CHILD-FOCUSED RAPID ASSESSMENT OF HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Final report for War Child UK

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GLOSSARY

Basic services	Public/private service provision systems that meet human basic needs including drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, energy, mobility, waste collection, health care, education, and information.[1]
Child	"A child means any person under the age of 18, unless under the (national) law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."[2]
Child protection	Child protection is the 'prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children.' Child protection 'seek to prevent and respond to all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence and builds on existing capacities and strengthens preparedness before a crisis occurs. Interventions support the physical and emotional health, dignity and well-being of children, families, and communities.'[3]
Psychosocial Support	Psychosocial support (PSS) includes any support that people receive to protect or promote their psychosocial wellbeing.
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	Persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."[4]
Orphans	"Orphans are children, both of whose parents are known to be dead. In some countries, however, a child who has lost one parent is called an orphan."[5]
Return	"Refers broadly to the act or process of going back. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning IDPs and demobilised combatants; or from a host country (either transit or destination) to the country of origin, as in the case of refugees, asylum seekers, and qualified nationals. There are subcategories of return which can describe the way the return is implemented, e.g., voluntary, forced, assisted and spontaneous return; as well as subcategories which describe who is participating in the return, e.g., repatriation (for refugees)." (IOM Glossary)
Returnee	International refugees who have returned to their country or community of origin.
Separated child	"Separated children are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members." [6]
Unaccompanied child	"Unaccompanied children (also called unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so."[7]

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[1] UNESCO, "Basic services," December 2022, https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/basic-services.
[2] General Assembly resolution 44/25, "Convention on the Rights of the Child," 20 November 1989.
[3] The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, "Minimum standards for child protection in emergencies." 2019.
[4] United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," September 2004.
[5] International committee of the red cross, "Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated children," 2004.
[6] Ibid, 13.
[7] Ibid, 13.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBE	Community Based Education
CPAN	Child Protection Action Network
CS	Case Study
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PV	Photovoice
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WCUK	War Child United Kingdom
WFP	World Food Program
YHDO	Youth Health and Development Organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHODOLOGY & OBJECTIVES

While Afghanistan has long faced humanitarian challenges stemming from decades of conflict and natural disasters, the political changes in August 2021, and subsequent withdrawal of humanitarian and development actors and freezing of government funds precipitated a deepening crisis.[8] Children, who comprise more than half of Afghanistan's population, have been the most affected by these events, and are the most vulnerable to future shocks. The service disruptions in all sectors, but particularly education, health, and psychosocial support (PSS) have had a profoundly negative impact on the health and overall well-being of children and other vulnerable populations and have severely threatened the rights of children. At the time of writing, girls' secondary schools have yet to reopen in the majority of the country, hundreds of thousands of children have returned from Iran or Pakistan or been internally displaced, and over 20 million people - 46% of the population - are food insecure, with 875,000 children expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2023.[9] Furthermore, the de facto authorities have just announced a ban on women working for NGOs, not only a significant violation of women's rights but massively limiting the delivery of aid, and causing a number of major NGOs to pause activities in country.[10]

In this context, the perspectives and experiences of children remain underrepresented in research. This needs assessment, conducted in Herat, Ghor and Badghis, used a qualitative child-centred and participatory methodological approach, and **aimed to contribute to closing the knowledge gaps and to generate high-quality in-depth evidence of the situation of children's rights and well-being in western Afghanistan**. 30 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) explored the topic of child protection needs and power dynamics within the locations of interest. **12 case studies** captured a range of experiences among children in the research areas, and **one child in each location** was invited to photograph their daily life and activities in the community. **Parent/ caregiver focus group discussions (FGDs) (12)** focused on child protection needs, risks and trends. In each location (for a total of **six**) an additional **stakeholder FGD** provided locally contextualised information regarding barriers faced in implementing child protection programmes.

These qualitative methods were combined with a desk review to answer three main research questions:

What are the key child protection needs at the site level, and how are stakeholders across levels positioned to address these?	How do youth and children themselves present their perspectives?	How can War Child UK and other actors best focus their efforts in the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns, and avoid support gaps?

KEY FINDINGS

Severe poverty and extreme hunger combined with unemployment and inflation poses a serious threat to survival and have exacerbated existing child protection risks. Economic sanctions placed on Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover have resulted in extreme poverty and food insecurity at the household level. An estimated 80-95 percent of households in the Western provinces face food insecurity; at the same time, 99 percent do not have any access to sustainable solutions.[11] As a result, households resort to dangerous practices, including child labour, child marriage, selling children, and migration. The challenges and needs raised by children and adults in this study are fairly consistent across all provinces. The following key findings and subsequent recommendations detail key needs as well as strategies identified by participants themselves to overcome some of these challenges in the long term, including activities such as skills and vocational training for adults and children, agricultural innovations to increase food production, improved water wells, and livestock/monetary capital.

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[8] Save the Children, "Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment," January 2022.
[9] UN OCHA, "Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Planned Response 2023," 2022.
[10] George, Susannah, Claire Parker, and Miriam Berger. "Taliban Bars Women from Working at NGOs; Key Aid Groups Halt Operations." *The Washington Post*, December 2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/24/taliban-women-ngo/.
[11] World Vision Afghanistan, "Multi-Sector Rapid Needs Assessment," March 2022.

1. Climate change drives food insecurity and forced migration

A major drought over the March and May 2022 lean season deprived nearly 20 million Afghans of food. Thousands of people have been further impacted by massive flooding throughout the country, destroying farmlands and livelihoods, and limiting access to education.[12] **Climate change is thus a major driver of livelihood and food security concerns.** Severe droughts cause water scarcity, limit agricultural yields, and challenge livestock survival. Meanwhile, floods not only form a direct risk of death and injury to community members and livestock but also exacerbate existing livelihood and poverty challenges. Many households have resorted to selling productive assets. Although there is limited extant data measuring the relationship between climate change and displacement in Afghanistan,[13] **participants in this study reported migration to other areas in the country as a coping strategy for droughts and food insecurity, often putting children at higher risk of child labour and leaving school.**

2. Poverty contributes to dangerous coping mechanisms

Parents and caregivers interviewed reported resorting – often very reluctantly – to a range of **dangerous practices, including sending children to work, marrying off daughters, and selling children - particularly girls - to meet household expenses and provide food.** This study revealed both girls and boys engaging in child labour. Boys generally engage in outside work such as collecting garbage, farming, and begging, while girls engage in work inside the house like tailoring, carpet weaving, and embroidery, due to governmental and cultural restrictions around leaving the house. A small number of especially vulnerable girls – orphans and those from extremely poor families – were reported to work outside collecting garbage or begging, placing them at additional risk.

3. Education challenges lead to child protection risks

Boys and girls face significant challenges – worsened in the past year - around school access, attendance, and quality. This study revealed a combination of demand and supply side barriers that continue to exacerbate education gaps. To address these, participants expressed a strong need for a range of actions, ranging from the establishment of more schools for both boys and girls, and ensuring that they are safe schools, free from violence, as a priority. Other needs include the provision of literacy programs, construction of a bridge over the river to enable (safe) school access, kindergarten, quality male and female teachers, as well as sensitisation of parents/caregivers on the right to education for children and girls, in particular.

4. Non-formal approaches to education increase access

Despite limited access to formal education, **this study revealed several forms of informal education used by girls and boys to continue learning**. These include madrasas, learning at the mosque, brothers tutoring their sisters at home, and enrolling in courses at the centre of the district. These informal learning methods might offer starting points for humanitarian actors to build upon existing initiatives to bridge learning gaps.

5. Infrastructure-linked dangers and injuries outside the home are common

Improved infrastructure was identified as a key need by participants as a preventative measure against some of the primary dangers children face in their day-to-day activities. Participants highlighted risks associated with fetching water, as well as the danger of poorly constructed wells. Bridges, in particular, are needed to facilitate safe passage during periods of flooding. Further, children lack awareness regarding some basic protective measures against threats such as dangerous highways, mines, and abuse.

6. Lack of access to healthcare and health education services drives child protection risks

Lack of access to healthcare and health education were clearly linked to multiple child protection risks. Key informants described the connection between limited parental knowledge related to health and wellbeing and poor children's health outcomes as well as increased household financial strain. Child protection stakeholders

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[12] World Vision Afghanistan, "Multi-Sector Rapid Needs Assessment," March 2022.

[13] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, "Synthesis of four briefs on displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021," forthcoming.

interviewed also noted parents of sick children often prioritise food or cash over healthcare services, in some cases reportedly refusing health care offered to attempt to receive broader support from a different organisation.[14] Participants often identified the urgent need for local health centres. In addition, lack of health education exacerbated child protection risks, as families overlooked basic healthcare needs in favour of more immediate priorities, including cash assistance.

7. Physical and emotional maltreatment within the home is a key challenge

In post-conflict and protracted displacement settings, patterns of violence are heightened. Households face constant pressure, with weakened protective structures in place to protect the children. As poverty and insecurity grow, children describe domestic violence as a primary concern, as many parents resort to negative coping mechanisms as a response to their daily stresses. A majority of parents interviewed reported using physical violence as a form of discipline. Many participants recognised the dangers in abuse, but lacked requisite skills to cope with stress, and awareness of alternatives to abuse and maltreatment, particularly positive coping mechanisms.

Study respondents also frequently reported violence in schools, citing overcrowded classrooms and teacher stress as common causes.[15] Continued efforts to raise awareness to prevent child abuse and maltreatment are identified as urgent needs by participants.

8. Improved psychosocial support (PSS) is needed

Prolonged conflict, displacement, and trauma have severely impacted the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of children and families in Afghanistan. The need for PSS services has reached a critical point. Child-friendly PSS services are virtually non-existent. Reports indicate that following the change in government, services have declined further, with more than 86% of parents in a recent survey reporting no such services were accessible.[16]

Current challenges, including lack of employment, financial stress, and food insecurity have resulted in increased household strains and higher reported mental health issues. Parents and children described the restrictive environment as a key factor to their worsening mental health, with participants noting that girls, in particular, suffer from decreased social interactions, restrictions on play, and inability to attend school as contributing to feelings of sadness and depression.

9. Marginalised groups require additional support

Marginalised groups, including IDPs, UASCs, female heads of households, girls, children with disabilities, and children from poor households are most vulnerable to shocks. Key child protection risks include child labour, child marriage, education, healthcare, and selling of children. This study finds that in many cases, children from female headed households are most vulnerable to other child protection risks, including child labour, early marriage, and family separation.

Respondents called for additional efforts to support marginalised populations, including sensitisation on child's rights to increase awareness of the negative consequences of child labour, child marriage and the selling of children, as well as actions to improve household food security and income.

10. Power dynamics

When it comes to accessing support, **children are dependent on a range of actors - whose interest, influence, and actual power will vary by location and evolve rapidly - and who can gatekeep their access to the limited support resources available.** Generally, **NGOs / CSOs** are consistently identified as the providers of child protection support, although the authorities have a fundamental role in allowing them access - and to implement - their activities, or not, and seek to impose their own priorities. The current research reinforces the relevance of community-level work in terms of both identifying vulnerable populations as well as helping them become aware of potential aid. Respondents underlined that there may be mutual lack of awareness of services on the part of

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[14] KII14, international NGO, male, Badghis.

[15] FGD16, male parents/caregivers, Ghor

[16] Samuel Hall and IOM, 'Research brief: Displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021'

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populations needing them. Community leaders underlined their own role as intermediaries; this comes with its own equity considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following high-level recommendations centre around existing response mechanisms and key considerations to take into account in planning and implementing child protection programming based on these findings from Herat, Badghis and Ghor. They further highlight selected sectoral entry points based on respondent feedback.

1. **A call to action and coordination for War Child and partners.** Recognising the impact of cross-sectoral approaches and following global guidance on the importance of protection mainstreaming within humanitarian assistance, overall, this research calls for the integration of child protection across all sectors. Building on existing networks and programming, War Child should work to incorporate protection mainstreaming, in particular PSS work, into all aspects of humanitarian assistance. This will allow multiple sectors to work together to share data, support identification of the most vulnerable children, more efficiently and effectively target assistance, and facilitate service delivery. **Such coordination and integration are crucial given the new areas now accessible to War Child and other organisations – and the breadth of needs evidenced there.** Any single organisation will not be able to address the range of needs and number of potential support recipients in all of these. To avoid over targeting certain, perhaps easier to access, areas at the expense of others, coordination of activities between humanitarian actors will be key.

2. **Supporting child protection at all levels of the socio-ecological model.** Child protection around issues such as child labour and child marriage appear in many cases as a perceived secondary concern to urgent needs - to allow households to buy sufficient food and supplies to make it through the winter. Yet, the impacts on Afghanistan's children in the longer-term if this is set aside will be grave. Two streams of work are thus needed on this front. Firstly, systemic support on child protection *understanding and awareness* - working at all levels of the socio-ecological model, including households, the community, district, and national levels with decision-makers and influencers (including community heads, religious leaders, and more) on the need to continue to protect children at risk explicitly. The recommended coordination above can support the access to child protection support and a stronger understanding of children's rights at the household and community levels, creating a clear entry point for action. Secondly, more specific strengthening of child protection systems – locally and nationally including the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) is needed.

3. **Developing localised approaches to implementing child protection support.** Resources across the board are very limited, with NGOs seen as the primary source of support. Currently, however, there is in many cases a perceived disconnect between specific community needs and individual vulnerabilities, and the ways that beneficiaries are selected and support is allocated. A targeted community approach is needed both to ensure that aid is accessible to the most vulnerable and to allow organisations to triangulate information around recommended beneficiaries from other stakeholders - namely, community leaders and local and district / provincial authorities, whose selection processes may be biased. Such approaches will need to be adapted to the specific communities of implementation – a one-size-fits-all approach will not suffice, as for example in one province the provincial governor may be the key stakeholder, and in another a specific directorate head, or more local actors.

4. **Bring support to vulnerable persons who cannot come to it.** Girls and women in particular have limited mobility in Afghanistan; this can impact children in female-headed households as well. Gendered spaces are needed to allow women and girls to access aid for themselves or their children; this could be a standard part of support provided to ensure that even within more generalised programming, PSS or counselling activities are included. Generally, more inclusive approaches should be considered in the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance recognising these access limitations, especially if the current ban on women's work within NGOs continues.

5. **Organisational reflection around engagement with the de facto authorities.** The expected implication of the current authorities in both activity and beneficiary selection and monitoring is clear. The question of how and under which conditions to partner with the authorities is one which must be engaged with internally to ensure that staff have clear guidelines. Beyond the ethical debates, there is also a risk that distribution of support could be seen as biased by the people they are trying to help, particularly in this current context, meaning extreme care needs to be taken in understanding contextual realities and setting up mitigation measures.

Sectoral Opportunities

The table below proposes sectoral level recommendations with specific entry points to effectively address the gaps in child protection within the current response mechanisms. Sectors highlighted in red have been highlighted as key areas for War Child given service gaps, War Child experience, child protection needs evidenced, and, pragmatically, the feasibility of actions in these sectors in the short term.

Child Protection	**War Child and partners should adopt a holistic approach to child protection programming, integrating a rights-based approach.** Ongoing awareness campaigns to promote social norms changes to strengthen child protection should adopt a multisectoral approach, working with key influencers at the community level such as those identified in this research.
Health, PSS & WASH	**Support the holistic integration of PSS services into all sectors, including health and WASH.** PSS services should be fully integrated into all sectors. This could be facilitated through targeted identification and intervention of PSS needs while beneficiaries are accessing other services such as food distribution. Given the limited amount of PSS services available, a particular focus on training staff to identify high-risk cases and refer them to these services is needed.
Education	**Revitalise and strengthen the education sector through alternative pathways to education.** Given the de facto authorities' position on girls' education and the limited funding available for larger infrastructure investments – however much needed - there is a need to focus on the implementing and reinforcement of alternative opportunities for education such as community-based education (CBEs) for children who have been out of school or are continuing to engage in work. Consideration should be given to support and strengthen existing educational programmes within mosques currently engaging with girls.
Food Security and Livelihoods	**Improve efficiency, transparency, and equity in targeted aid distribution and beneficiary selection.** All Afghans need to see donor investments leading to impartial aid delivery and to ensure inclusion in sectoral programming. Additional transparency around aid criteria and beneficiary selection could support in alleviating concerns around nepotism and perceptions that the most in need are not helped, which could potentially lead to implementation challenges for organisations if not considered.

Chapter 1.
INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Photo taken in Ghor during photovoice

1.1 Introduction

> *"I feel scared everywhere I go, especially in the bazaar, near the sea, and on the road that leads to the bazaar. In these places, I am afraid that I will be abused by others or that I will be harmed." [Case Study 5, male child, 13, refugee, Badghis]*

While Afghanistan has long faced humanitarian challenges as a result of decades of conflict and natural disasters, the political changes in August 2021, and subsequent withdrawal of humanitarian and development actors and freezing of government funds precipitated a deepening crisis.[17] Multiple and recurrent shocks have resulted in a near complete collapse of the banking and financial systems; disruption to basic services, including health care and education; a significant increase in the number of IDPs; and extreme food insecurity. [18]

Children, who comprise more than half of Afghanistan's population, have been the most affected by these events, and continue to be the population most vulnerable to future shocks. The service disruptions in all sectors, but particularly education, health, and PSS have had a profoundly negative impact on the health and overall well-being of children and other vulnerable populations and have severely threatened the rights of children.

The recent political crises have further complicated the situation for humanitarian actors wishing to continue to support the Afghan people. Involvement by government authorities in aid work varies by province, and there is a

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[17] Save the Children, "Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment," January 2022.
[18] Ibid.

lack of clarity around conditions imposed for female NGO staff to work. The authorities have their own priorities and areas of interest for programming, and interventions seeking to support girls and women specifically are particularly sensitive, with shifting messages on the permissibility of work on topics like girls' education. Access to areas previously unreachable by humanitarian organisations, has, however increased - and organisations are seeking additional information about these to consider if, how and when to incorporate them into programming efforts.[19] To date, however, the perspectives and experiences of children remain underrepresented in research.

This study aims to contribute to close knowledge gaps and to generate high-quality in-depth evidence of the situation of children's rights and well-being in western Afghanistan. To do so, it builds on existing research to highlight the situation facing children in key child protection sectors, focus on the specific lived experiences of children and youth themselves, and present the priorities they have identified as key. From this research, the study then seeks to provide recommendations to War Child United Kingdom (UK) on how and where to focus efforts in target areas in Western Afghanistan to address high-risk child protection concerns. In addition, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of child protection in the sector. The child-friendly methods adopted seek to ensure that future interventions take into account the perspectives of those most concerned by the issues at hand.

1.2 Research Approach

The needs assessment conducted in October and November 2022 in Herat, Ghor and Badghis used a qualitative child-centred, intersectional, and participatory methodological approach, considering gender, age, and other identity markers that can underlie drivers of child rights violations, inequalities, discrimination, and barriers to service for vulnerable groups.

Qualitative methods combined with an ongoing desk review were used to answer three main research questions:

1. What are the key child protection needs at the site level, and how are stakeholders across levels positioned to address these?
2. How do youth and children themselves present their perspectives?
3. How can War Child UK and other actors best focus their efforts in the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns, and avoid support gaps?

1.3 Tools and sampling

The research used five tools, summarised below; see Annex A for details. Data was collected by War Child's MEAL field teams after a training and pilot led by Samuel Hall in Herat.

> **Safeguarding and research ethics:** The research team employed a trauma-informed, child-adapted research approach that places the voices of girls and boys at the centre of the research. This approach is informed by Samuel Hall and War Child's Safeguarding Policy and prioritised the comfort and safety of the child respondents at all times, taking into account their school schedules and preferred times. Further details on the safeguarding approach can be found in Annex

15 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), with War Child (five), NGOs / CSOs (eight), the UN (one) and the district-level authorities (one) explored the topic of child protection needs and power dynamics within the locations of interest. Parent/ caregiver FGDs (separated by gender in each location; two per location for a total of 12) focused on child protection needs, risks and trends, and specific experiences that these parents/caregivers had faced. In each location (for a total of six) an additional stakeholder FGD (including Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)/Civil Society Organisation (CSO) staff, prominent members of the community, teachers, and medical practitioners) zoomed in on barriers faced in implementing child protection programmes in that locality, key needs, and local-level power dynamics.

