

1. About The Liaison Office (TLO)

Founded in 2003, The Liaison Office (TLO), is an independent and impartial Afghan Non-Governmental Organization. The organization has the following key areas of focus: (a) Research & Analysis (b) Peacebuilding & Access to Justice (c) Livelihood improvement, Environment and Community-Based Natural Resource Management(d) Humanitarian assistance and Community-Based Education.

2. Context

In Afghanistan is a dire need to focus on the ongoing humanitarian crisis; however, to our understanding, this will not address the broader challenges the country faces. The economic shock, ceasing of development, and livelihoods programs could help the local population's resilience to deal with poverty exacerbated by isolation from the international community and the absence of efforts to have help society deal with the recovery from climate change. We at TLO believe the Afghan population has suffered from four decades of conflict civic spaces, and civil society potential developed and flourished in last decades needs to be supported in their efforts for healing the trauma, creating dialogue and sustain and protect and human rights and civic liberty.

Afghanistan, after 20 years of international engagement, faces the following challenges:

Migration crisis: The migration crisis will haunt the world, mainly Europe and neighboring Afghanistan, for at least the next two to three years and possibly longer. After this period, it is either going to improve or worsen depending on the overall situation of Afghanistan and the opportunities it presents for the local population. The middle class has been shrinking with the economic meltdown and the brain-drain exodus.

Stability: Any developments in terms of security will impact the future in Afghanistan, including migration. Without a stable and safe Afghanistan, the migration crisis and terrorist threats will continue to present more significant challenges for the region and the world. International engagement could play a role in stabilizing the country, thereby reducing migration challenges and security threats; however, this may not be easy to achieve without directly engaging with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan. Even for humanitarian aid to be delivered effectively, engagement with the de facto authorities is unavoidable.¹

Climate: One of the most significant issues Afghanistan faces is the drought and other extreme weather conditions linked to climate change, such as floods. The more pervasive the drought, the more people will suffer –when access and effective mechanism for the distribution of aid is already challenging. More people are likely to turn to crime, join armed groups, or more radical groups such as ISPK, or develop other harmful coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the drought will likely also lead to more migration both internally and those fleeing from Afghanistan, looking for economic opportunities in neighboring countries and beyond.

¹ [Beyond Emergency Relief: Averting Afghanistan's Humanitarian Catastrophe | Crisis Group](#)

Economic Crisis: For the last 20 years, the economy of Afghanistan has been dependent on international aid, and while it was expected that this would come to an end one day, the abrupt decline of support left the economy in shock. During the last months of the Republic, symptoms of the severe economic crisis were already visible such as nonpayment of salaries to civil servants.; with the collapse of the Republic, the economy has been in free fall with limited foreign currency reserves inside the country.

A paralyzed financial system hit the private sector in the country hard. With correspondent banking relationships paused, they cannot make international banking transactions, hence blocking critical imports and leading to the loss of employment, leading to further recession of the economy. A functioning financial sector is also essential for delivering humanitarian response (cash for work, health workers' salaries, etc.), including the function of International and local NGOs.

The aim here is not to make Afghanistan aid-dependent again but to point out that humanitarian assistance alone will not help the suffering of the Afghan people. Enabling/Unlocking the financial sector and a new approach, acknowledging that the system now needs to be different from what was before, is required to address the economic challenges. Lessons learned over the past 20 years about aid impact and effectiveness must be applied to the current context.

Liquidity Crisis: The limits to cash-withdrawals at local banks, as set by the Central Bank, make delivering essential humanitarian/plus assistance to the local population in need very difficult to Afghan-NGOs. When the situation requires more action/engagement, many organizations are either closing down or reducing their operations due to the lack of access to financial means to carry out activities.

Human Rights& Civic space: The Afghan civil society (mainly women) is operating under challenging conditions, especially since the collapse of the Republic in August 2021. Neither under sanction, anything for positive has been changed on the ground except further deprivations of larger Afghan communities. The ambiguous position of the Taliban on human/women rights situation the mixed approach to women's participation in different areas of the country is increasing mistrust and fear of the worst that adds up to anxiety and rises brain-drain from the country.

The Afghan people see Taliban's announcement regarding secondary education and opening of universities with caveat only. Access for women to work, both in public and private sectors, protection and freedom of movement, is yet another critical demand of the civic groups in Afghanistan.

A welcoming sign is that many civil society organizations (CSOs), including those working for and led by women, are gradually coming out of hibernation of the past several months. Several civil society groups are planning a restart or have already started their work; the protection and support of such initiative need to be prioritized. Therefore, programs and organizations, especially local organizations, should be supported and protected to support women's empowerment. Civic spaces where dialogue between communities/civil society from all walks of

life can assist in dealing with local peacebuilding and creating dialogue spaces to deal with grievances and needs and reconciliation within communities are critical for sustainable peace after four decades of conflict.

Despite many challenges, Afghan media are still active inside the country and vocal about their threats while still hosting and airing political discourse. Access to information and the safety of journalists is a crucial demand of the local media. The space that currently exists must be supported and can be expanded with time

General amnesty announced by Taliban leadership on August 15 (2021) is breached from time to time, unless the amnesty is not enforced across the country and violators not brought to justice, this will remain an issue of concern by the public.

3. Conclusion

Afghanistan is experiencing a humanitarian crisis on an unprecedented scale and speed; this needs the International community's immediate attention and support. While the political side of the issue cannot be dismissed, the problem's acuteness requires bolder decisions and steps to attend to haunting famine that is threatening the lives of millions of Afghans today.

Despite overwhelming challenges, Afghanistan still has opportunities for peace within, in the region, and the broader world that requires engagement and dialogue, not isolation. A political roadmap ensures inclusivity, ownership, and legitimacy and eventually moves towards a more sustainable economy through regional connectivity and less dependency on foreign aid over time. This will require the Netherlands and the broader regional and international community's continued engagement with the Afghan people to get through the current hardships faced by the country.