Conflict, natural disasters and poverty continue to drive shelter and NFI needs across different population groups in Afghanistan. The scale, severity and complexity of needs for emergency and transitional shelter remains high, particularly among new and protracted IDPs who require core, supplementary and seasonal assistance, as well as longer-term support to rebuild their resilience. IOM’s DTM data shows that 4.1 million IDPs who have been displaced since 2012 remain in urban and rural settlements residing in sub-standard shelters characterized by a lack of adequate privacy and dignity; poor protection from harsh weather (particularly during winter); inadequate access to safe water and sanitation facilities; lack of connection to basic infrastructure and services; poor/non-existent security of tenure and a lack of adequate settlement planning.

The Emergency Shelter and Non- Food Items (ES-NFI) cluster provides life-saving assistance to people affected by conflict and natural disaster, including the current drought-displaced population, by protecting them from the elements, mitigating protection risks and ensuring people’s dignity and safety. Priority target populations include: IDPs, returnees and vulnerable host communities. In 2019, the cluster requests US$ 48.3 million and aims to reach 820,000 vulnerable people with shelter, NFI and winterization support.

In addressing the shelter needs of displaced populations, winterization support remains a major concern as winter temperatures pivot late 2019/2020. The ES/NFI Cluster in coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), estimates that 95,350 families (667,450 individuals) will need winterization assistance during the upcoming winter season. The strategy 2019/2020 calls for an integrated response with Shelter, Food, Health and WASH clusters to holistically mitigate vulnerabilities associated with the harsh weather conditions and ensure that persons of concern are adequately protected from the cold and can cope with the harsh weather conditions. Through contributions from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, bilateral donors and the common humanitarian funding mechanisms, the current capacity available is adequate to cover winterization needs for 72,477 families, 76 per cent of the population in need. At least 22,873 families will remain unassisted during the winter period due to a funding gap of USD $ 5.3m.

IDPs are most affected by cold weather because they live in temporary or inadequate shelters and lack proper clothing, heating materials. This leads to death and an increase in U-5 child mortality from respiratory infection partly related to exposure of the elements and hospital admissions for hypothermia. In 2018; population exposed to extreme cold not only resulted in death with case-fatality rate of 8.2% but also 11.2% of admissions resulted in limb amputation.
Conflict, natural disasters and poverty continue to drive shelter and NFI needs across different population groups in Afghanistan. With conflict-induced displacement in 2019 (437,666 people) being 14 per cent higher than in 2018 (382,627 people), many of those who have been displaced, do not plan to return to places of origin (nearly 90 per cent of IDPs[1]). In 2019 the WOA assessment highlighted that 72 per cent of displaced households reporting shelter needs as their second top priority need after food for survival. Across the country, the highest shelter needs were reported from the North East and Western region by 80 per cent of the displaced population, followed by the Northern region at 72 per cent and the Central region at 71 per cent. Around two-thirds of displaced households (65 per cent) reside in collective centres, open space, makeshift shelter, tents, and poor transitional shelter that do not protect them from the elements. In urban areas, most IDP families are residing in poor, overcrowded shelters - in some cases with 4-5 households sharing a house. Displaced households struggled to sustain the cost of rent as displacement periods become prolonged and job opportunities remain low. 43 per cent of non-displaced households affected by natural disasters and conflict have damaged shelters. Of these, a staggering majority (80 per cent) were unable to repairs their own shelters due to high repair costs, in turn serving as the main reason for taking on debt. While 18 per cent of affected population reported being hosted by non-displaced members from the community, 81 per cent of the affected households stated a need for shelter support including cash for rent, 32 per cent, materials and tools for construction support, 11 per cent and transitional shelter support, 39 per cent while under hosting arrangements. With 70 per cent of Afghanistan being mountainous, many people living in high altitude areas are susceptible to harsher weather conditions. Insufficient access to blankets and heating materials for the winter season was also a significant driver of need, with 64 per cent of households reportedly owning less than one blanket per household member. These concerns disproportionately affect persons with specific needs, women girls, children and the elderly.

RESPONSE

In 2019, the cluster reached 783,704 individuals with shelter, NFIs and winterization assistance.

1. 41,610 people were provided with emergency shelter assistance including rental support, 575,154 people received basic household items (standard NFI packages) and 26,169 people received support to reconstruct or repair their homes.

2. 140,771 vulnerable individuals received heating/ fuel support to mitigate protection, health and other risks associated with harsh winter conditions.

3. As at December 2019, the cluster had 58,665 standard emergency NFI packages, 10,088 emergency shelter kits and 15,567 emergency shelter self-construction/repair tool kits prepositioned at strategic locations across the country to aid with preparedness and contingency planning.

GAPS / CHALLENGES

In 2019, the ES-NFI cluster received 65 per cent of the funding required for the year, resulting in at least 22,873 families remaining unassisted during the winter period. Shelter repair / upgrade, transitional shelter activities remained underfunded at 24% per cent with most of the funding being earmarked for winterization and NFI related activities.