

NEEDS MONITORING FRAMEWORK (NMF):

KEY FINDINGS BRIEF

MARCH 2025 | Afghanistan

Rationale

This brief presents key findings from the Needs Monitoring Framework (NMF) quarterly assessment, designed to monitor Afghanistan's dynamic humanitarian needs amid persistent challenges like climate change, economic crises, conflict and natural disasters. With an estimated 22.9 million people in need in 2025, traditional annual assessments are insufficient for capturing rapid shifts in localized needs. In response, the NMF was developed by the Assessment and Analysis Working Group (AAWG) to complement the annual

Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) by offering quarterly, district-level insights into multisectoral needs. For more information on the assessment, please refer to the [Terms of Reference](#).

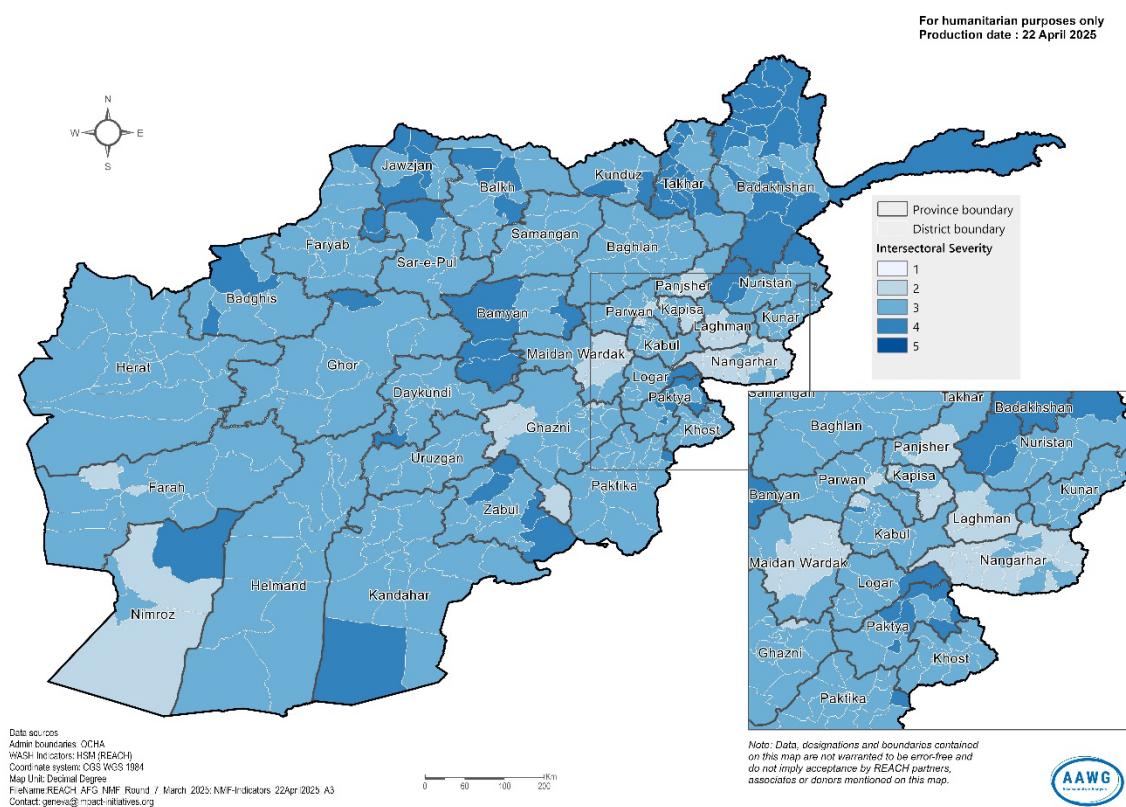
Findings overview

Between January 2024 and March 2025, the overall average intersectoral severity remained similar, although there were marked changes in the sectors driving needs. Notably, when comparing January 2024 to March 2025, we see a reduction of districts in Phase 4+ from 266 to 46.

