

Terms of Reference
for the evaluation of JPF-funded 2023 humanitarian response projects in Afghanistan

JPF Evaluation Department

24 June, 2024

1. Background

Afghanistan continues to grapple with a protracted crisis in the face of four decades of conflicts and recurrent waves of displacements, exacerbated by localized, yet pervasive impacts of frequent natural disasters, such as earthquakes, droughts and floods. Furthermore, the Taliban takeover of 2021 marked overall reduction in conflicts associated with insurgency, international isolation, downturn of an aid dependent economy, state-sanctioned marginalization of women and girls, and heightened risks of gender-based violence, with multifaceted impact on different segments of the population. Characterizing Afghanistan as a protection emergency, the Humanitarian Needs & Response Plan (HNRP) 2024 calls for context-specific, gendered analysis of nature and severity of needs for different population groups. Such nuanced understanding of humanitarian needs is increasingly critical, given that limited availability of funding due to a suspension of large-scale international aid leaves no choice but to target the most vulnerable of all, focus only on acute humanitarian needs, distinguished from basic human needs, and selectively identify when and where to intervene. As relative stability under the de facto authority opens space for more developmental interventions, nonetheless, HNRP recognizes importance of ensuring close coordination of humanitarian actions with longer-term interventions addressing underlying layers of basic needs.

Japan Platform (JPF) has been supporting Afghanistan intermittently since 2001, and has been renewing funding commitments annually since 2017. In 2023, JPF funded a humanitarian response program in Afghanistan at JPY 289,931,280 in total composed of 8 projects, which was later supplemented by a returnee assistance program of JPY 190,604,709, delivered via 5 projects and an earthquake response program in Herat Province of JPY200,000,000, delivered via 4 projects. These projects were delivered by 9 Japanese NGOs, operating remotely via local partners or offices in various Provinces.

The question of target and focus, and the challenge in drawing distinction between acute humanitarian needs and basic human needs, as elucidated in the Afghanistan HNRP, are mirrored in the ongoing debate within JPF. Hard choices must be made when ever-rising humanitarian needs across the globe are to be met with limited funding available. JPF intends to gather lessons from various programs, including but not limited to Afghanistan, to inform discussion as to the rationale for JPF's engagement in protracted crises, and criteria for setting target and focus to maximize impact of its limited resources.

2. Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation of JPF's 2023 program portfolio in Afghanistan aims to assess appropriateness of targeting, relevance and timeliness of interventions, and effective mainstreaming of protection and Do No Harm principles, keeping in sight of the persistent, if not deteriorating, vulnerability of the affected populations exposed to multiple shocks. In doing so, the evaluation interrogates what constitutes "acute humanitarian needs" as opposed to basic human needs, what can and cannot be realistically achieved with time-bound humanitarian actions, and what roles humanitarian actions may play vis-à-vis longer-term interventions addressing different layers of basic needs.

In doing so, the evaluation will respond to learning needs of the following key constituencies.

1) JPF's member organizations implementing humanitarian projects in Afghanistan

The evaluation will enable the implementing agencies to look at their respective projects from the perspective of the most vulnerable and marginalized. Specifically, the evaluation will shed light on:

- ① Ways in which the projects intervened into the critical moments of shocks,
- ② Extent to which they influenced affected people's survival, recovery and a sense of dignity and hope, and
- ③ Implications they might have, if any, to the compounding impact of recurrent and protracted crises on affected people's vulnerability and resilience at individual, household and community levels.

With renewed understanding of the dynamics in which crises-affected people find themselves, the implementing agencies will be able to reflect on appropriateness of targeting methods, relevance and timeliness of interventions, and effectiveness of approaches to protection and Do No Harm.

2) JPF

The evaluation will unpack multiple enablers and constraints that shaped decisions and actions taken by the implementing agencies in responding to the crises, and bring to light if and how JPF's funding scheme influenced such enablers and constraints. The evaluation will generate data and evidence that may inform JPF's decision making in the following regards:

- ① Target and focus: When/under what circumstances is JPF funding effective and when is it not? In the continuum of humanitarian to development and peace, which phases or aspects should JPF focus on in the context of protracted, underfunded humanitarian crises such as Afghanistan?
- ② Speed: How well is JPF prepared to respond to a rapid-onset emergency? Which aspects of JPF's application process and procedures influence the timeliness of response by implementing agencies?

