

HIGHLIGHTS

- Conflict indicators reached record highs in 2017, including air strikes.
- The coming months are expected to be drier and warmer than on average, affecting the upcoming winter and spring crops.
- Pressure could mount again on more than two million Afghan citizens in Pakistan to return to their home country.
- Awareness campaigns by health workers in Khost have built trust with residents and ensured their better treatment.
- In 2017, a total of 377 incidents were registered against aid workers, assets, activities or related to humanitarian access.
- The Afghanistan HRP was the second-best funded response plan globally in 2017 with the USA its biggest donor.



Intensified conflict is expected to continue in 2018 in many parts of Afghanistan. Photo: Resolute Support/Archive

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Conflict likely to dominate Afghanistan in 2018

Conflict indicators compiled and analysed by OCHA for the [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#) show a marked expansion of the conflict and more fighting across the country in the past months (see map) that will likely further dominate the situation this year.

Foremost, the number of conflict incidents hit a ten-year record high, according to UN data.

Further, from January to September, the United States conducted 2,400 air strikes, the highest number since 2014, and dropped more munitions than in any of the past five years, according to [the latest SIGAR report](#).

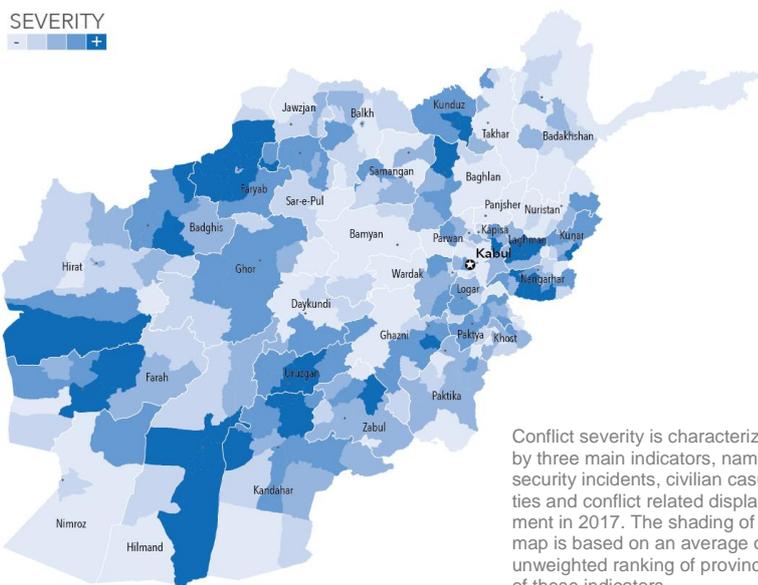
In an eroding stalemate that no party to the conflict seems to be able to win militarily, by August of last year, Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) had taken control of 13 per cent of all districts, up from 11 per cent in February 2017, according to the SIGAR report, and 30 per cent of all districts were considered contested.

The number of civilian casualties from January to September 2017 was 8,019 (2,640 killed and nearly 5,379 injured), nearly reaching the record high of the same period in 2016 when 8,531 casualties were reported (2,616 killed and 5,915 injured), [according to UNAMA](#).

Afghanistan ranked amongst top five countries globally for risk of crisis

The INFORM Global Risk Index for 2018 ranks Afghanistan amongst the five countries globally with the highest risk of humanitarian crisis and disasters in the world for the third year in a row. The country ranks behind Somalia, South Sudan and Chad and ahead of the Central African Republic and Yemen. The INFORM methodology works along three main dimensions: Hazards and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping mechanism.

Compared to the previous year, the risk index value dropped slightly from 7.8 to 7.7, notably due to improved coping capacity. For the fifth year unchanged, the risk of natural hazards is at six on a scale of ten, as is the risk for man-made disaster with the projected conflict risk and intensity of conflict both at the top of the scale with ten out of ten.



Conflict severity is characterized by three main indicators, namely security incidents, civilian casualties and conflict related displacement in 2017. The shading of the map is based on an average of unweighted ranking of provinces of these indicators.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FUNDING 78% FUNDED

409.4 million
requested (US\$)

317.5 million
Received (US\$)



The risk for conflict was rated same for Afghanistan and Pakistan: ten out of ten.

Risk for neighbouring Pakistan was rated considerably lower than Afghanistan by INFORM with 6.4, despite a higher risk for natural disasters. The risk for conflict is rated same as Afghanistan at ten out of ten. The **INFORM index for risk management**, a collaborative project of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the European Commission, is a global tool that allows comparison and grouping of countries.

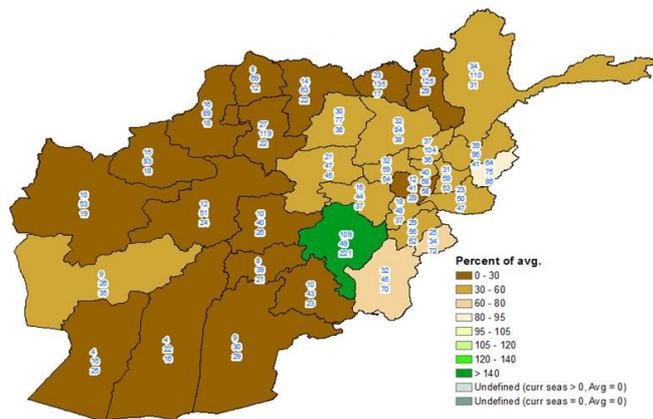
Afghanistan added to La Niña watch list

The Global El Niño Cell, under the auspices of the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**, identified Afghanistan as one of four countries at highest risk to suffer from effects of the current La Niña episode in the coming months. The other countries on the watch list are Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Rain and snow in Afghanistan from January to May are expected to remain below average and the coming months will probably be warmer and drier than on average. It is expected that next harvest of winter cereals will be below-average and will also will reduce the upcoming spring harvest that relies on the melting of snow for the irrigation of the fields.

El Niño and La Niña are large-scale climatic patterns with fluctuation of sea surface temperature in the Pacific Ocean that have significant effects on regional climates across the world. The 2015/2016 El Niño episode severely affected over 60 million people worldwide, causing 23 countries to appeal for humanitarian assistance totaling US\$5 billion.

Warmer winter, below-average rain and snow in more than a dozen provinces



Precipitation from October to December 2017 has been lower than average and the coming three months are expected to remain drier, too.

This winter, already, temperatures have remained above the seasonal average and snow levels in January have been lower than in any of the past three years.

Accumulated precipitation from October to December has been well below average: in more than a dozen provinces, less than one third of the average precipitation were registered (see map), according to FEW-SNET/MAIL. The only exception was Ghazni Province.

Only five per cent of average wheat harvest Ghor and Jawzjan provinces

In 2017, the aggregate wheat production in Afghanistan was the lowest in five years, just below the 2005 – 2017 average of 4.3 million metric tons. This was however only due to a good and above-average harvest of irrigated crops, while rainfed production turned out to be the poorest in more than five years (see table). Rainfed production in Ghor and Jawzjan reached less than five per cent of the five-year average.

Rainfed wheat production in MT	
2017	588,000
2016	830,000
2015	1,116,000
2014	1,168,200
2013	1,165,100
2012	1'651'000

Source: FEWSNET

With bread being a major staple food across the country, total cereal consumption in Afghanistan is above six million metric tons. The current deficit of 1.5 million metric tons is expected to be filled with imports, notably from Kazakhstan, the largest regional wheat producer, and Pakistan.

FAO recommends support for farmer and pastoralists in drought prone areas

In view of the possible effects of the ongoing La Niña episode, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recommends to provide vulnerable communities in drought prone areas with agricultural inputs including certified and drought resistant seeds, fertilizers and tools and technical advice.

Pastoralist households are also recommended to be supported and poultry production promoted at lower altitudes and in urban areas for women-headed households and other families with few resources.

Rainfed production of wheat in Ghor and Jawzjan provinces reached less than five per cent of the five-year average.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recommends to provide vulnerable communities in drought prone areas with agricultural inputs and support pastoralist households.

The Pakistani cabinet decided to extend the validity of Proof of Registration cards for only one month - the shortest renewal ever.

Renewed uncertainty for Afghans in Pakistan

On 3 January 2018, the Pakistani federal cabinet decided to grant only a 30-day extension of the Proof of Registration (POR)-cards and the Tripartite Agreement between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) beyond the last day of 2017. Expected had been a one-year extension. The one-month extension is the shortest period of time the POR-cards ever have been renewed.



At Torkham border crossing, Nangarhar, the main entry point for Afghans returning from Pakistan. Photo: OCHA / Kropf

If this decision is maintained and enforced, this could mean that some 1.4 million Afghans holding POR-cards in Pakistan are to leave the country by the end of January.

The development could also renew pressure on an estimated one million Afghan citizens living in Pakistan without registration, to return to their home country.

This includes some 700,000 people who have applied for the new Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) in the past months, none of which have been issued to date.

The ACC was intended to grant the holder temporary stay in Pakistan, pending their return to Afghanistan, to regularize their legal status.

Afghan families in Pakistan a token in big politics

According to some observers, this move by the Pakistani cabinet may have been in reaction to a recent political fallout between Pakistan and the United States that culminated in the suspension of US\$900 million in security assistance to Pakistan.