Significant improvements were observed in several key sectors. The ES-NFI sector saw the most dramatic progress, with the average phase classification dropping by 0.58 points since November 2024. The number of districts in phase 4 fell sharply from 36 in January 2024 to just 1 by March 2025. Education also showed moderate gains, with fewer districts in phase 4, though challenges like low school attendance and gender gaps remain. Similarly, WASH conditions improved substantially, with far fewer districts facing critical shortages compared to early 2024. Health services also strengthened, with only five districts now in phase 5, down from 29 in November.

However, not all trends were positive. Food security deteriorated sharply, with over 300 districts now in phase 4 more than double the number from early 2024. Rising food prices, shortages, and reliance on harmful coping strategies have deepened vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, protection concerns improved overall, with fewer districts reporting extreme risks, though issues like early marriage and explosive hazards persist. Nutrition outcomes were mixed, with slight declines in some areas despite progress elsewhere.

Intersectoral phase classification Map



Sector-specific Indicators:

ES-NFI

The ESNFI sector has seen the most improvements based on the March 2025 data. Compared to the previous rounds (January 2024 and November 2024), there has been a notable reduction in severity across many districts. The average phase level decreased by 0.58 points compared to November, with 200 districts moving from Phase 4 to Phase 3, while 152 districts remained stable.

This improvement appears to be linked to more households being able to own, rent, or be hosted in shelters, and more settlements reporting stable shelter types for the majority of the population. There has also been a slight reduction in reported building damage or destruction. That said, the changes are not consistent across all regions. The central and southern regions show the most notable improvements, while northern areas, particularly in Jawzjan province districts such as Shiberghan, Khawaja Dukoh, Khanaqa, Khamyab, and Aqcha have seen little to no change and remain in the same phase as they were back in January 2024.

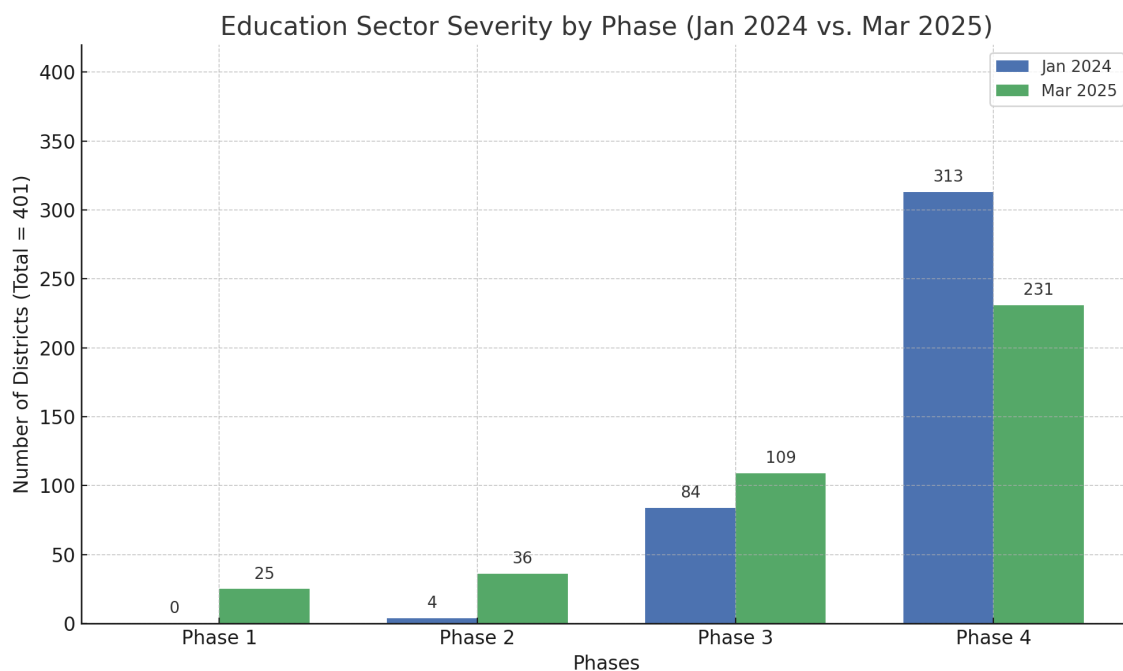
Back in January, KIs highlighted the main drivers of shelter needs as the lack of essential non-food items (NFIs) and limited access to basic services. While the need for NFIs remains high in March 2025, some indicators like improved housing stability and fewer severely damaged homes suggest a modest but important shift in shelter conditions.

