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OFFICE
.....



COVID-19
RESPONSE
VACCINES

2020 UN COUNTRY ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT



AFGHANISTAN
.....

April 2021



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Foreword

The year 2020 was characterized by a number of key developments and historic milestones in Afghanistan. Despite the intense impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and continued violence, the peace process was launched, the Government convened the 2020 Afghanistan Conference with the United Nations (UN) and donor community in Geneva, and a new vision framework was endorsed. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework II (ANPDF-II) was developed by the Government, with strong support from the UN in ensuring its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. A new accountability framework, the Afghanistan Partnership Framework, was also agreed on to ensure all stakeholders were working towards the same national priorities envisioned by the Government of State Building, Peace Building and Market Building.

The COVID-19 pandemic also provided the UN with the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to be agile and flexible by adjusting programming towards rapidly evolving needs. We were able to come out stronger, build better joint programming within the UN and with other partners to support the Government's response planning. The regional impact of the pandemic resulted in record numbers of refugees returning from Pakistan and Iran, requiring swift mobilization of humanitarian entities. This increased the awareness that future programming would need to reflect more intentionally regional potentials and dynamics impacting recovery and sustainable development across boundaries.

Similarly, the gradual unfolding of the peace process highlighted the need for narratives and programming that would advocate for regional cooperation and coordination to rebuild trust and strengthen existing partnerships between Afghanistan and its neighbours. Leveraging peace dividends and focusing on economic development opportunities that would underpin gains became the

focus of a regional outreach initiative jointly championed by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the UN Country Team.

Finally, the implementation of important programmes continued unabated despite the fragile security situation in the subnational regions through the dedicated national and international civil society partners. This was critical to ensure that the people of Afghanistan have access to essential services, and that people-centred and inclusive programming can move forward while the political processes take place.

While 2021 remains full of unknowns, the UN remains steadfast in its commitment to the people of Afghanistan and the delivery of essential support to the Government.



Ramiz Alakbarov

Deputy Special Representative of the
Secretary-General and
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in Afghanistan

UN Country Team



A woman in Bamyān feeds her grandson with fruits for Vitamin C during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Photo: Tahira Fahimi / UN

FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UN-HABITAT, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNITAR, UNMAS, UNODC, UNOPS, UNWOMEN, WFP, WHO

Agencies under the One UN for Afghanistan Framework

Key Development Partners of the UN Development System in the Country

The UN Development System in Afghanistan has a broad range of partners including the Government, international and national civil society, private sector, and international donors. We continued to work closely on the capacity development of national partners to further improve their ability to deliver services, protection and supporting the most vulnerable, and achievement of the SDGs. Our key goal is to support the smooth transition from capacity provision to national ownership.

Our partnership with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank is playing a significant role on off-budget and on-budget contributions to the COVID-19 response and to further the build back better agenda.

National and International civil society partners remained strong. The principles of “do no harm” is front and center, as they deliver in the most difficult parts of the country on behalf of the UN and the Government.

A list of partners is provided in Annex II.



Karima and her husband Khalil, checking the beehives in Qala Safid village of Karokh district in Herat province.

Photo: UNDP Afghanistan

Overview: Thematic areas

When the original UNDAF of 2014 was revised in 2017 at the request of the President programming was reorganized against six thematic areas: Normative; Education; Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods; Health; Return and Reintegration; and Rule of Law. Guided by the UN Country Team and supported by the Programme Management Team (PMT) the six Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) ensured that opportunities for joint programmes/programming, nexus programming, and innovation were leveraged to the degree possible. Each TWG is co-chaired by lead agencies in the specific thematic area.

During the process of adapting to the needs triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, a Social Protection Coordination Group was created to bring together both humanitarian and development partners to address deepening social protection issues arising from the accelerated vulnerability of the population. It is intended that this group will be merged into the Normative TWG once the situation stabilizes.

TWG	Co-Chairs
Normative	OHCHR/ILO
Education	UNICEF/UNESCO
Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods	FAO/WFP
Health	WHO/UNICEF
Return and Reintegration	UNHCR/IOM
Rule of Law	UNODC/UNDP

The UNCT also provides strategic direction to the Programme Management Team (PMT) on programmatic areas, Operations Management Team (OMT) on efficiencies, and the UN Communications Group on common messaging and advocacy, as well as through other thematic

working groups/mechanisms, such as: Gender; Data for Development (D4D); the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA); and the Legal Identify and Civil Registration.

Progress was made advancing work of the Youth and Disability working groups, but more needs to be done to formally incorporate all agencies across the system. The Humanitarian Country Team has taken a lead in creating the disability inclusion working group, which now includes UNCT members and civil society representatives. Protection Cluster has a group for disability inclusion and the protection of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), but it was exclusively focused on humanitarian programming in 2020. Therefore, it is intended to have sub working groups within the PMT and OMT that will address the programmatic and operational aspects respectively, to ensure that the UN is inclusive both in its internal systems and its programming.

Similarly, youth will be part of the PMT, at least initially, to avoid siloed working groups.



Girls in education in a rural area of Afghanistan.

Photo: UNHCR Afghanistan

Chapter 1: Key developments in the country and the regional context

The year 2020 was a challenging year for Afghanistan. The security situation remained precarious and the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted vulnerabilities of the Afghan population and created additional humanitarian and development challenges, many with regional implications. Against this backdrop the promise of peace has emerged with the launch of the inter-Afghan negotiations process in Doha.

The Government of Afghanistan, the Government of Finland and the United Nations co-convened the November 2020 Afghanistan Conference in Geneva, which was the last in the series of conferences agreed to under the Afghanistan “transformation decade 2015- 2024”. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework II (ANPDF-II) was developed by the Government, with strong support from the UN and donor community. A distinct feature of the conference was the adoption of the Afghanistan Partnership Framework (APF), with a strong donor conditionality component. This reflects a need to focus on achievement of tangible and measurable results, further increasing efficiency and accountability and ensuing compliance with international normative and human rights frameworks. Both ANPDF II and APF are developed in strong alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the UN system but also provided an opportunity to demonstrate value add of the collective action in facing adversity. UN system’s health, humanitarian and development actors have joined forces in mobilizing funds, medical supplies and equipment working across all regions of the country, reaching most vulnerable communities. This work was done in close cooperation and with support of multi-lateral

institutions, World Bank and Asian development Bank.

In 2020 the pandemic drove refugees from Pakistan and Iran to return to Afghanistan in record numbers. This required swift mobilization of humanitarian entities on both sides of the borders and raised awareness of the need for future programming to better reflect the regional dynamic.

In 2020 Afghanistan continued to face a food insecurity crisis compounded by the current La Nina weather phenomenon, which created dry conditions for the year 2021. As a result, Afghanistan had the second highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world and nearly half of all children under-five are expected to continue to face acute malnutrition in 2021.

In 2020, humanitarians delivered assistance in all of Afghanistan’s 401 districts, despite a significant increase in the number of access incidents they are facing. Continued focus on safeguarding humanitarian space remained critical. Additional attention had to be provided to enable the required space for civil society and non-governmental organizations to maintain delivery of essential goods and services.

Afghanistan enters 2021 with uncertainty associated with the impact of the withdrawal of international military forces and lack of clarity on the outcomes of the on-going peace negotiations. In this environment the UN will continue to provide essential lifesaving humanitarian and development assistance to safeguard progress which has been made in development of national institutions and sustaining livelihoods.

2020 Key development trends and emerging issues

In general, all trends entering 2020 were negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which created additional barriers to provide humanitarian and development assistance, deliver essential services and protect human rights. UNCT had to mobilize and innovate to secure gains already made towards Agenda 2030 and to respond to new challenges. Some of the key trends are summarised below:

Civilians Killed and Injured, 2009-2020

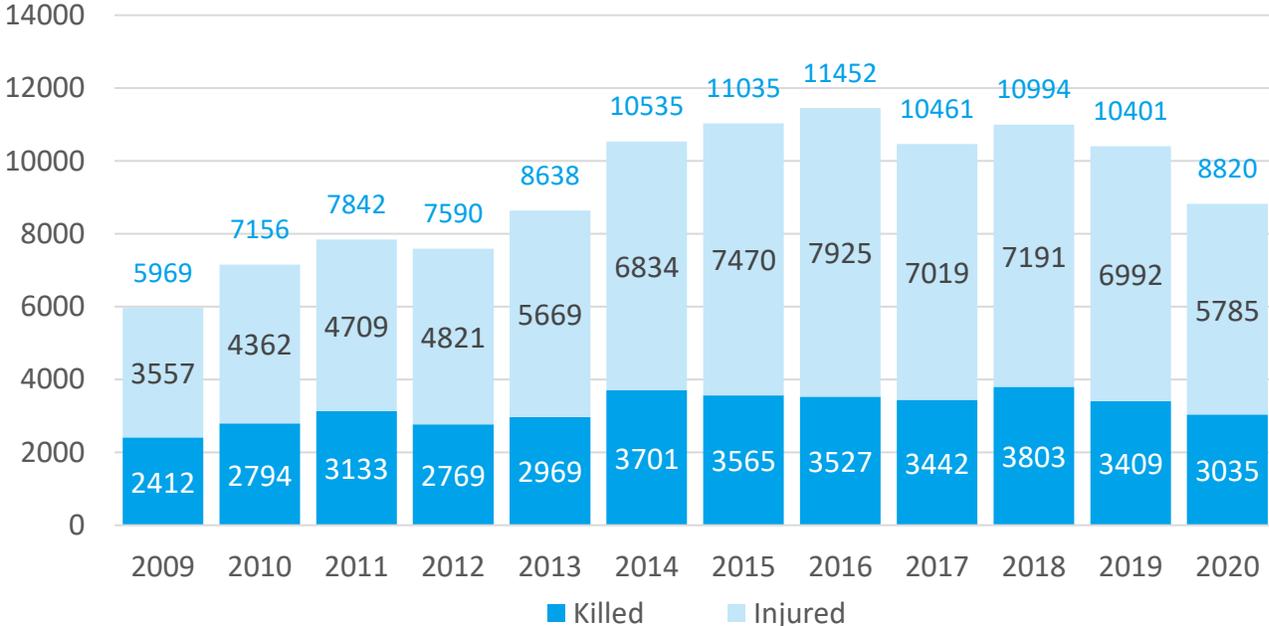
The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Human Rights Services/OHCHR’s *Afghanistan Protection of Civilians Report* noted a 15 per cent reduction in casualties (killed and injured) in 2020 in comparison to 2019, and the lowest number since 2013.

The last three months of 2020 saw a 45 per cent increase in civilian casualties in comparison to the same period in 2019 however, arising from the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and targeted killings. Of further concern is the worrying increases in civilians harmed from tactics aimed at creating fear and instability in order to potentially disrupt the peace process.

Population Growth and Youth “Bulge”

With an estimated 63 per cent of its population under the age of 25, Afghanistan is one of the youngest populations in the world. The last census in Afghanistan was conducted in 1979 and population estimates vary.

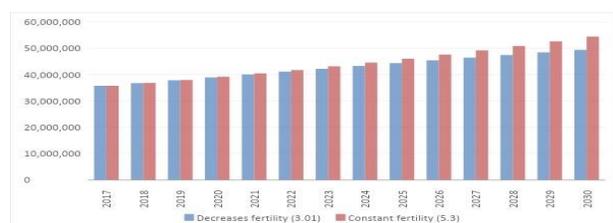
Figure 1.1. Number of civilians killed and injured, 2009–2020



Source: Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Annual Report 2020

According to UNFPA/NSIA estimates, the population will reach 40.4 million in 2021. The estimate for the total fertility rate remains high at 5.3 children per woman. The rapid population growth rate has put pressure on limited economic and environmental resources.

Figure 1.2 Total population, 2017–2030 (millions)

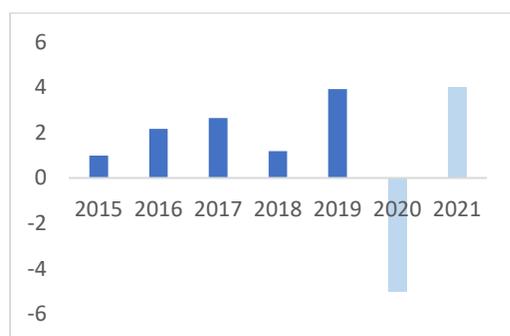


Source: UNFPA/NSIA Projection 2020

Economic Recovery

Concurrently, the economic growth rate has been sluggish in recent years and has not kept pace with population growth. The pandemic created a sharp 5 per cent contraction of the economy, and while the economy could recover in 2021, it remains highly dependent on climatic factors. The low growth rate for 2018 was largely attributable to drought, and patterns of rainfall indicate that another drought is likely in 2021.

Figure 1.3 GDP growth rates, 2015–2021 (per cent)



Source: World Economic Outlook.

Note: The growth rate is estimated for 2020 and projected for 2021.

Ranked 173rd out of 191 economies in the 2020 World Bank Doing Business Index, Afghanistan

scored particularly badly in key areas essential to market-building and state building.

Table 1.1 The ranking of Afghanistan in Doing Business Index, 2020

Starting a Business	Dealing with Construction Permits	Getting Electricity	Registering Property	Getting Credit
52	183	173	186	104
Protecting Minority Investors	Paying Taxes	Trading across Borders	Enforcing Contracts	Resolving Insolvency
140	178	177	181	76

Source: Adapted from the World Bank Doing Business (www.doingbusiness.org).

It is estimated that in 2021:

- 37.6 million people will be living on less than \$2 a day.
- 30.5 million people will need of social assistance responding to poverty.
- 18.4 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance responding to acute needs.

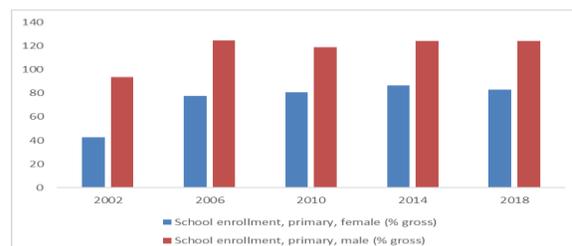
Education

Despite progress made over the past two decades, gender inequality persists. This is evident in school enrolment rates, in which girls' enrolment has stalled since the early 2010s. There are increasing concerns that the rates may fall further as a result of COVID-19 and other constraints, particularly in Taliban controlled areas.

Figure 1.4 Primary school enrolment rates (per cent) by gender - 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018

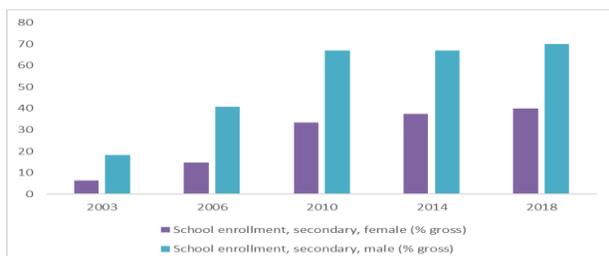
Source: World Economic Outlook.

Note: The growth rate is estimated for 2020 and projected for 2021.



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed from the World Development Indicators Database

Figure 1.5 Secondary school enrolment rates (per cent) by gender - 2003, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018

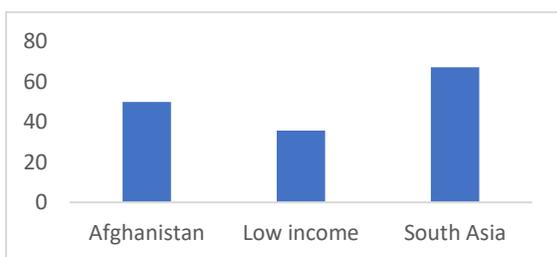


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, accessed from the World Development Indicators Database

Health

As was the case globally, the impact of COVID-19 not only stretched the health care system beyond its capacity, but it also put increasing numbers of people at greater risk as they faced deepened food insecurity due to lockdowns and lack of access to livelihood opportunities. Yet at the same time, it provided a focus for Government and partners alike to strengthen critical care services at all levels and train the necessary cadre of technicians and specialists to treat and care for the population. Infrastructure, medical equipment and supplies, training materials and awareness raising were provided in response to the pandemic.

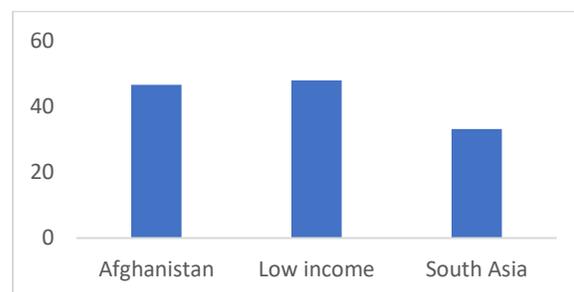
Figure 1.6 Current health expenditure per capita, Afghanistan, low-income countries and South Asia, 2018. (current USD)



Source: World Development Indicators Database

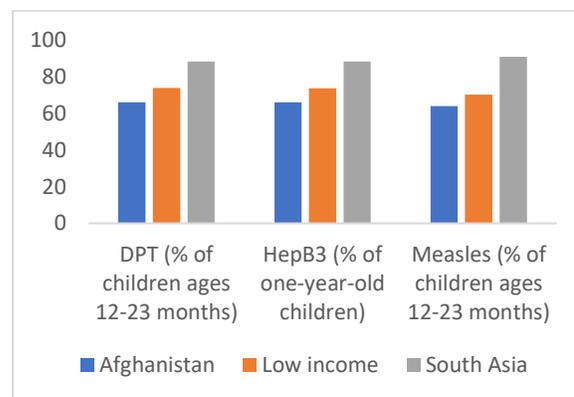
However, lockdowns and other impediments threatened the welfare and lives of pregnant women, victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV), and girls at risk of early childhood marriage, as the pandemic pushed families into negative coping mechanisms and harmful practices.

