AFGHANISTAN: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot | March - November 2022

**Overview**

High acute food insecurity persists across Afghanistan, as a combination of a collapsing economy and drought is depriving nearly 20 million Afghans of food, classified in Crisis (IPC Phases 3 or 4) between March and May 2022 (the lean season). Latest data shows. Among these are about 6.6 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 13 million in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). A significant amount of Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA) was provided, easing the food crisis for the most affected households. However, Afghanistan’s food security situation remains highly concerning, exacerbated by economic decline and high food prices. The economy is in free fall and food and fuel prices are rising, depriving the Afghan people of food. The country is also in the grip of one of the worst droughts in decades, curtailing food production. High levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) are observed in rural and urban Afghanistan. There is a need for urgent lifesaving support to prevent catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) and livelihood assistance to help households recover.

Between June and November 2022 (the post-harvest season), a slight improvement in food security is expected, with the number of people in IPC Phase 3 or above likely decreasing to around 19 million. However, this represents a nearly 16% increase from the same period last year (9.5 million people). Out of 19 million people, 6 million will likely be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 13 million in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). The number of areas in Emergency is expected to decrease in the projection period, which coincides with the post-harvest season from 21 to 12 analytical domains. It is likely that household food access during the post-harvest season will slightly improve due to the expected harvest (although still below the average due to the La Nina climatic episode) along with the easing of sanctions on Afghanistan. This will likely facilitate a range of commercial activity in Afghanistan, decreased conflict, increased humanitarian access and planned humanitarian assistance delivery during the projection period. However, the impact of high food prices, remaining sanctions on the de facto authorities, unemployment, and a significant decrease in income and purchasing power of communities are the major impediments that avoid a considerable improvement during the post-harvest period.

**Key Drivers**

- **Economic Decline:** Rapid reduction in international grant support, loss of access to offshore assets, disruption to financial linkages and impact of the Ukraine crisis have led to a major contraction of the economy, increasing poverty and macroeconomic instability as well as leading to high unemployment and high food and agricultural input prices.
- **Drought:** Below-average cumulative precipitation during the wet season (2021-2022) accompanied with high agriculture input costs (seed & fertilizers) resulted in a reduced level of winter wheat cultivation, which would likely result in a 7 to 13 percent reduction in the expected wheat harvest compared to the long-term average.
- **High Food Prices:** High prices of commodities compounded by reduced incomes for 50% of the total population have negatively affected the purchasing power of people. The terms of trade of casual labor against wheat prices have fallen by 35% compared with June 2021.
- **Impact of the crisis in Ukraine:** Afghanistan is typically a net importer of food and domestic production of wheat on average, and for the 2021/2022 year the cereals import requirement is expected to be 20% higher than average. The negative impacts of ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine is expected to further raise global food prices all while creating pressure on regional suppliers of wheat to Afghanistan, to place export bans, or food to prioritise domestic consumption.

**Recommended Actions**

- **Humanitarian Assistance:** Scale-up of life-saving assistance for the winter wheat season, the spring season crop and vulnerable farming households are essential to prevent further deterioration of household food production capacity in rural areas.
- **Livelihood Support:** Scale-up of livelihood assistance for the winter wheat season, the spring season crop and vulnerable farming households are essential to prevent further deterioration of household food production capacity in rural areas.
- **Focus on Women and Children:** Supporting women and children in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is a priority intervention. Programs targeting pregnant and lactating women and children should be prioritised.
Afghanistan has suffered some of the world’s deadliest conflicts and recurrent natural disasters for over four decades, resulting in a protracted food crisis affecting millions of people. Food insecurity and hunger persist. Due to a combination of frequent shocks, including conflicts, insecurity, population displacement, the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as natural disasters such as droughts, floods, crop pest invasions and earthquakes, millions of people do not have the resources to obtain enough nutritious food to lead healthy lives consistently.

Conflict and Population Displacement

The country has endured over 40 years of conflict, and armed fighting continues to rage, exposing civilians, particularly women and children, to deadly daily risks.

Natural Disasters

Afghanistan is prone to several types of natural disasters, including earthquakes, flooding, droughts, landslides and avalanches. Earthquakes are relatively frequent in the north and northeast, often triggering landslides. Floods are common in the spring when snow begins to melt and rainfall is heavy in the south and southeast. Located in areas of high seismic activity, and given the rugged and mountainous nature of the country and the location of villages, towns and cities, there is a high propensity for widespread death and destruction whenever an earthquake, landslide, mudslide, avalanche or flood occurs. Since 2000, there have been nine major earthquakes. A national drought was officially declared in June 2021, the worst in more than three decades. Eighty per cent of the country is now suffering from either serious or severe drought.

Economic Decline

Afghanistan faces daunting economic challenges as the gross domestic product has fallen substantially since the 1980s due to disruption of trade and transport as well as loss of labour and capital. The country’s economic growth remains impeded by conflicts, insecurity and an unstable political situation. Insecurity has also suppressed business and investment freedom, with Afghanistan ranked 146th globally. After years of slow recovery, the economy was dealt a significant blow by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a far-reaching impact on the country’s ailing economy and food security. The COVID-19 pandemic has set back Afghanistan’s economic growth by several years. It exposed structural and resource gaps in responding to unforeseen events such as pandemics. Following the political transition in August 2021, international development assistance, longer-term development projects and institutional support have been suspended. According to the World Bank, rapid reduction in international grant support in August 2021, loss of access to offshore assets, and disruption to financial linkages lead to a major economic contraction, increasing poverty, and macroeconomic instability. Inflation has worsened with energy prices rising by 13%, and prices for basic household goods, including food and fuel, increased substantially in the first quarter of 2022.

Acute Food Insecurity

Comparing IPC analyses over the last five years indicates a deepening and widening food crisis. The number of Afghans classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse is increasing or persisting in some areas. The current March 2022 IPC analysis shows nearly half of Afghanistan’s population experiencing high levels of food insecurity. This is among the highest number of food-insecure people ever recorded in Afghanistan since the first IPC analysis in 2013, and makes it the world’s second-largest food crisis, in absolute terms. The complexity of the crisis in Afghanistan has reached a peak in the period covered by this analysis. The combined impact of a collapsing economy and multiple hazards has pushed the crisis to unprecedented levels, with people’s ability to access food constrained like never observed before.

AFGHANISTAN: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot | Crisis Background

Afghanistan Crisis Background and Time Series 2020-2022

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