



Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Afghanistan humanitarian crises response

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Executive summary

Introduction

Affected populations across Afghanistan are continuously in need of humanitarian assistance, given the complexity of the local situation, including natural hazards, conflicts and economic decline. Afghanistan is thus facing the worst drought in 27 years, heavily impacting food security of the affected populations. Moreover, Afghanistan have been exposed to flash floods, disease outbreaks and earthquakes on top of the fragile situation. The change in government in August 2021 has further impacted the context. Within this context, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) have responded to acute needs of affected populations in all provinces of Afghanistan through the operations: MDRAF007, MDRAF008, MDRAF009 and MDRAF010.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was taken to meet the objectives of this mid-term review, which was conducted in Badghis, Kabul, Kandahar, Nuristan and Takhar. Whilst the responses are implemented in all 34 provisions, the evaluation team conducted a sample of all provinces through a purposive sampling strategy to obtain a sample size of five locations covering all interventions in the North, South, East, West and Central Afghanistan. Thus, based on the selection criteria of geographical coverage, inclusion of all interventions and through security briefings, the evaluation team selected Badghis, Kabul, Kandahar, Nuristan and Takhar. A quantitative survey was deployed for aid recipients and for non-aid recipients. A total of 633 surveys were collected, of which 80% of the surveys were conducted with aid-recipients and 20% with non-aid recipients. This survey was initiated by a demographic section to enable a disaggregated analysis. Of qualitative methods, key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with aid recipients, volunteers, community elders, Red Crescent/Red Cross stakeholders, development partners and sector representatives, amongst others. Moreover, six case studies were collected, one per province. A total of 86 KIIs were collected, of which 30 KIIs conducted in the field. Of FGDs, a total of 27 were conducted with aid recipients and volunteers. All data collection were conducted independently by the evaluation team and field team with no presence of volunteers or staff from ARCS.

Findings

Relevance and Appropriateness

ARCS conducted surveys with the communities in order to identify the most urgent needs and produce rapid needs assessments, which contributed to identifying the most urgent needs from community members and elders. This process was found to be implemented considering the local context and gender appropriateness, as both female and male volunteers conducted the surveys. Furthermore, high consistency in the perception of the relevancy and appropriateness of the aid was reported across various stakeholder groups consulted for this review. Overall, 46% of surveyed aid recipients found the assistance delivered to them completely relevant, 46% somewhat relevant, and 8% remained neutral, which can indicate a slight irrelevancy of the assistance for them. Winter kits and household kits were found to be the least relevant, whilst cash and food were most positively viewed. The relevancy of the assistance is also supported by aid recipients highlighting that the assistance had been used by them, and not sold. Despite the general relevancy highlighted, the ability of the aid to meet needs was limited, with many respondents noting too small quantities of the assistance delivered though the cluster guidelines and standards were followed. Moreover, IFRC is a member of the Humanitarian Coordination Team and both ARCS and IFRC have access to all clusters. IFRC was a member of the food security committee which was used to authorize applications from Organisations for UN pooled funding.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

The cooperation and coordination between ARCS, IFRC and other stakeholders were found to be effective to some extent, in the implementation of the program activities and achieving their objectives, with the funding channeled through IFRC supporting the implementation needs and operational plans identified by ARCS. The assistance was furthermore found to be somewhat effective at meeting the immediate needs of the population, with 18% reporting it to have fully met their needs, 70% to some extent and 12% remained neutral. However, the assistance was found to not reach all people in need. Given that all households were found to be in dire need alongside living under severe socioeconomic circumstances, the selection of household most in need in such circumstances with the kits available to be distributed was thus a key challenge for ARCS.

Shortages of ARCS volunteers in Nuristan and Takhar were furthermore identified during aid distribution days, which negatively impacted the effectiveness of the process, in some locations. In Kabul, shortage of staff members were reported. Many changes in ARCS management, staff and volunteers have been noted to have occurred after the change in national government. The IFRC Delegation in Afghanistan was very small with a low budget in 2021. With the change of the leadership of the ARCS during August 2021 and beyond the delegation was increased to better help the ARCS to understand their role of giving support to the communities and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance in a fragile and complex environment. Moreover, the ARCS had not carried out a review of the number of volunteers that they had since 1997. The number being used was a total of 30,000, made up of 20,000 men and 10,000 women. A new review was started during the time of this review, and it was found that there are approximately 24,600 volunteers of which 6,700 are females. The lack of involvement of women was found to be another limitation to IFRC and ARCS operations, limiting access to female headed households. Related, the use of surge support throughout the appeal has been appreciated, however the rotation of new people has resulted in limited relationship building and understanding of operations and context. Information-sharing for both IFRC and ARCS, and handover processes, however, need improvement.

Finally, logistical issues, such as road access (damages to roads and infrastructure), as well as transportation issues (lack of vehicles and equipment) were found to be significant barriers to the implementation, causing delays, calling for further contingency planning. Moreover, the ARCS has seven regional offices and 34 Provincial offices. Not all of these offices are connected to the internet on a full-time basis due to the lack of a reliable power supply.

Sustainability and Connectedness

Looking at the collaboration between ARCS and IFRC, strengths and benefits lies in their ability to communicate information upwards, to higher management, headquarters and donors, which is further strengthened when IFRC is able to visit local officers and experience first-hand the emergencies. ARCS branch directors found that IFRC's focus should be on this. Limited involvement of ARCS to donor proposals drafted by IFRC was reported, with impressions that ARCS were not given the space and time to participate meaningfully in terms of programme design and prioritisation of needs, where ARCS was only subject to donor principles based on geographical targeting.

While coordination activities between IFRC, ARCS and provincial National Societies is found to be good with regular meetings conducted and information sharing taking place, as well as coordination with the Humanitarian Country Team, struggles within the system is found in the vertical flow of information, specifically within the flow of information from managers to the staff in their departments. Without regular and accessible ways for communication, misunderstandings can occur. This is additionally magnified with ARCS management having changed over the past year, creating divisions between old and new staff, with collaboration between the two limited. This is reported by multiple key informants at both branch level and

district level, and reported that the collaboration is limited. At operational level, ARCS and IFRC is also found to have limited collaboration with other humanitarian actors, with low participation in cluster meetings. The compliance requirements system is also found to compromise effectiveness, slowing down responses, along with the already discussed lack of databased for ARCS volunteers and their skills. Whilst compliance requirements are necessary, it should be factored into early planning to avoid delays and slowing down the response. Digital transformation should thus be a top-priority, along with other above-mentioned issues to better contribute to the sustainability of this and future programmes. Finally, as an emergency and disaster relief programme, the activities were not found to support the implementation of any longer-term projects or objectives for the targeted communities. Suggestions to shirting to longer-term objectives are provided within the report.

Conclusion

With the support of the Movement partners, ARCS has been and is a first responder to the acute needs generated the natural disasters, of which the operations counts for assistance needed after flash floods, earthquakes and from the long-lasting drought. Moreover, the assistance is also highly relevant to the socioeconomic difficulties that communities are facing. Within the operations, affected populations were assistance with cash, food household, winter and hygiene kits, which were found to meet immediate needs to a good degree. The cash value and kits were found to last for one to two months.

Challenges were, however, found to have impacted the effectiveness of the operations, which affected the relevance of assistance, given some delays in assistance delivery. For example, shelter assistance was delivered in November 2022, thus, when winter had already begun. One of the key challenges which ARCS is facing, is the number of volunteers. Currently, the information about volunteers in Afghanistan is being updated, which will strengthen ARCS and operations in 2023. It is of great importance for ARCS to receive this overview of volunteers, sex of volunteers and skill sets, of which training needs to be provided, for – for example – data collection and monitoring.

Moreover, it was found that there is a need to optimise and strengthen efforts of monitoring. To ensure relevance and effectiveness of operations, it is vital to obtain data from the field, counting for markets and prices monitoring, debt monitoring and met needs versus unmet needs. To ensure these are conducted in neutral and independent manner, it is concluded that all stakeholders will benefit from monitoring conducted by a third-party. Particularly, for aid recipients, it is important that this monitoring is conducted by third-party, thus, they can speak freely without fear of losing access to assistance, which a common concern, and not related to ARCS or IFRC.

Short-term surge capacity staff has been used over a long period, which has been concluded to impact effectiveness and coordination. It will certainly strengthen IFRC and ARCS that longer term contracts and a more settled Delegation will be in place from 2023. Moreover, one of the key findings which is outlined through this mid-term review, is a need to strengthen cohesion between branches in Afghanistan. To enable this, it is vital to support branches with stabile power sources, hardware and software, as well as the update of databases for volunteers is of utmost importance.

Recommendations

In the following, the recommendations generated from this mid-term review is outlined. The full list of recommendations with findings and priorities can be found in section 6.

1. Ensure transparency and explanation of implementation plan.

2. Investigate the level of debt amongst households, assess if relevant to add as a selection criteria for aid based on findings, and investigate the opportunity to expand CVA assistance to respond to potential significant debt rates.
3. Ensure ARCS team consist of both female and male team members.
4. Train volunteers on receiving feedback and complaints as well as spread awareness of such channels to community elders and aid recipients.
5. Improve and streamline internal procurement systems.
6. Increase efforts towards digital transformation.
7. Increase coordination meetings during 2023.
8. Strengthen communication efforts with the purpose of clear objectives for Afghanistan and for advocacy.
9. Increase monitoring and delegate monitoring activities to a third-party.
10. Provide field findings of needs to coordination meetings with OCHA, clusters and working groups

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Acronyms

AFN	Afghan Afghani
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
APRO	Asia-Pacific Regional Office
ARCS	Afghan Red Crescent Society
BDRT	Branch Disaster Response Team
CHF	Confoederatio Helvetica Franc
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
DRU	Disaster Response Unit
ET	Evaluation team
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross domestic product
HR	Human Resources
HQ	Headquarter
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internal Displaced Person
IEA	Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KII	Key Informant Interview
MTR	Mid-term Review
NFI	Non-food item
NSD	National Society Development
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PNS	Partner National Societies
SMT	Senior management team
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollars
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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1 Introduction

1.1 Contextual Background

Afghanistan is experiencing one of the most critical humanitarian crises in the world, as a result of multifaceted factors, leading to acute needs across the country. Socio-economic vulnerability, brought out by decades of conflict, continue to impact Afghans, in addition to added exposures to shocks and stresses from natural hazards, including earthquakes, flooding, drought, landslides, and avalanches.

In the period between January 2022 and August 2022, almost all provinces in Afghanistan were affected by natural disasters to some extent, primarily flooding and earthquakes. These natural hazards affected more than 200,000 Afghans in total.¹ Other recent disasters with consequences still significantly impacting the population also include the severe drought in 2021-2022 affecting 80% of Afghanistan's territory² and the harsh winter of 2021-2022 making around 12 million Afghans dependent on winterization assistance.³ In addition to that, areas affected by flooding and snowfall are also exposed to risks of landslides and avalanches due to the mountainous terrain of the country, abundant precipitation and earthquake shakings. All these annual adverse events also destroy critical facilities and infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, water points, power networks and roads, further deteriorating the living conditions as well as imposing additional public expenditures in Afghanistan. These conditions all significantly decrease livelihood opportunities in the country as the majority of the population live in rural areas, relying on agriculture⁴ whose capacities directly depend on the climate. Natural disasters are one of the main factors promoting mass internal displacement, which in turn, is associated with an increase of protection risks. Internal displacement also negatively influences labour markets, access to health and education services as well as to electricity, water, shelter and sanitation in locations with a high density of internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA)⁵ having increased by 6 million people compared to the previous year⁶

Food insecurity is one of the biggest concerns in Afghanistan affecting all its 34 provinces. For the period between June and November 2022, nearly half of the Afghan population have been identified as experiencing high levels of food insecurity among which around 13 million are classified in Crisis (Phase 3 out of 5) on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) scale and around 6 million - in Emergency (Phase 4 out of 5) while further deterioration is still possible.⁷ Despite the food assistance provided, the situation remains highly fragile due to contextual changes, economic decline and climatic conditions. Food production is often reported to be impeded by limited access to water resources due to droughts while poverty negatively affects access to seeds, land, chemicals and equipment.⁸ A total of 98% of observed communities reported the increase in price of cooking oil, rice, flour and fuel that forced families to reduce food.⁹

In this condition, nearly half of the population is forced to employ crisis coping strategies such as deduction of number of meals per day, limiting food intake, borrowing food from others and restricting adults' food intake in order for children to eat, to meet their basic needs. This situation is expected to further deteriorate during the winter season.¹⁰ More than one in two children under-five suffer from acute malnutrition being

¹ Afghanistan: Overview of Natural Disasters (as of 8 November 2022), OCHA

² Afghanistan: Worst drought and hunger crisis in decades, IFRC

³ Joint Winterization Plan 2021-2022: Afghanistan, Shelter Cluster Afghanistan

⁴ Disaster Risk Profile: Afghanistan 2017, The World Bank, GFDRR

⁵ Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022 (January 2022)

⁶ Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 (January 2022)

⁷ IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis. March - November 2022

⁸ Afghanistan: Community-Based Needs Assessment: Summary Results Round 14 (November-December 2021)

⁹ Afghanistan: Community-Based Needs Assessment: Summary Results Round 14 (November-December 2021)

¹⁰ Afghanistan: Situation Report, October 2022, WFP

at risk of death without assistance¹¹ while only 62% of health facilities provide services for children diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition, and 45% for children with medium acute malnutrition in Afghanistan.¹² This year has also registered a significant increase in the number of children under five years of age being admitted to hospital inpatient departments with severe acute malnutrition, reaching more than 34,000 children through September 2022.¹³ Moreover, acute watery diarrhoea among children relating to the lack of safe drinking increased from 33% to 54% in 2021.¹⁴

Shelter is another sector of concern as approximately 11 million Afghans are in need of shelter and non-food items (NFI) in 2022¹⁵. Most shelters in the country are made of mud¹⁶ and cannot resist extreme environmental conditions such as flash floods, avalanches and landslides as well as not being equipped for living during freezing temperatures, common in high altitude locations. At the same time, IOM needs assessment showed that 85% of observed households could not afford to pay rent.¹⁷

The overall situation has been drastically deteriorated by the political context, as the Taliban takeover of August 2021, resulted in the international sanctions imposed on the country. The sanctions significantly impacted the international assistance provided to Afghanistan while it contributed to 45% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 75% of public spending¹⁸ Specifically, the freeze of funding by the World Bank disrupted the health system and related services, resulting in dengue, cholera, malaria, and measles outbreaks, which have been reported in different provinces of the country in the past¹⁹. Furthermore, forced by the sanctions, the Afghan Government introduced withdrawal limits, the restriction on banknotes transfers to private banks and prohibition of most electronic transactions in United States dollars (USD). All these cash restrictions, in addition to the abovementioned funding sanctions, negatively affected Afghan households that benefited from cash distribution, cash-for-work, and livelihood support programs and hindered many households' abilities to meet their basic.²⁰

1.2 Intervention Profile

Within the above-outlined context, four operations have been activated by IFRC to respond to the acute needs of the affected populations. The four operations consist of MDRAF007, MDRAF008, MDRAF009 and MDRAF010. In the figure below, each operation's geographical scope and assistance type is outlined. In the following sections, each operation is elaborated upon.

Figure 1: Assistance as of October 2022.

Province	District	Assistance Type	Fund	Total Reached
Takhar	Farkhar	Food	MDRAF008	150
Takhar	Farkhar	Hygiene Kits	MDRAF008	150
Takhar	Farkhar	Household Kits	MDRAF008	150
Takhar	Rostaq	Food	MDRAF008	150

¹¹ Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022 (January 2022)

¹² Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 (January 2022)

¹³ Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report Issue 21, October 2022, WHO

¹⁴ Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022 (January 2022).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Afghanistan: Community-Based Needs Assessment: Summary Results Round 14 (November-December 2021).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Economy in Free Fall: The Afghanistan Crisis, USGLC

¹⁹ Operation Update Report Afghanistan: Humanitarian Crises, n°5, June 2022, IFRC

²⁰ Economic Causes of Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis, August 2022, Human Rights Watch

Takhar	Rostaq	Hygiene Kits	MDRAF008	150
Takhar	Rostaq	Household Kits	MDRAF008	150
Kabul	Kabul	Food	MDRAF007	1,317
Kabul	Kabul	Winterization Kit	MDRAF007	1,000
Kabul	Kabul, Qara Bagh, Farza, Paghman, Khake Jabar, Bagrami	Cash (15,500 AFN)	MDRAF007	7,900
Kandahar	City	Food	MDRAF007	4,000
Kandahar	City	Winterization Kit	MDRAF007	1,000
Badghis	Muqur	Food	MDRAF007	558
Badghis	Abkamari	Food	MDRAF007	542
Badghis	Qades	Cash (9,000 AFN)	MDRAF010	500
Nooristan	Barge Matal	Food	MDRAF007	400
Nooristan	Kamdish	Food	MDRAF007	600
Nooristan	Kamdish	Food	MDRAF009	600
Nooristan	Kamdish	Household Kit	MDRAF009	600
Nooristan	Kamdish	Hygiene Kit	MDRAF009	600

MDRAF007 - Humanitarian Crises Appeal

The programme being reviewed consists of four appeal documents that are interlinked. The main intervention, MDRAF007, is entitled Humanitarian Crises, running from 10th April 2021 until December 31, 2023. Originally this was an appeal for Confoederatio Helvetica franc (CHF) 7.5 million, but it has been revised on four occasions to reach CHF 90 million as of June 24, 2022 (fourth revision), covering response towards population movement, drought, earthquake, flood and flash flood, and food security. The fourth revision took place after the earthquake in Khost and Paktika on June 22, 2022. Originally covering 19 Provinces the appeal now targets all 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The target population is set at 1,100,000 people which is approximately 140,000 households with an average family size of seven. Collectively, the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its members are aiming to deliver assistance to two million people across all provinces in Afghanistan, translating to 10% of the affected population.

As a result of multiple natural disasters occurred during the period of the Emergency Appeal, the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operations (MDRAF008, MDRAF009 and MDRAF010) were implemented to respond to the needs of the population affected by floods in seven provinces (Bamyan, Herat, Panjshir, Sar-i-Pul, Takhar, Wardak, Nooristan) and the earthquake in Badghis province. The operation thus aims at supporting 1,100,000 individuals from affected communities to meet their basic needs in a timely, effective, and efficient manner. The latest Emergency Appeal (Revision No. 4) includes specific actions responding to the needs of the population impacted by the earthquake in the Paktika and Khost provinces. The strategy focuses on the three following components:

- Integrated assistance (provision of both emergency and recovery shelter support, emergency food and support for livelihoods, as well as in-kind or cash assistance for household needs in Paktika and Khost provinces)

- Health, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (provision of emergency and primary health care, establishment of water and sanitation facilities, implementation of health promotion activities, as well as rehabilitation and equipment of health facilities in Paktika and Khost provinces)
- Protection and Prevention (integration of protection, gender, and inclusion aspects as well as community engagement and accountability in all the activities in all sectors)

According to the latest operation update (no. 6) released in November 2022, the program has so far reached at least 500,500 people (71,500 households) in 24 provinces through the distribution of food parcels, cash assistance, hygiene kits, household kits and winterization kits. Within the health component, ARCS reached approximately 278,108 people through primary healthcare services and immunization services provided by 31 mobile health teams (with support from IFRC) during the reporting period (April to September 2022). In addition, 115,616 community members were reached through the implementation of 7,708 community awareness sessions.