Contrary to 2016, when more than 580,000 Afghans returned to Afghanistan, many of them put under pressure in Pakistan, no new crackdown, harassments, or arbitrary arrests and detentions were reported from Pakistan to date.

UN Agencies and senior UN leadership in Kabul and Islamabad are in close and regular contact on the issue and contingency planning by OCHA Afghanistan is in process to ensure coordinated, principled assistance in case of unexpected large-scale returns. Last year, a total of 151,000 Afghan citizens returned to Afghanistan from Pakistan.

Information a vital part of the health package

[The World Bank contributed to this article](#)

A video clip plays in a loop on the screen in the waiting room of Dargai health centre in Tanai district, Khost Province. In it, a girl talks about the importance of the early vaccination of children and directly encourages viewers to bring in girls and boys for vaccination.

This day, 60-year old grandfather Alif Khan, is here with his four-year old grandson for a routine vaccination. Them showing up at the clinic is however not a given: only a few years ago, residents of the district were very conservative when it came to health matters.

Mr. Khan remembers the time when his brother died of appendicitis because no one brought him to a health centre. "In the past, when a person had an illness in the village, people thought it was infectious and denied treating them," he says. "It was hard, especially for those who had tuberculosis, because people used to believe there was no cure."



It was important for residents to know that female patients are treated by women at the health centre. Photo: World Bank

Community health workers, nurses and doctors raise public awareness

The TV-spot in the waiting hall is just one source of information. Two dozen community health workers hold regular health awareness campaigns that helped change behaviours

"In the past, when a person had an illness in the village, people thought it was infectious and denied treating them."

Afghanistan HRP second-best funded globally

The Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was the second highest funded HRP globally.

In 2017, the total humanitarian funding for Afghanistan amounted to US\$373.5 million, according to OCHA's Financial Tracking System. Of this amount, \$317.5 million was towards the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and \$26 million towards activities by partners working outside of the Cluster system like the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement.

Contributions outside of the HRP represented 15 per cent of the overall humanitarian contributions towards Afghanistan. This is considerably less compared to other HRPs like Iraq (31 per cent outside), Syria or Yemen (each 26 per cent outside) which is an indicator of strong donor's confidence into the activities and priorities put forward by the joint plan.

The \$317.5 million received towards the HRP represent 78 per cent of the revised funding request of \$409 million following the mid-year review, making the Afghanistan HRP the world's second most funded HRP behind Iraq that received 90 per cent.

OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) aims to present a complete picture of all international humanitarian funding flows (<https://fts.unocha.org>). The system relies upon the commitments to the Grand Bargain from donors, UN agencies and implementing partners regarding improved transparency through the comprehensive and timely reporting to FTS on the funding allocated to partners in Afghanistan.

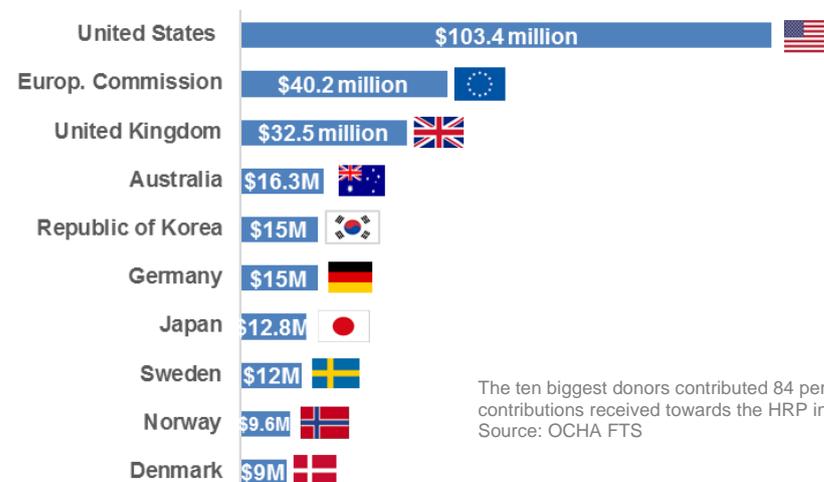
In 2018, the FTS team continues their work with OCHA Afghanistan to reconcile all 2017 transactions.

The United States contributed more than double the amount of the second largest donor to the HRP, the European Commission.

Ten top donors contributed 80 per cent of total contributions towards the HRP

The ten largest donors funding last year's HRP were the United States of America (USA) followed by the European Commission (EC), the United Kingdom, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Germany, Japan, Sweden, Norway and Denmark (see table below).

Together, they contributed \$265.8 million towards the HRP, or 84 per cent of the total contributions in 2017. With \$103.4 million, the USA contributed more than double the amount of the second-largest donor, the EC with \$40.2 million, and more than three times of what the third largest donor, the United Kingdom, contributed with \$32.5 million.