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[19] Save the Children's multisectoral needs assessment revealed urgent protection needs around education, child wellbeing and rights, child protection and PSS, household economy, intra-household dynamics, food insecurity, health and nutrition, covering Northeastern provinces. World Vision found comparable areas of attention in the provinces of Herat, Badghis, Ghor and Faryab.

Two case studies - one with a boy and one with a girl, aged twelve to seventeen - in each location, for a total of 12, aimed to capture a range of experiences among children in the research areas. These CSs were designed in a child-friendly and interactive fashion, starting with a drawing exercise for children to open up and express themselves non-verbally. Children were encouraged to draw a map of their community and highlight the places that are important to them; places they like and places they dislike. The resulting community map guided the remainder of the verbal interview, empowering children to steer the conversation towards topics of relevance for them.

Finally, to understand children's lived experiences and the social dynamics with others in the selected communities, one child in each location was invited to photograph their daily life and activities, positive and negative places, and other sites of interest in the community. Creating a narrative element to these photovoice interviews, the enumerator engaged in a conversation discussing the meaning and significance behind each image. While aiming for an equal number of male and female participants, photovoice was not feasible with girls in the communities for security reasons; further discussed in section 2.3.

Figure 1 - Example of community map drawn by a boy from Badghis
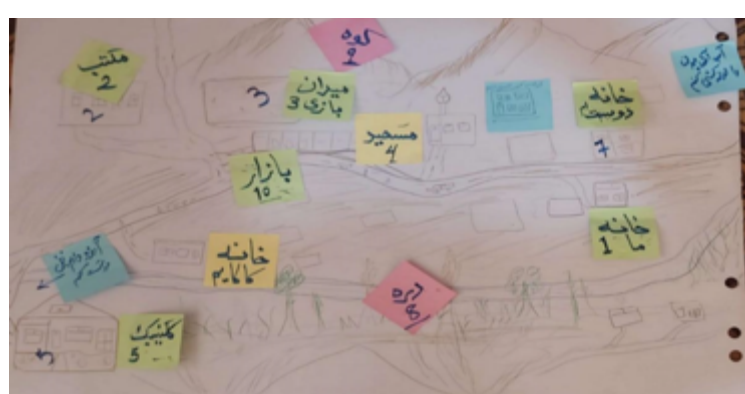
Findings from the above were triangulated against an ongoing desk review of select War Child UK strategic and programmatic documentation as well as other public literature from NGOs and United Nations (UN) organisations.

The selection of communities further considered protection concerns, geographic relevance (rural, urban, or peri-urban), population of IDPs and/or returnees, and accessibility and security concerns. The qualitative sampling approach was targeted and purposive. Identification of research participants occurred prior to the field work, with the support of local War Child caseworkers. (See Annex A for sampling details).

1.4 Limitations and Challenges

Sensitive research involves several conceptual and practical challenges, largely related to accessibility and the process of identification, categorisation, and inclusion of research participants. First, the field teams faced accessibility challenges in Qale-Naw- Badghis due to local unrest, resulting from protests by IDPs and NGO suspension. This resulted in a two-week delay in field work activities.

Second, while the study aimed for gender balance in the photovoice, girls were not ultimately allowed to participate; this resulted in a sample consisting of boys only. As a total of six girls participated in the case studies, the research team has still been able to capture the voice of girls. Further, while separate FGDs were conducted with male and female parents/caregivers, the FGDs with child protection actors were mixed gender. Considering cultural gender dynamics this may have reduced female protection actors' participation, although enumerators have put in significant efforts to ensure equal participation of participants. Lastly, cultural and religious norms challenge participant's freedom to speak on certain topics of interest, in particular as linked to girls' child protection concerns specifically. To address this, enumerators expended significant efforts to creating a safe and secure, culturally sensitive environment for discussion, allowing these topics to be at least touched on.

Figure 2 – Research locations (districts)

Herat
Enjil & Gulran
4 CSs
2 photovoice
3 FGDs
5 KIIs

TOTAL
12 CSs
6 Photovoice
18 FGDs
15 KIIs

Badghis
Qala-Naw & Jawand
4 CSs
2 photovoice
3 FGDs
1 KII

West Afghanistan
4 KIIs

Ghor
Lal-Sarjangal & Cheghcheran
4 CSs
2 photovoice
3 FGDs
5 KIIs
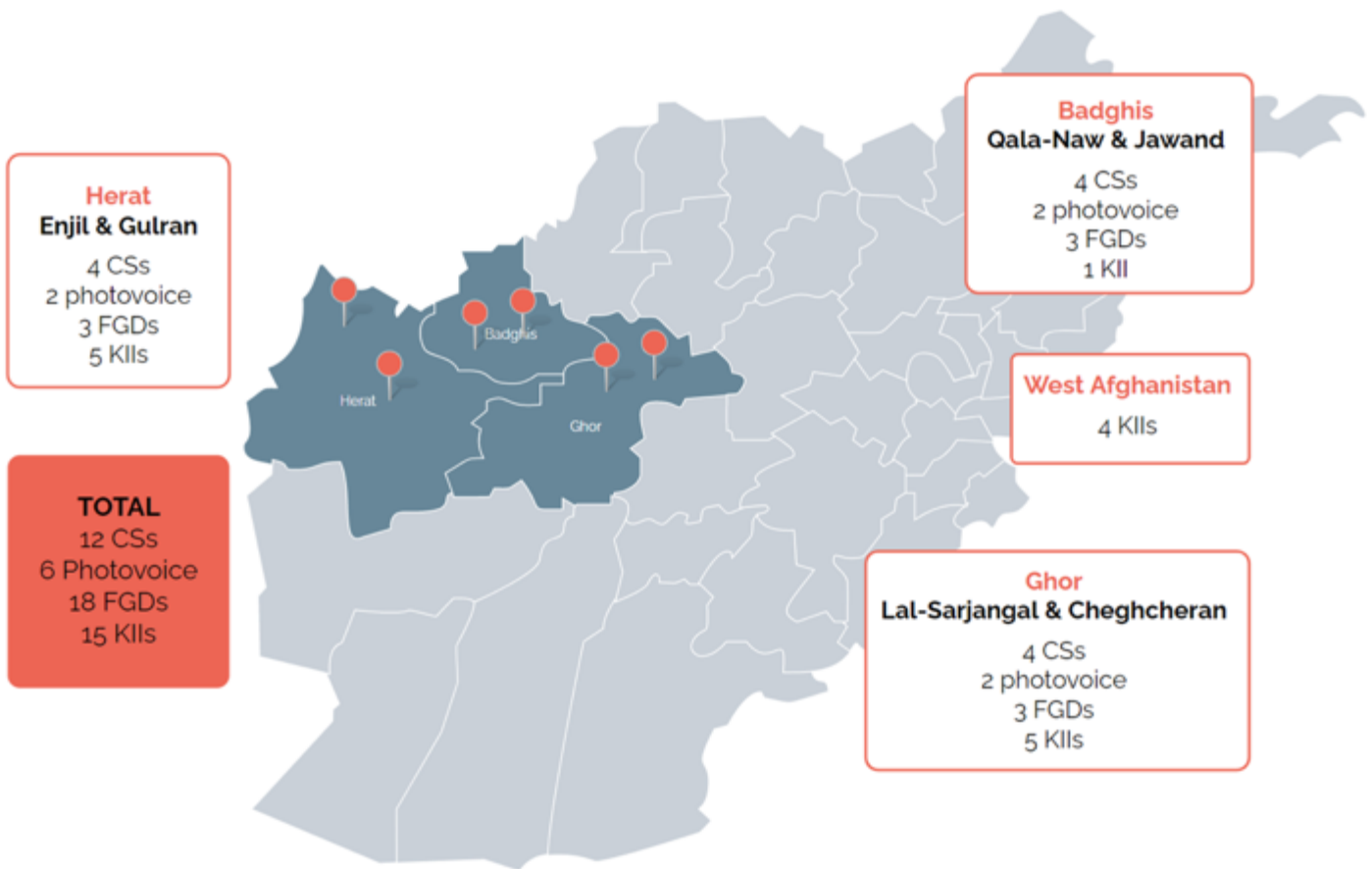
Chapter 2.
KEY CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

Photo of a valley in Herat province taken during photovoice

The following section presents key findings related to the humanitarian needs and child protection risks in Badghis, Ghor, and Herat. These are centred on the following, aligned with current War Child interventions: **food security, education, dangers and injuries, physical and emotional maltreatment, PSS, UASC and child labour.** While data collection focused on developing an in-depth understanding of child perspectives on the above-mentioned risks, children, parents and caregivers, and stakeholders all specifically identified **climate change related events, healthcare and health education, and WASH** as urgent priorities impacting child protection. These have therefore been added to ensure a fuller understanding of sectors whose work is linked to child protection.

Where possible, attempts have been made to identify and highlight any district-level differences in findings in each sector. In the majority of cases, child protection priorities, as identified by participants, were nearly identical across all provinces, reinforcing the urgent need to address these needs. This confirms previous research, acknowledging the difficulty in identifying any singular provincial differences or priorities in child protection needs and risks.

Table 1 – District level child protection concerns expressed by community members

Area / protection concern	Herat		Badghis		Ghor	
	Enjil	Gulran	Qale-Naw	Jawand	Lal-Sarjangal	Chagh-charan
Food and livelihood insecurity	•	•	•	•	•	•

Climate change						
Droughts[20]			•	•	•	
Floods		•	•	•		•
Harmful practices						
Child labour	•	•	•	•	•	•
Child marriage	•	•	•	•	•	•
Selling children	•		•	•	•	•
Domestic violence	•	•	•	•	•	•
Education	•	•	•	•	•	•
Dangers and injuries						
Violence and sexual/physical harassment	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kidnapping	•	•				
Unexploded mines	•	•				•
Drowning			•	•		
Traffic accidents	•	•	•	•	•	•
Health & WASH						
Lack of potable water in the village	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lack of health knowledge and awareness	•		•			•
Lack of (child specialised) health care	•	•	•	•	•	•
PSS						
Child mental health problems	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lack of support services	•		•			•

NB: the table above is not intended to be comprehensive but rather highlight those risks flagged by participants in this research.

2.1 Poverty, food insecurity, and loss of livelihoods pose a threat to survival

"We have nothing, and our misery and hunger are known to everyone. We will be happy if we have access to stale bread for three meals of daily food intake. However, we don't have enough food to feed ourselves in a day because we suffer from fragile financial conditions. I borrow from shopkeepers most of the time. My son is a wage worker and pays our debt." [FGD11, parent/caregiver, female, host, Badghis]

Severe poverty and extreme hunger combined with unemployment and inflation poses a serious threat to survival. Economic sanctions placed on Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover have resulted in a 40 percent

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[20] While cited by key informants as a key concern in Herat, droughts were not among the concerns expressed by the study participants from Enjil and Gulran.

drop in the GDP, worsening negative economic trends.[21] This has resulted in extreme poverty and food insecurity at the household level, with many respondents to this study sharing daily challenges to provide at least one meal per day to all family members. Debts, increasing unemployment and increasing food prices pose major concerns among most families. Indeed, an estimated 80-95 percent of households in the Western provinces face food insecurity; at the same time, 99 percent do not have any access to sustainable solutions.[22]

> *"I am in debt. When the moneylenders come to my house, I cry and swear that I have nothing until they leave me. Every night I feed my children first, when they have eaten food, if there is anything left, I eat it, otherwise, I don't eat anything, because there is not enough food for all of us."* [FGD5, parent/caregiver, female, Herat]

Chronic undernutrition and a lack of diversity in meals - most families reportedly survive on one or two meals of bread and tea per day - form a major threat to children's health. Further, the detrimental financial situation and the primary focus on survival drives child labour, early marriage and selling of children (see section 2.3) and restricts children from access to school, clothing, and a safe shelter. With winter upcoming, families are contending with serious survival concerns.

> *"We don't have shoes or winter clothes for our children. From now on, life will be difficult when the weather gets colder."* [FGD5, parent/caregiver, females, Herat province]

Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: Participants expressed urgent needs such as provision of food, clothes, and shelter to survive the upcoming winter, with some households "*only waiting for immediate aid from the NGOs.*" [FGD14, female parents/caregivers, returnee, Ghor]. To overcome poverty and food insecurity related challenges in the long term, respondents called for activities such as skills and vocational training for adults and children, agricultural innovations to increase food production, water wells, and livestock/monetary capital.

Figure 3 – Child's house, Ghor

"I live in this house with my mother, father and six siblings. My 14-year-old sister, who was in the sixth-class last year, does not go to school due to the government's new rules and has stayed at home. My other sister is 3 years old. My brothers are eleven, nine, six and four years old. My two brothers, who were going to school last year, are now not going to school due to poverty and economic problems, and they are working with me and my father as shepherds to collect bushes and fuel. Because I am the eldest son of my family, I was a shepherd for the village people from the beginning, and because of that I stayed away from studies. I am not literate, I cannot read or write, but one of my biggest dreams is to become literate and go to school.

Life in the village has its own beauties but at the same time it is very hard, all the children work here, some are shepherds, some are collecting bushes, and some are collecting grass. The winter in our village is very hard because heavy snow falls in winter." [Pv5, male child, 13, host, Ghor]

2.2 Climate change drives food insecurity and forced migration

> *"I remember that there was a flood almost three years ago, and it swept away most of the houses along with their household goods and caused a lot of damage to our neighbours and other people."* [CS3, male child, Herat province].

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[21] UN OCHA, "Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview," January 2022.
[22] World Vision Afghanistan, "Multi-Sector Rapid Needs Assessment," March 2022.

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Recurrent climate shocks have had a profound effect on children in Afghanistan. A major drought over the March and May 2022 lean season deprived nearly 20 million Afghans of food.[23] Thousands of people have been further impacted by massive flooding throughout the country, destroying farmlands and livelihoods, and limiting access to education.[24] As a direct result of these recent shocks, UN estimates suggest that over a period of nine months, over 90 percent of the population have faced insufficient food consumption, with more than half the population experiencing crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity.[25]

Climate change is thus a major driver of livelihood and food security concerns. Severe droughts cause water scarcity, limit agricultural yields, and challenge livestock survival. Meanwhile, floods not only form a direct risk of death and injury to community members and livestock but also exacerbate existing livelihood and poverty challenges by destroying shelters and possessions and obstructing the physical access to schools for children living on the other side of the river.

> *"Because of the successive droughts, the harvest of people has decreased, and it has affected a large number of people in the country, as farming is the only income source for the people."* [FGD13, parent/caregiver, male, Ghor province]

Figure 4 – River in Badghis

"Whenever the flood rises, no one from the other side of the valley can passage here. Boys cannot come to school or go for the work they might have in the market. Two years ago, two children fetching water from the valley drowned in it. I do not know their names. They were from the other side of the valley. My parents don't let us play in the valley or go to the other side of the valley. We cross the valley and bring potable water from the spring whenever needed. So, the drinking water is very far, and we must bring water on a donkey's back. The villagers should build a bridge over the valley here. However, the people are mostly poor, so they have not been able to do such a thing yet. This valley is massive." [Pv4, male child, 14, host Badghis]

Many households have resorted to selling productive assets, including land, equipment, and livestock, which while providing short-term financial relief, contributes to a worsening food security situation when funds are depleted.[26] Although there is limited extant data measuring the relationship between climate change and displacement in Afghanistan,[27] participants in this study reported migration to other areas in the country as a coping strategy for droughts and food insecurity, often putting children at higher risk of child labour and leaving school.

> *"People who were working on their agricultural land in rural areas suffer from the drought. They did not have access to sufficient water to cultivate crops and agricultural products, so they left their communities*

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[23] ReliefWeb, "Afghanistan: Drought 2021-2022." https://reliefweb.int/disaster/dr-2021-000022-afg.
[24] Ibid.
[25] UN OCHA, "Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview," January 2022.
[26] Save the Children, "Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment," January 2022.
[27] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, "Synthesis of four briefs on displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021," forthcoming.

and moved to the village nearby the city where their children can find a job or start begging." [KII13, local NGO, female, Herat]

In addition, children described some secondary effects of climate-related events in their locations, impacting child protection. As climate change worsens, and flooding intensifies, children are increasingly at risk of drowning because of limited infrastructure, including bridges and safe roads. Further, flooding isolates communities in remote areas; many children are unable to access school for months at a time.

"There is some risk to our children's safety, like crossing the river without a bridge, we must cross over the water to reach another side of the river, we are concerned about the safe passage of our children from the river on rainy days, therefore, we ask the donors for the construction of a bridge over the village's river." [FGD9, local protection actor, male, Badghis]

Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: Dams were suggested both to prevent floods and create a water depot for times of drought. To overcome drought-related agricultural challenges, various participants called for irrigation systems and provision of drought-resistant seed.

2.3 Poverty drives dangerous economic coping mechanisms

"Children suffer from many concerns and worries. Forced and underage marriages among girls and child labour among boys are the prominent instances of the mentioned claim. For example, a boy goes to the city to work or collect garbage. The fear is that someone will bully them, they will confront a car accident, or they will get lost in the city. These are the concerns that we have in our community and society." [FGD3, local protection actor, male, Herat]

Parents and caregivers interviewed reported resorting to a range of **dangerous practices, including sending children to work, marrying off daughters, and selling children - particularly girls - to meet household expenses and provide food.**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently reported nearly one quarter of children engaged in unpaid labour, while 20 percent reported working for pay. [28] While boys are at highest risk of child labour,[29] the current needs assessment revealed both girls and boys engaging in child labour. Boys generally engage in outside work such as collecting garbage, cleaning shoes, shepherding, farming, and begging, while girls engage in work inside the house like tailoring, carpet waiving, and embroidery, due to governmental and cultural restrictions around leaving the house. A small number of especially vulnerable girls – orphans and those from

Figure 5 – Photo of motorcycle repair workshop where a 14-year-old child works

"This shop is where I used to work as an apprentice in a motorcycle repair factory until last week. Working in this place was hard because I had to show up early in the morning and open the shop. During the day, I had to repair broken and damaged engines and parts with my employer. It was challenging, and I was not very interested in doing it. Sometimes, my employer misbehaved with me because I did not know the work well and was unfamiliar with the system. I had to work to earn money, but with time and the difficulty of the work, I gave up with my mother's advice. Also, my sisters were alone at home. Overall, the hard work and the low income made my mother no longer allow me to work here." [Pv3, male child, 14, host, Badghis]

[28] UNICEF, "Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8," 31 July, 2022.
[29] Save the Children, "Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment," January 2022.

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extremely poor families – were reported to work outside collecting garbage or begging, placing them at additional risk.

In addition to being sent to the cities for child labour - often followed by an overnight stay on the streets - boys are also smuggled to Iran to earn money for the family. Parents/caregivers expressed high concerns about the circumstances during and post-migration, with limited survival chance, high risk of deportation accompanied with violence and torture, and tough and hazardous work when they do reach Iran.

Child marriage is not a new problem in Afghanistan; past research has explored the breadth of drivers which can contribute to it. [30] Economic rationales have been used by many to justify child marriage - even when research found that self-reported household economic status did not linearly correlate with child marriage.[31] FGD participants interviewed in Badghis, Ghor and Herat generally explained child marriage accordingly: *"Also, the problem that affects most of the poor and needy girls is financial difficulties. For example, they are forced into underage and forced marriages."*[32] Similarly, the selling of daughters was mostly cited as *"an issue of family poverty that families are forced to sell their daughters for a small amount of money because they have nothing to eat."*[33]

> **Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions:** Given the linkages with poverty, child protection needs around child labour, child marriage, and selling of children mostly involved actions to improve household food security and income (see 2.1). Additionally, community sensitisation on child's rights were frequently cited to increase awareness on the negative consequences of child labour, child marriage and the selling of children. As one 13-year-old girl explained, "Parents should be informed about the rights of children so that they do not give the girls into early marriage."[34]

Figure 6 – Symbolic photo representing the road to the city

"I work in the city and collect and sell plastic, glass, old iron, soda, and energy cans to purchase a piece of bread for my brothers and sisters. We usually work in crowded places in the city. The drug-addicted people bother us, and sometimes when it is late, and we can't get home, we stay in the city and sleep at the intersections and parks. Additionally, we are afraid of dogs and other people. The drug-addicted people beat us because they also collect plastics.

