

# AFGHANISTAN: Earthquakes in Herat Province

## Health Situation Report No. 15

February 2024



World Health  
Organization  
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.

**179 122** individuals have been provided with humanitarian health assistance by February 2024 in leadership of the Health Cluster through 20 health partners.

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**.



Health education session for community members at the Domjo Family Health House operated by CARE in Karukh district, Herat. @CARE

#### Overview:

1. Herat province in western Afghanistan has been hit by several earthquakes and multiple aftershocks since 07 October 2023. Almost 275 000 individuals have been affected by these earthquakes. Many People are still living in tents and temporary shelters. This has predisposed them to different risks, including health risks such as water-borne and food-borne diseases, skin infections and other hazards related to harsh winter. Some groups of people like pregnant and lactating women, children and elderly people are more at risk of developing the epidemic-prone infectious diseases, which may result in increase in morbidity and mortality associated with these diseases.
2. Looking at this situation, WHO and other health partners continued response activities in Herat province.

Overall, 179 122 individuals have been provided with humanitarian health assistance by February 2024 under the leadership of the Health Cluster through 20 health partners. Health interventions by WHO and partners encompass a range of health care services such as primary and secondary health care, physical rehabilitation, mental health and psychosocial support, trauma management, as well as the provision of essential medicines and medical supplies. Furthermore, WHO is actively engaged in establishing new primary health facilities in the earthquake-affected areas, particularly in Zindajan, Ghoryan, Injil, and Kohsan districts to ensure continuous service provision in the face of rising demands.

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 is still awaiting responses from the donors.

During February 2024, another earthquake hit Zindajan district in Herat, but, fortunately, there were no casualties reported. WHO deployed 10 Surveillance Support Teams (SSTs) and supplied two shipments of emergency kits including medicines and equipment for Herat 650-bed Regional Hospital. Through the National Disease Surveillance Support Response (NDSR) and 10 SSTs, WHO supplied kits for sample collection and testing across the earthquake-affected areas. Out of the two shipments of medicines donated to the Herat Regional Hospital, the first one was 77 kits, consisting of total 700 cartons of different types of medicines and medical supplies and consumable items and the second shipment was comprised of seven non communicable diseases (NCD) kits in 77 cartons. The first shipment was delivered by WHO regional office in the province and the second shipment was sent directly from WHO office in Kabul.

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Between 07 October 2023 and 28 February 2024, a total of 20 Health Cluster partners supported the health needs of the people affected by Herat earthquakes. The partners involved were AADA, AFGA, ARCS, CARE, HEALTHNET TPO, HI, IOM, IRC, IRW, JACK, MMRCA, MOVE, JHPIEGO, OCCD, OHPM, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, WVI and YHDO. However, only four Health Cluster Partners (AADA, IOM, UNFPA and WHO) were involved in response to the earthquake-affected people in February.

As of 28 February 2024, Health Cluster partners delivered health services to a total of 179 122 individuals in nine districts.

### Health Cluster Coordination

Key activities carried out by Health Cluster Coordination Team and the partners to support the health response included:

1. In February 2024, Health Cluster partners delivered health services to a total of 179 122 individuals in nine districts. In Zindajan, 89,714; in Ghoryan, 20,861; in Injil, 18,757; in Herat City, 9,850; in Kushk, 14,872; in Kohsan, 10,784; in Gulran, 8,691; in Guzara, 4,419; and in Karukh, 1,174 individuals benefited from health services. Among the beneficiaries, 145,459 individuals received primary health care and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services, 11,063 individuals received trauma care and rehabilitation services, 4,235 individuals received various kits such as mama and baby kits, dignity kits, and individual clean delivery kits, and 18,365 individuals received communicable disease preventive and treatment support.
2. By 29 February 2024, a total of 15 static health facilities and five Family Health Houses (FHHs) had been deployed to earthquake-affected communities in Zindajan, Injil, Ghoryan, Kohsan, Gozara, Gulran and Karukh districts. These facilities are providing primary health care, reproductive health care, and MHPSS services. The deployment of these facilities was made possible with the support of five Health Cluster partners: OCCD/WHO (8), World Vision (4), AADA/UNFPA (2), OHPM/UNICEF (1) and CARE (Five FHHs).
3. The Regional Health Cluster Team took proactive measures in responding to the earthquake-affected population in Herat province. They conducted ad hoc weekly, biweekly and monthly meetings to ensure a well-coordinated health response in the affected areas, preventing duplication and optimizing resource utilization. Additionally, the Team actively engaged in various coordination platforms, including the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, Operational Coordination Team, and Emergency Preparedness and Response committee meetings, ensuring a comprehensive multi-cluster response.
4. Collaboration in deployment of additional health facilities. The Health Cluster partners plan to deploy additional 11 static health facilities in earthquake-affected districts. The site selection and staff recruitment processes have already been completed, and currently awaiting the signing of the MOUs. The new static health facilities will be supported by CARE/WHO (4), IRC (2), IRW (3) and WASS/WVI (2).



*Regional Health Cluster Meeting, led by WHO, in Herat. ©WHO*

## Trauma and Hospital Care

One mild earthquake took place in Zindajan district during the month of February 2024. However, no injured cases were received in any of the health facilities, including Herat Regional Hospital in Herat city. Since October 2023, almost 889 individuals were received and managed for trauma. In February, no patients were admitted in the hospital for trauma case management.

Additionally, WHO is actively monitoring medicine stocks at the Regional Hospital to ensure sufficient supply of medicines and medical equipment for earthquake-affected people and maintain readiness for possible future emergencies.

Below are some of the other health facilities in Herat province, supported partially or fully by WHO:

1. Eight Trauma Care Units (TCUs) are functional in Herat province and can support the injured patients during any natural disaster, including earthquake.
2. Sakina Yaqoubi Maternal and Child Health Hospital (20 beds) is functional and provides MCH services on regular basis to the community.
3. Herat Integrated Infectious Diseases and COVID19 Hospital, supported by WHO.



Provision of health care services to earthquake-affected people in Zindajan district, Herat. ©UNFPA/AADA



Vaccine provision for earthquake-affected communities in Herat province, supported by WHO. ©WHO/OCCD

## Primary Health Care

1. A total of 15 static health facilities and five FHHs are providing primary health care, reproductive health care and MHPSS services to earthquake-affected communities in Zindajan, Injil, Ghoryan, Kohsan, Gozara, Gulran and Karukh districts.
2. Primary Health Care in underserved areas. six health facilities are fully functional in Herat province along with additional three Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs) for the nomad communities in the province.
3. Eight health facilities of PHC project in earthquake-affected areas were functional until the end of February.
4. Nutrition in Emergencies (IPD-SAM Centres). Six therapeutic feeding units (TFUs) are delivering services in Herat province.

## Disease Surveillance/Potential Disease Outbreak Prevention and Response

### Active surveillance of Herat earthquake-affected areas:

1. WHO continued strengthening surveillance activities in earthquake-affected areas.
2. A total of 10 dedicated SSTs with three assigned vehicles are doing active surveillance in the earthquake-affected areas. During the mentioned period, below infectious diseases have been detected:
  - 3,295 ARI cases.
  - 52 AWD cases.
  - 8 suspected measles cases.
  - 2 suspected chickenpox cases.
  - 71 confirmed COVID-19 cases.
3. A total of 1251 rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) and 1783 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests were conducted for suspected COVID-19 cases; four and 67 were positive respectively (RDT positivity rate: 0.3%, PCR positivity rate: 3.8%).
4. A total of six RDTs were conducted for AWD cases, all results were negative.
5. Samples were tested from the three suspected measles cases and the results were negative.



Surveillance Support Team members monitoring people in earthquake-affected areas of Zandahjan district, Herat. ©WHO

| Districts | Diseases           | Number of reported cases During 01–29 Feb 2024 |          |          |          |       |        |       |
|-----------|--------------------|--|----------|----------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
|           |                    | Male   |          | Female   |          | Total |        |       |
|           |                    | <5 Years                                       | >5 Years | <5 Years | >5 Years | Male  | Female | Total |
| Zinda Jan | ARI                | 409  | 995      | 484      | 1407     | 1404  | 1891   | 3295  |
|           | Measles            | 3  | 2        | 2        | 1        | 5     | 3      | 8     |
|           | AWD                | 30   | 5        | 15       | 2        | 35    | 17     | 52    |
|           | Tetanus            | 2  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2     | 0      | 2     |
|           | Confirmed COVID-19 | 0  | 26       | 0        | 45       | 26    | 45     | 71    |

### Operational Support and Logistics

WHO has donated medical equipment and instruments along with emergency kits to Herat Regional Hospital. So far, 700 cartons of different types of medicines and medical supplies and consumable items and seven non communicable diseases (NCD) kits have been delivered to the Regional Hospital.



Donation of medicine and medical kits to Herat Regional Hospital. ©WHO

## Trainings

1. WHO has organized capacity building workshops on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (PRESAH) on 4-6 February 2024 in three batches for staff in Herat Infectious Disease Hospital. A total of 111 staff (24 female and 87 male) were trained.
2. Another PRSEAH training was conducted on 7 February 2024 for 36 staff (30 female and six male) of Sakina Yaqoubi MCH.
3. mhGAP training was organized for earthquake-affected health facilities' staff on 3 February 2024. Twenty six male health care providers were trained in the training session.
4. PM+ training was organized on 3-8 February 2024 for 60 staff (30 male and 30 female) from earthquake-affected health facilities.
5. Package of essential non-communicable diseases (NCDs) training was conducted on 19-22 February 2024 for 52 staff (8 female, 44 male) of health facilities from earthquake-affected areas.



*mhGAP training by WHO for health facilities in earthquake-affected areas. ©WHO*



*PM+ training for health care workers and social workers in Herat. ©WHO*

## Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Health education sessions and awareness on ARIs, AWD, measles, Psychological First Aid and NCD were provided at the health facilities and beyond across earthquake-affected areas.



*Package of essential noncommunication diseases training by WHO for health facilities in earthquake-affected areas. ©WHO*

## Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

1. Postpartum intrauterine contraceptive device (PPIUCD) at the Sakina Yaqoubi 20-bed MCH Hospital is activated and supported by WHO. WHO supplied 250 implants and 150 Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices to the Regional Hospital. In addition, 910 implants and 500 IUCDs were provided for nine Family Planning corners of HER project and 150 implants were supplied to Sakina Yaqoubi 20-bed Hospital.
2. 11 FP/PPIUCD corners were supported by WHO in the Herat province: nine in HER project, one at the Regional Hospital and one at Sakina Yaqoubi 20-bed MHC Hospital.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

The WASH assessment for newly established health facilities by WHO was completed.

## GAPS AND NEEDS

1. Continued and sustained health care delivery: The demand for high-quality healthcare services is on the rise, particularly the need for medicines and medical supplies. The damaged health facilities repair/reconstruction is challenging due to insufficient funding.
2. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of health services in earthquake-affected areas for continuation of health activities.
3. Epidemic Preparedness and Response for outbreaks and epidemic diseases: Risk of outbreaks and epidemic diseases is higher in earthquake affected areas especially in areas where people are living in tents due to overcrowding, poor hygiene practices and lack of sanitation facilities especially AWD, scabies, COVID-19 and measles etc. It is imperative to strengthen risk communication and community engagement efforts to raise awareness and sensitize the community to effective preventive measures.
4. 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. Thus far, US\$ 7.2 million have been secured, leaving a funding gap of approximately US\$ 5.5 million.

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

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