Figure 1.7 Infant mortality rate, Afghanistan, low-income countries, and South Asia, 2019 (per 1,000 live births)



Source: World Development Indicators Database

Figure 1.8 Immunization rates for DPT, HepB3 and measles, Afghanistan, low-income countries, and South Asia, 2019 (per cent)



Source: World Development Indicators Database

Chapter 2: UN development system support to national development priorities through the One UN for Afghanistan Framework

2.1. Overview of Thematic Area Results

In order to frame the results, it is important to consider the UN's response to COVID-19, which was more than an emergency response, but rather an integrated response achieved by structuring humanitarian and development work in a complementary and integrated fashion as possible within the constraints present.

The socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

The pandemic impacted beyond the health and safety of the population. Severe socio-economic repercussions resulted from border closures and lockdown measures that disrupted economic activities. The global pandemic also affected Afghan migrant workers abroad, resulting in reduced remittance and increased returnees. The economy, which had been expected to grow by about 3 per cent prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, is estimated to have contracted by 5 per cent in 2020. The incidence of poverty may have reached over 70 per cent, rising from 55 per cent before the pandemic. Inflows of remittances to Afghanistan are estimated to have contracted by 5 per cent in 2020. Annual government revenues fell by 18 per cent.

Varying degrees of lockdown measures were introduced in major urban centres from March to June 2020. The movement restrictions meant that those who rely on daily earnings or wages (e.g. retailers, especially street vendors, and day labourers) no longer had legal means of earning income. In rural areas, farmers and herders faced difficulty in accessing seasonal agricultural inputs and markets during the crucial months of spring and

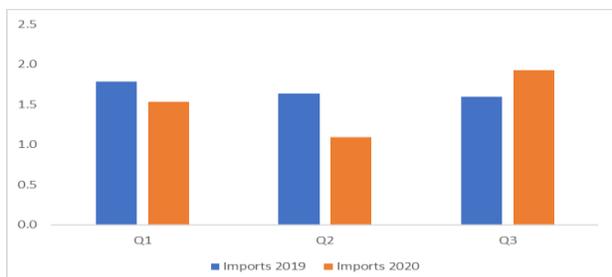
summer 2020. The worst affected households exhausted their savings and consumed seeds stocked for the next planting season. Sale of vegetables and fruits was hindered due to movement restrictions, especially border closures. Movement restrictions also affected the transhumance of Kuchi pastoralists, with some Kuchis unable to reach their traditional grazing areas or to access markets. All of this occurred against a backdrop of significant cost increases.

Partly as a result of the pandemic, 2020 saw the highest number of undocumented returnees with 865,793 crossing the country's borders. The vast majority (859,092) returned from Iran driven by the COVID-19 outbreak and related restrictions, limited access to health care and deteriorating economic circumstances. Returnees from Iran are often short-term migrants, typically working age men who have been sent to Iran for seasonal work as a family coping strategy. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable, including returnees and internally displaced people.

Border closures resulted in rising prices of food items, exacerbating the economic hardship for the poorest. Imports account for about one third of wheat and rice consumed in Afghanistan. Almost all sugar and palm oil are imported. Following the border closures from April to June, the value of Afghan imports fell by one third in value compared to the same period in 2019 (figure 1), and food prices spiked. Wheat prices rose by about 15 per cent. Reflecting higher dependence on imports, the prices of cooking oil and sugar saw even greater increases. Although border crossings were open by July and the trade volume in the third quarter recovered, the rise in food prices persisted. As a

result, almost half of children in Afghanistan are thought to be suffering from malnutrition.

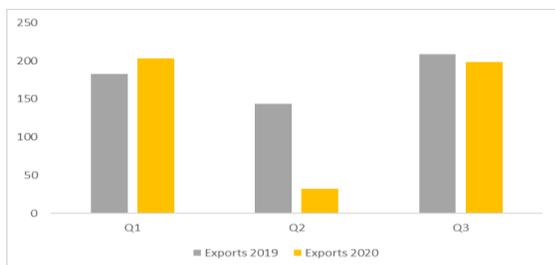
Figure 2.1 Imports to Afghanistan, 2020 Q1–Q3 (Billions of US dollars)



Source: NSIA website (<https://nsia.gov.af>).

Border closures also disrupted Afghan industries, especially those that require imported inputs. In May 2020, the Chamber of Mines and Commerce reported that 40 percent of factories in the country had ceased production due to a lack of raw materials and weak demand. Exports lost three quarters of their value in comparison to 2019.

Figure 2.2 Exports from Afghanistan, 2020 Q1–Q3 (Millions of dollars)



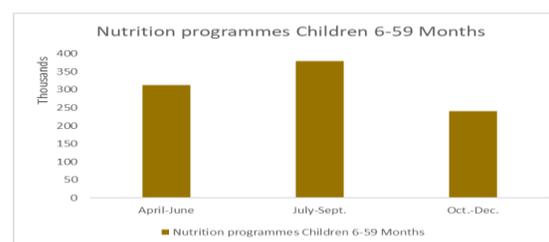
Source: NSIA website (<https://nsia.gov.af>).

COVID-19 had a particularly pronounced impact on women generally and female headed households. They lost income-generating opportunities as home and healthcare demands increased. Their access to essential services such as healthcare and protection was further reduced. Women suffered a high occurrence of depression (also affecting men), aggravated by reportedly increasing domestic violence.

The One UN Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19

The UN system in Afghanistan organized its socio-economic response to COVID-19 around five pillars. **The first pillar** is protecting health services at risk of being overwhelmed by the COVID-19 outbreak so that essential (non-Covid-19 related) health services continued to be provided. At the height of the pandemic (April–June 2020), regular vaccination programmes continued, providing vaccines to over 340,000 people. In the same period, UN agencies ensured that over three million women had access to essential maternal health interventions. Over 130,000 community health workers were supported to maintain essential services through the provision of PPE and RCCE materials. In response to the rising price and shortage of food, UN agencies provided nutritional programming targeting children aged 6-59 months. At the height of the pandemic, over 300,000 severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admissions were supported by the UN (figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 The number of children admitted for severe acute malnutrition supported by the UN, April–December 2020

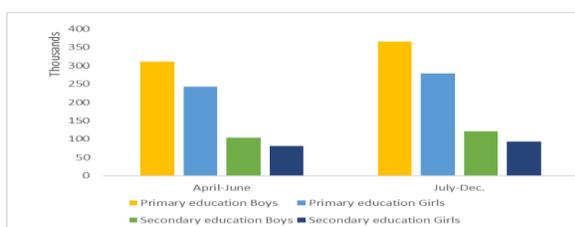


Source: Afghanistan’s Nutrition Online Database and WFP Cooperating Partner monthly reports.

The second pillar of the UN’s socio-economic response aims to ensure the population continues to have access to social services and social protection. Over 640,000 people were reached with critical WASH supplies over April–June 2020. UN agencies run social protection schemes and services, such as cash transfer programmes, food nutrition schemes and psychosocial support services. The number of beneficiaries expanded from over 370,000 in April–June to 460,000 in July–September, and then over 910,000 in October–December. UN education entities provided support

for distance/home-based learning, teacher training, modifying curricula and formulating training modules to respond to school closures. The coverage of the programme expanded from 738,000 in the second quarter to 860,000 (figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Number of children supported with distance/home-based learning



Source: Education in Emergencies Working Group Dashboard.

During school closure or partial re-opening, children were provided with take-home rations as an alternative to school feeding programmes, with over 124,000 children benefitting from this support from April to June.

The third pillar focuses on economic response and recovery. In Afghanistan, movement restrictions and border closures disrupted food supply chains. To mitigate against the problem, the UN provided food supply protection regimes to improve protective measures for food supply workers and to address food supply bottlenecks. Over 200,000 people benefited in April-June 2020.

In the fourth pillar, the UN aimed to assist the macroeconomic response to the pandemic. In Afghanistan, UN agencies conducted assessments of the socio-economic impacts focusing on issues such as poverty, women and agriculture.

The fifth pillar of the UN's response aims to support ongoing social dialogue and democratic engagement to maintain social cohesion and strengthen community resilience. Several UN agencies run projects to capacitate community-based organizations to prevent and remedy human rights abuses and ensure longer-term recovery. This includes working closely with civil society partners to respond to their emerging needs related to the COVID-19 crisis through technical and financial

support. Similarly, assistance was provided to nearly 70 community-based organizations focusing on livelihoods support and basic services delivery in each quarter in 2020, as well as creating sub-national social dialogue spaces.

This was accomplished through two separate yet complementary channels of support to the Government's response plan to assist people in need.

The first was the creation of an emergency One UN Health Response Plan, which focused on the urgent need for containment and treatment through the construction and equipping of testing laboratories across the country, training technicians and frontline workers in treatment as well as protection, and procuring vital supplies for the Government to distribute through the health system.

