Rapid Assessment Regarding Information and Communication Needs During Natural Disasters

Afghanistan
April 2021

CONTEXT

Located in a seismically active and mountainous region, Afghan people are at risk of avalanches, earthquakes, drought, flooding and other extreme conditions. The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index ranks Afghanistan as the 10th most vulnerable country in the world to climate change, which could exacerbate needs driven by decades of conflict, pervasive poverty, previous natural disasters, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2018 – 2019 drought, for example, displaced more than 300,000 Afghans and increased "crisis" levels of food insecurity in 22 out of 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations projects that lower than average levels of snowfall and precipitation caused by the 2020 - 2021 La Niña may result in a dry spell that could undermine the May-June 2021 harvest. This would increase food insecurity, depress local economies, and drive displacement – particularly in drought-prone areas of the country.

Lessons learned exercises conducted after the 2018 - 2019 drought indicated a gap in communications with affected communities. As of early 2021, there was still little known about the information needs of affected populations during natural disaster response. To inform spring emergency planning for a possible drought, the Accountability to Affected People Working Group (AAP WG) asked REACH to conduct an assessment looking at communications and feedback processes that were in place during the 2018 - 2019 drought. The following assessment was designed to help inform future AAP approaches to natural disasters.

METHODOLOGY

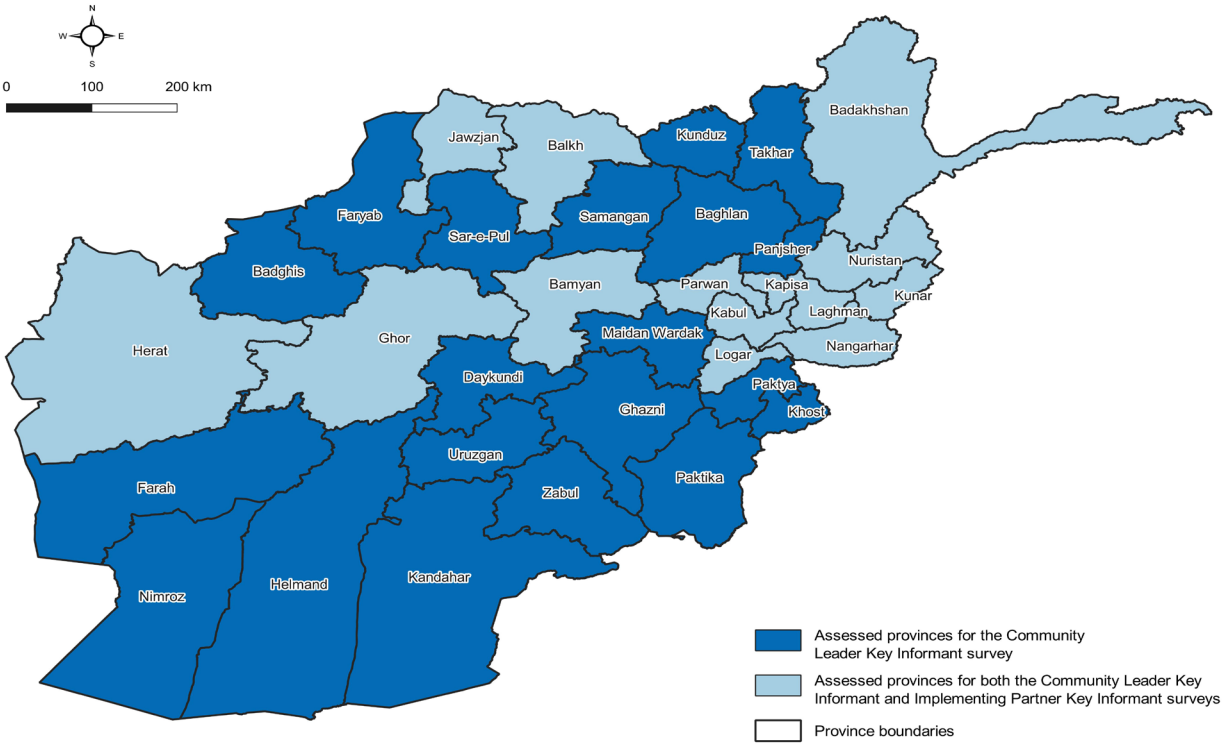
This assessment used a remote key informant (KI) based methodology and purposive-convenience sampling for primary data collection. Two sets of KIs were identified for inclusion, with a separate survey tool developed for each set of KIs (for a total of two survey tools used in this assessment).

