

AFGHANISTAN

Risk overview

INTRODUCTION

One year since their seizure of Kabul and declaration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban government has yet to obtain official recognition from any country. That said, most neighbouring countries have begun politically and commercially engaging with them; overall regional trade has continued, and the export of coal and minerals has substantially increased.

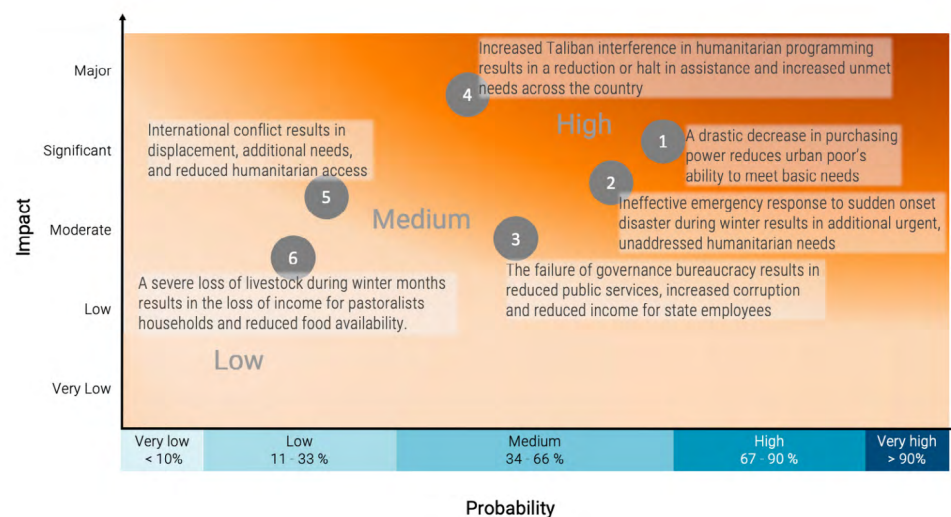
The Taliban government's relationship with the US, EU, and many other countries, however, remains contentious. The Taliban have established a government composed exclusively of their leadership despite early promises to share power with other political groups in the country. While overall conflict levels have decreased, small-scale attacks by anti-Taliban groups persist and are met with a harsh localised response.

A year since their return to power, the Taliban have started consolidating their rule, and:

- The Taliban's human rights record, their restrictions on girls' education and women's employment, and their enforcement of policies that limit the rights of Afghan people have further alienated them from the international community.
- The isolation of the central bank, freezing of overseas assets, imposition of sanctions, and suspension of bilateral assistance have precipitated a financial and economic crisis in the country.
- Food insecurity has increased; 89% of Afghan households continue to face insufficient food consumption (WFP 08/09/2022).
- The Taliban continue to replace government staff with unqualified personnel, undermining already weak governance. As Afghans enter the winter season, living conditions will become more challenging, and most people will continue to rely heavily on humanitarian assistance.

About this report

The Afghanistan Risk Overview is a biannual risk identification report outlining key emerging risks in Afghanistan that might affect the humanitarian situation over the next six months. It aims to inform the humanitarian community of possible changes in context and humanitarian needs in Afghanistan to facilitate contingency planning, risk management, and response. ACAPS regularly tracks these and other risks for Afghanistan and publishes alerts and updates as the context evolves. The next Afghanistan Risk Overview will be published in March 2023.

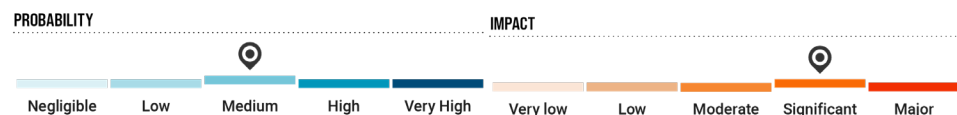


This report identifies six risks that, should they materialise, would significantly affect some or all of the population, compounding the already dire situation.

An explanation of the methodology and limitations of this report is on page 15.

Risk 1

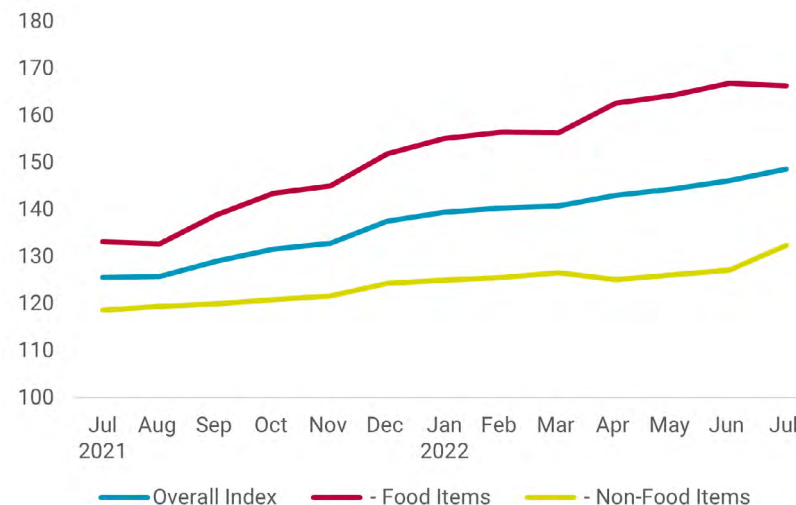
A drastic decrease in purchasing power severely affects the ability of the poor, specifically the urban poor, to address basic needs and access goods and services.



Rationale

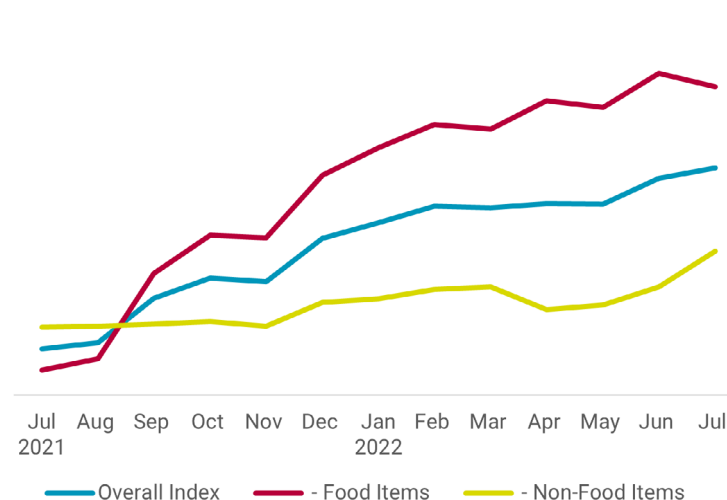
Afghanistan’s economic situation has been deteriorating since August 2021. In July 2022, the inflation rate for basic household goods (food and fuel) stood at 43.4% as a result of drought and the increase in global energy and food prices (WB 25/08/2022). Kazakhstan, the main exporter of wheat to Afghanistan, also recently imposed export restrictions because of the conflict in Ukraine. The price of cooking oil is also on the rise, as 60% of the sunflower oil produced worldwide comes from Ukraine and Russia (ICRC 13/07/2022). In August 2021, more than four of five households experienced a significant decrease in or elimination of their income following the change in government and cessation of all donor-supported development activities (REACH et al. 28/02/2022). Some humanitarian activities currently remain suspended. Sanctions on financial transactions, including remittance inflow to Afghanistan, have affected people’s income and, by extension, purchasing power. In 2020, remittances amounted to about USD 787 million, making up 4% of the national gross domestic product – although other sources estimated the actual figure to be closer to 18% (WB accessed 12/09/2022; The Economist 26/11/2020). According to the 2016–2017 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey, remittances represented an income source for almost one in every ten Afghan households. The problem is while remittances can still be sent to Afghanistan, the collapse of the banking industry has made it harder to withdraw money (VOA 22/08/2022). The hawala system, MoneyGram, and Western Union are still operational but expensive. Global inflation and economic downturn will also likely affect the amount of money families abroad can afford to send back, as people need a reliable income to regularly send money home (UNDP 15/06/2022).