Education

There has been some improvement in the education sector between the first quarter of 2024 and March 2025. In January 2024, a total of 313 districts were classified in Phase 4, reflecting serious educational challenges. By March 2025, this number had declined to 231 districts, indicating moderate progress. While most regions saw only minor changes in severity, the central and northern regions recorded the most significant improvements. In the central provinces, the number of districts in Phase 4 dropped from 55 in January 2024 to 18 in March 2025. Similarly, in the northern provinces, the number of Phase 4 districts decreased from 46 to 16 during the same period.

In January 2024, the primary drivers contributing to higher severity levels in education were related to children not attending formal schooling, as well as school-aged boys and girls being engaged in employment outside the home. These factors significantly limited children's access to and participation in education, particularly in more vulnerable districts.

By March 2025, although improvements were recorded, the remaining challenges were largely linked to issues affecting the quality and continuity of education. The most reported drivers included the lack of educational materials and the absence of teachers, both of which have continued to disrupt learning across several districts.



WASH

Based on the NMF data, the WASH sector has experienced notable improvements across Afghanistan between January 2024 and March 2025. In January 2024, 300 districts were classified in Phase 3 and above, indicating significant WASH-related needs. By March 2025, this number had decreased to 91 districts, reflecting substantial progress in the sector. The data shows that all regions have improved over time, though the northern and northeastern regions witnessed the most remarkable advancements.

Several districts in Balkh and Samangan provinces demonstrated clear improvements, including Charkent, Sholgareh, Chemtal, Char Bolak, and Kaldar in Balkh, and Aybak, Hazrat-e-Sultan, Khuram Wa Sarbagh, Feroz Nakhchir, Ruy-e-Duab, and Dara-e-Suf in Samangan. Likewise, in the northeastern region, districts such as Dahana-e-Ghori, Doshi, Khinjan, Andarab, Burka, Pul-e-Hisar, and Guzargah-e-Noor in Baghlan; Kohestan, Jorm, and Yamgan in Badakhshan; Hazar Sumuch, Bangi, and Namak Ab in Takhar; and Qala-e-Zal in Kunduz showed significant reductions in severity, with some moving from Phase 5 to Phase 3.

The main drivers of higher severity in January 2024 were the lack of access to functioning hand-washing facilities and inadequate quality and quantity of water for cooking, bathing, and drinking. By March 2025, while the situation had improved, remaining challenges were primarily associated with the main water sources being distant from households, lack of access to functional and improved sanitation facilities, and continued issues with the adequacy of water supply.

HEALTH

The health sector has shown noticeable improvement between the January 2024 and March 2025 rounds of the NMF. In January 2024, 296 districts were classified in Phase 4 or above, but by March 2025, this number had decreased significantly to 140 districts. The number of Phase 5 districts dropped sharply from 29 in November to just 3 in March, while Phase 4 districts declined from 200 to 134 during the same period.

Several factors contributed to the higher phases in January 2024. According to key informants, the main drivers included limited access to trauma care within 24 hours, lack of access to sufficient quality and quantity of drinking water, presence of household members with disabilities, a high number of measles cases, and poor access to functioning health centers where households either relied on facilities with significant systemic issues or had no access at all.

By March 2025, some of these key challenges had eased. There was reported improvement in access to trauma care within 24 hours of emergency, and access to safe drinking water had also improved. Additionally, there were fewer reported cases of children experiencing acute

watery diarrhea (AWD) and acute respiratory infections (ARI) in the past month. However, measles remained a persistent issue, continuing to show high levels across several districts.

Improvements have not been uniform across the country. The central region saw substantial progress, with the number of districts in Phase 4 and above falling from 47 in January to 16 in March. The eastern region, including districts like Nurgaram, Duab, Kamdesh, Mandol, and Barg-e-Matal in Nuristan which were in Phase 5 in January 2024 moved to lower phases in March 2025. In the northern region, the number of districts in Phases 4 and 5 dropped from 46 in January to just 16 in Phase 4 in March.

Conversely, the northeast, especially Baghlan and Badakhshan provinces, continues to face high health needs, with many districts still in severe phases and showing limited improvements over the past rounds.