- ③ Duration: Up to what point should JPF engage in a sudden onset emergency in the context of protracted crises? On what basis should JPF decide the timing of an exit?
- ④ Criteria for single-year vs. multi-year programs: What are advantages and disadvantages of single-year and multi-year programs respectively? When and to what aims is it effective for JPF to commit to multi-year programs?

3) A broader community of humanitarian agencies operating in and beyond Afghanistan
By illustrating multiple factors at play in shaping vulnerability and resilience of crises-affected people, the evaluation will interrogate the underlying assumption of the Afghanistan HNRP that acute humanitarian needs be clearly distinguished from basic human needs, and that humanitarian actions be focused yet linked to long-term interventions addressing different layers of the needs. In doing so, the evaluation questions a scope of humanitarian actions in a protracted crisis, and ways in which humanitarian agencies engage in such a crisis, generating insights that may be of interest to a broader community of humanitarian agencies grappling with the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus in the context of protracted, complex emergencies in and beyond Afghanistan.

3. Methodology

The evaluation is composed of three phases: 1) Third Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience in project target areas, particularly focusing on the most vulnerable segments of the population, 2) Participatory After-Action Review by Japanese NGOs and local partners in each project, 3) A Sense-Making Workshop among the implementing agencies and JPF at the Afghanistan Working Group to collectively reflect on the learning questions on the basis of 1) and 2).

1) Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience

A context-specific assessment of vulnerability and resilience will be undertaken, with an aim to make voices heard from the most vulnerable segments of the target population in respective project areas. The Afghanistan HNRP identifies as the vulnerable groups women and girls, particularly female-headed households, recent returnees, households with a member with a disability, and rural households¹. While being mindful of these segments, however, the evaluation seeks to locally define which individuals, households and communities may qualify as the most vulnerable, how and why. The evaluator may make use of the secondary data available and stakeholder interviews at provincial, district and community levels in distinguishing characteristics of the most vulnerable

¹ Nonetheless, concentration of people in need is the highest in an urban center such as Kabul. For the purpose of this evaluation, different natures of vulnerability and resilience will be explored in the rural and urban contexts.

segments. On the basis of such locally defined indicators for vulnerability, the evaluator will then extract a sample of the most vulnerable individuals and households in the most vulnerable communities from the project target areas to explore the following questions.

- ① A current livelihood cycle: How do the most vulnerable people make their living currently? What are the seasonal patterns of income and expenditure in their households? When, and to what extent are these individuals and households able to satisfy their needs? Which types of needs, of whom within a given household, are met or unmet currently? How do they make their ends meet?
- ② Shocks to a livelihood cycle: In the past one year, what types of shocks have the most vulnerable people experienced? When, under what circumstances have such incidences occur? How significantly have such incidences disrupted their livelihood cycle, in what ways? What has been the compounding impact of multiple shocks on their lives?
- ③ Resilience against the shocks: What capacity have affected individuals, households and communities demonstrated to cope with and recover from the shocks? How so? What happened as a result? What types of needs and issues have they been able to address on their own, and what have they not? Why so? What differences may lie between those who are and are not able to cope with or recover from shocks?
- ④ Role of aid: To what extent have the most vulnerable people/households been informed of and able to access humanitarian aid in the event of aforementioned shocks? What might have been the barriers to information and access, if any? Did they feel that they have a say in planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian aid, and how so? In what ways have they made use of humanitarian aid, and to what effect? What difference, if any, has the humanitarian aid made in their survival, recovery and a sense of dignity and hope? How do they perceive limitations of the humanitarian aid, if any?
- ⑤ Future prospect: What hopes and fears do the most vulnerable people have for their future? What capacity and resources do they think they have to act individually or collectively on their hopes and fears? What are the types of external support do they desire? Why so?

