**Overview**
Nearly 11 million people in Afghanistan are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) due to conflict, COVID-19, high food prices and rampant unemployment, between March and May 2021 (the lean season in most parts of the country). This includes around 7.8 million people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 3.2 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and require urgent action to save lives, reduce food gaps and save and protect livelihoods. Across the urban areas, around 2.73 million people face high levels of acute food insecurity, of which 717,000 people are in Emergency.

Between June and November 2021 (harvest and post-harvest seasons), a slight improvement in food security is expected, with the number of people in IPC Phase 3 or above decreasing to 9.5 million, with 6.7 million in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and 2.7 million in Phase 4 (Emergency). The areas that were in Phase 4 in the current analysis period are expected to remain in Phase 4 in the projection period, despite slight seasonal improvements. It is likely that households' food access will improve slightly with the onset of the harvest, better job opportunities, as well as seasonal decreases in prices; however, rainfall forecasts suggest that the harvest will be below average, which will likely affect food availability during the following lean season. The food security situation has relatively improved compared to the last three years, and compared to the projection from the previous analysis. The improvement is owing to lower impacts of COVID-19 than initially forecast and scaling up of humanitarian food assistance in response to the COVID-19 crisis. A significant scale-up of humanitarian assistance since the last quarter of 2020 has greatly contributed to mitigate acute food insecurity in the current period, especially in provinces that were projected to be in Phase 4 in the previous analysis for the current period. However, the food security situation is still concerning and expected to deteriorate further during the 2021-2022 lean season.

**Key Drivers**
- **Conflict**
  - Ongoing conflict has resulted in population displacements and damage to livelihoods. Between January and mid-March 2021, an estimated 42,000 new people were displaced internally due to conflict.
- **COVID-19 Impact**
  - The COVID-19 crisis imposed a burden on the economy & private sector in 2020. This resulted in a reduction in daily wage opportunities and small trader income, limiting households’ financial access.
- **Reduced Income and Unemployment**
  - Households face increased stress on their financial access due to reduced income and persistent unemployment, causing increasing food insecurity.
- **High Food Prices**
  - High food prices further exacerbate households’ food access and their purchasing power, especially those already living below the poverty line. An estimated 10-20 percent price increase has been observed compared with the five-year average in the context of COVID-19 and economic downturn, whereas, a 5 – 10 percent reduction in food prices has been observed compared to the 2020 pandemic peak.
- **Dry Spells**
  - Cumulative precipitation has been below average during the wet season. As a result, crop development is also below average. This is likely to impact water availability for irrigation of first and second crops in 2021, limiting food availability compared to average years.
- **Inadequate Irrigation Water**
  - Snowpack development is also below average. This is likely to impact water available for irrigation of first and second crops in 2021, limiting food availability compared to average years.
- **IDPs/other settlements**
  - Areas not analysed

**Assumptions for the Projected Situation**
Conflict is likely to increase in the projection period above the usual spring trends, with displacements towards urban centers. COVID-19 and the international economic situation will continue to affect food security, with remittances likely decreasing from Iran/Pakistan and slightly increasing from the Gulf countries. Below-average precipitation is likely to result in below-average wheat production in 2021. However, the late rainfall in some parts of the country resulted in a relative increase in spring wheat cultivation. The harvest will improve food security conditions in the projected period. However, the below-average stocks linked to the expected below-average precipitation and yield will affect the next lean season. Shortages of fodder and grazing areas for livestock are likely to result in below-average livestock body conditions/productivity. The Afghan economy is expected to rebound, subject to an improved situation in the country. Food prices will likely decrease seasonally, but remain above the five-year average. The income from agricultural labor opportunities is expected to be below-average due to the below-average production situation. The purchasing power will consequently reduce. Emergency humanitarian food and livelihood assistance, which has been significantly scaled up in the current period, is forecasted to continue to be at the same levels, along with government assistance through the Dastarkhwan-e-Meli program.

**Humanitarian Assistance**
Immediate and urgent humanitarian actions are needed for populations experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. IPC Phase 3 or above to save lives, reduce food gaps and protect livelihoods.

**Security Situation Monitoring**
The US and its allies’ troops withdrawal, the ongoing Afghan Peace Talks and their impact on the security situation should be closely monitored, particularly in provinces that trigger the displacement of rural population to urban cities.

