

# AFGHANISTAN: Earthquake in Herat Province

## Health Situation Report No. 7

13-14 October 2023

(The Health Situation Report is issued every other day.  
The next report will be published on 16 October 2023.)



World Health  
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Afghanistan



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## SITUATION UPDATE

### Highlights

**6.3 magnitude earthquake** hit the western region in Afghanistan on 7 October 2023.

Another **6.3 magnitude earthquake** struck Herat at 5:11 am on 11 October, followed by at least three aftershocks.

Around **19,250 people** have been affected across six districts: Zindajan, Injil, Kushk/Rabat-e-Sangai, Gulran, Herat and Kohsan of Herat Province.

Health Cluster reached **21,829** affected people through **16 partners** in highly affected districts (Zindajan, Injil, Kohsan, Herat City, Kushk and Gulran).



### Overview:

The 6.3 magnitude earthquake on October 7, 2023, and another of the same magnitude on October 11, have shaken Herat province in the western part of Afghanistan. Numerous aftershocks persisted until October 14, leaving the local population in a persistent state of anxiety and fear.

Furthermore, on October 12, dust storms in Zindajan, Kohsan, and Kushk/Rabat-e-Sangai districts were reported, destroying tents used by the mobile health and nutrition teams (MHNTs). WHO and its Health Cluster have re-supplied tents to continue lifesaving services. The dust storm also damaged tents that serve as temporary shelter for survivors.

Nearly 60% of the displaced population are temporarily relocated in more than 100 tents and 10 rooms at the Gazergah Transit Centre (GTC) in Herat city. Approximately 250 individuals are in urgent need of essential food and non-food items.

As of October 13th, OCHA Afghanistan has reported that over 19,250 individuals, comprising 3,197 families, have been directly affected by the earthquakes across various districts, including Zindajan (1,398), Injil (914), Kushk /Rabat-e-Sangai (385), Gulran (360), Herat (121), and Khosan (19). To date, 1,384 people (759 females and 625 males) are reported to have died and 1,853 people are injured (1,137 females and 716 males) by the earthquakes. Most of the casualties are women and children.

A rapid satellite imagery analysis conducted by the Global Shelter Cluster indicates around 21,282 buildings have sustained damage as a consequence of the earthquake. It is anticipated that the extent of damage may increase as further analysis and assessments are conducted.

WHO and its health partners are collaborating closely with local health authorities to intensify response efforts, addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of the earthquake survivors. As of October 13th, WHO and Health Cluster partners, have reached of 21,829 individuals across various districts, including Zindajan (17,687), Injil (1,804), Kohsan (205), Herat city (1,720), Kushk (336), and Gulran (77).

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE

## Health Cluster Coordination

- As of 13 October, WHO and Health Cluster partners, have reached 21,829 individuals affected by the earthquake across various districts: Zindajan (17,687), Injil (1,804), Kohsan (205), Herat city (1,720), Kushk (336) and Gulran (77). These efforts have resulted in the following assistance:
  - Primary health care (PHC) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services were provided to 18,960 people.
  - Trauma care and rehabilitation services were extended to 2,008 individuals.
  - A total of 796 people received various essential kits, including mama and baby kits, dignity kits and individual clean delivery kits.
  - An additional 65 individuals received support for communicable disease outbreak response.
- Furthermore, a multisectoral joint needs assessment has been successfully completed in the earthquake-affected areas of Herat province. The assessment report is currently in progress and is expected to be finalized within the next few days.
- This assessment will provide insights into the immediate and longer-term needs of the affected communities, aiding in the formulation of effective response strategies.



*Provision of physiotherapy services to the affected people – Credit HI*

## Health Facility Situation

- In the earthquake-affected districts, 21 primary health care facilities have been reported damaged in Herat City, and in seven districts: Guzura, Gulran, Zindajan, Ghoryan, Keshk, Karokh and Pashtoon Zarghoon. The damage affected the service delivery for an estimated 580,025 people.
- In addition, at least two hospitals, Herat Regional Hospital and Sakina Yakoubi Maternity Hospital, sustained minor damage to be assessed.
- WHO deploys an engineer for further detailed assessment of health facilities and the development of rehabilitation plans.

