



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL MONDAY AUGUST 30TH

Press release

Afghanistan: assisting the most vulnerable

HI continues to assist the people of Afghanistan

Ottawa, 30 August 2021. Most of Humanity & Inclusion (HI)'s activities with the most vulnerable in Afghanistan have resumed after a few days' interruption. Humanitarian needs are immense in a country devastated by decades of conflict and one of the most contaminated by explosive remnants of war and landmines in the world. Today, 80% of the Afghan adult population live with some form of impairment and more than 2.5 million adult people (14%) live with a severe disability.

- HI believes the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence are currently being respected and is steadily resuming its activities in four provinces - Herat, Kunduz, Kandahar and Nimroz. If women and other members of the population are prevented from accessing aid, the organisation would reconsider the future of its programmes.
- Present in Afghanistan since 1987, HI is **one of the few NGOs working in the fields of physical rehabilitation and psychosocial support** - services that play a vital role in helping people with injuries and disabilities regain or maintain their autonomy.
- HI set up **the only rehabilitation centre in the south of the country, in Kandahar** in 1996 and has supported it continuously ever since. The centre is run by a team of about 50 people and usually sees more than 400 patients a week. In the provinces where HI works, the organisation's mobile teams visit homes in isolated rural areas with no access to health facilities.
- HI also provides psychosocial support to people in need, including people displaced by the conflict, supplies mine risk education and assists people affected by Covid-19.
- Decades of war have had a direct impact on the incidence of disability in Afghanistan. Due to the presence of mines and explosive remnants of war, armed conflicts and limited access to health and nutrition services, and the like, [some 80 percent of adults live with some form of physical, functional, sensory, or other impairment](#). And **over 2.5 million adult people (14%) live with a severe disability**.

Suggested quotes

- **Quote 1:** "The access of women, disabled people and vulnerable populations to the services provided by HI is an essential condition for the association's action. HI's

teams in Afghanistan are either male or female to enable women to benefit from rehabilitation sessions. Respecting the possibility for women to work in our projects and ensuring equal access to services for women and men is a priority. If we are denied access to certain parts of the population, we would reconsider our work in the country.” **Alexis Gaipman, Executive Director for Humanity & Inclusion Canada.**

- **Quote 2:** “The Afghan people have experienced decades of conflict. They suffer shortages and a lack of essential services. Humanitarian needs continue to grow. The fragile health system, undermined by the lack of trained staff, is unable to meet the medical needs of the population. For many Afghan people, it is vital we continue to provide our rehabilitation and psychosocial services.”

Julio Cesar Ortiz Arguedas, director of HI in Afghanistan

HI's actions in 2021

- There are **260 people** on HI's teams in Afghanistan including **63 women and 30 people with disabilities**. The organisation supplied aid to **160,000 people in 2020**:
 - In 2020, HI provided **more than 17,000** people with rehabilitation care. The organisation distributed **3,700 prostheses and orthoses** and **9,200 mobility aids (crutches, wheelchairs, etc.)**. These actions were implemented in Kandahar rehabilitation centre and the Kunduz centre, or by mobile teams who travel to people's homes in isolated rural areas where it is difficult to access health care.
 - The organisation also expects to train **120 male and female physiotherapists** in 2021.
 - In 2020, HI provided **psychosocial support to some 6,000 people** through one-to-one and group sessions, and the like. This assistance is targeted at people who have been psychologically scarred by the conflict or other traumatic events, such as those who have fled their homes due to drought or conflict.
 - The organisation also **raises people's awareness of the risks from mines and explosive remnants of war** in the country.
 - HI also promotes and advances the rights of mine survivors and people with disabilities. It works for their inclusion in society and improves their access to medical and other basic services.
 - The organisation also assists people affected by the **Covid-19** epidemic, through awareness-raising on basic preventive measures, distributing hygiene kits, etc.

About HI

HI is an independent international aid organisation. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for close to 40 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions, and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was

founded in 1982, HI has set up development programmes in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. The network of eight national associations (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States) works constantly to mobilise resources, jointly manage projects and to increase the impact of the organisation's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organisations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 and the winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living in dignity" is no easy task.

Learn more: www.hi-canada.org

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