

Afghanistan – February 2024

# Integrated Emergency Response to Natural Disasters

## Takana Village Case Study



*New shelters provided by DRC in Takana Village, Maidan Wardak, Afghanistan.*

“It was 1 AM at night, and there was no rain in the sky. We were collecting fruits for drying when we saw the flood coming towards our village from the mountains. I quickly picked up the children and fled my home from the back door. When I turned around, I saw that my house had been completely destroyed”.

Female Focus Group Discussion (FGD) member, 13/12/23.

# Background

Following the collapse of the former government in August 2021, Afghanistan is experiencing a complex humanitarian crisis, with existing inequalities and vulnerabilities exacerbated by economic decline, global inflationary pressure, and the near collapse of social services such as the public health system. Increasingly frequent natural disasters and climate-related shocks compound the challenges facing communities already reeling from decades of conflict. Against this backdrop, women and girls are disproportionately affected, due to increasing restrictions limiting their coping capacities. DRC and its partners work in 17 provinces across Afghanistan to support household self-reliance and community resilience through integrated programs that serve hard-to-reach populations.

## Climate Change Impact – drought and frequent floods

Afghanistan is the 12<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country in the world to the impacts of climate change<sup>1</sup>, experiencing high sensitivity, exacerbated by low adaptive capacity. Furthermore, the INFORM Risk Index ranks Afghanistan as the third most at risk country from human and natural disasters<sup>2</sup>. These two facts are intrinsically linked, as climate change continues to worsen the frequency and severity of climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods, and landslides. Afghanistan is also in the midst of a water crisis, compounded by three years of drought. For hundreds of years Afghanistan's vast highlands fed water to lowland areas, with winter rain, snow, and run off from large glaciers providing the population with water through rivers and groundwater. As temperatures have risen, glaciers have rapidly receded. Changed weather patterns have also led to unpredictable rainfall and other climatic shocks. In addition, massive flooding affects the population in terms of education, water and sanitation, agriculture, health, and social life, leading to a general decline of the community. Together, the effects of climate change and a deepening water crisis present a complex problem for Afghanistan and its people, nearly 80 percent of whom rely on natural resources to meet their daily needs<sup>3</sup>. Among all population groups, women and girls – and especially female-headed households – face the greatest impact of the crisis, also due to their reliance on agriculture, including for self-consumption, which remains one of the economic sectors with the highest participation of women in Afghanistan.

## DRC integrated emergency response

In order to respond to the acute needs arising following natural disasters, DRC Afghanistan's program aims at reducing the impact and risks of shocks on target communities through the implementation of an integrated approach that links protection, Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA), emergency shelter, and emergency livelihoods with the aim of facilitating the recovery of disaster-affected communities.

The ambition of DRC Afghanistan's emergency response is to address the immediate needs of shock-affected households, while promoting linkages with longer-term programs to achieve self-reliance and promote community resilience. This ambition is pursued through the careful sequencing of first-line emergency response activities (e.g. MPCA), with second-line sectorial interventions (see psychosocial support, individual protection assistance, cash for work, and shelter repairs), complemented with community-level response packages, including the rehabilitation of key infrastructure damaged by the disaster. This process is strengthened by comprehensive community consultations and by the participation of community members in decision-making and implementation of all programme activities. Attention is provided towards the most vulnerable segments of the population, including displaced households, women-headed households, and persons with specific needs. Throughout all steps of the project cycle, DRC promotes safe access to assistance and engagement of women through consultations during the planning and intervention's design phase, through participation in the activities, and through the application of gender-sensitive evaluation techniques.

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1 <https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/ranking/vulnerability>

2 INFORM RISK INDEX 2023, December 2023

3 Stockholm Environment Institute and DRC Asia, Exploring the Environment-Conflict Migration Nexus in Asia, March 2022

### **Step 1: Early Warning Mechanisms:**

Through DRC-established community alert networks covering all areas of operations, DRC ensures linkages with communities and ensures they remain engaged with the organization and with the project, providing relevant information that can inform an early response. In this case, DRC received an alert from the Community Alert Network of Chak, Jelrez, and Maidan Shahr immediately after the flood.

