

# Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM)

## Round 12

March, 2026  
Afghanistan

### KEY MESSAGES

- A substantial share of settlements (78%) reportedly experienced economic shocks, slightly lower than in March 2025 (90%), **possibly indicating some improvement in economic conditions across the country**, beyond seasonal effects
- With the recent escalation of conflict, secondary sources have recorded direct incidents mainly in Paktya, Khost, and Nangarhar. However, according to HSM, a substantial proportion of key informants **in Kunar (24%) and some settlements in Kandahar (2%) reported conflict as a shock to their communities**, suggesting [potential underreporting and overlooked impacts](#).
- [Afghanistan remains one of the countries with the highest maternal mortality rates](#). In this context, **a substantial share of settlements (20%) reported that women relied on non-institutional maternity care**, including home-based care (12%) and traditional birth attendants (8%). This was particularly pronounced in Badghis (66%) and Ghor (63%).
- Consistent with the previous round, **distance remained the main barrier to boys' school attendance (in 85% settlements)**, while the **unavailability of girls' schools** was the primary barrier to girls' education below the grade 6 (63%).
- Nationally, **food remained the top priority need for most communities (76%)**, followed by livelihoods (60%), while **other priority needs emerged in specific areas**; for example, shelter was more frequently reported as a priority need in the Eastern region, likely linked to recent displacement.

### CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, driven by decades of conflict, economic fragility, and climate shocks - such as drought and floodings.

[According to OCHA](#), Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises in 2026, with approximately 21.9 million people, nearly 45% of the country, in need of humanitarian assistance,

The Humanitarian Situation Monitoring ([HSM](#)) seeks to inform the prioritization and understanding of needs of communities across the country, by monitoring quarterly the evolution of vulnerabilities, coping strategies, gaps in basic services, and needs of assessed communities.

### ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

The HSM is a nationwide, community-level, multi-sectoral needs assessment carried out quarterly across all districts of Afghanistan. It uses structured interviews with key informants in selected settlements to track needs and emerging trends, and to support district prioritization.

HSM Round 12 was conducted **from 16 February to 14 March 2026**, with a total of **12,867** key informants surveyed across all 401 districts in the country. The data and analysis files can be downloaded through this [link](#).

Figures presented throughout this report are to be interpreted as the percentage (%) of assessed settlements where key informants reported the indicator described. Further details of the methodology can be found in page 10.

The **most commonly reported priority needs for most people** in assessed settlements, as reported by the interviewed key informants (KIs)



**Food**  
76%



**Livelihood**  
60%



**Cash**  
45%



**Water**  
32%



**Health**  
31%



**Education**  
18%



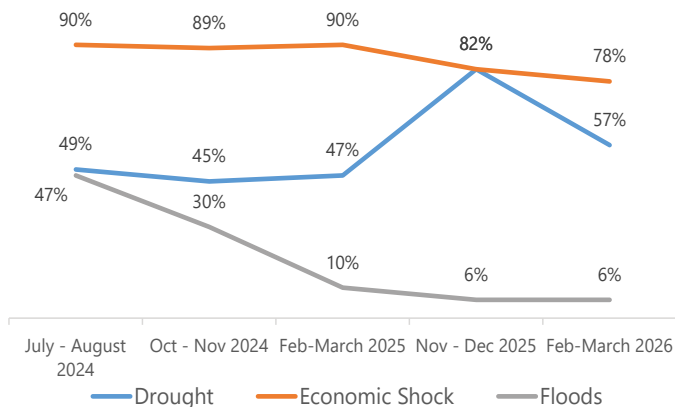
## SHOCKS AND DISPLACEMENT

### Key Findings

- [Despite above-average precipitation in the country](#), a substantial share of settlements (57%) reportedly experienced drought conditions in March 2026, marking an increase compared to March 2025 (47%). This suggests that, despite improved seasonal rainfall, many communities may still be facing water insufficiency.
- Movement challenges during the past winter were reportedly experienced by 36% of settlements in the country, particularly in Western (43%) and Central Highlands (46%) regions. In these regions, communities more frequently relied on food stored indoors from the previous harvest. However, in both regions, there were **high reports of food damage or loss, attributed to a lack of proper food storage** (In 45% of settlements).
- [Considering the 2.8 million people who returned from Pakistan and Iran in 2025](#), the distribution of returnees appears to remain similar to the end of 2025, with over 53% of settlements reporting the presence of cross-border returnees. However, **recent returns (6 months prior to data collection) were more visible in the Northern and Southern regions**.

Most KIs have consistently reported since 2024 that their settlements experienced economic shocks. In March 2026, a small decrease may reflect better economic conditions (figure 1).

**Figure 1: % of settlements where KIs reported shocks affecting their communities (2024-2026)**



**Most common reported impacts of economic shocks, as a proportion of KIs in assessed settlements.**



In **36%** of assessed settlements, KIs reported **Movement challenges during the past winter, particularly in Western and Central Highlands regions. Food damage due to lack of storage, restricted** access to markets and healthcenters were the main challenges faced by most communities during these months.

