



AFGHANISTAN APPEAL

The initial Afghan Crisis Appeal in the latter months of 2021 resulted from the worst period of drought in the country in decades, lengthy internal conflicts leading up to the overthrow of the Afghan government in August, a shortage of food and soaring prices, and health services on the point of collapse. Then a bitterly cold winter set in with heavy snow and avalanches in recent days. In mid-January this year, the United Nations launched a further funding appeal for \$5 billion for Afghanistan in order to reinforce the fast deteriorating basic services for the 22 million people in need of assistance inside the country, and 5.7 million people requiring help beyond its borders. This is the largest ever appeal for a single country for humanitarian assistance. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)) reports that half the population of Afghanistan now faces acute hunger, over nine million people have been displaced and millions of children are out of school. There is particular concern for one million children now facing severe acute malnutrition.



Rather unusually for St George's, for this appeal we know someone directly immersed in the situation. Angus Lambkin, a former choirboy has worked with UN Peacekeepers through the Irish Aid Rapid Response Corps for many years. He has

given excellent talks in St George's to groups from the church on his deployments which include the DCR, Iraq and South Sudan. In the autumn of last year, Angus was sent with a small group of colleagues to Afghanistan where he is a Civil-Military Coordination Officer for OCHA. He has sent his parents, parishioners Kay and Brian Lambkin, updates on his responsibilities offering a glimpse into the work of OCHA. Established by the UN in 1991, OCHA brings together all those working to provide and deliver humanitarian aid in order to ensure a coherent response to natural disasters and emergencies. It is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.



The role of the Coordination Officer is to engage with the local community and determine what they identify as their needs. When the British and American troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan last August, the UN personnel working there at that time also left in order to present the new government, the Taleban, with a fresh UN team with no association with the previous regime. The new OCHA team began the task of reaching out to the many different groups of Afghans – a mission which would take them out of Kabul to places including Herat to the west and Balkh to the north. Journeys of several hundred miles were undertaken either in a convoy of 2 UN vehicles or by plane to airstrips near the towns.

While Kabul has suffered particularly in the recent conflict, first impressions of the mountainous areas beyond the city were of its sheer beauty and magnificence. Inevitably the terrain in many areas presents travel and communication difficulties and some places can be reached only on foot. The OCHA team meets with community leaders to discuss needs, primarily food and water, and observe the distribution of food supplies. The military experience of the Taleban serves them well and the queueing and administration is calm and orderly. However they recognise that they are not politicians experienced in government.



At Food Centres, women and men do not mix but keep to separate areas or queues; once the women have received their quota, they are joined by their husbands who may have brought wheel barrows to take away supplies. The Afghans are proud people and try to make the most of their circumstances despite their poverty. Men are protective of their wives with some acknowledging that their wives would be willing to participate in community affairs – but need to be kept safe.

Listening to community leaders and engaging in negotiations needs a rapport between those present in order to develop a level of trust. An invitation to a meal will probably imply a growing respect and acceptance. It is unusual for a woman to be present.



Once winter set in the harsh temperatures and snowfalls increased the existing hardships. For the OCHA team, travel, fact finding and talks need to continue in the quest to reach out to as many communities as possible, wherever they are located, to counteract this emergency.



There will be a collection at the 11am Choral Eucharist on Sunday 27th February for UN CRISIS RELIEF. It provides immediate rapid response aid when disasters strike, and is administered by the OCHA. You can also donate in the usual way by electronic transfer to the St George's bank account, using if possible the reference Afghan 2022 for clear identification. (Sort-code: 98-00-10. Account: 09028029). Or you can write a cheque to St George's Parish Church and send it to: The Hon Treasurer, St George's Parish Church, 105 High Street, Belfast BT1 2AG. Please include a note to confirm that the donation is for the Crisis in Afghanistan Appeal. GiftAid will automatically be assumed if we already have your instruction. If you want to set up GiftAid, please email Selby Nesbitt for further information selby.nesbitt@btopenworld.com

Thank You.