## Trauma and Hospital Care

- From 13 to 14 October, there was no new case referred to the Herat Regional Hospital.
- The total number of admitted cases remained 698 since 7 October 2023.
- Currently, 39 patients are hospitalized in the regional hospital.

### Primary Healthcare Service Provision

- On 12 October, 20 health teams were mobilized to serve 17 affected villages across Zindajan, Kohsan and Gulran districts to provide primary health care and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), supported by the following: 5 by IRW; 5 by World Vision; 2 by AADA; 2 by CARE; 2 by IOM; 2 by OCCD/WHO; and 2 by OHPM/UNICEF.
- In Zindajan district: 18 health teams were deployed to the following villages: Koshkak, Mahal Wardakha (Karnal), Sia Aab, Kajlal, Chahak Mirandaziha, Cheshmah, Sar Baland, Cheshma Ghor, Sanjab, Lakasang, Siha, Asyabadk, Nayeb Rafi, Ghar Mooshak, and Qasr-e-Shirin.
- In Khosan district, one health team was established in Ahmadabad village
- In Gulran district, another health team was established in Botan village.
- Additionally, 35 Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs) from various organizations: World Vision (6); IRC (6); IRW (6); Jhpiego (5); IAM (5); AADA (3); CARE (2) and IOM (2) are on standby to deploy as needed.
- This coordinated effort ensures that affected communities receive critical medical care and support promptly.
- CARE contributed 12 Connexes, and IRW provided 7 Connexes for use by health teams delivering essential services in the affected areas. The distribution of these Connexes among partner organizations operating in the affected areas was coordinated by the Regional Health Cluster Coordination Team.



*WHO teams talk to communities displaced by the earthquake to assess health needs.*

### Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

- IAM, WASSA and War Child UK are providing Psychological First Aid and specialized psychiatric services for the affected communities of Zindajan, Gulran and Kohsan districts.
- WHO deployed two MHPSS experts for capacity-building activities, technical assistance and coordination of MHPSS technical working group (TWG).
- WHO, together with the Regional Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Group (MHPSS TWG), will conduct the following trainings to first line providers, starting 15 October 2023:
  - 3-day mhGAP training for all doctors at MHTs in affected villages, including fixed health facilities (only 1 at Kernel BHCs), targeting medical doctors (17-19 Oct)
  - 1-day Psychological First Aid (PFA) with Stress Management, targeting nurses and midwives (15 Oct)
  - 3-day mhGAP training for doctors on BPHS and EPHS in Herat City, targeting medical doctors (23-25 Oct)
- 1-day PFA with stress management, targeting community healthcare workers, community health supervisors, young adult volunteers and community volunteers (15-25 Oct, Nov)

## Disease Surveillance/Potential Diseases Outbreak Prevention & Response

- Considering the fragile condition among the affected population, WHO is working with the National Disease Surveillance Response (NDSR) team to enhance preparedness for potential communicable disease outbreaks such as measles, acute respiratory infections (ARI), tetanus, and acute watery diarrhea (AWD).
- NDSR and two WHO-supported surveillance support teams (SST) have been deployed to Zindajan district for active surveillance in affected villages since 9 October.
- By 13 October, a total of 279 ARI cases and 23 AWD cases were reported. All the cases received required treatment and health education through MHNTs. Six people were tested for COVID-19 using Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) and they yielded negative results.
- A total of 150 cholera RDT and 500 COVID-19 RDT are available in Herat NDSR. In addition, 300 viral transport medium (VTM) of influenza was shipped from the central public health laboratory (CPHL) to the Herat NDSR.
- The Regional EPI Management Team distributed vaccines to all partner organizations involved in routine vaccination services to ensure continuity of immunization as part of the immunization program.



*Surveillance teams for the detection of respiratory infections, measles and suspected cholera cases are deployed in five villages of Zenda Jan on 12th Oct 2023*

## Reproductive Maternal and Child Health

- In collaboration with the Afghanistan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (AFSOG), WHO deployed female healthcare workers, comprising of midwives, medical doctors and Obstetrician-Gynecologist (OB/GYN).
- WHO facilitated the allocation of the team to different clinics to provide reproductive health services for a week.
- These healthcare professionals are working in close coordination with various partners, including IOM, OCCD, OHPM, AADA, IRW, and WVI, to extend their services to the affected communities in villages such as Koshkak, Chushmy Ghor, Siyab, and Sarb land.