2) Participatory After-Action Review

Japanese NGOs and their local partners will be taken through a facilitated process to self-reflect on their respective projects in light of the findings from the Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience.

At first, Japanese NGOs and their local partners will work in pair to produce a timeline of events that unfolded in the field and in Tokyo since/throughout the moments of concerned crises. In doing so,

particular attention will be given to the timing and sequence of decisions and actions that led to delivery of the humanitarian aid on the ground, and interactions between the field and head offices in shaping such decisions and actions. A timeline exercise will also take into account the timing and procedures for funding applications to JPF.

Subsequently, each pair of Japanese NGOs and local partners will review the findings from the Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience, and discuss what this means to their projects. They will revisit the timeline, and reflect on what has worked and what has not in their projects, and see if and how they could have done things differently.

3) A Sense-Making Workshop

While the Participatory After-Action Review will be held project by project, a Sense Making Workshop will bring together Japanese NGOs, local partners and JPF across the projects to share and synthesize the lessons learnt from the Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience and the Participatory After-Action Review. A workshop will be designed in such a way for the participants to collectively reflect on the learning questions set forth, so as to enable shared learning between implementing agencies and collective feedback on how well JPF’s funding scheme is working in the context of Afghanistan. The participants will also extract from this discussion replicable lessons that are of relevance to a broader humanitarian community and identify channels through which they may wish to take such lessons forward.

4. Scope of the evaluation

A total of 5 projects are subject to the evaluation, out of 17 projects under the three JPF-funded programs in Afghanistan in FY2023: the humanitarian response program (2 out of 8 projects), the returnee assistance program (2 of 5 projects) and the earthquake response program in Herat Province (1 of 4 projects). Of these, 3 NGOs continue to implement successive projects in Nangahar, Kabul and Herat in FY 2024. The Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience specifically focuses on these three provinces. While the Participatory After-Action Review will involve only those 5 NGOs and their local partners, the Sense-Making Workshop is open to all the members of the Afghanistan Working Group.

Table 1: A list of sampled projects

Programs	Projects	NGOs	Locations	Duration
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The humanitarian response program	Urgent food support for vulnerable households in remote areas of Nangarhar Province (ナンガルハル県 遠隔地の脆弱な人々に対する緊急食糧支援)	PWJ	Nangarhar	2023/3/31-2023/10/31
	Project of Cash for Food for Vulnerable Households in Central Provinces, Afghanistan (アフガニスタン中央部における脆弱層への食糧購入用の現金配布事業)	REALs	Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan & Wardak	2023/11/15-2024/5/31
The returnee assistance program	Food voucher distribution to the returnees in Nangarhar province (ナンガルハル県における帰還民に対する食料バウチャー配付)	AAR	Nangarhar	2024/1/21-2024/7/21
	Distribution of food and WASH items for returnees in Nangarhar Province (ナンガルハル県における帰還民への食糧・衛生用品配布事業)	SVA	Nangarhar	2024/2/16-2024/7/22
The earthquake response program in Herat Province	Integrated Life-Saving Emergency In-kind Food and NFI Assistance to the Victims of Earthquake in Herat Province, Afghanistan (アフガニスタン・ヘラート県における地震被災者への緊急食料および越冬支援)	ADRA	Herat	2023/11/1-2024/5/31

5. Roles

JPF's evaluation department provides oversight over the 2023 evaluation of the Afghanistan programs. An external research and evaluation consultant will be commissioned to undertake the Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience, producing a report that will respond to the key questions under the section 3 Methodology 1). An external research and evaluation consultant is expected to deliver: 1) an inception report, clearly justifying and specifying the methodology and tools for the Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience, and 2) an assessment report, articulating the findings in response to the questions outlined in the ToR. S/he may be asked to assist in facilitation and documentation of the Participatory After-Action Review and the Sense-Making Workshop to be designed and delivered by JPF, in which case a contract extension will be negotiated

separately.

JPF will closely coordinate with the Japanese NGOs who implemented the 5 sampled projects throughout the evaluation, and keep the Afghanistan Working Group informed of the progress as needed.

The following roles are envisioned of the concerned parties.

JPF

- 1) Ensure that the evaluation is performed in compliance with the agreed ToR.
- 2) Recruit and orient the external consultant to undertake the Third-Party Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience
- 3) Coordinate with the Afghanistan Working Group (WG) and the Japanese NGOs whose projects are subject to the evaluation to ensure that the evaluation remains relevant to them.
- 4) Design and facilitate the Participatory After-Action Reviews and the Sense Making Workshop.
- 5) Document the outcomes of the workshops for learning and accountability.

External research & evaluation consultant

- 1) Design methodology and tools for the Assessment of Vulnerability and Resilience, based on the desk review and interviews with implementing agencies.
- 2) Conduct fieldwork in close coordination with the implementing agencies in Tokyo and in the field.
- 3) Analysis and report writing

Japanese NGOs whose projects are subject to the evaluation

- 1) Ensure their respective local partners are informed of the purpose and process of the evaluation, and introduce the external research and evaluation consultant to them.
- 2) Provide relevant information and documents for the assessment of vulnerability and resilience.
- 3) Be available for an interview with the external research and evaluation consultant.
- 4) Review and feedback on the inception report and research tools drafted by the external research and evaluation consultant.
- 5) Review and feedback on the assessment report on vulnerability and resilience.
- 6) Take part in the Participatory After-Action Review, and the Sense-Making Workshop.
- 7) Review and feedback on the workshop reports.

Local partners/offices

- 1) Facilitate access to the project areas for the external research and evaluation consultant, if and

as needed.

- 2) Provide relevant information and documents for the assessment of vulnerability and resilience.
- 3) Be available for an interview with the external research and evaluation consultant.
- 4) Take part in the Participatory After-Action Review, and the Sense-Making Workshop.

Afghanistan Working Group

- 1) Take part in the Sense-Making Workshop.
- 2) Review and feedback on the workshop report.
- 3) Follow-up actions on the Sense-Making Workshop, if and as needed.

6. Schedule

An evaluation is expected to take 7 months from late August to late March 2025. An indicative schedule is as follows. A schedule for the fieldwork is subject to change, due to unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

#	Tasks	Responsible	Involved	Dates
1	Call for tender for the external research & evaluation consultant	JPF		1-21 July
2	Notification to shortlisted candidates	JPF		26 July
3	Interviews of the applicants	JPF		Week of 29 July
4	Signing of contract	JPF		12 August
5	Desk review documents available for the consultant	JPF	5 NGOs & local partners	By 12 August
6	An inception meeting for the consultant	JPF		12 August
7	Methodology & tool development	The consultant		12-29 August
8	A planning interview with the implementing agencies	The consultant	5 NGOs and local partners	25-29 August
9	Submission of the inception report & tools	The consultant		1 September
10	Feedback on the inception report & tools	JPF	5 NGOs	1-14 September
11	Finalization of the inception report & tools	The consultant	JPF	22 September
12	Field work	The consultant	5 NGOs & local partners	29 Sep-17 October
13	Submission of the first draft assessment report	The consultant		4 November
14	Feedback on the draft assessment report	JPF	5 NGOs	5-19 November

15	Submission of the final assessment report	The consultant	JPF	28 November
16	Planning for the Participatory After-Action Review	JPF		2 -6 December
17	The Participatory After-Action Review	JPF	5 NGOs & local partners	9-27 December
18	Draft workshop reports	JPF		10 January 2025
19	Feedback on the workshop reports	5 NGOs	Local partners	23 January
20	Finalization of the workshop reports on the Participatory After-Action Review	JPF		31 January
21	The Sense Making Workshop	JPF	Afghanistan WG & local partners	Early February 2025
22	Draft workshop report	JPF		28 February
23	Feedback on the draft workshop report	Afghanistan WG		14 March
24	Finalization of the workshop report on the Sense Making Workshop	JPF		21 March