



Water Crisis in Afghanistan: A Humanitarian Emergency

Afghanistan's escalating water crisis, driven by severe drought, climate change, decades of conflict, and collapsing infrastructure, has left millions without reliable access to clean water. This scarcity is exacerbating hunger, displacement, and inequality, while increasing the risk and spread of waterborne diseases due to inadequate sanitation facilities.

Women and children are disproportionately affected, deepening existing gender inequalities and leaving children especially vulnerable to disease.

This exhibition offers a glimpse into the crisis and highlights the urgent need for support to address what UNICEF has described as a humanitarian emergency. It calls on the international community to respond swiftly and collaboratively to provide life-saving resources, protect vulnerable populations, and secure Afghanistan's water future.

The adage "water is life" has never been more true.

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Children bear the brunt of water scarcity, facing waterborne diseases, missed school, and long walks to fetch water. In Badghis Province, Afghanistan, a UNICEF-supported solar-powered water system now provides clean, safe water through reverse osmosis, transforming daily life for these young ones and their community.
(Photo: UNICEF 2023)



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In Chamtal District, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, the water crisis is so severe that children resort to fetching muddy water from a nearby stream. (Photo: UNICEF 2023)





Kabul City faces an intensifying water crisis. The city's groundwater supply is at risk of depletion by 2030 due to rapid urbanization and climate change unless urgent action is taken.

Women and children are disproportionately affected by this crisis, often travelling distances to find water. Women and children are disproportionately affected, deepening existing gender inequalities and leaving children especially vulnerable to disease. (Photo: UNICEF 2024)



A boy and resident of Noorkhail village, Badghis Province, Afghanistan, carries a container of clean water from a UNICEF-supported solar-powered water point which provides safe drinking water to over 3,000 residents, replacing the contaminated stream they once relied on. (Photo: UNICEF 2023)



Six-year-old Noorbala joins her grandparents and their donkey to fetch water from a stream in Kan Rozi Khel Village, Spera District, Khost Province—a testament to the collective struggle for water access. (Photo: UNICEF 2023)





Girls share a light moment at a solar-powered pump in Ahu Dara village, Balkh Province. In 2023, UNICEF installed 25 taps, bringing clean groundwater to 250 families and ending 6 km treks for water. (Photo: UNICEF)



Children collect water from a newly installed tap in Kantiwa Valley, Nuristan province, Afghanistan. Recently built by UNICEF, gravity flow systems bring clean spring water downhill to villages, requiring no pumps or electricity and designed to last for decades. (Photo: UNICEF)

12-year-old Mujibullah washes his hands at Mawlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi School in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh Province, Afghanistan. Together with partners, UNICEF has constructed latrines and handwashing facilities (with pumps powered by solar energy) at the school. (Photo: UNICEF)





Anar Gul holds a glass of clean water from her family's new tap—the first time safe drinking water is available near her home. In Kani Noorbakhil Village, Khost Province, 165 families now benefit from this life-changing water system. (Photo: UNICEF)



Secretary General's Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva (bottom left) and UNICEF Afghanistan Representative Tajudeen Oyewale (top) meet and hear firsthand accounts from Kabul residents on the severe impact of the city's escalating water crisis. (Photo: UNICEF 2024)