When we leave home, we go to the streets and other places. The street is more dangerous for us because we may be hit by a car or someone may bother us. Yes, once a drug-addicted person beat me and forcibly took the plastics I had collected. I had no one to talk to about the issue, so I ran away from him. I didn't say anything to my mother because she gets worried and can't do anything. We walk around the city collecting plastic and glass." [Pv1, male child, 15, IDP, Herat]

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[30] See for example SH / UNICEF on child marriage, 2018
[31] UNICEF and Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled, "Child Marriage in Afghanistan: Changing the narrative," 2018.
[32] FGD12, local protection actor, male, Badghis.
[33] FGD9, local protection actor, male Badghis.
[34] CS8, female child, Badghis, returnee, Jawand.

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2.4 Education challenges lead to child protection risks

"If the girls' schools are not opened soon, it will put the future life of girls into doubt, and they see their dreams as impossible. We cannot help them, except by promising them that the new regime will allow them to go to the schools after the finalisation of the girls' schools' reopening plan." [FGD13, parent/caregiver, male, host, Ghor]

As has been well documented, boys and girls face significant challenges – worsened in the past year - around school access, attendance, and quality. An estimated 4.2 million children were reported to be out of school in January 2022, 60% of whom were girls.[35] Multiple factors including protracted conflict, displacement, and 2019 Coronavirus Disease pandemic (COVID-19) school closures have resulted in large gaps in education and extensive learning loss for Afghan children.[36] In line with barriers reported by OCHA and Save the Children,[37,38] this study revealed a combination of demand and supply side barriers - mostly driven by poverty, insecurity, and governmental restrictions - that continue to exacerbate education gaps - and in turn contributes to placing children at risk.

On the supply side, respondents underlined that limited number of schools and long distances to school for villages, few and poor-quality teachers, tented classrooms that are too cold in winter, and violence by teachers limit school access and attendance. Infrastructure problems worsen this – with a lack of bridges or safe roads making attendance more difficult.

"But the problem is that our village is about three kilometres away from the school and the Kabul-Bamiyan highway passes through our village, where traffic accidents occur. Our children have to travel this long distance and cross the highway to get to school, which has caused us concern." [FGD13, parent/caregiver, male, host, Ghor]

Figure 7 – School in Herat

"This is our school, and there is only one school in our village where both boys and girls study.

The girls study only up to sixth or eighth grade. Also, the girls who are in seventh-grade study with other girls in separate classrooms because the Taliban does not allow them to study above the sixth grade.

Previously, female students studied up to 12th grade in our school, but since the Taliban banned the school for female students of seventh to 12th grades, they no longer come to school. This year, they all attended the school at the beginning of the year, but the headmaster dismissed their classes.

When the girls were banned from going to school, some of them were crying. My cousin also cried. She said that she would not be allowed to go to school anymore.

I am very happy to go to school, and I am trying to study hard to be an engineer in the future." [Pv2, male child, 14, host, Herat]

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[35] UN OCHA, "Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview," January 2022.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Save the Children, "Afghanistan Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment," January 2022.

For girls specifically, on top of being legally restricted from education after sixth grade, confirming previous research, the limited number of schools for girls, the lack of a perimeter wall that enables secure play, a lack of female teachers, and teachers unsupportive of girls' education challenges school access until sixth grade.

On the demand side, economic hardship, food insecurity, child labour, child marriage, cultural norms and a perceived limited value of education reportedly keep children out of school. Respondents underlined that families cannot afford books, uniforms, clothes, and food to enable school attendance, neither the opportunity costs when children do not work. On top of that, the poor quality of education, the limited job opportunities, and for girls, the lack of opportunities to continue studies after sixth grade make parents/caregivers question the value of school overall.

> "Bad economic situation is that people cannot provide for their children's needs and requests. They cannot provide sufficient food, nor can they send their children to schools or higher educational institutions. [..] The second obstacle is the IE who disallow girls' education beyond sixth grade and, thus, girls stay in their homes all the time and get depressed. How girls and boys are affected is distinguishable. Girls are sold or forced into marriage and boys are sent out to work or they become a wage worker." [FGD15, local protection actor, male, Ghor]

Having said that, parents/caregivers, protection actors and key informants also pointed at existing cultural norms that prevents boys and more so girls from going to school, regardless of the economic situation and governmental restrictions. Participants in this study explained that school for girls can be perceived as a dishonour for some communities, and boys are expected to deliver hard work instead of learning.

> "It will be very good if a school is established for girls in our village. However, if I tell my mother that I want to go to school, she will answer by saying that I am a girl and that I should be at home. She doesn't care about our education." [CS8, female child, 13, returnee, Badghis]

Despite limited access to formal education, this study revealed forms of informal means of education used by girls and boys to continue learning. These include madrasa, the mosque, brothers tutoring their sisters at home, and enrolling in courses at the centre of the district. These informal learning methods might offer starting points for humanitarian actors to build upon existing initiatives to bridge learning gaps.

> **Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions:** Participants expressed a strong need for the establishment of more schools for boys and girls. Parents and children identified safe schools, free from violence, as a priority. Other needs include the provision of literacy programs, construction of a bridge over the river to enable (safe) school access, kindergarten, quality male and female teachers, as well as sensitisation of parents/caregivers on the right to education for children and girls in particular.

Figure 8 – Photo of War Child's child-friendly space initiative

"Another place I like is Conix (Child-Friendly Space). Three months ago, I used to go and study at Conix
It was a nice place. We were happy, we played with the other children, had access to toys, and had cake and juice at Conix every day. In Conix they taught us reading, writing, poetry, and life skills.
We only studied in Conix for three months. Currently, one of my sisters goes to Conix, and she is happy because they play games with the children and read stories and poems to them.
Everyone child wanted to go to Conix and study there, but after three months, they told us that our class had ended. We do not go to Conix anymore." [Pv1, male child, 15, IDP, Herat]

2.5 Threat of dangers and injuries outside the home are common

"Yes, risks such as harming and injuring my children have worried me. My children are busy with some hard work and labouring such as collecting firewood and providing herbage for the cattle. They are working on mountainous places where my child fell down the mountain and his hand has been broken. It took a long time and I spent money on his treatment, however, he still complains about this pain in his hands while working and that makes him upset." [FGD13, parent/caregiver, male, host, Ghor]

Daily life for children in Afghanistan can be fraught with danger. Outside the house, children are exposed to dangers such as harassment, violence, kidnapping, and injuries due to dangerous mountains, uncovered wells, wild animals or unexploded mines. Parents frequently spoke of living in fear their children would be exposed to danger or sexual harassment and abuse while performing daily chores such as gathering firewood or fetching water or looking for work.

"For example, when children go to the plains and cities to collect firewood (fuel) or garbage, they are harassed and even sexually abused." [FGD2, parent/caregiver, males, IDP, Herat]

Inadequate services and limited and poorly maintained infrastructure mean that children may be forced to travel alone on busy highways, dangerous mountain paths, and in remote areas.

Limited access to water poses multiple threats to children's safety. Water scarcity and limited Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) resources drives children to travel long distances to collect water for their families. One parent explained the dangers their children face fetching water: *"When my children leave the home for the spring to fetch water, it makes me worry about them because the spring is far away [10 km] from our community. I am afraid that somebody bothers my children when they go to the spring to water."*[39] This also was linked back to climate change - in Ghor, one parent explained that due to the drought, more wells had been dug around the village – into which children were falling.

"Due to the drought, many wells have been dug around our village. These wells are a threat to our children. These days, the number of children falling into these wells has increased in the country." [FGD14, parent/caregiver, females, returnee, Ghor]

Figure 9 – Photo of river in Badghis crossed to go to school, the market, or work

"I pass this place every day to go to the market or work. It is perilous here for other children and me, especially when the river water rises in winter. Many children fear crossing this place when it rains, or the water level increases. I have been forced many times to go to the market by another longer route." [Pv3, male child, 13, Badghis]

Despite efforts to clear mines, improvised mines (IM) and explosive remnants of war (ERW) resulted in 98 percent of casualties in Afghanistan in 2021; 79 percent of the ERW casualties were children.[40] ERW detonations killed at least 34 children in April alone in 2022.' Moreover, between January and July 2022, 136 children were killed, and explosive ordinances maimed 328. A female parent in Ghor expressed her worries: *"I am always worried about my children. One of my children was hit by a mine two years ago. If they share their concerns with me, I will try to support them."*

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[39] FGD11, parent/caregiver, male, host, Badghis.
[40] UNMAS, "Afghanistan," July 2022, https://www.unmas.org/en/programmes/afghanistan.

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While parents expressed living in a near constant state of fear regarding their children's safety and wellbeing, many described the household's reliance on their children's daily support, and their helplessness at the situation.

> "Our children go to the streets to collect garbage as we use them as fuel. We worry they are sexually and physically violated or scorned until they return. We are afraid of armed people who belong to the Islamic Emirate/Taliban. When they march among the people, they feel frightened a lot." [FGD17, parent/caregiver, females, IDP, Ghor]

Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: Improved infrastructure was identified as a key need by participants as a preventative measure against some of the primary dangers children face in their day-to-day activities. Improved access to WASH services would eliminate risks associated with fetching water, as well as the danger of poorly constructed wells. The construction of bridges, or basic footbridges should be prioritised to facilitate safe passage during periods of flooding. Children lack awareness regarding some basic protective measures; to protect against threats such as dangerous highways, mines, and abuse, preventative measures need to be strengthened. These could include awareness raising on child protection and safety, such as road safety instruction, mine awareness, and abuse prevention programmes integrated into existing education programming.

2.5.1 Lack of access to healthcare and health education services drives child protection risks

While not directly a child protection challenge, this study found that not just is improved access to healthcare a key priority among respondents, but that lack of access to healthcare and health education were clearly linked to multiple child protection risks. Key informants described the connection between limited parental knowledge related to health and wellbeing and poor children's health outcomes as well as increased household financial strain.

> "I believe the mentioned problems have rooted causes both in households' financial condition and their traditional values and cultural norms. For example, a mother who suffers from tuberculosis does not know how to prevent her children from getting affected from her disease. Similarly, when children collect garbage, their hands become contaminated. However, their mothers do not know how to make their children wash their hands and change their clothes before eating something and coming to the living room. Thus, when they do not pay attention to the issue, they become sick and have to spend 1,000 AFN to provide their children with healthcare services. If their children earn 100 AFN a day from

Figure 10 – Photo illustrating boy's painful hands due to hard work

> "As I said, shepherding is a very difficult and tiring job, especially when the weather gets cold. When the weather gets cold, the back side of my hands crack and sometimes it's bleeding due to the coldness and dust. During the winter nights, my mother greases my hands with animal oil so that they don't bleed." [Pv5, male child, 13, host, Ghor]

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collecting garbage, they have to pay the earnings for ten days for their medical costs. In a nutshell, both economic and cultural challenges caused many problems in different communities.” [FGD3, local protection actor, male, Herat]

Child protection stakeholders interviewed also noted parents of sick children often prioritise food or cash over healthcare services, in some cases reportedly refusing health care offered to attempt to receive broader support from a different organisation.[41]

The gendered aspect to healthcare identified by several key informants is strongly linked to social norms and economic considerations.

“Unlike boys, girls do not receive proper health care services because their parents pay more attention to their sons because they will be the breadwinner of the household while the girls will marry and leave the home. ”[KII13, local NGO, female, Herat]

A 16-year-old girl from Herat confirmed the gendered nature of healthcare by describing two recent incidents in her community where girls were unable to access treatment.

“The head of our neighbour's daughter was hit by a stone ten days ago, and she suffers from an open wound on her head. However, she was not transferred to the clinic because she does not have a mother, and her father works in Iran. Also, her grandmother is old and unable to take her to the clinic that is ten KM away from our village, not to mention that we do not have a vehicle in our village. There is another girl who was bitten by her neighbour's dog and has a wound on her leg. She has not been transferred anywhere for treatment.” [CS 4, female child, 16, host, Herat]

Rural populations are most at risk; while between 50 to 60 percent of city residents have access to health care, most rural communities lack both medicine and medical facilities.[42] Some of the districts visited face additional limitations due to seasonal accessibility - for example in Ghor, health care services to remote areas pause from September to May because of the snow in more remote areas.[43]

Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: Participants identified the urgent need for local health centres. In addition, lack of health education exacerbated child protection risks, as families overlooked basic healthcare needs in favour of more immediate priorities, including cash assistance. Community sensitisation to combat entrenched social norms is critical to ensuring gender equitable access to health care.

2.6 Physical and emotional maltreatment within the home is a key challenge

“When my children misbehave, I have to beat them. Thereafter, I start to cry with them. I cannot discipline them because they grow up without a father and do not listen to me.” [FGD11, parent/caregiver, female, host, Badghis]

In post-conflict and protracted displacement settings, patterns of violence are heightened. Households face constant pressure, with weakened protective structures in place to protect the children. A recent study by Samuel Hall found that “anger, irritability, intolerance of noise, impatience, and inability to regulate emotions,”[44] were the most frequently cited symptoms by respondents in response to their stressful living situations. In the same study, respondents acknowledged that they had ‘physically lashed out at family members.” [45]

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[41] KII14, international NGO, male, Badghis.
[42] KII15, international NGO, male, Ghor.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, “Synthesis of four briefs on displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021,” forthcoming.
[45] Ibid.

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Figure 11 – Symbolic photo of children hugging before play to demonstrate unity

"However, before the start of the game, we hug each other because we are a team, and it shows that we are united and play together. We learned this from other older children. It was not common before; if it was, we did not know. We understand that this is a kind of unity, and we are united against the other team. We tell each other that we will play well together to beat the other team." [Pv1, male child, 15, IDP, Herat]

As poverty and insecurity grow, children describe domestic violence as a primary concern. School-based violence is also reportedly on the rise. The physical and emotional maltreatment of children severely impacts their wellbeing and capacity to achieve their full potential. However, many parents resort to negative coping mechanisms as a response to their daily stresses. A majority of parents interviewed reported using physical violence as a form of discipline. Parents interviewed seemed aware of the dangers and risks related to violence against children but lacked the appropriate coping mechanisms to respond differently.

> *"Please do not say about beating children and using violence against them because we do not have any option."* [FGD1, parent/caregiver, female, IDP, Herat]

Girls seem at higher risk of physical violence - a higher proportion of girl parents reported implementing 'harsh parenting' including resorting to physical punishment. For girls orphaned or separated from their parents, reliant on the care of relatives, the risk of violence is particularly high.

> *"My uncle's house is dangerous for me because it is where I am always beaten, punished, insulted, and humiliated. At my uncle's house, I always feel sad and tired. I am afraid that they will beat or insult me because I am not their child. Even though I do everything for them, they still don't like me."* [CS12, female child, 13, Ghor]

Study respondents also frequently reported violence in schools, citing overcrowded classrooms and teacher stress as common causes.[46]

Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: Continued efforts to raise awareness to prevent child abuse and maltreatment are identified as urgent needs. Targeted interventions to identify most at risk, including girls, orphans, and separated children should be implemented. Many participants recognised the dangers in abuse but lacked requisite skills to cope with stress; awareness and sensitisation campaigns need to link participants to PSS services, as well as provide alternatives to abuse and maltreatment, particularly positive coping mechanisms.

2.7 Psychosocial Support (PSS)

> *"We have been living in a relatively secure community since the last, but the unemployment and financial problems have dramatically increased. This has caused sadness, worry, and depression for*

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[46] FGD16, parents/caregivers, male, Ghor.

children and families because we cannot fulfil children's needs, such as clothes, food, etc." [FGD10, parent/caregiver, male, IDP, Badghis]

Prolonged conflict, displacement, and trauma have severely impacted the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of children and families in Afghanistan. The need for PSS services has reached a critical point. Current challenges, including lack of employment, financial stress, and food insecurity have resulted in increased household strains and higher reported mental health issues. Recent research by Samuel Hall found that nearly all respondents surveyed reported suffering from mental health conditions as a result of poverty, unemployment, inflation and debt.[47] As one NGO staff member interviewed for this research explained:

"The ground realities make the children suffer from mental health problems. However, all people regardless of their ethnic affiliation, gender, and living condition suffer from the current problems and limitations. Although the children of a few households that have stable financial conditions have relatively comfortable lives, a vast majority of children suffer from mental health problems." [KII15, international NGO, male, Ghor]

In addition to financial constraints increasing household strain, parents and children described the restrictive environment as a key factor to their worsening mental health. Participants noted that girls, in particular, suffer from decreased social interactions, restrictions on play, and inability to attend school as contributing to feelings of sadness and depression.

PSS services in general are extremely limited in Afghanistan, while child-friendly services are virtually non-existent. Reports indicate that following the change in government, services have declined further, with more than 86% of parents in a recent survey reported no such services were accessible.[48]

Figure 12 – Photo of boy, overlooking yard, Ghor

This is a view of our yard, which has such a beautiful view, especially at nights during spring season. From here to far away are mud houses where many people live and each of them has their own story. When i became sad during days and nights, when I miss or I come and stand here and look at this beautiful view to forget my sadness and problems of my life for a few minutes. This is the beginning and the end of my life, my home. [Pv 6, male child, 13, IDP, Ghor]

Recent studies have shown a significant positive shift in attitudes towards accessing formal PSS services, although the primary factors limiting access was cost and limited availability of services.[49] This is aligned with findings from this research; parents acknowledge a need for PSS, for themselves as well as their children, but express

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[47] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, "Synthesis of four briefs on displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021," forthcoming.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, "Mental Health - Research brief: Displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021," forthcoming.

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frustration at their inability to access support services. *"When I am physically and mentally suffering from problems, how can I protect and support my children?"*[50]

> Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions: The need for PSS services has reached a critical point. PSS needs to be made more accessible, particularly for vulnerable. The urgent need for PSS—identified across the board – requires it to be immediately mainstreamed into other child protection support services; PSS services should be integrated as much as possible into other services to provide much needed support.

2.8 Marginalised groups requiring additional support

High levels of displacement and migration continue to disrupt the lives of nearly one million Afghans, many of them children forced to flee from their homes with families because of man-made, natural disasters, or returned from abroad and unable to return to their places of origin. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by December 2021, 690,000 people were newly displaced, 80 percent of whom are women and children.[51] Among the most marginalised populations are IDPs, UASCs, female heads of households, girls, children with disabilities and children from poor households. Female headed households are more vulnerable to shocks; more than 68 percent experienced shocks in the first half of 2022, compared to 53 percent of male headed households[52] This study finds that in many cases, children from female headed households are most vulnerable to other child protection risks, including child labour, early marriage, and family separation.

> *"It has been four years since I lost my husband to cancer disease and now, I am in charge of the family. Taking care of and the life responsibility of my children is an unbearable burden on my shoulders. To find food for my children I am cleaning the houses and washing the clothes and dishes of my neighbours' houses."* [FGD5, parent/caregiver, females, Herat]

2.8.1 UASC

> *"Besides, the deportee children are also exposed to risk because while they plan their journey, they select a smuggler and travel with them and most of these children are alone while they travel with smugglers and as they are underage, they experience different child protection issues. When they enter Iran, they experience protection issues while in the workplace, and even those who are detained along the way, they are sent to the detention centres. There are a lot of protection issues and concerns and when they are deported, the money they spent along the way to Iran is wasted, as well as they suffer from different psychological problems. Therefore, the deportee children are a category who are more vulnerable and at risk."* [KII2, War Child, male, Western Afghanistan]

Family separation is a key risk for children. Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) sent away for work or safety – as reported by a number of respondents – are difficult to identify, as they often remain hidden. While exact figures of UASC are not available, in July 2022, UNICEF reported 1,273 UASC were reunified with their parents or provided alternative care.

UASC are often at heightened risk of violence and exploitation; UASC, particularly those working in Iran, face a high risk of deportation, detention, violence, and torture. Many UASC and homeless children are employed in dangerous jobs, in often hazardous work conditions.

