

MULTI SECTOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT - KEY FINDINGS

Afghanistan, February 2022

The purpose of this MSNA was to identify key gaps and needs where CARE operates, with the view to inform future programming priorities and better understand the impacts of the current situation on humanitarian needs.

A total of 364 households were interviewed from 20 districts across 8 provinces (Herat, Kandahar, Ghazni, Khost, Paktia, Parwan, Kapisa, and Balkh) in December 2021. An average of 18 interviews were collected per district. The survey administered a household questionnaire and a focus group discussion (2 per community –female and male) in each district.

Key Findings on Education, Gender, Humanitarian Access, and Food Insecurity are presented here. For more data and information, please refer to the full MSNA report.

Priority Needs

The top 5 concerns raised by the communities were all related to the consequences of Afghanistan's current economic and humanitarian crisis:

1. **food security** (72% of respondents),
2. **lack of employment opportunities** (66%),
3. **livelihood and economic empowerment** (56%),
4. **lack of access to humanitarian aid** (36%), and
5. **lack of access to shelter/ housing options** (36%).

Food Security and Livelihoods

Food security continues to deteriorate due to the contracting national economy, loss of employment, reductions in income, lack of employment opportunities and food price increases. Credit market purchases were reported to be the main source of food by 32% of the households. The high reliance on credit purchases could be attributed to low incomes against high prices. This is an indication that households might be failing to meet their daily food needs without external assistance. **About 30% of the households reported borrowing from other households as their main source of food,** again reinforcing the point that households are likely to be facing difficulties in meeting their minimum food security thresholds without external assistance. **Cash purchases from the market was reported by only 16% of the households** with more male headed households (17%) reporting this source compared to female headed households (13%).

The end of winter might not bring a much-needed relief. The below-average precipitation level forecasted might positively impact accessibility in some of these areas, but will likely negatively affect pasture in early spring, winter and spring irrigation, cultivation and production at the later stage.

Food insecurity and lack of livelihoods lead Afghan families to rely on negative coping strategies. In the absence of sustainable solutions, especially livelihoods solutions, these solutions have a bearing on the future ability of households to meet their needs.

This includes:

1. **Borrowing cash** (27%),
2. **Eating less food** (20%) - this is particularly true for female-headed households (mentioned by 25% versus 19% for male headed households).¹
3. **Relying on relatives** (19%),
4. **Child labour** (9%),
5. **Stop seeking medical care** (7%),
6. **Stop sending children to school** (6%),
7. **Marrying girl children** (4%).

34% of the households reported that high prices of goods on the markets impact their ability to access adequate food and non-food commodities in adequate quantities. As a result, households tended to limit expenditure on non-food essentials to acquire food, which has a negative impact on their general wellbeing.

Access to Humanitarian Support

Only 7% of the households interviewed had received humanitarian assistance in the 3 months preceding the survey. The proportion of male (7%) and female (6%) headed households who received assistance was similar. The most preferred type of humanitarian assistance was **multi-purpose cash assistance** (reported by 23% of households). The reason why it was the most preferred includes the flexibility that comes with this type of assistance. The second most preferred type of assistance was **food distributions** (20% of households).

Impact on Access to Education

Children, especially, girls, struggle to attend school. The situation is much worse for girls in male headed households: 68% of the school-age girls (5-17 years old) were not attending school, compared to 38% for female headed households. Similarly, male-headed households tended to have less boys going to schools than female-headed households. In comparison, in 2020, 52% of school-age girls were not enrolled in school, and 33% of school-age boys were not, according to the World Bank, citing the UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

Economic challenges were the main reason preventing children to go to school, mentioned by 35% of households. The situation was worse for female headed households with 44% compared to 33% for male headed households. The **lack of female teachers** was mentioned by 13% of male-headed households, but not by female-headed households. 12% of both female- and male-headed households mentioned the **unavailability of schools** as the third challenge to education ; 11% of households mentioned **social and cultural barriers** as the fourth main concern ; and 10% of female headed households mentioned **security** as a concern.

Impact on Women and GBV

Women almost exclusively (up to 88%) said that male unemployment had driven an increase in GBV, linking the current economic crisis to its consequences on women and girls. **Greater risks and reports of increased prevalence of GBV come on top of increased feelings of exclusion from services.** A common theme during FGDs with women was a reduction in access to specialised services since the onset of COVID in 2020. CARE protection staff reported that, in general, it had been more difficult to access women in need and ensure they can be referred to appropriate medical, psychological and legal services during the pandemic.

¹ This confirms CARE's earlier findings. In June 2021, CARE Rapid Gender Analysis found that men were three times more likely to report having a balanced diet than women, and that they could eat more dairy and meat than women.