The second channel was to re-orient the on-going work of the UN system in Afghanistan to respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19 pandemic and to reallocate resources where possible to strengthen the response plans. UNCT Thematic Working Groups focused on re-adjusting existing plans and as a result, approximately \$100 million was leveraged to support the response. Focus was made on maintaining essential services, adapting modalities that would allow for essential services to continue (education for example), and to provide support to ensuring that the most vulnerable did not fall deeper into crisis.

In June, the revised Humanitarian Response Plan was characterised by having a new strategic objective: responding to people in need of social protection. This was the result of discussions between development and humanitarian actors as how best to address increasing protection needs which emerged across humanitarian and development sectors.

Commitment to leave no one behind

As Afghanistan faced yet another crisis that put already-vulnerable populations at increased risk of deepened poverty, marginalisation, and inequality, the UNCT strove to leverage the new work modalities of the pandemic to extend its reach to

those left furthest behind. This included increased virtual outreach, identification of support that would minimise physical interaction or the need to convene, and programmatic options with the furthest reach such as cash vouchers. Similarly, mobilising multi-purpose teams reduced the need for repeated engagement such as polio teams conducting COVID-19 surveillance and monitoring.

With the pandemic also came greater risk for women and girls of becoming victims of GBV. Therefore, services that benefited the health and welfare of women and girls were prioritised for continuation to the extent possible.

2.2. Thematic area outcomes, and outputs

As mentioned earlier, there are six thematic working groups (TWGs) for the implementation of the One UN Framework.

2.2.1. Normative Working Group

Contributing UN Agencies: IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNMAS and UN Women.¹

Interventions by the UN in Afghanistan in 2020 on International Norms and Standards focused on supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its adoption and observance of international laws, obligations and commitments. This was achieved through support for continued compliance with its treaty obligations, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the protection, promotion and fulfilment of the rights of all persons in Afghanistan, including State reporting to UN human rights and other charter and treaty bodies; harmonization of national laws, policies and practices with treaty obligations and commitments, as well as multilateral agreements and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); development and/or

strengthening of inter-sectoral mechanisms that delivers on national laws, policies and programmes, in line with international commitments; and robust data collation and analysis, statistics management and dissemination – in line with international standards – that informs evidence-based decision-making across all sectors, for the achievement of the Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals (A-SDGs).

The UN's support in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the A-SDGs, are critical to Afghanistan's achievement of SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 13 (Climate Action), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships), as well the Afghanistan National Priority Programmes (NPPs) on the Citizen's Charter, Women's Economic Empowerment, National Justice and Judicial Reform, and Effective Governance, and the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) pertaining to Social Capital and Nation Building, and on Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion.

Outputs achieved

Outcome 1: The internationally recognized human rights of women and men, girls and boys in Afghanistan are respected, protected, and fulfilled through compliance with international obligations, harmonization of national legislation and regular public reporting.

An enabling environment for the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the rights of all persons in Afghanistan, as per the Constitution and domestic laws of the country, as well as Afghanistan's obligations and commitments under international law, remains a fundamental priority for the Government and people of Afghanistan. In support of its treaty reporting obligations, with technical support from the UN in Afghanistan, the

¹ National partners included: Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Economy, Attorney-General's Office, Ministry of Information and Culture, Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry for Martyrs

and Disability Affairs, Directorate of Mine Action, National Environment Protection Agency of Afghanistan, National Statistics and Information Authority, Administrative Office of the President, and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Non-Governmental Organizations also contributed to the results outlined in this section.

Government coordinated and submitted its State report on Optional Protocol 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), as well as drafted the State report on Optional Protocol 2 on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) to the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Technical advice was also provided to the Government in the drafting of the State's Eighth Report on the Implementation of Action Plan between the Government and the UN on the use and recruitment of children in armed groups and forces submitted in 2020.

The UN in Afghanistan supported the Afghan High Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (TIP Commission) to establish its National Referral Mechanism (NRM), but the roll-out was slowed by the combination of COVID-19, the time taken to appoint Ministers, and the process of securing all High Commission member's agreement on their Terms of Reference in the NRM. A national database was rolled out as a pilot programme in nine provinces, but the uptake was impacted by shifting priorities due to COVID-19.

Supported by the UN in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and non-governmental stakeholders – separately and together – discussed and mobilized for the protection of civic spaces, to inform and enable ongoing dialogue with the Government on social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights issues, as well as on the human rights impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strengthening inter-sectoral mechanisms' and institutions' policy and programme delivery, evidence-based advocacy by the UN and Afghan stakeholders contributed to an overall reduction in civilian casualties in comparison to 2019 and a reduction in credible allegations of torture and ill-

treatment by security-related detainees. This advocacy also contributed to the continued implementation of the Roadmap to Compliance on Children and Armed Conflict,² particularly the recruitment and use of children in units of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces. Similar evidence-based advocacy and technical assistance by the UN in Afghanistan facilitated the development by the Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC)³ of the National Mine Action Strategic Plan (NMA SP), 2021 – 2025 and the establishment of a dedicated chemical unit in the National Environmental Protection Agency.

Explosive remnants of war (ERW) are the second-leading cause of civilian casualties after improvised mines. Over 400 requests for urgent mine action tasks were received through the Awaaz Afghanistan mine action hotline⁴ in 2020. The UN in Afghanistan funded quick response teams to respond to urgent mine action requests, removing spot ERW, conducting surveys of newly contaminated areas and providing explosive ordnance risk education. With its partners, the UN in Afghanistan assisted in the removal of over 1,200 explosive ordnance and cleared 14.07 square kilometres of contaminated land, releasing it back to communities for productive use.

Outcome 2: The Government of Afghanistan shapes national policies and programmes observing international norms and standards, including multilateral agreements and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

In coordination with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the UN in Afghanistan supported the Government's ongoing review and consultation of domestic laws and policies to ensure alignment with Afghanistan's international treaty obligations and commitments. Examples

² In 2014, the government's Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict endorsed a 15-point roadmap toward compliance with the action plan, drafted jointly by the Afghan Government and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and UNAMA.

³ The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) comes under the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority. The Mine Action Program of Afghanistan is led by DMAC.

⁴ It is a toll-free and confidential humanitarian helpline connecting Afghans (IDPs, returnees) and refugees affected by conflict and natural disaster with information on assistance. Anyone with access to a mobile phone in Afghanistan can call for free to access information on, and register feedback about, the humanitarian response.

include the draft Labour Law that is before Parliament, the draft Family Law, the draft Conciliation of Civil Disputes Law and the Elimination of Violence against Women Law, as well as certain provisions of the Penal Code. On policy initiatives, the UN in Afghanistan supported the development of an Action Plan addressing Gender-Based Violence in Schools by the Ministry of Education (endorsed and implemented in 2020); a Policy on Safeguarding Rights and Protection of Children in contact with the law by the Ministry of Interior Affairs (endorsed in November 2020); a common defence sector policy on Protection of Children in Defence and Security Sector developed by the National Security Council (pending approval); and a National Disability and Inclusion Strategy (NDIS) by the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD) aimed at guiding future Government assistance to disabled persons. The DMAC developed new Afghanistan Mine Action Standards (AMAS) related to Improvised Mine Clearance and Planning and Prioritization, and revised two standards related to quality management, training, and qualification, in alignment with international standards and upholding the quality and safety of mine action activities in Afghanistan. In response to the economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN in Afghanistan also supported the Government-Employers'-Workers' Tripartite inclusion of a new Outcome on Social Protection in the Afghanistan Decent Work Country Programme.

The UN in Afghanistan supported the Government's mainstreaming of the A-SDGs into national development policies and projects, as well as mainstreaming multisectoral gender considerations across A-SDG-related data collection and analysis through tailored technical advice and capacity building on gender-specific data collection.

In support of SDG 11.3 on inclusive and sustainable urbanization, the UN in Afghanistan provided technical support to Government partners to improve municipal governance, land management and revenue collection. Six operational manuals for the *City for All* programme were produced regarding street addressing, municipality revenue generation cycle, strategic urban action planning, business

licensing, land and property valuation, and occupancy certificate procedures.

Through training and technical support to Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), the UN in Afghanistan facilitated Afghanistan's implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) through the provision of technical assistance regarding administrative obligations of ratified Conventions (UNCBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, CITES, Ozone Treaties), ranging from project proposal development and legal harmonization to reporting. An MEA strategy and action plan was finalized, an MEA handbook developed, the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report (1990-2017) developed, and a Biennial Update Report was submitted to the UNFCCC.

With the aim of protecting cultural heritage and promoting culture for the sustainable development of Afghanistan, work was commenced on the design of the Management Plan for the Bamiyan Valley. This work is ongoing, with the intention that local communities will benefit from the creation of cultural public spaces and services that engender an inclusive approach to cultural sites, create employment opportunities and contribute to developing sustainable tourism in Afghanistan.

The UN in Afghanistan also supported the Government's continued integration, preservation, and management of Physical Cultural Resources, building on earlier work and achievements.