> *"My son is fourteen years old and went to Iran for construction work and to have an income. We do not have any other option to provide our livelihood except for my son who left school and works for a low wage in Iran. I am very worried about my son's future because he is too young, and I am afraid that he will be sexually abused, fall from the top of a building, get into drugs, or have an accident. I spend morning till night worrying about my son."* [FGD5, parents/caregivers, female, returnee, Herat]

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[50] FGD1, parents/caregivers, female, Herat.
[51] UNHCR, "UNHCR warns Afghanistan's conflict taking the heaviest toll on displaced women and children 2022," 13 August, 2021 https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/8/611617c55/unhcr-warns-afghanistans-conflict-taking-heaviest-toll-displaced-women.html.
[52] Ibid.

For girls, the risk of violence and exploitation is particularly high if orphaned or separated. One girl, forced to live with her abusive relatives described being subjected to daily abuse. She was prohibited from attending school and forced to perform housework.

"I don't like my uncle's house because I am not treated well here. I suffer because I don't have parents. My uncle works on the street, and I go to the streets to collect garbage. My uncle and his wife always beat me. My uncle's wife's behaviour is bad toward me. When I am with my brothers, they help me with the housework. I am not allowed to go to school because I am busy cleaning and doing housework every day." [CS12, female child, 13, Ghor]

2.8.2. IDPs

"Many IDPs live in tents and in camps where they do not have access to any facilities. The winter is coming, but they do not have a proper shelter. For example, we reach out to the camps every week to survey the condition of IDPs and provide them with recommendations. They suffer from many challenges. Similarly, the host communities do not have relatively better conditions than those of IDPs because all people suffer from financial problems. However, IDPs are more vulnerable because they live in tents and houses which do not have roofs. They cover the roofs with plastics. They need shelter and foodstuff, not to mention that the host communities also are in deep need of foodstuffs." [KII14, international NGO, male, Badghis.*

IDP children face additional challenges - multiple key informants described them as facing mental health problems, child labour and malnutrition. Children interviewed within an IDP camp highlighted additional risk of violence compared to those reported in other communities. Maryam[53], 16, who was married at 13 and is three months pregnant, explained:

"We don't have enough food and potable water. Water supply happens for only one hour per day, and we get disgraced and even beaten during the process." [CS2, female child, 16, IDP, Herat]

"This situation can get even more problematic for girls. They exploit our rights and even distribute the facilities amongst boys. Another significant issue is concerned with the kidnapping of girls. For example, two girls were kidnapped from this area, and we haven't had any news about them for the last year. Their future remains unknown." [CS2, female child, 16, IDP, Herat]

IDP children's access to education is further complicated by language challenges and lack of proper documentation – which can lead to further risks of child labour.[54]

Figure 13 – Photo of school in IDP camp, Herat

"A classroom is a good place because we learn new things there. We learn how to read and write in the classroom, which is a good and important place. I like my school. Our teacher behaves very well with us, does not beat us, and tries to make us learn something. Our teacher is very kind. In our school, boys and girls study in separate classes.
I study here with my brother and sister, and my ten-year-old sister and I are in the third grade. My brother is in the first grade. We are in the classroom from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and study.
I go to the city to work after my class ends. I am very happy with my classmates when I am in the classroom. We study and write in the classroom.
In this school, girls and boys study separately, and my sister is happy that she goes to school." [PV3, male child, 13, IDP, Herat]

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[53] Participant names have been changed

[54] KII13, local NGO, female, Herat

Girls, in particular, were at heightened risk of not attending school. Respondents also reported that due to the worsening economic situation, IDP families are selling girls as young as 3 or 4 years old into marriage.[55]

Participants also noted the change in government and subsequent restructuring has exacerbated the situation by reducing aid and access to services. "*Although the IPDs and returnees receive services and support from the directorates of Migration and Natural Catastrophes as well as NGOs, the assistance and services cannot resolve all of their problems. For example, children of IDPs and returnees are wage workers because they suffer from poverty, and the assistance which is provided by the government and NGOs does not suffice for their basic needs so that they can send their children to school.*" [KII16, government, male, Ghor]

Winter is particularly dangerous for IDP children, in particular those living in remote areas. Basic services including water, shelter and access to healthcare are limited.

> "*No, these problems that I mentioned before exist in all districts, but two districts including Charsadda and Pasband are more at risk because these areas are far away from the city and don't have access to health and education facilities. Moreover, the winter of these areas is so harsh because there are 5 months of winter and in the winter, there is no access to health services and many people lose their lives due to lack of health services.*" [KII17, international NGO, male, Ghor]

Finally, in some cases, providing support directly targeting IDPs can come with risks if host community members are not included, due to perceptions of 'favouritism' driving this decision.

2.8.3 Gendered vulnerabilities

The above sections have frequently noted the impact of restrictive gender norms and increasingly restrictive practices have for women and girls in Afghanistan. Recent studies find girls are almost twice as likely as boys to go to bed hungry."[56]   Respondents particularly underlined the shrinking public space - including around education - available to women, as well as increased reliance on child marriage in particular as an economic coping mechanism.

Restrictive social norms, more broadly enforced since the change in government, have increasingly isolated girls. As their world has gotten smaller, girls report increased mental health challenges, including sadness, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness.

> "*I am not allowed to play outside the house. For example, my mother claims it is not good work. However, my brothers can play with their friends outside the house. In fact, I can't go to school since primary school is allocated for boys. Even if girls go to school, it is mostly possible for young girls since teenage girls aren't allowed to do so.*" [CS8, female child, 13, returnee, Badghis]

Across districts visited, instances of child marriage as an economic coping mechanism were observed. For example, one parent described selling his 15-year-old daughter to her cousin, for the equivalent of 4,600 pounds. While community-based Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) attempted to prevent these kinds of marriages, their efforts were met with mixed results, in part due to the lack of alternative 'solutions' which can be proposed.[57]

> "*I engaged my eldest daughter, who is fifteen years old, to her uncle's son for five hundred thousand Afghanis. Her uncle, who is against girls' education, did not allow my daughter to go to school after the wedding. My daughter is currently doing the housework and at the same time, she is busy with tailoring and embroidering, and selling her handicraft in the market.* "[FGD5, parent/caregiver, female, Herat]

Although the restrictive gender norms for women and girls are well-known, boys also face gender-specific risks. As described in previous sections, boys are sent away to work, facing multiple child protection risks including

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Save the Children, "Help Children in Afghanistan," 2022, https://www.savethechildren.net/what-we-do/emergencies/afghanistan#:~:text=Afghanistan's%20children%20have%20endured%20decades,It's%20a%20humanitarian%20catastrophe.
[57] KII14, international NGO, male, Badghis

robbery, physical abuse, and detention along the way.[58] In addition, participants noted that boys are generally the ones forced to work outside the home, in sometimes dangerous jobs including garbage collecting and fetching water, exposing them to additional dangers.

2.8.4. Children with disabilities

Recent studies have highlighted that an estimated 17.3 % of children in Afghanistan live with some form of disability.[59] Through laws and policies, including the development of a policy framework for the country, Afghanistan has demonstrated a commitment to protecting the rights of people with disabilities. Disability-inclusive education, in particular, is a component of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) 2017-2021.[60]

However, this study found that these policies do not necessarily translate into concrete actions to provide services to this population. According to one local protection actor, children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups, because they lack access to schools, opportunities for socialisation, and their parents are unable to afford treatment. As one father explained, "*Disabled children are more vulnerable than other children. Since I have a disabled child, I am familiar with these problems. For example, it is very difficult for these children to go to school.*" [FGD16, parents/caregivers, male, host, Ghor]

> **Key child protection needs raised and proposed solutions:** Marginalised groups, including IDPs, UASCs, female heads of households, girls, children with disabilities and children from poor households are most vulnerable to shocks. Key child protection needs include child labour, child marriage, education, healthcare, and selling of children as well as actions to improve household food security and income (see 2.1). Additional efforts are needed including sensitisation on child's rights to increase awareness on the negative consequences of child labour, child marriage and the selling of children.

2.9 Impact of political changes

The broader impact of the change in government in Afghanistan in August of 2021 has been well documented. The fall of Kabul in 2021 triggered vast economic sanctions on Afghanistan, with devastating consequences for the economy. At the individual level, this has translated to "mass unemployment, a collapse of the housing market, and increased rates of malnutrition," among many other challenges and violations of children's rights.[61] While humanitarian access has increased in many locations[62] - including some of those targeted by this study - security concerns continue. These range from continued attacks in urban areas,[63] to more individual risks. One key informant, for example, highlighted the negative coping mechanisms utilised by many households to address the financial crisis, ranging from child marriage to sending children abroad, in particular to Iran, to find work there.[64]

> *"After the regime change, most households were plugged into financial problems. To resolve their financial problems, some households send their children to Iran where they can find a job, and some families force their children to be wage workers or accept underage marriages." [KII16, government, male, Ghor]*

Several children interviewed indeed confirmed the improvement in general security so often flagged by the authorities.[65] However, even when doing so, most cautioned this - raising more localised security issues or restrictions which continue to govern their lives.

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[58] KII2, War Child, male, Western Afghanistan
[59] FGD17, parent/caregiver, females, IDP, Ghor
[60] FGD16, parents/caregivers, male, host, Ghor
[61] Chatham house, "Afghanistan: One year of Taliban rule," 15 August 2022, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/08/afghanistan-one-year-taliban-rule.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Samuel Hall and IOM Afghanistan, "Synthesis of four briefs on displacement trends and challenges in Afghanistan since August 2021," forthcoming.
[64] KII16, government, male, Ghor
[65] See for example: CS 3, male child, 17, host, Herat.

> *"Security has improved since the Taliban government's arrival. However, the same isn't accurate about the economic condition, which has deteriorated significantly since then. We don't have employment opportunities and many required facilities in our lives. Also, we face restrictions on our movement outside the house."* [CS2, female child, 16, IDP, Herat]

> *"With the new government coming into power, the wars and conflicts have stopped but nothing has changed with the level of violence in the community. Now, we are unable to go to school or outside the house."* [CS6, female child, 13, IDP, Badghis]

Girls, in particular, have faced the starkest risks as a result of the governmental changes, as do those who do not adhere to the authorities' beliefs:

> *"If they come to our village, we will be terrified. We think there will be a war. Girls fear the most because their families do not allow them to go out."* [CS4, female child, host, 16, Herat]

> *"Additionally, injustice has increased, and people's safety is in danger. A person who does not belong to the Taliban is neither listened to nor accepted."* [CS12, female child, 13, Ghor]

From a programmatic standpoint, while humanitarian organisations can access new districts for activities, the bureaucracy around programmatic implementation has generally been challenging for organisations across the board. Although the authorities have stated support for many projects, so long as they are in support of the Afghan people,[66] the de facto authorities have evidenced, in many instances, a strong desire for involvement in decision-making and monitoring around programmatic activities. MoUs with relevant government ministries are required for implementation, which can slow down planning - and aid delivery - significantly. Government involvement has also sought to focus programming on certain themes. For example, one KII underlined that as communities themselves are requesting food assistance, the government is enforcing a focus on this - rather than planned activities on child protection.[67] A clear tension is evidenced between governmental stakeholders, who expressed that they should be choosing activities and locations for implementation, and NGOs who wish to do so themselves. The authorities themselves lack the funding to directly implement the programming they have in mind - and the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs is particularly poorly funded.[68] One focus group underlined that aid being diverted by those in power from people in the community, posing an ethical and practical risk to organisations wishing to operate in the area.

> *"The Taliban are threatening the people in our community and forcibly taking half of the foodstuffs that are provided to the people by NGOs."* [FGD11, parent/caregiver, female, Badghis]

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[66] KII18, international NGO, male, Western Afghanistan.
[67] KII19, national NGO, male, Herat.
[68] KII16, government, male, Ghor

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Chapter 3.
THROUGH A CHILD'S EYES -
A WALK THROUGH THE
COMMUNITY

3.1. Through a Child's eyes – Safe places

SCHOOL

From establishing village schools to constructing bridges over the river and alleviating governmental restrictions for girls, all children greatly valued school and wished for solutions to increase access to school.

"School is also the best place that we can make a better future life for ourselves. At school, I study the lessons and learn knowledge, I wish to become a doctor or engineer and serve my homeland." [CS5, male child, 13, Badghis]

HOME

As the place where family comes together, their home is the space where children feel happy and safe. However, separated children explicitly missed this safe space, experiencing emotional and physical abuse by their caretakers, and girls in general wish they could leave the house more often.

"Here is the house where I live happily with my father, mother, sister, and brother. I feel safe in my home." [CS4, female child, host, 16, Herat]

PLAYGROUND

Boys and girls largely appreciate play and having fun with friends, but face barriers such as the lack of a playground for boys and social restrictions to play (outside) for girls.

"During the administration of the current government, we have nowhere to play and spend time with our friends." [CS4, female child, host, 16, Herat]

MOSQUE

The mosque is not just a place of hope and worship for children, but also an alternative to the lack of access to formal education especially for girls, although when growing older, girls are restricted from access to the mosque.

"Another place is the mosque to learn religious studies; because we cannot go to school, it is good that we can go to the mosque." [CS4, female child, host, 16, Herat]

3.2. Through a Child's eyes – Dangerous places
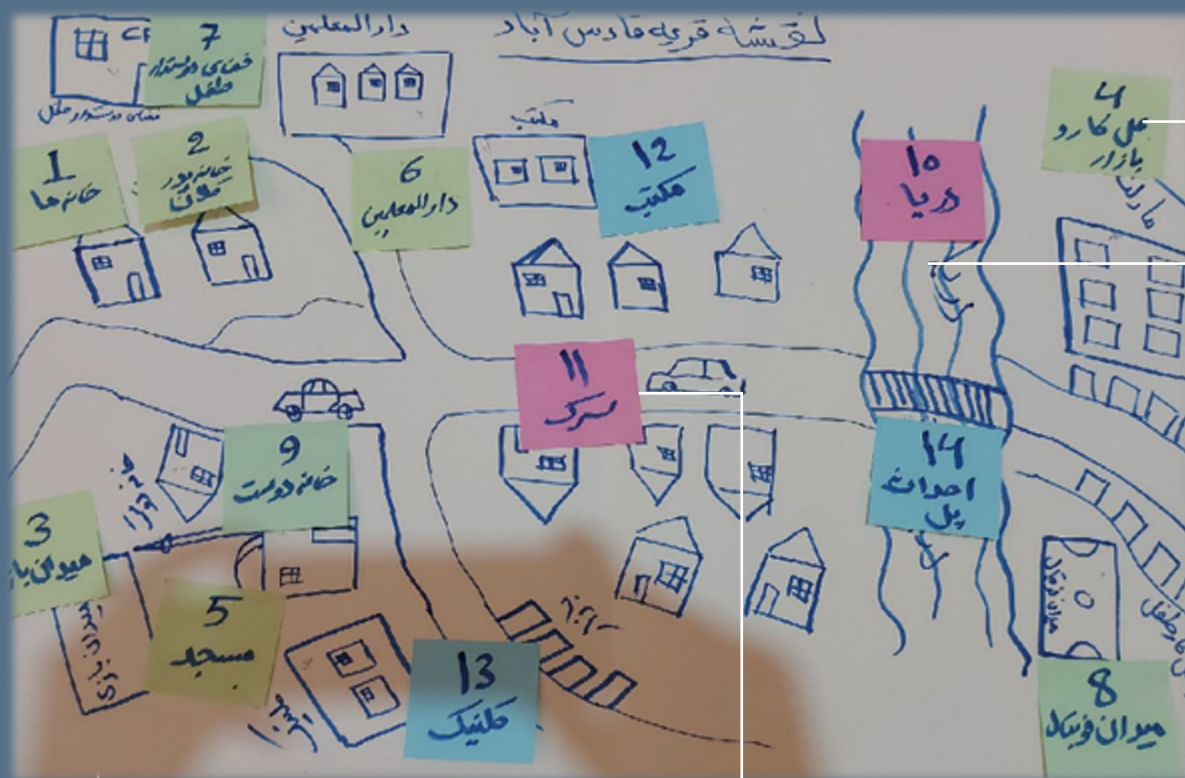
WORKPLACE

While child labour seems to be taken as a given, nearly all children dislike work – they prefer going to school, want to have fun and play, and fear harassment and injuries.

"Drug-addicted people also come in the wreckage when I go there to collect garbage. I am afraid of this place because thieves and drug addicts may attack me." [CS12, female child, orphan, 13, Ghor]

RIVER AND VALLEY

While a source of water and a place for fun, the river/valley is mostly perceived as a dangerous place, risking drowning when water level rises. Children wish for a bridge to cross the river, creating safer access to school.

"The valley is a mixture of good and bad places. This valley is where we get water from, and the cultivation water also comes here. However, it is also very dangerous. There is a lot of flooding from the valley in the spring and the rainy seasons." [Pv4, male child, 14, host, Badghis]

STREETS AND CITY

Children fear the streets due to the high risk of traffic accidents and physical and sexual harassment, in particular in the city where some children stay in the streets overnight after a workday.

"We usually work in crowded places in the city. [..] When we can't get home, we stay in the city and sleep at the intersections and parks. The drug-addicted people beat us because they also collect plastics." [Pv1, male child, IDP, 15, Herat]

MOUNTAINS

Children are often sent to the mountains for gathering firewood but face many dangers, including unexploded mines, heights, wild animals, and physical and sexual harassment.

"The mountains are dangerous because they have very high altitudes, deep valleys, and mines that have remained there since the years of war." [CS3, male child, host, 14, Herat]

3.3 Child-identified solutions to key child protection needs

Children in each location were asked about their main needs and priorities. While these are not intended to be representative, the responses suggest that there were very few differences across the provinces. Children were primarily concerned with basic needs like safe shelter, access to schools, WASH, improved infrastructure, employment opportunities, and safe places for play. The following are called for by child participants themselves:

Infrastructure

- Bridges so that children can cross rivers safely to travel to school, work, and for play.
- Safe places to play, including new playgrounds, in particular for girls.
- Safe and warm accommodations for all children, particularly IDPs and victims of domestic violence.

Education

- Walls around schools so girls could play safely, and improved infrastructure more generally to prevent learning disruptions during colder months. This also includes the need for more schools in rural locations.
- Literacy classes for young women and girls to address limited education provision.
- Community-led sensitisation campaigns against child marriage.

WASH and health services

- A clean and consistent water supply within communities to avoid dangers and risks from traveling long distances for water, and health and education impacts thereof.
- Construction of local health facilities, particularly in rural areas which currently lack them.

Income generation

- Income-generating opportunities for boys and girls who work on the street and collect garbage.
- Vocational centres and vocational training to support illiterate and unemployed girls and young women in developing income generating skills.

Chapter 4.
ACTORS AND ACTIVITIES

Photo taken during photovoice with 13-year-old boy from Ghor province

Respondents interviewed in the course of the research highlighted the complex web of stakeholders involved in child protection in the various districts visited. Globally, children and adolescents are dependent not just on their parents but on the community and local leaders to access support available - which itself is governed by both provider (generally, UN / NGO / CSOS) and governmental priorities. Exploring these dynamics and existing actors in each location is key to offering relevant and effective services.

4.1 Stakeholder dynamics

Aligned with past research by Samuel Hall, this research has shown that adolescents in Afghanistan straddle the line between children and adults, with many working, supporting families, or married and parents before age 18.[69] These are not situations they are necessarily choosing, generally guided by their family. In many cases their families themselves may feel themselves forced into situations rather than actively choosing them. When it comes to accessing support, then, they are dependent on a range of actors - whose interest, influence, and actual power will vary by location and evolve rapidly - and who can gatekeep their access to the limited support resources available.

Generally, **NGOs / CSOs** are consistently identified as the providers of child protection support, although the authorities have a fundamental role in allowing them access - and to implement - their activities, or not, and seeks to impose its own priorities. Permissions or MoUs from the authorities are needed to be able to implement. Recent research conducted in parallel to this has underlined that the relevant authority (or authorities) may vary from one province to another for the same research or activities. For example, in Ghor the

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[69] Samuel Hall and UNICEF, "Social Protection System: An Afghan Case Study" 2018.

provincial governor's office has recently been more involved in research permissions, while in Herat this has been handled by the relevant Directorate.

This is not always understood at the local level, where perceptions place the NGOs as deciders as who will receive aid - and rationales for targeting are not always understood.

