

SITUATION UPDATE



International Medical Corps staff members distribute supplies in Chalas village, Chawiki/Sawki district.

On August 31, a powerful magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck Kuz Kunar district in Nangarhar province, eastern Afghanistan. The tremor was followed by more than 17 aftershocks, including three above magnitude 5.0, which intensified the destruction across mountainous terrain. According to the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority, the earthquake resulted in 2,205 confirmed deaths and 3,640 injuries. Among the fatalities, UNICEF reported that 731 were children.

The earthquakes, which were shallow and thus especially destructive, caused widespread damage to infrastructure and housing. As of September 6, at least 6,782 homes were reported as either partially or completely destroyed, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Entire villages were flattened, and repeated aftershocks led to the collapse of weakened structures. Rockfalls and landslides blocked access to several districts, leaving many communities isolated and forcing families to remain outdoors. According to the International Organization for Migration, at least 783 families were displaced to temporary sites in the Shalt and Zere Baba areas of Nurgal district, where conditions remain unsafe and services are limited.

The situation remains critical, with many families still displaced and living in temporary shelters. The psychological impact of the earthquake is severe, as survivors cope with grief, trauma and anxiety. Many children have been orphaned or separated from their families, and psychosocial support is essential to help them and other affected individuals coping with the emotional impact of the disaster. Combined with the damage to health facilities and the psychological trauma experienced by survivors, there is an urgent need to scale up health services and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), to address both physical and emotional well-being.

Thousands of trauma cases require immediate surgical care, and overcrowded displacement sites increase the risk of disease outbreaks. The WHO has reported hundreds of cases of respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases and malaria in Kunar province alone. The risk of disease outbreaks is rising due to overcrowding, poor sanitation and limited access to clean water. As winter approaches, the lack of adequate shelter and heating poses additional threats to the health and safety of affected populations.

The earthquake also has severely affected access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services across affected provinces. According to assessments, 46% of communities are experiencing a water crisis, and 64% rely on unsafe water sources. In Nangarhar and Kunar, more than 50% of communities lack latrines, and up to 91% are affected by open defecation. Hygiene conditions are poor, with 25% of communities lacking handwashing facilities and 19% without soap. Damaged or destroyed water systems have left many communities dependent on contaminated sources, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases. Immediate interventions are needed to restore water-supply systems, provide safe drinking water, install sanitation facilities and distribute hygiene kits, to prevent further health deterioration and support recovery.

FAST FACTS

- A powerful earthquake struck eastern Afghanistan on August 31, killing 2,205 people and injuring 3,640. At least 6,782 homes were destroyed, 783 families were displaced and 20 health facilities damaged. UNICEF estimates that 500,000 people are affected across Kunar, Laghman and Nangarhar provinces, while the WHO reports that 19 health facilities in Kunar were damaged, and one in Nangarhar.

OUR FOOTPRINT

- International Medical Corps has been operating in Afghanistan since 1984, providing primary and secondary healthcare, training, health education, emergency response, mental health and psychosocial support, nutrition services, protection services, community empowerment, and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

OUR RESPONSE

- To date, International Medical Corps has distributed 7,290 liters of clean water, 18 tents and 180 winterization kits to affected families in Kunar province.

In short, the earthquake has created an urgent need for health services, clean water, sanitation and psychosocial support. The humanitarian situation demands attention and sustained support to address these immediate and long-term needs of the affected communities.

International Medical Corps Response

International Medical Corps, with more than 22 years of experience in Kunar province and active programs in Nangarhar and Nuristan, is on the ground and closely monitoring the situation. Our teams are working with relevant authorities and other humanitarian partners, participating in coordination meetings to assess humanitarian needs in the affected areas and responding accordingly.

Our emergency response teams responded swiftly to the earthquakes, supporting coordination, conducting field visits and initiating relief operations that included the delivery of emergency shelters and winterized non-food items (such as clothing kits), and clean drinking water. We also delivered assistive devices for persons with disabilities to the Nangarhar regional office, prepared for distribution.

International Medical Corps has conducted field visits to Chawkai and Nurgal districts to assess humanitarian needs and access routes, and has participated in ad-hoc coordination meetings, including the Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items Team, the Health Clusters and the Operational Coordination Team.

On September 5, International Medical Corps distributed 5,400 liters of clean drinking water to families in Andar Lachak, Badinzai, Nasapa and Paman villages, in Chawki district, and supplied bottled water to health facilities operated by partner organizations in the area.

On September 6, International Medical Corps supported 70 households in Andar Lachak by providing 18 emergency shelters, 70 winter clothing kits and 900 liters of water. On September 8, International Medical Corps distributed winterization kits and 990 liters of clean drinking water to 110 households in Chalas village.

International Medical Corps will continue supporting earthquake-affected communities in Kunar province through sustainable WASH interventions to improve access to clean water and reduce disease risks. We also will train frontline health and protection responders in psychological first aid and provide psychosocial support through counselling, community mobilization and awareness activities under its protection program.



International Medical Corps staff members distribute tents, winterization kits and clean drinking water in Andar Lachak village, Chawki district, Kunar province.



Affected families receive winterization kits and drinking water in Chalas village, Chawki district, Kunar province.