One set included KI interviews with 2,016 community leaders (i.e. elders, religious leaders, government officials, etc.). Survey participants included 79 persons with a disability (self-reported) and 48 women from 414 districts in 34 provinces of Afghanistan The second set of KI interviews included 57 implementing partners (i.e. local humanitarian workers, government officials, etc.) who participated in the humanitarian response during the 2018 - 2019 drought. Survey participants included 17 women and 40 men from 14 provinces of Afghanistan.

Both sets of KIs were identified through purposive sampling of existing networks within the humanitarian cluster system. Interviews were conducted using trained interviewers fluent in Dari and Pashto, either from a call centre in Kabul or face-to-face (according to standard COVID-19 interview protocols) as security protocols allowed. Data was collected, cleaned, and analysed according to standard IMPACT guidelines. A secondary data review complemented and triangulated analysis drawn from primary data collection.

There are several limitations to this assessment. The majority of KIs (2,008 out of 2,073 KIs) were male, which may obscure barriers or experiences that women may encounter during a natural disaster. Similarly, the majority of KIs did not report a disability (1,630 out of 2,073 KIs). This may obscure barriers/experiences that persons with a disability may encounter. Finally, findings are indicative and are not statistically representative of the assessed population.

COVERAGE MAP



OCHA

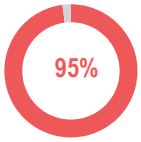
ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE WORKING GROUP (AAP WG)

REACH Informing more effective humanitarian action

Community Leader Key Informants (CL KIs)

Community experiences and impacts of natural disasters

% of CL KIs who reported a natural disaster in the three years prior to data collection:[1]



Among CL KIs, the most commonly reported natural disaster in the three years prior to data collection was flood (**68%**), followed by drought (**64%**) and locusts/pests (**12%**).[1]

Among the 95% of CL KIs that reported a natural disaster in the three years prior to data collection, by natural disaster and most reported impacts of a natural disaster:[1]

% of CL KIs...	Limited water access	Limited crop production	Limited food access	Reduced income	Reduced livelihood opportunities
Avalanche:	3%	64%	23%	74%	41%
Drought:	86%	88%	47%	78%	53%
Earthquake:	0%	5%	10%	18%	5%
Flood:	8%	88%	45%	72%	37%
Heavy snow:	4%	74%	82%	90%	29%
Landslide:	0%	39%	7%	29%	14%
Locusts, pests:	2%	93%	46%	90%	16%
Other:	3%	83%	34%	69%	17%

Among the **64%** of CL KIs that reported a drought in the three years prior to data collection, **62%** also reported a flood and **11%** reported locusts/pests in the three years prior to data collection.

Information gaps and needs during/immediately following natural disasters

Among the 95% of CL KIs that reported a natural disaster in the three years prior to data collection, by natural disaster and most reported information gaps during/immediately following a natural disaster:[1]

% of CL KIs...	Information regarding personal safety	Information regarding how to safely remain at home	Information regarding emergency medical services	Information regarding cash, food, and non-food items (NFIs) distribution
Avalanche:	71%	38%	49%	87%
Drought:	80%	22%	27%	74%
Earthquake:	73%	60%	50%	90%
Flood:	75%	57%	54%	76%
Heavy snow:	84%	22%	78%	88%
Landslide:	61%	71%	46%	61%
Locusts, pests:	93%	5%	37%	50%
Other:	78%	18%	32%	56%

Most reported information needs regarding humanitarian assistance during/immediately following a natural disaster among CL KIs:[1]

- Information regarding available humanitarian assistance — **84%**
- How to request humanitarian assistance — **77%**
- Who is eligible for humanitarian assistance — **62%**

Most reported information needs during/immediately following a drought among CL KIs:[1]

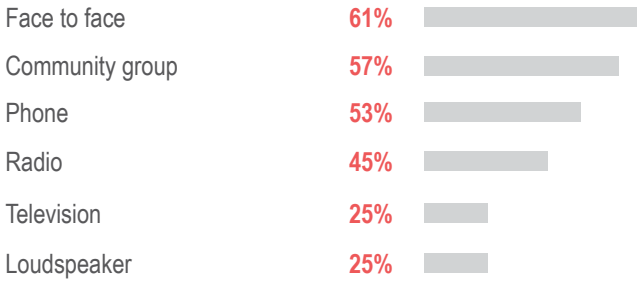
- Information regarding available water sources — **85%**
- How to safely reduce water consumption — **70%**
- Information regarding when drought could end — **68%**

[1] Multiple options possible. Please visit this link to see all options and analysis disaggregated by KI type, region, province, district or natural disaster.