> *"We seek assistance because of our insufficiencies from the government and NGOs, but they refused to provide us with assistance packages. We do not know why they refused to assist us."* [FGD10, parent/caregiver, male, Badghis]

> *"We do not have any relationships to access services and assistance. It means we do not have any connection with the staff of any NGOs to help us benefit from the services and assistance of NGOs. In our community, rich people receive assistance more than poor and deserving people. They must have a relationship with the staff because they are surveyed and provided with assistance despite being rich."* [FGD17, parent/caregiver, females, IDP, Ghor]

The current research reinforces the relevance of community-level work in terms of both identifying vulnerable populations as well as helping them become aware of potential aid. Respondents underlined that there may be mutual lack of awareness of services on the part of populations needing them, and of the dire nature of living conditions of some in more remote areas.

> *"We have nothing, and in my opinion, the main obstacle to our deprivation of help and services is the organisations themselves, which do not come here to discover our living conditions and problems. Before the aid reaches us, it is distributed to other places in the district."* [FGD6, parent/caregiver, male, Herat]

Community leaders underlined their own role as intermediaries; this comes with its own equity considerations.

> *"These awareness projects have been useful to society. Also, there are some defects in these policies regarding beneficiary selections. They cover several children from one family rather than poor families' children. I recommend selecting one child from every household so that we can cover most populations of the communities. For removing these defects and other challenges, it would be better if the NGOs consult with the councils and people's representatives prior to the launching of the projects."* [FGD9, local protection actor, male, Badghis]

> *"There are not any particular organisations to support and assist us. When our community is provided with assistance, the community representative and local power-holders embezzle the assistance. No one has paid attention to orphans and widows."* [FGD1, parent/caregiver, female, Herat]

Finally, NGOs may be challenged by the fact that the practical limitations that they face in providing aid are not well understood - there were many calls for broader provision of support, reflecting the wide scope of needs, without reflection on the feasibility (financial and otherwise) thereof.

> *"Some of the services non-governmental organisations and offices provide do not include all children. Many children are deprived of the services provided by these organisations. Also, there is no transparency because children receive services based on relationships with the organisations. It is necessary to provide inclusive and extensive services so that all children can benefit from them. Additionally, these services should be provided to remote areas so that families and children who live in remote areas can benefit from these services in an equal and fair way."* [FGD18, local protection actor, Ghor]

4.1.1 Child protection stakeholders within the community

Examining the roles of these stakeholders within the communities visited highlights similar dynamics and challenges across provinces. Table 3 below seeks to sum these up based on their relative importance to the child protection issues faced by any one child - and their ability to influence these directly.

Table 2 – Primary stakeholders with regard to child protection in the community.

Stakeholder type	Importance	Influence	Comments
Children	High	Low	While at the crux of the various issues discussed here, the research makes clear that from the perspective of children themselves, they have a very limited ability themselves to directly influence matters. As one CS respondent explained, *"Children can't do anything but tell their parents about the issues with which they are struggling."* [CS11, male child, 15, Ghor]
Friends / young family members	Medium	Low	While friends and young family can form an important part of emotional support, in particular when part of the same household, they too have limited potential for action. *"I primarily engage with my sister-in-law, who is the same age as me. In fact, at times, when left unnoticed by the family members, I also play and have fun with her. (...) I don't have any other place or person to pass my time.* [CS2, female child, 16, IDP, Herat]
Parents and older family members	High	Medium	*"Parents are the first who play the main role in child protection and have the most efficiency. Their role is determination of musts and must nots, preparing food, making sure of their children's physical well-being and providing their children's conditions and expenses of studies"* explained an imam in Ghor. However, practically, most parents face challenges in doing so due to the difficult economic conditions prevailing in Afghanistan at the moment, as well as years of conflict and national disasters impacting income generation in the area.
Teachers and other community level actors (child committees, health workers, etc)	Medium	Medium	Teachers, community health workers and other community workers are well placed to identify child protection challenges, although this has been limited by girls' more limited access to education since the change in authorities. However, their range of action is centred on awareness raising, community-level mechanisms and referrals to NGOs and CSOs. One teacher detailed, *"During the meetings and workshops we hold in school, we try to cast light on families to send their children to school and avoid sending them to do heavy and underpaid jobs."* [FGD18, local protection actor, Ghor]. As one community leader described the child committee's role and responsibilities, he explained that it is *"responsible for discovering the causes and origin of children's problems, recognizing vulnerable, poor, sick, and disabled children, and referring them to NGOs for support, treatment, and foodstuffs distribution to these children."* [FGD9, local protection actor, male, Badghis]

Community and religious leaders	Medium	High	Mullahs were identified as key awareness raising players, able to *"tell people about the rights of children based on Islamic principles."* [FGD12, local protection actor, Badghis] *Meanwhile*, community leaders were highlighted and themselves recognised a key role for themselves as *"representatives of the people and the contact person between people and NGOs."* [FGD9, local protection actor, Badghis] Respondents noted that they are well placed to identify gaps in child protection, provide recommendations for targeting to NGOs and CSOs, and resolve matters within families. However, they are lacking in resources to resolve child protection challenges requiring financing. For example, one community leader in Ghor explained, *"I myself have been trying to provide educational opportunities for children. I have succeeded to some extent, but due to the lack of enough budget, I will not be able to do this in the long term."* [FGD15, local protection actor, Ghor]
NGOs	High	High	NGOs and CSOs - along with the government - were identified as the key child protection actors with power to act - or to facilitate / prevent actions. Respondents identified a number of concerns around NGOs and their means of actions, however. There is a perception raised in Ghor and Badghis in particular that NGO targeting is not done fairly. For example, in one FGD in Badghis, respondents explained *"IDPs (...) become the core source of NGO aid, and they receive all the aid and assistance. Therefore, not having IDPs in our town causes NGOs to ignore our town."* [FGD9, local protection actor, male, Badghis] District and provincial-level authorities also play a key role (see below) in deciding what organisations can do, where, and paperwork is crucial - in Ghor, one NGO representative was reportedly detained for not having an MoU in place for project implementation (KII 17). The CPAN has previously provided a forum for coordination; respondents were not clear as to its current level of activity after last year's political changes.
Government actors	High	High	Respondents flagged the government as a key duty bearer on child protection; however, the current authorities lack the budget to act effectively on child protection. In effect, then, as one government stakeholder detailed, many authorities view their role as one of controlling access, monitoring activities and selecting beneficiaries; NGOs not consulting with them then can cause frustration. *"None of the NGOs consulted the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs regarding the recognition of vulnerable communities and identification of people's needs before launching the projects in different communities. We are informed about their programs when they commence their activities and submit their proposals for receiving a confirmation letter from the Directorate of Labour and Social affairs. Although we have mentioned in all our meetings that NGOs can seek our consultation for the identification of vulnerable communities and selecting the nature of their assistance before initiating their programs, we have not been consulted by any NGOs yet."* [KII16, government, male, Ghor]

4.1.2 Understanding children's interlocutors and advocates

Past research by Samuel Hall and other actors on parent-child relationships on questions linked to child protection in Afghanistan have highlighted that both that decision-making within households can be more complex than a simple male head-of-household decision as is sometimes the stereotype, and also that real and perceived agency around many decisions linked to child protection (child labour, child marriage, for example) is limited.[70] Respondents to one FGD in Herat, for example, when describing child protection issues which their children - and others - now faced, nearly all removed the element of choice from the path leading to these:

> R3: "My husband has been killed because of the war, and my five children and I do not have a guardian. (...) In order to take care of my children as well as the five children of my father-in-law, I had to marry my brother-in-law, who was less than 18 years old."

> R4: "Because my husband is drug addicted, my children have to collect garbage so that we can purchase some loaves of bread."

> R5: "However, because her father is unable to work and does not have any source of income, we have to make her (11-year-old daughter) marry so that we can make a life using her dowry. The rest of my daughters go to school." [FGD1, parents/caregivers, female, Herat]

While male head of households do have the strongest voice, and final decisions generally rest with them, a range of stakeholders within and around the household may impact these decisions. Parents interviewed described such a range of situations, resting from fathers as sole-decision makers to mothers as the same.

Children interviewed as part of this research largely presented a coherent picture of their interactions with different stakeholders, with parents, and sometimes other key family makers and community members acting as intermediaries between children and organising providing child protection services. Parents emerge as the first point of contact for many children when seeking support.

Figure 14 - Children, interlocutors, and actors

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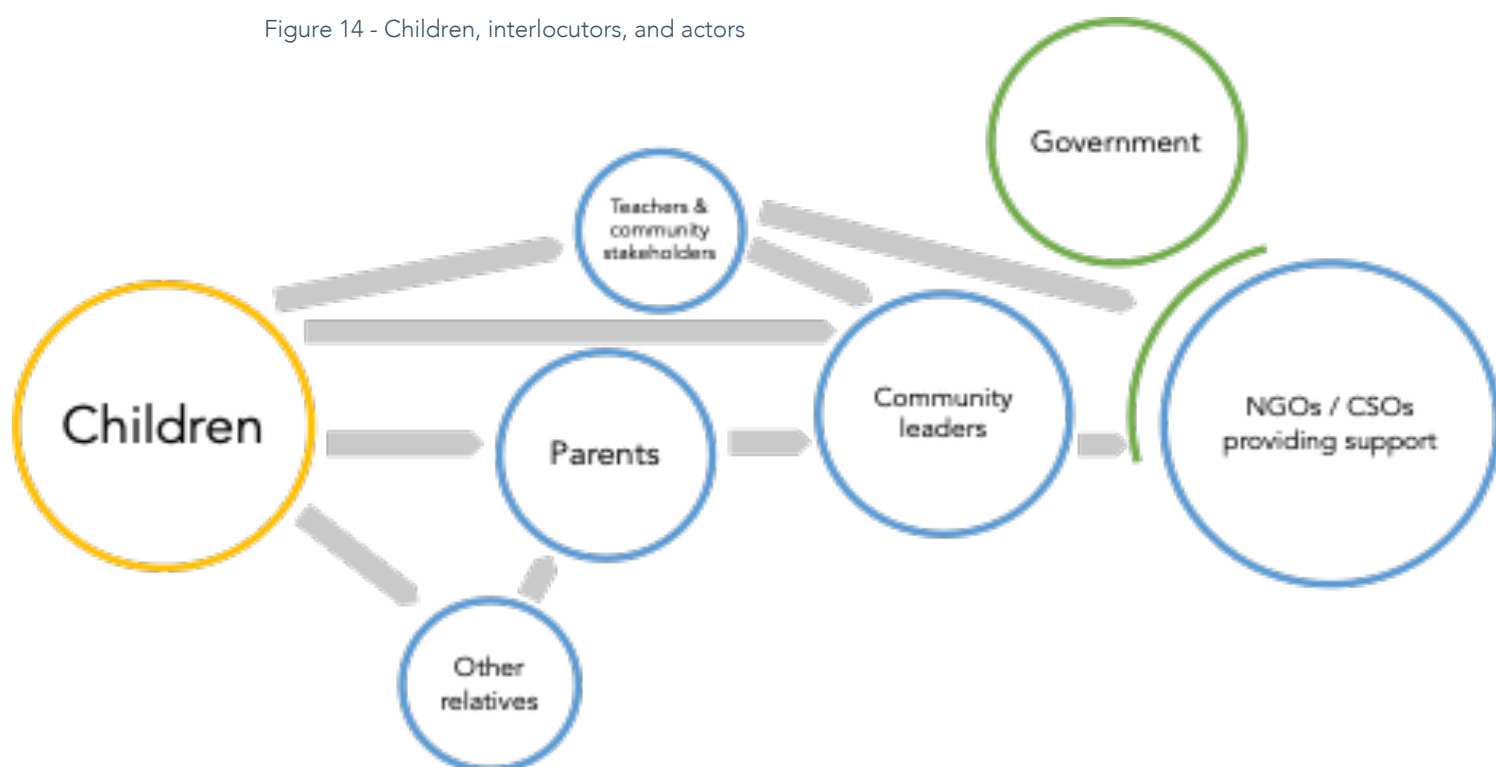
[70] Samuel Hall's 2018 research for UNICEF on Child Marriage in Afghanistan, for example, found that the research "challenged narratives that suggest decision-making on child marriage is unilateral", explaining that "while decision-making is firmly centred within the family unit, and male household members are likely to have greater or final say, most reported women and other family members being involved in the process. It was common to report that children ought to have a say in their marriage, even if they were not allowed to make the final decisions." (p 11). Research on child returns to Afghanistan found that children were involved in the decision to return in just under 40% of cases. (p. 27, SCI from Europe to Afghanistan)

"We can have the support of our parents. There is no one else to support us. Girls can't tell anyone if they are raped or confront similar problems because it is a shame for a girl's family." [CS4, female child, host, 16, Herat]

Children may also make use of a slightly broader range of actors when seeking support, both familial and within the community.

"In case of any concerns or worries, I share them with my uncle. We have never faced any kind of threats or violence." [CS6, female child, 13, IDP, Badghis]

"I share my worries with my parents so that they can help me. However, if someone has harassed me, I will let the CDC head, the community leader, and elders, such as my paternal and maternal uncles, know about It as well." [CS3, male child, Herat]

4.2 Service Mapping

(I)NGOs and CSOs are at the core of the child protection system in Afghanistan. Table 3 below provides an overview of the services mentioned by local and national level participants in the course of this study. While not intended as a comprehensive overview, it illustrates gaps in the current service provision and offers starting points for War Child and other humanitarian actors to assess priorities.

Table 3 – Overview of child protection services per province

Sector / service	Actor	Province		
		Herat	Badghis	Ghor
Child protection				
Case management	Youth health and Development Organization (YHDO) funded by War Child and UNICEF	x		
	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	x	x	x
	War Child[71]	x	x	x
Child protection in emergency program	Help	x	x	x
Child trafficking	YHDO funded by Colombo Plan	x		
UMSC	War Child[72]	x	x	x
Children rights				
Awareness raising on child's rights [program ended]	IRC		x	x
	War Child[73]	x	x	x
Awareness raising on in-school child protection and safety	World vision	x	x	x
Health, PSS & WASH				
Health surveys among urban IDPs	International Organization for Migration (IOM)		x	x
Mental health programs and awareness sessions	YHDO funded by UNICEF	x		
	IOM	x	x	x

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[71] War Child UK's Child Protection Referral Pathway for Herat, Ghor and Badghis, updated June/August 2022.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

Psychosocial Support (PSS)	Save the Children, World Vision	x	x	x
	War Child[74]	x	x	x
Health care coverage	CPAN[75]		x	x
	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)		x	
Community clinic	World Division Institute	x		
WASH including water wells and pipelines for potable water	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	x	x	x
	DACAAR	x		x
Education				
Child friendly spaces	War Child	x	x [76]	x
Provision of basic education services	War Child	x	x	

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[74] Ibid.

[75] The Children Protection Agency Network involves 12 NGOs including War Child, NRC, World vision, UNICEF as well as the Directorate of Education to coordinate protection efforts and work under the rule of the state.

[76] War Child UK's Child Protection Referral Pathway for Herat, Ghor and Badghis, updated June/August 2022.

Chapter 5.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study details the breadth and depth of the child protection challenges extant in select districts in Ghor, Badghis and Herat. The 2023 Humanitarian Needs and Planned Response 2023 Overview from UNOCHA projects 20.3 million people in need of protection assistance next year - with vulnerable groups including children, but also survivors and at risk people, and women and girls in particular, given the reduced access they have to public spaces - and the overview further highlights mitigating the protection risks of the most vulnerable as one of three strategic objectives for next year.[77] Despite laudable efforts from NGOs and the previous administration, multiple convergent factors, including economic and other forces have contributed to a wide range of harmful practices continuing. The change in authorities and resulting economic and systemic crisis, worsened by further natural disasters, have placed millions of children at risk of protection issues - if not already experiencing them. At the time of writing, girls' secondary schools have yet to reopen in the majority of the country, hundreds of thousands of children have returned from Iran or Pakistan or been internally displaced, and over 20 million people - 46% of the population - are food insecure, with 875,000 children expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in 2023.[78]

With over two-thirds of Afghanistan's population requiring humanitarian assistance in 2023, the question of where and how organisations can best plan their activities is primordial. This research finds a clear reversal in past gains on child protection fronts, with respondents recognising that child marriage and child labour, for example,

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[77] UNOCHA, Afghanistan 2023 Needs and Response summary
[78] UNOCHA, Afghanistan 2023 Needs and Response summary and latest displacement figures

are not generally ideal for children, but facing limited options. The change in authorities has further disrupted the humanitarian system in Afghanistan, not just contributing to greater needs but requiring organisations to rethink where, how, and under what circumstances they can provide support, and making the logistics for this more difficult

This research sought to specifically consider the situation in six districts across Ghor, Herat and Badghis provinces, with an eye to understanding how War Child UK and other actors can best focus their efforts there to support high-risk child protection concerns. The stakeholder mapping by sector in section 4.2 provides an overview of those actors already known to be operating in diverse child protection concerns at the provincial level. When it comes to these six districts, specifically, the challenges and needs raised are, as detailed previously, fairly consistent across the board. Outside of some locationally specific infrastructure challenges - such as proximity to the highway in two districts - respondents interviewed, both children and adults, underlined similar needs and priority from their perspectives.

War Child UK's 2022 Annual Plan for Afghanistan included four country strategic aims: (1) Children and their families affected by conflict and other humanitarian crises have access to life-saving services, to improved physical and psychosocial wellbeing and development, and are more resilient to shocks; (2) Children (girls and boys) at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence, including SGBV survivors, children in conflict with the law, and children on move, have access to safe and quality reintegration services; (3) The protection of children at risk is promoted through strengthened community-level child protection systems and structures, and by facilitating policy dialogue and engagement with stakeholders; (4) Children and young people acquire skills, knowledge and resources providing them with opportunities for positive development and active participation in civil, social, and economic life as agents of change.[79] This research confirms the relevance of all of these in the current context. It further underscores the systemic- and cross-sectoral nature of the challenges facing children and young people, and organisations wishing to support them, in Afghanistan today.

In addition to considering the scope of needs, organisations in western Afghanistan organisations face a range of logistical and practical challenges. The changes of August 2021 have complicated an already difficult operating complex, forcing organisations to consider how and when they wish to collaborate with the authorities, and the impact of this on the selection of activities which they can put into place. Child protection is an especially delicate field: it touches on a number of culturally sensitive practices, girls and women face differentiated protection challenges whilst less accessible to organisations wishing to support them, and the breadth of immediate needs, for example, the children suffering from acute malnutrition, may make approval for activities focused on generally less immediately less-threatening activities more difficult to obtain. **In planning priorities and activities then, organisations like War Child will need to take a three pronged approach:** *idealistic* – seeking to ensure that Afghan children are able to realise their rights in the same way as children worldwide, and advocating for alignment with global standards; *contextual* - understanding the context within child protection challenges are occurring, to propose solutions which are adapted to the multi-sectoral nature of many of these challenges; and *pragmatic* – considering the widespread nature of needs, taking into account implementation realities such as access, local authority priorities, and other organisations' coverage, in planning programming.

The recommendations proposed in the next section propose high-level recommendations around existing response mechanisms and key considerations to take into account in planning and implementing child protection programming based on these findings from Herat, Badghis and Ghor, as well as highlighting selected sectoral entry points based on respondent feedback.

5.2 Key Recommendations

1. **A call to action and coordination for War Child and partners.** Recognising the impact of cross-sectoral approaches and following global guidance on the importance of protection mainstreaming within humanitarian assistance, overall, this research calls for the integration of child protection across all sectors. Building on existing networks and programming, War Child should work to incorporate protection mainstreaming, in particular PSS work, into all aspects of humanitarian assistance. This will allow multiple sectors to work together to share data, support identification of the most vulnerable children, more efficiently and effectively target assistance, and facilitate service delivery. **Such coordination and integration are crucial given**

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[79] War Child United Kingdom (2021), Annual Plan 2022 - Afghanistan, p.1

the new areas now accessible to War Child and other organisations – and the breadth of needs evidenced there. Any single organisation will not be able to address the range of needs and number of potential support recipients in all of these. To avoid over targeting certain, perhaps easier to access, areas at the expense of others, coordination of activities between humanitarian actors will be key.

The linkage between many of the child protection challenges explored in this research and the broader economic, climate and other challenges facing Afghanistan is clear. Seeking to address the immediate child protection challenges without addressing their underlying drivers will struggle to make much headway. Presenting a coordinated approach could also reduce the potential for authorities to seek to influence the specific selection of support locations if a relatively holistic plan has already been developed.

2. **Supporting child protection at all levels of the socio-ecological model.** Child protection around issues such as child labour and child marriage appear in many cases as a perceived secondary concern to urgent needs - to allow households to buy sufficient food and supplies to make it through the winter. Yet, the impacts on Afghanistan's children in the longer-term if this is set aside will be grave. Two streams of work are thus needed on this front. Firstly, systemic support on child protection understanding and awareness - working at all levels of the socio-ecological model, including households, the community, district, and national levels with decision-makers and influencers (including community heads, religious leaders, and more) on the need to continue to protect children at risk explicitly. The recommended coordination above can support the access to child protection support and a stronger understanding of children's rights at the household and community levels, creating a clear entry point for action. Secondly, more specific strengthening of child protection systems – locally and nationally including the Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) is needed.

3. **Developing localised approaches to implementing child protection support.** Resources across the board are very limited, with NGOs seen as the primary source of support. Currently, however, there is in many cases a perceived disconnect between specific community needs and individual vulnerabilities, and the ways that beneficiaries are selected and support is allocated. A targeted community approach is needed both to ensure that aid is accessible to the most vulnerable and to allow organisations to triangulate information around recommended beneficiaries from other stakeholders - namely, community leaders and local and district / provincial authorities, whose selection processes may be biased. Such approaches will need to be adapted to the specific communities of implementation – a one-size-fits-all approach will not suffice, as for example in one province the provincial governor may be the key stakeholder, and in another a specific directorate head, or more local actors.

4. **Bring support to vulnerable persons who cannot come to it.** Girls and women in particular have limited mobility in Afghanistan; this can impact children in female-headed households as well. Gendered spaces are needed to allow women and girls to access aid for themselves or their children; this could be a standard part of support provided to ensure that even within more generalised programming, PSS or counselling activities are included. Generally, more inclusive approaches should be considered in the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance recognising these access limitations, especially if the current ban on women's work within NGOs continues.

5. **Organisational reflection around engagement with the de facto authorities.** The expected implication of the current authorities in both activity and beneficiary selection and monitoring is clear. The question of how and under which conditions to partner with the authorities is one which must be engaged with internally to ensure that staff have clear guidelines. Beyond the ethical debates, there is also a risk that distribution of support could be seen as biased by the people they are trying to help, particularly in this current context, meaning extreme care needs to be taken in understanding contextual realities and setting up mitigation measures.

5.3 Sectoral opportunities

The table below proposes recommendations at the sectoral level proposing entry points to effectively address the gaps in child protection within the current response mechanisms. Sectors highlighted in red have been highlighted as key areas of implication for War Child given service gaps, War Child experience, child protection needs evidenced, and, pragmatically, the feasibility of actions in these sectors in the short term.

Child Protection	**War Child and partners should adopt a holistic approach to child rights programming, integrating a rights-based approach.** Ongoing awareness campaigns to promote social norms changes to strengthen children's rights should adopt a multisectoral approach, working with key influencers at the community level such as those identified in this research.
Health, PSS & WASH	**Support the holistic integration of PSS services into all sectors, including health and WASH.** PSS services should be fully integrated into all sectors. This could be facilitated through targeted identification and intervention of PSS needs while beneficiaries are accessing other services such as food distribution. Given the limited amount of PSS services available, a particular focus on training staff to identify high-risk cases and refer them to these services is needed.
Education	**Revitalise and strengthen the education sector through alternative pathways to education**. Given the de facto authorities' position on girls' education and the limited funding available for larger infrastructure investments – however much needed - there is a need to focus on the implementing and reinforcement of alternative opportunities for education such as CBEs for children who have been out of school or are continuing to engage in work. Consideration should be given to support and strengthen existing educational programmes within mosques currently engaging with girls.
Food Security and Livelihoods	**Improve efficiency, transparency, and equity in targeted aid distribution and beneficiary selection**. All Afghans need to see donor investments leading to impartial aid delivery and to ensure inclusion in sectoral programming. Additional transparency around aid criteria and beneficiary selection could support in alleviating concerns around nepotism and perceptions that the most in need are not help, which could potentially lead to implementation challenges for organisations if not considered.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Terms of Reference for National or International Consultant

Humanitarian Response multisector needs assessment in Herat, Badghis and Ghor.

Summary of the Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Needs Assessment	The overall objective of this assessment is to generate data to build a greater understanding of the humanitarian needs relevant to child protection (integrating EiE and FSL) in nine districts of Herat, Badghis, and Ghor provinces, Western Afghanistan. This data should inform a robust needs analysis to inform the design of relevant response programmes, to secure funding, and to shape advocacy efforts. The War Child UK needs assessment should complement and supplement any external needs assessments, and should focus on capturing essential information while avoiding duplication of effort and population fatigue.
Commissioner[1]	Abebe Jaleta, WCUK Program Quality and development advisor, Afghanistan Mohammad Eshaq Karimi, Head of Programmes
Evaluation Manager[2]	Hosain Hashemi, MEAL Manager
Timeframe	The start date may be subject to change, but the final deliverables are required by AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2022
Locations of the Needs Assessment	REMOTE SUPPORT Nine districts of Herat, Badghis, Ghor, Western Afghanistan

1. Background

1.1 Background to War Child UK

War Child UK is an international humanitarian agency working to protect children living in some of the worst conflict affected places in the world. War Child programmes are focused on three thematic areas: Child Protection, Education in-Emergencies, and Food Security/Livelihoods. The current WCUK programme portfolio includes operations in: Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo.

War Child UK started its operation in the Western Region of Afghanistan in 2003 working in the three (3) thematic areas of Education, Protection and Livelihood. War Child UK's main office is located in Kabul, with a sub-office in Herat.

War Child UK works according to five principles:

1) We reach children early in the conflict cycle and we stay to support them through recovery;

2) We are a specialist organisation focused on high-impact and sustainable interventions;

3) We champion the voices of children and mobilise others to take action to support them;

4) Our values define our actions and drive us to continually improve our work and systems;

5) We are a part of an effective global family.

For more information, please see www.warchild.org.uk

1.2 Background to the Needs Assessment

Afghanistan is experiencing a complex and protracted humanitarian crisis due to the recent escalation of conflict and the fall of the Afghan government to the Taliban. The displacement of millions of people within the country, and their migration to other countries due to the conflict and a long-running drought, have exacerbated an already dire situation significantly. The widespread economic challenges coupled with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, drought, displacement, and damage caused by recent fighting between government forces and Taliban is affecting people's access to basic services including lifesaving humanitarian aid. The restoration of civil order and resumption of public services and humanitarian aid operations may take more time, causing more difficulty for vulnerable people to access lifesaving humanitarian support.

In response to this changing context and increased humanitarian need, WCUK is commissioning a child-focused needs assessment to better map the child protection risks and resources within targeted communities to inform programming and advocacy.

2. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The needs assessment will be conducted in Herat, Badghis and Ghor provinces. The needs of both children and adults will be assessed within the targeted locations. Nine districts were purposively sampled from the three provinces (three districts in each province). The selected districts are based on a) where WCUK currently operational b) areas where there are critical gaps c) areas with urban populations and d) areas with high numbers of displaced populations.

The nine sampled districts in Herat, Ghor and Badghis

No	Provinces	Districts
1	Herat	Enjil, Gulran Adraskan
2	Badghis	Qale-Naw, Jawand, Abkamary
3	Ghor	Taywara,Pasaband, Shahrak

2.1 The Specific objectives of the needs assessment are:

• To provide understanding of the situation, needs, service delivery gaps and challenges in child protection, education, food security and livelihoods in targeted locations and groups

• To provide key data, findings and recommendations for proposals development, advocacy documents/efforts and projects interventions.

• To provide data to prioritize geographic areas according to the needs and support the more effective response for each area and population group.

• To support WCUK in an evidence-based engagement and contribution with the donors, clusters and humanitarian partners.

• To understand what services are available in each area and which aid agencies and active and operating in each area and what strengths/capacities/initiatives are already in place at a community level or being supported by other agencies

• To provide key information about risk reduction and preparedness capacities in the selected areas.

Points of interest and key priorities for each sector:

WCUK is interested to get the answers to the following key questions. Below are key priorities for each of the sector based on which data is to be collected.

- Child Protection

1. Dangers and Injuries.

• 1. Nature and extent of the risks

• 2. Family and community capacities and mechanisms to prevent and respond to the risks • 3. Increase in dangers and injuries due to the recent crisis

2. Physical and emotional maltreatment

• 1. Nature and extent of the risks

• 2. Family and community capacities and mechanisms to prevent and respond to the risks • 3. Increase in dangers and injuries due to the recent crisis

3. MHPSS

• 1. Nature and extent of the risks

• 2. Family and community capacities and mechanisms to prevent and respond to the risks • 3. Increase in dangers and injuries due to the recent crisis

4. UASC

• 1. Nature and extent of the risks

• 2. Family and community capacities and mechanisms to prevent and respond to the risks • 3. Increase in dangers and injuries due to the recent crisis

5. Child labour

• 1. Nature and extent of the risks

• 2. Family and community capacities and mechanisms to prevent and respond to the risks

• 3. Increase in dangers and injuries due to the recent crisis

The Consultant will complement the primary data collected above with a desk review of secondary data to capture the following key issues:

- Which areas/districts are most in need of child protection supports?
- What are the top child protection concerns in each district?
- Which target groups are most in need of child protection support?
- What are the priority child protection needs?
- What are the existing child protection services in each area/district?
- What type of child protection service is needed and recommended in each district?

- Education

• Estimated target group school aged children in each district?

• Out of school/drop out target group children in each district?

• What are the reasons behind school drop out? X

• What are the key needs to have the targeted children back to school in each district?

• What are barriers to access education in each district? X

• How many households/children are in need of education support in each area/district?

• Which target groups are most in need of education support?

• What are the existing education facilities and services for the target groups in each area/district?

• What are the existing education capacities and resources in each district?

• Which agencies are active and operating in which areas and what type of education services delivering?

- Food Security and Livelihoods

• Basic needs basket: goods, services, facilities households need in their daily life (food, NFIs, water, hygiene, shelter, communication, cooking fuel, health etc…)

• Main source/provider of those goods and services

• Name of location from where goods/services are sourced from

• Average distance from sources/providers

- Ability to meet needs: all/most/some/none
- Availability of goods, services, facilities (full/limited/none and why)
- Physical accessibility of goods, services, facilities (yes/limited/none and why)
- Affordability of goods, services, facilities (yes/limited/none)
- Quality of goods, services, facilities (satisfaction with the quality of goods households are able to access)
- Priorities for assistance (naming and ranking top 5 priorities from most to least urgent/important)
- Preferred assistance options (cash, vouchers, in-kind, direct services provision)
- Recurrence of expenditures (how often do household purchase/pay for the needed goods, facilities and services): food, NFIs, water, hygiene, shelter, communication, cooking fuel, health etc…
- Current regular/frequent expenditures + Greater/Lower than usual – how has the spending pattern changed recently, how do people spend their money now?
- Seasonal expenditures, one off expenditure to keep in mind: for instance, items for winterisation, agricultural inputs, school items/fees, etc…

3. Approach and methodology

The approach and methodology specific to this assignment should respond to the objectives of the Terms of Reference. The proposed approach and methodology should be detailed in the needs assessment inception report prepared by the assessment consultant. *(A detailed methodology, including planned timeframe, list of stakeholders to be consulted, proposed sampling approach, protocols for data collection and analysis, ethical procedures to be followed, and draft data collection tools)*

The Needs assessment should employ a qualitative approach, and triangulate findings across multiple sources. Where security or access to stakeholders or target groups creates methodological limitations the approach and methodology may be adjusted accordingly. As far as possible, the assessment should seek to include child and adult participatory and qualitative methods.

The approach and methodology may include, but are not limited to the following:
- **Desk review/literature review:** Document review refers to gathering information from recorded documents, existing relevant international and national assessments and studies. Reviewing international, national annual reports previous research and studies relevant to multi sectoral humanitarian needs.
- **Key informants' interviews (KII)** with stakeholders – this would include local and national government authorities; mandated UN agencies (UNHCR, UNOCHA, UNICEF) and relevant clusters, community and religious leaders, CSOs, CPANs/DCPANs and etc.
- **Focus group discussions** with children of different ages, parents and communities

All the support will be in remote, working with WCUK MEAL team in AFG. The consultant will develop the right tools for working in remote with the filed team.

4. Deliverables

The deliverables required from this needs assessment are as follows:
1. An inception report based on the TOR and initial briefings/desk review (in English), which includes: **detailed methodology**, including planned timeframe, list of stakeholders to be consulted, proposed sampling approach, protocols for data collection and analysis, ethical procedures to be followed, and draft data collection tools;
2. The needs assessment findings summary report in English (a concise summary of the main findings and actionable learning in English, maximum 4 pages,)
3. A power point slides Summary Report presentation for dissemination of the findings and recommendations
4. One electronic file containing (a clean version of) all data collected
5. The needs assessment study final report in English

The needs assessment report should:
- be jargon free, clear and simply written;
- not exceed 30 pages;

• include an Executive Summary, brief background, outline of the methodology used (including any limitations), findings and recommendations.
• ensure findings are always being backed up with relevant data, with reference to the data source;
• contain at least the following annexes: (i) Terms of Reference, (ii) Itinerary for field visit, (iii) List of documents reviewed, meetings attended, persons interviewed/involved in Focus Group Discussions, and (iv) Data collection tools.

5. Timeframe and Payment procedure

The needs assessment is expected to be completed in 30 working days. The consult should commence the work by 10th August 2022. The final report is due on or before 30th September 2022. The consultant will develop the detail time frame as part of the incept and submit to WCUK. The consultancy is required to update WCUK throughout the consultancy about the progress through regular meetings.

Payments:
• 20% on approval of the inception report
• 30% on approval of the draft report
• 50% on successful completion of the assignment and the submission and acceptance of the expected outputs.

6. Roles and responsibility of the consultant

The consultant is responsible to:

- Conduct the needs assessment in close coordination with WCUK MEAL department and Emergency response department
- Develop the needs assessment design (methodology, data collection and data entry tools, plans and timelines).
- Conduct the desk review for the needs assessment.
- Conduct 1-day training for MEAL team and data collectors' supervisors with support of WCUK - Coordinate data collection process ensuring the data is being collected properly and as per the design
- Monitor and supervise the works of data collectors remotely and supervise during actual FGDs and KII.
- Plan data collection process and provides technical support in data collection
- Analyse the collected data (based on agreed data analyses methods mentioned in the design) - Writing both the inception and final reports (Reports should be of a high quality in terms of analysis and organization, which can serve as paper for publication and fundraising possibly)
- Facilitate the inception workshop and incorporate the inputs into the final assessment report.

7. Required experience, qualifications, skills and competencies of the consultant

The consultant should meet the following requirements:
▪ Extensive experience of designing and implementing evaluations, researches, needs assessments, reviews and/or learning initiatives in the humanitarian sector, specifically in the areas of child Protection, Education, food security and livelihood
▪ MA in social sciences with 8 years of relevant experience or BA in social sciences and 10 years' relevant experience
▪ Experience of building capacity in evaluation, research and studies
▪ Experience of facilitating participatory studies and assessments and learning processes (ideally with children)
▪ Demonstrable skills in producing high quality, accessible reports/outputs
▪ Team coordination experience in field level community-based work with strong analytic skills ▪ Strong written and spoken English
▪ Experience of working in conflict-affected contexts, including Afghanistan
▪ Good working knowledge of English, Dari and Pashto
▪ Adherence to the War Child UK Child Safeguarding Policy

8. Child Safeguarding

The consultant, enumerator(s) must read, sign, and adhere to the War Child UK Child Safeguarding Policy.

War Child UK reserve the right to conduct background checks for the consultant and the enumerators, in addition to collecting references from previous clients.

ANNEX 3 – SAMPLE DETAILS

The data collection took place in two districts per province, carefully identified by Kabul based Samuel Hall staff and War Child UK to allow for a focused and comparative examination of the humanitarian aid situation across a vast geographic area. The selection of communities further considered protection concerns, geographic relevance (rural, urban, or peri-urban), population of IDPs and/or returnees, and accessibility and security concerns. The qualitative sampling approach was targeted and purposive. Identification of research participants occurred prior to the field work, with the support of local War Child caseworkers.

Location				Sample size									
				Case Studies		Photo voice	FGDs			KIIs			
Governorate	District	Sub-district	Community	Male	Female	Male	Parents/ caregivers female	Parents/ caregivers male	Protection actors (mixed)	NGOs/ CSOs	UN	Government	War Child
Herat	Enjil	Shaydaei	Zone A	1	1	1	1	1	1				
	Gulran	Qara-Bagh	Bozan	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Badghis	Qala-Naw	Qades Abad	Jara khoshk	1	1	1	1	1	1				
	Jawand	Jawand	Rigi	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Ghor	Lal-Sarj	Sia Cheshman	Sia-Chesma	1	1	1	1	1	1				
	Chakhcharan	Shahrak Mohajerin	IDP Camp	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Total sample size				6	6	6	6	6	6	8	1	1	5

ANNEX 4 – ITINERARY FOR FIELD VISIT

Activity	| October 2022	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	November 2022 — 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
KIIs			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Enjil																																																	
CS					X																																												
Photovoice					X																																												
FGDs				X																																													
Gulran																																																	
CS													X																																				
Photovoice														X																																		
FGDs												X	X																																			
Qades Abad																																																	
CS																										X																						
Photovoice																										X																						
FGDs																											X																					
Jawand																																																	
CS							X																																									
Photovoice								X																																								
FGDs							X																																									
Lal-Sarjangal																																																	
CS									X																																							
Photovoice									X																																							
FGDs										X																																						
Chaghcharan																																																	
CS								X	X	X																																						
Photovoice										X																																						
FGDs							X																																									

ANNEX 5 – OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

Code	Date conducted	Village	Tool	Participants (e.g. name; age; gender; organisation; role)[80]
Enjil				
CS_1	17-10-2022	Injil district	CS	14, male, IDP
CS_2	17-10-2022	Injil district	CS	16, female, IDP
Pv_1	17-10-2022	Injil district	Pv	15, male, IDP and worker
FGD_1	16-10-2022	Injil district	FGD parents/caregivers	Female
FGD_2	16-10-2022	Injil district	FGD parents/caregivers	Male
FGD_3	16-10-2022	Injil district	FGD with local protection actors	Mixed gender
Gulran				
CS_3	25-10-2022	Gulran	CS	17, male, vulnerable
CS_4	25-10-2022	Gulran	CS	16, female, host/vulnerable
Pv_2	26-10-2022	Gulran	Pv	14, male, vunerable
FGD_4	25-10-2022	Gulran	FGD with local protection actors	Mixed gender
FGD_5	24-10-2022	Gulran	FGD parents/caregivers	Female Parent
FGD_6	24-10-2022	Gulran	FGD parents/caregivers	Male Parents
Qale-Naw				
CS_5	7-11-2022	Qades Abad	Case Study	13, male, returnee
CS_6	7-11-2022	Qades Abad	Case Study	13, female, IDP
Pv_3	7-11-2022	Qades Abad	Photovoice	Male Child
FGD_7	8-11-2022	Qades Abad	FGD parents/caregivers	Female FGD parents/caregivers
FGD_8	8-11-2022	Qades Abad	FGD parents/caregivers	Male Parents FGD
FGD_9	8-11-2022	Qades Abad	FGD with local protection actors	Mixed Gender
Jawand				
CS_7	19-10-2022	Rigi	CS	16, male, poor/vulnerable
CS_8	19-10-2022	Rigi	CS	13, female, returnee
Pv_4	20-10-2022	Rigi	Pv	14, male
FGD_10	19-10-2022	Jawand	FGD parents/caregivers	Male Parents
FGD_11	19-10-2022	Jawand	FGD parents/caregivers	Female Parents
FGD_12	19-10-2022	Jawand	FGD with local protection actors	Male Actors
Lal-Sarjangal				
CS_9	21-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	CS	13, male, IDP
CS_10	21-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	CS	13, female, orphan
Pv_5	21-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	Pv	13, male, labour
FGD_13	22-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	FGD parents/caregivers	Male parents
FGD_14	22-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	FGD parents/caregivers	Female parents
FGD_15	22-10-2022	Lal Sarjangal	FGD with local protection actors	Mixed gender
Chaghcharan				
CS_11	22-10-2022	Cheghcheran	Male CS	15, male
CS_12	20-10-2022	Cheghcheran	Female CS	13, female, orphan

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[80] Names have been deleted for confidentiality reasons

Pv_6	22-10-2022	Cheghcheran	Pv	13, male, orphan
FGD_16	19-10-2022	Cheghcheran	Male FGD parents/caregivers	Parent, Male
FGD_17	19-10-2022	Cheghcheran	Female FGD parents/caregivers	Parent, Female
FGD_18	19-10-2022	Cheghcheran	FGD with local protection actors	Mixed gender
KIIs				
Inception KII1	15-9-2022	Ghor	KII	Cash and Voucher Advisor, War Child
Inception KII2	18-9-2022	Herat, Ghor, Badghis, and Farah	KII	**MEAL Manager, War Child**
Inception KII3	18-9-2022	Herat	KII	**Safeguarding Coordinator, War Child**
Inception KII4	18-9-2022	Herat	KII	Humanitarian Response Manager, War Child
Inception KII5	22-9-2022	Herat	KII	Project Coordinator, WASSA
Inception KII6	22-9-2022	Ghor	KII	UNICEF Extender, CPAN
Inception KII7	25-9-2022	Western Zone	KII	Program Manager, CRDSA
KII_13	3-11-2022	Herat	KII	ACWSO
KII_14	6-11-2022	Badghis	KII	ICRC
KII_15	3-11-2022	Ghor	KII	CRS
KII_16	6-11-2022	Ghor	KII	DOLSA
KII_17	8-11-2022	Ghor	KII	HELP
KII_18	7-11-2022	Western Zone	KII	NRC
KII_19	2-11-2022	Herat	KII	YHDO
KII_20	28-11-2022	Western Zone	KII	War Child UK

ANNEX 6 – DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

2. INFORMED CONSENT PROTOCOL

Samuel Hall ensures that all research that is conducted is held to the highest possible standards of ethics in research - and this necessarily includes clear and appropriate Informed Consent protocols. The following protocols have been developed by Samuel Hall[81] based on a variety of industry-standard approaches, including for child participants.

This section presents the Informed Consent protocol that will be used for all research - noted in each tool as being read out to participants at the beginning of the session.

INFORMED CONSENT PROTOCOL

This informed consent form is for parents / guardians/ caregivers and participating children, as well as stakeholders to be interviewed using tools designed for the War Child Multisector Needs Assessment.

This study is commissioned by War Child UK and conducted by War Child UK and Samuel Hall, with this data collection carried out as part of the Multisector Needs Assessment in Badghis, Ghor, and Herat.

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

1. Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
2. Certificate of Consent for stakeholders, children and youth, caregivers, and parents (for signatures if you choose to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction:

Hello. Thank you for speaking to us today. My name is _____. I am a researcher at War Child. I am here today conducting research on behalf of War Child. War Child UK is an international humanitarian agency working to protect children living in some of the worst conflict-affected places in the world. Our work during research is not to provide any assistance or direct help but to make sure that concerns are voiced upwards, to help organisations improve their programmes. We would like to now explain this research to you [and your child], to confirm that you consent [to have your child] participate in this research [and that they are also willing]. Please stop me at any point if there is anything that is unclear.

Purpose of this research:

With this research we aim to close the knowledge gap and get contextual information about humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three provinces of Herat, Badghis, and Ghor. By listening to the voices of the community, and children, in particular, we aim to develop an understanding of how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. This research will inform advocacy and programming that protects vulnerable children at risk.

Type of research intervention:

This research is being conducted War Child. The information collected today will be used solely for this research and shared solely within the Samuel Hall research team. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. We will never share any personal data that you provide us without your permission.

We are speaking primarily with parents, local child protection actors, and children, but also with programme implementing partners, community organisations on child protection related issues, War Child staff, experts, and key stakeholders. These conversations can have different forms, some are single interviews, some are group discussions that are only a few hours. For you, this research will involve your participation in:

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[81] See Samuel Hall & IOM (2020) publication, *Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit.*

[PLEASE SELECT/EXPLAIN THE RESPECTIVE TOOL]:

❑ a Case Study Interview/Mapping Activity that will take about one to one and a half hours

❑ a Focus Group Discussion that will take about 90 minutes

❑ a Key Informant Interview that will take about one hour

❑ a Photovoice activity you will complete independently, and follow-up interview that will last approximately 30 minutes

Each interview will cover the following topics:

- Key child protection needs
- Stakeholder engagement
- Key actors influencing child protection and power dynamics
- Vulnerable and at-risk populations
- Impact of the 2021 change in government on child protection risks, support services, and stakeholders
- Recommendations for future programming
- Recommendations for War Child

Voluntary participation:

Your participation [/ that of your child] in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. You do not need to participate in our study, you do not need to answer any questions. Nothing will happen if you don't want to participate. If anyone has told you that you have to participate, that is not true – and if someone told you that, you may or may not tell us who this was, so we can talk to her or him; but you don't have to tell us who it was if you don't want to.

If you need to or want to leave the conversation, you are allowed to leave at any point. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed to participate earlier. You don't have to explain why, and you can always talk to us individually, for whatever reason.

The information you provide will be strictly confidential and never connected to you. We will put information from you together with information from other people in this study. No one will be able to tell what information came from you. When we report on this research, we will not use your name, and no one will know what answers you gave. Only a few researchers will have access to this information, and all information will be stored safely under the care of the lead researcher.

Child-friendly explanation of confidentiality and informed consent (please read aloud):

Sometimes children talk about difficult things that they want to keep private, so we have rules about who can know what children have said. Our first rule is that we will not tell your family, your teacher, or anyone else in your community what you have told us. We will keep what you tell us private and confidential. That way, you can tell us about private things, or scary things, or confusing things that happened, and no one else will know what you told us.

In very special cases, we may have to tell someone what you told us. We would only tell someone what you told us if someone in your life is hurting you or mistreating you right now or if someone who hurt you or mistreated you in the past is still in your life. We would tell War Child if you are in danger, so that they can help you. Does that make sense? It's a hard rule to understand, so can you say that rule back to me so that I can make sure I explained it well?

[pause for answer, rephrase if child does not understand]

Now, even though I won't talk to your family or the people here in your town about what you said, the things that you tell me are going to be very important to understanding what happened to people in our country. If it's okay with you, sometimes Samuel Hall will remove all the parts of the story that identify you and then share other parts that are important to understanding what happened. We might talk about something you told us, but we wouldn't say your name, or your town, or anything else that might make it possible for people to know it was you who told us. If you tell me today that at school you read 1,000 books, then I might say "Somewhere in the south of the country an 11-year-old girl read 1,000 books," but I will never say "[CHILD'S NAME] read 1,000 books."

That way we can talk about the things that we learn from children, but no one ever knows which child said it. That's the second rule that I follow. What do you think about that rule?

[pause for answer, rephrase if child does not understand]

Your participation in this study may not benefit you directly, but it may benefit others. Your responses may improve War Child's work and understanding about ways to provide better services to people like you.

Before you say yes or no to being in this study, we will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask me questions at any time. If you have any questions or concerns, you may also contact [ ].[82]

Risks

Your safety and comfort are our highest priorities. But we want to already address two risks:

1. We will ask questions which may remind you of difficult experiences or topics which you prefer not to talk about. If you do not feel comfortable talking about any questions we raise, you [and your child] are always allowed not to answer. In general, you do not need to answer any of our questions, and you can always stop and leave our conversation. If there is anything else that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, tell us right away. For example, this can be something about this room, something about others in the room, or anything else – please let us know. As said, your safety and comfort are our highest priorities. If you would prefer to do this in another location, we can work together to find a better place that works for you. Other people will not be able to listen to our conversation [though when we are interviewing children, their parents or guardians should be close by]. When we are speaking with children under 18, parents or guardians should be within eyesight but not listening – if this is not possible here, we can find another location.

2. This conversation will be anonymised, and your name will not be mentioned in any report or document. The answers which you and other people give us will be aggregated and considered together so that no answers can be traced back to you. The information you share will not be shared with anyone in the community.

Benefits

The main goal of this research is to create new and more knowledge around the humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Badghis. The results of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations to War Child UK and other actors on where and how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. While this research will not necessarily provide you with direct benefits, we hope that this study will help children and other vulnerable populations in the future.

Referrals

If you are in need of legal, financial, psychosocial, psychological or other kinds of support, we have a list of organisations who may be able to help you, and we can give you their contact details.

Questions or Concerns

You can also reach out to [Maureen Park][83] on [maureenpark.samuelhall.org] from [Samuel Hall] if you have any further questions or concerns.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so and choosing to participate will not have any good or bad consequences. If you need to or want to leave the conversation, you are allowed to leave at any point. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed to participate earlier. You don't have to explain why, and you can always talk to us individually, for whatever reason. At the end of every conversation, you are always welcome to ask more questions.

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[82] Pending contact information from War Child.

[83] See above.

<u>Right to Retract</u>

If at any point during or after the interview you decide you do not want to share information with War Child or Samuel Hall, you have the right to retract, or ask that the information you have shared is removed from the study. You do not have to explain why. You may withdraw your information by contacting the person listed above.

I'll be asking you to share your experiences; we'll be making notes on what you say. If you agree, I would also like to record this conversation, so we don't miss out on any of the details. We will keep transcripts and recording strictly confidential, and these will only be shared within the research team at Samuel Hall. We will never share your name or contact information with anyone outside of these two groups or allow anyone outside of the research teams to listen to your recording. Do you have questions for us?

ASK: Do you want to ask me anything further before you decide whether or not to participate / whether or not your child can participate? YES / NO

Part II: Certificate of Consent

For adult consent – *to be used for the consent of any adult participant (stakeholders, experts, guardians, or community members) above 18*

I have been invited to participate in the research being conducted for War Child. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature / Thumbprint of Participant _____

Date _____

      Day/month/year

If participant above 18 is illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print Name of Witness _____

Signature / Thumbprint Witness _____

Date _____

        Day/month/year

Note: A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team).

For parent / guardian consent – *to be used for any participants under 18 years of age*

My child has been invited to participate in the research being conducted for War Child. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to my child's participation in this study

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature / Thumbprint of Participant _____

Date _____

        Day/month/year

If parent / guardian / adult participant is illiterate:

I have witnessed the reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print Name of Witness _____

Signature / Thumbprint of Witness _____

Date _____

       Day/month/year

Note: A witness, preferably literate, must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team).

For child / other participant under 18 assent / consent *– to be used for the child or any participant under the age of 18 to respond to themselves, in addition to parent or guardian consent.*

I have been invited to participate in the research being conducted for War Child. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature/Thumbprint of Participant _____

Date _____

       Day/month/year

If participant under 18 is illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print Name of Witness _____

Signature / Thumbprint of Witness _____

Date _____

       Day/month/year

Note: A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team).

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and when relevant their parent / guardian and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands it. I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent _____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____

Date _____

       Day/month/year

Confirm: The parent/guardian has given their consent to be interviewed	☐ Yes / ☐ No
Confirm: The parent/guardian has given their consent to be recorded	☐ Yes / ☐ No
Confirm: The participant has given their assent to be interviewed	☐ Yes / ☐ No
Confirm: The participant has given their assent to be recorded	☐ Yes / ☐ No

The parent/guardian is present during the interview with the participant's consent: ☐ Yes / ☐ No

3. QUALITATIVE TOOLS GUIDELINES

3.1 Focus group discussion (FGDs)

Parents/caregivers

Guidance:

The aim of this FGD is to help us to better understand, from a caregiver's perspective, humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Badghis. The results of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations to War Child UK and other actors on where and how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. We will never share any personal data that you provide us without your permission. The FGD will cover the following topics:

- Key child protection needs
- Stakeholder engagement
- Key actors influencing child protection and power dynamics
- Vulnerable and at-risk populations
- Impact of the 2021 change in government on child protection risks, support services, and stakeholders
- Recommendations for future programming

These FGDs will target male and female parents/ guardians/ caregivers of children. These should include participants from a mix of backgrounds including, but not limited to IDPs, returnees, parents of child labourers, and minority groups, but selected from one location in the district based on discussion with the Samuel Hall and War Child UK teams. Men and women will be interviewed separately.

It is IMPORTANT that the interviewer:

1. Adopt an informal tone and a language adapted to the profile of the respondents.
2. Exercise caution, be emotionally sensitive and intelligent. If a respondent is approaching issues that are too sensitive or seem to be causing upset, the interviewer will be responsible for stopping or diverting the conversation.
3. Allow the respondents to speak freely without interrupting.
4. Listen to the respondents respectfully. There is no rush to go to the next question.
5. Answer any questions that the respondents have to make them feel comfortable.
6. Recognise if the respondents are feeling uncomfortable in talking about a particular topic. If this is the case, the interviewer will move on from that question, and make a note of it and come back to it at the end, asking the respondents if they are comfortable talking about it at that point.

NB: The themes chosen should be included to the degree possible in the conversation. However, this is not exhaustive, and if the person wants to talk about other points relevant to the research, it is important to let them speak and take detailed notes.

First, the enumerator will ask an open question, and will then follow-up on the sub-questions as needed to prompt further information. It is not expected that all sub-questions will be asked and/or answered for each interview.

FGD Information:

FGD Gender (circle one):	Female/ Male
District/Province:	
City:	
Date:	
Enumerator / Facilitator Name(s):	

Participant Information (to be completed by the interviewer):

	Name	Age	Number of Children	Number of Children living at home[84]	Employment/ Source of Income	Selection criteria
Participant #1						
Participant #2						
Participant #3						
Participant #4						
Participant #5						
Participant #6						

Introduction and Informed Consent

Introduce yourself and the project and complete informed consents forms for each participant before proceeding with the FGD.

Is everyone willing to participate? (Ensure all participants have signed a consent form).
- YES / NO Informed consent provided (circle one).

PART 1. WARM UP (5 minutes)

1. Tell me about yourself and your household, particularly your children. How long have you lived in this location?

Probe: Number of household members, ages, genders and in or out of school.

PART 2. Child protection concerns (25-30 minutes)

We are interested in better understanding issues related to child protection in your community. We would like to learn more about some of the challenges, dangers, and risks children face, including injuries and illness, physical and emotional treatment, access to education, and employment. We are also interesting in learning more about the risks and dangers children face who are separated from their families, for work or other reasons.

2. Can you describe some of your main concerns related to the dangers and risks your child(ren) are exposed to in and around your community?

Probe: For example, have there been any instances of attacks, violence, or threats?

Probe: What are your concerns about the safety of the area in which your child(ren) live, play, and study?

Probe: Have your child(ren) shared any similar additional concerns or worries with you?

Probe: How does this affect different children differently? For example, how does it differ by gender, children with disabilities, or minority groups?

Probe: What changes have you noticed related to dangers/safety in your community since the new government has been in power?

Probe: Does this differ by gender?

Probe: In which locations do your child(ren) feel unsafe or at risk (e.g., school, market)?

3. What actions or protective measures at the family and/or community level do you take when your child shares concerns related to their safety?

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[84] Note to enumerator: Please note, if this differs from the total number of children, inquire as to why? Were they sent away for work or safety concerns? Have they married (if so what age)? Please explore this with respondent.

4. How would you describe the overall health and mental health/emotional well-being of your child(ren) and family? What issues worry you the most? What changes, if any, have you noticed in the past year?

Probe: How do you support your child if they are feeling unwell emotionally (sad, depressed, anxious)?

5. How would you describe your household food security?

6. What are various roles of different household members and how does this vary by age and gender? How do the different roles impact opportunities available to various family members? Describe these differences. (For example, attending school)

Probe: What kind of jobs, if any, do your children do inside the home to help support the family? How does this vary by gender?

7. What kinds of work, if any, do your children do outside/away from the home?

(Ask only if children work outside the home) Probe: What are concerns you have related to the health and safety of your childen working outside the home? Have any of your family members had to travel to find work?

Probe: How has working outside the home affected your child's access to opportunities, including attending school?

8. How do you respond when your child misbehaves/requires discipline?

Probe: Is the response the same whether they are a boy or girl? Do you and your spouse agree on disciplinary practices?

Probe: Do you believe that your approach to discipline is typical for other families in the community?

PART 3. Household and community perspectives (20 minutes)

I would like to understand more about child protection risks and perspectives, as well as power dynamics at the household and community level.

9. What services or support/aid have you been able to access in your community? How did you access them? From people (local community members), or from organisations, governments?

Probe: Who or what organisations are available to provide support for children and families?

Probe: How do you learn about the support and services available to children and families?

10. What are the main barriers to accessing services in the community? (For example, education, mental health, and psychosocial support).

Probe: Who or what controls access to services?

11. In this community, who in the household normally makes decisions? Are there differences between types of decisions, such as managing assets, livelihood opportunities, education for children? Which ones and why? What are the reasons for this?

Probe: Which decisions do women normally have greater influence? Men? What about for children and how does that change by age and gender?

12. What are the differences in access to opportunities, services and resources for men and women and children in your community?

Probe: Consider justice, financial services, education, health and mental health and psychosocial support. What risks exist in accessing these? How do concerns around safety and security impact access for different groups?

PART 6. Informing Future Programming (10 minutes)

13. What support and services are most needed in your community?

14. What are the three most important changes that need to take place to ensure a safe, healthy environment for your children?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

FACILITATOR AND NOTE TAKERS NOTES

Address the following questions:

1. What were the most important or memorable statements the respondent made during the interview? OR What were the most salient points that came out of this interview?
2. What was the most compelling story the participants shared?
3. Overall, what do you think was most important to the participants?
4. What did you learn that should be further explored?
5. What did you already know that this interview confirmed?
6. Include any comments, impressions, or special information about the person interviewed or the interview process.

Community-based child protection actors

Guidance:

The aim of this FGD is to help us to better understand, from a community member's perspective, humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Badghis. The results of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations to War Child UK and other actors on where and how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. The data collected will be anonymised and we will never share any personal data that you provide us without your permission. This data will be used to inform future programme strategy and implementation. This FGD will cover the following topics:

- Key child protection needs
- Stakeholder engagement
- Key actors influencing child protection and power dynamics
- Vulnerable and at-risk populations
- Impact of the 2021 change in government on child protection risks, support services, and stakeholders
- Recommendations for future programming.

These FGDs will target male and female community-based child protection actors. These should include participants from a mix of backgrounds but selected from one location in the district based on discussion with the Samuel Hall and AKF teams. Men and women will be interviewed together, where appropriate.

It is IMPORTANT that the interviewer:

1. Adopt an informal tone and a language adapted to the profile of the respondents.
2. Exercise caution, be emotionally sensitive and intelligent. If a respondent is approaching issues that are too sensitive or seem to be causing upset, the interviewer will be responsible for stopping or diverting the conversation.
3. Allow the respondents to speak freely without interrupting.
4. Listen to the respondents respectfully. There is no rush to go to the next question.
5. Answer any questions that the respondents have to make them feel comfortable.
6. Recognise if the respondents are feeling uncomfortable in talking about a particular topic. If this is the case, the interviewer will move on from that question, and make a note of it and come back to it at the end, asking the respondents if they are comfortable talking about it at that point.

NB: The themes chosen should be included to the degree possible in the conversation. However, this is not exhaustive, and if the person wants to talk about other points relevant to the research, it is important to let them speak and take notes.

First, the enumerator will ask an open question, and will then follow-up on the sub-questions as needed to prompt further information. It is not expected that all sub-questions will be asked and/or answered for each interview.

FGD Information:

FGD Gender (circle one):[85]	
District/Province:	
City:	
Date:	
Enumerator / Facilitator Name(s):	

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[85] Only needed if interviews are conducted separately.

Participant Information (to be completed by the interviewer):

	Name	Position in organisation	Selection criteria
Participant #1			
Participant #2			
Participant #3			
Participant #4			
Participant #5			
Participant #6			

INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT

Introduce yourself and the project and complete informed consents forms for each participant before proceeding with the FGD.

Is everyone willing to participate? (Ensure all participants have signed a consent form).
- YES / NO Informed consent provided (circle one).

PART 1. WARM UP (5 minutes)

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today; we would like to learn more about your knowledge of various aspects related to child protection risks and humanitarian needs.

1. Tell us a bit about your background? What is your current role/position in the child protection sector? How long have you held this position?

PART 2. Child protection concerns

We are interested in better understanding issues related to child protection in your community. We would like to learn more about some of the challenges, dangers, and risks children face, particularly related to injuries and illness, physical and emotional treatment, access to education, WASH, and employment.

2. Can you describe the primary child-protection needs in and around this community?

Probe: For example, have there been any instances of attacks, violence, or threats?

Probe: In which locations are children especially at risk?

3. What changes have you noticed related to dangers/safety in your community since the new government has been in power?

4. How do child protection needs differ by gender? What other subgroups are most at risk? (For example, children with disabilities, minority groups, IDPs, UASCs).

Probe: What, if any, are some of the current efforts to support these at-risk groups?

5. In your work with children, to what extent do they share protection concerns? What do they identify as their greatest need? Greatest fear?

Probe: Do these differ by gender?

Probe: How do you provide support for these children?

6. How are vulnerable and at-risk children identified? To whom are they referred?

PART 2. Access and barriers to services (15 minutes)

7. What services or protection and support mechanisms are in place and accessible to the community? Please describe them. (Consider access to education, food and livelihood security, mental health and psychosocial, etc.).

Probe: How effective are these systems?

8. What services/gaps in child protection exist and are most needed?

Probe: How are gaps in child protection support identified?

9. What are some community-level barriers that prevent access to services/support? For example, if safety is a concern for parents, are there any efforts to improve safe school access?

Probe: Can you identify any additional barriers at the community level that prevent children from accessing services, including education? Are there commonly held community attitudes, such as boy preference, girls typically help with housework? Is there stigma associated with seeking help for mental health challenges?

PART 3. Community dynamics (15 minutes)

10. To what extent do laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practices promote child protection? Are there any policy gaps?

Probe: Are there any secondary or unintentional consequences of existing policies and practices on various groups?

11. Who are some of the key actors influencing child protection in this community? Describe their role.

Probe: How has this changed in the past year with the change in government?

12. What are existing examples of child protection response mechanisms that could be further developed/expanded?

Probe: What are their strengths? What makes them work?

Probe: What community-level solutions could be implemented to encourage improved and equitable access to services?

PART 6. Informing Future Programming (5-10 minutes)

13. What are the three most important changes that need to take place to ensure a safe, healthy environment for children in your community?

14. Is there anything else you would like to add?

FACILITATOR AND NOTE TAKERS NOTES

Address the following questions:

1. What were the most important or memorable statements the respondent made during the interview? OR What were the most salient points that came out of this interview?
2. What was the most compelling story the participants shared?
3. Overall, what do you think was most important to the participants?
4. What did you learn that should be further explored?
5. What did you already know that this interview confirmed?
6. Include any comments, impressions, or special information about the person interviewed or the interview process.

3.2 Case Studies and Community Mapping

Children 12-17 years old

Guidance:

The aim of this case study and community mapping activity is to help us to better understand, from a child's perspective, the humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Badghis. The mapping will provide a visual representation of the things that children value in their community, as well as provide an opportunity for the children to identify specific needs, key actors, and current practices related to child protection.

The results of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations to War Child UK and other actors on where and how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. The data collected will be anonymised and we will never share any personal data that you provide us without your permission.

- Key child protection needs
- Stakeholder engagement
- Key actors influencing child protection and power dynamics
- Vulnerable and at-risk populations
- Impact of the 2021 change in government on child protection risks, support services, and stakeholders
- Recommendations for future programming
- Barriers to accessing services

These case studies will be conducted with boys and girls, 12-17 years old. These should include participants from a mix of backgrounds selected from one location in the respective district, based on discussion with the Samuel Hall and War Child UK teams.

It is IMPORTANT that the interviewer:

1. Adopt a tone and a language adapted to the profile of the respondents.
2. Exercise caution, be emotionally sensitive and intelligent. If a respondent is approaching issues that are too sensitive or seem to be causing upset, the interviewer will be responsible for stopping or diverting the conversation.
3. Allow the respondents to speak freely without interrupting.
4. Listen to the respondents respectfully. There is no rush to go to the next question.
5. Answer any questions that the respondents have to make them feel comfortable.
6. Recognise if the respondents are feeling uncomfortable in talking about a particular topic. If this is the case, the interviewer will move on from that question, and make a note of it and come back to it at the end, asking the respondents if they are comfortable talking about it at that point.

NB: The themes chosen should be included to the degree possible in the conversation. However, this is not exhaustive, and if the person wants to talk about other points relevant to the research, it is important to let them speak and take notes.

First, the enumerator will ask an open question, and will then follow-up on the sub-questions as needed to prompt further information. It is not expected that all sub-questions will be asked and/or answered for each interview.

Participant name	
Participant contact information	
Date photovoice commenced (if applicable)	
Date photovoice completed	
Date of the interview	
Location of participant	
Participant status	• IDP • Returnee • Refugee

	• Other
Participant's gender	• Male • Female • Other (specify)
Participant's age	
Level of Education Please ask them to tell you what level of education they have completed, if any.	
Employment status Full-time, Part-time, Casual, Unemployed, Full-time student	
Time in this location	

Community Mapping[86]

Introduction and Informed Consent

Introduce yourself and the project and complete the informed consent form with the research participant before proceeding with the case study.

Is everyone willing to participate? (Ensure participant has signed a consent form).
- YES / NO Informed consent provided (circle one).

Materials Required

- One large sheet of flipchart paper
- Coloured pencils or crayons/markers
- Sticky notes or small squares of paper and tape

PART 1. Warm Up (5 minutes)

Welcome! Now that we have discussed the purpose of this case study do you have any questions? *To encourage participation, and to assess comfort of participant, the researcher should begin by asking a few of the following questions:*

- How are you today?
- How do you feel about participating in this? Have you ever done this before?
- Do you have anything you would like to talk about before we begin?

I would like to start by having you think about your community, the places you visit frequently, and that are important to you. Can you name some of these places? *(Allow the child a few minutes to think, and then encourage them to share some of the places with you. If they are struggling to identify locations, suggest a few like a school, the bazaar, a health centre, etc.). Spend a few minutes identifying and discussing locations, and why they are important, also discuss what 'community' means to them. Take notes of conversation.*

PART 2. Community Mapping (15 minutes)

The interviewer sets out a large piece of paper, coloured pens or markers, and sticky notes. The interviewer then asks the child to draw a map of their community. Emphasise the map does not need to be an exact replica or drawn to scale.

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[86] This tool has been modified from World Vision's Community Mapping tool.
https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Community_Mapping_tool_0.pdf

- Explain to them they should draw a picture of where things are in their community, to the best of their knowledge/memory.
- Encourage them to include the following:
  - Their home
  - Things or places that are important in their life and their families' lives;
  - Things or places where they like to spend time, especially socially;
  - Main roads, mosques, schools, shops;
  - Things or places that are dangerous, worry them, or cause them to feel unsafe, and/or that they don't like; and
  - Things or places that are especially important for vulnerable children including where they live. Some examples of vulnerable children include children with disabilities, children who live without their families, and children from minority groups, although there are many other examples. *[For enumerator: ensure child understands this, and encourage them to provide other examples/suggestions.]*

As the child draws, the interviewer asks friendly questions about what the locations are, labelling them if necessary, and takes notes of responses.

When the map is finished, the interviewer takes a photo as a record.

Figure 1. Community map

Image Source: Viva. Community Mapping https://childreninemergencies.org/2016/08/16/community-mapping-with-children/

PART 2. Child Protection Risks (25-30 minutes)

We are interested in learning more about your community. We would like to learn about some of the challenges, dangers, and risks children like you face, especially things like injuries and illness, physical and emotional treatment, and access to education. We also want to learn about where you feel safe, and where you can find help and support in your community. *Note to enumerator: take note of all responses; ensure a verbatim transcription of child's comments, while also making sure you or the participant label each location on the map as it is identified.*

1. Let's start with your home. Please describe your home and why it is important to you.

Probe: Who lives with you? What resources are available in your household? For example, does your family own animals? Tools and equipment? Is there anything you need that you do not have access to?

Probe: What kind of jobs do you and your brothers or sister do around the house to help the family? Do any members of the family, including brothers and sisters, work outside the home?

Probe: How do the jobs differ by age and gender? How does this impact opportunities available to various family members? Describe these differences. (For example, attending school, spending time with friends).

Probe: Who is responsible for important decisions in the house? Do you have any input in these decisions? What if you disagree with some of the decisions?

2. Now, let's look at the other places you have drawn on the map. Please describe the places here that are most important to you. Why are they important?

Probe: Where do you spend time with friends, play, and socialise?

Probe: Who uses or or is in charge of these places?

3. Where are places here that you have drawn that make your life better? Where do you go to feel safe?

Probe: Describe how these places make your life better, or make you feel safe.

Probe: Who uses or is in charge of these places?

4. Where are the places that can be dangerous or difficult? (Ask children to identify these on the map and use a piece of paper to indicate and name danger, e.g., isolated path, people frequently robbed; mined area, etc.).[87]

Probe: Why is this place dangerous, scary, or worrying? For example, have there been any instances of attacks, violence, or threats? Please explain.

Probe: Are there places here that are more dangerous for girls than for boys? Or places more dangerous for boys? Please explain. (As they discuss, mark on map with sticky note, label as dangerous for girls/boys, include risk).

5. What are some things that worry you the most? To whom can you go if you need support or help if you are feeling worried, sad, or anxious? (Indicate on map, if possible). If you or someone you know experienced violence or abuse, where could you go to seek help?

6. What changes, if any, have you noticed related to dangers/safety in your community since the new government came into power one year ago? Which of these places have become more/less safe? (As they explain, label locations, noting whether they are more or less safe).

Allow a brief, 5–10-minute break to let the participant rest, if desired.

PART 5. Gaps and recommendations for future programming (10 minutes)

7. Looking at the map that you have drawn, are there any things that are missing that your community should have? Consider services, places to play, etc. Please explain.

8. What would you change in your community to make it better?

Probe: Who could make these changes happen? What would they need to make these changes happen? Is there anyone in your community you could share these ideas for change with? What can children do to contribute to these changes? (If time permits, allow the participant to draw some of the suggested changes; label as changes).

9. What are your hopes for the future? What are the top three things you can think of that would help you achieve your hopes/dreams?

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[87] NB it is very important to pay close attention to the child, and if they feel uncomfortable discussing any topic or theme, to stop, reassure them of anyonymity and safety and to refer to child safeguarding protocol and best practices.

Probe: Is there anything else you would like to share?

After concluding the interview, the interviewer takes photos of the community map. Then, the interviewer asks the participant who should keep the paper. As long as the interviewer has a <u>readable</u> photo of the map, it is okay for the participant to keep the drawing if she or he would like.

Thank you for participating in this interview today.

Repeat that the interview was confidential. Congratulate the participant on their contribution to the study, and the strength and resilience that they have demonstrated through their story.

FACILITATOR AND NOTE TAKERS NOTES

Address the following questions:

1. What were the most important or memorable statements the respondent made during the interview? OR What were the most salient points that came out of this interview?
2. What was the most compelling story the participants shared?
3. Overall, what do you think was most important to the participants?
4. What did you learn that should be further explored?
5. What did you already know that this interview confirmed?

Include any comments, impressions, or special information about the person interviewed or the interview process.

3.3 Photovoice

Photovoice as a methodology

Photovoice is a methodology in which participants take photos of the people, places, and things in their everyday life, and provide explanations of their significance, or why they are important to them. By putting these photographs and descriptions together we can form a narrative account, or 'photo diary', of your life, and understand what a normal day looks like for you. We are interested in learning about what a normal day looks like for you, and other children in your area. What are things that are important and meaningful to you? Where do you enjoy spending time? With whom do you spend time, and what activities do you participate in?

Why photovoice?
Photovoice, as a research methodology, offers several interesting and unique advantages, including:

- Empowerment: it allows participants to document their own lives as they see it and tell their own story.
- Engagement: it is visually engaging and grabs the reader's attention - 'a picture paints a thousand words'.
- Inclusive: it is a relatively inexpensive and accessible method, which allows different groups to tell their story.

Aims of the photovoice

Your photovoice is your own and we want to hear your story. In particular, we are interested in seeing your perspective on the following questions:

- How your daily life and activities look like?
- What are the places you play, socialise, and go to school/work?
- What are the negative things in your home and school/work/community environment?
- What are the positive things in your home and school/work/community environment?
- What are the other interesting things about your environment/community you
   would you want me to know?

You don't have to answer every question here and not every question might be relevant to you, but they are intended to provide you with a guide of the kind of information we are interested in.

How to conduct a successful photovoice

Whilst there is no one correct way to conduct a photovoice, this section will provide you with some guidance on what the images and text you create might look like.

Documentary Photos

One approach you can take to producing your photos is to simply document some of the most important people, places, and things in your everyday life. This could include a wide range of things, from your local school, an important figure in your community or some of the objects that you use in your everyday life. The most important criteria is that they should all be things which have *meaning* and *significance* to you.

After you have taken your photos, you will share your photos with the enumerator, and tell why you have taken this picture. When explaining the image, you should not only tell us what we're looking at e.g. 'This is a picture of a school', but also why the subject of the image is important to you and your life e.g. 'This is a picture of my local school; this is where my children are enrolled. As you can see, there are a lot of students in this class for one teacher, and the students must share books because there are not enough to go around.'

Some possible examples of documentary photos are included below:

"This is a local community centre where children in my community meet to socialise and to play football. This is an important place in the community because it helps to bring people together…" etc.


"This is my father's business at the local market where I help sell fruit and vegetables. I have been helping my family at this market for two years. We have not had as much fruit or vegetables to sell recently because of the drought…" etc.

Symbolic Photos

Another approach you can take to producing photos, is to not document something literally, but instead take a picture which represents an idea or a feeling you have. For example, a symbolic photograph to represent the idea of 'peace and friendship' might be a picture of a handshake. With symbolic photos, you have more freedom to be creative and express ideas you might have about your life and your local community. A good approach would be to think about what ideas you want to express beforehand in a mind-map and then think of ways you could represent this in a photograph.

Some possible symbolic photo ideas are included below:

"This is an image of two people shaking hands. I took this image to represent the sense of unity and cohesion that I feel exists in my local community…" etc.

"This is a photo of some cracked, tired hands. I took this photograph to represent how hard I work. I work a physical job for many hours each day, which means I am often tired by the end of the day…" etc.

Taking good photos

It's important that you try to take the best quality photos that you can. This means photos which clearly display a subject, are well lit, and not blurry. Some technical tips to ensure you are able to take good photos include:

- Ensure that the sun, or bright lights, are behind you when you take the picture. This helps to ensure that the subject of your photograph is well lit and not in shadow.
- Ensure that your camera is focused on the subject.
- Ensure that your hands are steady whilst taking the photo, this will help to reduce blur and produce sharper images.
- Take more than one picture of your subject. It is always better to have too many photos of a subject than too few.
- Try taking pictures of the same subject from different angles. The same subject can look different depending on the angle or position you are in relation to it, so try to experiment with this.

PART 1. Process

1. We will request that you use the iPad provided to take the photos.
2. You will take as many photos as you want in the agreed upon timeframe. You may also ask the moderator to have the photo taken for you in a guided photo shoot.
3. The research team will then help select some photos you took, and come back to you so you can write captions (or explain the photos verbally) for the selected photos.

Ethical Considerations

It is very important to understand that if you take any pictures of people, you must obtain written permission from them before we can use them. We will share a consent for with you and you can get subjects of your photos to complete.

Another important thing to remember is that you should not put you or any of your subjects in danger when taking your photographs. **Do not go to places or areas that are unsafe** or which you normally wouldn't go to, we want to get an authentic picture of your normal, daily life.

3.4 KII GUIDE

Key Child protection actors and stakeholders- local and national level

Interviewee Name, Title, and Organization	
Interviewee Contact Information	
Date of the interview	
Location of the interview	
Start time of interview	
End time of interview	
Time with Organisation	
Geographic Responsibility	

Introduction: Thank you for speaking to me today. My name is _____ and I am part of a research team at Samuel Hall to collect information on humanitarian needs and child protection risks in the three western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Badghis. The results

of this study will provide evidence-based recommendations to War Child UK and other actors on where and how to best focus efforts within the identified districts to support high-risk child protection concerns and avoid support gaps. The data collected will be anonymised and presented in a project report and other publications. The data collected will be anonymised and we will never share any personal data that you provide us without your permission.

Your participation is voluntary – it is your choice whether you want to participate or not. The discussion should take about 1 hour . You do not need to answer every question we ask you. You are completely free to decide whether or not you feel comfortable talking to us and you can stop this conversation at any time. If you do not want to participate, this is fine, you do not need to participate in our study. If you need to or want to leave the conversation, you are allowed to leave at any point. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed to participate earlier. You do not need to explain why, and you can always talk to us individually, for whatever reason.

If you agree, we would like to record this conversation, in order to better support the accuracy of transcription. We will keep these strictly confidential and never share your name or contact information with anyone or allow anyone outside of the research team to listen to your recording. Do you have questions for us?

Confirm: The participant has given their consent to be interviewed: Yes   No
Confirm: The participant has given their consent to be recorded: Yes   No

QUESTIONS

PART 1. Background and position

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today; we would like to learn more about your position, aspects related to child protection risks

1. Tell us a bit about your background.? What is your current role/position in the humanitarian/child-protection sector? How long have you held this position?

2. What is your organisation's mission in the current location? How long has the organisation been working on this issue

3. How, if at all, in the context of this role, do you work to improve the rights of children, and ensure basic humanitarian needs are met?

4. What is your understanding of the situation of child protection in Afghanistan, broadly, and your current location, more specifically?

PART 2. Profiling children

5. Overall Trends. We are interested in better understanding trends in child protection. What are the biggest child protection concerns?

6. Have you noticed any shifts in trends as a result of COVID-19? Have you noticed any emerging trends?

7. Have you identified any changes in children's status following the transition in government?

Probe: Are there any locations more at risk? Please explain.

Probe: What subgroups of children are most at risk., i.e. minorities, IDPs, children with disabilities, returnees? What are their specific needs?

7. Gender Aspects. What are some examples of how gender norms, roles and power relations impact child   protection risks and concerns?

8. How are the needs of children determined? Do they play any role in programming in your organisation?

9. How does your organisation engage with children? Any best practices? Lessons learned?

PART 3. Programming and Challenges

10.   What other organisations are working in the area to address child protection in this area? What are the   specific areas of focus? Are there any coordination efforts?

11.   What are the biggest challenges in the targeted area related to access to basic services, including   education,   health, WASH, as well as food security? (With a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised   populations?

12.   What are some of the challenges for organisations/the government working on child protection issues?
   a.   Are any of these challenges gender specific?
   b.   Have the challenges remained mostly the same, or have new ones emerged with the new government?
13.   What is the government's role related to child protection in the targeted location?

PART 4. Climate-related risks and coping mechanisms

14.   What will be the most critical climate-related challenges faced by communities in Afghanistan in the   immediate to medium-term future? What effects will these challenges have on child protection and   displacement and what climate resilience measures can be deployed at a community and local level?

15.   Comsiderting particularly th most vulnerable and marginalised people such as women, youth and   persons   with disabilities How do communities cope with climate change? What are people (women,   youth) doing that we are not aware of?

PART 4. Recommendations

15.   What needs to happen for the current programmes to succeed, and successfully address child-   protection related issues?

16.   What, if any new programmes need to be developed/grown to address child-protection related   issues?

17.   Any recommendations for additional contacts/interviews?

18.   Is there anything else you would like to share?

ABOUT SAMUEL HALL

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes, and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. Our approach is ethical, academically rigorous, and based on first-hand experience of complex and fragile settings.

Our research connects the voices of communities to changemakers for more inclusive societies. With offices in Afghanistan, Germany, Kenya, and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, we are based in the regions we study. For more information, please visit www.samuelhall.org.