# DEMAC
DIASPORA EMERGENCY ACTION & COORDINATION

# DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN REAL-TIME REVIEW

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
*Danida*

# ACKNOW-
# LEDGEMENTS

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# ABOUT DRC'S DIASPORA PROGRAM

The Diaspora Program is implemented by DRC's Civil Society Engagement Unit. DRC engages civil society actors rooted in and/or with direct ties to the Global South, and therefore considers diaspora transnational civil society actors an integral part of the civil society we work with.

Since 2010, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has been working with diaspora groups as transnational civil society actors. Engagement with diaspora is based on a recognition of the significant role they play for people and communities in countries of origin (or heritage), for refugees and migrants in transit, and for newly arrived refugees and migrants in countries of residence, and, consequently, their potential for improving the situation for many of those affected by conflict and displacement.

# ABOUT DEMAC

The mission of DEMAC is two-fold:

1) to enable inclusive coordination and collaboration among diaspora organizations providing humanitarian assistance, and across diaspora organizations and institutional humanitarian actors, and

2) to facilitate higher levels of engagement and visibility for diaspora organizations in the humanitarian system.

The objective is to contribute to transforming the humanitarian eco-system by laying the groundwork for a deeper understanding of diasporas as humanitarian actor groups with different modus operandi for the implementation of aid in practice, identifying and opening potential spaces for engagement and cross-fertilization, and improving coordination between diaspora and institutional relief providers.

# WHY DIASPORA?

Work with diasporas has shown that diaspora organizations are multi-sectoral, fast responding actors who work transnationally, including in countries facing humanitarian crises. Having a connection with and understanding of their country of origin or heritage plays a vital role in humanitarian assistance where diaspora organizations often are part of the first response in the aftermath of a disaster.

Diaspora are also key actors when it comes to raising the alarm in times of crisis. The ease and frequency of communication between local communities and diaspora organizations means that they can be alerted in real-time, and their capacity to collect and disperse funds rapidly ensures that they are a key factor in unlocking the first responses in crisis settings. In hard-to-reach places where access may be an issue, diaspora organizations have a unique advantage due to their local connections and ties. They use their transnational position to respond to the growing demands for remote management and cross-border response in countries where international actors have a limited presence, and to advocate on behalf of crisis affected populations in the policy arenas of their countries and regions of residence.

Supporting diaspora as part of a broader humanitarian ecosystem to play a key role in humanitarian responses and provide vital support to communities in countries of origin contributes to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of humanitarian responses. In light of their transnational identity and close local ties, it is also strongly linked to the localization agenda, one of the main commitments under the Grand Bargain. Localization aims to strengthen the resilience of local communities and to support local and national responders on the front line. UNOCHA has called furthermore, for an indispensable opening of the resource base of humanitarian action by integrating 'non-traditional actors' - such as diasporas - to enhance the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and render it interoperable.

Diaspora organizations are part of and play a central role in localization. Many can be considered frontline responders themselves, making direct and concrete contributions to emergency responses in their home countries. Others work closely with local authorities, local organizations and community groups, providing technical and financial support, playing a role in advocacy and linking local actors with additional sources of support.

Diaspora organizations are heterogeneous – they have different capacities, values and approaches and as part of a broader humanitarian community can play a valuable and agile role in humanitarian responses. However, assistance provided by diaspora organizations and the formal humanitarian actors often follow parallel tracks, resulting in a lack of mutual understanding and recognition, and thus a lack of coordination and collaboration that would be of benefit to the overall response.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ADO | Afghan Diaspora Organization |
| AYEDI | Afghan Youth Engagement & Development Initiative |
| CAD | Canadian Dollar |
| CALA | Canadian Afghan Lawyers Association |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DEMAC | Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination |
| DFID | Department for International Development (UK) |
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council |
| GBP | Great Britain Pound |
| GIZ | German International Development Agency |
| KIIs | Key Informant Interviews |
| INGO | International non-governmental organization |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| Q&A | Question and answer |
| RTR | Real-time review |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| US | United States |
| USD | United States Dollar |