Food Security

Food security conditions have deteriorated significantly in this round compared to both January 2024 and November 2024. In January 2024, 119 districts were classified in phase 4. This number increased sharply to 333 districts in March 2025. Similarly, compared to November 2024, the average phase classification rose by 0.48 points, with the number of phase 4 districts rising from 132 to 293, indicating a notable and widespread decline in food security across the country.

It is important to note that the key reason behind this sharp increase is the inclusion of a new indicator in this round that captures the impact of shocks and the suspension of humanitarian assistance on food access. While the core food security indicator still shows a deterioration from 120 districts in phase 4 in January and 132 in November to 190 districts in March 2025, the new indicator highlights that many districts have been severely affected by recent disruptions, such as natural disasters and reduced aid. When considering the results of this new indicator alongside the existing analysis, the total number of districts classified in phases 4 and 5 rises to 333.

Some of the most severely affected districts include Gelan and Nawa in Ghazni, Yamgan and Keran Wa Manjan in Badakhshan, Bangi and Yangi Qala in Takhar, Ali Abad in Kunduz, Charsada in Ghor, and Almar in Faryab.

The main reasons for deterioration reported across districts include:

- High food shortages reported
- More families relying on negative coping strategies
- Rising food prices
- High levels of hunger
- Shocks such as natural disasters or loss of assistance

Protection

According to the NMF, the protection situation remains critical in many areas, though there have been improvements between January 2024 and March 2025. In January 2024, 255 districts were in Phase 4 and above. This number dropped to 54 districts in March 2025.

The regions with the most noticeable improvements include the northern, northeastern, southern, and southeastern provinces, where districts previously classified in Phases 4 and 5 have largely shifted to Phase 3 or below. For example, in Baghlan province in the northeast, all 15 districts were classified in Phase 4 and above in January 2024 - 8 of them specifically in Phase 5. By March 2025, only 1 district (Andarab) remained in Phase 4, indicating a significant decline in severity in that region.

Key drivers of high severity in January 2024 included early marriage, experiencing protection incidents, presence of explosive hazards (mines, ERWs, PPIEDs), and vulnerable heads of households. In March 2025, while some of these drivers remained, key informants highlighted early marriage being used as a coping mechanism, ongoing safety and protection concerns in communities, insecure or informal shelter arrangements, presence of explosive hazards, and a continued high number of vulnerable-headed households such as those led by the elderly or persons with disabilities.

Nutrition

According to NMF, the nutrition situation shows slight signs of deterioration since January 2024. 38 districts were classified in phase 3 in January 2024,. By March 2025, this number increased to 48 districts, showing a rise in the number of areas facing moderate levels of nutrition-related needs.

At the same time, several districts demonstrated positive changes compared to January 2024. These include Mehtarlam in Laghman; Yahya Khel, Giyan, and Turwo in Paktika; Bilcheragh, Dawlat Abad, Kohistan, Qaram Qul, and Khan-e-Char Bagh in Faryab; and Nahr-e-Saraj, Washer, Musa Qala, Kajaki, and Baghran in Kandahar—all of which reported improvements in their nutrition phase classification.

On the other hand, a number of districts experienced a deterioration in nutrition conditions.

These include:

- Takhar province: Hazar Sumuch, Baharak, Bangi, Farkhar, Khawja Ghar, Rostaq, and Dasht-e-Qala
- Khost province: Mandozayi, Gurbuz, and Sabari
- Paktya province: Shawak and Dand Wa Patan

These areas saw an increase in classification of phases, indicating growing nutritional challenges.

Districts in phase 3 and above:

Districts such as Kohestan and Yawan (Badakhshan), Hazar Sumuch, Khwaja Bahawuddin, (Takhar), Shiberghan, Mingajik, Qush Tepa (Jawzjan), Anar Darah (Farah), Charsadra (Ghor), Miyanshin (Kandahar), Azra (Logar), and several others consistently remained in phase 4 across multiple sectors in both June and August. These districts remain a priority for humanitarian interventions.

District-Level Changes in Phase Classification (Jan 2024 – Mar 2025)

To better illustrate the changes in multisectoral severity across districts between January 2024 and March 2025 rounds of the Needs Monitoring Framework (NMF); the map below presents a comparative view of severity trends.

