



AFGHANISTAN EMERGENCY FUNDING APPEAL

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**Women's Peace &
Humanitarian Fund**

A United Nations & Civil Society Partnership

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Background

Just over a year after the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. More than half the population (24.4 million) is in need of humanitarian assistance - this is nearly four times higher than the number of people in need three years ago¹. Women and girls tend to be most left behind when it comes to accessing life-saving humanitarian services such as food, safe shelter, and medical services. Gender segregation and increasing intolerant attitudes towards women in public spaces at and on the way to humanitarian distribution points limits women's access to humanitarian aid and services.

This humanitarian emergency is clearly marked by gender-specific restrictions that directly impact women's and girls' rights and are interwoven with ongoing conflict dynamics and humanitarian needs. The political crisis that began in August 2021 led to a significant roll-back of women's rights and status, with Afghanistan ranking last among 156 countries in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Index. The de facto authorities abolished the Ministry for Women's Affairs in September 2021 and removed women from public service positions. Several decrees restrict women's freedom of movement by requiring male relatives (mahram) to travel with women for trips further than 45 miles from home, hijab requirements to fully cover women's faces except for the eyes, and gender segregation in public spaces. As a result, women across the country increasingly share reports of severe restrictions to their freedom of movement, access to life-saving goods such as food and protection, as well as other freedoms such as education and livelihood opportunities.

This year's natural disasters have further exasperated the already dire humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan. The country has been further struck by what has been described as the worst drought on record in 27 years, a 5.9 magnitude earthquake in the south-eastern region of Afghanistan, and heavy rains and flash floods². Compounded by the prospect of rising prices continuing into 2023, Afghanistan is now set

to face even greater proportions of malnutrition due to this escalating crisis. According to a report conducted by IPC³ a record high of nearly 19 million Afghans experiences high levels of acute food insecurity and two-thirds of the population experience water scarcity. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, with more women than men going hungry. At least 800,000 pregnant and lactating Afghan women are affected by acute malnutrition. Moreover, a staggering 95 per cent of Afghans are not getting enough to eat, with that number rising to almost 100 per cent in female-headed households. Food basket costs are rising amidst Afghanistan's economic decline and make up more than 82% of the average household income.

Afghanistan is also on the brink of universal poverty (97% of the population) by 2022, with women and girls being particularly affected as they are largely excluded from the labor market and household financing decisions. Taliban decrees restrict women's access to the labour market limiting women's ability to provide for their families, in particular women-headed households. Women's employment was projected to decrease by as much as 28% by July 2022⁴. Women play important roles in the agricultural sector and restrictions to move and work will further increase food insecurity, with 92% of households already struggling to meet their food needs⁵.

Since the takeover of the country by the Taliban, availability of accessible and quality services in response to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence has deteriorated, while reports of needs for such services have increased. Violence against women and girls remains widespread and tolerated, with the restrictions placed on women's ability to move freely in society resulting in many women remaining locked in their homes, fearing for their safety and unable to seek support. These escalating restrictions further feed into the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and opinions, regressing the gender equality gains made over the previous years in Afghanistan. Nearly all Afghan women (90%) believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife and 9 out of 10

Afghan women experienced at least one form of intimate partner violence⁶. Hazara women are at particularly high risk as violence against the Hazara population escalated in the aftermath of international troops' withdrawal in Afghanistan. Since August 2021, services to address GBV have been dismantled even though reports suggest that gender-based violence has increased since the Taliban takeover.

Women's access to education and essential services is very limited. Secondary schools remain closed to girls, excluding 80% of secondary school students from attending classes in April 2022⁷. Only 10% of women said they could cover their basic health needs and access to reproductive health and protection services for victims of violence is very limited. The mobility restrictions for women requiring male relatives to travel further limit access to specialized health care, particularly in rural areas and for women-headed households. Restricted mobility for pregnant women as well as midwives along with the rise of child marriages is likely to increase maternal mortality rates.

Despite these challenges, women remain key to Afghanistan's future. Amid a deteriorating humanitarian and economic crisis, paralyzed banking system, rampant human rights violations, and lack of effective engagement from the international community, Afghan women continue to lead efforts to build a better Afghanistan.

WPHF's Funding appeal (2023-2025): USD 15 million

Women's organizations are at the frontlines of delivering essential services to Afghan women and girls, particularly in the context of decrees restricting women's freedom of movement. However, 77% of women's organizations had no funding in 2022 and women's organizations experience cash shortages, lost talented aid staff that leave the country or had to close since the Taliban takeover. It is therefore critical that funding continues to support women's rights organizations in Afghanistan that are first responders to women's and girls' needs.

In this context, the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) is launching an urgent funding appeal for up to USD 9 million in 2023 to support local women's organizations in Afghanistan. The following WPHF impact areas have been identified as priority needs:

- ▶ WPHF Impact Area 3: Women's participation and leadership in planning and responding to humanitarian crises, including food insecurity
- ▶ WPHF Impact Area 5: Protection of women and girls

WPHF's Afghanistan response consists of an open Call for Proposals to mobilize women's organizations that can respond to the crisis and the needs of women and girls. With additional funding (of a minimum of 1,000,000 USD), an open Call for Proposals will be launched to identify additional partners for the response.

