



Norwegian Refugee Council's **Country programme in Afghanistan**

Armed conflict and disasters continue to plague Afghanistan and its civilians. As the country struggles to rebuild, NRC is on the ground, assisting.

Humanitarian and political background

Afghanistan is a country entrenched in chronic crisis. Generations of Afghans have grown up in exile, in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. Decades of conflict have forced them from their homes – sometimes as long as 30 years. NRC has operated in the country since 2003.

Beyond the emergency

Afghanistan has been in an active state of war since its revolution in 1978. Recently, the numbers of civilian deaths have yet again begun to climb. At a time when security risks and needs are critical, NRC faces many obstacles. Media and donor fatigue has left the humanitarian response in Afghanistan severely underfunded. Violence and natural disasters block entry to remote areas. Many people remain unregistered and undocumented, meaning they have no official way to receive assistance. Each year, hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees spontaneously return or are forced to return from Pakistan and Iran. In 2016 there was a drastic

**In 2016 NRC reached
299,898**

Individuals, with Shelter/WASH, Education, and ICLA programming with Emergency Response and Protection Advocacy cutting across all programmes.

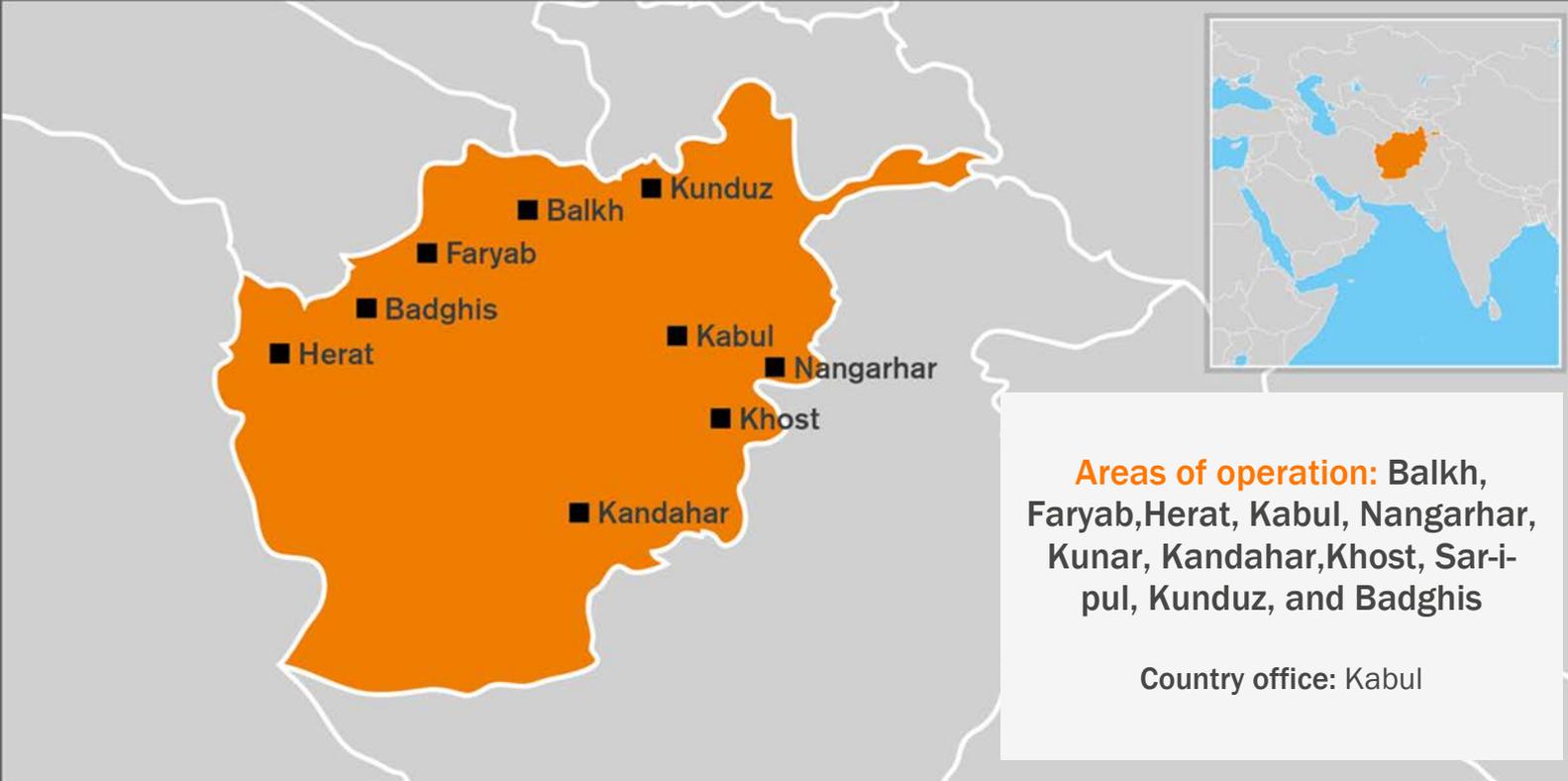
Budget: 2017: 190 mill NOK | 2016: 124,8 mill NOK

Donor: Norwegian MFA, SIDA, NORAD, DANIDA, ECHO, UNOCHA-CHF, European Aid (DevCo), DfID, Dutch MFA

International staff: 17

National staff: 1082

increase in returnees, where the number of returns was over five times as high as in 2015.