Figure 1 National Consumer Price Index



Source: National information and Statistics Authority (NISA)

Figure 2 Monthly national price inflation (%)



Source: NISA

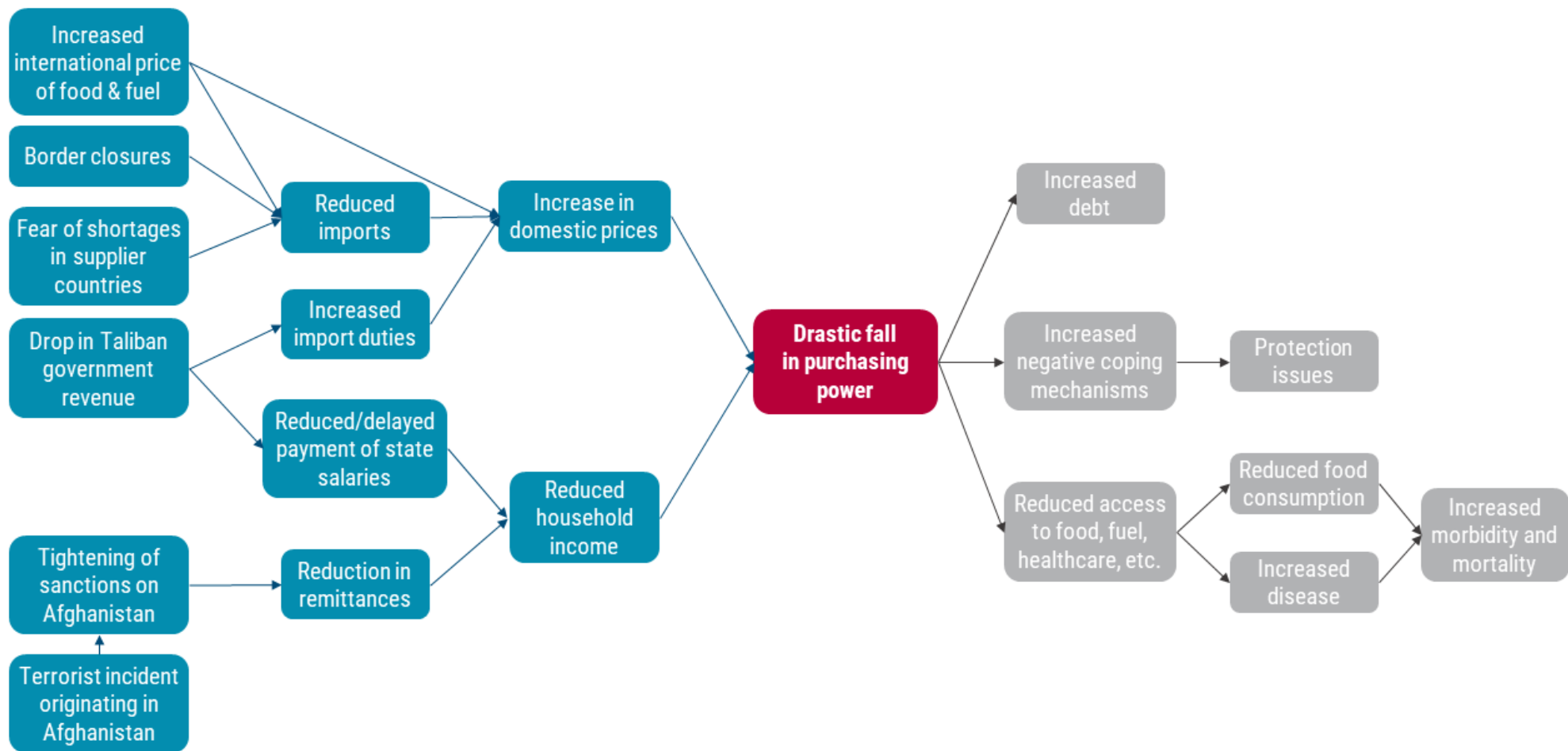
The banking crisis resulting from sanctions, the large depreciation of the Afghani immediately after the Taliban takeover, and cash withdrawal limits that the Taliban government has imposed have worsened the country's initial economic shock. While there has been some sanctions relief for remittances and humanitarian aid, Afghanistan still faces sanctions that limit its economic recovery. Any disruptions to the inflow of US dollars to Afghanistan, such as a reduction in humanitarian aid funding or remittances, would result in currency depreciation and volatility, further reducing Afghan people's purchasing power.

Since August 2021, the purchasing power of most Afghan households has decreased significantly, and the use of negative coping mechanisms has increased (WFP 27/07/2022). A further significant decrease in purchasing power would severely reduce access to food, healthcare, and other essential services. Such a decrease could result from a reduction in income or a surge in prices as driven by external factors, such as a further reduction to global food supply chains, or internal factors, such as an increase in import duties as the Taliban seek to raise revenue. US special licenses allow for remittances and humanitarian aid to enter Afghanistan, but a major international terrorist event linked back to entities in Afghanistan, or further restrictions on Afghan women and other policies limiting the rights of Afghan people, could result in the revocation of these licenses. Increased tensions with neighbouring countries could also result in border closures and disrupt imports.