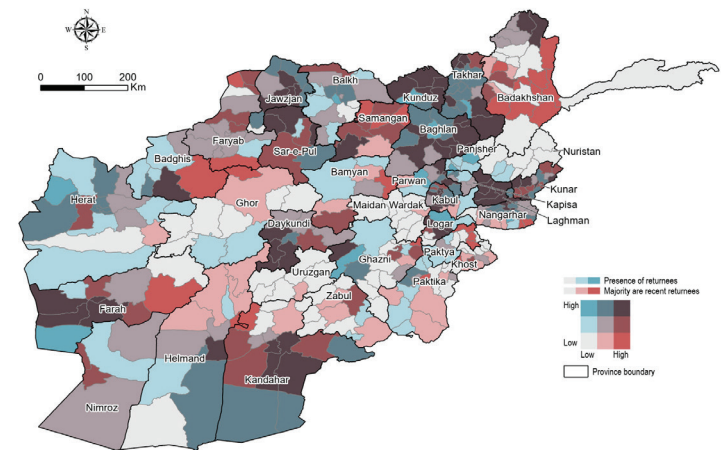


In **53%** of settlements, KIs reported there is presence of cross-border returnees, 67% of them are in North-east, and 62% in North. In **35%** the majority reportedly arrived within the last 6 months.

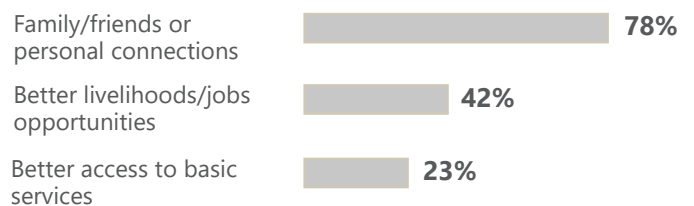


In **38%** of settlements, KIs reported presence of IDPs. 17% of settlements reported the majority arrived within the previous 6 months.

**Reported presence of returnees vs most arrived in the past 6 months (recent return), as % of KIs reporting. (Dark colors show reported presence of recent returnees)**