Outcome 3: Robust data/information and statistics management, in line with international standards, informs evidence-based decision-making across all sectors.

To strengthen the Government's capacity to collect, analyse and disseminate statistics and data, as per international standards, the UN in Afghanistan supported institutional capacity building initiatives of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Office (CRVSO) and the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), and the establishment of a Survey Control Room (SCR) with state-of-the-art technologies in the NSIA. It is an inclusive

surveillance room monitoring all survey-related activities, including the management of technical aspects of surveys and its troubleshooting. The established SCR has the infrastructure and capability to monitor surveys in multiple, mixed, and sequential modes, including in-person, telephone, and text messaging data collection methods.

For the enhancement of evidence-based decision-making across all sectors in 2020, including in the coordination of data collection around an A-SDG data repository, the UN in Afghanistan supported surveys on: Annual Family Planning Expenditure in 2019; Income, Expenditure and Labour for 2019/2020 and the preliminary estimates of multidimensional poverty; the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on women and children (the first round of a rapid assessment); and the Nexus of Economic Development and Safety and Security, conducted in eight target cities, covering 4,126 households. This was in addition to ongoing support to the Government in the implementation of the National Population Policy, as per its sustainable development priorities for poverty alleviation and improvement in the quality of life of all Afghans.

Key Challenges

Impediments to effective coordination between the national and sub-national levels in the implementation of domestic laws and policies remains a fundamental challenge, particularly in relation to:

- i) Resource mobilization from central Government to sub-national levels;
- ii) Unreliable electricity supply and internet connectivity; and
- iii) Turnover in the civil service and State institutions.

Promise to leave no one behind

The non-discriminatory implementation of domestic laws and policies is a first step towards ensuring equality of opportunity and access to all

rights-holders and a fundamental factor to leaving no one behind. This requires proper, adequate, and sustainable resourcing of law and policy implementation so all Afghans have equal access to basic service delivery, and no one is left behind.

2.2.2. Education Working Group

Contributing UN Agencies: UNICEF, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNDP, WFP, UNOPS and UNIDO⁵

In line with the Human Capital NPP under ANPDF and SDGs 4 and 5, the Education Thematic Working Group made progress in 2020 despite the situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, a national curriculum framework for general education and literacy was developed; syllabi for more than half of the general education subjects were developed and quality assured; the entrepreneurship curriculum for grades 10-12 was developed and piloting started; national policy frameworks for out-of-school children, girls' education and early childhood education were developed; 61,025 students were educated through community-based education (CBE) and 7,050 youth and adults received literacy education; 157,342 children benefited from Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes; 188,971 students received daily nutrition (snacks), 62,672 girls received take home rations, and parents/caregivers of 2,699 secondary school female students received direct cash incentives; 1,896 teachers/principals/academic supervisors (mostly female) were trained in different areas related to quality education; 17,500 educational packages on improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnances were procured; 63 National Technical Advisors (NTAs)/extenders supported in the MoE; 86 provincial education officers were trained in educational planning; and technical support on the MoE reform and structure was provided.

Key Challenges

Despite the significant role played by the Education Thematic Working Group in the development and

⁵ National partners included: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence and

Technical, Vocational, and Educational Training (TVET) Authority.

implementation of education policies and strategic plans, the Working Group encountered challenges:

- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown on school closure and programme implementation.
- Movement limitations resulting from increased insecurity across the country; and
- Delays due to political instability and rapid changes in the Ministry of Education's leadership.

Promise to leave no one behind

The primary objective of the Education Thematic Working Group is to prioritize those children left behind: out-of-school children, particularly girls. The displaced, returnees, refugees and children in hard-to-reach areas are the targets of the CBE and EiE programmes. COVID-19 has shifted donors' attention from development to emergency responses, resulting in several educational activities remaining unfunded.

Although 2020 has been a challenging year due to school closures, many children benefitted from different programmes. The Education Thematic Working Group works closely with the National Statistics and Information Agency (NSIA) to strengthen their capacity for education information management, and vulnerability assessment analysis and mapping. In 2021, the Education Thematic Working Group intends to strengthen joint programming and strategic partnerships to optimize available resources for more effective and wide reach.

2.2.3. Food Security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods (FSNL) Working Group

Contributing UN Agencies: WFP, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, UNEP, IOM, UNODC, UNOPS, IFAD⁶

Many planned development-facing activities were either reduced, suspended, or delayed until 2021.

⁶ National partners included: Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), National Water

However, the Working Group members strongly advocated for planned access for farmers to their fields to preclude losing both the 2020 planting and harvesting seasons, which would have deepened food insecurity immeasurably.

Outcome 3.1 Food insecure populations, including crisis-affected people, have improved access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round

One of the critical negative impacts of the pandemic were lockdowns, which prevented daily laborers and farmers from their sources of livelihood and food. While the Government responded by launching food distributions, people were still forced to risk their own and their family's health because of the need to leave home in search of any source of possible income. On the positive side, the UN's support ensured that 52 in-patient clinics were strengthened in the management of in-patient severe acute malnutrition (IPD-SAM).

Outcome 3.2: Vulnerable groups, in particular children under five years, adolescent girls, and women of reproductive age, have improved nutritional status

No Nutrition Surveys was conducted to measure the prevalence of stunting. National Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) survey, national anaemia, and national Minimum Acceptable Diet for children age 6-23 months surveys also were not conducted all due to access constraints related to COVID-19.

Concurrently, coverage was also low due to increased needs during 2020 and insufficient resources. Actual distribution under the stunting prevention programme could not take place in 2020 due to delays resulting from COVID-19 and preparatory work in relation.

Nutritious school snacks or take-home rations were provided to 188,971 primary school children, while oil take-home rations or cash was provided to 62,672 secondary school girls. These initiatives

Affairs Regulation Authority (NWARA), National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), Afghanistan Meteorological Department (AMD), and Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA).

both encouraged girls to attend school and ensured that nutritional supplementation was delivered to them and their families.

Outcome 3.3: Small-scale subsistence farmers, including women, nomads, and pastoralists have improved sustainable crop and livestock production and productivity and increased access to markets

Notable key results include the rehabilitation of cold storage facilities and the Mallan and Baharestan Roads. This allowed to improve agriculture value chains and economic growth in Herat City and the surrounding province. Dairy industry development to improve production, productivity and animal health reached 10,947 people against the 2020 target of 7,000.

UN partners also exceeded the target for 2020 regarding the establishment of fodder seed, crop and demonstration plots with the provision of extension services and artificial insemination to improve animal breeding, reaching 10,002 beneficiaries against a target of 7,000. Additionally, the Afghanistan Food Safety and Nutrition Agenda (AFSeN-A) Secretariat received ongoing technical and financial support from the UN in Afghanistan.

Outcome 3.4: Rural communities and authorities have strengthened capacity to adapt to and mitigate climate change and increased resilience to cope, prevent and recover from climate-related and other natural disasters

All planned activities in 2020 were delayed by COVID-19 and most are slated to continue in 2021. Capacity building for an Early Warning System was supported however, through the provision of indirect financial support.

Outcome 3.5: People have improved private sector-led opportunities for income, employment, and trade, including through value-added activities and value chains

Given the nature of work anticipated under this outcome, COVID-19 made it impossible to undertake most of the planned activities, as they required in-person interactions.

Key Challenges

COVID-19 created significant population movements across borders as well as within the territory of Afghanistan. The prospect of drought on top of COVID-19 will be a significant challenge for Afghanistan in 2021.

Promise to leave no one behind

Working with those most food insecure was a priority during 2020, as COVID-19 pushed those already on the brink into deeper poverty and risk. The UN provided support to farmers to harvest and plant crops despite lockdowns, and worked with other vulnerable populations such as IDPs, returnees and refugees, who often lack access to any livelihood opportunities.

2.2.4. Health Working Group

Contributing Agencies: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UNOPS and UNODC⁷

In addition to supporting the Government's COVID-19 response, the Health Working Group was also able to provide continuing support to essential health services, including vaccinations and support to healthcare workers and institutions. The UN's support, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the A-SDGs, is contributing to Afghanistan's achievement of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) as well the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) priorities pertaining to Social Capital and Nation Building, and on Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion.

Outcome 4.1: Health Systems: Strengthened, expanded, and sustained health system with well-functioning institutions, focusing on improving public perception of the health sector, national and local capacity for effective health planning, human

⁷ National partners included: Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Higher Education and Afghanistan Medical Council

resources, health information, health regulation and practices, diagnostic capacity of the health facilities, access and quality of health services, health financing mechanisms and increased domestic and international resource allocation for health

As the country faced the pandemic, resources and attention were diverted to supporting the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) in its response to COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic reduced the utilization of essential health services in the first two quarters of 2020 significantly. However, the pandemic also created opportunities to strengthen the existing health system by providing support to laboratory testing, hospital care and capacity building.

The UN in Afghanistan assisted the MoPH in establishing 23 COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) laboratories across the country. In addition, personal protection equipment (PPE), oxygen concentrators and other required medical equipment and COVID-19 related supplies were provided to the MoPH. Over 6,000 health care providers were trained on COVID-19 case management, intensive care unit (ICU) care, nursing care and infection prevention across the country. Continued support was provided to COVID-19 surveillance across the country with a special focus on points of entry to the country.

With a target of 57,078 doses of free anti TB drugs, drugs for the treatment of Plasmodium Falciparum Malaria, Antiretrovirals and long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets for the prevention of malaria, the UN in Afghanistan delivered 91,876 doses - nearly doubling its the targeted amount.

At the same time, the UN in Afghanistan and its partners provided continuous support to the MoPH's risk communication campaigns and the development of the National Health Policy for 2021 – 2030, and a strategy paper on the continuation of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN procured and distributed millions of necessary standard vaccine doses in support of the Government's health programmes. However, 10 per cent of Afghanistan's population live beyond the coverage of the national Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) programme, in so-called "White"

areas, with limited or no access to essential health services.

Outcome 4.2: RMNCAH: Improved access to and utilization of high quality reproductive (including family planning), maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) preventive and curative services.

As the pandemic surged, there remained a need to ensure basic health services, particularly for women and youth, continued to be accessible and delivered. To that end, the UN team provided both training and services across the country.

The UN supported public-private partnerships between the MOPH and 50 private health facilities to improve access of women to family planning services by providing birth control methods including pills, intra-uterine devices (IUDs), condoms, and implants in accordance with MOUs for free delivery of family planning services. In addition, 172 Family Health Houses (FHH) were active and provided essential lifesaving reproductive, maternal, and child health services to an estimated 430,000 clients from the "furthest behind" population living in underserved areas in nine provinces, resulting in 11,573 skilled birth attendance. The midwifery and youth HelpLine responded to 12,640 and 211,294 calls from midwives/female health workers and youth respectively. 37 Family Protection Centres (FPCs) were active in 26 provinces, providing medical, psychosocial, and referral services to 25,289 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors.

Around 300,000 Afghan returnees from Iran and Pakistan, IDPs, and host communities were reached with sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV services at the border with Pakistan and Iran as well as in the provinces.

Support was also extended to the development of national guidelines on care for pregnant women, intrapartum and postpartum care, new-born care, breastfeeding, and family planning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, support was provided for the development and revision of national guidelines on adolescent health friendly services; preconception

care; and basic emergency obstetrics and new-born care. Furthermore, the UN also supported a pilot project in 25 health facilities in Herat and Kabul provinces on postpartum and post-abortion family planning using long-acting reversible contraceptive methods.

Outcome 4.3: Polio Eradication and Immunization: 90% coverage with all basic antigens at the national level and interrupt poliovirus transmission with certification standard surveillance

Supplementary Immunization Activities (SIAs) were conducted in 2020, but from March – July no campaigns were possible due to COVID-19. There were twin outbreaks of virus types WPV1 and cVDPV2, and a targeted vaccination campaign was undertaken. However, high-level discussions were needed to ensure access to certain parts of the country, as part of continuing advocacy for humanitarian corridors and protection for humanitarian actors to be able to deliver services safely and equitably.

Complementary vaccination activities (Permanent Transit Teams, Cross Border Teams, International Health Regulation and Returnee Vaccination Teams) resumed from October 2020 onwards.

Surveillance continued, with the entire surveillance network trained on COVID-19 to enable polio vaccination teams to support the COVID-19 response and reporting on suspected cases detected during active case search in health facilities.

Against the target of 122,234,330 doses, 94,319,000 doses were procured and distributed. At the same time, community and media campaigning and awareness raising was done to promote acceptance of the vaccination. Media mapping was conducted in key polio priority districts in the West, East, South East and South of the country, and multimedia information, education and communication (IEC) materials were produced. Social media activities were also expanded, and a website was launched. 2,300 full-time immunization communication networks (ICN) were deployed to support the southern region, and significant focus was given to strengthening field monitoring

systems, leading to the addressing of ICN management issues in the southern region and analysis of Immunization Communication Network catch-up data, including RI monitoring and referrals, in a timely manner. Other results included the finalization of the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey data, continued support for National Emergency Operations Centre remote monitoring initiatives, and establishing a decentralized call centre for the southern and eastern regions.

Outcome 4.4 Health Emergencies: reduced death, illness and disability in the most acutely vulnerable population while complementing and strengthening existing health institutions to adequately prepare for and respond to conflicts, outbreaks, and natural disaster-related health crises

Health activities in 2020 focused on the most vulnerable populations including women and those living in hard-to-reach areas. Focusing on the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on women, risk communication and community engagement helped ensure women and girls had the same opportunity to receive information on and access to treatment for COVID-19. Health activities also contributed to assisting people living with disabilities in accessing expanding rehabilitation services.

The COVID-19 response support from the UN in Afghanistan provided support to more than 3.2 million people, and promoted better collaboration between the MoPH, UN agencies and civil society organizations to respond jointly. Further partnerships were forged with neighbouring countries and the wider region in coping with migration-related health challenges, particularly to support the implementation of International Health Regulations.

UN health entities and their partners met almost all their targets, which were largely comprised of capacity training. This training paid off in terms of readiness of frontline workers to deal with COVID-19 cases, as well as the overall strengthening of the response capacity of the MoPH.

Outcome 4.5: CDs and NCDs: Improved capacity to monitor the trends and delivery of integrated quality services that is inclusive and free of stigma and discrimination to help reduce the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases

Health entities met their targets for supporting the Government's programmes and ensuring that, even during COVID-19, communities had access to healthcare and therefore had reduced incidence of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Similarly, this included ensuring national pharmacological protocols and guidelines for treatment of substance use disorders were available and used by Drug Demand Reduction (DDR), Afghanistan National Program for Control of AIDS, STIs and Hepatitis (ANPASH), civil society organizations (CSOs), implementing non-government organizations (NGOs) and drug treatment service providers. The national guideline for treatment of people who use stimulant drugs (particularly methamphetamine) and national protocol on management of recovering drug users and protocols were translated into the national languages and disseminated among drug treatment professionals and service providers in Kabul and provinces.

242 drug treatment professionals, CSOs, NGOs service providers and government staff were supported with local and international training programmes on evidence based, gender responsive and human rights-based drug prevention, drug treatment and HIV prevention services. A total of 100 service providers and MoPH staff were trained on evidence-based HIV prevention, treatment and care services, and PPE was procured and supplied to drug treatment centres catering to women and children.

Promise to leave no one behind

Despite the overwhelming challenges facing Afghanistan due to COVID-19 and other factors, the UN and its partners remain committed to supporting the Government's healthcare service programmes to ensure that all possible means are explored and

applied to deliver to all people in Afghanistan. This will include implementation of policy, promotion of community engagement and awareness raising, and continued support to ensure the equitable provision of lifesaving and lifechanging services to all.

2.2.5. Return and Reintegration Working Group

Contributing UN agencies: UNHCR, IOM, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNMAS, UN Habitat, UNODC, WFP, WHO⁸

UN agencies supported the Government's efforts on voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees. In 2020, interventions by the UN in Afghanistan benefitted nearly one million people with improved access to basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and shelter.

Agencies within the thematic working group also assisted the Government in operationalizing Presidential Decree 108, which provides documented returnees and protracted IDPs the legal right to apply for land allocation and housing support from the state – thus providing a durable solution to tenure insecurity for millions of displaced people.

Specific attention was given to developing reintegration supportive infrastructure facilities to create conducive return conditions promoting peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. This included rehabilitation and/or construction of schools, health clinics, community centres, and productive and economic facilities such as access roads, irrigation canals, cold store etc.

Further, supporting the Government's efforts in building Human Capital, around 100,000 men and women received livelihoods support, including technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship and employment support including job placement. In addition, around 50,000 returnees were provided with financial and in-kind assistance.

⁸ National partners included: Displacement and Return Executive Committee, Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of

Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ministry of Women Affairs.

At the regional level, forums such as the Tripartite Commission (among the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) and quadripartite Steering Committee of the Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) helped to jointly identify and implement approaches toward lasting solutions for Afghan refugees in the region, including a commitment to voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity, sustainable reintegration, and support to host communities in Pakistan and Iran. In 2020, the governments of the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and the UN reiterated their commitment and launched a new SSAR support Platform to enhance on-going efforts to mobilize additional resources.

Impact of COVID-19:

COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges faced by returnee and displaced communities. Overstretched capacities of (health) institutions limit returnees' and IDPs' access to quality health and protection services, including MHPSS and social safety nets.

Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring countries faced stigmatization due to the pandemic outbreak in the region. Since the onset of the pandemic in January 2020, over 800,000 persons spontaneously returned to Afghanistan, particularly through the Islam Qala and Milak border crossings. This spontaneous return was partially a function of the rapid transmission of COVID-19 in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

UN agencies interventions continue to focus on supporting the government in preparedness and response by (i) enhancing national level disease surveillance systems through strengthening Community Event-based surveillance by linking mobility and displacement information to surveillance data; and (ii) facilitating access to quality protection and social protection services for returnees and displaced communities.