Impact

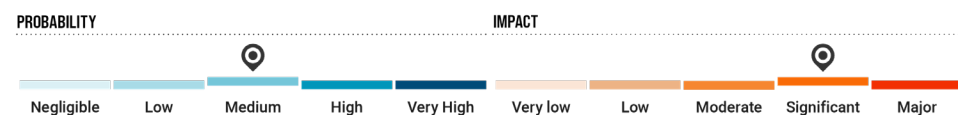
The urban poor depending on daily wage jobs and spending most of their meagre earnings on essential items are more vulnerable to inflation than other groups. They are also more vulnerable to shocks to the employment market than the rural population. As inflation has an inverse relationship with employment, high inflation combined with job losses would significantly reduce their purchasing power. This outcome is particularly worrying given the lack of capacity of the Afghan Central Bank to reduce inflation through conventional monetary policy because of sanctions, the loss of most of its technical capacity, and competing priorities, such as regaining its assets.

For the urban poor, a decrease in purchasing power would further increase debt and the use of extreme coping mechanisms. The winter season, during which casual labour opportunities decrease and heating costs and health issues increase, always presents a challenge for poorer households. Should purchasing power decrease significantly, households will struggle to afford healthcare and be forced to prioritise food within families. Traditional coping mechanisms (e.g. borrowing money and selling household goods and assets) will further erode. In 2021, many families sold off their assets and entered the winter season with fewer or no assets. Poverty and the adoption of extreme coping mechanisms (such as switching to lower-quality foods and engaging in child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, and begging) will increase, exacerbating protection needs and the risk of civil unrest. Less poor people will become increasingly susceptible to future shocks, and the overall number of people in severe poverty will increase.



Risk 2

Ineffective emergency response to sudden onset disasters during winter results in additional urgent, unaddressed humanitarian needs



Rationale

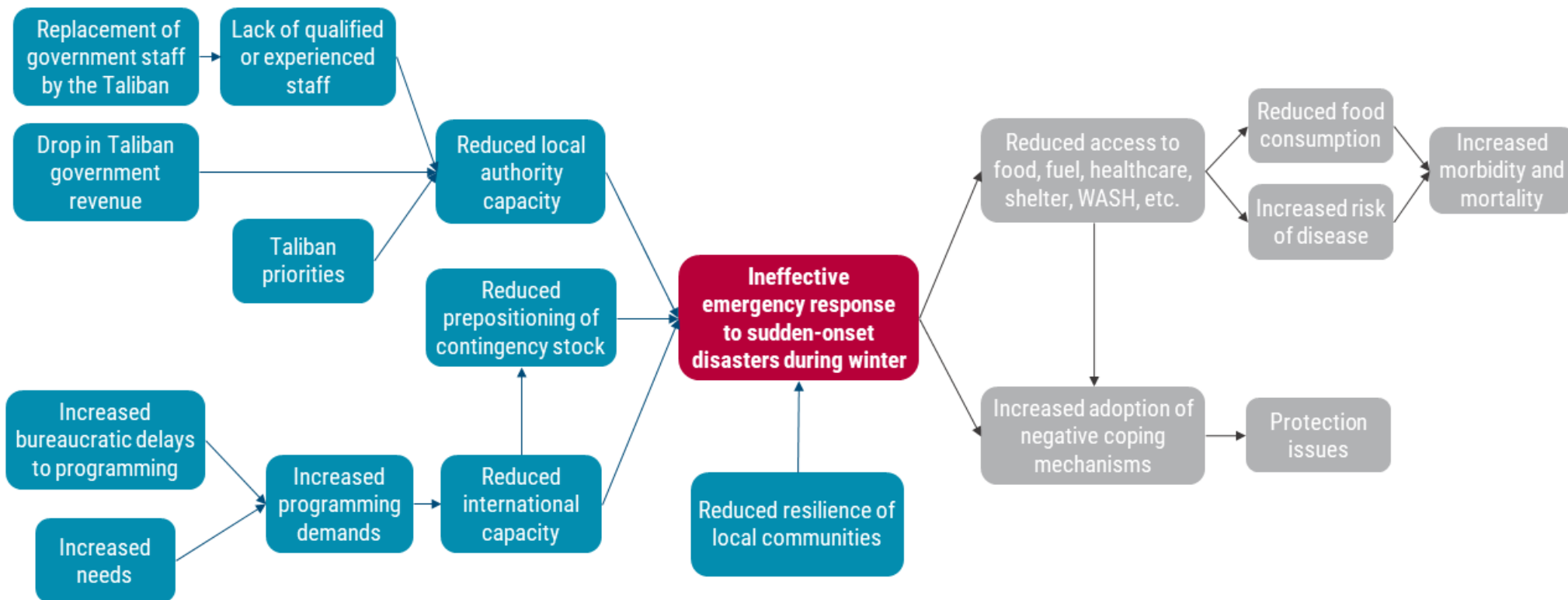
The number of people in need, the magnitude of needs, and uncertain commitment outlook from donors because of geopolitical uncertainties overstretch humanitarian response capacity in Afghanistan. The mass exodus of officials and technical Afghans has created a capacity vacuum within government institutions and the non-profit sector for emergency response. International funding also no longer supports the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority. Humanitarian organisations are left as the main frontline responders to sudden adverse shocks, as international grant funding that could have been reprioritised for emergency response ceased in-country operations in August 2021. Logistical challenges are likely to further hamper any available response capacity. Parts of Afghanistan experience very harsh winters, and many mountainous and remote areas (in central and northeast regions) become even more difficult to reach during this season. Previous disasters and the economic and governance collapse have also drastically reduced the resilience of most communities. Avalanches, flooding, landslides, heavy snow, and earthquakes affected over 275,000 people between September 2018 and April 2019, over 70,000 in the winter of 2019–2020, and about 42,000 in the winter of 2020–2021 (OCHA accessed 20/09/2022).

Should a sudden-onset disaster occur during winter, the usual challenges – such as a lack of access given road blockages from snow, landslides, floods, and harsh temperatures – will delay the provision of assistance from outside the affected area and increase the risk of death subsequent to hazards. The reduced prepositioning of emergency response supplies, weakened national response mechanisms, reduced spare capacity in the international humanitarian system, and lower resilience within communities leave people much more vulnerable to the primary and secondary effects of a sudden-onset disaster.

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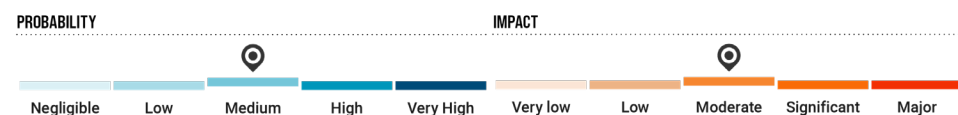
People living in disaster-prone areas – in the mountainous areas of the central and northeast regions, in non-standard houses made of mud, or near rivers or mountains – are more vulnerable to natural disasters. Such disasters can lead people to lose their belongings, livestock, and houses while a lack of response capacity prevents timely recovery, affecting their access to basic needs. The impact of a natural disaster includes the immediate rise in needs for food, shelter, water, health, and WASH services. A lack of response to health needs is likely to lead to the spread of diseases. The loss of shelter, especially if a disaster occurs during winter, is likely to further affect overall health conditions, as it exposes people to harsh temperatures. A lack of adequate shelter is also likely to increase protection needs, as people find themselves in overcrowded emergency locations. Logistical challenges and a very limited emergency response capacity are likely to hamper the delivery of food and other essential commodities, resulting in reduced food consumption.