**The main reported reasons for displaced people to move to their current settlements are:**



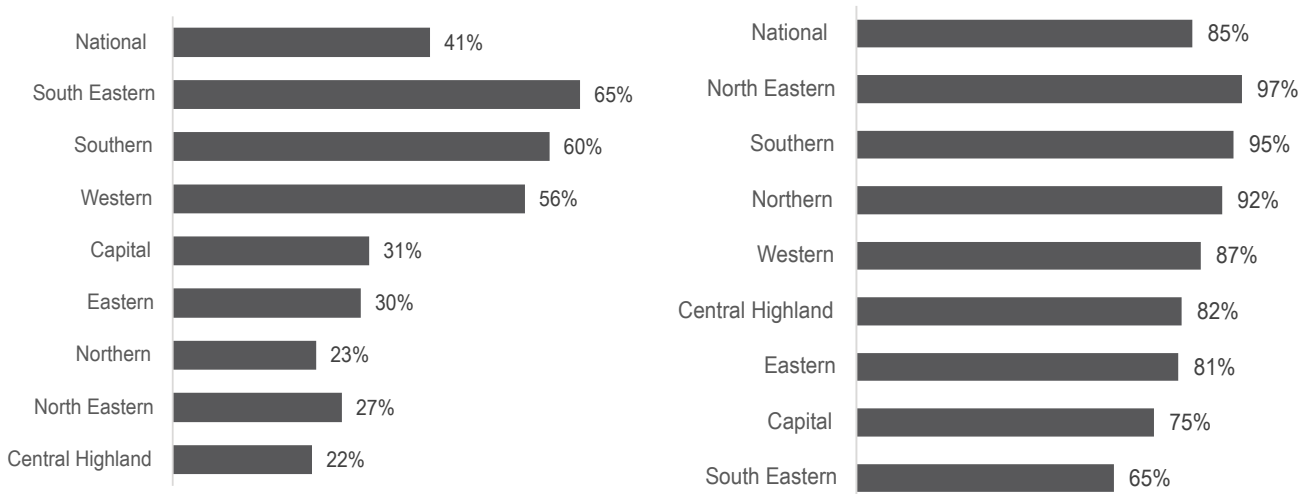
**LIVELIHOODS**

**Key Findings**

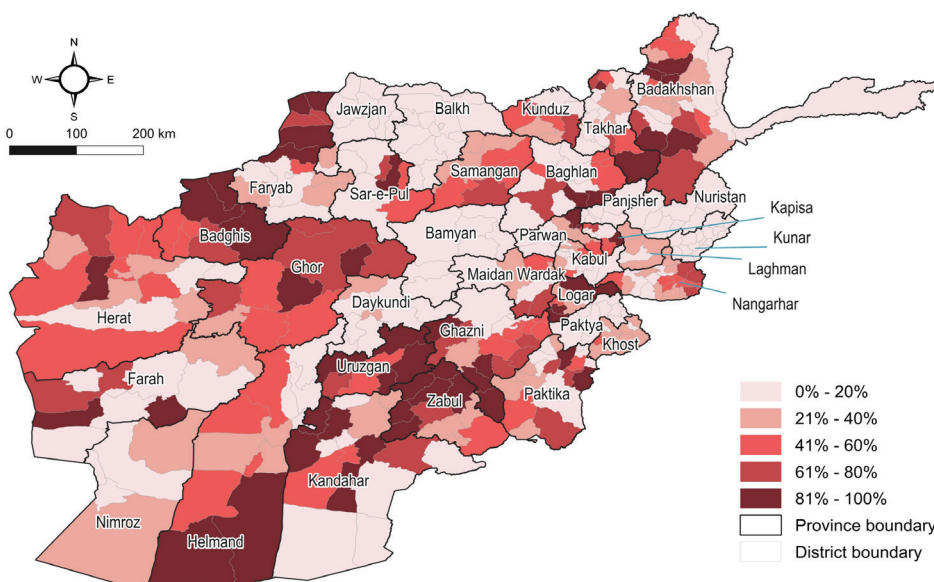
- [With the recent border closure with Pakistan and the lower production of food in 2025](#), about half (54%) of settlements in the country reportedly experienced major and sudden price increases. These were mostly reported in Parwan (93%), Uruzgan (94%), Kapisa (83%) and Panjshir (87%).
- Among the 48% of settlements reporting access to pasture land, **only 17% of KIIs reported that pasture conditions were better than last year. In this context, livelihood opportunities for households relying on livestock production remained limited** partly due to [below-average precipitation at the beginning of the year](#).
- **Female employment remained low**, similar to the previous round, with KIIs in 33% of settlements reporting that no women were working. Additionally, women in 41% of settlements were reportedly **unable to access markets to buy or sell food and non food items**, further restricting their livelihood opportunities. These challenges were reported more frequently in the South, South Eastern, and Western regions.
- In 17% of settlements there was reportedly a **very serious problem because people do not have enough income, money or resources** to meet their needs. These perceived problems were reported substantially more in Baghlan (44%), Badghis (41%), and Kunduz (39%).

**Women could not access markets to buy or sell, as % of KIIs reporting in assessed settlements, by region**

**Major and sudden increase in food or non-food prices, as % of KIIs reporting, by region**



**% of settlements where KIIs reported women are NOT participating in income generating activities**





## EMERGENCY SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS (ES/NFIs)

### Key Findings

- In 19% of settlements, KIs reported serious or very serious problem with poor or lack of shelter in their communities. Economic constraints were the main reported problem (90%), while physical access limitations (e.g., damaged roads or lack of transport) were notably reported in provinces such as Kunar and Nuristan in the context of cross-border tensions with Pakistan.
- **Severe or very severe building damage** was reportedly present in 12% of settlements, mainly in Kunduz (32%) and Uruzgan (22%) and Kunar (21%).
- [Consistent with the reported increase in housing demand and prices in Afghanistan](#), the number of settlements where the most common tenancy arrangements are renting remained the same as in last round (28%), hosting for free (remained the same also, 24%). Squatting, while reported at low levels overall (5%), was still present in provinces such as Kandahar (24%) and Nuristan (19%).
- KIs in a few (4%) of the settlements reported they have been aware of households threatened with or forced to evict from the house - this was particularly the case in some provinces like Uruzgan (17%), Kunar, Nuristan (14% in each), and Kabul (10%).

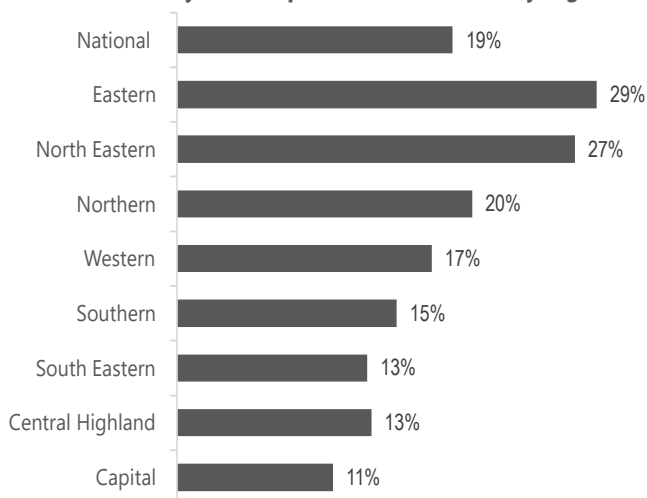


In 19% of settlements across the country, KIs reported a serious problem because **people in their communities do not have access to adequate shelter.**