### **Step 2: Engagement with communities**

Before, during, and after the implementation of the project, DRC engaged with community leaders, representatives from the local authorities, and community members. Immediately after the flood, DRC established communication with the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) representatives to coordinate on the assistance. After ANDMA distributed the land to the most-at-risk households (HHs), DRC could start with the technical assessments for the transitional shelters.

### **Step 3: Multi-Sectorial Assessment**

DRC conducted several preliminary site assessments, including Protection Monitoring, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Household Emergency Assessment Tool (HEAT). During these assessments, DRC collected data on a range of topics, including the total population of the area, movement intentions, the availability of and access to services, shelter and infrastructure conditions, community structures, and protection concerns. DRC, along with other partners, deployed joint assessment teams to the affected areas immediately after the flood. The assessment identified 260 HHs eligible for urgent humanitarian assistance. A second technical assessment was conducted before the construction of the shelters, after which DRC identified 64 eligible HHs.

### **Step 4: Integrated Response**

Based on the initial multi-sectorial joint assessment, DRC provided to the most-at-risk people MPCA and cash for winterization. Following the referrals from the first assessments, DRC provided psychological support and awareness raising sessions to the flood-affected families. After the most immediate assistance, part of the community of Takana participated in cleaning the canals, levelling roads, and building the shelters through DRC's Cash for Work (CFW) activities. Finally, DRC provided Asset Replacement assistance to 19 beneficiaries who lost their assets due to the flood.

### **Step 5: External coordination and Partnership**

DRC conducted meetings with various stakeholders and partners to fill the gaps of WASH, machinery for clearing the roads, health, and winterization. Other NGOs agreed to provide complementary assistance to DRC activities and to build the water supply and latrines for each transitional shelter.

### **Step 6: Monitoring & Evaluation**

DRC MEAL team conducted process monitoring exercises during the construction phase with the targeted beneficiaries to collect their feedback about the shelter constructions, and to make sure the activities are being followed as planned. Additionally, MEAL team conducted two FGDs, separately with men and women at the targeted community to evaluate the impact of integrated programming. Finally, Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) were conducted for all relevant distributions.



## Case Study: Takana Village

“It had not rained in our village, but that day there were thunders and lightnings in other areas. As a result, the rain from neighboring areas caused a flood here too. All organizations responded very quickly, but DRC was the fastest and started their assessment process on the same day”

Male FGD member, 13/12/23.

Takana is a village of around 450 households situated in Maidan Wardak Province, Afghanistan. On July 22, 2023, flash floods hit several districts of Maidan Wardak causing destruction and casualties in multiple locations, including Takana. The flood resulted in deaths and injuries, destruction of private shelters, and infrastructure damage. DRC received an alert about the flood from the Community Alert Network (CAN) of Chak, Jelrez, and Maidan Shahr. The CANs are mechanisms established under DRC’s ECHO-funded project to provide timely information about disasters and displacement across all our areas of operation. The initial report stated that 1,200 shelters were either completely or partially damaged, with 30 people killed and 25 injured.



House destroyed in Takana Village, Maidan Wardak, Afghanistan.

## First Response: Assessments, MPCA, and Cash for Work (CfW)

DRC's rapid response to the flood was possible thanks to the presence and effectiveness of the community alert networks, sharing timely information about disasters and displacement in communities under their scope of work. These alert networks ensure a direct communication also with the most hard-to-reach populations in Afghanistan and promote linkages with communities that remain engaged with DRC beyond the scope of specific activities, providing relevant information that can inform an early response. In this case, DRC received an alert from the CAN of Chak, Jelrez, and Maidan Shahr immediately after the flood.

DRC, along with other partners, deployed staff to conduct a joint assessment to the affected areas on the same day as the flood hit Takana. This preliminary assessment aimed at acquiring an understanding of the scale of the disaster and of the multi-sectorial needs of the flood-affected households. The first assessment identified 260 HHs (1,820 individuals) eligible for urgent humanitarian assistance, with more than half being women and girls.

