

NRC's operations in Afghanistan

Humanitarian overview

Decades of war, chronic poverty, mass returns from Iran and Pakistan, rising regional tensions, and recurrent natural disasters such as droughts, massive earthquakes and flash floods, as well as an economic crisis have devastated Afghanistan and driven a trajectory of sustained decline. The UN estimates that 21.9 million people (45% of Afghanistan's population) require humanitarian assistance in 2026.

Most Afghans now live well below the poverty line, with 17.4 million people experiencing food insecurity. The return of around five million Afghans from Iran and Pakistan since late 2023 has further strained livelihoods, exacerbating poverty and unemployment.

As of April 2026, only 12.3% of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan is funded, leaving an 87.7% gap that limits the scale and continuity of response efforts. As of April 2026, tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have displaced an estimated 115,000 people based on initial reports, with 94,000 individuals confirmed through assessments, adding to the 3.2 million already internally displaced and living in precarious conditions.

With Afghanistan heavily reliant on imports, tensions with Pakistan and hostilities in Iran have disrupted trade routes and driven market inflation, further weakening the economy. While all these crises together have overwhelmed humanitarian organisations, the funding landscape has severely shrunk, with people mostly reliant on aid, and humanitarian actors are forced to make difficult prioritisation decisions.



Photo: Malsam Shafiey/NRC

Our core activities



Education



Information, counselling
and legal assistance (ICLA)



Livelihoods
and food security



Protection
from violence



Shelter
and settlements



Water, sanitation
and hygiene (WASH)

NRC Afghanistan

Established	2003
International staff	10
National staff	412

Our locations of operation

- Badghis
- Baghlan
- Balkh
- Faryab
- Herat
- Kabul
- Kandahar
- Khost
- Kunduz
- Kunar
- Nangarhar
- Zabul



Our activities in detail

NRC Afghanistan seeks to protect and assist vulnerable communities affected by displacement. NRC provides assistance to meet immediate humanitarian needs, prevent further displacement, and contribute to durable solutions.

We implement programming across all of NRC's core competencies, integrating protection and advocacy, and maintaining an emergency team to support preparedness and response.



57,611 people reached in 2025 ▼

Education

We specialise in education in emergencies for displaced children, adolescents and youth. Our teams aim to improve access to quality, inclusive and protective educational opportunities relevant to children's cognitive, emotional and psychosocial development with strengthened coping mechanisms. To work towards this objective NRC improves the capacity of education staff to deliver quality programming and work within four strategic response areas including non-formal education, transition to formal education, first-line education response and youth.

Under non-formal education we provide community-based education to children who are out-of-school, affected by displacement, and in rural and hard-to-reach areas where schools do not exist or are far from communities.

Under formal education, we support students to transition into formal basic education through increasing the absorption capacity of hub-schools. Through our support, schools can construct and renovate classrooms and educational infrastructure including the water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to make schools a safe environment for children.

Under first-line education response, we support displaced/returnee children in coping with trauma from displacement and/or conflict while preparing them for reintegration into regular schooling. The response includes establishing safe and structured temporary learning spaces, using a phased approach aligned with children's healing and recovery trajectory and combining psychosocial support, play, lifesaving content, and foundational skills. Finally, under youth, we support adolescents and youth to equip them with the basic skills they need to be able to develop their competencies, which includes stand-alone tailored life skills and transferable skills.



82,698 people reached in 2025 ▼

Information, counselling and legal assistance (ICLA)

ICLA helps displaced-affected people and returnees to be aware of and access their rights. We provide information, counselling and legal assistance to displaced Afghans on a wide range of legal rights within four thematic areas: housing, land and property (HLP); legal identity documentation (LID); employment law and procedure (ELP); and access to essential services.

We conduct information sessions on legal rights in communities, NRC community centres and transit centres as well as sessions on basic rights to returnees at border points with Pakistan and Iran. We help people through one-on-one legal counselling and provide direct legal assistance and full representation to enable people to claim and exercise their rights, including accessing legal identity documentation; resolving housing, land and property disputes; tenure security, and claiming employment rights.

In 2025, ICLA has initiated digital legal awareness on HLP and LID rights for the returnees and IDPs which will be enhanced to expand through local partnership in 2026

By supporting formal and informal justice actors with capacity-building training and mentorship, we provide knowledge and skills to resolve disputes and facilitate access to rights. Our teams also conduct research and assessments to better understand the challenges displaced Afghans face in claiming and exercising their rights.



37,587 people reached in 2025 ▼

Livelihoods and food security

To ensure households sustain their basic livelihoods during conflicts and disasters, NRC helps to address the food needs of displaced populations, ensuring their essential productive assets are protected, and that the coping capacity of vulnerable households is improved.