MDRAF008 (Bamyan, Herat, Panjshir, Sar-i-Pul, Takhar, Wardak)

On May 3, 2021, consecutive flash floods occurred affected 16 provinces in five regions. Based on the ARCS Provincial disaster management committee's assessment, a total of 404 houses were reportedly fully destroyed, 482 partially destroyed, and 697 families affected by the flood in Bamian, Herat, Wardak, Sari-e-Pol, Takhar and Panjshir provinces. The initial target for this operation was 2,000 households. However, only 1,750 households in five provinces were reached. The reason for this was the DREF timeframe and winter conditions which constrained access to the beneficiaries in Sar-e-Pol province. A total of 250 households from this province were supported later under a different operation – the Afghanistan Humanitarian crises emergency appeal. Against a backdrop of a country facing multiple natural disasters, conflict, change of government and near collapse of financial industry, the implementation of this operation was extremely challenging. Besides, the roads became blocked due to winter conditions and heavy snowfall constraining access and distributions of the relief assistance. Several key donors were concerned about some changes in ARCS, and initially hesitated to channel resources via the organization. The concerns related mainly to screening of individuals against sanctions lists. ARCS and IFRC took various measures to reassure such donors about compliance mechanisms that were in place.

MDRAF009 (Nooristan)

On the July 28, 2021, Mirdesh village (Kamdesh, Nooristan) faced massive flash floods due to heavy rainfall. The initial field documentation reported 150 casualties. Approximately 300 homes were impacted, and 200 fully damaged by the flash floods. Moreover, roads, one public bridge and four small bridges were also damaged. The flash floods also had devastating consequences for livestock and agricultural fields, as the floods swept away cattle, destroyed agricultural lands. The East Zone Disaster Response Unit (DRU) team, the Branch Disaster Response Team (BDRT) Kunar, Nuristan staff and mobile health team of the ARCS were the first-responders on the ground, providing healthcare, tents, kits, potable water and food assistance.

MDRAF010 (Badghis)

On January 17, 2022, a 5.3 magnitude earthquake hit the Badghis province, heavily impacting Qadis, Muqur and Qala-e-Naw (population size estimated to be 260,000). Of these three locations, Qadis faced the most significant impact. Several other smaller subsequent earthquakes struck the area, which were felt in Badghis, Ghor and Herat provinces. 26 casualties were reported, 4 injured, and 7,000 were impacted in three out of seven districts. Another wave of earthquakes hit three days later, further worsened by rain and snow. At this

point of time, most locals were sheltering in tents and makeshift shelters.

1.3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this mid-term review (MTR) is to assess the relevance and appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency, and sustainability and feasibility of the humanitarian actions, services and response under the Afghanistan humanitarian crises emergency operation response (MDRAF007), and the three DREF operations (MDRAF008, MDRAF009 and MDRAF010) of the ARCS, supported by IFRC and Partner National Societies (PNS). The review also assesses the evolution of IFRC's support to ARCS (capacity building, programme design, service delivery and coordination) and its relevance and effectiveness to national and local actors. The exact objectives of the review are as follows:

- To evaluate and review the humanitarian actions in these operations are fit for purpose in the context of a multi-faceted needs and multi-hazards/crises in Afghanistan and highlight gaps and provide recommendations
- To review the adaptability of ARCS and IFRC to external and internal changes, including its absorption of funds from the appeal within the context of the country and highlight gaps
- To review coordination mechanisms, identify gaps and to provide recommendations on how to enhance coordination with the authorities, membership coordination, Movement coordination as well as coordination with donors and humanitarian actors in the response.
- To evaluate the effect of the operations on ARCS organizational capacity and development

This MTR scope includes analysis and assessment of the performance of ARCS, IFRC and Participating National Societies within the interventions of the Emergency Appeal (MDRAF007); DREF – Floods (MDRAF008); DREF – Nooristan Floods (MDRAF009); and DREF – Badghis Earthquake (MDRAF010). The MTR includes views and perspectives from of ARCS (at headquarters, provincial and district levels), IFRC Afghanistan CD and IFRC APRO, PNSs, government bodies, partner organizations (UN agencies, clusters, working groups, amongst others), and the affected population. This MTR was conducted in the provinces of Kabul, Nuristan, Takhar, Kandahar and Badghis.

1.4 Review Criteria and Questions

In order to meet the objectives of this MTR, the evaluation team (ET) employed the following framework:

Figure 2: MTR Framework

Criteria	Key Question	Sub Question
Relevance and appropriateness	Is the programme reaching the target population?	How relevant were the interventions in identifying the most vulnerable among the affected population (displaced and host communities), and responding appropriately to their particular circumstances?
		Was the beneficiary selection process transparent, fair, appropriate and effective?
	Is the implementation meeting programme benchmarks?	Was the assistance provided appropriate and sufficient to meet intended needs? Are they accessible and safe?
		Were intervention strategies and priorities in line with local customs and practices of the affected population, the priorities of the Government authorities and other key humanitarian actors?

Efficiency and Effectiveness	How is this service going?	How were programme activities planned, managed and coordinated, particularly between ARCS, IFRC, other partners, clusters, and local authorities?
		How were ARCS and its volunteers mobilized to ensure services reach the most in need?
	What are the barriers to implementation?	What are the barriers to success - including institutional weaknesses, external threats and challenges with stakeholders including affected communities?
	Is the delivery working?	Did the interventions meet their immediate and intended results?
		Were there adequate resources (financial, human, physical, technical and informational) available and were they utilized effectively and efficiently?
Were adequate tracking systems in place to ensure transparency and accountability?		
How can we finetune this programme/ delivery to make it more effective and efficient?	Which concerns have been raised by stakeholders through the accountability mechanism? How have this impacted implementation?	
Sustainability and Connectedness	What is the programme trying to achieve?	Were ARCS and IFRC able to adjust the interventions to maintain relevance due to the changes in priorities in the country?
		How relevant was IFRC in setting the coordination and strategic direction under the Emergency Appeal and two DREF operations covering the affected areas?
		How did IFRC coordinate internally within the Movement and externally with external coordinating bodies to ensure connectedness and sustainability?
	How is implementation going now compared with a month ago or a year ago?	Was there adequate and relevant staffing including: a) decisions concerning the number of staff members needed, where, when, with what competences, at what levels, and at required availability and b) decision-making chain regarding staffing?
	How could the organization be changed to make it more effective?	Is there evidence that the IFRC capacity building (programme design/delivery, coordination) and support to ARCS tangibly improved their effectiveness, ability deliver assistance based on needs alone and in line with the Fundamental Principles of the RCRC?
	How did the interventions support	How did the interventions contribute to the development objectives of Afghanistan?

	the implementation of longer-term projects or programmes?	How does the assistance provided contribute to longer term well-being of the beneficiaries?
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2 Methodology

2.1 Evaluation Methods

Desk review

During the inception phase, the team conducted desk review of all relevant operational and organizational documents provided by the IFRC and ARCS. Moreover, the team conducted a review of secondary, external sources to capture all impacting factors during the projects' duration. Lists of used sources can be found in Annex 5.

Field visits

The ET field team conducted field visits to a number of villages during this MTR, which are outlined in the below figure. The ET employed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure field visits will take place in locations of responses. In line with this strategy, the ET set up three selection criteria for the purposive sampling strategy for locations: A) All interventions (007, 008, 009, 010) shall be covered amongst the five locations, B) Geographical coverage of the whole country, and C) Security briefings from the Operations team and from TAGHEER's field team. For response 010, Badghis was the exact location of the intervention, whilst Nuristan was the exact location for 009, hence covering two interventions. For 007, Kabul and Kandahar were selected as they contribute to geographical coverage as well as the response is reaching high numbers of affected populations under the 007 umbrella. For 008, Takhar was selected to cover the north, completing the geographical coverage in accessible areas and inclusion of all responses.

Figure 3: List of locations included in the MTR

Province	District	Village
Kabul	City	
	Center	Kabul center, Kart-eNaw, District5
	Paghman	Qala Haider Khan, Chunghar, Zar Sheikh, Dara Zargar, Dasht Karizak
	Bagrami	Alokhil, Hussainkhil, Butkhak
Nuristan	Parun	
	Kamdish	Kamdesh/Paprok, Gohardesh, Mehardesh
Takhar	Taloqan	
	Farkhar	Khafdara
	Rostaq	Ganda, Chaghyan, Sar-e-Rostaq
Kandahar	City	
	District 08	Kandahar city
	District 09	
	District 13	
	District 15	
Badghis	Qala-e-Naw	

	Muqar	H. M. Sadiq Sang Aatesh, Haji Rangeen Mohamadzai
	Qades	Khakpolak, Khalifa ha
	Abkamary	Tagab Robot, Dahestan

Surveys

A survey tool was employed in order to bring forward aid recipients' experiences, insights and reflections on the responses, whilst a non-beneficiary survey also was employed. Based on a 95% and a 3.9% margin of error calculation with a sample size of 1.100,000, the sample size equals a total of 633 surveys using a random sampling strategy. The sample has been distributed to the populations sizes in order to control bias and ensure representativeness. Of the total sample unit, 20% of the surveys were conducted with non-aid recipients and 80% with aid recipients. In order to enable disaggregated data analysis, the tool included a section on demographic and socioeconomic factors. An overview of demographics can be found in Annex 6.

Figure 4: Number of aid-recipient and non-aid recipient surveys in each province/district.

Province	District	Aid recipients	Non-aid recipients	Female respondents	Male respondents	Surveys total
Kabul	Bagrami	68	22	23	67	90
	Kabul	21	8	12	17	29
	Paghman	58	13	26	45	71
Nuristan	Kamdish	76	19	19	76	95
Takhar	Farkhar	38	10	17	31	48
	Rostaq	38	10	14	34	48
Kandahar	Kandahar	76	19	27	68	95
Badghis	Abkamari	41	10	16	35	51
	Muqur	44	11	15	40	55
	Qades	42	9	14	37	51
Grand total		502	131	183	450	633

Figure 5: Number aid-recipient's reporting receiving each assistance type, per province.

	Food Kit	Hygiene Kit	Cash	Winter Kit	Household/NFI kit
Kabul	20	1	126	9	0
Kandahar	68	10	5	0	0
Badghis	85	0	89	0	0
Takhar	76	0	0	75	30
Nuristan	72	2	17	7	7
Total*	321	13	237	91	37
*Total value does not add up to 502, as some respondents reported receiving multiple assistances.					

Key informant interviews

The method of key informant interviews (KII) serves as an entrance to extensive qualitative data from the community and project level, hence inclusion of a range of different stakeholders, such as IFRC, ARCS,

development partners, community leaders, and local authorities, including the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA). Through this approach, valuable data from multiple levels was collected to capture strengths and challenges, efficient and effective modalities and insights of the target communities, stakeholders and partners. In total, 86 KIIs were conducted. The complete list of key informants can be found in Annex 7.

Focus group discussions

To engage aid recipients and ARCS volunteers, the field team conducted a total of 27 FGDs with six to eight participants per group across Kabul, Kandahar, Badghis, Takhar and Nuristan. In all locations, with the exception of Badghis, the team conducted FGDs with both female and male volunteers. For the FGDs with aid recipients, both male and female groups were engaged in all locations. In each province, FGDs with aid recipients (one female and one male) were conducted, and two FGDs (also one female and male) with ARCS volunteers were conducted, except for Badghis, where only a FGD with male volunteers were conducted. Thus, nine FGDs were conducted with male aid recipients, nine with female aid recipients, five with male volunteers and four with female volunteers. A focus group discussion was also held with the locally recruited female members of the IFRC Delegation.

Case studies

The ET field team identified participants for case studies through FGDs and surveys, of which case studies are collected from a household-level. The ET has thus produced five case studies, one from each province. The case studies are further supported with secondary data obtained from the desk review of internal documents. The case studies can be found in Annex 8.

2.2 Limitations and Challenges

During this MTR, the ET faced multiple limitations and challenges. Overall, a key limitation is thus the time constraints faced by the ET. The MTR was initiated through an inception meeting on October 12, and the first draft report was submitted on December 14, hence 8 weeks for inception report writing and data collection tools development, field preparations, data collection, data translation, data analysis and report writing. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team was given two extra weeks for these stages, as the initial deadline was November 29. Moreover, the international ET was not able to travel outside Kabul or to attend any of the field data collection apart from KIIs with key stakeholders in Kabul due to logistic and poor infrastructure. Finally, the inception phase was short, and the inception report not finalized when the ET travelled to Kabul. Due to this and the short period in Kabul (two weeks), the ET could not schedule any KIIs prior to going to Kabul, and therefore, the first days in Kabul were used on planning and finalization of the inception report and tools.

Aid recipients were informed about the purpose of this MTR and its focus to be on ARCS response, however, it is a limitation that aid recipients may not know or recall who they received aid from, as in all locations (except Kandahar), there are other responders as well. Moreover, community members in the areas of this MTR are living in deep poverty, with significant levels of unemployment and livelihoods opportunities, and in severe food security. Therefore, aid recipients are likely to provide more positive feedback than is realistic, given the fear of being excluded from future aid. In some cases, during this MTR, the responses from

aid recipients have thus been significantly more positive than responses from ARCS, IFRC and development partners.

In the following, limitations and challenges related to field data collection per province is outlined.

Kabul

In Bagrami district, the field team was not allowed to conduct data collection until the provincial governor office had issued a letter of approval. This process delayed the field team in Kabul for two days. After receiving this letter of approval, the team conducted an FGD, but a district officer enforced his representatives' participation for observation. Although no interference during the FGD was reported, the outcome of the FGD may be limited due to authority presence.

Nuristan

In Nuristan, the field team was challenged by weather conditions, roads, mobile services and internet connection. In Kamdesh, the road between the village and Parun was closed during data collection due to heavy rainfall, meaning Kamdesh could only be accessed via Ghaziabad district in Kunar province.

Takhar

Given the movement amongst aid recipients, an estimated 30-40% of the selected respondents were no longer living in the locations of Khafdar, Ganda Chughyan and Semurghyan. Therefore, there were significant gaps in the sampling frame, which were mitigated by the field team by replacing these with new respondents from ARCS's lists.

Kandahar

In Kandahar, the field team faced the same challenges as in Takhar in terms of the sampling frame. Therefore, as for Takhar, a new list of respondents was issued and sampled. No other significant challenges occurred in Kandahar.

Badghis

In all provinces, it was planned to conduct FGDs with both female and male ARCS volunteers. However, in Badghis while the FGD with male volunteers was conducted as planned, the field researchers were informed that there were no teams of female ARCS volunteers in Badghis. The FGD with female ARCS volunteers thus could not be conducted, according to plan. In Haji Rangeen Mohamadzai, Taqab Robot and Dehestan, many aid recipients had return to their villages or moved to other locations, and therefore, the sampling frame was not adequate. As for Takhar and Kandahar, the field team issued a new recipients list.

3 Evaluation Findings

3.1 Relevance and appropriateness

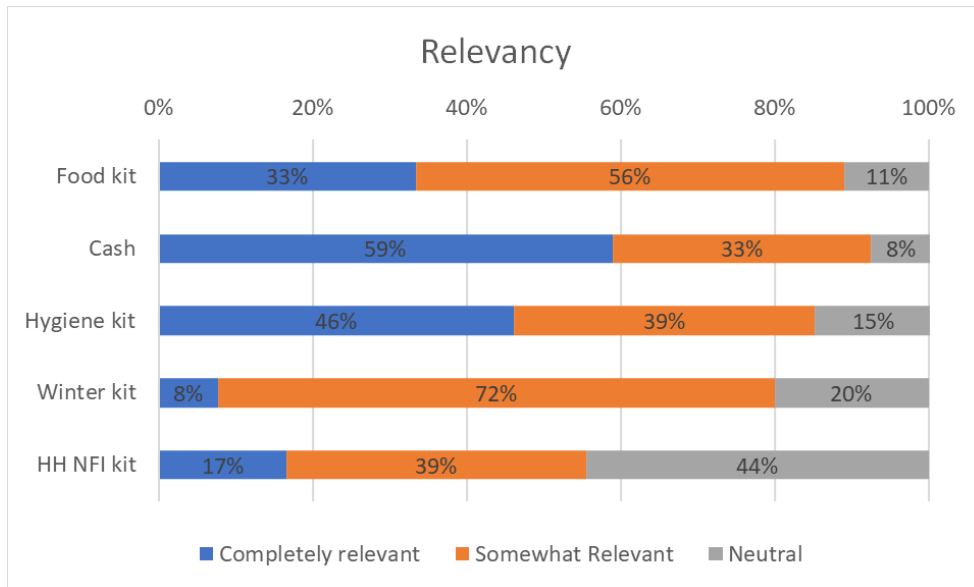
Review Question 1: Is the programme reaching the target population?

During visits to villages, ARCS conducted surveys with community members to identify the most urgent needs and produce a rapid needs assessment. These needs assessments were conducted in cooperation with community elderlies and volunteers. For the floods in Mosahi, ARCS headquarter (HQ) supported the field work, given the severity of the situation. As a rather new strategy, ARCS is thus both consulting community elderlies and conducting surveys directly with community members independently, to avoid the risk of bias, as a significant number of beneficiaries in the past have been relatives of community elderlies, hence not necessarily the community members most vulnerable and most in need.

To ensure a context-appropriate approach to the needs assessment, surveys were conducted with male head of households. For households with a female head of household, ARCS sent out married couples to district, of which the female then conducted these surveys with female heads of households. This approach enabled ARCS to be respectful and sensitive towards the local context, and at the same time, to increase the chance of vulnerable female-headed households to be included in the assistance. At the Khost and Paktika earthquake, the National Society assessment team which arrived in good time after the emergency was however all males. Thus, within the Afghan culture direct information from women was impossible to obtain, and the assessment had to be repeated three weeks later.

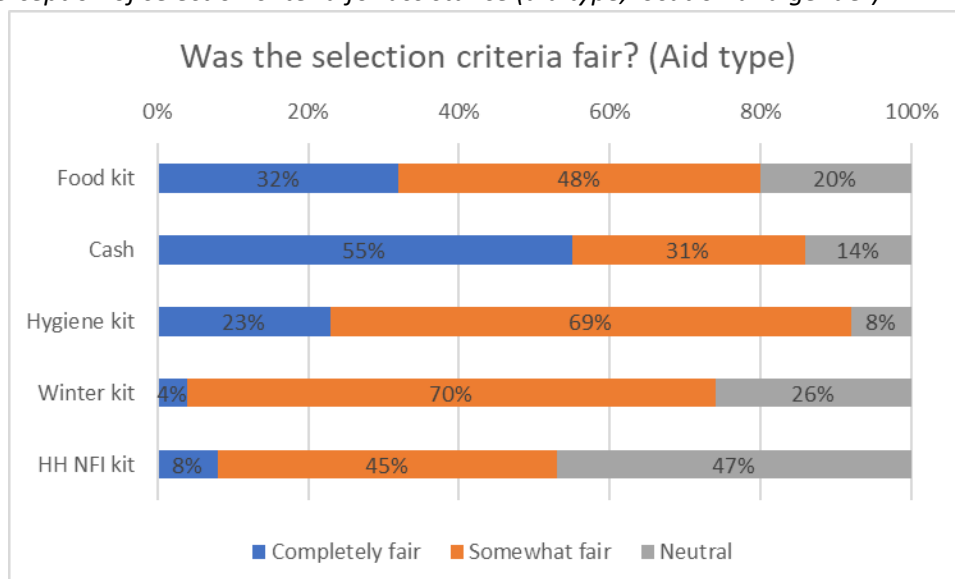
Across locations of implementation and assistance types, there is a high consistency in the perception of the operations' relevance amongst aid recipients and the elderly as well as from the viewpoints of volunteers and local authorities, including the ANDMA. Overall, 46% of all surveyed aid recipients found the assistance completely relevant; 46% somewhat relevant; and 8% neutral. The highest rankings are given by aid recipients in Kabul (65% reported assistance to be completely relevant), and lowest ranking was found in Takhar, where 22% reported neutral and 78% somewhat relevant. The below graph presents aid recipients' perceptions of assistance relevancy by aid type, highlighting the limited relevancy of the HH NFI kits, as 44% gave a rating of "neutral". Assessments of neutrality can be interpreted as partial disagreements to the statement, as within the context of this review and assistance, high levels of needs are identified, and the provision of any assistance is generally positively approached.

