



# Earthquakes in eastern and northern Afghanistan

## UN Women Humanitarian Update

Gender responsive humanitarian action reporting period: 1 September – 15 November, 2025

Women humanitarian workers, supported by UN Women, distribute winterization kits to women affected by the earthquake in Kunar province, eastern Afghanistan.

Photo: UN Women Afghanistan

### Highlights

- Women and girls continue to be the most affected by the recent earthquakes and face challenges in accessing WASH and health facilities.
- UN Women has reached more than 21,000 people with humanitarian assistance, including 16,000 women and girls, in earthquake-affected areas of eastern Afghanistan
- More than 1,600 women and girls have accessed four safe spaces for women and girls, set up by UN Women
- UN Women continues to advocate for women's participation in the response, including by supporting women in assessment teams in northern Afghanistan.

### Situation Overview

#### Northern region

- On Monday, 3 November 2025 a powerful magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck northern Afghanistan with the epicenter close to Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh province. The tremors were particularly strong in Balkh and Samangan provinces.
- As of 18 November, 26 people have been killed and 1,172 injured. In total, 3,027 families have been affected, with 874 homes destroyed and 2,153 damaged.<sup>1</sup>

#### Eastern region

- Following the initial earthquake on 31 August 2025, a series of aftershocks over a number of weeks caused additional damage. The telecommunications black-out and disruption of Internet services at the end of September [impacted humanitarian operations](#), slowing down contact with frontline responders, putting women staff at risk, and delaying the transmission of assessment and response data from field locations to centralized hubs.<sup>2</sup> Operations have since resumed, and emergency support has transitioned to recovery over the past few weeks.

<sup>1</sup> [OCHA, Flash Update 3, 10 November 2025.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [OCHA, Flash Update 7, 25 September 2025.](#)

## Gender Dimensions & Risks

- Women and girls represent 29 per cent of those killed in the northern region earthquake and 51 per cent of those injured (with seven women and girls killed and 453 injured).
- In the eastern region, as the emergency response phases out, earthquake-affected **women still experience challenges linked to displacement**. Over 7,700 families have been displaced and are currently living in temporary settlements.<sup>3</sup> Overcrowded tents, insufficient lighting, limited access to clean water and WASH facilities and limited access to health services are particularly impacting women and girls, while protection needs remain dire and are exacerbated by living conditions in the camps.
- **Women's livelihoods have been disproportionately affected by the earthquake**, with many losing their sources of income, magnifying pre-existing gender gaps. In over 40 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with over 200 women, carried out by UN Women, women expressed their willingness to be part of the economic recovery of their communities and to undertake livelihood activities such as tailoring, farming and caring for livestock. It is critical that the opportunities for women's participation brought by the earthquake are built upon in the recovery phase.

## Operational Constraints

- Due to **ongoing restrictions on women humanitarian workers**, women and girls are at risk of being left out of the humanitarian response to the earthquake in the northern region. In Samangan province, in particular, women humanitarian workers have not been allowed to work outside of the health and education nationwide exemptions and have thus not been part of initial humanitarian assessments. Negotiations with de facto authorities were, however, successful in securing the participation of women enumerators in some assessments during the week of 16 November.
- In the eastern region, women staff working with the UN have also faced continuous challenges in accessing field locations, which has restricted the ability to consult with women and carry out field monitoring.

## Coordination and Partnerships

### Northern region

- UN Women **successfully advocated** for the participation of **women enumerators** in the interagency multi-sectoral assessment in Balkh. As a result, UN Women **mobilized eight women enumerators** to participate in the assessment in four districts of Balkh province. In Samangan, the participation of women enumerators in the multi-sectoral assessment was not granted by the de facto authorities.
- **Five women enumerators** were also deployed by UN Women as part of the Protection Cluster rapid needs assessment in both Balkh and Samangan provinces.

### Eastern region

- UN Women contributed to the Joint Rapid Recovery Needs Assessment (JRRNA) led by the UN, the World Bank, the European Union and the Asian Development Bank which gathers evidence of the damages, losses, and recovery needs across key sectors, informs resilient recovery interventions and complements the humanitarian response. UN Women led the development of the chapter on human impact, bringing together other UN agencies and highlighting key needs for women, girls and other at-risk groups in the recovery from the earthquake. The JRRNA framework has requested 4.5 million USD to fund protection services, psychosocial support and inclusion programming in the recovery period.
- The GiHA working group (WG) co-led by UN Women, in collaboration with the PSEA Network, trained **75 women and 58 men frontline responders in Kunar province** on women's participation and safe access to assistance as well as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and safe and confidential reporting channels, leading to increased gender and PSEA awareness among frontliners.
- The GiHA WG in the eastern region also collaborated with the interagency humanitarian helpline Awaaz, **to deliver sessions on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and the use of Awaaz helpline to 130 affected women and 30 women and men**

<sup>3</sup> Eastern Region Earthquakes JRRNA, November 2025, forthcoming

staff in Kunar. This will ensure affected communities can report complaints about humanitarian assistance, challenges in accessing assistance and SEA concerns.

