

AFGHANISTAN: Earthquakes in Herat Province

Health Situation Report No. 13

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World Health
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Afghanistan



HEALTH
CLUSTER
Afghanistan

SITUATION UPDATE

Highlights

Series of earthquakes and aftershocks hit Herat Province in western Afghanistan between 7 and 15 October 2023.

Around **275,000** people are impacted. Most of the displaced individuals are grappling with various health issues.

By the end of December 2023, Health Cluster partners provided health services to a total of **102,655** individuals in six districts: Zindajan, Injil, Kushk, Herat City, Kohsan, and Gulran.

The Health Cluster has appealed for **US\$12.7 million** to sustain these initiatives through March 2024, but only US\$5.2 million has been received thus far.



WHO supported SSTs in conducting active surveillance in the affected villages.

Overview:

Between October 7 and October 15, 2023, three powerful earthquakes, each with magnitudes of 6.8, struck Herat Province, Afghanistan, impacting over 275,000 individuals. Although 85 days have passed since the earthquakes, many survivors and victims still find themselves living in makeshift tents and temporary shelters, with the situation remaining precarious. On December 28, a mild earthquake was reported in Herat Province, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the survivors. Most of these displaced individuals are grappling with various health issues, including trauma and mental health disorders. This vulnerability is particularly heightened for mothers, children, the elderly, and those with comorbidities, especially during the harsh winter season.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Health Cluster partners have been diligently expanding their efforts to provide healthcare assistance to the 220,000 affected individuals, including 1,900 female-headed households. By the end of December 2023, 102,655 individuals have been provided with humanitarian health assistance. WHO and the partners' interventions encompass a range of healthcare services, such as primary healthcare, physical rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), as well as the provision of essential medicine and medical supplies. WHO has also deployed surveillance-support teams (SSTs) to the affected villages to monitor disease trends and respond to communicable disease cases. Furthermore, WHO is actively working on establishing new primary health facilities in the affected areas, particularly in Zindajan, Ghoryan, Injil, and Kohsan districts, to ensure continuous service provision in the face of rising demand.

Despite these efforts, a significant funding gap persists. The Health Cluster has appealed for US\$12.7 million to sustain these initiatives through March 2024, but only US\$5.2 million has been received thus far. This substantial gap threatens to leave vulnerable populations even more exposed to health-related challenges.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Between 7 October and 31 December 2023, Health Cluster partners provided health services to a total of **102,655** individuals in six districts, namely: Zindajan (57,107), Injil (14,055), Kushk (10,389), Herat City (8,595), Kohsan (7,213), and Gulran (5,296). Among them, **83,924** people received primary health care services, **9,800** received MHPSS services, **4,697** people received trauma care and rehabilitation services, and **4,234** people received various kits, including mama and baby kits, dignity kits, and individual cleaning delivery kits.

Health Cluster Coordination

The Regional Health Cluster Coordination Team actively participated in various coordination meetings, including the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), Operational Coordination Team (OCT), and Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) committee meetings. The discussions encompass conducting joint monitoring visits to assess the response, continuing active surveillance activities, ensuring the availability of winterization supplies in health facilities of the earthquake-affected districts, and improving waste management and WASH facilities in healthcare facilities.

Additionally, the Health Cluster team has maintained engagement with the Health Cluster partners and other clusters to ensure a coordinated response.



In collaboration with OCCD, WHO is working on the establishment of eight SHCs with containers in the earthquake-affected areas.

Trauma and Hospital Care

On December 28, 2023, a mild earthquake occurred in Herat with no reported injuries. The 650-bed Herat Regional Hospital in Herat City has been a crucial hub for earthquake victims. To date, it has treated 889 individuals, and currently, there are no new admissions related to the earthquakes.

From December 17 to December 20, WHO conducted a four-day Mass Casualty Management (MCM) training for 24 hospital staff (clinicians and management staff), including eight females, from the Regional Hospital, Ghoryan, and Gulran District Hospitals. The training aims to equip responders with skills to manage large-scale emergencies effectively, prioritizing lives and minimizing impact.

Additionally, WHO is actively monitoring medicine stocks at the regional hospital to ensure a sufficient supply for earthquake-affected victims and maintain readiness for future emergencies.



WHO conducted a four-day MCM training for hospital staff in Herat province.