International, national and local women-led, women's rights, feminist, or civil society organizations with a proven track record working with women and girls, will be eligible to apply. Grassroots and local community-based organizations will be particularly encouraged to apply. Consortiums of organizations are allowed and encouraged. The Call for Proposals will make available financing for civil society organizations that build the resilience of Afghan women and girls through programmatic funding from 30,000 USD to 350,000 USD, and institutional funding to help sustain and strengthen women's organizations throughout the crisis with grants from 2,500 USD to 30,000 USD.

Management Arrangements

As per WPHF procedures, the Call for Proposals will be prepared and launched by the WPHF Secretariat, detailing the nature and scope of the funding as well as types of interventions that are encouraged, in close coordination with the UN Resident Coordinator/HC and UN Women Country office. The UN Women Afghanistan office will act as the WPHF management entity in the grant-making process. The WPHF Secretariat will conduct the technical review of all proposals received and the WPHF Regional Steering Committees will be responsible for the final selection of proposals. The WPHF Secretariat, together with the Management Entity (UN Women Afghanistan office) will ensure quality monitoring and reporting on projects as well as linkages with partners from the UN, civil society, networks of women, and member states. The grantees selected through the Call for Proposals will also be included in WPHF's Community of Practice to learn from and exchange best practices with other WPHF partners.

Background on WPHF's work in Afghanistan

The United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), as a UN & civil society pooled funding mechanism dedicated to channelling flexible and quality funding to women's organizations in contexts of crisis, is supporting 38 projects implemented by 51 women-led and women's rights organizations in Afghanistan since 2020 with a total of over 5.5 million USD allocated. Projects have addressed interventions in conflict prevention, humanitarian response, protection against SGBV as well as peacebuilding and recovery.

Through its partnership with the Spotlight Initiative, 16 new grants began implementation in 2022 with a total investment of \$1.9 million USD. Projects prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and protect women and girls survivors of SGBV, including internally displaced women and girls as well as groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination. Through this support, 20 women's organizations and networks of women's organizations have been working to more effectively to prevent and respond to SGBV.

Through the WPHF's COVID-19 Emergency Response, WPHF strengthens the capacity of women's rights organizations to respond to the COVID-19 global pandemic and sustain their critical services to vulnerable women and girls. 2 projects with 3 civil society organizations responded to the gendered effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including heightened poverty, unemployment, health risks, and protection risks, particularly SGBV. WPHF Covid-19 Emergency Response partners' efforts have reached over 43,000 beneficiaries.

WPHF's Funding Initiative on Forced Displacement launched the Afghanistan Regional Response in summer 2021 with projects starting implementation in 2022/2023. The Initiative supports 30 projects by local women's rights and women-led organizations working with vulnerable Afghan women and girls in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. Projects will respond to Afghan women's displacement-related needs, promote their economic recovery, and promote their participation and leadership in peacebuilding and crisis response. The initiative will also provide institutional funding to six organizations to ensure that women-led and women's rights organizations working with displaced Afghan women and girls can survive and thrive despite the current restrictions.

Overall in Afghanistan, through WPHF Funding Windows:

- ▶ 62% of projects support women who are forcibly displaced
- ▶ 29% of projects will strengthen institutional capacities of CSOs
- ▶ 33% of projects are implemented at the local/community level
- ▶ 61% of CSOs are supported by the UN for the first time

In addition:

- ▶ Under the WPHF Rapid Response Window for the implementation of peace agreements, 19 Afghan women and their 25 dependents relocated to 10 countries and 14 women human rights defenders evacuated and received visa support.
- ▶ An additional 3 women human rights defenders supported under the Women Human Rights Defenders Window.
- ▶ 43,349 beneficiaries reached to date (47% women and girls) with a particular focus on vulnerable women and girls, including women who are forcibly displaced, women with disabilities, and survivors of SGBV.

References

¹ IRC, 2022. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/afghanistan-one-year-neglect-causes-humanitarian-needs-soar-third-irc-warns-current>

² OCHA update, 2022

³ <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/alerts-archive/issue-49/en/>

⁴ UN Women (2022), Women's Rights in Afghanistan one year after the Taliban take-over. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Gender-alert-2-Womens-rights-in-Afghanistan-one-year-after-the-Taliban-take-over-en_0.pdfv

⁵ According to the latest World Food Programme (WFP) Afghanistan Situation Report, which was issued on 15 August

⁶ UN Women (2021), "Gender equality is critical for Afghanistan's future, long-term development, and sustained peace."

⁷ UN Women (2022), "Women's Rights in Afghanistan one year after the Taliban take-over."

About WPHF

The Women's Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) mobilizes critical support for local and grassroots civil society organizations working on women, peace and security and humanitarian action. WPHF is a flexible and rapid financing mechanism supporting quality interventions designed to enhance the capacity of women to prevent conflict, respond to crises and emergencies, and seize key peacebuilding opportunities. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded over 800 civil society organizations through 24 funding allocations in 32 countries working to support women to be a force for crisis response and lasting peace.

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