



19 October 2023 in Kabul, Afghanistan: An estimated 114,000 most affected people are in urgent need of life-saving health assistance following series of earthquakes in western Afghanistan between 7 and 15 October. The WHO-led health sector requires \$7.9 million to ensure affected communities will be provided with essential health services in the next six months.

The multiple earthquakes flattened villages, displaced thousands of people and left many families in urgent need of humanitarian and health assistance. The disaster has severely impacted women, girls, boys, and vulnerable populations, who account for over 90% of the deaths and injuries.

“I have talked to people affected by earthquakes and the sense of loss is heartbreaking”, says Dr Luo Dapeng, WHO Representative in Afghanistan. “Many people spent days digging under the rubble to search for family members who either died or got injured. As they rebuild their lives, survivors are gripped with physical and emotional trauma and this is also affecting our health workers.”

Based on the initial assessment, at least 40 health facilities across nine districts were reported damaged, resulting in severe disruptions in access to health services for an estimated 580,000 people. The health consequences are staggering.

As one of the very first responders – the World Health Organization (WHO) in Afghanistan was on the ground within hours and has been supporting hospitals, especially the Herat Regional Hospital in mass casualty management, treating the injured, providing medicines and medical supplies.

“Thanks to the long and established presence in Herat, WHO rapidly mobilized resources and extended immediate lifesaving support to the affected population at the most critical time of the emergency”, says Dr Alaa AbouZeid, WHO Team Lead for Emergencies. “We were able to deploy mobile health and nutrition teams (MHNTs), surged personnel for mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), emergency management, trauma care, maternal and reproductive health services.”

WHO has also activated its surveillance system to prevent, detect and respond to outbreak-prone diseases, especially with the upcoming winter season.

“As WHO and Health Cluster partners scale up the response, the appeal for \$7.9 million in funding will cover life-saving health services, while working to restore and build back critical health services in the affected communities,” says Dr Jamshed Tanoli, Health Cluster Coordinator. “The needs are high and we hope to reach as many people as possible with donor support.”

WHO's immediate response to the earthquake in Herat has been made possible through the support of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and ECHO. Subsequent efforts have been made feasible by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the German Federal Government, USAID and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

WHO expresses deep gratitude to these donors for their crucial support during this critical time. Immediate and flexible resources are needed to allow WHO to swiftly scale up to address emerging health needs and continue its emergency response to this disaster.

References:

Herat Earthquake Response Plan, Afghanistan in this link: [Afghanistan: Herat Earthquake Response Plan \(October 2023 - March 2024\) - Afghanistan | ReliefWeb](#)

WHO and Health Cluster Situations Reports in this link: [WHO EMRO | Earthquake in Herat province | News | Media centre](#)

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Wednesday 1st of May 2024 10:05:21 AM