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**On 16 August, 2021 the Taliban announced that they had gained control of Afghanistan. The takeover resulted in heated public debate about the two-decade war, the humanitarian implications of the withdrawal, and the future of women and civil society in Afghanistan.**

The role of the Afghan diaspora is now in flux; diaspora organizations have been called on by the media to comment on the political and human rights situation, while simultaneously navigating the personal and professional effects of the new political reality. In light of the evolving situation in Afghanistan, DEMAC and DRC's Diaspora Program commissioned a real-time review (RTR) to capture the evolution of diaspora engagement in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban gaining control over Afghanistan. The purpose of the RTR is three-fold: (1) to assess what actions the Afghan diaspora organizations have been engaging in in terms of advocacy, coalition building, and direct engagement; (2) to assess changes in diaspora dynamics since the Taliban takeover and the nature of these changes; and, (3) to record how any relevant changes in dynamics have resulted in tangible outcomes and actions.

To capture Afghan Diaspora Organization (ADO) engagement in the current political crisis, the RTR consisted of two main approaches to data collection. First, online media monitoring was conducted from 15 August 2021 to 31 September 2021 of 60 ADOs from Europe (26), North America (21), Afghanistan's neighboring countries (9), Australia (5), and one global organization. It consisted of a daily review of online diaspora statements, events, and fundraising pages through 100 social media accounts. To provide additional context, key informant interviews were also conducted with representatives of ten ADOs, as well as DRC Diaspora Program staff.

**What actions have ADOs been engaging in?**

Before the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, most of the ADOs included in this study were working in the fields of integration, culture, advocacy, legal aid, resettlement support, and education, primarily focusing on the diaspora communities in their countries of residence. Afghan diaspora organizations are also active in various areas of humanitarian aid and development support in Afghanistan.

The reviewed organizations were also varied in their dates of establishment, ranging from more than 25 years of active service delivery to being founded due to the recent political crisis.

Overall, the diaspora organizations in the US and Canada had a stronger online presence compared to the European organizations despite the slightly lower number of organizations from North America covered in this report. For ADOs in the countries neighboring Afghanistan, however, reports and updates of activities were almost non-existent considering the limited operational space and political sensitivities within their countries of residence.

**What have been the changes in diaspora dynamics since the Taliban takeover and the nature of these changes? What have been the tangible results of these changes, including the results of advocacy, coalition building, and direct assistance?**

All the interviewed diaspora organizations had gone through a change in their areas of focus or approach since the Taliban takeover. For the already active and well-established organizations, the main changes included new focus areas or an escalation of efforts in their activities. Organizations that were largely inactive before the recent events in Afghanistan quickly began to mobilize their resources for making meaningful contributions to their cause. The change in focus and approach was also influenced by some of the practical and logistical challenges resulting from the evolving political situation.

**Advocacy and Awareness Raising**

- The online monitoring revealed that 48% of the organizations posted most frequently about ongoing advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns.

- ADOs organized protests in various cities around the globe, often with unified messaging, including the international solidarity protests held by the diaspora community on 28 August 2021. Collaboration was evident between ADOs which previously did not work together.

- Prominent individuals from the Afghan diaspora and ADOs gave multiple accounts of the situation in Afghanistan to voice the concerns of their communities in countries of residence.

- Official statements and open letters were sent to political leaders and the UN to advocate for the rights of the people of Afghanistan, resettlement, humanitarian aid, diplomacy and human rights were published.

- ADOs in North America, Europe, and Australia reported engaging directly with their representatives and policymakers in their countries of residence. They have also used online campaigning techniques like hashtags, such as the #ActionForAfghanistan campaign.

- Online and in-person panel discussions involving Afghan and non-Afghan actors and subject matter experts were held on a range of topics covering the current situation in Afghanistan and possible outcomes of the Taliban takeover.

**Emergency Fundraising**

- Emergency fundraising campaigns accounted for 15% of online engagement.

- In the weeks leading up to the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, Afghan diaspora organizations started to put a stronger focus on their fundraising activities. Close to 200 GoFundMe campaigns related to Afghanistan - but only 14 were recorded as ADO-run fundraising campaigns.

- During the online monitoring phase of this study, fundraising activities of 26 distinct organizations were recorded, with more than half of them using online crowdfunding services.

- The more successful campaigns also had a strong promotional strategy and a broad focus as to where the funds will be spent, with a high degree of follow-up information and updates provided by the campaigning ADOs.

**Community Engagement**

- Community engagement campaigns accounted for 14% of online engagement.

- ADOs requested their communities' support for a diverse range of volunteer activities, including sorting donated items, organizing protests, providing medical and interpretation services for the recently relocated individuals, and joining the welcoming committees of newly arrived Afghans.

- Volunteers were usually asked to come forward by calling a phone number or filling out an online form. Afghan diaspora organizations also shared some good practices and innovative approaches they had taken with regards to community engagement and mobilization.

- ADOs also engaged with Afghan and non-Afghan social media 'influencers' to support messaging, and with non-Afghan communities and organizations to support activities which supported their overall aim of integration as well as a more resultful community mobilization strategy.

**Direct Assistance**

- Activity reports focusing on direct services provided to the people in Afghanistan, welcoming newly relocated Afghans, and holding information sessions for asylum seekers and donors accounted for 24% of social media engagement.

- ADOs continued to provide direct assistance to thousands of vulnerable individuals despite the serious challenges, although many ADOs considered information-sharing regarding services delivered in Afghanistan to potentially put the volunteers or the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve at risk and as a result, refrained from publishing public updates.

- The loss of access to their volunteers and bank accounts in-country significantly hampered their ability to deliver services. Despite these hindrances, several diaspora organizations found alternative methods to continue their services in multiple provinces across Afghanistan.

- ADOs invested significant effort in facilitating the resettlement and welcoming of the newly relocated Afghans in their countries of residence.

**Accountability**

- Given that many diaspora organizations run on membership contributions, the reporting line between donors, and recipients of their services is not always clear.

- ADOs tried to address accountability gaps by organizing Q&A sessions and publishing updates, sometimes accompanied by location information, images and videos of their activities.

- The level of care taken by different ADOs was also varied when it came to protecting the identity of the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve.

**Coordination**

- ADOs actively tried to form new coalitions with other ADOs with similar objectives.

- For organizations who were already working in partnerships, coordination calls and meetings became more regular and frequent. However, not all the ADOs were able to keep the momentum going; some are already facing difficulties in keeping the coalitions active.

- ADOs have vastly different experiences regarding coordination. Less established organizations may have difficulty locating other like-minded ADOs.

- Forming new coalitions seemed to occur through individual connections of ADO members.

**Recommendations**

- Conduct organizational self-assessment training. To facilitate mutually beneficial engagement among ADOs, it is important to clearly outline strengths and improvement areas.

- Organize events with clear objectives. Networking events are often valued for younger organizations looking to introduce themselves and discover allies.

- Support host coalitions in countries of residence by involving relevant donors. By focusing on country-level coalitions as opposed to regional or global ones, the shared context and operational space will contribute to a shared experience with regards to some of the challenges and opportunities.

- Develop short and targeted e-learning courses to increase their online profile. ADOs without dedicated or in-house resources can also benefit from the general guidelines.

- Translate key DEMAC documents to Farsi/Pashto. Translation of documents could be limited to training material, and summary reports.

# 1.
# INTRODUCTION
# AND PURPOSE

**Only four months after the US Government confirmed its intention to withdraw from Afghanistan, and a month before complete withdrawal was planned, the Taliban had reclaimed control of Kabul. By 15 August 2021 President Ghani had fled Afghanistan and thousands of Afghans fled to the airport in Kabul hoping to be evacuated on humanitarian flights. On 16 August 2021 the Taliban announced that they had gained control of the country.**

The takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban resulted in heated public debate about the two-decade war, the humanitarian implications of the withdrawal, and the future of women and civil society in Afghanistan. The role of the Afghan diaspora is now in flux; diaspora organizations have been called on by the media to comment on the political and human rights situation, while simultaneously navigating the personal and professional effects of the new political reality. Prior to the Taliban takeover, some components of the Afghan diaspora had increasingly taken up a human rights advocacy role while also providing resettlement support for recent Afghan arrivals, with some limited provision of humanitarian and social assistance in Afghanistan. It is difficult to predict how this will evolve in the coming months. Similarly, humanitarian organizations and international donors are in the process of reconsidering their role in Afghanistan and how to effectively engage to relieve human suffering – but not exacerbate or lend credibility to the new Taliban government. Ultimately, little is known about how the Taliban will rule Afghanistan and whether they will be able to maintain control in the face of likely insurgency.

The purpose of the RTR is three-fold. First, the RTR will examine what actions the Afghan diaspora organizations have been engaging in in terms of advocacy, coalition building, and direct engagement. Second, the RTR will address the extent to which there have been changes in diaspora dynamics since the Taliban takeover and the nature of these changes. Finally, the RTR will assess the extent to which the engagement and any relevant changes in dynamics have resulted in tangible outcomes and actions, including the results of advocacy, coalition building, and direct assistance.

This report begins with a review of the context of the Afghan diaspora, the evolving political situation and role of the diaspora, as well as the diaspora reaction in the lead up to the coalition force withdrawal from Afghanistan. This is followed by the methodology and limitations of the RTR process. The analysis that follows is divided into several thematic sections. First, the profiles of Afghan diaspora organizations engaging in the current situation are reviewed. Next, the areas of engagement are discussed. This includes advocacy, emergency fundraising, community engagement, and direct assistance. The third analysis section focuses on the issue of diaspora organizations and accountability. This is followed by a review of the role of coalitions and coordination bodies in the response. The report concludes by reviewing challenges and outcomes of the diaspora response before providing a series of recommendations.

# 2.
# DIASPORA CONTEXT

Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict, displacement, and protracted refugee crises for four decades. As a result of conflict and resultant displacement and insecurity, Afghanistan has had migration flows which closely mirror critical political and security incidents. Over time, these multiple waves of displacement have resulted in Afghanistan becoming one of the largest refugee-producing countries in the world.[1]

Table 1: Top 10 Afghan Diaspora[2]

| Country | Total Diaspora |
|---|---|
| Iran | 3,300,000 |
| Pakistan | 1,800,000 |
| United Arab Emirates | 300,000 |
| Germany | 171,000 |
| United States | 156,000 |
| Russia | 150,000 |
| Turkey | 130,000 |
| Canada | 80,000 |
| United Kingdom | 79,000 |
| Sweden | 63,000 |

[1] Koser (2013). Afghanistan 2014: A Crisis of Internal Displacement, 30 August 2013. https://web.archive.org/web/20211110061132/https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/08/30/afghanistan-2014-a-crisis-of-internal-displacement/

[2] Wikipedia (2021). 'Afghan Diaspora', Retrieved 5 November 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211105055940/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_diaspora

As a result of decades of conflict and displacement, the Afghan diaspora is complex, multi-ethnic, and comprises multiple generations of arrivals.[3] Some of the diaspora are young new arrivals, while others have been residing in the country of residence for decades. In some cases, young diaspora members may have recently arrived in Europe, but have grown up in refugee settings in Pakistan or, more commonly, Iran. This means that the Afghan diaspora are not a unified group; waves of migration (see Table 2) have followed different destination patterns corresponding to region of origin in Afghanistan and time of displacement.[4] The Afghan diaspora population has distinct ways of interacting with their country of origin – usually through the lens of ethnicity, religion, class, and political allegiance – versus the international community, which perceives the diaspora homogeneously as 'Afghan'.

[3] Fischer (2015). Relations and Agency in a Transnational Context: The Afghan Diaspora and Its Engagements for Change in Afghanistan, 14 July 2016. https://web.archive.org/web/20211110061108/https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:77d0ecf1-5f8d-4ad7-a5fa-1a5378c90940/download_file?file_format=pdf&safe_filename=THESIS01&type_of_work=Thesis
[4] Ibid

Table 2: Timeline of Conflict and Displacement in Afghanistan

| Timeline | Event | Displacement Trends |
|---|---|---|
| 1978 | The Afghan Communist Party takes over leadership of Afghanistan under President Nur Mohammad Taraki. Mujahadeen resistance forces formed by Islamic leaders opposed to communist rule are formed. | |
| 1979-1980 | The Soviet Union enters Afghanistan, insurgency against Soviet forces led by the Mujahadeen commences. | **First wave of displacement.** Primarily to Pakistan (3-4 million) and Iran (2 million). Afghan refugees in Pakistan are resettled globally, including in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. |
| 1981-1985 | Osama bin Laden makes his first documented trip to Afghanistan to aid Mujahadeen in 1984. | |
| 1986-1989 | The Mujahadeen are receiving arms from the United States, Britain and China via Pakistan. | |
| 1988 | Al Queda is formed by Osama bin Laden and an alliance of Islamist groups in opposition to Soviet rule. | |
| 1989 | The Soviet Union withdraws from Afghanistan following a peace agreement between Afghanistan, Soviet Union, USA, and Pakistan. | |
| 1990-1991 | The Taliban is formed. | |
| 1992 | The Mujahadeen gain control of Kabul and ousts communist president (Mohammad Najibullah). Factions within the Mujahadeen deepen. | **Large-scale returns.** A combined 4 million Afghans return from Pakistan and Iran.[5] |
| 1994 | Fighting between two Mujahadeen groups (Hezb-e-Islami and Jamaat-e-Islami) for the control of Afghanistan. | |
| 1995-1996 | Taliban captures Herat province, followed by a slow advance across Afghanistan, finally capturing control of Kabul in 1996. | **Second Wave of Displacement.** 1 million people flee to Pakistan, based primarily in pre-existing refugee camps. More continue to flee to Iran, other neighboring countries and the Gulf. Many of the country's elites and academics flee, opposed to harsh Taliban rule. Displacement of ethnic minority groups (Hazara, Tajik, Uzbek) is pronounced. Iran and Pakistan close their borders in 1999. |
| 1996-1999 | Harsh Taliban rule accompanied by a series of historic droughts cause further waves of displacement. Serious human rights violations are documented against Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek ethnic groups - including the denial of critical food aid. 'Northern Alliance' against Taliban is formed. | |

[5] Jazayery, L. (2002). 'The Migration - Development Nexus: Afghanistan Case Study', International Migration 40 (5): 231-254.

| Year | Event | |
|------|-------|---|
| 2001 | The American-led coalition begins air-strikes in Afghanistan in October. The Taliban surrenders in December. Hamid Karzai, of the Northern Alliance, is sworn in as President. | |
| 2002 | Initial stability following coalition actions results in significant regional returns. | **Large-scale returns.** Over 5 million people return to Afghanistan spontaneously and with the support of UNHCR.[6] |
| 2003 | NATO enters Afghanistan. | |
| 2005 | The first national elections take place. Taliban insurgency intensifies and NATO expands reach into southern Afghanistan. | |
| 2014-2019 | NATO troops withdraw from Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani elected as President. 'Mediterranean Migration Crisis' and increased movement of asylum seekers from Syria and Afghanistan towards Europe. | **Third Wave of Displacement.** in 2014, internal displacement dramatically increases. Many choose to migrate in search of stability and to reunite with family.[7] Afghanistan is the second main citizenship with the EU[8] and one of the main sources of undocumented people on the move.[9] |
| 2020 | US-Taliban peace deal reached in February. | |
| 2020-2021 | Taliban begins campaign of assassination of judges, human rights activists, journalists, and female leaders. | |
| 2021 | American-led coalition begins withdrawal in April, with complete withdrawal planned for September. | |

[6] ACAPS/NRC/ECB (2012). 'Afghanistan: Conflict and Displacement', Disaster Needs Analysis 10 October 2012. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102141439/https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afghanistan_conflict_and_displacement.pdf

[7] UNOCHA (2018). Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2018 - Snapshot. Kabul: UNOCHA. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/afg_conflict_idps_2018_jan_jul_snapshot_20180806_v1.pdf