*Afghanistan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology (AFSOG) deployed to earthquake-affected areas, supported by WHO.*

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services

- The Regional Health Cluster Coordination Team collaborated with UNHCR and the WASH Cluster to ensure the provision of shelter and WASH facilities for the health teams deployed to the affected areas, as well as referral facilities.
- WASH Cluster provided 20 water tanks to the 20 health teams operating in the affected areas.

## Operational Support and Logistics

- WHO delivered 50 tents and 200 IV stands to Herat today. A total of 16 tents – to be used as clinics- have been delivered to the partners (OCCD, AADA, IAM and AIL) operating in the affected areas, including Naib Rafi, Gharmushak, Azghilak, Shakeebam, Langar villages in Zindajan district to replace the damaged tents due to the dust storms.
- WHO dispatched 1000 COVID-19 RDT kits (for 25,000 tests) and 30 cholera investigation test kits (for 600 Cholera RDT and 600 Cary blair).
- AFGA will provide 1000 clean delivery kits to the partners for distribution to the health teams/facilities.

## GAPS and URGENT NEEDS

- The prolonged displacement of people demands an increase in healthcare worker capacity, along with medicine, medical supplies, and equipment. Due to ongoing concerns linked to aftershocks, a shortage of healthcare workers has been reported.
- Assessments reveal damage to 21 primary healthcare facilities in addition to some major hospitals, with one completely non-functional and 20 partially damaged. Ongoing aftershocks pose a continuous threat to these structures. Urgent rehabilitation is needed based on the assessment.
- Displaced individuals, suffering from trauma, loss, depression, and post-traumatic stress, require critical mental health and psychosocial support.
- The mobile health and nutrition teams currently operating in tents are facing significant infrastructure challenges. These challenges include:
  - The absence of reliable electricity, which could be addressed through the use of solar power systems, and the need for access to clean water.
  - Proper Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, such as toilets and washing basins, are essential for ensuring the well-being of both healthcare workers and patients.
  - The limitation of space in maintaining patient privacy and conducting Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services, including normal deliveries and the insertion of Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices (IUCDs), within the tents.
  - The absence of solid/medical waste management equipment (e.g., trash bins) has led to indiscriminate dumping of waste, including plastic and food leftovers.



*Displacement of people continues to pose health risks to communities affected by the earthquake.*

## Story from the Field: Rebuilding for Family's Survival

On a radiant, sun-drenched day, Abdul Ghaffar, a house builder, labored diligently to take out his daughters' belongings, buried beneath layers of suffocating mud. This pile of mud had once been his cherished home shared with his wife and three daughters.

The hours prior, Zainab (120, Sakeena (9), and Fatima (5), awaited their father, in their muddy house in the Zindajan district, Herat. Abdul Ghaffar had left to buy food. Then, he received the dreaded phone call – a powerful earthquake struck the village. He hastily rushed back to Wardakha, where he has been living for 30 years. His village was unrecognizable.

"It was as if the world had come to an end," he recounted, struggling to find words to describe the day. The once-thriving homes now resembled eroded clay cliffs. The earthquake had almost destroyed the entire town, burying lots of souls.

Abdul explored everywhere, desperately searching for his daughters, but they were nowhere to be found. Words reached him that some of the bodies and injured had been brought to the Herat Regional Hospital. With hesitation, he made his way there.

The hospital was flooded with people seeking medical aid. Abdul tenaciously checked each room, his heart pounding with nervousness. He found his daughters, with one of them in critical condition. "A sense of tranquility washed over me. They were alive," he whispered while his eyes glistened with tears.

Rescue workers had helped his daughters after the earthquake and brought them to the hospital. But amidst his relief, he couldn't forget his nieces who did not survive the earthquake.

Surrounded by the ruins, Abdul Ghaffar contemplates reconstructing his home and devising a plan for his family's survival during the harsh winter ahead.



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