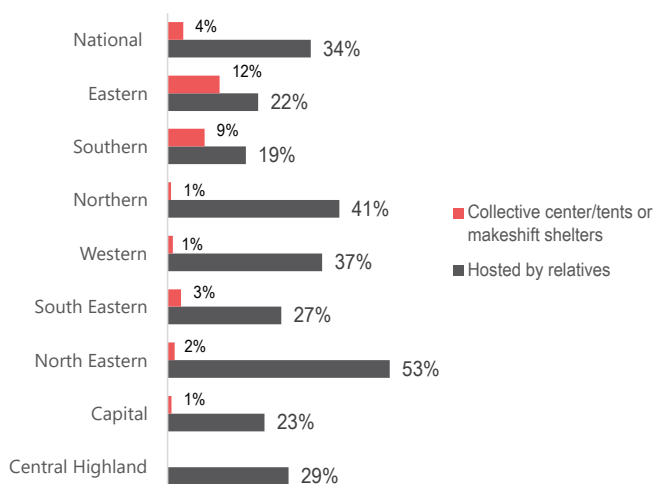


Of the 53% of settlements with reported presence of CB returnees, in 22% the majority reportedly rented a house, while **in 3% the majority reportedly lived in tents or makeshift shelters.**

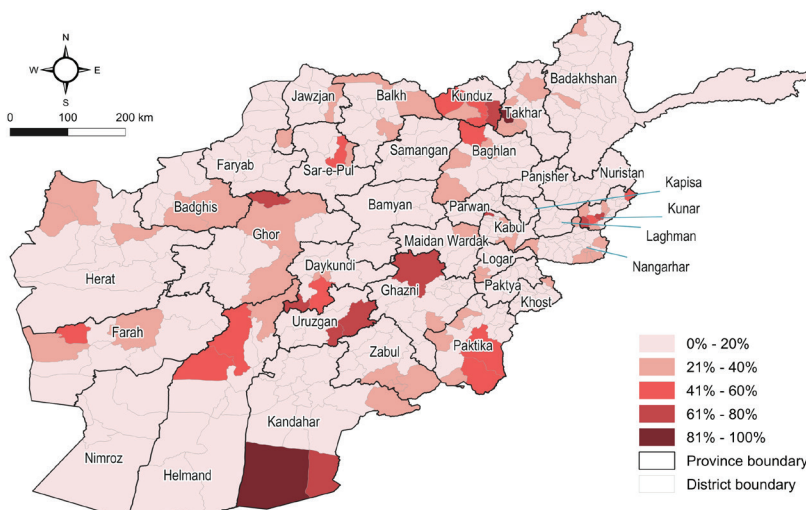
Serious or very serious problem with shelter by region:



% of settlements by reported type of tenancy most CB returnees live in:



% of settlements where KIs reported severe and very severe damage of buildings in their settlements (many buildings are unusable).

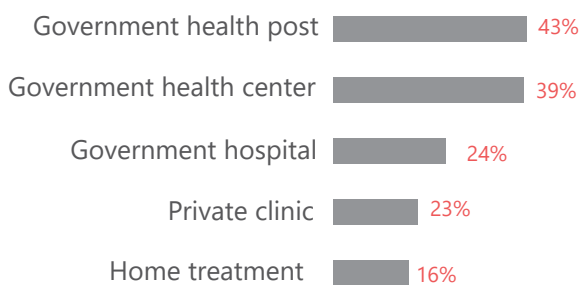


# HEALTH AND NUTRITION

## Key Findings

- **Barriers to access adequate healthcare** were primarily supply- and cost-related, with KIs in **75%** of settlements citing a **lack of medicines or equipment** and **53%** citing **unaffordability**. Medicines or equipment were particularly lacking in the South-eastern (80%) and Northern (82%), and Central Highlands (84%) regions.
- [After the closure of some 485 health facilities in Afghanistan following the suspension of U.S. funding in January 2025](#), access to healthcare remained constrained in **17% of settlements nationwide, especially in Ghor (51%), Farah (43%), and Baghlan province (38%)**
- In **38%** of the assessed settlements, KIs reported that **there are not enough doctors** available to respond to the needs of patients. In **23%**, they reported that **there are not enough midwives**. In **12%**, **maternity care was reportedly provided at home**.
- In 21% of settlements nationwide, KIs indicated that **health facilities were not safe and easily accessible for women and girls**. Similar to previous years, this was more common in the South (37%) and South-eastern (33%) regions.

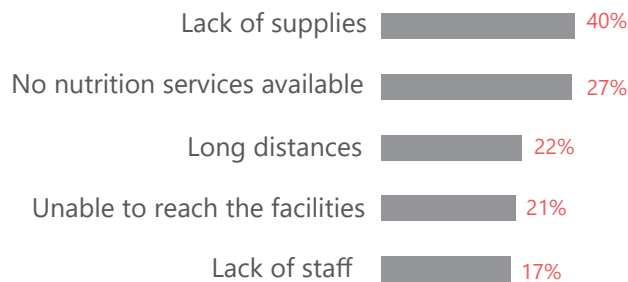
### % of settlements by reported main type of health centers that most people had access to:



In 12% of settlements, key informants reported **no maternity services, with women relying on self-care at home**. This was most common in the Western (28%) and Southern (19%) regions.

In 17% of settlements, people **are reportedly aware of the existence of nutrition services** nearby their locations.