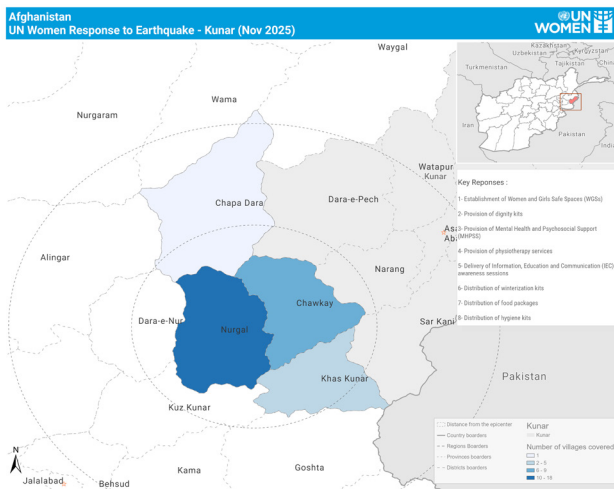
## Response Activities

### Northern region

- UN Women will reach **120 affected women** with Non-Food Item (NFIs) kits containing soap, blankets and solar lamps among other items.

### Eastern region

- UN Women, along with its women-led organization (WLO) implementing partners, reached close to **21,000 people** (including over **16,000 women and girls** and close to **5000 men and boys**) with a range of services, including dignity and winterization kits, Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).



Map: UN Women and partners response

- Through coordinated humanitarian interventions, **UN Women partners have reached over 6,600 women and girls** with dignity kits, hygiene kits and winterization supplies, across more than 30 affected villages and camps.

- Some **640 households** in heavily impacted areas received **food packages** contributing to immediate relief.
- UN Women reached **3,619 family members** of **512 women-headed households** and **five men-headed households** with multipurpose cash assistance to support their urgent needs.
- UN Women and partners reached over **7,800 women and girls** with **protection services** including **counselling, psychosocial aid, information and referrals** through the establishment of **four safe spaces for women and girls** and the deployment of mobile teams across affected locations. Over **1,600 women and girls** accessed these safe spaces. Protection services reached over **1,300 individuals** while women, girls, men and boys also benefited from over **3,000 group counseling sessions**.
- UN Women conducted **awareness-raising sessions** for over **8,500 community members**, including women, girls, men and boys, on GBV, PSEA, hygiene, and disaster preparedness, notably through the distribution of IEC materials.

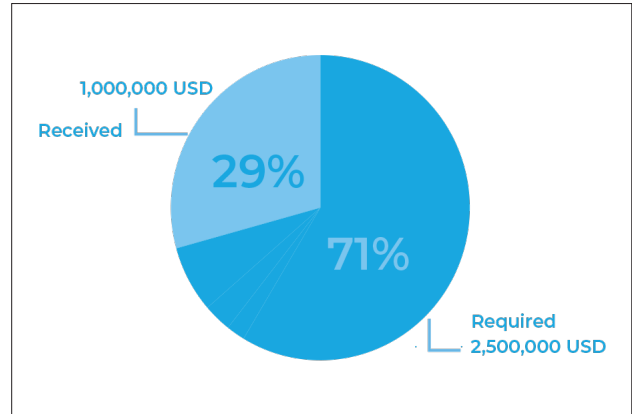
## Women-Led Organizations

WLOs have been involved in the response, notably through their participation in the GiHA WGs in eastern and northern regions where they receive information and are linked up with clusters' emergency response. In both regions, WLOs are active in humanitarian assessments and in providing direct support specifically to affected women and girls, children and people living with disabilities. In Kunar and Nangarhar, WLOs set up safe spaces for women and girls, provided MHPSS and protection services and have played a leading role in engaging with affected women and informing high level missions of the needs of women and girls on the ground.

## Funding Overview

UN Women still needs urgent funding to continue supporting Afghan women and girls to rebuild their lives after the earthquakes. Out of the 3.5 million USD requested in its first appeal, UN Women has received 1 million USD through the generous support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

2.5 million USD is still needed to reach 30,000 individuals -primarily women and girls.



Photos above: With the support of UN Women, women humanitarianists distribute dignity and winterization kits to women affected by the earthquake in Kunar province, eastern Afghanistan. Photos: UN Women Afghanistan

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