UN Women’s Response to Herat Earthquake

Overall Situation

On 7 October 2023, a magnitude-6.3 earthquake rocked Herat province, in Western Afghanistan, followed by aftershocks, particularly strong in early morning of 11 October, with magnitude 6.3, 5.4 and 5.0, as well as other smaller shocks.

Herat province

Earthquakes magnitude:
6.3, 5.4 and 5.0

Earthquake center:
Zindajan district

1,200 fatalities
1,600 injured

Complete destruction of homes

Reports suggest that:
Women and children make up most of the casualties as men were out working when the earthquake struck

The aftershock on October 11th caused additional destruction in neighboring districts such as:

Gorian Gulran Robat Sangi Injil

Key Findings

- Approximately, 400 villages of Herat province have been impacted by earthquakes on 7, 11 and 15 October, and subsequent aftershocks.

- In the assessed 178 villages:

  - 58% of adult persons who lost their lives were women.
  - 60% of injured persons were women.
  - 61% of missing persons were women.

Assessments estimate that women-headed households make up almost 10% of the population in some districts.

Immediate Needs

- Safe shelter and WASH facilities (latrines, water points)
  - Women specific Non-Food Items (NFIs) such as hygiene kits and clothes

- Cooking utensils and other NFIs delivered alongside food distributions
  - Immediate psychosocial support, to complement other health interventions

Risks

- Exclusion of women from beneficiary lists
- Limited access to information
- Women’s health and protection concerns

- Women’s displacement and loss of economic opportunities
- Women-headed households experience displacement challenges

1 Preliminary data from Multi-Sectoral Rapid Assessment Form, as of 17 October 2023 (forthcoming)
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
A. Emergency Response

Complement the emergency response with partners through:

- Provision of individual and group psychosocial support (PSS) to up to 370 women.
- Distribution of Non-Food Items to up to 600 female beneficiaries (winter clothes and shoes, hygiene kits, blankets).

Inclusive response: bringing women-led and women-focused organizations in the response

- Mobilizing subnational GiHA WG members for participation in assessments and response.
- Linking subnational GiHA WG members with humanitarian coordination mechanisms including to ensure women organizations’ participation in the cluster-led response.

Direct contributions to the response

- Provide local partners with 5 conex boxes for the provision of safe and confidential PSS.
- Roll out MultiPurpose Cash Assistance to 500 women-headed households and most vulnerable HH in affected villages.

Humanitarian Coordination

At subnational level:
- GiHA WG representation in humanitarian coordination platforms and organization of joint field missions with clusters; leveraging local actors including members of the Women Advisory Group to the HCT.

At national level:
- Elevating field observations and recommendations to the Inter Cluster Coordination Team and the Humanitarian Country Team and participation in joint field missions.

Knowledge Products:

- Key messages for engagement on the participation of women humanitarian workers across emergency response.
- Gender alerts.
- Gender analysis of earthquake response.

Advocacy and engagement with authorities for:

- Women’s participation across the response, in emergency and early recovery phases.
- Unimpeded operations of women-only spaces, for women to access assistance and services.

B. Early Recovery and Resilience

- Livelihood opportunities for women by women.
- Psychosocial support for women by women.
- Social cohesion.

Documenting the impact of the earthquakes on women

Mobilizing local female journalists to collect stories of women affected by the earthquakes.

Key messages for engagement on the participation of women humanitarian workers across emergency response.