The recurrence of natural disasters and the authorities' inability to provide timely and adequate response over time erode the coping abilities of communities and individuals. A rise in unmet humanitarian needs will lead people to adopt negative coping mechanisms. At the same time, those unable to support themselves and their families are likely to displace to urban centres in search of work. This displacement might create tension or lead to civil unrest given the resulting competition with host communities over available resources. People living in disaster-prone regions, especially those with harsh winters, have also likely exhausted traditional coping mechanisms, such as borrowing money and selling household goods and assets. Such a situation may lead them to turn to more extreme coping mechanisms, such as reducing food intake (primarily affecting women and girls), switching to lower-quality foods, and engaging in child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, and begging. People may also be more likely to illegally cross borders in search of work or opportunities, making them more vulnerable to human trafficking. They would also be leaving their families with reduced resources to meet needs and relying on remittances.



Risk 3

The failure of government bureaucracy results in the reduction of public services, increased corruption, and reduced income for state employees.



Rationale

The Taliban inherited a weak but functioning bureaucracy that, while heavily reliant on international support, delivered many basic services (such as health and education) and other functions of the state – including local governance, rule of law, and justice. The exodus of experienced managers and professionals immediately after the Taliban takeover affected this governance system. The initial replacement with Taliban commanders of those in major political roles in Kabul and the provinces curtailed much policy development. Regardless, enough of the day-to-day business of government has continued to enable key institutions to function, with some staff returning to work, albeit at reduced efficiency. Women are no longer assigned to senior civil positions, and although female staff continue to receive their salaries, most are not allowed to return to work. The absence of women in decision-making positions is likely to also worsen the exclusion of women in service delivery. While the establishment of the Afghanistan Fund will facilitate debt payments, fund some essential spending, and help stabilise the currency, it is likely to undermine the ability of Da Afghanistan Bank to effect macroeconomic policy.

As the Taliban appoint more of their own to middle- and lower-level bureaucratic positions, many functions can be expected to further deteriorate. Some may completely collapse because of appointees' lack of experience or expertise in their respective assignments. Appointment across all levels of government will extend the reach of Taliban restrictions on various rights of the Afghan people, especially affecting women and girls. Considering that it took twenty years to build and strengthen the Afghan government system and train its personnel, ad hoc changes at the system level and the replacement of staff with unqualified and inexperienced former insurgents will significantly weaken government functions. As the Taliban consolidate their rule, the adoption of policies based on the conservative culture of parts of rural Afghanistan or the Taliban's interpretation of Shari'a law will become more

common, while the day-to-day business of government – at the strategic, policy, and clerical levels – will largely cease. Concurrently, existing corrupt practices will expand, hastening the failure of government systems. Delays in the issuance of passports, for which there is a very high demand, have already resulted in corruption.

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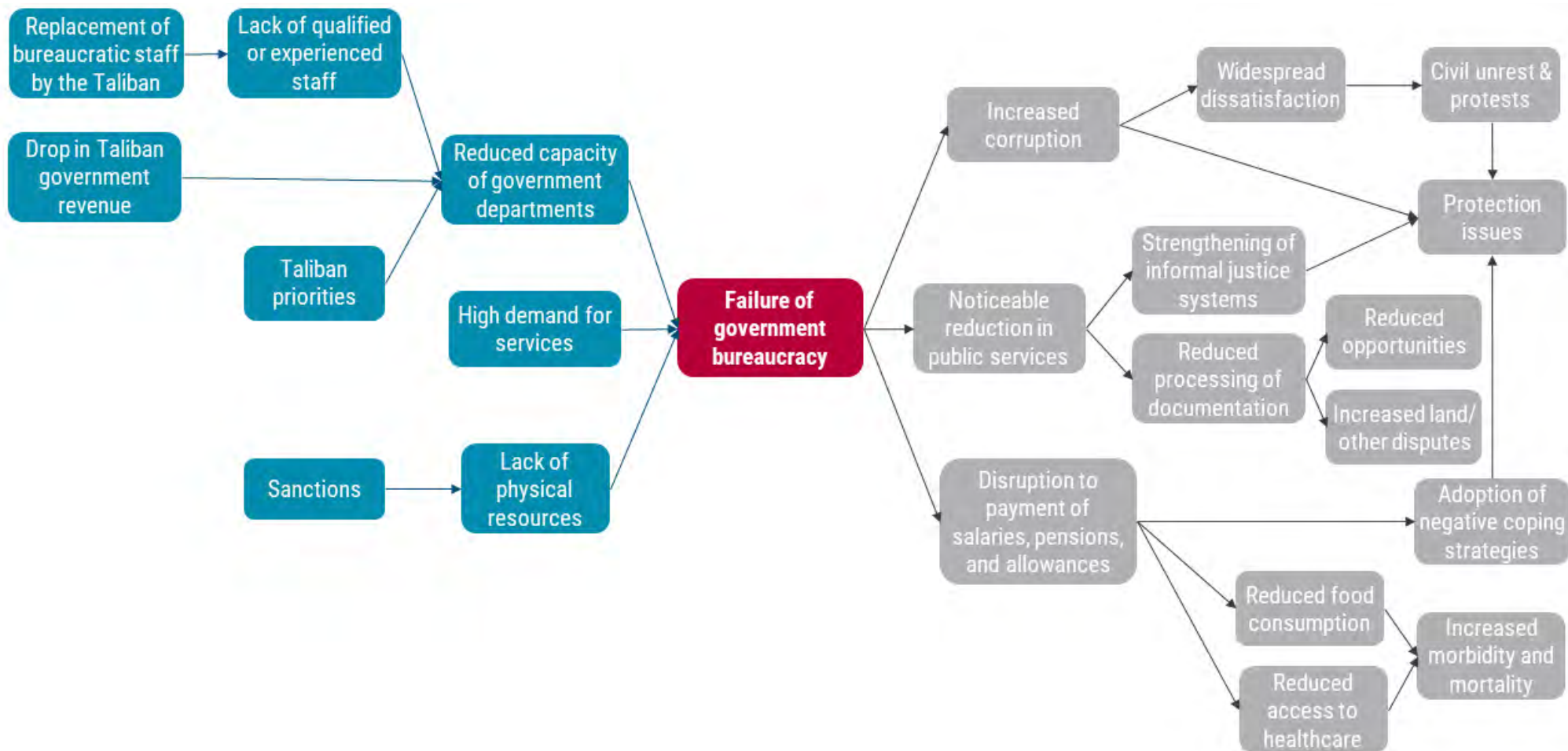
The failure of the day-to-day functions of government or inefficient bureaucracy has wide-ranging effects on the population. The ability of the governance system to provide or oversee the provision of basic services could erode further.