### % of settlements by reported main concerns regarding nutrition services

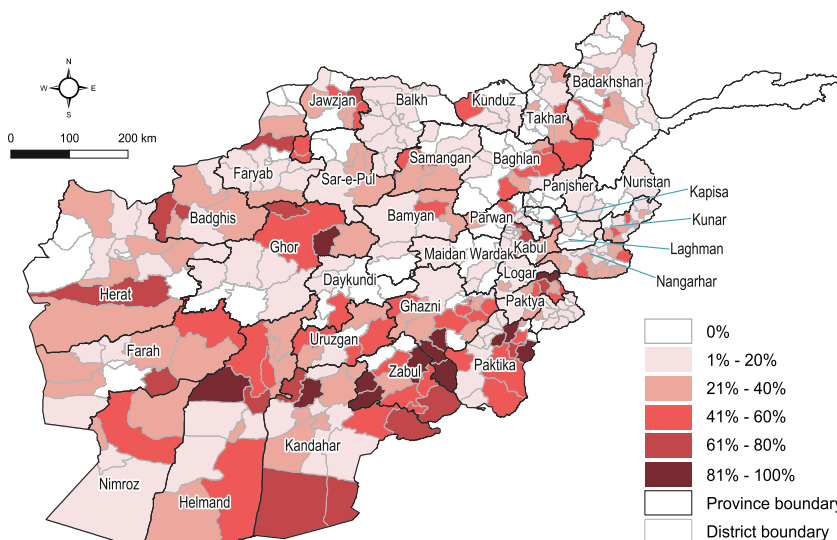


In 56% of settlements, KIs reported **lack of medical staff** in the health facilities.

In 13% of settlements, KIs reported the **healthcare facilities are structurally damaged**.

In 26% of settlements, KIs reported **damaged roads or no transport** to access health services.

### % of settlements where KIs reported health facilities were not safe and accessible for women and girls



## WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

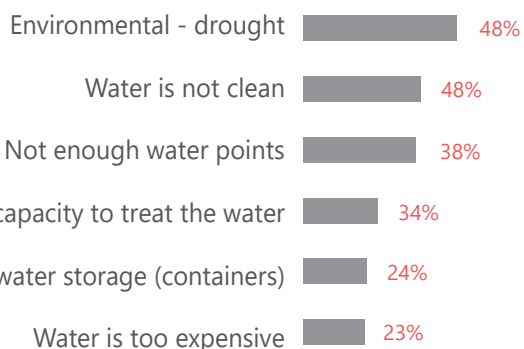
### Key Findings

- In 23% of settlements across the country, **water was sometimes or often insufficient for the majority** of households. This was substantially higher in Baghlan (40%) and Faryab (40%).
- In 45% of settlements, **water sources were reportedly damaged**, similar proportion to the previous HSM rounds, indicating a persistent and unresolved problem across the country.
- Public water sources were reportedly often **unsafe and inaccessible for women and girls** in 16% of settlements nationwide, mainly in Southern (24%) and North-eastern (24%) regions.
- In 23% of the assessed settlements, KIs reported that **few households in their settlements have access to functioning sanitation facility (latrine/toilet)**. This was heightened in Kandahar, Kunar, Nuristan and Khost provinces.
- **Access to soap was limited** for the majority of people in 17% of settlements in the country, particularly in the Western region (45%) - Badghis (81%), Farah (76%) reporting no access to soap.

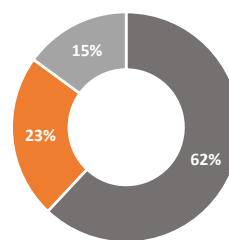


In 9% of settlements, KIs reported there is a **very serious problem because people do not have enough water that is safe for drinking**.