Based on the initial multi-sectorial joint assessment, DRC provided to the most-at-risk people MPCA and coordinated with People in Need (PIN) for the provision of cash for winterization. As a result of the interventions:

- 1,510 individuals benefitted from MPCA.
- 20,174 people received winterization assistance by PIN.

From the data gathered by the first assessments, DRC referred internally some cases to the protection teams that provided Individual Psychological Support Services (PSS) to 22 individuals and PSS awareness raising sessions to the flood-affected families.



Community members cleaning roads and building shelters during DRC CfW activities, Takana village, Maidan Wardak, 13/12/23



After the most urgent and life-saving assistance was delivered to support disaster-affected families to meet their immediate needs, the rehabilitation works began.

As a first step, it was necessary to clear the access roads that connect Takana village to main street from the debris brought by the flood. In order to support these essential efforts, DRC started in September 2023 a Cash for Work (CfW) scheme engaging the community of Takana in the cleaning of canals and leveling roads to open the way to reconstruction works. During the first round, 35 community members were selected and worked for a month to clean the canals. As a result, a total of 800m of canal were cleaned and 100m of road were levelled. In the second round, 40 community members were selected for road leveling projects which will be completed by February 2024. Due to the types of activities implemented through cash for work and the restrictive gender norms of this region, cash for work activities during this initial phase of the response only targeted male community members. DRC will deploy efforts to identify viable alternatives for the inclusion of women living in Takana village in cash for work opportunities in the upcoming months.

“When the flood came, we lost everything. We used this money to buy things like clothes, medicine, and other items. This assistance helped us to solve our problems very well in that emergency or situation.”

“The DRC became our main supporter. Their help encouraged other organizations to help us.”

Male FGD members, 13/12/23.



DRC staff on the main road connecting Takana village after it was levelled and cleared of debris brought by the flood, Maidan Wardak, 13/12/23



## Transitional Shelters

After the flood hit Takana village in July 2023, it became clear that the location where most shelters were situated was not viable for shelter reconstruction efforts because it presented significant flood risks. As a result, the Afghan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) was called in to support with the allocation of suitable land for the construction of the new shelters. Multiple options were provided to the community in terms of land for shelter construction. At the end, Takana community selected the land that is closest to their orchards and agriculture fields. DRC had to delay the construction of transitional shelter until all affected households received their lands to ensure proper implementation. After the land distribution, during the first week of August, DRC conducted a technical assessment along with shelter engineers. DRC identified 59 households (413 individuals) affected by the flood and willing to be engaged in transitional shelter construction activities. Due to the approaching of the winter and of the harsh weather conditions, DRC could implement the construction works only from October to December. Despite the very limited timeframe, the community members together with DRC engineers managed to complete 80% of the shelters. The remaining works will be completed in March 2024.

Under the shelter response, DRC aimed to provide safe, dignified, and appropriate shelters for the most vulnerable shock-affected households. For families whose shelters were destroyed in the flood, DRC provided 40m<sup>2</sup> shelters for families with more than seven members and 30m<sup>2</sup> shelters for families with seven or fewer members, in line with the Shelter and NFIs cluster standards and with the Bills of Quantity (BoQ) approved by BHA at the time of proposal development. Market monitoring was conducted to ensure the availability and accessibility of shelter materials, and technical assessments were carried out to determine the appropriate response design. DRC implemented quality control measures and provided technical monitoring and support throughout implementation.

To complement DRC's transitional shelter response, the NGO People in Need (PIN) built household latrines for each of the families receiving shelter support by DRC.



New shelters built by the community of Takana with the help of DRC above the flood-affected village, Maidan Wardak, 13/12/23



“We were consulted and involved in all aspects of the shelter reconstruction; we also helped our husbands and other men within their household to reconstruct their shelters.”

Female FGD member, 13/12/23.