Increased government mismanagement will provide an environment for low-level corruption and nepotism to prosper and result in the failure of state institutions to provide key services, possibly including paying salaries. Dissatisfaction with the Taliban could increase. The continued disruption to the payment of salaries, pensions, and other allowances would worsen the economic crisis at the household level. The failure to provide critical governance functions, such as the rule of law and justice, could lead to the formation or strengthening of informal institutions in some areas and the deterioration of social order and stability in others. While informal institutions, such as local dispute resolution councils (jirgas), community councils (shuras), and cultural codes and norms, can be useful, they can also result in human rights abuses, especially against women and minorities. The backlog in the judicial system will grow, resulting in many cases remaining unresolved and indefinitely keeping those awaiting trial in prison.

The situation will also affect agriculture-related services as humanitarian aid is prioritised over development activities and the local government is unable to provide subsidies, including seeds and training. Lack of investment in infrastructure will result in further deterioration of already poor roads, especially given the growing volume of cross-border heavy goods traffic. Haulage times will increase further and humanitarian access diminish.

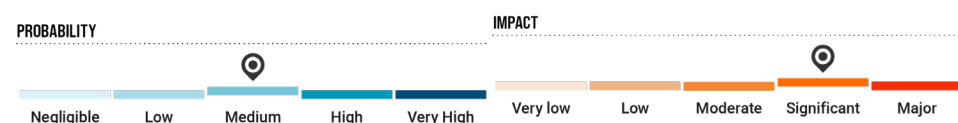
Possessing documentation (including birth certificates, driver's licences, and land ownership documents) is critical to reducing protection risks, ensuring access to income-generating opportunities, and securing assets. Access to civil documentation is indistinguishably linked to housing, land, and property (HLP) rights, contingent on a person's ability to prove their identity and family lineage. A lack of civil documentation severely limits opportunities and further compounds the challenges that IDPs and returnees face in exercising their HLP rights.

The inability to issue travel-related documents (as the current stock of blank passport books has run out) makes it extremely difficult for people to leave the country. The inability to print more e-Tazkera cards will also end its issuance. As the e-Tazkera is the most important identification document in Afghanistan, the suspension of issuance would likely create difficulties for people seeking services in the country.



Risk 4

Increased Taliban interference in humanitarian programming or attempts to divert aid result in a reduction of or temporary halt in humanitarian assistance, further economic collapse, and major health and food crises.



Rationale

Afghanistan is highly dependent on humanitarian aid to address the current crisis. There have been reports of interference by the Taliban authorities in the form of incidents of violence or threats to aid employees, requests for the payment of levies at the provincial or local level, demand to vet staff before granting them access to some areas, restrictions on activities and programming, and the interrogation of female staff. The Taliban government restrictions have delayed assessments, such as the 2022 Seasonal Food Security Assessment (KII 16/09/2022). Some NGOs also report pressure to disclose recipient identity data. In a recent poll, just under 50% of NGOs reported experiencing some level of impediment from officials, although fewer than 25% experienced severe impediments (KII 16/09/2022). These impediments vary, but the most reported are delays in the signing of memoranda of understanding, a lack of coordination between line ministries, requests by the Taliban government to share staff details, and delays in permission for projects to start.

As the Taliban seek to impose more bureaucratic processes to oversee humanitarian activities, the ability of humanitarian organisations to talk directly with decision makers recedes while the Taliban administration's demand for increasing oversight and control, including the sharing of confidential data, increases. The effect is a straining of relationships and restriction of humanitarian operations. The lack of coordination between government levels compounds the issue by creating inconsistencies in approaches to humanitarian access, resulting in varying levels of access and aid distribution between cities, districts, and provinces.

The Taliban government perceives humanitarian organisations as an important level of engagement with the international community and has facilitated humanitarian operations for this reason, among others. If Taliban relations with the international community experience

serious disruption, the Taliban government may resort to a more heavy-handed approach towards the humanitarian sector. More serious interference in aid delivery, restrictions on humanitarian staff, increased demands to share confidential data, or attempts to direct aid would cause serious disruptions to aid delivery and availability. Any significant reduction in operational ability to deliver humanitarian assistance would not only reduce the assistance that the population receives. It would also reduce donor confidence and possibly result in reduced funding for 2023.

International humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan need to navigate these bureaucratic requirements while facing donors' conditionality to only engage with NGOs and UN agencies, not the government and its partners. These constraints on communication and facilitation create an additional layer of challenges.

Impact

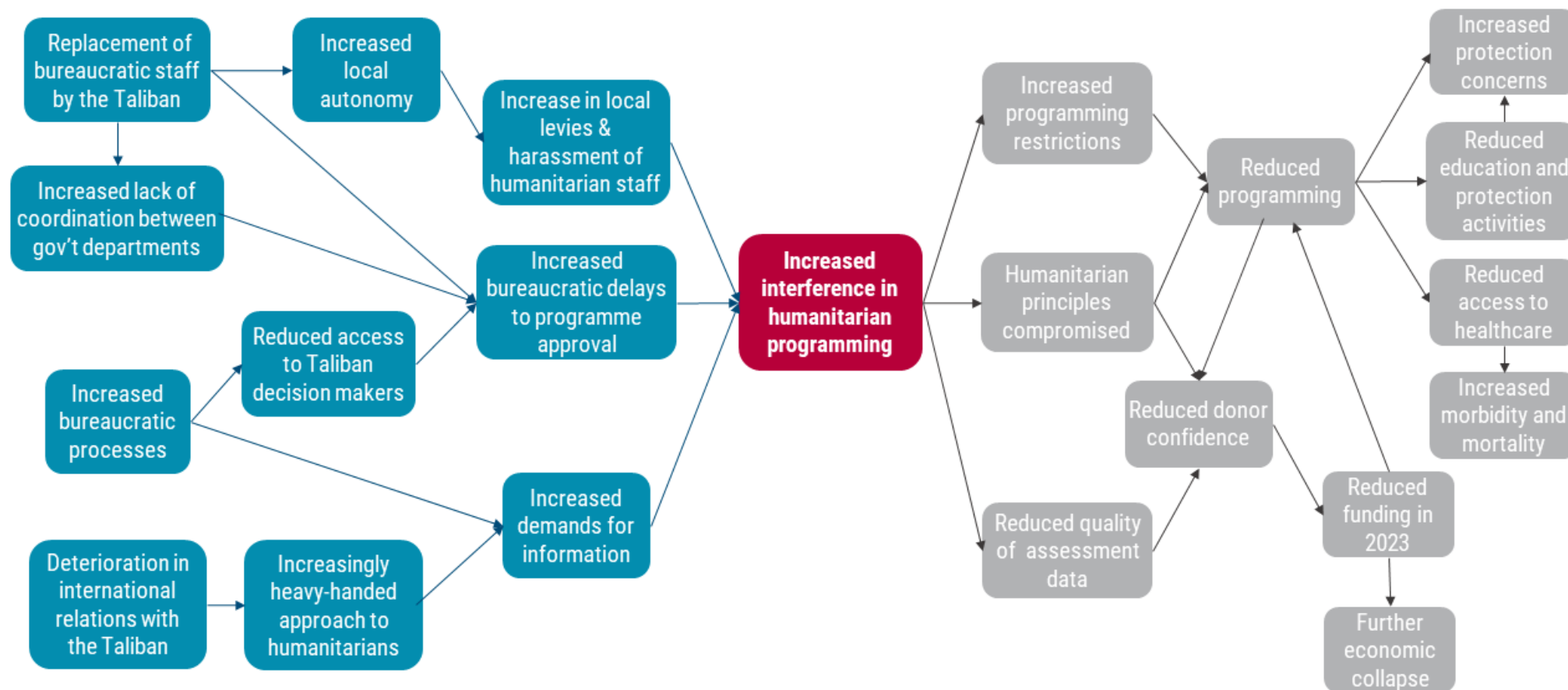
Taliban interference with aid operations and the consequent inability of aid organisations to deliver on their commitments could directly lead to a reduction in aid delivery, donor disengagement, or the prioritisation of Taliban-preferred programming, such as food distribution, healthcare services, and WASH services. This reprioritisation of aid would result in millions of people receiving reduced assistance or the halting of programming facing the most Taliban interference (most likely protection- or education-related).

Increased interference in assessments, targeting, recipient selection, or operational delivery would compromise humanitarian principles and limit the ability of humanitarian organisations to meet donor commitments. Donor exhaustion and perception that effective humanitarian assistance is no longer possible in Afghanistan would ultimately reduce humanitarian aid delivery.

Restrictions on humanitarian organisations would most likely initially affect primary data collection exercises, undermining donor confidence in the number of people in need. Programming restrictions would highly likely target protection and education-related programmes first because they touch on sensitive issues. These restrictions would result in reduced programming specifically supporting at-risk groups. They could also reduce donor appetite to fund such programmes, practically omitting them from Afghanistan's humanitarian service delivery. Even short-term aid disruptions would significantly affect targeted households and wider communities.

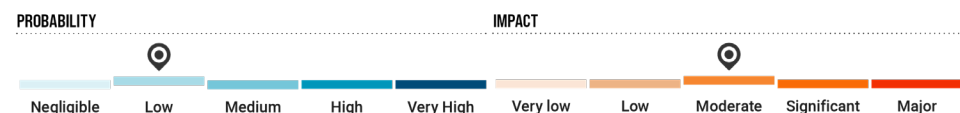
Should donor confidence in the humanitarian community's ability to deliver assistance falter, funding for 2023 would decrease. Such a reduction would restrict humanitarian operations and worsen the current food crisis. Cash and food assistance would fall, directly affecting the more than 16 million Afghan people receiving assistance (EC 15/07/2022). The reduction would also majorly disrupt service delivery, as humanitarian, development, and financial

systems all depend on humanitarian funding. The disruption would trigger further economic collapse, as the humanitarian sector is one of the biggest employers and cash injectors into the economy. Results would include increased unemployment, a widespread decrease in living conditions, and the adoption of increasingly negative coping mechanisms. A major health crisis would emerge as health facilities, preventative care (vaccines), and care for chronic illness – all of which humanitarian responders currently provide – collapse.



Risk 5

International or regional conflict causes displacement and reduced access to humanitarian services.



Rationale

Although Afghanistan is currently experiencing relative peace compared to the last two decades, the risk of conflict escalation from regional or global causes still exists. The Islamic State – Khorasan Province has continued to carry out small-scale attacks against civilian targets, including minorities, the Taliban, and their commanders since August 2021 (ACLED accessed 10/09/2022; ACAPS 09/09/2022). Anti-Taliban groups are also active in districts in north and northeastern Afghanistan (FDD's Long War Journal 29/08/2022). While domestic conflict usually decreases during winter, external factors pose a threat to Afghanistan's stability. At the regional level, relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours have been uncertain and problematic at times. Border conflict incidents have been reported with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Militant groups active in these countries are also believed to be present in Afghanistan.

The activities of armed groups such as Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan could lead to cross-border conflict or a significant deterioration in relations with the respective countries. The US and European countries are also concerned about the continued presence of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, whose leader Al-Zawahiri, while standing on the balcony of a house owned by a senior member of the Taliban in Kabul, perished in a US drone attack in July (ICG 12/08/2022). The continued presence of groups like Al-Qaeda could lead to increased drone strikes and the breakdown of already weak engagement between the Taliban-led Afghanistan and the international community.

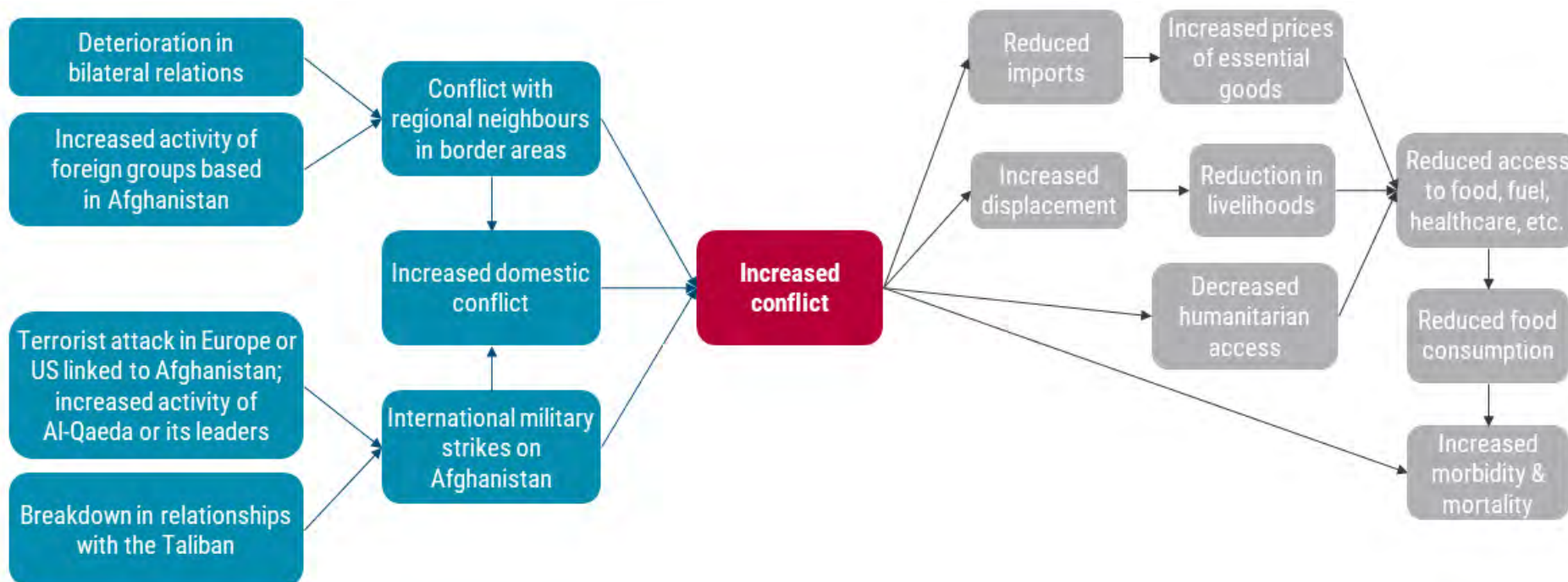
All these dynamics are prone to sudden and significant change. Even temporary conflict at the border could disrupt imports and exports for a week or more, seriously affecting the availability and prices of essential goods.