**% of assessed settlements where KIs reported main problems with water:**



**% of assessed settlements by reported main latrine/toilet most people use**

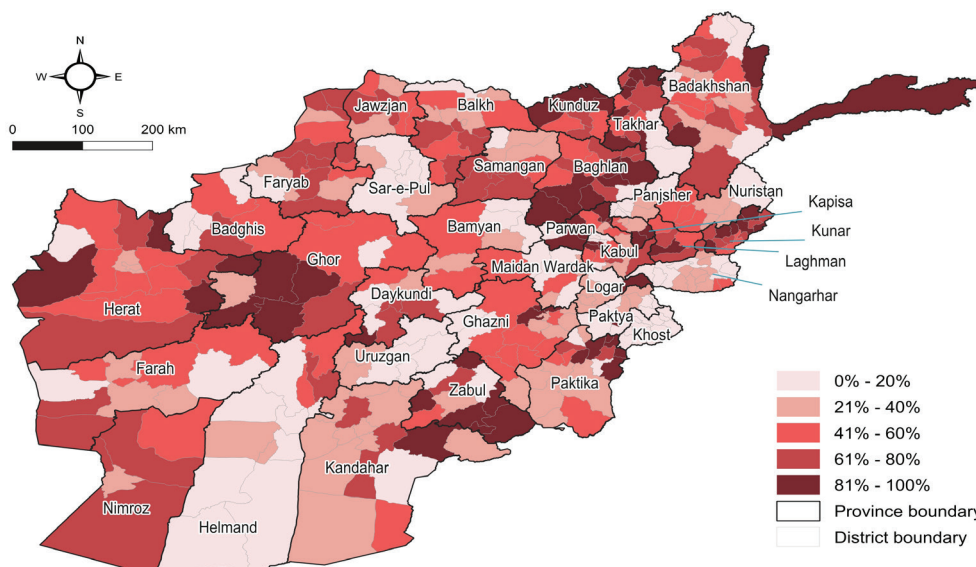


■ Unclean toilets/latrines ■ Clean and safe toilets/latrines ■ Open defecation



In **17%** of settlements, KIs reported most people **do not have access to soap**. Heightened particularly in Western region (45%).

**% of settlements where water KIs reported water sources are structurally damaged**

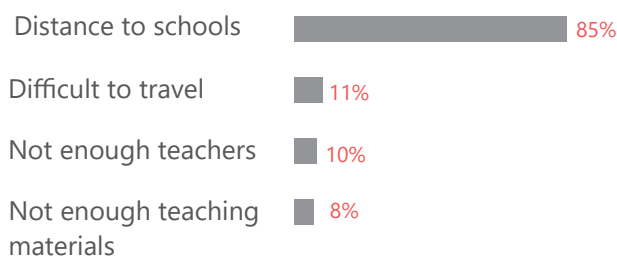


## EDUCATION

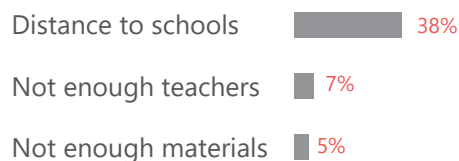
### Key Findings


- Compared to December 2025, the proportion of boys and girls attending school decreased. In 12% of settlements, key informants indicated that **few or no boys were currently attending school**, and in 23% of settlements, **few or no girls (up to grade 6) were attending**. The highest reported non-attendance rates for both girls and boys were reported in South and Western regions.
- The majority of children were reportedly enrolled in government/public schools (in 85% of settlements), followed by madrasa/religious schools (11%) and community-based education (CBE) classes (3%).
- Education activities were reportedly disrupted** in the six months prior to data collection in about 80% of settlements, mainly due to a **lack of education materials** (43%), **teacher absence** (27%), and **natural hazards** (9%). Natural hazards were more frequently reported as a cause of disruption in Kunar (37%), Paktiya (26%) and Nuristan (22%).
- Children attending school did not have access to functioning latrine** in at least 34% of settlements in the country. Lack of sanitation is particularly concerning in the Southern region - Uruzgan (71%), Zabul (64%), and Kandahar (67%), as well as in Paktika (73%), and Badakhshan (65%). Likewise, they did not had sufficient access to water in schools.

#### Most reported barriers preventing BOYS from going to schools:

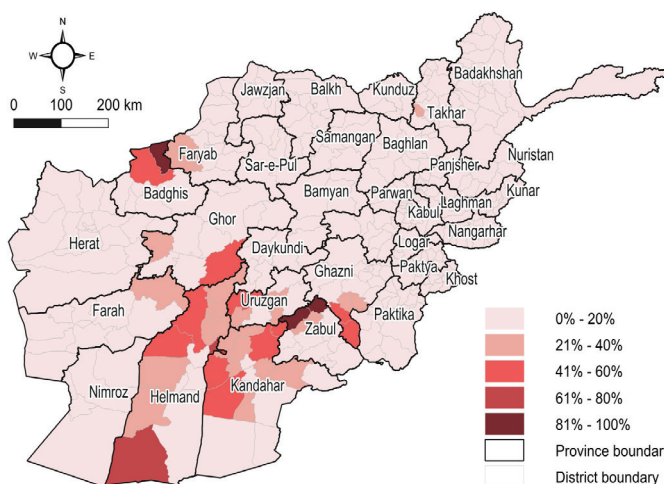


#### Most reported barriers preventing Girls from going to schools:

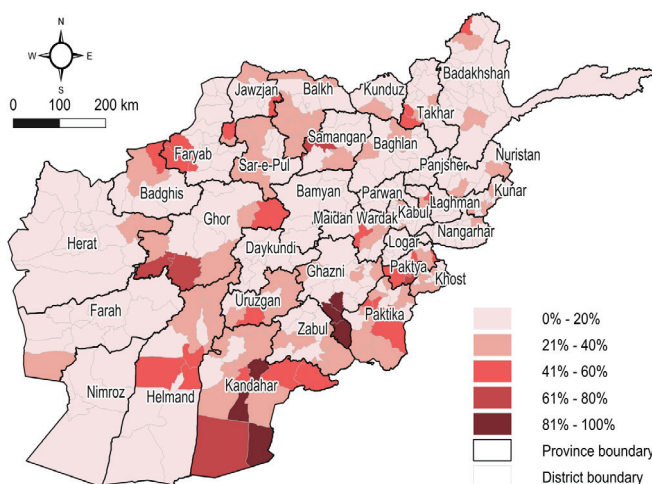


 In 33% of settlements, KIs reported that schools do not have access to potable water; in 34% they do not have functional sanitation facilities.