## Asset Replacement

Finally, to promote longer-term solutions that can support recovery of the local economy after the disaster, DRC provided Asset Replacement grants to 19 beneficiaries, including small businesses affected by the flood. DRC provided support ranging from 34,000 to 37,000 AFG (approx. 450 – 500 USD). These were used to replace livestock and to assist businesses such as grocery stores, mills, welding and mechanic shops, pharmacies, and establishments specialized in shoe-making and blacksmithing to recover their livelihoods. This assistance helped directly the 19 business owners and their families, improving the livelihoods of a total of around 130 individuals, with more than half being women and girls.



*Mohammed, beneficiary of DRC's Asset Replacement Assistance in his new shop, Maidan Wardak, 13/12/23*

## Mohammed's story

Mohammed\* is one of the 19 beneficiaries of DRC's Asset Replacement Assistance. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2023 the flood that affected Takana village inundated his grocery shop. Everything was destroyed and all the items he'd purchased to sell were lost. As one of the few shops along the main road to Takana village, this tragedy didn't only affect Mohammed but the whole population in the shop's surroundings. Through DRC assistance he was able to re-purchase all the items lost in the flood and re-start his business.



## Impact of the assistance and lessons learnt



DRC staff conducting a FGD in Takana village, Maidan Wardak, 13/12/24

On 13 December 2023 DRC teams conducted two Focus Group Discussions with the community, one with women and one with men from the community and recipients of DRC's assistance. The findings of these discussions reflected the great impact that the assistance had on the beneficiaries' lives and gave the opportunity to the flood-affected families to explain which needs were met and which ones are still unmet.

The FGDs with both female and male community members found that DRC played a crucial role in the aftermath of the flood. The assistance provided, particularly the construction of transitional shelters, was deemed vital by the community members. The focus on transitional shelters aimed to address the urgent need for housing, especially for those who lost their livelihoods.

The construction process was defined by the community as admirable and well-structured, with skilled workers from outside the village and non-skilled workers from the community ensuring efficient and timely completion of the construction works. Female FGD participants within the community stated that were happy about the inclusive approach used by DRC and that now they are feeling safer, with the new shelters protecting them from harsh weather conditions and wild animals.

While the shelters met local needs, concerns were raised about the absence of boundary walls, posing a risk from wild animals, particularly wolves. The size of the provided shelters did not always meet the need of households, especially very large ones, leaving some families feeling cramped. The impact of the assistance extended beyond shelter construction: through cash for work, community members employed on a temporary income generation scheme cleaned canals affected by the flood, facilitating agriculture activities, and leveled roads improving access to the village, including for trucks essential for the transportation of shelter materials for the transitional shelter construction efforts. The inclusive approach, involving women in

shelter reconstruction and considering accessibility issues for people with disability, garnered appreciation from the community.

DRC's proactive support not only addressed immediate needs but also encouraged other organizations to join the relief efforts. Despite some reservations about the adequacy of the cash assistance amount to meet all needs of disaster-affected families, the community acknowledged its significance. The complementary winterization assistance distributed by People in Need was also utilized for winter clothes, medicines, and household items.

**“I lost everything during the flood except for two children. The assistance provided by DRC was essential. Without the t-shelter, I would have been left with nothing.”**

Female FGD member, 13/12/23.

The disruption in livelihoods, aggravated by the flood, has left the community struggling to meet their food needs. DRC's Asset replacement grants helped beneficiaries investing in the purchase of lost assets linked to their livelihood's activities. The provision of assets replacement grants mitigated the dangerous and long-term impact of the disaster on households' economic security and on the local market. The assistance provided was used for sustainable income-generating activities such as dairy cows, mills parts, and shop supplies, resulting in increased income rates compared to the past.

While the assistance significantly improved living conditions, challenges persist. Access to potable water remains a major concern, with the relocation of shelters increasing the distance to the water source. Education and healthcare facilities are distant, making the journey perilous for children.

As we move forward, addressing these remaining priorities—ensuring access to water, enhancing education and healthcare facilities, and supporting livelihoods—will be crucial for the sustainable recovery of Takana village.





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societies - and we work with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence.

To read more about what we do, see: [www.drc.ngo](http://www.drc.ngo)

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