[8] Eurostat (2017). Asylum in the EU Member States. 1.2 million first time asylum seekers registered in 2016: Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis continued to be the top citizenships. Newsrelease, 16 March 2017. https://web.archive.org/web/20211030152950/https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7921609/3-16032017-BP-EN.pdf/e5fa98bb-5d9d-4297-9168-d07c67d1c9e1

[9] Angeli and Triandafyllidou (2016). Europe In: Migrant Smuggling Data and Research: A Global Review of the Emerging Evidence Base (M. McAuliffe and F. Laczko, eds.). IOM, Geneva, 2 November 216. https://web.archive.org/web/20211030154751/https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/smuggling_report.pdf

Over the decades, Afghan diaspora members have self-organized into diaspora organizations (referred to in this report as 'Afghan Diaspora Organizations' or ADOs). ADOs range in size and formality and cover a diverse range of concerns and activities. Similar to the diaspora in general, the nature and membership of ADOs vary significantly according to country of residence, ethnic and linguistic ties, generational factors, and political affiliation. Many are focused on providing integration support for recent arrivals into the country of residence - this includes activities such as cultural events, support with translation and service access, legal representation, and facilitating connections between community members. ADOs may likewise provide education on language and culture for second-generation diaspora members as a means to support interest in cultural heritage. Many ADOs also retain strong connections with Afghanistan and have become advocates for human rights and providers of localized humanitarian and development assistance in Afghanistan funded by diaspora members. While ADOs have existed for decades, they proliferated in the 2013 to 2015 period - particularly in Europe - in response to the increasing level of Afghan emigration due to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan hastened by the withdrawal of NATO in 2014.[10] DEMAC and the DRC Diaspora Program have prioritized a better understanding of ADOs and supporting ADO engagement in the last number of years in recognition of their potential to support durable solutions for displaced people abroad and those remaining in Afghanistan. ADOs once again came to the fore in the months leading up to the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the advance of the Taliban, and ultimately the final days of mass evacuation from the Kabul airport in late August 2021.[11]

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[10] DRC/Maastricht University (2019). Afghan Diaspora in Europe: Mapping Engagement in Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Copenhagen: DRC/Maastricht University. https://www.merit.unu.edu/publications/uploads/1576769428.pdf

[11] See: Nimkar, R. & B. Frows (2018). Split Loyalties: Mixed Migration and the Diaspora Connection. Nairobi; DRC/RMMS.DRC/Maastricht University (2019); Ahmed, A. (2020). A Guide to Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe. Vienna: VIDC.

# 3.
# METHODOLOGY

**To capture ADO engagement in the current political crisis, this Real-Time Review (RTR) consisted of two main approaches to data collection: 1) online media monitoring beginning the day the Taliban seized Kabul (15 August 2021), and 2) semi-structured key informant interviews.**

### 3.1 Online Media Monitoring

**Online media monitoring consisted of a daily review of online diaspora statements, events, and fundraising pages. These were continuously monitored through their social media accounts (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram), to closely follow the dynamics of diaspora engagement while also identifying hindrances and opportunities for the diaspora to engage as they arose.**

In order to narrow down a pool of organizations to monitor, an initial mapping of ADOs with an online presence was first conducted.[12]

The mapping exercise was built on DEMAC's and DRC's Diaspora Program's available data on diaspora organizations in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the UK[13], and was expanded to include diaspora organizations in North America, Australia, and some of Afghanistan's neighboring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the UAE. While some ADOs were known to exist or were referenced by other organizations, only ADOs with an online presence were selected for this study. In total, the websites and social media accounts of 60 diaspora organizations were selected for online media monitoring.

[12] This report acknowledges that many individual diaspora members have been very active online and contributed positively to the overall campaign to support Afghans and Afghanistan, though individual activities are outside the scope of this report.
[13] Drawn from an annex: DRC/Maastricht University (2019).

To select which social media platforms to follow for each organization, their popularity among the Afghan diaspora and the population within Afghanistan was considered. According to Statcounter, a web traffic analysis website, Facebook and Twitter were the top two social media platforms visited from within Afghanistan.[14] Moreover, a review of ADOs' various social media accounts revealed that they usually receive the highest number of feedbacks in the forms of likes, views, and comments, on their Instagram accounts. Despite its popularity among both the Afghan diaspora communities and within Afghanistan, WhatsApp groups were excluded from this study as their content is not publicly available.

