



A Policy Framework for Afghanistan's Escalating Climate-Driven Internal Displacement Crisis

Field	Human Rights and Immigration
Member State:	United States of America
Regional Group:	Afghanistan (Asian-Pacific Group)
Principal Delegate:	Naseer Faiq, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the United Nations
Date of Submission:	05/03/2026

II. Statement of Purpose

This submission examines how worsening droughts, floods, and extreme weather, coupled with government instability and limited aid, have exacerbated the climate crisis in Afghanistan. It provides tangible solutions for how existing institutions, both domestic and international, can be developed to ensure Afghan citizens have access to adequate resources and aid amid increasing climate-induced internal displacement.

III. Research Question / Inquiry

The Member State of the United States of America seeks to investigate:

How can private and public institutions and organizations adapt to work with the current Afghan government (Taliban) and the international community in order to provide aid to Afghan climate refugees?

IV. Executive Abstract

Afghanistan ranks among the top ten most vulnerable nations to climate and weather-related disasters in the world (UN OCHA). Because of its location in the Middle East, Afghanistan experiences exorbitantly high temperatures, with climate change exacerbating both droughts and floods. On top of this, Afghanistan has a complex political history marked with turmoil and conflict. The current government, the Taliban, is known for stripping Afghans' basic rights, including those of freedom of expression, education, and movement, based on Sharia Law. This leaves the population especially vulnerable to natural disasters and adverse weather conditions, with limited viable aid and resources. In other words, the combination of extreme climate and lack of effective governance poses a major challenge to supporting Afghan refugees.

There are a multitude of statistics that highlight just how serious the climate refugee crisis in Afghanistan has become. For starters, after facing its worst drought in 27 years, nearly 13 million Afghans now struggle with acute food insecurity (Millions of Afghans endure crisis three years after Taliban takeover, 2024). Villagers now have to dig deeper than 80 meters to retrieve water, compared to just 12 meters 30 years ago (Shafiey, 2024). As a whole, roughly 45% of the population requires humanitarian assistance (Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026, 2025). This means that nearly half of all Afghans cannot support themselves on their own. On top of this, Afghanistan's National Environmental Protection Agency has not been invited to COP29 or COP30, and therefore is unable to represent itself on the most important, climate-related global stage (Statement of the National Environmental Protection Agency, 2025). Further exacerbating this issue, humanitarian support has also not been able to reach the region due to a decline in support and international assistance. Recently, 343 mobile health teams, representing more than half of all teams across the country, have been shut down (Millions of Afghans endure crisis three years after Taliban takeover, 2024). In an effort to combat these

struggles, nations like Norway have hosted over 125,000 people, including over 61,000 women, fleeing Afghanistan (Shafiey, 2024). On a similar note, the European Union has become Afghanistan's largest donor and represents one of the few international actors tangibly on the ground (Afghanistan in crisis: The role of the international community, 2025). However, Afghanistan still has approximately 21.9 million in need, with only 17.5 million people currently targeted. This means the nation still requires at least 1.71 billion US dollars to help support its population (Afghanistan to remain major crisis in 2026, 2025).

Afghanistan's climate-displacement crisis is no longer a future risk. It is a present, compounding emergency in which drought, water insecurity, and recurring floods interact with governance constraints and a shrinking aid pipeline to drive internal displacement and cross-border movement. The country is entering 2026 with 21.9 million people (about 45% of the population) projected to need humanitarian assistance, and the UN-coordinated response is already being forced into prioritization because funding is not keeping pace with needs.

The data points we have gathered point to a system under strain in the exact sectors that prevent climate shocks from becoming displacement: food security, water access, and basic health coverage. The UN's 2026 appeal is \$1.71 billion to target 17.5 million people, which signals both the scale of need and the reality that millions will remain outside full coverage if funding falls short. At the same time, service delivery is eroding: the International Rescue Committee reports 343 mobile health teams (about 52%) have shut down, directly reducing access to lifesaving care in remote and climate-affected areas. And the water crisis is increasingly structural, with reporting showing dramatically deeper well-drilling and sharp drops in the water table in Kabul and other provinces, which translates into livelihood collapse and displacement pressure.

Taken together, the conclusion is clear: Afghanistan's climate refugee crisis is being driven as much by institutional and funding constraints as by the climate hazards themselves. Even where humanitarian actors can operate, the response is increasingly triage-based, while Afghanistan's limited formal inclusion in global climate processes undermines access to climate finance and coordinated adaptation support (illustrated by ongoing controversy around Afghanistan's participation at COP30).

V. Proposed Recommendations

1. **Recommendation 1: Fund the response at the scale of need, not the scale of triage**

We recommend that UN member states fully fund Afghanistan's 2026 humanitarian requirements (**\$1.71B**) and prioritize flexible funding that can surge during drought/flood shocks, because chronic underfunding is directly driving service shutdowns and rationing of assistance.

2. **Recommendation 2: Rebuild last-mile service delivery by restoring mobile health and nutrition capacity.**

We recommend an emergency package to reopen and sustain mobile health teams and community health delivery, targeting climate-affected districts and displacement hotspots, since the closure of **343 mobile health teams (52%)** undermines basic survival and increases displacement incentives.

3. **Recommendation 3: Treat water scarcity as the core displacement driver and scale WASH + drought resilience accordingly.**

We recommend a coordinated WASH surge (safe water access, groundwater management support, drought-resilient infrastructure, and water trucking where necessary) aligned with longer-term resilience programming, because water stress is accelerating livelihood collapse and forced movement.

4. **Recommendation 4: Shift from reactive aid to anticipatory action tied to early warning triggers.**

We recommend expanding anticipatory cash and protection programming that automatically activates when drought/flood thresholds are reached (cash-for-food, temporary shelter support, and livelihood protection), to prevent climate shocks from becoming displacement events.

5. **Recommendation 5: Protect access and delivery by insulating humanitarian operations from political constraints.**

We recommend that the UN and donors negotiate and enforce operational safeguards that allow equitable aid delivery (including women's participation in aid delivery and monitoring), because restrictions on implementation capacity directly weaken response quality and coverage.

References

- Afghanistan in crisis: The role of the international community*. United Nations: Regional Information Centre for Western Europe. (2025, June 23).
<https://unric.org/en/afghanistan-in-crisis-the-role-of-the-international-community/>
- Afghanistan to remain major crisis in 2026, UN, partners warn | UN news*. United Nations. (2025, December 30). <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/12/1166684>
- Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 (December 2025) | OCHA*. UN OCHA. (2025, December 30).
<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-2026-december-2025>
- Millions of Afghans endure crisis three years after Taliban takeover*. International Rescue Committee. (2024, August 30).
<https://www.rescue.org/article/millions-afghans-endure-crisis-three-years-after-taliban-takeover>
- Shafiey, M. (2024, November 18). *Struggling against the tide: Afghanistan's battle against climate change and displacement*. NRC.
<https://www.nrc.no/feature/2024/struggling-against-the-tide-afghanistans-battle-against-climate-change-and-displacement>
- Statement of the National Environmental Protection Agency Regarding the 30th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. National Environmental Protection Agency. (2025, September 11).
<https://www.nepa.gov.af/index/show/5000>