#### % of assessed settlements with no or few boys reported-ly attending school, by district.



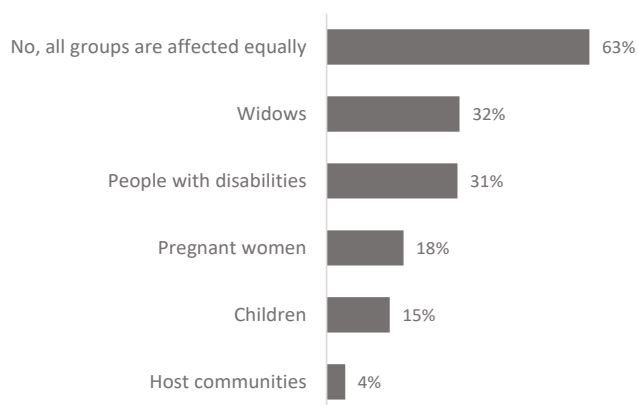
#### % of assessed settlements with no or few or girls reportedly attending school, by district.



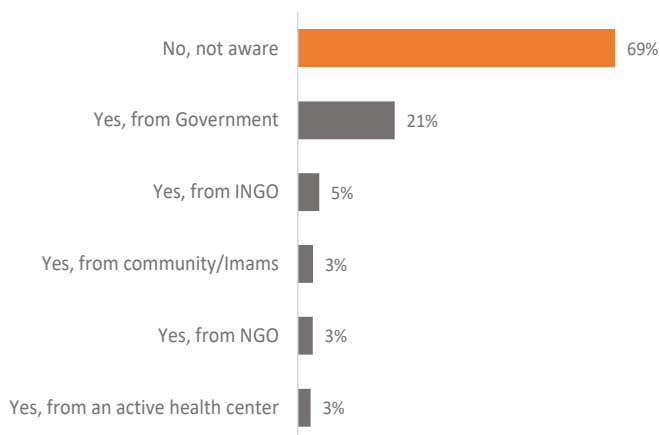
## Key Findings

- **Widows and persons with disabilities were most often reported to have experienced greater difficulties in meeting basic needs.** Rates of disability are [very high](#), yet only in 69% of settlements were KIs not aware of any support services, and these populations are often [unable to access](#) aid, health, and rehabilitation services.
- Discriminatory access to services and livelihoods for women and girls persists. **In 17% of settlements, KIs reported that no girls attended primary school** (56% in Southern region and 30% in Western region), while **in 33%, no women worked** (77% in Uruzgan, 73% in Zabul), and **in 6%, none of the women had civil documentation** (24% in Southern).
- The primary barrier to education access for boys was the distance to the nearest facility; however, KIs in 11% of settlements reported that child labour was a main barrier (43% in Badghis). **Child work is a common response to economic need, reported in 52% of assessed communities as a strategy to cope with poor access to food.**
- **Afghanistan is the [second](#) most landmine contaminated country, yet awareness of risks remains [low](#).** Correspondingly, only in 9% of the assessed settlements KIs reported awareness of any mine risk education activities in their area.

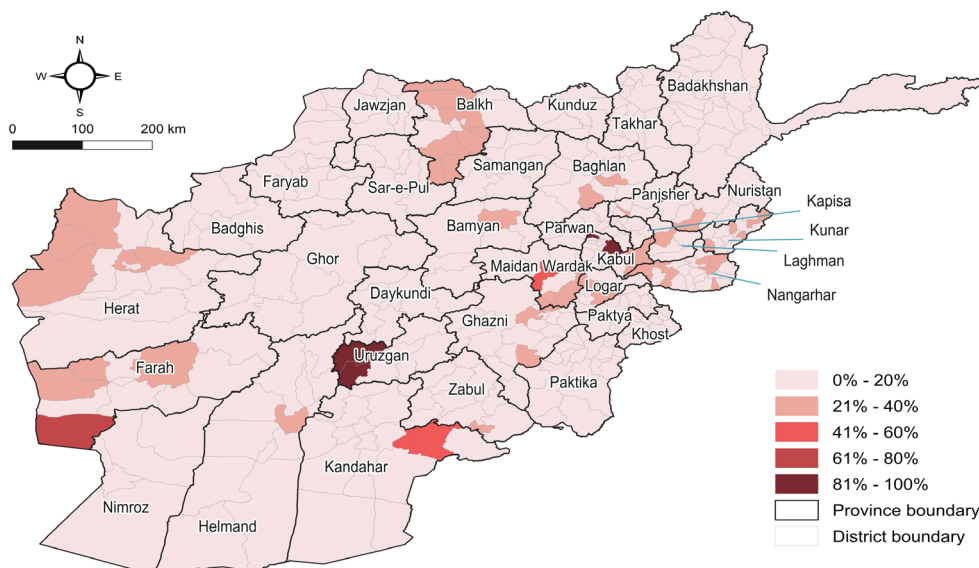
Groups struggling most to meet basic needs, as % of KIs in assessed communities



Awareness of availability of services for people with disabilities, as % of KIs in assessed communities



% of assessed settlements with reported presence of mine and explosive hazards.