The selected ADOs had 52 Facebook accounts, 26 Instagram accounts, and 22 Twitter accounts (100 accounts monitored total). Across all accounts monitored, there were a total of 677,922 followers.[15] However, most organizations tended to have a clear preference for a specific platform. In some cases, identical material was posted across various platforms by the ADO. In these instances, the platform with the most user interaction for each ADO was selected for further monitoring.

[14] For more info on the usage of social media in Afghanistan see: statcounter GlobalStats (2021). 'Social Media Stats Afghanistan', July 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210829001918/https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/afghanistan

[15] Followers were not equally divided amongst organisations or accounts. One account had over 300,000 followers. The average number of followers was 6,779 people.

**Number of selected ADOs by region**

26
EUROPE

21
NORTH
AMERICA

1
GLOBAL

5
AUSTRALIA

7
NEIGHBORING
COUNTRIES

60
TOTAL

The monitoring period began 15 August 2021 and continued until 30 September 2021 - covering the first 1.5 months of Taliban rule. The data collection for the online monitoring phase consisted of daily monitoring of ADO posts on key elements of their public engagement activities, as well as trends and changes in their overall narrative about the situation in Afghanistan.

In order to support analysis, codes were developed to support the categorization of engagement efforts into themes. While some themes were developed prior to review of social media posts, additional themes were added as relevant. They focused on three main categories: ADO actions, ADO dynamics, and outcomes. These were divided into sub-themes (e.g., Actions - fundraising, Actions - advocacy). Moreover, instances of collaboration between ADOs were recorded where explicitly mentioned. A total of 184 unique social media posts were captured as part of this exercise.

While not categorized as social media in this review, some organizations linked to crowdfunding pages to collect donations for specific campaigns or actions. Aside from calls for donations on ADO websites and social media, their use of crowdfunding platforms was also monitored. As a result, GoFundMe, the largest crowdfunding platform, was also monitored for relevant funding requests from ADOs in response to the current situation in Afghanistan.

**3.2 Key Informant Interviews**

**Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of ten ADOs, as well as Diaspora Program staff.**

The key informant interviews were held to 1) validate the findings from the online monitoring phase, 2) capture a more nuanced understanding of challenges and opportunities for Afghan diaspora engagement, and 3) conduct an in-depth analysis of select ADO activities. In designing the questionnaire, the key identified trends and topics from the online monitoring phase as well as the identified information gaps were considered. The tool was then validated through the interviews conducted with Diaspora Program staff. The interviews were conducted in either English or Farsi/Dari, based on interviewee preferences, and the notes were translated to English before analysis and reporting. The interviews were conducted from late September to mid-October 2021.

Table 3: Key Informant Interviews by location

| Locations | # Of KIIs |
|---|---|
| Australia | 1 |
| Austria | 1 |
| Belgium | 1 |
| Denmark | 2 |
| Germany | 2 |
| Netherlands | 1 |
| UK | 2 |
| **Total** | **10** |

The consultants held regular internal meetings, as well as weekly coordination calls with DEMAC and DRC's Diaspora Program to enable quick identification of key trends and to make the necessary adjustments in response to rapid changes in the overall situation of Afghanistan.

Based on the findings of the initial analysis of the online media monitoring phase, the categories were further refined. For the analysis of in-depth interviews, manual inductive coding was used to highlight key trends in ADOs' engagement patterns and to identify the challenges and opportunities for their meaningful engagement during this crisis. To verify the findings, and to capture a snapshot of Afghan diaspora organizations' engagement, the data from the media monitoring phase was triangulated with in-depth interviews. The analysis was done to increase knowledge and awareness on Afghan diaspora engagement and to provide concrete and actionable recommendations for DRC, the diaspora organizations, and their partners on the way forward.

