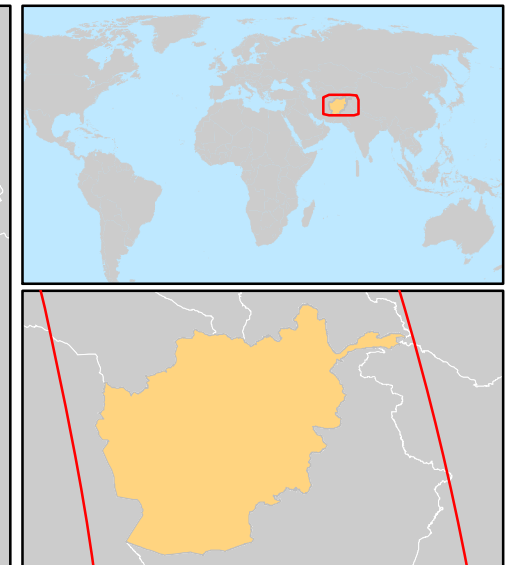
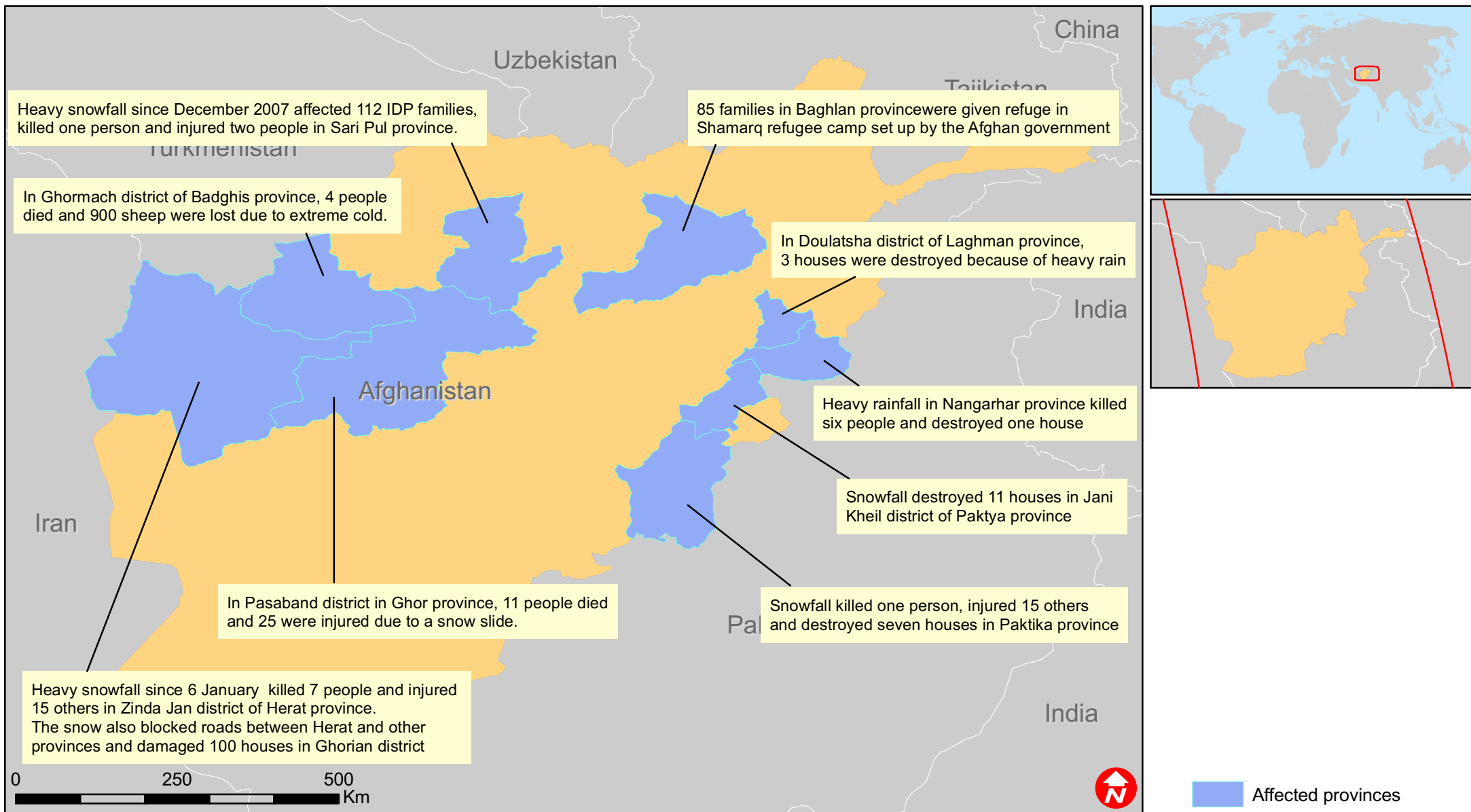
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[<map below; click here to return to the title page>](#)



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The maps used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or National Societies concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.
 Map data sources: ESRI, DEVINFO, GIST, Federation