

AFGHANISTAN

Conflict-driven displacement



Briefing note – 03 September 2020

Crisis Impact Overview

Since 16 August, fighting between the Taliban and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in villages of Khanabad district along the Kunduz-Khanabad highway, Imam Sahib district, and Kunduz city, all in Kunduz province (OCHA 27/08/2020), displaced approximately 64,000 people within these areas; approximately 28,000 were identified in assessments as requiring immediate lifesaving assistance. The attacks on ANSF outposts and retaliatory ground offensives and airstrikes also resulted in the deaths of 17 civilians and in the injury of 23 (Humanitarian Web 25/08/2020) (OCHA 23/08/2020). Assessments from mid-August indicated that a high proportion of IDPs did not want to return to their areas of origin, fearing continued fighting (OCHA 25/08/2020). However close to 13,000 of the IDPs have returned to their homes in Khanabad district, where their needs will be assessed. Returnees are exposed to violence, IEDs, and mines on their return journeys. Further, households have long lived under conflict conditions and their coping capacities are likely severely strained. Kunduz city was hosting a high number of IDPs prior to this recent fighting (ECHO 26/08/2020) in a province counting approximately 5,300 IDPs as of 20 August (OCHA last accessed 02/09/2020); available aid resources are likely to be scarce. Although fighting has stopped in Kunduz city, sporadic shooting has been reported (OCHA 27/08/2020); continued fighting is likely to force further displacement and will likely place civilian populations in danger. Since the start of 2020, at least 1,213 civilians were killed and 1,744 injured across Afghanistan because of security incidents (AIHRC 14/07/2020). Security conditions have deteriorated in Afghanistan, including the north-eastern region, since June, despite the start of peace talks between the government and the Taliban (Tolo News 25/08/2020) (ECHO 26/08/2020). Kunduz Province is one of the most conflict-affected in the country, and insurgent group presence is persistent across the province. On 22 August Kunduz city residents protested, accusing government forces of not adequately addressing the Taliban's threat (Tolo News 23/06/2020).

Key Priorities



28,000
estimated number of people in need of immediate assistance



Shelter
material is required



Risk
of exposure to COVID-19

National response capacity

Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), Ministry of Refugees and Reparations (MORR); District level bodies; national NGOs

International response capacity

World Bank, UN agencies (OCHA coordination, UNICEF, WFP), INGOs, Afghan Red Crescent society

Anticipated scope and scale

Clashes between the two parties resumed in Imam Sahib district on 31 August, which may drive further displacement (Noqta 01/09/2020). OCHA projected that the direction of fighting is likely to also effect Dai Qala district (OCHA 25/08/2020); this would likely force further people into displacement. It may increase IDP needs and cause further trauma. IDPs are also likely to be exposed to COVID-19, as many are living in unsuitable conditions. IDPs may be exposed to food insecurity and suffer malnutrition.

Humanitarian constraints

Local residents indicated that, although all main roads are currently under the control of Afghan National Security Forces, routes connecting districts to Kunduz city are under threat from the Taliban and civilians are frequently subject to extortion and harassment along key routes such as the Kunduz-Kabul highway (Salaam Times 06/08/2020) (SATP 26/08/2020). This will probably prevent humanitarian actors from reaching IDPs who are often in hard to reach areas. Due to insecurity, access constraints are high across Afghanistan, and NGOs are frequently targeted by insurgents (Aid Worker Security 04/05/2020). Flight irregularities and bureaucratic constraints have slowed down some operations, and interference with activities continues to be reported in Kunduz (OCHA 31/08/2020) (The Johanniter 11/2019) (OCHA C-19 Report 25/08/2020).

Sectoral needs



Shelter and NFIs

IDPs in Kunduz are residing with relatives or friends, sheltering in schools, or have put up makeshift shelters, all of which are inadequate (OCHA 25/08/2020). NGO assessments have identified that IDPs need shelter aid, though warned against establishing camps-style settlements that may encourage the spread of COVID-19 (OCHA 27/08/2020).



WASH

IDPs need clean water, as well as sanitation and hygiene aid (OCHA 27/08/2020).



Health

Although Kunduz houses one of Afghanistan's only high-level trauma health facility, resources are restricted; there are 75 public health facilities in the province, however they often lack human resources to address trauma injuries or some basic health care and are controlled or influenced by the Taliban (The Johanniter 11/2019). IDPs' movement will likely encourage the spread of COVID-19 as there is a severe lack of soap and clean water sources to maintain appropriate hygiene (OCHA 27/08/2020). Cramped camp conditions and their movement back home are likely to also contribute to COVID-19 spread. Health aid is currently being provided, including psychosocial support.



Food

IDPs need food aid (OCHA 27/08/2020). People in Kunduz province face Stressed (IPC-2) food security conditions as of August-September, and 14.2% of children under five face some form of malnutrition in the province (Nutrition Cluster 2019). People are projected to face these levels into next year, which will likely make recovery difficult (FEWS Net 08/2020).



Protection

17 civilians were killed in the fighting, and 23 injured (OCHA 23/08/2020). IDPs often are exposed to psychological trauma and may require special care. Civilians who are moving are exposed to IEDs and mines, along main thoroughways; children may be especially exposed to injury or death from explosive weapons.

Aggravating factors

COVID-19 pandemic: 38,243 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Afghanistan as of 02/09, with 29,315 recoveries and 1,409 deaths, though deaths are likely underreported (Afghan Ministry of Public Health last accessed 02/09/2020) (OCHA 31/08/2020). Projections indicate that severe cases and deaths will likely continue to rise over the coming weeks, should containment measures be lifted (OCHA 31/08/2020). The National Government recorded 595 confirmed cases of COVID-19; the wider north-eastern area has a death rate of just over 3% and a recovery rate of 46%, although Kunduz' recovery rate is lower at 42.5% (Afghan Ministry of Public Health last accessed 02/09/2020) (OCHA 25/08/2020). COVID-19 is a threat to responders and people in need, it does also strain already limited healthcare resources (OCHA 25/08/2020). Containment measures had sporadically hampered some humanitarian activities at the beginning of the pandemic as well as slowing down some operations. This has become less of a problem, but commercial international flight schedules are still unreliable, and some carriers require a negative COVID-19 test. These factors may reduce INGOs' capacities to send international staff, increasing the burden on national and locally based staff (OCHA C-19 Report 25/08/2020).

IEDs, mines, and other remnants of war: Decades of war have left heavy mine contamination and a widespread presence of explosive remnants of war across the country, which in particular often result in child death or injury (UNAMA 02/2020). Over the period of 2010 – 2018, there has been a notable increase in deaths and injuries in Kunduz Province (The Johanniter 11/2019). Civilians across Afghanistan are frequently killed or injured as a consequence of military ground operations; however, the primary cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan remains exposure to mines and IEDs, which accounts for 42% of the overall total (UNAMA 02/2020). These are frequently places in areas with concentrations of civilians and civilian infrastructure; they frequently result in child casualties as well (AOAV 01/04/2020) (UNAMA 02/2020). IDPs may be exposed to mines and IEDs when fleeing conflict areas or when returning to their home areas, potentially resulting in death, injury, and trauma.

Reference map of Kunduz Province and road networks (primary roads in red, provincial roads in orange, district roads in yellow)

Source: DACAAR, iMMAP, UNICEF (03/08/2015)

AFGHANISTAN Common Operating Picture Kunduz Province - Reference Map for WASH Cluster

