Afghanistan Support Group
Between 80 and 100 representatives from international organizations, NGOs and the donor community are expected to attend the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) in Tokyo on 7 and 8 December. Agenda items will be: the current political and security situation and future prospects; ongoing humanitarian assistance and conditions for the return of UN international staff to Afghanistan; needs and prospects for humanitarian assistance after the return of international staff and the status of common programming/1999 Appeal; natural disasters and anti-personnel mines; human rights and gender issues; drug issues.

Afghanistan 1999 Appeal
Appeal preparations are in the final stages. UN agencies are currently reviewing their project submissions and highlighting priority activities. Advance copies will be shared with ASG participants before the Tokyo meeting. The Appeal will be formally launched in Geneva on 16-17 December.

Central Highlands Mission
UN international staff returned to Islamabad on 24 November following an exceptional mission to Bamiyan. The mission met with members of the team of national staff who had travelled up to the region from Kabul to assess humanitarian needs, and with the new authorities to assess the security of offices, equipment, vehicles, and warehouses.

The Taliban assured the mission that agencies could safely resume activities in their offices and undertook to ensure the security of any supplies stored in warehouses. Nine vehicles were returned to the UN.

Trade routes are now active with supplies coming into the region. Bamiyan bazaar is reported to be busy, but many people are finding it difficult to pay for food supplies.

Many people who left their homes have now returned, especially to Panjao and Waras. Around half the displaced people living in caves under the Bamiyan Buddhas have returned. The most vulnerable families are those who have no land and no adult male family member. Some farmers face hardship because their crops were affected by rust: in some areas two-thirds of the wheat harvest was lost. WFP is to distribute 300 tonnes of food from its Yakawlang warehouse. Agencies are currently discussing the possibility of bringing in additional supplies from Ghazni and elsewhere, before snow blocks roads to the remoter parts of the region. Needs are estimated to be highest in Panjao, Waras and Behsd.

International Children's Day
UNHCR celebrated Universal Children's Day in Peshawar on 20 November. Paintings and drawings by refugee children from different schools remain on display throughout this week.
CDAP Training Programme
The last phase of CDAP regional trainers' training programme started in Peshawar on 16 November. By the end of this month-long phase, fifteen female and male CDAP trainers from Mazar, Takhar, Wardak, Kandahar and Farah will have completed a hundred-day comprehensive training on community-based rehabilitation of disabled people. This programme will enable CDAP field staff to conduct all rehabilitation-related tasks and training sessions independently and with a full professional capacity.

Assistance Update
Central Region
FAO Crops purchased apricot and almond seeds for new fruit tree nurseries. The organization also bought seed tubers of five major potato cultivars grown inside Afghanistan from Logar and Kabul, which will be planted in high and lower elevations. It distributed 100kg seeds of Mahaleb (an ideal rootstock for cherries grown under Afghan conditions) to implementing partners and nurseries located in higher elevations.

WFP delivered over 1,000 tonnes of wheat and wheat flour to Jalalabad and Kabul last week. The WFP VAM field survey of Kabul was completed. Analysis of data will be available by mid-December.

The community fishery project awarded by UNHCR Kabul for returnee families in Azro has been completed by HAND, an Afghan NGO.

UNICEF distributed midwifery kits to TBAs in Khushi and Kharwar districts of Logar.

UNCHS has offered to contribute to the Kabul winter relief effort.

UNCHS has completed a new road map of Kabul city has also been completed. Copies are available from the Kabul office.

WHO provided supplies for clinics and hospitals in the central and northern region.

Eastern Region
A social mobilization training programme was held in RRD training centre in Nangrah, with the financial support of UNICEF. About 25 social mobilizers and health educators from Laghman, Kunar and Nangrah attended the course.

A three-day training workshop for 100 female and male teachers of girls’ home-based schools was organized in Qarghali district of Laghman.

WFP is working out how to assess the Jalalabad bakery project prior to its resumption. This will be preceded by a WFP VAM survey of the city in early December.

Some 350 tonnes of wheat were received to pay back wages of labourers on the WFP/WHO city sanitation project which was suspended in September. Another 75 tonnes of wheat are awaited from Peshawar, which complete the requested over 900 tonnes for back wages. The office also received the inter-office transfer of seven tonnes of oil from Herat for institutional feeding.

FAO Crops conducted a vegetable seed and crops production training course for implementing partners, NGOs and local agricultural department staff in Laghman Province, planted 16 sets of varietal and agronomical wheat trials in the Shesham-bagh research station, and irrigated some land for seed increase programme in the region.
Northern Region
WFP is using the baseline data collected by WFP VAM in Badakhshan province in summer to assist in designing winter interventions in the province. Based on information provided by FOCUS, WFP's winter emergency intervention in the area may extend assistance to six previously unassisted remote districts, including Wakhan and Darwaz. In addition, a second WFP VAM survey, this time of Faizabad City, is planned for the month of December prior to any winter intervention.

Southern Region
WFP completed one food for work project in the past week. A WFP/WHO project in Zabul used FFW to construct a hospital in remote Shinkai district.

FAO Crops budded different kinds of stone fruit seedlings of seven private fruit tree nurseries in Kandahar and procured scions of different stone fruits from Kandahar for budding private fruit tree nurseries seedlings in Farah.

FAO Livestock provided medical supplies to veterinary clinics in the region.

WHO provided supplies to clinics and hospitals in Kandahar and Helmand provinces.

Meetings have been held on preparedness for the National Immunization Days in districts of Kandahar and Zabul, bordering Pakistan. The aim is to eradicate polio and its transmission chain at border crossing points.

Western Region
Mine action teams have been working in Murghab and Ghormach in Badghis to help alert returning IDPs to the hazards of landmines, and to survey the land for mines.

Reports from the field indicate that as a result of this programme, mine-related accidents have fallen from 32 per month to one per month.

Many IDPs from Minaret II, Rowza, and Shaidahi camps are reportedly returning to their homes of origin in Faryab and Badghis provinces following the phase out of assistance to camps. However, repatriation by Afghan refugees in Iran to Herat has increased, with approximately 1,500 people returning each week. WFP is determining in conjunction with UNHCR and WFP Herat whether these returnees have received a repatriation package in Iran, and if not whether they need assistance.

In view of shrinking wheat stocks in Herat, WFP dispatched 375 tonnes of wheat from Termez by rail via Torghundi last week; the wheat has now arrived in Torghundi.

FAO crops carried out a winter sunn pest survey and trained 75 farmers on mechanical control of sunn pest in Karukh district of Herat Province.