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Harsh Winter Put Many Lives at Risk

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Heavy snowfalls in many parts of the country have cut-off land access to many remote mountainous districts in central and northern provinces. At times when snow is perceived a blessing in countries like Afghanistan - where if there is no rain and snow, there will be severe draught -, for Afghans living in camps and remote districts of provinces like Daikundi, Badakhshan, Ghawr and Bamiyan this blessing mostly turns into a curse. In 2011, heavy snows and avalanches killed dozens of people in parts of the country, including more than 30 – many of them children – who froze to death in Kabul. Many died last winter and more people are at risk this year.

The international community has generously poured billions of dollars in aid to Afghanistan. But like in many other areas, little or no work has been done for facing emergency conditions caused by natural disasters. The government could have built working strategies for managing emergency conditions and natural disasters. Nonetheless, due to rampant corruption, all the international aids have gone futile. Even the foods, clothing and other necessities procured for needy families to help them survive during the winters are distributed to people with good contacts and recommendations or simply sold off in open markets by crooked government officials.

According to a recent report by Reuters, thousands of homeless Afghans are huddling on the sides of freezing roads this winter with little shelter and nothing to eat, not far from warehouses stuffed with food. Government stocks, mostly paid for with the billions of dollars of foreign aid that have poured into Afghanistan, should have been distributed by the Afghanistan National

Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), a government taskforce. But precious little has gone out because thousands of tons of supplies are missing or are stuck in warehouses.

With so many life-threatening problems people face due to snowfalls, the government is not paying any serious attention. The ANDMA has been inefficient, inactive and symbolic. Same is the case with other concerned ministries. The condition indicates existence of deep-rooted corruption, government's recklessness and lack of monitoring in the process of providing aid to the needy families in remote and mountainous areas of Afghanistan and to the people who live in dozens of makeshifts in capital and other provinces