Areas of operation: Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kabul, Nangarhar, Kunar, Kandahar, Khost, Sar-i-pul, Kunduz, and Badghis

Country office: Kabul

Violence and disasters obstructing aid

Access and insecurity are the largest barriers we face in reaching the most vulnerable. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are forced to flee each year, often in remote, hard-to-reach areas. In addition to conflict, natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods force many to flee their homes.

A spike in urbanisation

The combination of conflict, disaster and demographics is creating an accelerated urbanisation, which in turn further impoverishes communities. Nearly two thirds of Afghanistan's population are under twenty-five years old. These youth are seeking opportunities in cities and urban areas. Here, relations with local communities can be strained, creating competition for land and social and economic services.

Women's property rights

In Afghanistan, civil documentation is key to protecting an individual's rights. The scarcity of

land gives it high political and economic value. Ownership, therefore, is central to the empowerment of Afghan women. Although women's housing, land and property (HLP) rights are recognised in Afghanistan's constitution through its civil code and in sharia, women continue to face discriminatory cultural norms and practices. Often, women's HLP security only comes to fruition through relationships with men: fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. In the event of death, abuse or divorce, women risk losing their possessions to dominant family members.

Access and Protection

We have designed initiatives to promote operational access for humanitarian agencies through high-level coordination and capacity building, and supporting innovative work on improving understanding and acceptance of humanitarian work in Afghanistan.

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NRC activities in the field

We help internally displaced Afghans and Pakistani refugees find lasting solutions. Our priorities in Afghanistan are twofold. In the face of violence and disaster, we give immediate, emergency assistance. Where the effects of long-term displacement have taken hold, we work to find lasting solutions that will brighten their futures. Our regional and cross-border programmes look to address and relieve the effects of the conflict. Throughout, we build resilience and reduce vulnerability. NRC has offices located in Balkh, Faryab, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Sar-i-pul and Badghis. The trends of urbanisation and a young population have changed the way that NRC supports young Afghans as well as the broader population. We focus on reaching them in urban areas. Our specialists work together to ensure that displaced Afghans and Pakistanis – as well as the local populations – receive the most impactful aid we can deliver. The empowerment of women is another important aspect of our approach.

Emergency response

In Afghanistan, our emergency teams respond to the urgent needs of people displaced by conflict and by disaster and climate change. We help whoever is in need – undocumented returnees, internally displaced people, refugees and local communities. Our emergency response:

- Distributes cash, in the form of unconditional cash transfers, cash-for-shelter and cash-for-work.
- Distributes non-food item (NFI) kits.
- Stockpiles supplies for the Emergency Response Mechanism in Afghanistan.
- Coordinates with government officials and other humanitarian agencies.
- Improves local understanding and acceptance of humanitarian work.
- Coordinates with the international community to ensure we protect people who are most vulnerable.

Education

The children of Afghanistan will be the ones who mend their damaged societies. We work to preserve the environment where they can build their intellect and hone the skills they need to forge their path to recovery. Our education activities are multifold:

- We increase accessibility to schools in rural areas that transition into suburbs of larger cities.
- We train teachers and informal instructors.
- Our youth programmes combine vocational training with literacy and life skills classes for young people.
- Our accelerated education programmes ensure that children who have missed parts of their education can catch up to where they are supposed to be.
- We work with the Ministry of Education to increase the capacity of the Afghan government to respond to the urgent educational needs of displaced children, as well as those returned from Pakistan.

Food security

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Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

Many displaced people in Afghanistan do not know their rights. This prevents them from living in dignity. We want to make sure that they, and the local communities they live in, can claim and exercise their rights. We advise Afghans and Pakistanis on a wide range of legal matters, guiding them through legal processes and supporting them as they defend their legal rights within their communities. Women in particular face many barriers, especially when it comes to housing, land and property (HLP) rights. NRC is the only organisation in Afghanistan to work for the widespread acceptance of women's HLP rights. Our ICLA work aims to:

- Visit communities to conduct legal sensitisation sessions, group trainings and legal assistance.
- Provide individual counselling and personalised information packages.
- Employ statutory and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms to resolve cases related to legal disputes, HLP rights and civil documentation.
- Distribute hygiene kits, and training on how to use them.
- Provide households with individual latrines.
- Construct latrine blocks and safe drinking water points in schools.

Shelter

Many Afghans live in inadequate housing, improperly protected from violence and natural hazards. We help them improve their homes and their community centres, so they can settle and live in them for longer periods. Our all-female shelter team reaches female-headed households and widows – the most vulnerable part of the population we serve. Our shelter teams work side-by-side with our WASH experts as they carry out many of their projects. Our shelter activities:

- Construct one and two-room shelters for families.
- Build schools as well as additional classrooms in schools that already exist.
- Collaborate with the community to construct shelters through a cash-based programme.
- Involve the community by providing cash-based assistance in exchange for constructing shelters.
- Advocate for shelters to be built to better endure natural hazards, in line with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) measures.

Water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH)

Water, sanitation and hygiene practices are not the norm in many parts of Afghanistan, largely due to the lack of infrastructure. We work to ensure that Afghans and refugees can drink clean water and use proper latrines. We want to stop the spread of waterborne disease. In many of our WASH activities, our WASH experts work closely with our shelter teams. Our WASH projects: