

COMMUNITY PERCEPTION SURVEY

AFGHANISTAN CRISIS APPEAL

OCTOBER 2022



**DISASTERS
EMERGENCY
COMMITTEE**



ROOTED IMPACT

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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
FGD	Focus group discussion
HH	Household
IDP	Internally displaced person
WASH	Water, sanitation, and hygiene

Overview

Between August and October 2022, Rooted Impact worked with Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) member agencies and its Afghanistan-based research firm, BEID Consulting Services, to develop and conduct a customised community perception survey focused on **accountability to affected populations (AAP)** in four provinces: Herat; Ghor; Helmand; and Nangahar. AAP calls for **active and genuine participation** by communities in all humanitarian actions, as well as access to information about assistance in an accessible format and language that communities readily understand so they can make the best decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities.

The survey process was designed in support of DEC and its members' objectives to focus on and **strengthen inclusion and accountability** to affected communities during the implementation of the Afghanistan Appeal. The overall goal of the survey was to **better understand affected people's perceptions** of the DEC humanitarian action and to inform the rapidly evolving humanitarian response. Rooted Impact, with the support of BEID, **engaged local actors and communities** throughout the process to centre their voices and priorities in the DEC Afghanistan response.

Survey findings indicate that the **current aid programming is perceived positively** by the majority of participants, however, the **need far outweighs the available resources**. This report provides a brief **overview of key perceptions** drawn from the survey results to support DEC member program implementation through enhanced AAP.

Approach and Methodology

Diversity of stakeholders is important to this process to represent **different perspectives and lived experiences**. All methods of engagement were designed to be **accessible and ensure reasonable accommodation** for people with different types of disabilities. Data collectors were trained on inclusive data collection processes. Representative organisations were engaged for support in including groups affected by inequality and discrimination in this context and providing accommodations, such as sign language interpretation (in local language).

These measures helped ensure that individuals from all backgrounds were able to meaningfully contribute during household interviews and group discussions, contributing to **greater inclusion and consideration of a diverse range of perspectives**. Data collectors employed principles of non-discrimination, dignity, participation, inclusion, accessibility, and accountability through the process.

AAP Community Perception Survey Methodology Overview		
Planning and Coordination	<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security clearance • Obtaining other permissions and introductory letters • Community member mobilisation • Separate selection committees including DEC members to introduce people affected by inequality and discrimination within the community 	<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEC member agencies • Communities and local leaders • Community Monitoring Committee • Awaaz Afghanistan • District and Provincial Governors • Sign language interpreters • Organisations of people with disabilities
Data Collection Tool Development and Testing	<p>Development and Testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial interviews • Inception workshop and survey • Geographic coverage finalised • Inclusive criteria determined • Local research firm engagement • Data collection tool development • Data collection tool translation • Tool testing • Inclusive data collection training 	<p>Inclusion Criteria and Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and girls: 50% • Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in IDP camps: 30% • Older people (above 60): 10% • Women headed households: 20% • People with disabilities (focus on women and girls with disabilities): 30% • Mothers/caregivers of malnourished children: 10% • Pregnant/lactating women: 10%
Data Collection and Preliminary Analysis	<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person data collection by local research firm (BEiD Consulting) • 37 Household (HH) Surveys • 27 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 270 community members 	<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open-ended questionnaires and inclusive facilitation methods • Representation of individuals meeting all inclusion criteria • 51% women and 49% men participants
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data processing and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft findings and report development
Limitations	<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope limited to four provinces • Identification of individuals meeting inclusion criteria, such as deaf and blind individuals and pregnant/lactating women 	<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty accessing and engaging women and other groups affected by inequality and discrimination • High levels of poverty and illiteracy • Political tension and security concerns

Survey Targeting

Four provinces where DEC member agencies are implementing response activities were targeted. The sample ensures **diverse demographic coverage, as well as thematic and sectoral representation**. DEC and member agencies provided input on the selection and scope of the survey, taking into account security factors, necessary permissions, and accessibility of priority

locations. The table below provides an overview of the geographic areas included in this survey.

AAP Community Perception Survey Target Provinces and Districts		
Province	Districts	Planned Sample
Herat	Kushka Kohnaand, Kushka Rabat Sangi, Injil, Zinda Jan District, Kohsan, Herat city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 100 FGD participants (10 FGDs) ● 15 HH Interviews
Ghor	Firuzkoh (Known as Chaghcharan), Lal, Shahrak, Tiwara 1, Pasaband, Saghar, Dawlatyar, Marghab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 80 FGD participants (1 FGD each in 8 districts) ● 10 HH interviews (among them 3 mothers of children reached through the response)
Helmand	Sangin, Musa Qala, Kajaki, Nawzad, Marjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 50 FGD participants (1 FGD each in 5 districts) ● 5 HH interviews
Nangahar	Chaparhar, Lalpoor, Goshtain, Surkh Rud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 40 FGD participants (1 FGD each in 4 districts) ● 4 HH interviews

Of the 270 participants across FGDs and HH interviews, participants for this survey were **selected from communities that received support from the DEC crisis appeal**. Most participants that were selected (95%) confirmed that they had received aid, including cash, cash for work, food items, and WASH related assistance. Most participants have been **receiving aid for 4-7 months**. There was a small number of interviewees in Ghor province who began receiving aid as long as three years ago, while the remainder have only received aid 1-2 times.

Data collectors were **largely successful in meeting goals for inclusion** of priority populations. Women represented 51% of all participants. Goals were met for IDPs, older people, and women headed-households. Despite utilising information provided by DEC members and additional outreach efforts, there were challenges meeting the inclusion

AAP Community Perception Survey Demographics Overview			
Priority Target Population	Overall Target	Percent of FGD Participants	Percent of HH Interview Participants
Women and girls	50%	51%	51%
IDPs in IDP camps	30%	37%	5%
Older people (above 60)	10%	35%	14%
Women headed households	20%	Not Collected	35%
Persons with disabilities	30%	26%	30%
Mothers/Caregivers of malnourished children	10%	7%	Not Collected
Pregnant/Lactating Women	10%	6%	Not Collected

**Equals more than 100%*

goals for participation of people with disabilities, mothers/caregivers of malnourished children, and pregnant/lactating women. 15 individuals were not aid recipients. This is primarily due to the **desire to gain perspectives on inclusion / exclusion from those** who have historically been excluded from receiving aid, such as those with sensory impairments.

Key Findings

The findings presented here highlight critical aspects of **current perceptions** with regards to AAP within the DEC response. Overall, the available aid assistance is considered **valuable, but often insufficient** vis-a-vis the level of need. The sections below provide more detail and context around the key perceptions raised by survey respondents, including the following:

- People do not have enough to eat. The majority of survey participants are suffering from **food insecurity**. They report a desire for the next phase of intervention to be based on the food sector or other sustainable activities that can facilitate food security.
- **Winterisation** can be a life-threatening challenge for the people. After food security, respondents highlighted aid to enable people to cope with winter as a critical need.
- **Investment in income generating activities** to secure a stable income is critical. Respondents feel that if affected people are helped with sufficient cash, they should also be provided with information on how they can invest their money in small businesses and what opportunities are there for securing a stable income.
- Local leaders and the Imam Masjid play a vital role in **identifying eligible people** for receiving aid. Respondents cited the need for women humanitarian aid staff to approach women who do not have access to the local leaders and Imam Masjid.
- **Women face challenges accessing aid**. There is an information vacuum for women who do not have access to mosques and get information from there. Besides, they are excluded from the cash-for-work program based on its specificities and are willing to get women related work opportunities.
- **Local councils should be included in the selection process**. Local councils often number more than ten and respondents feel they may contribute to greater transparency in selection processes.
- **People with disabilities** should not be left behind in any sector. In the cash-for-work approach, they were not included due to their disabilities. People with disabilities can be included and can do other work, such as observation from the process.
- **Current strategies are not sufficient to empower people**. People's perceptions are that more investment in longer term strategies is necessary.
- Respondents emphasised that before asking people their opinion in the feedback process, they should be provided with **information about the feedback mechanism** and how the process works.
- To **increase utilisation of feedback mechanisms**, women humanitarian aid staff should receive feedback from women in the communities supported by the DEC response.

Respondents noted examples, such as widows, who should be approached in their homes to receive feedback.

Context and Priority Needs

Participants cited humanitarian **aid as the only source of survival**. Aid covered many of the most important needs, but in the majority of cases it is not sufficient for all members of the family, as they are often many. The number of family members has been a key reason cited by respondents for the insufficiency of aid.

All respondents cited **food insecurity** as a critical issue and was frequently cited by respondents as an immediate need. This was common among all respondents, including IDPs, permanent residents, and people with disabilities, in all four provinces. Aid in the form of cash and food items are seen as very valuable, but there is a **need for increased aid to be distributed more frequently**.

After food, women frequently cited **hospitals and access to medicine** as their dire need. Those who had received cash often spent their money on medicine and doctors to treat their family members, rather than themselves. Training for women on nutrition for children was seen as beneficial, but did not resolve their problem of access to food and resulting malnutrition. Similarly, women who received WASH training believe that they should also be provided with medicine, as they lack access to clinics and medicine.

With winter looming, **fuel for heating and supplies for winterization** were the next most frequently cited need, particularly in Herat and Ghor. These provinces have a harsh winter, and respondents believe that they cannot survive the coming winter if they are not helped. In these parts of the country, people typically use a wood-burning bukhari, a drum-shaped stove made of thin metal, or a sandal, a pit of burning coal under a small table covered by a heavy blanket. They cannot afford these instruments to cope with the harsh winter if they are not helped.

The perception of affected people is that the money and aid given to them is covering **basic needs** and is helpful for a short time, but is **not a sustainable solution**.

Respondents cited unemployment and drought as the main reasons for not being able to meet their needs. They believe that there are **no employment opportunities**. Cash aid enabled some people to invest in their businesses and make them more sustainable with more **ongoing income**.

People struggle with whether to use cash to **invest in a business** or **buy necessary food items**. They would like greater financial aid to be provided to cover both. They also suggest consultancies, for example, in financial management of a business, and **longer term strategies**, such as improving irrigation channels to support agriculture.

Employment opportunities tailored for women, men, and people with disabilities were requested by respondents. Items that could be used to start businesses, such as sewing machines, and livestock, were cited as important needs. Improvements to roads, schools, clinics, electricity, water pumps, and access to potable water are also seen as critical needs.

Eligibility and Selection Processes

Many respondents were aware of the mechanisms for **identifying and selecting eligible people** and able to describe them. The majority believe **aid is given to those most in need**, however, also felt that many were left behind because the available aid is insufficient. Orphans, widows, pregnant and lactating women, those in need of medical treatment, unemployed people, homeless people, people with disabilities, and IDPs are seen as those who need aid the most.

Imam Masjids and local leaders are often highly involved in the process of identifying and selecting eligible people. In some cases, the local council works with a selection committee. Many respondents felt that it is best to involve Imam Masjid and local leaders, who have the best knowledge of local residents, and were **satisfied with the selection process** of affected people that received support from the DEC response. They believe that local leaders and Imam Masjid are knowledgeable about each family's situation and well positioned to identify eligible people.

Though in the minority, there were respondents who believe that involving the Imam Masjid and local leaders contributes to **decision-making based on tribal and family relations**, which will exclude eligible people. Respondents acknowledge that the division of clans plays a vital role throughout Afghanistan, especially in rural parts of the country.

Respondents note that homes are generally **surveyed by humanitarian staff** before receiving aid and many feel that it is the best way to identify whether a person is in need or not. Agencies are accompanied by the village head and Mullah Imam to assess living conditions and determine eligibility. The process was seen by many as **fair and transparent**.

Respondents report receiving **information on aid** equally from the Imam of the village, village elder, community leader, mosque, head of council and district attorney, aid organisations, and

The **majority of men** were **aware** of the selection process and **have access** to Masjid and local leaders. Masjid plays a vital role in spreading awareness in society. The male respondents are **satisfied** with the selection process and have confirmed that their houses were surveyed before receiving aid.

The **majority of women** are **aware** of the process and the roles of Imam Masjid and local leaders, but **lack access** to these leaders. Most women report that they heard about the assistance through their relatives and neighbours, especially those do not have any male members that go to Masjid. In their interviews, they frequently pointed to this **barrier**.

As one of respondent explains, *"They come to mosques and say they help the poor, displaced and farmers. It's not good for a widow like me, who has no man at home and can't receive the aid. We just heard that the aid came and finished leaving hundreds of families in need behind."*
Helmand Sangin Women Respondent

Women have challenges getting information about aid. They do not frequent markets or public places to receive information about the aid programme. The situation is harsher for those women who are the head of their household and do not have any adult men in their family.

occasionally via word of mouth. Often, this only happens at the same time as aid organisations conduct household surveys to determine eligibility.

The perception of the population on sharing information by community leaders shows that the majority feel that the **information shared is limited and information on important details of the aid is missing or inaccessible**. The majority feels that they are generally informed of humanitarian aid in their area, but 13% state that they are not. Up to 27% of those interviewed report that they do not have the specific information necessary to access aid; the remainder state that they receive information from the sources noted above.

Distribution and Utilisation

The vast majority of women and men respondents say they were happy with the behaviour of DEC humanitarian staff. They believe that humanitarian staff considered local customs and that they **were treated respectfully by humanitarian staff** throughout the process.

Respondents say that they **feel safe while receiving aid**. There is no problem reported in this regard. They frequently confirmed that they have not faced security problems when receiving aid. After being enlisted to receive humanitarian aid, they received a call to collect the cash. They did not face any security problems while collecting aid from the designated office or spending it.

Despite this, there is also a perception among some affected people that **aid distribution is not transparent and is corrupted**. This is also supported by the finding that some families get aid several times, while others are not receiving anything at all. This is seen as a reason why many eligible people were left behind.

In terms of **utilisation**, it was reportedly easy to spend the monetary assistance on necessary items. In terms of whether it was enough money, the prices are very high at this time and the **amounts are not sufficient**.

The perception on **receiving money** is positive and the majority say that it was easy, however, there were some challenges cited:

Information on aid arrival is not well distributed and is causing some peoples exclusion

Some affected people would prefer that aid agency workers give cash physically to families because people are uneducated and have problems receiving it from banks.

Others stated that physically it is hard because the distribution sites are crowded and difficult for female aid receivers to go.

Physical distribution is also hard as sometimes people don't get information about the process and they become absent from the site when the aid is distributed.

Some distribution locations were remote and it was difficult and time-consuming to access, forcing people to hire cars or go long distances by foot, which is particularly difficult for people with disabilities.

Corruption in the Distribution Process

Respondents largely confirmed that they **perceive the process as transparent** and **believe that there has been no corruption**. All of the respondents confirmed that they were not involved in any kind of corruption and that they received the amount of money or aid that they were supposed to receive. There was no case of providing bribes for the humanitarian staff or other stakeholders to receive the humanitarian aid. Only one respondent noted that he saw a person who complained that the padrone took some money from them. Despite this, there is a perception that those **people who have connections with the village head or are his relatives are prioritised to receive assistance**.

There was one person who pointed to **interference by the Taliban** in the aid distributing process. According to him, the people who have a good relationship with the Taliban intelligence receive aid. Those respondents who believe this type of corruption may be happening tend to point to local leaders and Imam Masjid for prioritising their relatives for receiving humanitarian aid. They believe that these local leaders and Imam Masjid first enlist their relatives.

Other international organisations have raised concern regarding the Taliban's **interference in the aid distribution process**. Global Human Rights Campus published a report at the beginning of 2022, where the organisation documented complaints of people who believe that they were deprived of aid due to their identity. According to this report, the Taliban has not allowed the Hazara people to receive aid. United Nations (UN) has also pointed to this issue and reported that Taliban are interfering in distribution processes.

“The community elders have **not shared any information** about the aid with us. Once the aid came, it was **only distributed to a very limited number** of people and some people which belonged to the Taliban intelligence came and took the aid to their village and we were not able to receive it. **The process is corrupt and there is not transparency.**” Helmand
Musa Qala Man
Respondent

Inclusion of People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are also seen as among the highest priority populations, yet many remain left behind. The perception of affected people is that **consideration of the needs of people with disabilities is rare**.

Some needs and rights are considered but not all of them and there is **not sufficient attention given to people with disabilities**. There is also a perception that it seems that the focus is on physical impairment. People with disabilities state that they are excluded from employment opportunities and there is no respective employment.

Those respondents with disabilities were selected from communities that received support from the DEC response and whom DEC members believe benefited from the response. People with disabilities were happy to be receiving aid, but they **expressed that they do not have any income opportunities**, and humanitarian aid is the only source they rely on for survival. Where there are work opportunities, they are perceived as needing physical strength, which limits options for people with disabilities.

In those districts where the aid was distributed in the form of "**cash-for-work**," people with disabilities were left behind. Cash for work was successful but did not consider employment of people with disabilities and thus automatically excluded them from participating in and receiving support from the DEC response. In this program, crisis affected people were hired to clean the irrigation systems or other jobs that needed physical strength.

In the majority of cases, **cash transfers are seen as accessible for people with disabilities**. Most people with disabilities were able to physically access the site to receive aid, but there are many cases that it is hard because of the necessary transportation or a disability such as a visual impairment that prohibited them from accessing distribution sites. In these cases, respondents noted that they would prefer that aid was distributed to their homes. Many had access to digital information through phones and people often requested that cash be put on bank cards.

Reaching Other Priority Populations

The majority **perception on fair aid distribution is positive**, but many also state that some people are being left behind. People from groups affected by inequality and discrimination in the Afghanistan context have varying perceptions on whether they feel included or not.

There was a strong general perception that there were **many eligible households who live in poverty remained unassisted**, since many people live in poverty and aid is not adequate - the aid available is lesser than the people who need it. Respondents reiterated the need for aid distribution to cover all families living in one house, since many homes have more than one family in residence. There were some districts where respondents stated that aid covered all those at-risk, however this was not the overall perception across all surveyed communities.

Among those most in need are **widows**. In Afghanistan, the male member of the family is responsible for providing for the family, and once they lose their male members of their family, they do not have any other option for earning or ensuring food security. The respondents frequently pointed to households that do not have male members, noting that woman-headed households face greater challenges than those headed by men.

Returnees and internally displaced persons are other groups who are seen as most in need, yet are perceived by respondents as among those most left behind. People who are displaced due to natural disasters rely on the support of the host community. Often, the host community cannot provide them with the necessary assistance. IDPs have an additional burden due to lack of housing and having to pay rent or live in tents. In addition to IDPs, many of the villages have returnees. These returnees are the original residents of the village, but they had left the village years ago and often do not have secure housing or food.

Empowerment of Crisis Affected People

The political crisis and economic collapse have greatly limited opportunities to earn money. Respondents **believe that they cannot survive without humanitarian aid**. The ones who will not be able to live without aid are people with disabilities, widows, and ill people. The rest state that they feel that if they get sufficient support now, they will be able to survive.

*“The **flood-affected households** are the neediest of receiving aid in our area who have no house. Likewise, those households who have come from other districts or the returnee migrants from abroad the country (Iran and Pakistan) are also among the eligible people to receive aid since **they have no house, no job, and no land to work.**”*

Nangarhar Rodat HH
Interview Male
Respondent

Many respondents had only received aid once or twice and believe that this **current support is not enough to empower themselves** to live without aid. They expressed a need for longer-term aid in greater amounts and more frequently. They would like aid staff to take a fuller view of the family household and provide assistance, relative to the needs and number of people.

To **support longer term empowerment**, respondents believe that they should be provided with job opportunities so they can support themselves. They requested **fundamental opportunities** for living, like creating jobs, building streams and dams to irrigate farms, installing solar panels, digging tubewells, accessing equipment to create income streams, buying livestock, building clinics, schools, and increasing access to drinking water.

Women respondents asked for **training in skills that would enable them to earn and make money**, such as sewing, carpet weaving and tailoring workshops, and support in establishing and managing a small business.

Many respondents expressed a **desire for better engagement with aid staff**. Their perception is that the agencies should meet the population, listen to people’s problems, hear their views, and observe the problems themselves to **gain a better understanding of the needs to help solve them together**.

Feedback Mechanisms and Confidentiality

Communities that received support from the DEC response have provided feedback in three provinces, with 64% reporting at least one instance of providing feedback. In Nangarhar, affected people were not provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on the process of aid distribution or selection process in the province.

Of those respondents who have had the opportunity to provide feedback, the **majority feel that their views are considered**. Most feedback related to extension of aid or reaching key populations, such as people with disabilities. While many think that their feedback was considered, there are also many reports that they were not aware of how to provide feedback and say that no one has requested their feedback to date. They would like **more attention to in-person surveys** on the perceptions of the population.

Of the 225 respondents who reported providing feedback, **89% rated the level of confidentiality as good or very good**. The majority of women and girl respondents feel that the feedback mechanism is **accessible and that they feel safe using it**. There were several individuals that stated that their feedback is not collected at all and others that sometimes feel fear regarding the feedback process.

Conclusion

The provision of aid is considered **very valuable to the target population**. Many feel it helped them with key priorities around food access and improved nutrition and some of them were able to invest in their small businesses and were successful.

However, the majority of respondents highlight that the **current aid is not enough** and that a more constant supply would be more effective. The perception of affected people is that the money and aid given to them is covering their basic needs - only their food for up to one month – so there are **no sustainable solutions**, and their living situation repeats as soon as they run out of food. Access to health services and medication is limited, especially for women.

Respondents want **more sustainable, longer-term support** from humanitarian agencies through the creation of job opportunities and implementation of agricultural activities that are **designed to include those populations who experience greater inequality and discrimination in Afghanistan**, such as women headed-households, people with disabilities, and IDPs.