Through engaging in market-based activities, we support the displaced population by helping to meet their immediate food needs during emergency situations, assisting in improving food production systems, and strengthening local markets to work for affected populations.

Through our programmes, we enable women and people with disabilities to access basic food needs and improved livelihoods.



28,244 people reached in 2025 ▼

Protection from violence

NRC's protection from violence work focuses on reducing protection risks and strengthening the safety of displacement-affected communities through community-based and individual support, with a particular focus on marginalized groups, including women, people with disabilities, and minority communities.

At community level, NRC works through Community Resource Centres and outreach to deliver an integrated protection response. This supports communities to strengthen coping mechanisms, promote social cohesion, and ensure inclusive participation. Civilian Self-Protection committees are trained to identify risks and implement practical self-protection measures through community-led projects, ensuring locally driven responses. These efforts are complemented by wider information and awareness-raising on services and protection risks.

At individual level, NRC provides tailored support to individuals at heightened protection risk through protection case management, integrated with cash for protection assistance. This is complemented by referrals to specialized services and Psychological First Aid, with strong linkages to community structures.

NRC's response is further informed by protection monitoring and site profiling, enabling evidence-based programming and advocacy, and supporting NRC's role as co-chair of the national Protection Cluster.



58,318 people reached in 2025 ▼

Shelter and settlements

NRC provides shelter and settlements support to address immediate life-saving needs while enabling pathways to durable solutions for internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, disaster affected families and vulnerable host communities in Afghanistan.

Our response combines emergency assistance with longer-term, climate-resilient solutions to improve safety, dignity, and living conditions – particularly for women, children, and people with disabilities.

In emergencies, NRC delivers rapid shelter support including emergency shelter kits, winterization assistance, rental support, and non-food items (NFIs), through both in-kind and cash-based modalities. These interventions are designed to reduce exposure to harsh weather, mitigate protection risks such as eviction, and stabilize vulnerable households.

Beyond immediate response, NRC supports transitional and permanent shelter solutions through construction, upgrading and repair of shelters using locally appropriate, disaster-resilient techniques. This includes promoting energy-efficient designs, improved ventilation, and the use of sustainable materials.

NRC also adopts an area-based approach to strengthen settlement infrastructures such as community facilities, access routes, and solar energy solutions – while enhancing community engagement and governance. Through integrated programming and collaboration with legal assistance (HLP), NRC supports tenure security and contributes to durable solutions.



89,385 people reached in 2025 ▼

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

NRC delivers WASH services ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene services essential for health, dignity, and protection.

In rapid-onset emergencies, NRC provides life-saving WASH interventions, including water trucking, emergency latrines and bathing facilities, hygiene kit distribution, handwashing facilities, and hygiene promotion to prevent disease outbreaks.

For protracted displacement and recovery contexts, NRC focuses on sustainable, climate-resilient WASH solutions. This includes rehabilitation and construction of water supply systems, sanitation facilities, drainage improvements, and solid waste management to enhance public health and settlement conditions.

WASH interventions are fully integrated with shelter and education programming, ensuring that households receiving shelter support also have access to safe, private, and gender-sensitive sanitation facilities. Special attention is given to the needs of women, girls, and people with disabilities to reduce protection risks and improve inclusivity.

Through community engagement and behaviour change approaches, NRC promotes improved hygiene practices and strengthens local capacity to manage and maintain WASH services, contributing to long-term resilience and healthier communities.

Gender and protection

NRC is committed to ensure safe and inclusive programming. Mainstreaming protection and gender in our work is essential to ensuring that service and aid provision is safe, accessible and accountable, while also being sensitive to the different needs of the affected population.

Although women, men, boys and girls share many common needs in a humanitarian setting, they do not necessarily have the same coping mechanisms, nor will they have the same

experience in accessing and obtaining humanitarian support to meet their needs.

In Afghanistan, women and girls have always faced many barriers, increasing the need for humanitarian support. Yet this situation has only worsened in recent times. NRC continues to deliver its programmes through a gender lens by providing women with safe access to adequate assistance and services.

Emergency response

We provide first line emergency humanitarian assistance across our operational areas through a broad set of measures including winterisation, emergency shelter and WASH response, non-food items, joint needs assessments, capacity building and multi-purpose cash to support displaced Afghans affected by sudden onset emergencies.

Our donors

We are grateful for the generous support from our donors:

- Centre de Crise et de Soutien (CDCS); French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
- Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA)
- Norwegian Agency Fore Development Cooperation (NORAD)
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)
- UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (OCHA AHF)
- Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)
- Education Cannot Wait (ECW)
- UN International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- UN Women
- German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO)
- Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Contact NRC in Afghanistan



Country director: Jacopo Caridi



af-info@nrc.no



www.nrc.no/afghanistan



Norwegian Refugee Council, Street 2, Qala-e Fathullah, Kabul, Afghanistan