Impact

Any conflict precipitated by regional or international entities would increase internal and cross-border displacement and disrupt livelihoods and humanitarian access. Regional conflict would also disrupt cross-border trade, reducing the availability and increasing the prices of basic food items and fuel. A breakdown in relations with neighbouring countries would lead to reduced engagement on political and practical levels. The reduced engagement would interrupt electricity from Uzbekistan and disrupt exports to and transit trade via neighbouring countries. The net effect would be the reduced availability and higher prices of essential goods and services. Tougher border restrictions would aggravate challenges that Afghans travelling for business and those seeking to flee the country face.

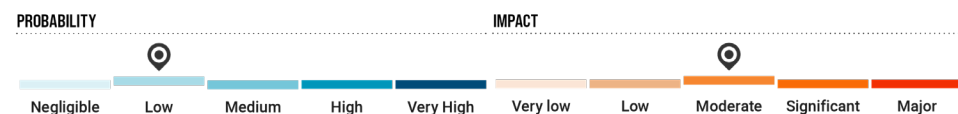
Domestic figures, including local warlords, could also take advantage of any regional or international conflict and initiate internal conflict, precipitating a harsh, indiscriminate response from the Taliban. The ensuing conflict would raise protection concerns for adult men in areas perceived as strongholds of Islamic State – Khorasan Province, the National Resistance Front, or other anti-Taliban groups. The conflict would likely heavily restrict freedom of movement in such areas, preventing most trade and humanitarian interventions and worsening the already high needs for food and protection.

A prolonged or wider conflict, in which the supremacy of the Taliban is questioned, could lead to fragmentation as elements switch allegiances, further destabilising the country and compounding the issues above.



Risk 6

A severe loss of livestock during winter results in the loss of income for pastoralist households and reduced food availability.



Rationale

Livestock health usually deteriorates during winter as temperatures plummet and fodder replaces fresh pasture. In 2008, over 300,000 animals died during unusually cold temperatures from January–February (UN 29/02/2008). The coming winter is also likely to result in the below-average production of animal fodder, affecting livestock health and increasing their vulnerability to disease. The cost of core fertilisers has also significantly increased owing to increased transportation costs. Drought is another factor. Below-average rainfall and a shorter rainy season – results of climate change – have led to recurrent droughts or prolonged dry spells in 26 provinces (AAN 6/10/2001). As pastures in Afghanistan are largely rain-fed, the situation will significantly affect the availability of food and water for animals. The deterioration of animal health and lack of proper feed also affect the natural regeneration of herds. As nomadic herders move between summer and winter pastures, the herds could spread disease. Herders resorting to buying cheaper available livestock from neighbouring countries also increase the risk of importing disease.

A shortage of vaccines is affecting livestock vaccination campaigns, and the upcoming three months before the worst of winter are particularly relevant to ensuring livestock health resilience (KII 7/9/2022). The very low vaccination rates and reduced fodder make livestock less resilient to disease and cold. The spread of the Lumpy Skin Disease is also currently affecting livestock health (KII 17/9/2022). Afghanistan is currently facing a shortage of livestock vaccines and reduced outreach capacity because of a lack of prior experience in managing the disease. Many veterinarians also left the country after 15 August 2021. Remaining veterinarians are overstretched and undersupported. The quality of available vaccines is low, and their handling and storage (through a cold chain system) do not meet the required standards to ensure efficacy.

The lack of capacity, in terms of resources and experience, in dealing with certain diseases is preventing the implementation of awareness campaigns about animal diseases, the establishment of veterinary clinics in areas where there is a potential risk of the diseases spreading, and the timely provision of medication. International funding tends to focus more on agriculture and irrigation and less on livestock. The decline of the economy and closure of financial activities have affected cash flow, preventing livestock farmers from maintaining their farms, feeding their families and animals, and implementing climate change mitigation measures in drought-prone areas (Food Tank 12/2021). As the prices of food, fuel, and fertilisers continue to increase globally, the repercussions in Afghanistan are on the availability, prices, and quality of goods, affecting the quality of Afghan agricultural outputs and fodder production.