Promise to leave no one behind

The UN and its partners are committed to nexus programming that will leverage the comparative advantages and capacities of all actors on priority issues to not only address urgent and emerging needs, but to also build the foundation for durable and sustainable solutions for those most in need.

2.2.6. Rule of Law Working Group

Contributing UN Agencies: UNDP, UNODC, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, UNAMA, UN – HABITAT, UNOPS, and UNESCO⁹

Outcome 6.1: The government's Justice Sector Reform initiatives supported leading to an impartial, transparent, and accountable justice system and application of law; improved delivery and enforcement of court judgements and decisions; improved access to, delivery, and use of the formal justice system; increased trust in judicial services; and a fully operational and independent Anti-Corruption Justice Centre.

Significant traction has been gained regarding child protection and child rights in the judicial system, while the Family Law was revised to include stronger language regarding child rights. Strong support to the Supreme Court enabled the UN to ensure that cases were re-prioritised and remote modalities were identified so that cases continued to be heard in a timely fashion even during the pandemic. Campaigns to increase public awareness of their rights under the Constitution also continued at the national and sub-national levels.

Outcome 6.2: Strengthened electoral and representative institutions and systems better able to ensure full public participation, representation, and transparency in electoral processes

⁹ National partners included: Ministry of Interior, Attorney General Office, Anti-Corruption Justice Center, Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, Independent Election Commission, Parliament, High Peace Council (Ministry of Peace),

Independent Directorate of Local Governance and Municipalities, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Social and Labour, IARCSC, DAB (FinTRACA) and Civil Society Organizations/networks.

As there were no elections in 2020, either to be planned or conducted, there are no results to be reported.

Outcome 6.3: More capable and inclusive provincial and municipal governments are better able to plan, monitor and budget for accountable and transparent service delivery in accordance with the Sub-National Governance Policy and National Priority Plan

As COVID-19 impacted data collection, as well as actions like birth and death registrations, there was a focus on building capacity of those responsible for such activities, with the hope that 2021 would allow for a more comprehensive set of actions to support subnational governance in these areas.

Outcome 6.4: Increased participation of women in civil service and public life; full implementation of the Government's commitment to women's empowerment through the National Priority Programme on Women's Economic Empowerment (priority 2.6, ANPDF), Citizen's Charter, National Action Plan on implementation of UN SCs resolution 1325 and other mechanisms of rule of law and governance

Full efforts continue to be made, both within this outcome and through the support to the peace process, in terms of high-level advocacy for women's participation in areas impacting their lives and futures. The new ANPDF-II strongly reflects women's economic empowerment, although more work is needed to promote women's empowerment in all sectors and spheres. The Government's efforts to increase the number of women in political positions have been encouraging although not entirely successful. The Ministry of Women Affairs underwent a series of changes within its leadership, and there is a new vision regarding the focus of the Ministry. The capacity activities that were envisioned for 2020 will be carried over to 2021, to the benefit of the new staff and tailored to reflect the priorities of the Ministry under new leadership.

Outcome 6.5: Improved security and reduced conflicts for communities and enhanced law enforcement capacity to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

This outcome was impacted by COVID-19 as it requires an "on the ground" approach that was not feasible as intended. This included renovations to improve prison conditions, infrastructure for the Ministry of Interior Affairs to improve surveillance capacity, etc. While the work was initiated, it remains incomplete. However, continued advocacy and support of national institutions was maintained, and capacity building undertaken where feasible.

Promise to leave no one behind

As mentioned earlier, all efforts were made to ensure that women and girls, youth, minorities, as well as vulnerable populations such as IDPs, returnees and refugees, were engaged throughout the year to ensure their voices were heard during the peace process and to ensure that their civil rights were protected. The creation of the Legal Identify and Civil Registration Working Group played a key role in identifying areas of concern and potential impact for the UN in Afghanistan and its partners.

Finally, focusing on human rights, access to justice and the creation of peaceful societies will remain a priority. This is essential for a lasting peace as there cannot be a peaceful nation if there is no peace at home or in the community.

2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

The UN works through both government counterparts and civil society partnerships, with growing private sector partnerships emerging. This includes working with chambers of commerce in the provinces, as well as national institutions such as the National Environmental Protection Authority. Other key partners are the International Financial Institutions, such as the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank. The World Bank partnership was strengthened in 2020 through coordination of COVID-19 assistance to the Government, as well as a multi-stakeholder initiative to support the National Statistics and Information Authority to create a public data platform to improve coordination of assessments regarding COVID-19, data-based

planning and programming of the national response.

International and national civil society organisations play a significant and critical role as implementing partners of the UN, reaching and supporting the most difficult to reach areas to deliver both humanitarian and development assistance as part of the effort to leave no one behind. They also provide essential data and insight into the needs of the population that inform both the Humanitarian Response Plan and the UNSDCF.

Given that the high level of humanitarian needs in Afghanistan dominate the programmatic landscape, all SDGs are supported through both humanitarian and development interventions, but without a specific SDG financing framework. The process of costing the SDGs will be continued in 2021, and UN programming is cognizant of the need to both support and promote an SDG-centred results process. This was successfully promoted during the formulation of the ANPDF-II document through high-level advocacy with the government and donors by the DSRSG/RC/HC. As a result, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) will be more easily aligned with the ANPDF-II, and the measuring of results in both frameworks will be against the A-SDGs indicators where applicable and the global indicators where needed. Consultations on financing the 2030 Agenda will be part of the UNSDCF development process in 2021.

2.4 Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency

Integrating SDGs into national development plans: In 2020 specific focus was made on bringing Government, UN Agencies and donor community to work together on finalization of Afghanistan National Development Plan II (ANPDF II). The UNCT focused on providing inputs and participating in joint workshops to develop and finalize ANPDF II, which was welcomed at the Afghanistan Donor Conference held in Geneva in November of 2020. As a result of this process, SDSs are widely integrated

in the national development plan across the peace, state, and market building priorities.

Driving operational effectiveness:

Convening around the formulation of the Business Operation Strategy II (BOS II) was another highlight of the year. UNCT members contributed strongly to development of the new BOS II strategy which is promising to create additional savings and provide efficiency gains and demonstrate operational effectiveness in 2021.

Joint evidence-based planning, coherence, and integration:

Evaluation of the current UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Afghanistan was conceptualized and initiated in 2020 through a participatory approach. The Joint Steering Committee of the evaluation includes participants from government, donors, UN Agencies, civil society, and development partners. It will guide future UN programming based on evidence and lessons learned.

UNCT initiated work on UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in 2020 through the launch of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) exercise. The CCA is contributed to by all UN Agencies and all sections of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Joint analysis of the situation and system-wide collaborative work on the formulation of the UNSDCF creates foundation for meaningful and multi-layered functional integration of the political, development and humanitarian work of the UN system in Afghanistan.

The development of the UNSDCF will reflect the unique context of the country while guiding the UNCT to be more agile and innovative, to respond to any changes, emerging needs, and to continue delivering as One UN in the complex operational realities of Afghanistan.

2.5 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

For the UNCT, as a whole, available resources exceeded required resources. However, available humanitarian-facing funding was under 90 per cent. Total estimated expenditures amounted to about 76 per cent of available resources. The under-spending was mostly due to COVID constraints, such as reduced footprint and therefore reduced capacity on the ground, as well as access to project sites, partners and target populations. Efforts to reallocate funds to COVID-specific activities were not always possible for donors, and therefore some projects were either suspended and/or moved to 2021.

Table 2.1 Total required resources, available resources, and expenditures, 2020, by agency (USD million)

Agency	Total Required resources	Available resources	Estimated ¹⁰ Expenditures
FAO	35.7	35.2	35.2
ILO	2.1	2.1	1.7
IOM	80.0	70.8	47.9
OHCHR	0.3	0.3	0.3
UN-Habitat	31.4	31.4	28.8
UNDP	457.2	612.3	416.0
UNEP	4.9	4.9	2.6
UNESCO	12.0	12.0	6.5
UNFPA	14.7	14.7	13.1
UNHCR	123.2	68.7	64.5
UNICEF	173.3	173.3	173.3
UNIDO	Not available	2.0	-
-UNMAS	7.1	7.1	7.1
UNODC	8.6	9.2	6.4
UNOPS	30.8	30.8	31.3
UNWOMEN	14.2	10.7	9.3
WFP	331.2	281.7	172.4
WHO	85.4	69.9	69.9
TOTAL	1,412.0	1,437.0	1,086.1

The reasons for the high values for UNDP, WFP and UNICEF are as follows:

- UNDP’s resources and expenditures include the “Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan” (LOTFA), which it administers on behalf of the donors to manage national police payroll;

- WFP delivers large amounts of food aid and a voucher programme with high dollar-value; and
- UNICEF procures and distributes vaccinations in support of the Government’s vaccination programme.

Table 2.2 Planned budget and estimated expenditures, 2020, by thematic area (USD million)

	Planned Budget 2020	Estimated Expenditures 2020
Normative	13.5	Not available
Education	106.7	37.0
FSNL	253.2	183.2
Health	114.7	85.5
R&R	71.4	60.7
Rule of Law	49.6	33.4

To avoid double-counting, expenditures by thematic areas do not include personnel costs (unless they are assigned to a specific project). Total expenditures reported by thematic areas are therefore much lower than the total UNCT expenditures. As COVID-19 restrictions constrained programme implementation, the expenditures were substantially lower than the planned budget.

Table 2.3 Estimated breakdown between development-related expenditure and humanitarian assistance (USD million)

	Development	Humanitarian
UN Total [1]	475.1	369.6
FAO	18.9	16.3
ILO	1.7	-
IOM	23.7	24.2
OHCHR	0.3	-
UN-Habitat	28.8	-
UNDP	176.9	-
UNEP	2.6	-
UNESCO	4.6	-
UNFPA	10.7	2.4
UNHCR	-	64.5
UNICEF	131.6	41.7
UNIDO	-	-
UNMAS	1.1	6.0
UNODC	6.4	-
UNOPS	27.7	3.1
UNWOMEN	8.9	0.4
WFP	21.4	151.0
WHO	10.0	59.9

Excluding LOTFA, 56 per cent of UNCT expenditures were on development-related activities. Two agencies - UNDP and UNICEF - account for two-thirds of development related expenditures. On humanitarian expenditures, the WFP and the WHO account for over 57 per cent of the total.

Non-core funding accounted for 95 per cent of the expenditures for the UNCT. For some UN entities (OHCHR, UN-Habitat, UNEP, UNHCR, UNMAS, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP), non-core sources funded all their expenditures in 2020. The funding of UNDP and UNICEF also relied largely on non-core sources.

Table 2.4 Estimated breakdowns of expenditure by funding modality (USD million)

	Core	Non-core
UN Total	56.6	1,124.0
FAO	0.4	34.7
ILO	0.6	1.1
IOM	0.0	47.9
OHCHR	-	0.3
UN-Habitat	-	28.8
UNDP	8.8	407.2
UNEP	-	2.6
UNESCO	0.0	7.4
UNFPA	3.6	9.4
UNHCR	-	68.8
UNICEF	37.6	135.7
UNIDO	-	-
UNMAS	-	7.1
UNODC	-	6.4
UNOPS	-	31.3
UNWOMEN	1.7	7.6
WFP	-	281.7
WHO	3.9	66.0

Data available indicates that over 75 per cent of all non-core funding came from project/programme specific contributions. Single agency thematic funds accounted for another 17 per cent.

UN agencies raised almost \$1.4 billion in 2020, including funding for multi-year programmes. Donor countries and country groupings (e.g. the EU, the Resolute Support, etc.) accounted for almost 60 per cent of the total. The largest donor was the United States, followed by Japan and the European Union. UN Funds and Agencies (other than their own) contributed 21 per cent. A large amount of this contribution was provided by the UNDP's Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office.

Chapter 3: UNCT key focus for next year

Afghanistan is slated to have its first UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) start in 2022, and therefore the UNCT will be focused on undertaking the various processes associated with it. The timing of this process coincides with the Government's review and restatement of its national priorities, thereby providing an opportunity to analyse new political, economic and social dynamics while also promoting areas in which the One UN for Afghanistan Framework has remaining concerns. A series of consultations that were initiated as part of the ANPDF-II process in 2020, have provided a platform from which to launch the UNSDCF consultations with strong national engagement and leadership.

The development of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the evaluation of the One UN for Afghanistan Framework provided an opportunity for enhancing the focus and priorities of the UNCT. It encouraged not only parsing the strategic priorities and needs of the country but also a chance to reflect on what can be accomplished in 2021 to fulfil outstanding obligations while identifying more innovative ways to accelerate the country's drive towards the SDGs. National leadership, enhanced coherence, partnerships, and intellectual leadership on core issues impacting Afghan lives, will contribute to the country's stability and sustainable development.

Key to the work of the UN in Afghanistan in 2021 will be adherence to the guiding principles of the UNSDCF. This will ensure that while the country continues its journey towards peace and recovery, the people of Afghanistan will have uninterrupted access to essential services as well as people-centred and inclusive opportunities to contribute to the nation's evolution through improved participation in all spheres of cultural, social, political and economic life.

UN programming will focus on women, youth and vulnerable populations by promoting collaborative programming between humanitarian, development and peace-building actors. Focus will be made to strengthen the social protection foundations for all while addressing immediate needs in an inclusive manner. This will empower stakeholders to become part of their future planning.

Afghanistan has one of the youngest populations in the world, and as such, there is little time to spare in ensuring that youth, and particularly girls, are the primary focus of programming, rather than collateral beneficiaries. If today's youth are the country's future, the time for their engagement is now. They will be responsible for keeping the peace created by their elders, driving and sustaining the economic development of the country, and promoting human rights. Therefore, it is imperative that their voices are heard now, and not when they are older and their opportunities have passed.

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFSeN-A	Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda
AHF	Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AMAS	Afghanistan Mine Action Standards
ANPDF-II	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework-II
A-SDG	Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goal
BOS	Business Operations Strategy
CDs	Communicable Diseases
CDC	Community Development Commission
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
D4D WG	Data for Development Working Group
DMoM	Deputy Ministry of Municipalities
DSRSG/RC/HC	United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator
EIE	Education in Emergencies
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
EU	European Union
FHH	Family Health House
FSNL	Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods
GDP	Gross National Product
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GoIRA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IEC	Independent Elections Commission
IFI	International Financial Institution
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MoCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoEc	Ministry of Economy
MoEd	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MoIA	Ministry of Interior Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoMD	Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development
MoRR	Minister for Refugees and Reintegration

MUDL	Ministry of Urban Development and Land
MoWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPP	National Priority Programme
NSIA	National Statistics and Information Authority
OMT	Operations Management Team
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
PMT	Programme Management Team
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
R&R	Return and Reintegration
RCO	Resident Coordinator Office
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health
RoL	Rule of Law
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMoP	State Ministry for Peace
SRSG	United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCG	United Nations Communications Group
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
USD	United States Dollar
WB	The World Bank
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
IFAD	United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	United Nations International Labor Organisation
IOM	United Nations International Organisation for Migration
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
WFP	World Food Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation

ANNEX I: List of Key Partners of the UN Development System in Afghanistan

1. IFI PARTNERS and DONORS

a) IFIs:

Asia Development Bank
The World Bank

b) List of some key donors in 2020:

Australia DFAT	Malta
Belgium	Norway
Bulgaria	Russia
Canada	Saudi Arabia
Denmark	Sweden
European Union	Switzerland
France	United Kingdom
Finland	USA/INL
Germany	Central Emergency Response Fund
Iceland	GEF
Japan and JICA	GCF - Green Climate Fund
Republic of Korea	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
Luxembourg	Private Donors USA
The Netherlands	Private Donors Japan

2. MINISTRIES

Deputy Ministry of Municipalities Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Ministry of Counter Narcotics Ministry of Defense Ministry of Economy Ministry of Education Ministry of Finance Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Industry and Commerce	Ministry of Interior Affairs Ministry of Justice Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled Ministry of Public Health Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development Minister for Refugees and Reintegration Ministry of Urban Development and Land Ministry of Women Affairs State Ministry for Peace
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3. GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Afghanistan Central Business Registry & Intellectual Property Afghanistan Customs Department Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority Anti-Corruption Justice Centre	Kochis' Affairs Coordination Authority National Assembly of Afghanistan National Environmental Protection Agency National Water Affairs Regulation Authority National Security Council
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Attorney General's Office Directorate of Mine Action Coordination High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Independent Directorate of Local Governance Kabul Municipality	National Statistic and Information Authority Offices of the First and Second Vice Presidents Parliament Provincial Government Supreme Court
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4. INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Services Commission Independent Commission for overseeing the implementation of the Constitution Independent Election Commission	Afghan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Afghanistan National Horticulture Development Organization Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry National Union of Afghanistan Workers and Employees
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5. UNIVERSITY AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTES

6. CIVIL SOCIETY (National and International)

AfghanAid Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation Afghan Red Crescent Society Afghan Planning Agency Afghanistan Cultural Heritage Organisation Afghanistan Development & Welfare Services Organization Aga Khan Foundation Agency for Assistance and Development of Afghanistan Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development Ansari Rehabilitation for Afghanistan Asia Culture House Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA) Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) Danish De-Mining Group Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA)	HealthNet TPO Afghanistan (HNTPO) HEWAD Human Resource Development Agency International Medical Corps Islamic Relief Worldwide Kabul Dairy Union Mercy Corps Mission d'Aide au Développement des Economies Rurales en Afghanistan MOVE Welfare Organization Organization for Research & Community Development Organization of Human Welfare Organization for Relief Development Reconstruction & Social Services for Afghanistan Organization War Child Welthungerhilfe Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan Women Activities & Social Services Association Women for Afghan Women
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