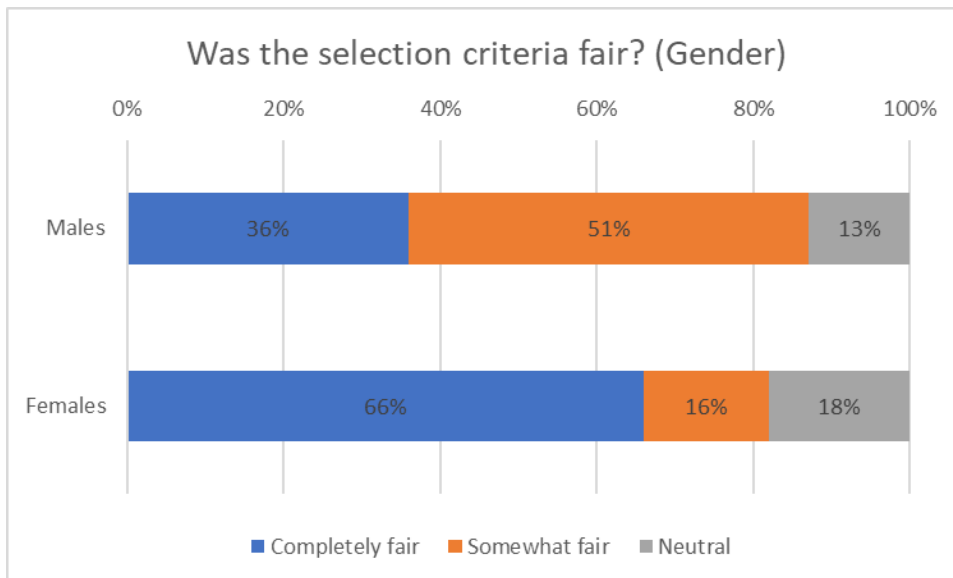
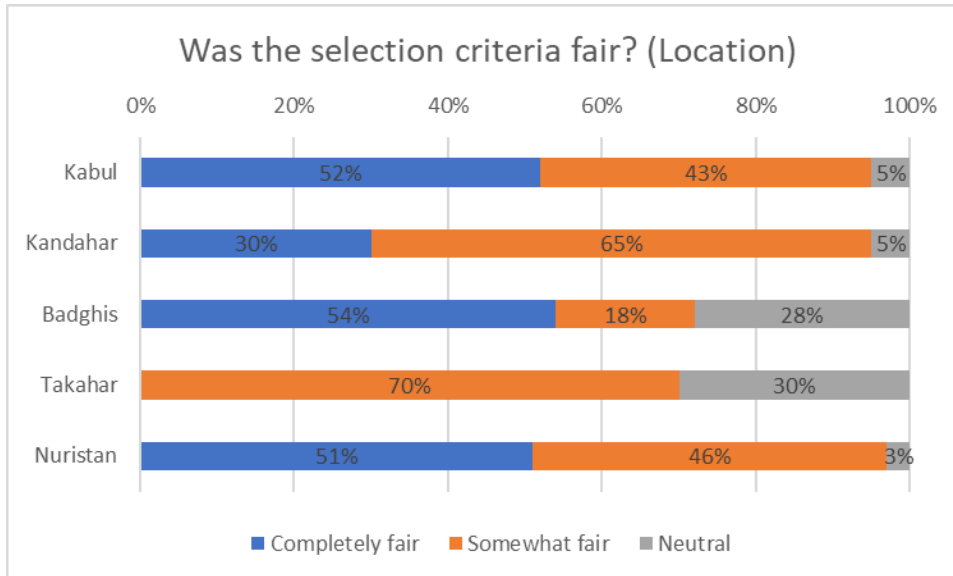
Graph 1: Aid recipients' perception of assistance relevancy



Of surveyed aid recipients, 41% were informed of the selection criteria, whilst 59% were not. In Kandahar, the lowest awareness of selection was found with merely 11%, and highest in Kabul with 73%. Notably, female headed households were informed of the selection criteria *more* (61%) than male headed households (39%); while also host community members were better informed (43%), in comparison to IDPs (34%). Of those aware of the criteria, 41% found them completely fair; 44% somewhat fair, and 14% neutral, with lowest perception of fairness in Takhar and highest in Kabul and Nuristan. In terms of the female aid respondent who participated in FGDs in Nuristan, these aid respondents did not find the selection criteria adequately transparent, as they found it unclear why many other households in need did not receive assistance from ARCS. However, that some households did not receive support is not correlating to selection criteria but due to limited aid material and therefore, those households assessed as most vulnerable were prioritized. In the below graph, perception of fair criteria is analysed per aid type, location and gender of respondent.

Graph 2-4: Perception of selection criteria for assistance (aid type, location and gender)





However, the share of female headed-household receiving aid was found to be lower than anticipated. In many areas, women are not allowed to collect the aid provided, thus they had to send their mahrams (husbands, father, brother or son) to collect the assistance. It is however likely, that not all women-headed households had access to the support intended to be delivered to them, due to their limited access to the delivery sites. Further analysis on the household composition collected via Red Rose could validate further whether the reach and coverage were adequate in terms of gender parity and other vulnerabilities, which would be useful for IFRC and ARCS in impact measurement and future reporting.

Finally, aid recipients and community elderlies to a high degree found the selection criteria transparent and fair. However, all these interviewed or surveyed respondent also know of households who are living in deep poverty and have not received aid. Particularly, aid recipients expressed confusion and wondered why such households have not received any assistance. This challenge was echoed by ARCS staff who found it challenging that there were significant limited assistance kits to be distributed compared to high levels of needs in communities and significant number of deeply poor households. The quantities of kits can thus be

concluded not to be sufficient to meet the needs, within the geographical scope. A number of households are living in such deep poverty that they were eligible for up to three or four kits, which, however, does not align with the cluster's standards of items in kits, which are followed within the operations. In Takhar, Badghis, Kandahar and Nuristan, hundreds of households received aid, however thousands did not, yet in dire need of such. Thus, it is of utmost importance that IFRC – as the actor of activating the operations and attending cluster meetings – provide realistic information of how many households and locations that their response can cover.

“There were problems during assessment surveys, because we had to select very limited number of the neediest, but the number of poor families are very high. For example, we had to select 500 people out of 100.000 population, that is problematic.”

Male volunteer, Badghis

From the data, it is obvious that wherever the information about selection criteria and the project activities have been shared with aid recipients, the positivity in their opinion about relevance, appropriateness, and fairness increases as is observed for Kabul. One other reason for higher positive values in Kabul could be the active presence of ARCS in Kabul at grass root level.

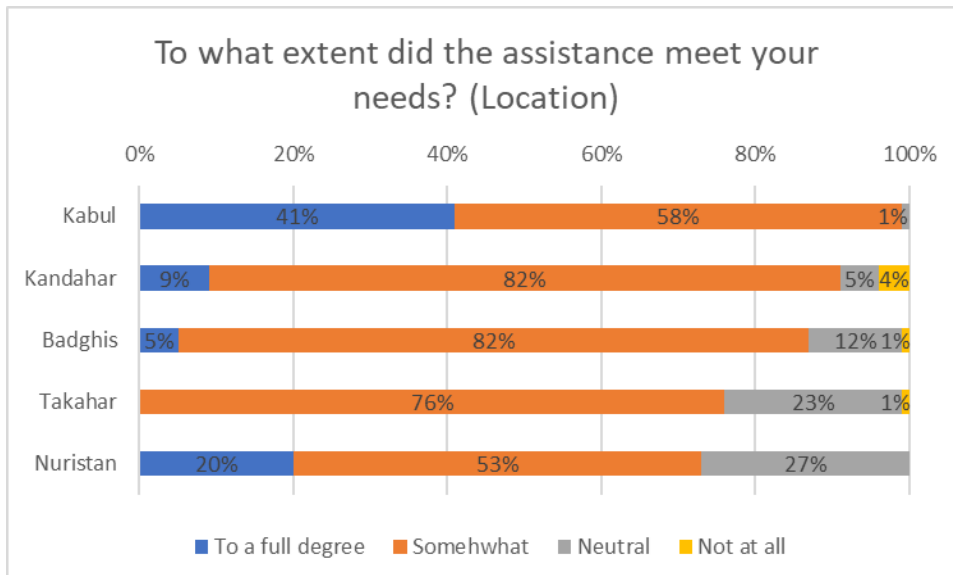
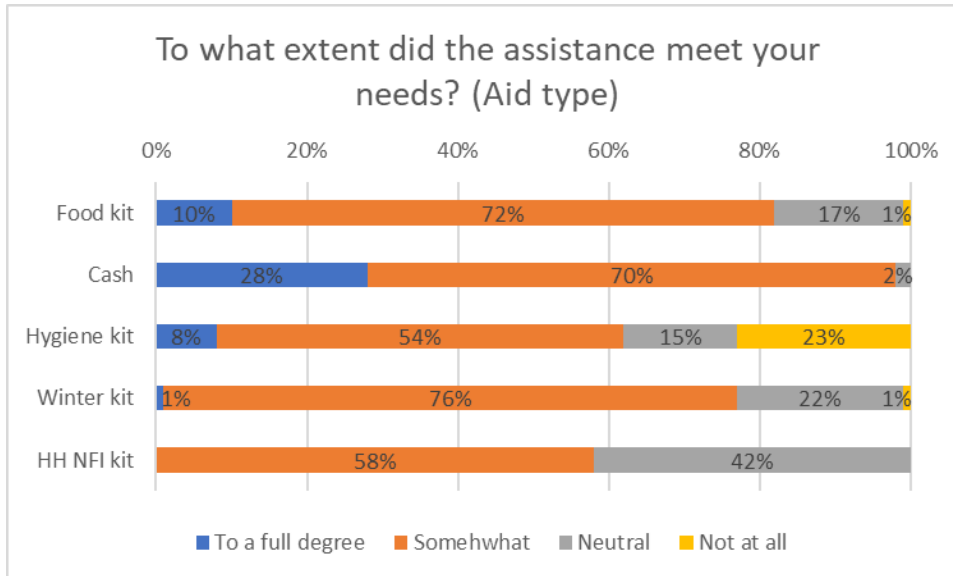
Review Question 2: Is the implementation meeting programme benchmarks?

Aid recipients are significantly positive towards the appropriateness of the assistance. Particularly, flour, cooking oil, tents and blankets are items echoed as highly appropriate as well as relevant. In terms of sufficiency, all aid recipients who participated in FGDs highlighted that all items have been used, which is triangulated with quantitative data as 99.6% of aid recipients reported to not having sold or exchanged any items from kits.²¹ However, across locations and type of assistance, aid recipients are reporting insufficient quantities. In Nuristan, for example, female aid recipients reported that the kits barely lasted for a month, whilst the items lasted for two to three months in the remaining locations, reported by aid recipients and community elderlies. Thus, needs were met completely for 18% (most significant in Kabul) of the surveyed respondents, somewhat for 70%, 12% reported neutral and 1% not at all. Of those who reported that the aid did not meet their needs at all (1%, N=5), three are from Kandahar, one from Badghis and one from Takhar. In the graph below, overview of needs met is outlined per assistance type. Food kits, cash and hygiene kits have significantly contributed to needs being met, whilst lower impact within winter kits and household kits. Of those who reported food kits to not meet needs at all, the aid recipients voiced that the foods did not last more than 20 days. For hygiene kits, the aid recipients voiced how they were more in need of cash and food, instead of hygiene kits.

The below graphs present different groups' perceptions on the extent to which the assistance provided met their needs. As can be seen, across aid modalities and locations, opinions differed, however household profile characteristics, such as household size (based off number of children within the household) and household head age, did not significantly influence opinions on the assistance.

Graph 5-6: Aid recipients' assessment of needs being met (aid type and location)

²¹ Of the 0.4% who exchanged or sold items for the kits, the aid recipients are from Baghdis and from Kabul. These aid recipients exchanged or sold items in order to purchase potable water and medicines.



Aid recipients' immediate needs in Kabul were covered to a large extent with the cash value lasting for one to two months. Both female and male aid recipients reported that they were able to meet immediate needs short-term, as households received cash assistance with a value of 15.000 Afghan Afghani (AFN). This cash assistance enabled households to purchase, primarily, food (flour and cooking oil mainly), and medicines. Some households were also able to pay back debt to shop owners. However, larger households reported to not being able to pay for medical healthcare nor medicines, though it was a significant need as well.

In Takhar, community elderlies and aid recipients confirmed the distribution of household kits, hygiene kits and food assistance, confirming these items met immediate needs to some extent. The food assistance was of utmost importance and contributed well to meeting the most urgent needs. Aid recipients also received blankets in the household kits, however, reported that these blankets were of poor quality and not adequate for the circumstances. Aid recipients also reported there was an urgent need for tents, which was not provided to these community members though. Moreover, aid recipients flagged the need of cash or

materials to rebuild their homes after the floods, alongside tents, as above-mentioned, and carpets. Cash was originally planned to be distributed, however, due to the financial challenges in-country, this assistance modality was replaced with kits.

In Kandahar, ARCS distributed food and hygiene kits and some cash to the affected populations. The assistance types were considered highly relevant by 36% of the aid recipients, while 61% mentioned relevance to some extent. The items of the kits thus met the most urgent needs at the time, albeit in a short-term manner. Aid recipients from Kandahar are, however, flagging the need for shelter materials or cash support to rebuild their homes, as some of the interviewed aid recipients are living in rented shelters. This is thus an extra financial burden for affected households, which may lead to households being unable to meet the most urgent needs of the household and may lead to obtaining debt as well.

Aid recipients from Nuristan confirmed to have received cash, food, hygiene, winterization and household kits. Both female and male aid recipients found the kit items relevant and appropriate to their circumstances and confirmed that these items met their immediate needs. However, aid recipients found the kits to last no longer than a month, flagging that there is a continued need for such support still in the villages. For a longer-term approach, aid recipients discussed that the most appropriate assistance modality is food baskets and cash. Of the items, flour, cooking oil, tents, tarpaulins, blankets and dishes were described as the most useful and suitable items to meet the immediate needs.

In Badghis, female and male aid recipients receiving cash assistance all reported to be an appropriate modality, as the households could prioritise themselves which items or food to purchase. However, households received 9000 AFN, which the households, who participated in FGDs, did not find sufficient. Respondents noted how the amount was only sufficient to cover food needs for a 20-day period, and not enough to purchase any other items of need, such as materials for reconstructing damaged homes. From surveyed aid-recipients, many also confirming receiving food kits, with overall 85% of survey respondents from Badghis finding the assistance completely or somewhat relevant. Aid recipients were surveyed by ARCS, and received assistance within 72 hours, consisting of cash and tents. During and following this rapid assessment period, volunteers also faced significant challenges, as there was inadequate number of kits and cash support available compared to households in need.

Across Kabul, Takhar, Badghis, Kandahar and Nuristan, 31% of surveyed aid recipients found the kit items completely appropriate, 49% somewhat appropriate, 18% neutral, 1% somewhat inappropriate and 1% completely inappropriate. Those finding it inappropriate, however gave reasonings of being in need for cash and/or food items, instead of hygiene items, for example. No inappropriateness related to insensitivity to the context was thus identified. Moreover, 42% found the distribution process completely appropriate, 38% somewhat appropriate and 19% neutral, with lowest rates in Takhar, and highest in Kabul and Nuristan.

During distribution of kits and assistance, a total of 69% found themselves feeling completely safe, 11% somewhat safe and 20% neutral. Most aid recipients felt completely safe in Kabul (91%) and in Kandahar (96%), whilst the lowest ranking of safety was found in Takhar (63% reported neutral, 37% somewhat safe).

3.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness

Review Question 3: How is this service going?

The cooperation and coordination between ARCS, IFRC and other stakeholders was effective in the implementation of the program activities and in achieving their objectives to some extent. The planning of implementation modalities is a shared responsibility of ARCS and IFRC. Based on the interviews with ARCS

and IFRC representatives, emergency appeals are prepared by IFRC, with no involvement of ARCS, yet based on the information on needs as defined by ARCS. ARCS is responsible for implementation in the field and for monitoring the support needs in the communities. While the operational side lacks awareness on the funding mechanisms of operations (by appeal or other mechanisms), there is no evidence that a lack of transparency in sources of funding has affected the level or quality of implementation. Rather, the funding channelled through IFRC supports the implementation needs and operational plans mainly identified by ARCS.

According to ARCS branch managers in Kabul, Nuristan, Kandahar and Takhar, the coordination between the different stakeholders is effective, with continuous reporting of the community needs with ARCS country office and HQ, and IFRC. ANDMA staff in Takhar, Badghdis, Kandahar and Kabul all report the coordination to be effective for both government departments and the humanitarian organizations. ARCS Branch managers pay visits to the offices and personally submit requests for aid.

In the event of natural disasters, branch managers first collect information via volunteers in affected areas, then evaluate it, and share information with ARCS zonal offices. They submit requests to zonal offices which are then shared with ARCS HQ in Kabul. Branch managers are in charge of providing all the details regarding the affected area. They are then informed by email or telephone whether the request has been approved. If approved, branch managers then conduct a survey and submit the required aid package details to the zonal offices.

Amongst surveyed respondents, 77% found that the aid was delivered right on time, while 22% found it to be a little too late and only 1% too late. All provinces had similar findings apart from Takhar, where the majority found the assistance to be delivered a little too late. Elderly head of households were also more likely to view the assistance to have been delivered a little too late, compared to households headed by youth or adults. According to male ARCS volunteers in Kabul and Nuristan, the ARCS aid was delivered on time, and the volunteers received the relevant trainings, including disaster management which explains the protocols of how to provide aid to affected people. The community elders, aid recipients, and ARCS male volunteers all confirmed that the ARCS aid packages were delivered at an appropriate time when people needed them. A survey was first conducted, and seven to 10 days later, the aid packages were distributed to the selected beneficiaries. On the other hand, the female volunteers reported experiencing a significant change since the shift of authorities; before, they were provided with aid program related information, provided transport and food in the field. However, since the shift in authorities, some feel excluded from aid programs and with reduced opportunities to attend training as compared to prior to the transition.

ARCS and its volunteers reached the affected populations in need to some degree, within the allocated resources, the kits available, that is, to be distributed. The aid was reported to be effective by community elders in Badghis, especially after the earthquake, whereby ARCS aid was essential in fulfilling the basic needs of those affected by the earthquake. Whilst some aid recipients and community elders found the number of staff during distributions to be sufficient, overcrowding was reported by aid recipients, community elders and volunteers. Generally, it was found that there have not been enough volunteers to respond under the operations. Volunteers were thus brought in from other locations, leading to added expenses for accommodation, transportation, food, etc. The aid was sufficient to fulfil the basic needs of the people for a short period of time, hence meeting immediate needs well. However, in terms of long-term aid, ARCS is not able to meet those needs and not all people in need are covered, due to limited funding for developmental programs. Since the transition of August 2021, most - if not all - donors have frozen or suspended funding for developmental programs, with focus mainly on humanitarian financing.

However, the shortage of ARCS workers on the distribution days impacted the effectiveness of the distribution as the distribution process took many hours, according to stakeholders in Badghis. While the community elders confirm the competence of the workers who were well trained and experienced, the lack of staff members meant the district office employees had to assist them. There have been major changes in ARCS management, staff and volunteers after the change in the national government. At the point of data collection of this MTR, it was unclear how many volunteers ARCS has. The official number is 30,000 but the figure seems to be from the year 1997. However, update of the database to enter the was finalized within the timeframe of this MTR, showing that there are 24,600 volunteers, 6,700 of them are females. This makes development and training projects particularly difficult to focus on the real needs to improve the capability of the National Society. Ideally the digital upgrade for the National Society will include a database to give priority to information on the reality of volunteers available. Based on that information it will become much clearer what the ability of the National Society is to respond effectively in any given location.

Context of non-aid recipients

Of the non-aid recipients surveyed, 60% are aware of ARCS presence, with the highest awareness in Kandahar (94%) and the lowest in Badghis (7%). A total of 17% of non-aid recipients reported receiving aid from other organisations, counting for 33% in Badghis, 21% in Nuristan, 16% in Kabul and 0% in Kandahar, namely from the World Food Programme (WFP) (in Kabul, Badghis, and Takhar), the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development and the Norwegian Refugee Council (in Nuristan), and World Vision (in Badghis). When asked for the reasons why they did not receive ARCS aid, the most given answers were: 1) due to the population increase, the aid was insufficient for all; 2) respondents had not been informed of the aid; 3) without the Tazkira, ARCS could not register them; 4) community elders did not inform community members, or they did not register their names. Low awareness of the selection criteria was reported among non-beneficiaries, with only a total of 11% being aware of selection criteria (Kabul, Badghis, and Nuristan), with 47% reporting the criteria to be fair and 53% to be neutral. When asked if they had any contact with ARCS, only 9% had, in Kabul, Nuristan, and Kandahar through community elders and visits to the villages. Of those who did not have any contact (91%), 92% stated not knowing how to contact them. Of those who did contact ARCS (2%), all (3) stated that they have not received any response yet.

Review Question 4: What are the barriers to implementation?

Road accessibility is reported as a significant barrier by ARCS volunteers and ANDMA field staff. During the project, ANDMA and ARCS staff were faced with issues of road accessibility due to damaged bridges and roads as a result of the earthquake which caused delays of 4-5 days during reconstructions. The transportation issues impacted the effectiveness of aid as there was a lack of vehicles and equipment, inhibiting the management of the incident. The issue of transportation, due to the lack of their own vehicles, was further emphasized by ANDMA field staff in Kabul, who reported it inhibited the distribution of aid. Contingency planning for most typical disasters (e.g. earthquakes, floods and droughts) could be improved to achieve rapid response. With the recent earthquake, it took one month to get shelter experts in Kabul, and another 3-4 months before first aid distributions were started. Senior IFRC recommends that, in collaboration and in follow-up with other humanitarian organizations, contingency plans should be developed. For example, through cluster coordination meetings for cash and vouchers, shelter and health, IFRC and ARCS should ensure attendance to share and learn from others' experiences, strengthening the effectiveness of the sectors at large.

Volunteers in Kabul additionally mentioned logistical difficulties faced, where low level identification cards were provided to them, with which the volunteers were often unable to access affected locations immediately after incidents, due to security forces not recognizing these cards. These volunteers noted that if higher level identification cards could be provided, how they could provide better aid, move more easily between affected areas and better support in transferring people to hospitals for example.

ARCS field staff in Takhar and ADMA staff in Kabul reported occasional low quality of aid packages by IFRC and the limitation of food packages after the earthquake in Paktika province, as people were in severe need for shelter rehabilitation and could not even cook the food from the food items provided as their kitchens and shelters had been destroyed. Senior ARCS staff discuss the digital issue as a barrier, whereby many of the Provincial branches are not fully connected to the internet due to a lack of power supply to run the system. Communication between the ARCS and these branches is usually by mobile phone. The regional delegation IT department had a mission to Afghanistan to look at the support required but concluded that any upgrades to the system were too expensive for the ARCS with no solution determined.

Gender aspects, especially involvement of women in operations could be taken in focus both at IFRC and ARCS. The gender disbalanced amongst volunteers is reported to be a barrier to the delivery of aid to female beneficiaries. The lack of female volunteers drastically limits access to female aid recipients. Among ARCS staff, women are mainly allowed to work in health teams and in marastoons. Most women who used to work at the ARCS headquarters or other offices are not allowed to enter the office anymore, but works from designated separate spaces near the headquarter. Also, IFRC has work to be done to promote equal opportunities for all regardless of gender. Most local women working for IFRC consider their professional development opportunities to be more limited than those for their male colleagues. Challenges in equal treatment are found at team and mid-management level, rather than at the top management of IFRC country delegation, of which challenges are referring to including females more into activities in the offices.

A recent assessment was done by the Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO) Volunteering Coordinator from 14 to 21 October 2022, which identified the various challenges and opportunities in improving ARCS volunteer management. A Volunteer Management Working Group comprising of ARCS, IFRC, Turkish Red Crescent, Danish Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will be established, in line with the National Society Development (NSD) Initiative drafted. This should be a good platform to address the many issues identified above. In order to mitigate the challenges and improve the delivery of aid, the following suggestions were discussed:

- Equipment and tools when managing disaster situation or visiting the area; floods handling equipment; fire equipment
- Equipment be supported and facilitated by other organizations; ARCS providing ambulances while the Public Health department would provide medicine and medical professionals and other donor organizations would cover injured people treatment
- First aid kits with survey teams, BP check-up tool, and bandages etc.
- When visiting target areas, food items and water, because in faraway areas there are no hotels and shops
- Additional training for ARCS volunteers, such as extensive training for natural disaster management

Other issues around the distribution were discussed by ARCS male volunteers in Kabul who reported overcrowdedness during aid distribution at the sites. ARCS volunteers and ANDMA field staff discuss issues during the survey, reporting having witnessed interventions from officials and local influencers during the assessment surveys and reported rising community tensions. This is not a report shared with ARCS staff, however such observations and discussions are important data, and therefore, should be shared with ARCS staff to assess and develop action points when needed.

Review Question 5: Is the delivery working?

Overall, 18% of aid recipients report the aid to have fully met their needs, 70% report it somewhat meeting their needs, and 12% being 'neutral'. Aid recipients in Kabul had their needs met to the fullest degree (41%), whereas the majority of aid recipients in Kandahar (82%), Badghis (82%), Takhar (76%) and Nuristan (53%)

had their needs somewhat met. Only 10% of food kits recipients report the aid fully meeting their needs with the highest in Kabul with 50% and the lowest in Takhar with 0%. A total of 73% report it somewhat meeting their needs, with the highest in Kandahar (87%) and the lowest in Nuristan (54%). As for cash recipients, 28% of recipients report their needs being fully met, with the highest in Kandahar (60%) and lowest in Badghis (8%). 70% report their needs to be somewhat met, with the highest percentage in Badghis (89%) and the lowest in Kandahar (40%). 2% report neutrality, with the highest in Nuristan (6%) and lowest in Kandahar (0%).

In terms of hygiene kit recipients, only one respondent reported their needs being fully met, whereas 54% report somewhat meeting their needs with 60% in Kandahar and 50% in Nuristan, and 15% reporting feeling neutral about the aid. Overall, winter kits beneficiaries report the aid somewhat meeting their needs (76%) with the highest in Kabul (78%) and lowest in Nuristan (67%). Only 1 winter kit recipient in Kabul reported the aid fully meeting their needs and 1 recipient in Takhar reporting it did not meet their needs at all.

For household kits, 58% report the aid somewhat meeting their needs with 57% in Takhar and 67% in Nuristan. 42% report feeling neutral, with 43% in Takhar and 33% in Nuristan. According to all interviewed beneficiaries and community elders, the aid had a significant positive impact on the aid recipients and helped alleviate their bad economic situation and provided them with basic needs. The project met their immediate emergency needs, however the majority of aid recipients state that it only met their most immediate need and did not meet long-term needs. According to a community elder in Butkhak Bagrami, the ARCS met up to 65% of the people's needs, justifying the number by emphasizing many people in need did not receive any aid package, however, reporting the timeliness and quality to be effective. The ARCS volunteers report similar numbers, stating that the aid covered around 60% of targeted groups' needs. The interviewed community elderly in Qadis Badghis reported the ARCS aid packaged fulfilled the aid recipients' basic needs for a month, with ARCS staff being organized and managing the distribution process according to their standards, with equal aid provided to all areas.

Financial, human, physical, technical and informational resources

According to various stakeholders, including ARCS branch managers, ANDMA field staff and community elders, the resources available are utilized effectively and efficiently, with resource utilization having become more effective in the last year. However, the lack of transportation is reported by branch managers, provincial directors and volunteers as an inhibitor of aid delivery, especially when villages are far from each other. Good practices discussed by ARCS volunteers included the surveys conducted in the target areas for selecting beneficiaries. Volunteers suggested that ARCS and IFRC must conduct joint awareness campaigns as many beneficiaries and community members were unaware of the role of ARCS. However, a range of concerns were discussed by various staff, including the lack of training on procurement processes for new staff, lack of timely response to queries from Kuala Lumpur or Geneva, lack of ownership on procurement activities, challenges from market conditions and vendor behaviour. Human Resources (HR) issues were raised via the IFRC Integrity Line, which queried on IFRC HR hiring decision made on the basis of personal ties rather than the best candidate. HR assured that all their hiring decisions were documented for accountability purposes.

HR:

1. Timeliness of hiring: some delegates mentioned that their presence would have been more useful had the hiring taken place at the earlier phase of the emergency response. The use of surge support throughout the appeal has been appreciated, however the rotation of new people meant that the continuity of relationship and understanding of the operations and context had to be renewed every time. As information sharing for both IFRC and ARCS was weak (see below),

handovers were not always optimal, particularly if there were no overlapping periods for both incoming and outgoing staff.

2. Effectiveness and efficiency of people working from home: For ARCS, female staff were based at home or in marastoons (which the ET did not visit or do interviews with). With the limited internet connectivity, it is unclear whether home-based staff were supported adequately in order to carry out their tasks. As no female staff staying at home were interviewed, effectiveness and efficiency could not be evaluated. However, in Kabul, the internet connection is reported to be working well through mobile hotspots but challenged by power outage at their home.

Finance:

1. Increasing the skills level of new staff will be important for timeliness and compliance with IFRC/ARCS Financial Rules and Regulations. Adapting to digital transformation for financial reporting will also be critical. Some branches still submit hard copy reports which required time for data entry etc. Late reports have affected subsequent donor payments, and this has affected the flow of activities in their response
2. Salary delays caused by the late delivery of funds to the ARCS from IFRC (up to five months) due international banking restrictions. However, this raised both trust issues and eroded confidence towards the Movement in general. ARCS has apparently received queries from staff, the public (as staff are unable to pay rent to landlords, debt to creditors etc.) and even from the Ministry of Public Health on the reason for the delay. This could potentially create security and acceptance issues within the community and also puts the Movement's credibility at risk in the eyes of the government if it recurs, particularly since it was not clear for all key informants why it was delayed. At the point of this MTR, this was not reported to be a present issue.

Review Question 6: How can we finetune this programme/delivery to make it more effective and efficient?

Various stakeholders confirm the availability of accountability mechanisms, with the community elders in Badghis reporting ARCS to have a complaint system whereby field staff had distributed cards with phone numbers to submit complaints. ARCS is reported to have its own independent team for monitoring and evaluating the process themselves and asking for beneficiary feedback.

On the other hand, community elders in Kabul report that there are no complaint mechanisms in place such as complaint boxes or numbers; however, they report that beneficiaries can submit complaints to ARCS HQ. A community leader in Bagrami Kabul reported that beneficiaries are not aware on how to file complaints. These findings are alarming, and it is therefore recommended that complaint mechanisms be set up in Kabul communities and that awareness sessions be conducted with beneficiaries. All beneficiaries in Kamdesh-Nuristan and Badghis state having had the opportunity to submit their suggestion to ARCS prior to the aid program and reported feeling safe to report any complaint or feedback:

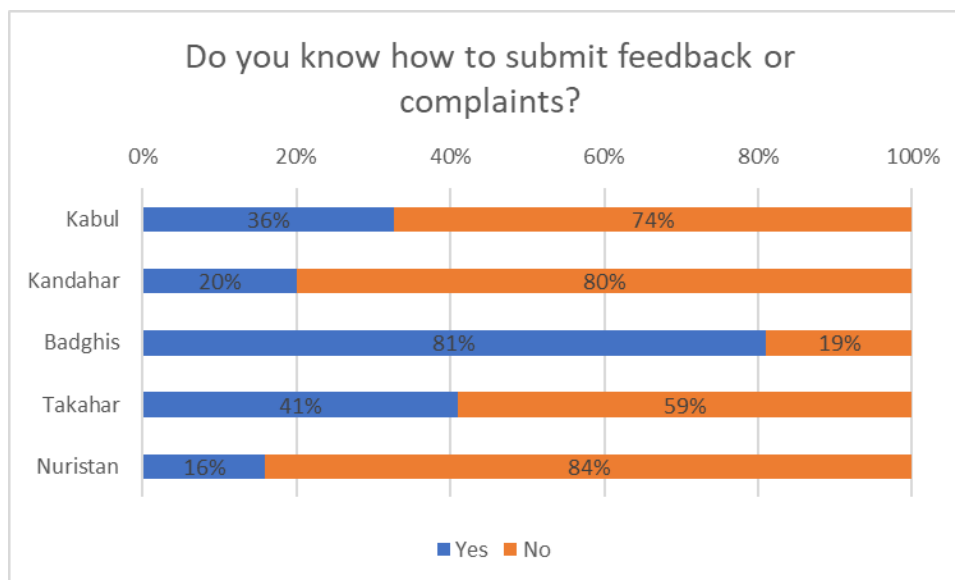
"We were free to submit our feedback and suggestions to ARCS team, we had no fear or hesitation."

Male aid recipient, Abkamary, Badghis

The aid recipients have varying reports based on their locations; all aid recipients participating in group discussions in Kandahar and Paghman Kabul reported to not have any opportunity to file complaints or submit feedback to ARCS and were not provided any information on feedback and complaints mechanisms. While all male beneficiaries in Bagrami Kabul show they are both aware of how to file a complaint and feel safe doing so, female beneficiaries state not being provided opportunities to submit feedback. Moreover, of the surveyed aid recipients, only 40% are aware of how to submit complaints or feedback, with graph 7 below

presenting levels of awareness by location. Importantly to note, within the survey, female respondents had significantly lower awareness (18%), as did youth headed households (24%) and IDP households (27.5%).

Graph 7: Aid recipients' awareness of complaint and feedback mechanisms



The preferred methods to submit feedback or complaints were reported to be through elders (40%); complaints box (36%); face-to-face (13%) and through a phone (10%). Of those aware of how to submit complaints and feedback, most (80%) know how to do so anonymously, with 81% reporting feeling safe leaving a complaint. Only 4% (N=21) had reported a complaint in the past; majority who had been recipients of food kits and/or hygiene kits. Of these, 86% reported that their feedback/complaint was considered by ARCS. ARCS branch managers all stated that aid recipients can submit complaints via phone numbers or by directly writing to the offices. A team of volunteers is assigned to collect beneficiary complaints and communicate them with the ARCS provincial directorate. According to ARCS field staff in Takhar, the volunteers are trained in how to gather feedback. Feedback is received via the below three mechanisms:

1. Mobile numbers are provided
2. Complaints box
3. Meetings/ gatherings

However, in Bagrami, a community leader reported no mobile number is provided to community members. ARCS volunteers in Nuristan were not provided with any training on how to record beneficiary feedback and requested to have such training. However, in Kabul, male volunteers were provided training on how to collect feedback.

3.3 Sustainability and Connectedness

Review Question 7: What is the programme trying to achieve?

The activities planned to the recent disasters are considered to be generally effective modalities, by most stakeholder groups consulted for this review. Particularly, cash modalities are considered as an effective way to deliver aid to the recipients. After a disaster hits, it does, however, take considerable time to get the substance delegates deployed, plans prepared, and aid delivered. Counting from the latest earthquake in Badghis, it took five months for the first shelter support to be delivered to the aid recipients. While it reached them just on time before winter, it was not available in the acute situation after the disaster, hence not in a

timely manner within an acute response The first cash transfer for shelters was provided in November 2022, and then second, two weeks later, hence when winter had already started. Within provincial levels, adjustments were also found to be made effectively to reflect different areas in need of prioritization each year.

Furthermore, while the majority of ARCS volunteers found the speed of ARCS decision making in relation to changing needs as positive, some volunteers found the process to be slow, noting how for example, in some districts while surveys had been conducted and needs collected six months ago, they still had not received any aid from ARCS provincial directorate, while other districts had been provided with aid immediately. These issues are reported to be largely due to delays in delivering aid by partners of procurement.

“ARCS decision-making process is very slow to respond timely to the needs of the affected people. ARCS provincial directorate has to seek approval for its aid program from the ARCS HQ. This makes the process lengthy and time consuming. If local ARCS directorates are given independence in areas, especially in the case of disaster then ARCS would be able to provide aid immediately to the affected communities” - ARCS volunteer

During designing of programs, there was some feedback from ARCS that their involvement were quite limited. The impression is that they were not given the space and time to participate meaningfully in terms of program design and prioritization of needs. There were comments on ARCS feeling that they were subject to donor priorities based on geographical targeting.

Internal coordination within the Movement and external coordination with external bodies

Coordination activities between the IFRC, ARCS and PNS is found to be good, with regular meetings conducted and information sharing taking place. Coordination with the Humanitarian Country Team are maintained with regular meetings run by the UN Humanitarian Coordinators Team. These meetings are found to be invaluable to know and understand the activities and objectives of the UN when a new event such as an earthquake, floods, land slips or similar occur. Ad hoc meetings between staff of IFRC and the ARCS are commonplace, taking place at an almost daily level, indicating a high level of harmony has been achieved between the new management of the National Society and the key staff of IFRC. Regular task force meetings and internal senior management team (SMT) meetings also are found to be programmed, ensuring that each department is aware of what the plans are for the immediate future and for longer term objectives.

Where struggles within the system is found, is within the vertical flow of information. Specifically, within the flow of information from managers to the staff in their departments within IFRC and ARCS. This review finds that without a regular and accessible way for staff to update themselves on the decisions made, misunderstandings can occur, where with people working in silos, a level of animosity can be built. One such example is when IFRC female staff were asked to leave a workshop which included Afghan men from the ARCS. The feeling from the women was that it was the NS men who had objected to their presence in the same room. In reality, it was a visiting member of the “Ministry of Vice and Virtue” who had seen the attendance at the workshop and insisted having a screen separating and between the men and women, otherwise the women would have to leave. Misunderstanding like this can be avoided with regular staff meetings where such issues can be explained. For example, for many organizations, staff meetings can be as often as every week in the present climate, to contribute to the promotion of staff confidence and moral. Meetings taking place with over two months in between may need to be reconsidered.

At an operational level, ARCS and IFRC is found to have limited collaboration with other humanitarian actors in Afghanistan. Active participation in cluster meetings for both IFRC and ARCS could improve the understanding of and collaboration between different partners. Such participation and collaboration would

also be useful for identifying potential gaps and challenges from lessons learned presented by other organizations, enhancing the connectedness and sustainability of programmes. Thus, active collaboration between ARCS and IFRC at all levels and sectors should be promoted. Improved collaboration has potential to contribute to capacity development through training and to understanding, better and more efficient planning and more effective operations. Currently while ARCS financing experts are up to date on the pledges and other funding mechanisms promoted by IFRC, other units are less aware of the actions of their corresponding colleagues in the partner institution. Institutional and personal level inter-agency collaboration and communication between IFRC and ICRC could be better.

Review Question 8: How is implementation going now compared with a month ago or a year ago?

In line with the contextual changes, many modalities shifts and conditions have occurred over the past year. Firstly, ARCS reports their operational budget for this year to be triple compared to last year. Secondly, most of ARCS management has changed over the past year. Currently there is a clear division between old and new staff, both at district and branch level, with collaboration between the two groups reported to be limited. The lack of collaboration can cause serious challenges in implementation, ultimately negatively affecting the effectiveness, impact or sustainability of programmes.

Additionally, ARCS follows the national government guidelines on restricting women's access and presence in communities. This results in women not being allowed to work at the ARCS headquarters. While some women are still employed and being paid, they are not able to access the HQ but work from home or at a designated office near the HQ. Working from home is however challenged due to internet connection outside Kabul and power outage (including Kabul). Women are still being hired as midwives in mobile health teams and also continue to work in marastoons. However, should women be hired, they would need to be accompanied by a mahram, with a salary having to be paid to the mahram. This review finds that in some districts women might have a possibility to work in the office without a mahram, however they are not allowed to go to the field. The lack of women in operations, as well as amongst volunteers, significantly reduces ARCS's access to female beneficiaries, and thus the overall effectiveness of the programme.²² Within IFRC, critical vacancies are now found to be filled, lessening the need for short-term surge support, currently provide. During the evaluation visit, the HR surge support had concluded a round of recruitment, which helped to speed up hiring and provide on-the-job training and improve IFRC HR hiring practices.

At the field level, ARCS staff and volunteers' capabilities were well regarded by community elders across provinces. The elders noted how generally field staff adequately managed the operations of the distribution processes, with activities taking place in an orderly manner, with staff and volunteers being respectable and transparent throughout the process, while some local problems occurring when staffing was insufficient. The capacity building of provincial ARCS teams was highlighted as a benefit of IFRC contributions. ARCS volunteers also generally found provided training to be sufficient in increasing their capacity to work more effectively. For example, volunteers mentioned how while before field assessments with the affected population would take place on pen and paper, they had now been trained on the use of the Kobo software, noting this as an effective change. Volunteers in Takhar and Nuristan however did not find themselves to having been trained sufficiently especially in terms of conducting surveys with the affected population as well as collecting feedback from the community.

Direct reliance of community elder request and specification on affected families has decreased, due to high risk of bias within this mode. While community elders, mosque mullahs and other influential people continue to be consulted to help identify needy families, ARCS now conduct objective surveys to assess the situation

²² Maharam is not a new requirement from the national government in all provinces as it was a requirement in some parts of Afghanistan prior to the transition of 2021. Different provinces as well as geographical areas have different cultural expectations and practices, and therefore, this has been a requirement before 2021.

and select beneficiaries based on the defined standards. In this regard, some community elders noted a limited consultations having occurred, viewing this to have hindered the effectiveness of the aid process.²³ Shifts to ensuring verification processes are included is important and positively viewed, however the inclusion and regular consultation with community elders, should be maintained.

Review Question 9: How could the organization be changed to make it more effective?

At many levels, compliance requirements seem to compromise effectiveness. There are many layers to go through within an operation, which slows down the response and cause ineffectiveness at times. The process of decision-making and procurement can therefore take a very long time, and compromise the response to the affected populations. Over six months to get shelter material and months to buy food locally are examples of the systems not being used in an effective way.

Getting all branches online, installing a database and completing a full registration of volunteers, their skills and needs is extremely important. Without such, there is no clarity on the number of volunteers nor their qualifications. Therefore, digital transformation should be a top-priority, as it will enable a training programme based on reality (a gap analysis and a strengths analysis of the volunteers and their skill sets). This can ensure in the future a fast response and improved effectiveness, realistic accountability and credibility.

The PMER needs to be strengthened in both IFRC and ARCS in order to evaluate effectiveness more strongly across the sectors. The delays in conducting lessons learned workshops has meant that learnings and recommendations have not been captured and both IFRC and ARCS run the risk of repeating the same mistakes. Moreover, particularly, monitoring and evaluation is perceived as a shortfall by multiple key informants. First of all, frequency and quality of monitoring is flagged on several occasions. This counts for monthly monitoring of households' needs and post-distribution monitoring (PDM), as well as monitoring of markets and debt rates will be important to monitor. This also requires increasing capacities in PMR systems, hence, to ensure proper planning of monitoring, which includes who the monitor is – ideally external from the RCRC and from trusted people within the local community with the right knowledge and skills. Due to the levels of unemployment within the poorest communities, the levels of poverty with reduced or no coping mechanisms left at least on a monthly basis. . Next, there is a need of capacity and capability building for ARCS staff and volunteers within data collection, and how to clean and filter data. This will be a key part in improving the PMR systems.

As several INGOs are likely to return to Afghanistan during 2023, it is vital to hire females as staff with a competitive salary and duty of care, as the demand for female staff is expected to increase in the coming year. Moreover, female staff are a vital part in ensuring aid distribution to all households, including female-headed, and to reach set targets.

Finally, it is assessed that it will be beneficial for both IFRC, ARCS and for aid recipients, that ARCS starts attending cluster meetings more regularly. ARCS knows the conditions and the field conditions better, and can therefore actively contribute with information, and receive information. As found under relevance, the kits quantities are not sufficient for the needs even though the quantity and quality are within the cluster's guidelines. Thus, this makes it important that ARCS becomes an active participant in cluster meetings.

Review Question 10: How did the interventions support the implementation of longer-term projects or programmes?

²³ As of 2023, ARCS Provincial Assemblies Directorate is working on a modularity wherein they are establishing councils in the provincial and district level.

As an emergency and disaster relief programme, aid-recipients noted how the aid provided fulfilled basic needs for a month only, which after the situation was the same as before the aid distribution. Many suggestions were provided by consulted stakeholder groups, however ultimately these falls more under the scope of development programs, instead of disaster relief and emergency programming. Some bridging activities, such as support for livelihood creation and WASH, could, however, fall within humanitarian operations but also contribute to longer term development. Focusing on livelihoods for example, such as the provision of agricultural/livestock inputs or providing vocational training were often highlighted suggestions to contribute to longer-term objectives; in addition to the rehabilitation of infrastructure such as the rebuilding of roads, schools and homes. Additionally, in Takhar, the construction of canals and/or protection walls to avoid floods up to the same extent experienced was highlighted as a need. Furthermore, more active promotion of WASH as part of the humanitarian response could benefit communities also in the longer term. Some interviewed volunteers did mention how ARCS has in the past provided vocational training programmes for communities such as tailoring trainings, which carry longer-term impact, absent from the current programming due to limited funding.

4 Conclusion

Within this MTR, it can be concluded that the modalities of response are relevant to a large degree. Within the operations, assistance has been supported financially and technically by IFRC and carried out by ARCS in all provinces of Afghanistan, following the appeals. As such, ARCS is a first responder to the acute needs from the natural disasters, counting for flash floods, earthquakes and the long-lasting drought alongside needs generated from the economic difficulties and changing context.

Cash assistance, food assistance, household kits, winter kits and hygiene kits have been delivered, and assisted affected populations in meeting immediate need. However, affecting relevance is the effectiveness of operations and timeliness. For example, shelter support came five months after the earthquake in Badghis and was therefore not as relevant as would have been, if the assistance had been delivered in a timely manner. The delivery came in November 2022, during winter. The quantities of items in kits were not found to be adequate to meeting needs for more than a month, and the value of cash assistance lasted one to two months. Whilst ARCS follows the cluster's guidelines and standards, these shared guidelines are thus not sufficient for the actual needs in targeted locations. This contributes to the importance of ARCS attending cluster meetings to share real-time insights from the field level.

Moreover, a key concern is the number of volunteers that ARCS currently has as well as in which location, gender of volunteers and their capacity. The main role of the volunteers will vary from province to province based on the type of reoccurring disasters. At the point of data collection, there is no sufficiently updated database of volunteers, which impacted the overall effectiveness and the accessibility towards aid assistance, as, for example, female-headed households are depending on female volunteers to receive aid, given they do not have access to distribution points as men. However, a survey of the number of volunteers has now been completed, showing that there are 24,600 volunteers of which 6,700 are females. Moreover, the visibility of the Red Crescent volunteers needs to be improved so that their role in community support is seen by their actions. This will help with the recruitment of new volunteers. The problem of gender and accepting that women must be an integral part of the Red Crescent national society if it is to be credible. This must be from communities up to leadership and management roles within both IFRC and the ARCS when they have the capability.

IFRC has been using short-term surge capacity staff, assessed as for too long a period. For example, it was reported that IFRC PMER - described as still a fairly new department - had surge support for a duration of one month, which was deemed too short to be meaningful. Moreover, for IFRC, critical vacancies are now being filled, which would lower the need for short-term surge support. During the MTR, the HR surge support had concluded a round of recruitment which helped to speed up hiring and provide on-the-job capacity building to improve IFRC HR hiring practices. There will always be a loss of continuity in any role using this system particularly when there is no direct handover in country. However, longer term contracts and a more settled Delegation will be in place from 2023, which is perceived as a key initiative to increase effectiveness and coherence. Moreover, one of the main roles of the IFRC Delegation during 2023 has to be Institutional Development, not only at the HQ level, but reaching out to all branches of the National Society, which will require more than one Delegate. Finally, as a gender sensitive and equal opportunities organization efforts in recruiting Afghan women into management roles is of vital importance. In regard to coherence, effectiveness and coordination, the lack of connectivity from all 34 provincial branches was found to be a vital barrier, of which there needs to be a review, branch by branch, of the hardware needs to include a reliable power supply. Training needs is also needed for the use of software and the installation of agreed software systems.

As many households in need did not receive aid and significant percentages rated "neutral" or "partially" to

relevancy of assistance and needs being met, more information from independent monitoring teams is needed. On an ongoing basis, monitoring is particularly needed from the communities which are known to be at high-risk of natural disasters. Data on market availability of goods, costs and quality plus the knowledge gained from household surveys and knowing the groups of people who are most at risk, including elderly living alone and people with disabilities, is thus vital to emergency operations.

All of the sectors to be supported should be agreed so that provincial national societies can offer relevant support where they have an expertise. Coordination at all levels has to be maintained and, in some cases, improved with staff from both the ARCS and IFRC working in harmony as active participants. Internal coordination should continue as agreed between the various stakeholders from the RC/RC moment. Next, it was found that great efforts have been put into advocacy since August 2021 to show that the Movement is still present in Afghanistan. However, advocacy can be done in various ways, with sensitive issues being addressed at one-to-one-meetings between ARCS and IFRC senior staff with government officials.

If looking at a graph of time against productivity, it is generally accepted that the first 10 to 15 months is a high learning period in any management position. The graph tends to start to flatten out after 15 months as people become comfortable in their positions but still put a lot of energy into productivity. After about two and a half years complacency starts to set in and from three years onwards the level of productivity is reducing. This is one of the reasons why IFRC use to recommend no more than four years in any position in the same location. If there are staff in key positions for five years or longer then a plan of how to use these people in another environment might be considered. This could also help to retain key staff who are working in a department under a long-term manager, otherwise the risk is to lose the staff that run the systems to another organization.

5 Lessons learned

The following lessons learned have been generated based on analysis of data collection with the involved stakeholders.

1. In Nuristan, Kandahar and Kabul, it is particularly highlighted by ARCS that their accessibility to affected populations is troubled due to lack of vehicles and do to damaged infrastructure. At the time being, OCHA is via the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and other organizations providing transportation to the teams conducted surveys in Kabul province. Specifically for Nuristan, the ARCS team faces significant difficulties once driving due to damaged infrastructure (bridges, roads), which has led to multiple days of delay in reaching the affected communities. The vehicles are needed to transport ARCS volunteers to conduct assessment surveys and to transport aid material in all three provinces.
2. Cash was consistently highlighted as the most relevant and appropriate type of aid, followed by food baskets, according to surveyed respondents and FGD participants.
3. Some concern was raised concerning the gap between the salaries of professional ARCS staff and staff in similar positions (counterparts) in the (I)NGOs. When asked if they would apply for positions in other Organisations there was a positive response. If, when INGOs return to Afghanistan or expand their programs this could result in the loss of ARCS skilled staff weakening the levels of efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Given that women in some geographical locations cannot collect the aid at distribution points for cultural reasons, it is likely that not all women-headed households had access to the support intended to be delivered to them. Further analysis on the household composition collected via Red Rose could validate further whether the reach and coverage were adequate in terms of gender parity and other vulnerabilities, which would be useful for IFRC and ARCS in impact measurement and

future reporting.

6 Recommendations

Figure 6: List of recommendations

#	Findings	Recommendations	Priority (High, Medium, Low*)
Relevance, appropriateness			
1	Ensure transparency and explanation of implementation plan.	Across all locations, aid recipients expressed wonder why the assistance (number of kits) was limited to a degree where a significant number of community members did not receive aid. The majority of aid recipients who participated in this MTR all know of households, who are living in deep poverty, have many children, have one or more household members with disabilities or are ill, or have no source of income, amongst others, who these household did not receive any assistance. Moreover, all aid recipients are critical towards the lack of longer-term support and described themselves as waiting for more assistance from ARCS. However, this is due to the limited funding leading to limited aid material to be distributed and provided by ARCS. Thus, it is vital to ensure transparency of the operations to aid recipients and to community elders, so they know what to expected from ARCS as well as it will decrease the risk of mistrust and tensions towards ARCS.	H
2	Investigate the level of debt amongst households, assess if relevant to add as a selection criteria for aid based on findings, and investigate the opportunity to expand CVA assistance to respond to potential significant debt rates.	During this MTR with all of the interviews undertaken with ARCS and IFRC, only on a couple of occasions has anybody mentioned the debt levels of households in the IEA. Considering what families have lived through during the past 40 years with persistent drought conditions where rural families have lost their crops and animals on numerous occasions, it is expected that levels of debt for many households could be high. From past assessments of debt, it is verified that families try to borrow within the extended family, however when this is no longer possible money lenders can be involved. Part of a monitoring process could include general details of the levels of debt which could significantly affect the levels and type of support being given to the poorest families in communities. Moreover, families from Kandahar, for example, are reporting to be living in rented houses currently, as homes have not been rebuilt. Living in rented houses thus causes extra financial burdens, which may also lead to significant debts.	M

Efficiency, effectiveness			
3	Ensure ARCS team consist of both female and male team members.	After the Khost and Paktika earthquake, the ARCS team arrived at the affected locations to conduct a rapid needs assessment through surveys with community members. However, all members of the ARSC team were men, and could therefore only interact with male headed-households, and not female-headed households. The ARCS team thus had to repeat the assessment three weeks later, having included female personnel. To show contextual sensitivity to the communities and ensure female-headed households also receive emergency assistance, it is thus of utmost importance that all teams include female team members. This can, for example, be done through teams consisting of husband/wife, son/mother, daughter/father. Having such a system of trained volunteers is likely also to be a way of solving the problem of how to get balanced first-hand information from a disaster site to be able to plan effectively. Moreover, there was no female ARCS volunteers mobilized for the response in Badghis.	H
4	Train volunteers on receiving feedback and complaints as well as spread awareness of such channels to community elders and aid recipients.	To ensure accountability towards aid recipients, it is vital to up-scale efforts towards feedback and complaint mechanisms. This includes training volunteers on the mechanisms, train volunteers to spread awareness of such and ensure there are phone numbers to mechanisms. In Bagrami, community elders reported that they have no phone number to ARCS, whilst in Nuristan, volunteers reported to not have been trained on such mechanisms. Finally, only 40% of the aid recipients are aware of how to submit a complaint or feedback.	M
5	Improve and streamline internal procurement systems.	To ensure that the timeliness of delivering humanitarian assistance is improved, more authority needs to be given in-country to the Country Delegation being supported by the Region for a fast and effective system. As well, there are several changes that need to be made to improve the systems for those delivering humanitarian assistance and those supporting with procurement: A) There needs to be training on the procurement systems for those staff in both the procurement and operations departments on what to do and how to do it. B) There needs to be a proactive approach from both sides where the needs are discussed monthly showing what is required several months in advance. With new sudden onset emergencies, there needs to be ad hoc decisions taken which will allow for the supplies to be delivered in a timely way, using local markets whenever	H

		<p>possible.</p> <p>C) Project planning, even in emergencies, should be possible with all projects, what needs to be achieved, by who, and during what period to ensure that other activities can continue on time, working back from the end of project or final delivery dates. This needs to be reviewed each week or each month depending on the period of the project. Agreements on any changes to plans need to be made and this should include all relevant departments including HR, Finance, Security, Funding and Reporting, Communications as well as the Operations and Procurement staff.</p> <p>D) For accountability, there needs to be follow up on all relevant documents from the requisition forms, the procurement process and delivery including quality and quantity control, warehousing with bin cards/stock cards, weigh bills and signed receipts for delivery.</p>	
6	Increase efforts towards digital transformation.	<p>It is strongly recommended to integrate a tracking system to show actions over time on how a stable power supply can be given to all 34 branches of the national society, to allow them to be online and connected. This could be with solar panels following the Kenya model, wind power depending on location or as a last resort, a generator. Any plan should show the hardware requirements which can run the systems that both IFRC and ICRC are able to support with the ARCS and any backup systems. When the hardware is installed then the appropriate software needs to be loaded and then a training plan developed so that a core group of staff in each Provincial branch can use the system. Lack of connectivity from all 34 provincial branches is a major concern where there needs to be a review, branch by branch, of the hardware needs to include a reliable power supply. Training needs for the use of software and the installation of agreed software systems.</p>	H
Coordination, connectedness			
7	Increase coordination meetings during 2023.	<p>The regular meetings between the various RC elements should continue as planned but regular meetings (could be every 2 weeks), could help to reduce the feeling of working in a silo. This point is important as many NGOs may be returning to Afghanistan during 2023 or expanding their operations when conditions permit. These efforts are also recommended to be put in place to ensure coordination of assistance in Afghanistan, as it was found, for example, in Kandahar that there are no other responding humanitarian actors present.</p>	M
8	Strengthen	There needs to be a communications strategy with clear	M

	communication efforts with the purpose of clear objectives for Afghanistan and for advocacy.	objectives for all stakeholders, including the ARCS, the Government and Authorities of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) as well as PNS, donors and the UN system. Clearly one of the elements making up a communications strategy should include ensuring that a message of hope and some success stories are delivered in all formats to the media and all stakeholders with the intention of ensuring that it is understood that not everything in the IEA is a disaster. Regular information updates from the Health and Operations departments in particular, of achievements countering the effects of some of the disasters in the country as well as the reality of the levels of poverty could be used.	
9	Increase monitoring and delegate monitoring activities to a third-party.	A proper monitoring system needs to be put in place for the locations where there is support for people affected through one or more of the disasters. Ideally this system would be run by a third-party that does not have any links with the Movement. Proper terms of reference should be compiled for such monitoring, which should include market assessment, PDM and household conditions. Moreover, the PMR system needs to be streamlined by clear planning. Finally, given that there are significant percentages of aid recipients responded “neutral” or “partial” to relevancy of the aid, increasing monitoring efforts is likely to better inform ARCS and IFRC why many aid recipients are sceptic towards relevancy. To understand such, it is important that monitoring consists of a mixed-method approach, thus, measurable data can be obtained from quantitative methods and elaborated and more detailed data can be collected from qualitative methods.	H
10	Provide field findings of needs to coordination meetings with OCHA, clusters and working groups	Though ARCS and IFRC are following guidelines and standards for kits and cash value, it was found from the field study that these standards are not sufficient to the actual needs in communities. Therefore, it is highly recommended that also ARCS is attending cluster meetings to share real-time data from the field as well as it is vital that IFRC and ARCS provide realistic information about how many communities and households can be targeted within IFRC-activated operations.	H

*High: Within 3 months.

Medium: Within 6 months.

Low: Within 9-12 months.

7 Appendices

Annex 1: Terms of Reference



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Afghanistan humanitarian crises response

This document outlines the terms of reference for the evaluation and the hiring of a consultancy firm or consultant to carry out the evaluation.

SUMMARY

Purpose: The purpose of this Mid-term Review (MTR) is to assess the **efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance** of the **humanitarian actions and services** under Afghanistan humanitarian crises emergency operation response, [MDRAF007](#), and the three Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operations – [MDRAF008](#), [MDRAF009](#) and [MDRAF010](#) – of Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) supported by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Partner National Societies (PNSs). The review is expected to assess the evolution of IFRC's support to ARCS (capacity building, programme design, service delivery and co-ordination) to be a relevant and effective national and local actor enabling delivery of a principled response in this protracted crisis context.

It will also evaluate the **suitability and feasibility** of the operational strategy and implementation. The findings and recommendations will be used by the management and operation teams in ARCS and IFRC to improve the support sector operational response and to improve and better link the response to **recovery** and **long-term development**.

The review findings shall ultimately provide guidance for future decision making of relevant IFRC support not only to the ARCS but also other National Societies in similar contexts of fragility and protracted crisis.

Audience: Afghan Red Crescent Society, IFRC Afghanistan Delegation, IFRC Regional Office in Kuala Lumpur and IFRC Geneva Office, in-country partner National Societies, external partners, and other current/future partners.

Commissioners: IFRC Regional Director for Asia Pacific

Reporting to: Evaluation Management Team

Duration: 40 days

Timeframe: 40 days ending October 2022

Location: Afghanistan (Badghis, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyán, Daikundi, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Herat, Helmand, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Sari-Pul, Urozgan, and Panjshir provinces).

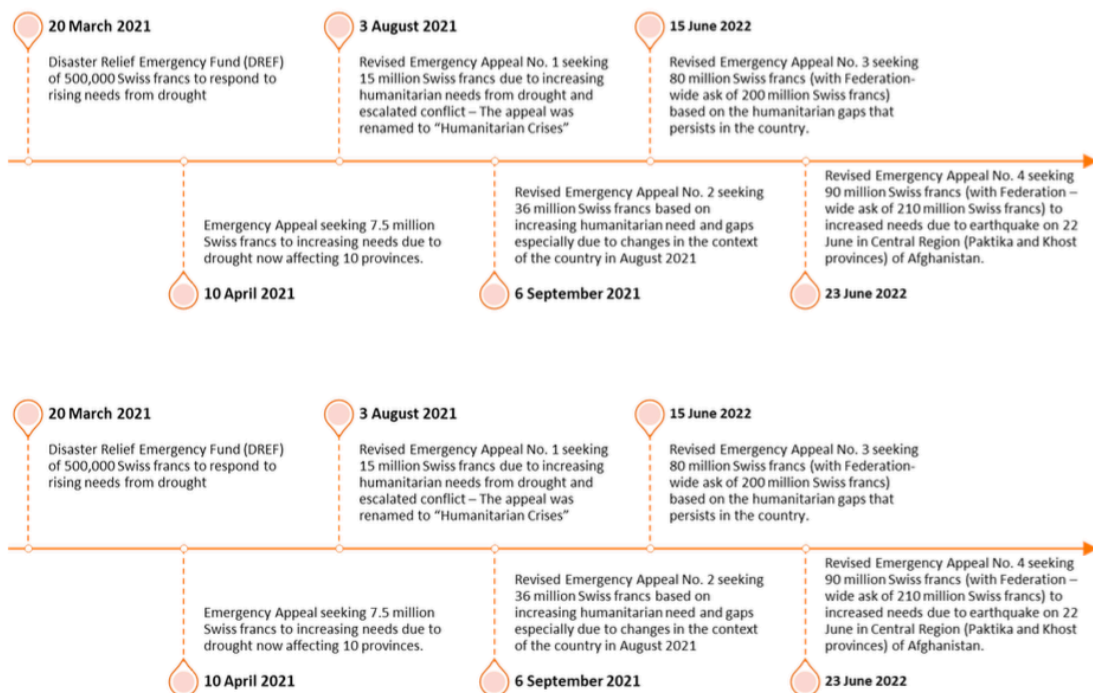
ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The IFRC has been active in Afghanistan since 1990 where its country delegation is accorded recognition as an International Organization by virtue of a status agreement. The delegation operates as a technical support and collaboration platform to support ARCS development and outreach, with a strong focus on improving coordination and developing cooperation with Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and non-Movement actors.

IFRC's technical support to ARCS programmes reflects global strategic priorities articulating emergency response, disaster risk management, livelihoods, health with focus on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH), immunization, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), migration and displacement, gender, and inclusion, as well as cross-cutting programmatic focus on climate change, women empowerment and quality and accountability aspects, which include Community Engagement & Accountability (CEA), Sexual and gender-based Violence (SGBV) and Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

Background

Afghanistan is reeling from a complex humanitarian crisis resulting from compounding impacts of conflict, drought, food insecurity, and displacement, as well as gaps in health services. The situation in Afghanistan remains highly fluid after the change of government on 15 August 2021. Even prior to the change, Afghanistan was going through a crisis due to a drought, the worst in 27 years, affecting the country since the winter season of 2020 which impacted 80 per cent of the population. Simultaneously the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic impact have further exacerbated the situation in terms of health and livelihoods. The following diagram shows the timeline for the emergency appeal.



During the period of the emergency appeal (which initially focused on drought up to September 2021), multiple other natural disasters also occurred, such as flash floods in seven provinces as well as an earthquake



of which the following DREF operations were established to cover the specific needs of the population:

- DREF – Floods (MDRAF008) operation covers six provinces, many of which are part of the emergency appeal: Bamyan, Herat, Panjshir, Sar-i-Pul, Takhar, Wardak provinces.
- DREF – Nooristan Floods (MDRAF009) operation covers Nooristan province
- DREF – Badghis Earthquake (MDRAF010) operation covers Badghis province.

Overall Programme Objective: The overall objective of the planned interventions under this revised emergency appeal is “to improve food security, restore and diversify livelihood strategies, and build resilience in communities affected by drought and other multiple shocks in 19 provinces of Afghanistan”. The affected population has difficulties in coping with current crises. Hence, ARCS – with IFRC support – contributes to assist with humanitarian interventions based on the needs prevailing in the affected communities.

The operation– addresses their needs relating to the restoration of livelihoods, food security, deteriorating health and hygiene, establishing and improving emergency shelters and living conditions, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, gender, protection, and inclusion, migration and displacement, supporting the capacity development of ARCS, whilst contributing to building longer-term resilience in the affected communities.

PURPOSE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW

The purpose of the midterm review is to

- assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance of the humanitarian actions and services under Afghanistan humanitarian crises emergency operation response, and the two Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) operations – MDRAF008 and MDRAF009 – of Afghanistan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) supported by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Partner National Societies (PNSs).
- review the suitability and feasibility of the operational strategy and implementation.
- illustrate and analyse the role of the IFRC in supporting the ARCS to be a relevant and effective national institution particularly in upholding the RCRC Fundamental Principles to deliver emergency services while balancing the sensitive operational and political reality in Afghanistan

To improve quality assurance and accountability, the MTR should provide **clear recommendations to support formulating medium- and longer-term vision and strategy, including transition and sustainability strategies beyond 2022. The MTR should also document the lessons learned** so that it can be used to replicate the good practices in other similar kinds of humanitarian emergency operations. In-country Movement partners and external stakeholders will use the evaluation to inform future design and operation of similar projects and interventions.

SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

This MTR will be carried out by assessing the performance of ARCS, IFRC and Participating National Societies with reference to the response strategy, structure, system, procedure and implementation of interventions



of the Emergency Appeal (MDRAF007); DREF – Floods (MDRAF008); DREF – Nooristan Floods (MDRAF009); and DREF – Badghis Earthquake (MDRAF010).

The review will account for the views of ARCS (at headquarters, provincial and district levels), IFRC Afghanistan country delegation and IFRC APRO, PNSs, government bodies, other partner organizations, and cluster and sub-cluster systems activated for the operations, population reached/to be reached, and general population in the affected areas – focusing on multi-stage random sampling. The locations up to the district level will be provided to the evaluation team during the inception phase. The team will visit randomly selected districts within the randomly selected provinces in the five regions (and as access and security allow).

The findings will account for both the Emergency Appeal and DREF operations of which the highlights from the findings of the types of operations will be pointed out within the report to ensure learnings.

OBJECTIVES AND CRITERIA

Objectives

This review will examine the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the response based on the following:

- To evaluate and review the humanitarian actions in these operations are fit for purpose in the context of a multi-faceted needs and multi-hazards/crises in Afghanistan and highlight gaps and provide recommendations
- To review the adaptability of ARCS and IFRC to external and internal changes including its absorption of funds from the appeal within the context of the country and highlight gaps
- To review coordination mechanisms, identify gaps and to provide recommendations on how to enhance coordination with the authorities, membership coordination, Movement coordination as well as coordination with donors and humanitarian actors in the response.
- To evaluate the effect of the operations on ARCS organizational capacity and development

Criteria

The following criteria will be used to guide the review recommendations:

- Relevance and appropriateness
- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Sustainability and connectedness

Evaluation questions

The evaluation team will develop process, methods, and questionnaires for the evaluation in consultation with ARCS and IFRC team based on the above objectives. The sample questions (outlined under the Annex 1 section below) need to be adjusted based on the project, in agreement with the evaluation management team (EMT) and outlined in the inception report.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The methodology will adhere to the [IFRC Framework for Evaluation](#), with particular attention to the processes upholding the standards of how evaluations should be planned, managed, conducted and used. Applicants to this consultancy should detail their technical approach to the review, proposing a clear design and a subsequent methodology that should link with the financial components of the proposal in the inception report (including timeline and baseline of processes). The evaluation team must ensure that the methodology used will enable a review that is factual and practical which will enable learning for the team.

The specific evaluation methodology will be detailed in close consultation between the consultancy firm/consultant, EMT, Commissioners, and relevant key stakeholders, but will draw upon the following mixed methods, conducting both quantitative and qualitative data collection – or other sampling methods considered applicable in the context (to be identified and presented in inception report)

- **Desktop review** of relevant organizational and operational background documents and history relating to ARCS and IFRC, including national policies and SOPs, prior IFRC reports, and any relevant sources of secondary data, such as exit surveys, post-distribution monitoring (PDM) reports, recovery assessment report, learning review reports and other evaluations/reviews
- **Field visits/observations** at intervention locations.
- **Key informant interviews** with management in IFRC and ARCS, people reached/to be reached, and general population in the area as appropriate.
- **Focus group discussions** with institutional representatives, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries (ensure inclusivity of the diverse groups) as appropriate.
- **Case studies** combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

The detailed evaluation design is to be created by the consultancy firm/consultant; however, the following should be considered:

- **Sampling method** is to be decided by the consultancy firm/consultant, but at minimum, the final sample should include both ARCS and IFRC personnel involved in the response interventions and the 'most vulnerable' affected population.
- **Semi-structured or structured framework to interview** IFRC programme representatives in Kabul, ARCS senior programme management team in Kabul, ARCS staff in ARCS Regional and Branch Offices.
- **Data collection methods** and **pace** are to be decided by the consultancy team, in consultation with the EMT but should consider the reality of remote and hard-to-reach districts as well as the risk of COVID-19.
- The evaluation team should visit a **representative number of communities** in the operation areas. The consultancy team will be responsible for outlining the support needed in-country clearly. This will be agreed upon with EMT based on resources available.

EVALUATION MANAGEMENT TEAM

An evaluation management team (EMT) will be appointed to manage and oversee the evaluation and ensure that it upholds the IFRC Framework for Evaluation and will consider gender balance within the team. The EMT



will consist of three members:

- one from ARCS
- one from IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation (who will lead the EMT)
- one from IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office

Emt Roles And Responsibilities

The EMT in coordination with ARCS and IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation, will ensure the following:

- Support the recruitment of the review team ((selection of enumerators will be supported by ARCS)
- The review team will report to EMT and will closely coordinate with IFRC and ARCS senior programme management and technical staff.
- Support the review team so that they have access to programme documents and data.
- Support the review team so that they have access to beneficiaries.
- Support the review team so that they have access to key informants including IFRC and ARCS leadership and management team members.
- The ARCS provincial team supervise the surveyors and validate the data collection reports at the provincial level.

EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation team will consist of at least five and at most six members as follows:

- Independent, external consultant (team lead)
- A member from a Participating National Society with no presence in Afghanistan
- A member from an Asia Pacific National Society
- A member from the Afghan Red Crescent Society
- A member from the IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation

The sixth member of the evaluation team would be from the ICRC, as may be agreed.

All evaluation team members from Red Cross Red Crescent Movement entities must be individuals who have not been directly involved in implementation or oversight of the operation. They would be participating as professionals at individual capacity and not representing their respective organizations.

Evaluation Team Roles And Responsibilities

- Developing processes and tools.
- Training data collection team and pre-testing of data collection tools.
- Overseeing data collection.
- Data entry/analysis.
- Travel to programme locations for data collection.
- Developing MTR's implementation plan.
- Conducting key informant interviews.
- Developing MTR's reports and presentations.

- Develop an inception report, detailing the review design, methodology, tools and work plan schedule to carry out the assignment in coverage areas.
- Coordinate collection of data, and its entry into a suitable platform for cleaning and analysis. Analyze and interpret the findings.
- Develop and submit the first draft of the MTR's report and debriefing to IFRC and ARCS.
- Submit the final MTR's report to IFRC country delegation. The raw data, the database which has been cleaned (both qualitative and quantitative, including original field notes for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, as well as recorded audio material), and data collection tools used in the review should be submitted together with the report. A simple inventory of material handed over will be part of the record. IFRC has sole ownership of all final data, and any findings shall only be shared or reproduced with the permission of IFRC.

DELIVERABLES

The following will be provided by the consultancy team:

- **Inception report** to include details of methodology, tools, and timeline/ work plan for the review, after incorporating feedback from stakeholders, on data collection tools and the review methodology among others. This will be approved by the Evaluation Management Team.
- **Draft and final MTR's report(s)**. Page limit is approximately 25-30 pages (excluding annexes). The report to include the below outline.

No.	Content	Description
01.	Executive summary	Summarizes the overall findings of the review with key conclusions and not more than 10 key recommendations. The summary must be specific to the evaluation, clearly based on the specific context of the interventions.
02.	Background and context analysis	Outlines the response's overall objectives, aims, intervention strategy, policy frameworks, targets, main stakeholders, financial frameworks, institutional arrangements, and a brief context analysis that highlights the challenges and issues on the ground.
03	Methodology	Outlines the overall approach used and the rationale on the approach used, the tools applied and the key assumptions. It will focus on consideration for appropriateness, effectiveness and sustainability in consideration of the internal and external issues.
04.	Findings	Outlines and describes the findings of the evaluation.
05.	Conclusions	Outlines the main conclusions that have emerged from the findings.
06.	Lessons learned and recommendations	Provides general overall recommendations, including on cross-cutting issues.

- A **presentation** to IFRC country delegation and ARCS management in Kabul of the main findings

- collected during the work in the field.
- **Lessons learned workshop** will include IFRC, ARCS and in-country PNS to collect data and discuss recommendations. During the lessons learned workshop, findings for DREF operations and Emergency Appeal will be separated as much as possible to ensure the learnings from the DREF operations can be utilized for future DREF operations.
 - **Final data set** upon which the review analysis was based, for both quantitative and qualitative components to be submitted to IFRC country delegation team.
 - Maximum of two pages of **MTR's summary report**
 - A **Final Report Workshop** that includes a summary of the MTR's report (including process, findings, and recommendations) that will be presented to various stakeholders including IFRC secretariat, participating national societies and donors. Discussions on responding to the findings will also take place to initiate the management response for the evaluation.

The deliverables will be submitted through the EMT, who will ensure the quality and providing input if necessary. The EMT will submit the draft final MTR's report to relevant stakeholders for review and clarifications including the interviewed stakeholders. The Commissioner as well as the management team of IFRC Afghanistan Country Delegation and ARCS will oversee a management response and will ensure subsequent follow up.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

The evaluation is expected to last a maximum of 40 paid days starting from 26 August 2022, following the below proposed schedule and deliverables. The evaluation team will further analyze the proposed timeline and proposed the actual timeline in their inception report.

Activity	Location	Days	Deliverables	Dates
Kick-off discussion with EMT	Home	1	-	26 August 2022
Literature/desktop review and submit draft inception report and data collection tool	Home	3		27-29 August 2022
Revision and approval of inception report by EMT and Commissioner		2		30-31 August 2022
Briefing with Commissioner and IFRC country delegation facilitated by EMT	Kabul	1	-	1 September 2022
Data collection (document review, conducting KIIs and FGDs, etc.)	5 provinces in 5 regions	13		2 September – 14 September 2022
Presentation of initial findings to ARCS, IFRC and other stakeholders (with some joining remotely)	Kabul	1	Initial findings presentation	15 September 2022
Lessons learned workshop	Kabul	1		16 September 2022

Prepare and submit draft report with annexes	Home	8	Draft report	17-24 September 2022
Review of the draft report: ARCS and IFRC submits any requests for clarifications, corrections, or changes on the draft report	-	8	-	25-2 October 2022
Finalize and submit final report with annexes	Home	2		3-4 October 2022
Final report approval by Commissioner	-	-	Final report	
Duration		40 days		

Note: The attached table reflects an estimated timeframe of the evaluation, however, the consultancy team shall have the flexibility to address any feedback on the draft report after the indicated timeframe until it is finalized and approved by the EMT.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF EVALUATION TEAM

- Significant experience in conducting evaluations related to emergency humanitarian programming.
- Field experience in the evaluation of humanitarian or development programmes, with prior experience of evaluating Red Cross Red Crescent programmes desirable.
- All individuals of the evaluation team should have relevant degrees or equivalent experience.
- The evaluation team should have strong analytical skills and ability to clearly synthesize and present findings, draw practical conclusions, make recommendations and to prepare well-written reports in a timely manner (with examples of previous work) as well as it is desirable that team (members) have proven experience of the priority and cross-cutting areas of the operations
- Previous experience in Afghanistan is highly favorable.
- Previous demonstrable experience in data collection, analysis and interpreting the review results
- Excellent English communication skills (writing and speaking).
- Knowledge of local languages (Pashto and/or Dari) is favorable.
- Ability (or can delegate capacity) to access and talk to different demographics of Afghanistan for data collection (women, men, children, elderly, people with disabilities, different ethnic groups)

CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected during this exercise will become the property of IFRC and will not be shared with third parties without the express permission of IFRC.

INSURANCE

The consultant would need his/her own insurance that is in line with country delegation requirements.



EVALUATION QUALITY AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

All external consultancy firms or individual consultants involved in this evaluation exercise will be required to comply with IFRC's Safeguarding Policy and sign the Code of Conduct. Strict confidentiality and anonymity of data should be ensured throughout the process of this evaluation. Data cannot be used in any way that could be construed as harmful to any individual respondent.

The consultancy firm/consultant should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the evaluation is designed and conducted to respect and protect the rights and welfare of people and the communities of which they are members, and to ensure that the evaluation is technically accurate, reliable, and legitimate, conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, and contributes to organizational learning and accountability. Therefore, the firm/consultant should adhere to evaluation standards and specific, applicable process outlined in the [IFRC Framework for Evaluation](#). The IFRC Evaluation Standards are:

1. **Utility:** Evaluations must be useful and used.
2. **Feasibility:** Evaluations must be realistic, and managed in a sensible, cost-effective manner.
3. **Ethics & Legality:** Evaluations must be conducted in an ethical and legal manner, with particular regard for the welfare of those involved in and affected by the evaluation.
4. **Impartiality & Independence:** Evaluations should be impartial, providing a comprehensive and unbiased assessment that takes into account the views of all stakeholders.
5. **Transparency:** Evaluation activities should reflect an attitude of openness and transparency.
6. **Accuracy:** Evaluations should be technical accurate, providing sufficient information about the data collection, analysis, and interpretation methods so that its worth or merit can be determined.
7. **Participation:** Stakeholders should be consulted and meaningfully involved in the evaluation process when feasible and appropriate.
8. **Collaboration:** Collaboration between key operating partners in the evaluation process improves the legitimacy and utility of the evaluation.

It is also expected that the evaluation will respect the seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent: 1) humanity, 2) impartiality, 3) neutrality, 4) independence, 5) voluntary service, 6) unity, and 7) universality. Further information can be obtained about these principles at <http://www.ifrc.org/what/values/principles/index.asp>.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Interested applicants should submit their expression of interest to pmer.apzo@ifrc.org by 19 August 2022. In the subject line, please state the consultancy you are applying for, your company name or last name and first name. **(SUBJECT: Mid-term Review of Afghanistan humanitarian crises response- Last Name, First Name).**

Application materials should include:

- **Curriculum Vitae** (CV) of applicant(s)
- **Cover letter** responding to the criteria as set out in the requirements and clearly summarizing your



experience as it pertains to this evaluation

- **Financial proposal outlining** daily consultancy fees and total cost of evaluation (in USD)
- Details of three professional references
- A **two-pager approach paper** with proposed evaluation methodology
- Two **samples of previous written reports** most similar to that described in this ToR, produced in English, and for which the consultancy team is sole or lead author

Application materials are non-returnable, and we thank you in advance for understanding that only short-listed candidates will be contacted for the next step in the application process and the selection panel does not have the capacity to respond to any requests for application feedback. Please take note that expressions of interest that do not cover these requirements will not be considered.

ANNEX 1 (List of Questions)

See below a list of example questions:

- Key evaluation questions are in red
- Sub-evaluation questions are in blue
- Below them are suggested questions for prompting or further enquiry

Key- and sub-evaluation questions will need to be finalized, in agreement with the EMT, and presented in the inception report.

1. Relevance and appropriateness

1a. Is the programme reaching the target population?

- How relevant were the interventions in identifying the most vulnerable among the affected population (displaced and host communities), and responding appropriately to their particular circumstances?
- Was the beneficiary selection process transparent, fair, appropriate and effective?
- What strategies were used to ensure quality, timely and relevant delivery to target beneficiaries including mechanisms to capture beneficiary complaints/feedback?
- To what extent were the interventions beneficial to the affected population in all their diversity, including vulnerable groups, and did not harm the relations within the communities?
- To what extent were the beneficiaries involved in the assessment, planning, design, implementation, and monitoring of the interventions?

1b. Is the implementation meeting programme benchmarks?

- Was the assistance provided appropriate and sufficient to meet intended needs? Are they accessible and safe?
- Were intervention strategies and priorities in line with local customs and practices of the affected population, the priorities of the Government authorities and other key humanitarian actors?
- Were the interventions in line with ARCS and IFRC strategies, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and guidelines?

1c. Is it consistent with the programme plan?

- What problems and constraints were faced during implementation and how did the interventions manage these?

2. Efficiency and Effectiveness

2a. How is this service going?

- How were programme activities planned, managed and coordinated, particularly between ARCS, IFRC, other partners, clusters, and local authorities?
- What services did IFRC offer to PNSs in Afghanistan and how did those services contribute towards the effectiveness of the operation?
- How were ARCS and its volunteers mobilized to ensure services reach the most in need?

2b. What are the barriers to implementation?

- What are the barriers to success - including institutional weaknesses, external threats and challenges with stakeholders including affected communities?
- Were there challenges in volunteer mobilisation and how were these challenges addressed?



2c. [Is the delivery working?](#)

- Did the interventions meet their immediate and intended results?
- Did the policies, procedures in ARCS and IFRC support the delivery of services?
- Were there adequate resources (financial, human, physical, technical and informational) available and were they utilized effectively and efficiently?
- Were adequate tracking systems in place to ensure transparency and accountability?
- Was the capacity of the human resource system enough to fulfil the needs of the interventions and beneficiaries? Were personnel skills utilized in an efficient and effective manner?

2d. [How can we finetune this programme/delivery to make it more effective and efficient?](#)

- Were complaints/feedback mechanisms put in place for community questions and concerns to be answered? What were the concerns raised by communities during the intervention? Were feedbacks from communities properly incorporated in the revision of plans of action and adjustments in the implementation processes?

2e. [Is there a site which needs attention to ensure more effective delivery?](#)

- Did the support of the IFRC strengthen and complement the response of ARCS Headquarter/Provinces/Branches and coping mechanisms, or hinder them?

3. Sustainability and Connectedness

3a. [What is the programme trying to achieve?](#)

- Were ARCS and IFRC able to adjust the interventions to maintain relevance due to the changes in priorities in the country
- How did the support in planning, strategic direction, coordination and NS development enable ARCS to better face future disasters?

3b. [How is the implementation going between sites?](#)

- How relevant was IFRC in setting the coordination and strategic direction under the Emergency Appeal and two DREF operations covering the affected areas?
- How did IFRC link with external coordination bodies, such as the UN and government bodies to ensure connectedness and sustainability?
 - What is the perception of RCRC Movement by external coordination bodies?
 - Has the perception of ARCS by other bodies been improved due to its additional responsibilities outlined in the localisation principle?

3c. [How is implementation going now compared with a month ago or a year ago?](#)

- Where there any procedural/legal issues relating to facilitating international assistance coming in (e.g. visas, recognition of licenses and qualifications of international aid workers, customs and taxes relating relief goods and vehicles, satellite phones etc.)? How were these issues resolved?
- Was there adequate and relevant staffing including: a) decisions concerning the number of staff members needed, where, when, with what competences, at what levels, and at required availability and b) decision-making chain regarding staffing?

3d. [How could the organization be changed to make it more effective?](#)

- What important lessons have been identified that can improve future interventions in Afghanistan and be shared more widely?
- Would greater investment in preparedness measures have resulted in more efficient, effective and less costly interventions?



- Did the interventions result in enhanced institutional capacity of the ARCS, in terms of?
 - I. ability to plan and implement response and recovery programmes;
 - II. ability to prepare for and respond to disasters in a timely, efficient, and coordinated manner.
 - III. ability to manage new roles as indicated by the government to operationalize the localization principle.
 - IV. ability to mobilize its staff and volunteers to provide services
 - V. ability to mobilize communities at risk to cope with future disasters.
 - VI. its auxiliary role; and
 - VII. influence partners, including authorities, to act in accordance with humanitarian principles and (inter)national law?
- Is there evidence that the IFRC capacity building (programme design/delivery, coordination) and support to ARCS tangibly improved their effectiveness, ability deliver assistance based on needs alone and in line with the Fundamental Principles of the RCRC?
- Is there evidence of whether, and if so how the IFRC has been able to improve the reputation and visibility ARCS?

Annex 2: Evaluation Team Members

Team	Name	Organisation/Consultancy
Evaluation Team	John Watt	Independent Consultant
Evaluation Team	Charlotte Krog	Trust Consultancy & Development
Evaluation Team	Enja Vaario	Trust Consultancy & Development
Evaluation Team	Syed Kamal	Tagheer Consultancy
Evaluation Team	Paula Tommila	Finish Red Cross
Evaluation Team	Shuhada Rosdi	Malaysian Red Crescent
Evaluation Team	Abdul Jabarzai	Afghanistan Red Crescent

Annex 3: Evaluation Workplan

Project Phase	Activities / tasks from work plan	Deliverables	Dates
Inception, desk review and planning phase	ET coordination meetings	Inception Report & tools	October 14-20
	Documents review		
	Sampling frame and field plan development		
	Finalizing evaluation matrix		
	Develop inception report and tools		
	Submission of inception report		
	Review of the Inception report by EMT		October 21-24
Finalise inception report and re-submit	October 25-27		
Tools contextualization, translation, field enumerators training, and data collection phase	High level interviews by the ET		October 22- November 6
	Contextualisation & translation of field data collection tools		October 27- November 3
	Testing survey tool		
	Field enumerators training		
	Field data collection		October 30- November 19
Data analysis and reporting phase	Data translation, transcription, and cleaning	Workshop presentation, MTR report, and full data set	<i>Simultaneously-</i> November 28
	Conduct qualitative and quantitative analysis for triangulation and correlations		November 29- December 9
	Develop mid-term review report		
	Submission of draft report		December 10
	Validation workshop		December 16
	All written feedback is given		December 18
	Revisions in line with written feedback		December 18-22
	Finalise the MTR report incorporating EMT feedback		December 23

Annex 4: Data Collection Tools

Annex 4.1: Quantitative Tools

Survey
Province
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kabul Districts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kandahar District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Badghis Districts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takhar Districts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noristan District
Village / PD
Sex of respondent
Age of respondent
Marital status of respondent
What is the displacement status of the household?
What is the sex of the household head? The head of household is typically considered to be the decision-maker of the household.
What is the age of the household head?
Are there children in your household?
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) infant (less than 2 months)
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) 3-5 months
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) 6 month-5 years
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) 6-10 years
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) 11-13 years
Please select how many children that are in each age group in your household (if no, note zero) 14-17 years
What is your main source of income?
If other please specify?
Code
Type of respondents
Which assistance did you receive?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assistance did you receive? /Food Kit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assistance did you receive? / Hygiene kit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assistance did you receive? /Cash
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assistance did you receive? /Winter kit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which assistance did you receive? /Household/NFI kit
To what degree did you find this assistance relevant?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If somewhat irreverent or Completely irrelevant , please explain

• If somewhat irreverent or Completely irrelevant , please explain/Inadequate quantity
• If somewhat irreverent or Completely irrelevant , please explain/ Inappropriate items
• If somewhat irreverent or Completely irrelevant , please explain/Poor quality
• If somewhat irreverent or Completely irrelevant , please explain/Other
If other please explain?
Did you sell or exchange any items?
If yes, which items did you sell/exchange?
• If yes, which items did you sell/exchange?/Items from food kit
• If yes, which items did you sell/exchange?/ Items from Hygiene kit
• If yes, which items did you sell/exchange?/Items from winter kit
• If yes, which items did you sell/exchange?/ items from household/NFI kit
Why did you sell/exchange?
• Why did you sell/exchange?/To get food
• Why did you sell/exchange?/ To get water
• Why did you sell/exchange?/To get items for tent/shelter repairs
• Why did you sell/exchange?/ To get medicine or healthcare
• Why did you sell/exchange?/To get Cash
• Why did you sell/exchange?/Other
If other please explain
Were you informed about the selection criteria regarding this project?
Did you find the selection criteria fair?
if completely unfair please explain
Did you find the selection criteria appropriate?
If somewhat inappropriate or completely inappropriate please explain
Did you find the kits items appropriate?
If somewhat inappropriate or completely inappropriate please explain
Code
Did you find the distribution appropriate?
If somewhat inappropriate or completely inappropriate please explain
Did you feel safe during distribution?
If somewhat unsafe or completely unsafe please explain
To what degree did the assistance meet your needs?
If "Not at all" please explain
Code
How many days did the kit or cash last?
How would you assess the timing of the assistance?
If too much late, how many days, it took you to receive the assistance?
Did the intervention create any tensions in your community?
If yes What tension? Please list only one / two major tensions.
Which impact did the assistance have on you and your household?
If It did not enable my household to meet needs at all please explain
Code
Do you know how to submit feedback or a complaint about the assistance you received?

Are you aware of a method to register feedback or complaints that would allow you to remain anonymous?
How do you prefer to submit a feedback?
If other please explain?
Code
Would you feel safe submitting feedback or a complaint?
Have you submitted a feedback or complaint so far?
If yes, "Was your feedback or complaint considered by ARCS?"
Does the assistance provide the communities any longer term (e.g., longer than one year?) support?
If yes, what type?
Is there anything you would like to suggest to ARCS?
Code
Non-Beneficiary
Are you aware if ARCS is present in your community?
Are you receiving any aid or assistance from aid organizations other than ARCS?
If yes, which aid organizations? (Please list)
Code
Why you did not receive assistance from ARCS? Please list top three reasons
Code
Were you informed about the selection criteria regarding the assistance?
Did you find the selection criteria fair?
If "Completely unfair", please explain
Did you find the selection criteria appropriate?
If somewhat inappropriate or completely inappropriate, please explain
Have you at any point been in contact with ARCS volunteers?
If yes, how did you get in contact with them?
If other please explain
If no, are you aware of how to get in contact with ASRC?
Have you ever contacted ARCS for aid?
If yes, what was the response?
Code
Is there anything you would like to suggest to ARCS?

Annex 4.2 Qualitative Tools

KII: ANDMA Provincial Director
How did you coordinate and work with ARCS as part of identifying and covering needs?
How are ARCS and partners setting up criteria?
How often are they monitored and assessed?
How do you ensure with ARCS, authorities and other stakeholder ensure and coordinate strategies?
How, specifically, under the flash floods, drought and earthquakes in the past years?
How often are the stakeholders having coordination meetings?
To what degree is the coordination effective?
How could it be improved?
Which barriers and threats are your organization facing in your interventions?
How are you mitigating these?
How are the stakeholder's community and cooperating on these?
which efforts are employed to ensure contribution to development objectives?

KII: ARCS Branch Managers
What was the process for you to identify the emergency needs of vulnerable people?
How was the assessment different for normal aid supply and cases of emergency (flood, earthquake, air strike etc.)?
Any particular attention that you paid to families with more women and children? How (any examples)?
Did you select beneficiaries while visiting each HH or if the information on needs were collected through Malik / community elders etc.?
How did you distinguish between bigger and small families for assistance? (larger families / HH needs more supply)
How did you engage the local communities in assessing their needs and designing the support packages (prioritizing certain aid packages over others, agreeing on non-uniform packages for special cases like larger families etc.)
How did you control the conflict over resources / aid packages between local community and IDPs / Returnees (any special treatment of the local community to happily engage the IDPs / Returnees within their community?)
How did you share the needs of your communities with the ARCS HQ / IFRC and other humanitarian players?
And how did they respond to your needs? (imposing the aid on you or was there free and open discussions on the timing, quality and quantity of support necessary for your people)?
Is the local community happy from the timing, appropriateness, and adequacy of the ARCS response they received each time? If yes, how do you know this (any survey report etc.)
If no, what are the reasons for their disappointment?
Any reasons that the IFRC aid was not considered effective either by the ARCS local teams or the community people? can you list a few barriers?
How much (in %) of your provincial / community needs were met partially or fully by the support you received through IFRC?
Can you list what is still missing that IFRC could supply / support?

Any recommendation, how they can resolve the above challenges and improve their aid program further?
How did you ensure that the aid was received by the needy / selected HH and if it was utilized for the intended purpose (for example cash)? Do you conduct postdistribution surveys?
What / which feedback mechanism do you have, where the community can inform you to change any aspect of the aid delivery? (for example, hotline, complaint box, meetings etc.?)
Do you remember if in the past one year, you have changed / prioritized one emergency response over the other? If yes, what was it?
What have you done within your own provincial and community resources to cope an emergency situation without IFRS?
Can you list any 3 advantages and disadvantages of the IFRC team visiting your sites / offices at the provincial / community level?
Compared to last year, what changes do you see in the performance and reach of ARCS and IFRC to supply aid on time and effectively?
Can you list top 3 changes / improvement that you want to see for better performance but you can't improve because of the lack of resources?

KII: Community Elders
How did the response take into account you're most pressing / emergency needs?
Did you agree with the focus of the support being given by the ARCS?
Were you or the affected people reached by other humanitarian players for your pressing needs not entertained by ARCS due to scope or budgetary issues? If YES, who?
How were you involved in identifying the criteria for beneficiary selection?
Who else were involved in the selection? Can you name them?
Were there any problems with this? Was anyone among the group dominating the selection process and decision making? Who?
How did you keep a right balance between local community, IDPs, and Returnees during the selection process?
If you have to do the selection and the needs assessment again, what will you do differently this time?
What were the differences between the level of support you received from different aid organizations including ARCS?
Were the communities involved and in agreement with the standards being set and delivered to beneficiaries? If there were any problems, what were they and how was this resolved?
Did you have a voice in how support was given and was there a local monitoring system to observe activities?
How did you check / confirm if the beneficiaries you identified during the selection process were supported by ARCS during the implementation?
Are the ARCS active and considered effective in your region?
Were there enough staff and volunteers to deliver the intended support effectively?

Did the staff and Volunteers have the needed capability to deliver the assistance effectively?
Was the support given effective in reducing the needs of the beneficiaries?
Were there any gaps and if so, how was this communicated and responded to?
Did the interventions meet their immediate and intended results?
To what degree is the implementation and efforts of ARCS transparent?
To what degree do you assess ARCS is ensuring accountability? "
"Were complaints/feedback mechanisms put in place for community questions and concerns to be answered?
Are you aware of any revisions to the implementation due to feedback from community leaders/elders or community members+?"
Were ARCS and IFRC able to adjust the interventions to maintain relevance due to the changes in priorities in the country?
How well were the staff and volunteers of the ARCS able to deliver the intended support to communities?
Were they organized in an effective way to ensure quality delivery?
There will always be regional differences but was your region disadvantaged due to the quality of delivery?

KII: RCRC and development partners
Did the ARCS/IFRC attend regular coordination meetings and share information? Were they a part of the process of identifying the outstanding needs?
Was there a uniform and accepted criteria for the selection of beneficiaries?
Were standards accepted and coordinated by all Organisations or were there differences in the levels of support given?
Were the local and Provincial Authorities involved and in agreement with the standards being set and delivered to beneficiaries? If there were any problems, what were they and how was this resolved?
Were decisions taken outside of coordination meetings and imposed or was there free and open discussions on quality and quantity of support?
How were locations for various Organisation decided on for support to be given? Were there any duplications /gaps? How was this situation resolved?
Where some Organisations are only involved in life saving and the reduction of suffering and others want a more developmental approach how was this managed and coordinated? Where there any problems due to the style of implementation and if so, how was this resolved?
Did the interventions meet their immediate and intended results? If not, what were the gaps?
Which resources was ARCS supplied with? (financial - human - physical - technical - informational) Were this adequate? If no, why not? - Could you please tell about the planning of the utilization of these resources? - How did you ensure these were utilized in an effective manner? In an efficient manner?
Which tracking systems are in place to ensure transparency and accountability? - Have there been any revisions to the systems during implementation? Which? Why?
Were there any complaints from beneficiaries, local or Provincial Authorities about the way that the RCRC movement worked in supporting beneficiaries? How were these dealt with and were there any problems caused due to any complaints? How did it impact implementation?
In clusters and coordination meetings were you able to adjust to changing situations and how did the ARCS react to any changes? Were there any problems caused by changes of focus of the way support was given?
If appeals for funds were not fully supported then Organisations have to change what they can do and for the number of beneficiaries they support. Were there any problems of quality and quantity of coverage and standards from the ARCS based on what they had agreed to do? If so, how was this managed?
"How did IFRC coordinate with the Movement? How was coordination done with external coordinating bodies? To what degree did it ensure connectedness and sustainability? What were the key strengths/challenges? Why? How were the challenges mitigated? What could be done differently?"
How well were the staff and volunteers of the ARCS able to deliver the intended support to communities? Were they organised in an effective way to ensure quality delivery? There will always be regional differences but were any regions disadvantaged due to the quality of delivery?
In coordination meetings did the ARCS and IFRC both attend and were they actively involved? was there a harmony in the way these Organisations worked together?
which efforts are employed to ensure contribution to development objectives?
How is the intervention designed to have a longer-term impact?

FGD: Aid recipients
How the assistance provided meet with your needs and if, it was timely?
Were there others who, from your perspective, would have needed the support even more but did not receive it?
What are your most important needs that are not met within the assistance of ARCS?
How would you describe the transparency, fairness and appropriateness of the beneficiary selection process, as you saw it?
How would you describe the sufficiency of the assistance provided?
Were there any unsuitable items/types of assistance provided for you? If yes please list them
Were there any problems or challenges with the assistance you received? Should something have been done differently?
Did the assistance help you to cope with the disaster/situation?
"Have you had a chance to provide feedback on the assistance you received? if yes, who informed you? if you submitted a complaint or feedback, were you free to do so or be hesitant? Why?"
From your perspective, what could be done better in the future?"
Does the assistance provide you any longer term (e.g., <i>longer than one year?</i>) support? If yes, what type?
Do you have any suggestion to how the assistance can have a more long-term impact on households and communities?

FGD: Volunteers
How relevant was your assistance to the communities that you served?
Was there any part of the community that you couldn't reach or serve?
Was the assistance given sufficient for people's needs?
Were there any services/ assistance that was inappropriate or unwanted by the community?
Were the services delivered in a sufficiently timely manner?
Were there any problems or challenges at any point before, during and after the service delivery or assistance?
How would you describe the usefulness of your assistance/ service to the affected communities?
"How were you supported by ARCS with information and technical resources? Was it adequate? If no, why not?"
What could be done to ensure resources are utilized in a more effective manner? In a more efficient manner?"
Were you trained to collect any feedback from the community members?
If you were to repeat this service/assistance again, what would you do differently?
Were there significant changes in priorities before, during or after your activities? If YES, what were those changes?
Was there sufficient training given to volunteers in order to deliver the services adequately? If no, what trainings do you need?
Was there sufficient volunteers deployed for support / assistance activities?
How would you describe the speed of decision-making in terms of staffing?
How would you describe how effective ARCS is in delivering its assistance while maintain its principles?
How does your activities align with the bigger goals of ARCS?
Does the assistance provide the communities any longer term (e.g., <i>longer than one year?</i>) support? If yes, what type?

Annex 5: Literature List

Afghanistan: Overview of Natural Disasters (as of 8 November 2022), OCHA

Afghanistan: Worst drought and hunger crisis in decades, IFRC

Joint Winterization Plan 2021-2022: Afghanistan, Shelter Cluster Afghanistan

Disaster Risk Profile: Afghanistan 2017, The World Bank, GFDRR

Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022

Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis. March - November 2022

Afghanistan: Community-Based Needs Assessment: Summary Results Round 14 (November-December 2021)

Afghanistan Emergency Situation Report Issue 21, October 2022, WHO

Economy in Free Fall: The Afghanistan Crisis, USGLC

Operation Update Report Afghanistan: Humanitarian Crises, n°5, June 2022, IFRC

Economic Causes of Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis, August 2022, Human Rights Watch

Annex 6: Demographics of Survey Respondents

Surveyed respondents

Respondents	Number	Percentage
Aid recipients	502	79.30%
Kabul	147	23.22%
Kandahar	76	12.01%
Badghis	127	20.06%
Takhar	76	12.01%
Nuristan	76	12.01%
Non-aid recipients	131	20.70%
Kabul	43	6.79%
Kandahar	19	3.00%
Badghis	30	4.74%
Takhar	20	3.16%
Nuristan	19	3.00%
Grand Total	633	100.00%

Sex of respondents

Provinces	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	61	32.11%	129	67.89%
Kandahar	27	28.42%	68	71.58%
Badghis	45	28.66%	112	71.34%
Takhar	31	32.29%	65	67.71%
Nuristan	19	20.00%	76	80.00%
Grand Total	183	28.91%	450	71.09%

Age of respondents

Provinces	18-24		36-45		25-35		46-55		56-65		65+	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	16	8%	49	26%	43	23%	43	23%	24	13%	15	8%
Kandahar	12	13%	24	25%	36	38%	13	14%	5	5%	5	5%
Badghis	6	4%	52	33%	48	31%	31	20%	14	9%	6	4%
Takhar	7	7%	21	22%	16	17%	28	29%	14	15%	10	10%
Nuristan	6	6%	29	31%	40	42%	11	12%	9	9%		0%

Grand Total	47	7%	175	28%	183	29%	126	20%	66	10%	36	6%
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Material status of respondents

Provinces	Married		Single (never married)		Widow	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	145	76%	16	8%	29	15%
Kandahar	74	78%	5	5%	16	17%
Badghis	148	94%	3	2%	6	4%
Takhar	80	83%	2	2%	14	15%
Nuristan	92	97%	1	1%	2	2%
Grand Total	539	85%	27	4%	67	11%

Sex of head of household

Provinces	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	48	25%	142	75%
Kandahar	12	13%	83	87%
Badghis	14	9%	143	91%
Takhar	6	6%	90	94%
Nuristan	6	6%	89	94%
Grand Total	86	14%	547	86%

Settlement status

Provinces	Host Community		IDP		Returnee	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	158	83%	27	14%	5	3%
Kandahar	44	46%	51	54%	0	0%
Badghis	156	99%	1	1%	0	0%
Takhar	89	93%	7	7%	0	0%
Nuristan	84	88%	7	7%	4	4%
Grand Total	531	84%	93	15%	9	1%

Households with or without children

Provinces	Household without children		Household with children	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Kabul	12	6%	178	94%
Kandahar	2	2%	93	98%
Badghis	13	8%	144	92%
Takhar	16	17%	80	83%
Nuristan	4	4%	91	96%
Grand Total	47	7%	586	93%

Annex 7: List of Key Informants

Name	Organisation	Position
Rad al Hadid	IFRC	Operations Manager
Patrick Mutai	UNHCR	Cluster Coordinator
Mohammed Hadri	UNHCR	Deputy Coordinator
Fiona De Heer	IOM	Shelter Technical Advisor
Farukh Keter	IFRC	Shelter Delegate
Bidur Regmi and Priyanka Thapa	IFRC	Shelter Delegates
Carmina Camara	IFRC	HR Delegate
Lyn Phang	IFRC	PMER Delegate
Ali Madad Basharyar	IFRC	Sr IT Development Officer
Dr. Haroun Achakzai	IFRC	Routine Immunisation (RI) Project Manager
Mohammed Omar Ahmadzai	IFRC	Sr Emergency Livelihood Officer
Syed Hashem Sadat	IFRC	Sr Cash and Response Officer
Adiba Mohammadi	IFRC	Community Health and First Aid Assistant
Omulbanin Fazli	IFRC	Assessment and Analysis Officer
Ahmad Siamak Haris	IFRC	Operations Response Officer
Fahim Ahmad	IFRC	Sr Logistics & Procurement Officer
John Gwynn	IFRC	Organisational Development Consultant
Necephor Mghendi	IFRC	Head of Mission
Homa Nader	IFRC	Fundraising & Reporting Manager
Shabeer Ahmad Usmani	ARCS	Finance Director
Basheer Ahmad		Donors General Manager
Sediqullah Amin	ARCS	DRR Manager
Naseer Hemat		DP Manager
Sayed Edrees		DP Sr Officer
Mohibullah Iqbal		Cash and IM Sr Officer
Qasim Nooryan		Sr Officer for Beneficiary communication
IFRC Ladies group (8-9 pax)	IFRC	Various positions
George Bete	WFP	Programme Policy Officer (WG Coordinator)
Rami Beirkdar	CRS	CRS Cash Technical Advisor
Norulhaq Yousufi	ARCS	HR Director
Dr Mohammad Zaheer Walizay	ARCS	NPM RI Project
Dr Atallah Mahmodzay		MSD manager
Dr Ghulam Sarwar Haydary		Data training officer

Shakar Arbab Nives Verdoc	Danish Red Cross	Country Manager MHPSS
Afsar Salihe	IFRC	HR Manager
Mohammed Yasin Hussaini	IFRC	Membership Services Coordinator
Dr Mohammad Nabi Burhan	ARCS	Secretary General
Eeva Maria	IFRC	Regional Operations Coordinator (APRO)
Mulawi Sharafudin	ANDMA	Deputy Minister
Ola Karakra	UN Women	Program Manager
Christina Duschl	IFRC	Ops Coordinator (GVA)
Ahmed Al Othmani	Qatar Red Crescent	Head of Programs in Afghanistan
Shafiullah Jamal	ARCS	Youth and Volunteer Management Director
Roberta Falciola	ICRC	Cooperation Coordinator
Dr Shah Mansoor Staniczai	Save the Children	Senior Health Technical Advisor
Ahmad Ali Rezaie	IFRC	former Operations Manager
Nelson Castano	IFRC	former Operations Manager
Maryann Horne	IFRC	former Support to the HoD for Comms, IM
Jonathan Dedi Junaidi	IFRC	Regional IT Manager Regional IM Manager
Khurram Munawar	IFRC	Former Procurement Surge Delegate
Vinko Lazarevski	IFRC	Regional Security Coordinator Asia Pacific
Dr. Salim	ARCS	Former Director of Health
Mirwais Arif	IFRC	Finance Manager
Alexander Matheou	IFRC	Head of Asia Pacific Regional Office

Field KIIs

Position	Location
ARCS Branch Manager	Baghdis
ARCS Branch Manager	Nuristan
ARCS Branch Manager	Kandahar
ARCS Branch Manager	Kabul
ARCS Branch Manager	Takhar
ANDMA Provincial Director	Baghdis
ANDMA Provincial Director	Nuristan
ANDMA Provincial Director	Kandahar
ANDMA Provincial Director	Kabul
ANDMA Provincial Director	Takhar
Community Elderly	Baghdis
Community Elderly	Baghdis
Community Elderly	Baghdis

Community Elderly	Baghdis
Community Elderly	Baghdis
Community Elderly	Baghdis
Community Elderly	Nuristan
Community Elderly	Nuristan
Community Elderly	Kandahar
Community Elderly	Kandahar
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Kabul
Community Elderly	Takhar
Community Elderly	Takhar
Community Elderly	Takhar
Community Elderly	Takhar

Annex 8: Case Studies

Badghis

Kamal and his family live in Dehestan, a village located in the Abkamary district of Badghis province. Kamal is unemployed and has no source of income, which causes him to face challenges every day to provide for his family.

Badghis was one of the most impacted provinces by recurrent drought that hit the country over the last two decades. The drought left farmers unable to reap crops and to maintain their livestock health. This further resulted in a lack of job opportunities, as agriculture represents the main sector of employment in the province. The lack of clean water increased exposure of the population to waterborne diseases and malnutrition, in particular among the most vulnerable groups (e.g., children, elderly, pregnant women). The repercussions of the drought significantly deteriorated living conditions for the population in the province, forcing some families to resort to extreme survival measures such as reduction of meals per day, sale of assets and livestock, and child marriage. This also generated significant displacements in the West region, further reducing the ability for displaced populations to rely on themselves and to meet their essential needs.

Kamal's household was identified during the needs assessment conducted by the ARCS in the province, and the family was supported with food assistance for a month. According to Kamal, the assistance received had a very positive impact on his household, as it enabled them to meet their food needs for the month. It also helped attenuating the psychological pressure for Kamal, as he would not have to concern himself with securing food for his family on a daily basis. This further enabled him to concentrate his time and efforts in finding a suitable employment, subsequently strengthening the household's self-reliance and making it more resilience to potential future shocks.

In Kamal's opinion, continuous assistance should be provided for the time being, as the situation significantly worsened for the Afghan population as a result of the climatic and economic shocks that affected the country.

Kabul

Mirwais lives with his family in Qala Haider Khan, a village located in the Paghman District of Kabul Province. Originally displaced from Kunduz, the family lives in a tent and faces important challenges to meet essential needs. Mirwais works in a small business, but his turnover was significantly impacted by the change of regime in the country, and he was no longer able to secure food for his household.

Recurrent conflicts in Afghanistan have generated massive displacements all over the country. The internally displaced individuals represent one of the most vulnerable groups of the population, particularly during the winter months. After the political shift and the collapse of the economy in the country, living conditions have further deteriorated for the Afghan population. Many households were prevented from meeting their essential needs due to restrictions on cash and to the introduction of withdrawal limits by The Central Bank of Afghanistan (as a consequence of the lack of both USD and Afghan banknotes). Additionally, as a result of the inflation, food prices have been drastically increasing, further limiting access to food for the Afghan population. Many businesses had to close, as they were not longer able to maintain their sales.

Mirwais and his family were identified during the needs assessment conducted by the ARCS. His wife and his children were sick, and Mirwais was unable to pay for their treatment. He believes the cash assistance received had a very positive impact on his household, as it enabled him to buy food for his family, as well as

to pay for his wife and children's treatment. The assistance further enabled Mirwais to purchase wooden roof material and to improve the quality of their settlement. A portion of the assistance was also used for buying school supplies for his son.

Kandahar

Hafiz lives with his family in the district 15 of Kandahar city, the second largest city of Afghanistan. Hafiz is unemployed and does not have any source of income.

Kandahar province has been heavily impacted by weather and climatic shocks over the past few years, including the droughts as well as heavy rains and subsequent flash floods. Over the past decade, many individuals working in the agricultural sector had to leave their lands in search of better living conditions and stable employment. Furthermore, as a consequence of the floods, infrastructure is often destroyed, which results in lack of clean and safe drinking water, as well as increases the population's exposure to waterborne diseases.

Over the past months, several infectious disease outbreaks were reported in Kandahar, including a cholera epidemic, which can cause life-threatening diarrhoea to individuals exposed to it, especially for the most vulnerable groups among the population (children, elderly, pregnant women). This also echoes on the nutritional status of exposed individuals, who are further at risks to suffer from malnutrition and undernutrition.

The household of Hafiz was identified during the needs assessment conducted by the ARCS in the city, and the family was supported through in-kind food assistance. The food package consisted of 100kg of wheat, 24.5kg of rice, 10 litres of oil, 7kg of beans, 1kg of green tea, 2g of salt, 5kg of sugar, and a unit of BP 5 biscuits (BP-5 Compact Food). According to Hafiz, the assistance provided lasted them for a few months, which had a very positive impact on their situation.

Nuristan

Ahmad lives with his family in Mehadesh, a village in the Kamdish district of Nuristan Province. The household has been internally displaced and lives in a self-settlement. Ahmad does not have any source of income and often resort to borrowing neighbors in order to provide for his family.

Due to its geographical features, Nuristan is Afghanistan's least populous province, and is extremely difficult to access during winter. The primary occupations in the province are agriculture, animal husbandry, and day labor. Nuristan was one of the provinces where most casualties and damage were reported after the floods in June, July, and August 2022. Heavy rains are frequently occurring in the province, resulting in recurrent flash floods causing severe damages to critical infrastructure and decimating crops and livestock. Food insecurity remains the main challenge for the inhabitants of the province, in particular for the internally displaced people among them.

Ahmad was identified during the damage and needs assessment conducted by the ARCS in Kamdesh district. The household was provided with multipurpose cash assistance as a response to the floods in the province. According to Ahmad, the assistance was very helpful for the family, as it enabled them to purchase food and essential items for their daily life. The assistance received further saved Ahmad from having to borrow money from other people and cumulating debts. Moreover, with the cash provided by ARCS, Ahmad could purchase the necessary materials in order to build a settlement for his household. The assistance also had a positive impact on Ahmad's psychological wellbeing, as it relieved from him the pressure related to his responsibility of feeding his family, as the only breadwinner of the household.

Takhar

Yasin and his family live in Khafdara, a village in the Farkhar district of Takhar province. Yasin is the only breadwinner of his household and the family was living from the lands he cultivated. Yasin and his family lost their house and agriculture production after the floods devastated their village.

Takhar province is divided into 17 districts and is covered in mountains and valleys. The main sectors of industry in Takhar are agriculture and mining (coal, gold, and salt). Over the past decade, Takhar has increasingly suffered river floods as a consequence of heavy rainfall occurred across the province, which significantly affected crop and livestock farming as well as displaced many inhabitants.

Yasin's household was identified during the assessment conducted by the ARCS and was provided with emergency food security assistance, and water, sanitation, and hygiene kits (including essential items such as soaps, toothbrushes and toothpaste, towels, sanitary pads, jerrycan) as well as a household kit (consisting of items such as blankets, cooking pot, kettle, pressure cooker, and stainless bucket). The household was also given emergency shelter in one of the ARCS tents for a few months. Yasin and his family now live in the house of a relative. Yasin believes the assistance provided by ARCS was relevant and had a positive impact on the household, as the family was able to feed themselves and to meet their essential daily needs for a few months. Yasin hopes additional support will be provided for rebuilding the household's house.