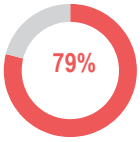
Community Leader Key Informants (CL KIs)

Communication preferences and barriers during/immediately following natural disasters

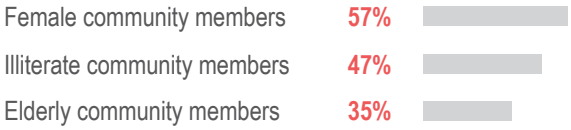
Most reported preferred ways to receive information from humanitarian actors during/immediately following a natural disaster:[1]



% of CL KIs who reportedly preferred to communicate with humanitarian actors during/immediately following a natural disaster by phone:[1]



Most reported vulnerable groups that face barriers to information from humanitarian actors:[1]



Among the **57%** of CL KIs which reported that women/girls face barriers to information from humanitarian actors, **75%** reported that women/girls primarily receive information face to face and **41%** reported that women/girls primarily receive information via radio (most commonly reported information methods).[1]

Most reported preferred ways to receive information from humanitarian actors during/immediately following a natural disaster, by region and information method:[1]

% of CL KIs...	Community group	Face to face	Loudspeaker	Phone	Radio	Television
Central:	43%	52%	31%	42%	43%	15%
Eastern:	54%	63%	43%	91%	94%	26%
North:	66%	62%	18%	38%	18%	26%
Northeast:	94%	65%	43%	22%	17%	55%
South:	73%	60%	10%	65%	60%	19%
Southeast:	34%	72%	16%	72%	63%	10%

Among the 95% of CL KIs that reported a natural disaster in the three years prior to data collection, by natural disaster and most reported information barriers during/immediately following a natural disaster:[1]

% of CL KIs...	No internet connection	Roads impassable	Unclear messages from humanitarian organizations	Could not leave home	Contradictory messages from humanitarian organizations	None
Avalanche:	18%	55%	43%	17%	26%	27%
Drought:	30%	6%	33%	23%	24%	31%
Earthquake:	38%	18%	50%	10%	38%	25%
Flood:	30%	36%	41%	29%	28%	17%
Heavy snow:	16%	25%	22%	14%	8%	55%
Landslide:	14%	18%	21%	11%	18%	54%
Locusts, pests:	23%	2%	16%	11%	14%	57%
Other:	5%	34%	23%	18%	10%	24%

[1] Multiple options possible. Please visit this link to see all options and analysis disaggregated by KI type, region, province, district or natural disaster.

Implementing Partner Key Informants (IP KIs)

Programme profiles

Most reported programmes implemented during the 2018 - 2019 drought by IP KIs, per type of assistance:

Food distribution	58%
Cash and voucher	19%
Nutrition assistance	12%
WASH assistance	12%
Livelihoods support	9%

Vulnerable groups reportedly targeted in programmes during the 2018 - 2019 drought by IP KIs, per group:[1]

Women and girls	86%
Persons with disabilities	77%
Displaced	75%
Men and boys	55%
Minority ethnic groups	9%
None	8%

Key programme strengths

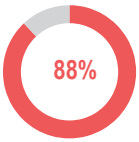
Most commonly reported programme strengths, by % of IP KIs:[1]

Access to drought-affected populations	84%
Access to vulnerable groups	68%
Timely programme implementation	66%
Coordination with other humanitarian actors	56%
Access to host community	53%

Most commonly reported strengths regarding communication with programme participants, by % of IP KIs:[1]

Relations with host community	78%
Relations with vulnerable groups in the community	61%
Methods of communication with drought-affected populations	58%

% of IP KLs which reportedly offered a feedback and response mechanism (FRM):



Most commonly reported FRMs, by % of IP KIs:

Organization phone number	85%
In-person interaction between programme participant and staff member	7%
Complaints and suggestions box	3%

Most commonly reported communication methods with programme participants, by % of IP KIs:[1]

Face to face	94%
Community group	79%
Phone	21%

Key programme challenges

Most commonly reported programme challenges, by % of IP KIs:[1]

Security	40%
Not enough goods or services for eligible populations	26%
Limited or no access to drought-affected populations	17%
Tension with host community	7%
Insufficient information provided to eligible populations regarding available goods or services	5%

Most commonly reported challenges regarding communication with programme participants, by % of IP KIs:[1]

Lack of funding for communication	30%
Unable to reach drought-affected populations due to security concerns	22%
Lack of knowledge regarding communication preferences among host community	17%

[1] Multiple options possible. Please visit this link to see all options and analysis disaggregated by KI type, region, province, district or natural disaster.

Assessment conducted in partnership with:
Accountability to Affected People Working Group (AAP WG) in Afghanistan

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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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 Programmeme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).