Primary Healthcare

- Nine static health facilities have been set up in Zindajan district to provide primary healthcare (PHC) services, including MHPSS services. These facilities are located in villages such as Karanil, Koshkak, Qasr-e-Shirin, Sia Aab, Kajkal, Chahak, Sar Baland, Naeib Rafi, and Qar Moshak. Their support comes from various organizations, including World Vision (four facilities), AADA/UNFPA (two facilities), OCCD/WHO (two facilities), and OHPM/UNICEF (one facility).
- Additionally, five Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs), which were initially redirected to assist with earthquake response in Herat City, have now resumed their original service delivery locations.
- Furthermore, efforts are underway to establish 16 more static health facilities and five Family Health Houses (FHHs) in earthquake-affected districts. Site selection and staff recruitment processes have been completed. These new static health facilities will receive support from OCCD/WHO (eight facilities), CARE/WHO (four facilities), IRC (two facilities), and IRW (two facilities). CARE will also provide support for the five FHHs. WHO is in the process of establishing those eight sub-health centers (SHCs) using Connex containers, which are currently being installed.



WHO/OCCD-supported SHC provides reproductive, maternal, and child health services.

Disease Surveillance/Potential Disease Outbreak Prevention and Response

WHO has coordinated with the National Disease Surveillance Response (NDSR) team to enhance surveillance activities and deployed five surveillance support teams (SSTs) in Zindajan district.

In December, a total of 3,890 acute respiratory infections (ARI) cases, 146 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 39 acute watery diarrhea (AWD) cases were reported.

a total of 1,327 suspected COVID-19 samples were subjected to PCR testing for COVID-19 at the Herat Regional Reference laboratory; 146 tested **positive**. Additionally, three rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) were administered for AWD cases, with all test results returning negative.

Districts	Diseases	Number of reported cases During 01–31 Dec 2023						
		Male		Female		Total		
		<5 Years	>5 Years	<5 Years	>5 Years	Male	Female	Total
Zinda Jan	ARI	526	1,170	622	1,572	1,696	2,194	3,890
	Measles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	AWD	17	0	18	4	17	22	39
	Tetanus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Confirmed COVID-19	0	48	0	98	48	98	146

Operational Support and Logistics

WHO has delivered five metric tons of different medical kits and equipment, including the WHO trauma and emergency surgery kit (TESK) to the 650-bed Herat Regional Hospital.



UNPFA/ADA distributes kits at PHC facilities.



WHO has delivered 5 MT of medical kits and equipment to the Herat Regional hospital in December 2023.

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

From December 16 to December 20, 2023, WHO organized a training program titled "PRSEAH and Health Response to Survivors of Violence in Emergency Settings" for healthcare facilities in earthquake-affected areas of Herat province. This training involved 30 female staff members, including medical doctors, nurses, midwives, MHPSS (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) counselors, and nutrition counselors. These healthcare professionals are working in various health facilities across Herat city, as well as in Zandajan, Gulran, Ghoryan, Kohsan, and Kushk-e-Kuhna districts, which were among the areas most severely impacted by the earthquake.



WHO trained 30 female staff on "PRSEAH and Health Response to Survivors of Violence in Emergency Settings."

GAPS and NEEDS

The ongoing situation in the earthquake-affected areas has been exacerbated by harsh winter conditions, significantly heightening the vulnerability of populations already at-risk to various health threats. Several key factors emphasize the urgent and sustained need for support:

- **Sustaining Service Provision:** The demand for high-quality healthcare services is on the rise, particularly the need for medicines and medical supplies. Additionally, many damaged health facilities remain unrepaired due to insufficient funding.
- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support:** Concerns are growing about the mental well-being of individuals, including children, who are exhibiting symptoms such as fear, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and psychosomatic disorders. A long-term commitment to mental health and psychosocial support services is essential for the affected communities.
- **Outbreak Risk:** Overcrowding, inadequate hygiene, and poor sanitation conditions in temporary shelters have elevated the risk of disease outbreaks and epidemics, such as measles, COVID-19, and acute respiratory infections. It is imperative to strengthen risk communication and community engagement efforts to raise awareness and sensitize the community to effective preventive measures.
- **Winterization Supplies:** The ongoing winter season has amplified health risks for those residing in temporary shelters, aggravated by a shortage of winterization supplies like blankets and heating systems. Adequate heating equipment is also required at health facilities to maintain service level and quality.
- **Ambulatory Services:** Despite partners' efforts in healthcare service provision, there is a critical need to activate the ambulatory system to ensure timely referrals 24/7.
- **Funding Gap:** Ongoing health operations strain our resources, leaving a significant shortfall in addressing the health needs of earthquake-affected populations. The Health Cluster is seeking US\$12.7 million but still faces a US\$7.5 million deficit to provide adequate support.

For more information on the response to #HeratEarthquakes, contact:

Dr Jamshed Ali Tanoli, Health Cluster Coordinator, Email: tanolij@who.int

Mr Mohammad Modaser Islami, Officer-in-Charge, Communications, Email: islamim@who.int

Mr Mohamed Kakay, External Relations and Partnerships Team Lead, Email: kakaym@who.int

Ms Akiko Takeuchi, Emergency Officer, Email: takeuchia@who.int

For more information, please visit:

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Thank you to the following donors for supporting WHO's health response to the Herat Earthquakes:

