

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat calls for urgent humanitarian support for Afghanistan's overwhelmed cities

Nairobi, 13 September 2021 – UN-Habitat has called for an immediate response to the growing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, particularly in urban centres where most people have been fleeing and seeking shelter.

UN-Habitat emphasized the need for the international community to provide targeted humanitarian aid for people who have arrived in cities and towns during the recent turmoil - particularly the most vulnerable people including women and children. Many of the displaced people are living in urban areas in tents and other makeshift shelters and are lacking basic services.

Over half a million people have been displaced by conflict this year with large numbers moving to cities. A recent survey found that conflict-displaced people were living in more than 1000 informal settlements and nearly 80 per cent of them were in urban areas.

"We need urgent support for those who have been forced to take refuge in Afghanistan's already over stretched cities and towns – particularly the most vulnerable," said UN-Habitat Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif. "We will urgently scale up our existing projects, working closely with partners and donors."

The Executive Director called for a focus on moving quickly to develop community-based solutions to ensure basic services and shelter as the harsh Afghan winter is approaching.

UN-Habitat has worked with community-based networks in 13 provinces in Afghanistan for more than 30 years and has community-based delivery mechanisms in more than 1,100 communities. The main work has been ensuring the safe resettlement of internally displaced persons and returning refugees, the Urban Safety and Security programme for women- and girl-friendly infrastructure and protecting land tenure especially for women-headed and marginalized families.

While the focus now is on immediate needs, UN-Habitat has also emphasized the importance of long term solutions to the displacement crisis. The Executive Director urged all stakeholders, donors and partners to come together to rebuild inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Afghan cities and human settlements which can support recovery and stability in Afghanistan for all.

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