Introduction

According to Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, a staggering 28.3 million people (two thirds of Afghanistan's population) are in need for urgent humanitarian assistance in order to survive as the country enters its third consecutive year of drought-like conditions and the second year of crippling economic decline, while still reeling from the effects of years of continued disaster

In March 2023, CARE conduct the Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) to assess the condition of needs, vulnerabilities, and poverty in the selected communities within mentioned provinces to help inform proposals to potential donor for lifesaving responses in sectors of EiE, Health, Nutrition, Livelihood, WASH and some integrated GBV and nutrition interventions for longer-term support to address their ongoing vulnerabilities.

This research covered 381 people (50% women) in 9[1] provinces in Afghanistan. Most respondents were between 24-45 years old, and 83% were host community members. The other 17% were internally displaced people.

Key Finding

- **Incomes are dropping.** 78% of people say they are earning less than they were in September 2022. 73% of people are earning less than 5,000 AFN ($59) per month. 80% of men and 75% of women saw their incomes decrease in February 2023. This is somewhat improved since November of 2022, when 87% of respondents had seen a considerable drop in household income.

- **The shocks keep coming.** 83% of people have reported experiencing shocks in the last 6 months. The most common challenges are food price inflation, job and income loss, and drought.

- **Hunger and malnutrition are serious problems.** 97% of people in Kabul and 85% of people in Ghazni are so food insecure that they cannot stock any food at all. 31% of women and 22% of men are eating smaller portions than before. This is an increase from February of 2022, when 25% of women and 19% of men were eating less food. 48% of women and 35% of men are eating less preferred foods. 10% of men and 8% of women will go for a whole day without eating. The situation has improved since November 2022, when 81% of women had to skip a meal in the last two weeks, and 84% of people were eating less preferred foods.

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[1] Provinces include: Kandahar, Herat, Ghazni, Khost, Paktya, Kabul, Parwan, Kapisa and Balkh

This brief draws from the full Afghanistan Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, for more details please contact Reshma Azim (Reshm.Azmi@care.org) or Haqmal Munib (Haqmal.munib@care.org)

- **Men have better networks to cope with food crisis.** 61% of men and 42% of women are borrowing food or the money to buy food from friends and family.

- **Children are experiencing malnutrition.** 61% of people say that malnutrition has gone up since September 2022. 80% say they do not have enough food or money to feed babies. *"In our community two out of every three children suffer from malnutrition, even though the clinic has informed us about how to improve nutrition situation, but people can't afford it because of the poor economic condition."*

- **Health care is scarce.** Only 20% of people can access basic health care. 89% of people cannot afford to get medical care. Infrastructure is missing. One interviewee says, *"the hospital … does not have walls."*

- **Where there is health care, it's far away.** 30% of people have to walk more than an hour to get to health care services. Most people prefer to go to hospitals farther away because they are more likely to have the staff and supplies people need. *"The provincial health facilities have technical staff including female staff and psychosocial counselor, but unfortunately the hospitals at the district level don't have sufficient female staff."*

- **Hygiene services are struggling.** 20% of people cannot access drinking water, and 80% do not have access to a sex-separated latrine.

- **Economic conditions are likely to get worse.** 33% of people are suffering economic impacts from the ban on women working. This is not just a problem for women. 39% of men and 26% of women say the ban on women working is impacting their household economics.

- **Girls aren't going to school.** 90% of boys are in school, but 80% of girls are not in school anymore. "The main reason for the children being out of school are lack of a standard school, professional teachers, low economic conditions and child labor, lack of teachers and a good education system; and the current ban on girl education has decreased their interest."

Recommendations

- Request the clusters to integrate the recommendations from this MSNA in their response plans and to implement subsequent actions. This is essential to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches women, girls who are the most at-risk population groups.
- Food is people's primary concern, and communities particularly women are eating least, the situation has deteriorated with reduced humanitarian response part of the ban, immediate focus on addressing food security need of communities is appealed.
- Ensure that there is continued and flexible funding for the provision of integrated essential and lifesaving Sexual and Reproductive Health and nutrition services throughout humanitarian response.
- Investment in the implementation of research and a robust monitoring system with women staff engagement should be prioritized to continue better understand impact of current crises on communities particularly on women so far, and how humanitarian responses can better meet people's needs as the crisis evolves.
- The humanitarian donor Ensure that a gender-responsive and transformative responses are funded - in coordination with humanitarian actors. In particular, the UNAMA should ensure that the DFA allow women to participate in humanitarian response to reach marginalized population groups.
- Increase investments in targeted interventions for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to reduce vulnerability and address gender inequalities.