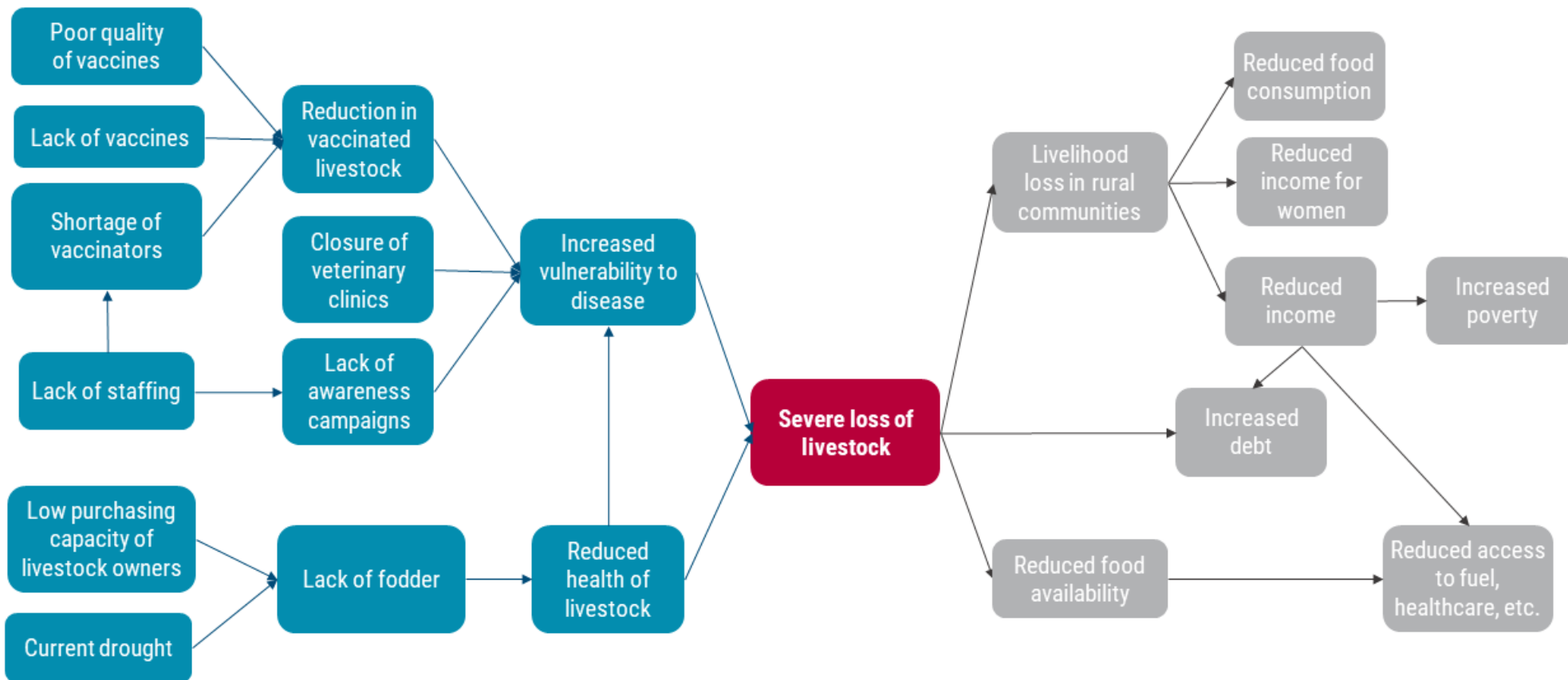
This lack of planning and mitigation measures – including disease awareness programmes, providing vaccination and medications, and establishing veterinary clinics – and increased challenges in procuring fodder will significantly reduce livestock resilience and the ability to identify and treat diseases promptly. Pastoralist households in Afghanistan risk losing an excessive number of livestock over the coming winter, especially if temperatures fall below average.

Impact

The loss of livestock severely affects the livelihood of a large proportion of the population, as livestock is a key component in the livelihood of more than 70% of Afghanistan's rural population. Reduced incomes push people to resort to negative coping mechanisms to acquire basic goods and services. Coping mechanisms include selling animal heads and other productive assets and requesting support from relatives and the local community, further increasing indebtedness. The deterioration of the economy, however, has also weakened these social connections and traditional support networks. Significant livestock loss within a community would further undermine these networks.

The excess loss of livestock is more likely to affect the Kuchi nomads and other seminomadic pastoralists in the provinces of Ghazni, Kabul, Kandahar, and Zabul, as animals are their only source of income. Displacement and the need to move to other areas to ensure better access to resources are likely to lead to land disputes.

As women are a very important part of livestock production, should the risk materialise, women's incomes would significantly decrease, affecting their and their families' access to food, water, health services, and other basic goods and services.



METHODOLOGY

The objective of ACAPS' risk analysis is to enable humanitarian decision makers to understand potential future changes that would likely have humanitarian consequences. Explaining how situations might develop and understanding their impact can support decision makers and responders in planning and preparedness, improving overall response.

This risk analysis is based on the ACAPS Risk Methodology Note. It is the result of a virtual workshop involving 28 participants comprising independent experts on Afghanistan and representatives from 13 different organisations (read more about the ACAPS risk methodology).

ACAPS will provide updates on the risks every three months, taking into consideration the dynamism of the crisis and developments that might change the chain of events or way in which the identified hazard(s) materialise. Every six months, past risks identified will be assessed and the accuracy of the analysis evaluated. ACAPS will conduct a monthly internal monitoring of key risks and provide updates and alerts as risks evolve.

Key principles of risk analysis

Risk analysis requires a solid understanding of the context and an investigation of the interaction of variables that could cause or resist change.

Risk analysis is not an exact science. An event identified as a hazard might not evolve or materialise as anticipated or not have the projected impact. Events or factors (triggers) expected to drive a shift or change in the situation may not occur, or new factors may arise that prevent the projected change or shift from happening.

The probability of a risk does not need to be high to warrant concern. A hazardous event with a low or medium probability of occurring should be a cause of concern for humanitarians if the expected impact is medium, high, or very high.

What is a risk?

The ACAPS risk methodology defines risk as the probability of a hazard or multiple hazards materialising, combined with the estimated impact of such hazards. The associated risk level (low, medium, or high) rises with the hazard's probability of occurring and the severity of its expected impact.

Impact is the predicted overall humanitarian consequence of a hazard materialising. It can be an increase in the number of people needing assistance, the severity of their needs, or

both. The impact is based on exposure to the hazard, the intensity of the hazard, and the population's vulnerability and coping capacity. ACAPS classifies impact on a five-point scale: very low, low, moderate, significant, or major.

Probability is the chance of a hazard materialising. ACAPS assesses probability on a five-point scale: very low, low, medium, high, or very high. A hazardous event estimated to have a 50% probability of occurring should be cause for concern. In some cases, a probability of as low as 25% (a one in four chance of occurrence) may be a concern depending on the hazard's potential humanitarian impact.

In this report, some of the risks represent 'newly emerging crises', and others indicate a potential 'rapid and marked deterioration' in an existing crisis. A steadily deteriorating humanitarian situation that continues at the same rate is considered a trend instead of a risk. This report does not include trends.

LIMITATIONS

Population figures used in this report are currently under review. As a result, the estimations based on population figures are used to give an indicative figure of the number of people exposed to the risk and likely to need additional humanitarian assistance if the risk occurs.

The continued deteriorating trends in Afghanistan make it very difficult to establish if a risk will occur or if a situation will simply gradually deteriorate. Although this analysis follows a specific methodology, risk analysis is not an exact science.

Information gaps limit the analysis. It was particularly challenging to establish the impact of some of the risks, identify the most vulnerable groups, and collect and evaluate available information on the coping strategies of the population and response capacities of humanitarian organisations in specific areas of Afghanistan.

The lack of information on the population's level of resilience and coping strategies made it particularly challenging to establish the impact of the risk associated with a reduction in humanitarian assistance.

All figures provided for the impact of the risks are estimations. As such, they should be treated as indications that help understand the exposure of the population to the risk.

While efforts were made to ensure that all information was up to date at the time of publishing, the rapidity with which the situation deteriorates means significant changes are often observed weekly.