## METHODOLOGY AND COVERAGE

The Humanitarian Situation Monitoring (HSM) is a key informant-level assessment that covers more than 12,000 settlements across the country. Key informants (KIs) —including government officials, religious leaders, teachers, and healthcare practitioners—are surveyed to collect information regarding the humanitarian situation of communities in the settlements of interest. Based on previous studies, HSM surveys one key informant per settlement.

The sampling strategy aims to cover all Basic Service Units (3,239) in the country. A BSU is defined as a geographic unit where a number of households share public spaces, such as markets and roads, along with essential services, including healthcare clinics or schools. The obtained data is then aggregated at the district level to better inform humanitarian actors and other stakeholders.

Key informants are selected using a two-stage methodology. First, settlements are randomly

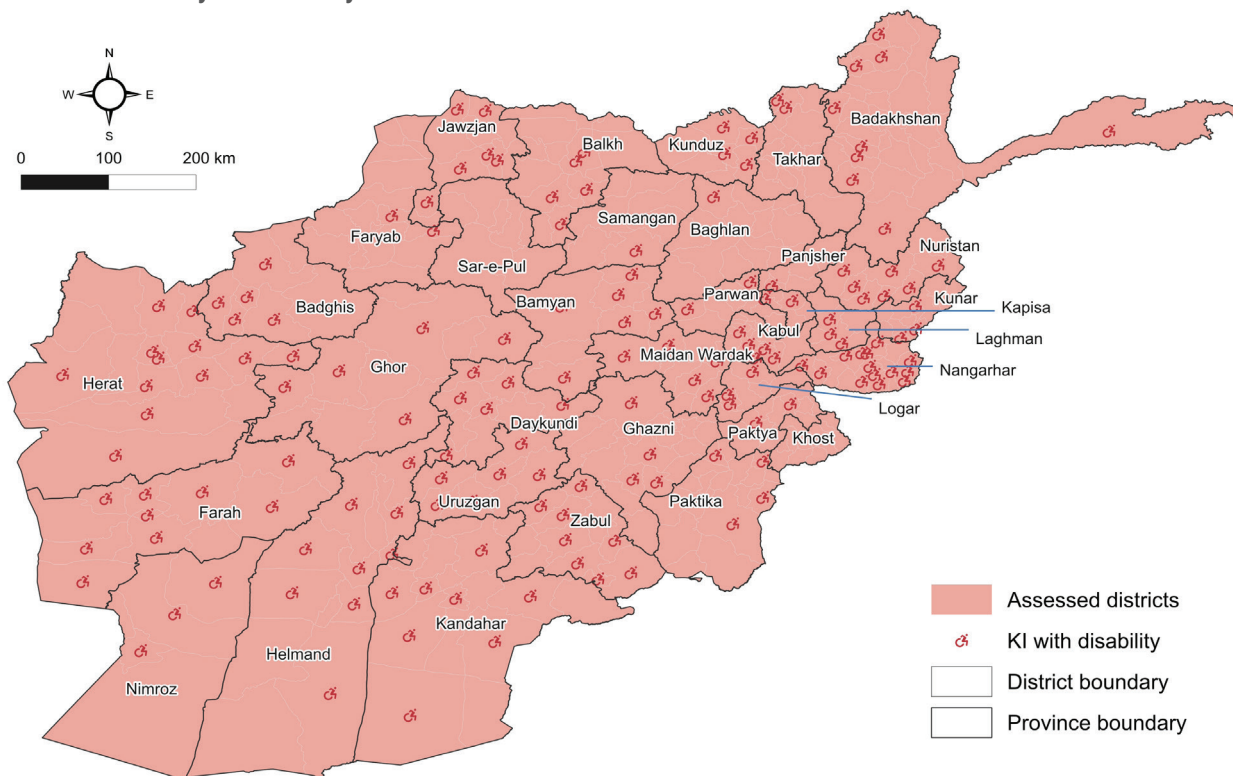
chosen using a population-weighted approach, giving larger settlements within each BSU a higher probability of selection while still including smaller ones. Second, trained enumerators visit selected settlements and identify relevant key informants through snowball sampling. Results are indicative and aim to cover a high proportion of the population.

The HSM Round 12 covers:

- All [401 districts](#) and BSUs in the country.
- One Key informant per settlements assessed.
- A minimum of three KIs per BSU.
- A minimum geographical coverage of 12% of settlements per district.
- 54% population covered (as per the total population of the settlements assessed).

For a comprehensive understanding, please refer to the [HSM terms of reference \(ToR\)](#). The data (including all interviews) and cleaning logs for HSM Round 11 are available upon request.

**Coverage map: districts assessed and districts where Key informants with any disability were surveyed.**



### ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).