The ten biggest donors contributed 84 per cent of the total contributions received towards the HRP in 2017.
Source: OCHA FTS

The Humanitarian Coordinator, Toby Lanzer, approved \$44.9 million of CHF funding for 51 projects of 39 partners in 2017.

CHF-Afghanistan disbursed nearly \$45 million in 2017

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF)-Afghanistan, one of OCHA's Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs), empowering the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to direct a quick and strategic humanitarian response, received contributions totalling \$38.8 million in the past year.

The six governments funding the CHF-Afghanistan were the United Kingdom (\$16 million), Sweden (\$8.4 million), Australia (\$6.1 million), the Republic of Korea (\$5.9 million), Norway (\$2.1 million) and Switzerland (\$200,000).

In two Standard and four Reserve Allocations, the Humanitarian Coordinator, Toby Lanzer, approved \$44.9 million of CHF-Afghanistan funding for 51 projects of 39 partners in 2017. In one Reserve Allocation, the Humanitarian Coordinator allocated \$45,000 to the World Health Organization (WHO) so that a new triage area could be built in Hirat Regional Hospital.

GMS Business Intelligence displays real time CHF Afghanistan data usefully structured for donors and stakeholders to analyse the ongoing processes with a consolidated view. Information can be accessed here: <http://gms.unocha.org/bi>.

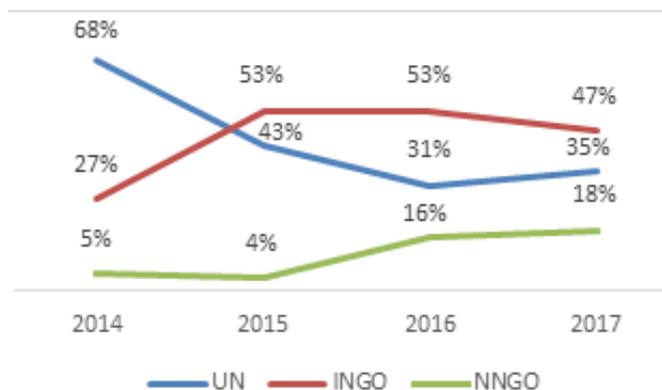
CHF-Funding for Afghan NGOs tripled

The percentage of funding towards national NGOs has more than tripled, with 5 per cent in 2014 and 18 per cent in 2017.

Partners eligible to receive funding from the CHF-Afghanistan are UN Agencies, and international and national NGOs. Since its inception in 2014, the CHF-Afghanistan has allocated \$17.6 million to national NGOs for a total of 37 projects.

The percentage of funding towards national NGOs has more than tripled, with 5 per cent in 2014 to 18 per cent in 2017 (see table).

In 2017, 11 national NGOs received funding from the CHF-Afghanistan, compared to only one in 2014. By end of 2017, 19 national and 41 international NGOs were eligible to receive funding.



In 2017, the allocations of the CHF-Afghanistan towards projects by national NGOs reached 18 per cent of the overall allocations.

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Localisation of aid and the Twinning Programme as part of the “Grand Bargain”

In many countries, the CBPF is the largest source of direct funding for national partners. The pooled funds play an important role in the localisation of aid, one of the key reforms of the humanitarian financing system that was agreed upon by aid organisations and donors during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit as part of the “Grand Bargain”.

NGOs interested in applying for funding from a CBPF must pass a comprehensive eligibility process to ensure accountability and capacity. One measure to increase the number of eligible national NGOs for CHF-Afghanistan are capacity building partnerships between national and international NGOs.

Together with OCHA Afghanistan’s Humanitarian Finance Unit (HFU), the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) organizes the **Twining Program** that teams up a national with an international NGO to mentor and support the national partner in completing the CHF-Afghanistan eligibility process.

Of the 27 national partners in the Twinning Program, 12 have successfully completed the Due Diligence Review, the first step of the eligibility process, and two have successfully completed the partner capacity assessment and are now fully eligible to apply for funding under an open CHF allocation.

CHF-Afghanistan continues to strengthen capacities of partners in country

Throughout the year, OCHA HFU trained dozens of partners on topics including the Grant Management System (GMS), reporting requirements, allocation procedures and the eligibility process. In addition, the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) provided a training to NGO partners prior to the second Standard Allocation in October 2017 to enhance their knowledge of the security risk assessment tools and access challenges in preparation for projects implemented in the hard to reach areas.

The Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) provided training to partners on how to access hard-to-reach areas.

For further information, please contact:

Dominic Parker, Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan, parker@un.org

Philippe Kropf, Public Information Officer, OCHA Afghanistan, kropf@un.org, Tel (+93) 793 001 110

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