**La Niña Situation Monitoring**
In case an early and severe lean season is confirmed, because of drought-like conditions and the increase of pests and diseases; a scale-up in response may be required in rural areas to support those most in need: agriculture labor and small scale agriculture and livestock farmers.
Afghanistan Crisis Background and Time Series 2018-2020

Afghanistan has suffered decades of one of the deadliest conflicts and recurrent natural disasters, resulting in one of the region’s biggest food crises. Afghanistan faces one of the world’s most acute internal displacement crises. It has experienced protracted conflict, ongoing insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and natural hazards such as droughts, floods, crop pest attacks and earthquakes.

Conflict and Population Displacement

With over 40 years of conflict, armed fighting continues to rage, exposing civilians, particularly women and children, to deadly daily risks, population displacement, disease outbreaks, and choking the country’s unstable economy. Internal displacement and migration have become familiar survival strategies for many Afghans. Millions of Afghan individuals, families and communities migrated within and outside the country. Rural communities mainly migrated to nearby urban or semi-urban settlements, where security is relatively better. The outside the country. Millions of Afghan individuals, families and communities migrated within and outside the country. Rural communities mainly migrated to nearby urban or semi-urban settlements, where security is relatively better. The land is still affordable or available free of the rental cost for temporary accommodation. While these settlements may provide a safe living from conflict with non-state actors, internal communal conflict on land use, lack of basic services like electricity, water, access to latrines, education, and poor shelter conditions are key issues. Due to the severity of the conflict and its sudden nature, most of these vulnerable IDP’s livelihood assets are either looted or sold at low prices.

Natural Disasters

Afghanistan is prone to several natural disasters, including earthquakes, flooding, drought, landslides and avalanches. Earthquakes are relatively frequent, more frequent in the north and northeast, often triggering landslides. Floods are common in the spring when snow begins to melt, and rainfall is heavy in the south & southeast. Located in areas of high seismic activity, and given the rugged and mountainous nature of the country and the location of villages, towns, and cities, there is a high propensity for widespread death and destruction whenever an earthquake, landslide, mudslide, avalanche or flooding occurs. Since 2000, there have been nine major earthquakes. From recent disasters that occurred, it is estimated that at least 6,000 families (over 42,000 individuals) across 21 provinces have been affected by avalanches, flooding, landslides and heavy snowfall since February 2014.[1]

COVID-19

Although Afghanistan’s case count currently stands at around 58,000, including over 2,300 deaths, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a far-reaching impact on the country’s ailing economy and food security. It is believed that cases are underestimated because of low testing capacity and reporting issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has set back Afghanistan’s economic growth by several years. It exposed structural and resource gaps in responding to unforeseen events such as pandemics. The country had to reallocate resources from long-term development priorities to fighting this health and food insecurity crisis. Remittances from and cross-border movement with Iran and Pakistan were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. People will continue to face a more complex situation of decreased remittances than average – mainly from Iran due to its currency depreciation – low to no employment opportunities and more competition in the job market due to people returning from Iran, Pakistan and within Afghanistan. Conversely, it is assumed that the level of remittance from Gulf countries will likely increase due to conflict, COVID-19, high food prices, and rampant unemployment between March and May 2021.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity and hunger persist in Afghanistan. Due to the key drivers mentioned above, many people do not have the resources or access to consistently obtain enough nutritious food to lead healthy lives. Since 2018, when the first countrywide IPC analysis was conducted, most of Afghanistan was classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse, with millions of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. Badakhshan, one of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, has almost consistently reported critical levels of acute food insecurity with a population classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Currently, nearly 11.1 million people in Afghanistan are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) due to conflict, COVID-19, high food prices, and rampant unemployment between March and May 2021.

Food Insecurity

According to the IPC analysis, over 10.9 million people (or 38.5% of the population) were under high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or worse) between April and May 2020. This number increased to over 11.1 million people in November 2020, when the countrywide IPC analysis was conducted. The population classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between June and November 2020 is expected to increase to over 13.1 million people in November 2021.

Afghanistan Crisis Background and Time Series 2018-2020

Over 11.1 million people in Afghanistan were classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between June and November 2020.

Food Insecurity

Afghanistan Crisis Background and Time Series 2018-2020

Over 10.9 million people in Afghanistan were classified in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) between April and May 2020.