## 3.3 Limitations

**This study is intended to provide a snapshot of activities and messaging from ADOs in the immediate post-Taliban takeover period. Given the current circumstances in Afghanistan and the real-time nature of this study, a number of challenges were faced in preparation for this report.**

First, this study only captures ADOs which have a significant online presence - at the very least a public Facebook page. As a result, many ADOs that may be smaller or lack online presence due to a number of factors have not been captured in this study. Similarly, ADOs that did not appear to have an 'active' online presence (i.e., updates in the last several months) were not considered in this study. Therefore, it cannot be considered representative of ADOs overall - only those with a public and active online presence. Second, there were challenges engaging ADOs in key informant interviews due to time constraints; ADOs are busy carrying out their activities and supporting their communities, so may not have time to engage in research studies. As a result, the consultants were not able to reach the intended geographical and ethnic diversities in conducting the key informant interviews as anticipated in the initial methodology.

It must also be noted that - similar to the first limitation - due to the low number of in-depth interviews, the results of this study are not representative and should not be generalized to the wider community. Linguistically, this study was conducted in English and Farsi/Dari. This would exclude some results from Pashto posts; while automatic translation was used, it cannot be guaranteed to capture everything. It is also important to note that this study commenced ten calendar days after the Taliban takeover. As a result, archived web pages were used to analyze engagement in the initial ten-day period. In this sense, not all analysis that occurred was 'real time' - but was adjusted to be as accurate as possible given the online tools that exist. Finally, given the limitations of the study and the rapidly evolving situation in Afghanistan, it is difficult to determine the specific results of ADO action; achieving 'results' is difficult with no specific definition of success or achievement.

# 4.
# FINDINGS

The following is divided into five sections. First, it provides an overview of the ADOs selected for this study, including their profiles, typical activities, and key characteristics of their membership. The second section reviews the thematic areas in which ADOs engaged in the first 45 days of Taliban rule. This includes advocacy and awareness campaigns, fundraising, community engagement, and direct humanitarian assistance. The third section addresses the efforts ADOs have made in terms of accountability to donors and affected communities, as well as the limitations of their capacity and experience providing this type of follow-up in such a high-pressure situation. The fourth section reviews collaboration and coordination between ADOs and the extent to which new partnerships were formed and maintained, including the nature of these partnerships. It concludes with a review of the challenges faced by ADOs during this period - some linked to the current situation but others reflecting deeper challenges and limitations of ADOs.

## 4.1 Afghan Diaspora Organizations

**ADOs have distinct backgrounds and different missions which result in a diverse range of activities. These organizations also adopt various approaches in conducting those activities. Although there is a general understanding around the 'shared experience of the diaspora', it was revealed through the in-depth interviews that it is important to recognize some of these fundamental differences which can hamper meaningful engagement among the ADOs themselves and with the larger communities within Afghanistan.**

The organizations reviewed in the online monitoring phase of this study were selected from Europe (26), North America (21), Afghanistan's neighboring countries (9), Australia (5), and one global organization. Given the different contexts and operational spaces within these regions, the response from these organizations was quite varied. However, a surge in their active engagement through multiple modalities was observed across all regions.

Before the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, most of the ADOs included in this study were working in the fields of integration, culture, advocacy and education, primarily focusing on the diaspora communities in their countries of residence. They routinely organize language courses and social events for their respective communities. Sports and cultural events for the Afghans and the local residents are also being held to facilitate integration. Additionally, providing legal aid for the relocation of asylum-seeking Afghans has been one of the key areas of focus for some of the diaspora organizations. Afghan diaspora organizations are also active in various areas of humanitarian aid and development support. According to their online profiles, they have been providing emergency aid in the fields of education, health, gender, and livelihoods, with some of them having field offices in Kabul and other cities in Afghanistan.

A review of DEMAC's and DRC's Diaspora Program's available data on diaspora organizations in Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the UK[16], revealed that only 60% of them had either a website or a public social media account. The reviewed organizations were also varied in their dates of establishment, ranging from more than 25 years of active service delivery, to only beginning to become active in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban takeover. However, there was no correlation between the number of years active and the strength of their online profile and reporting updates. Organizations with extensive experience appeared inactive online without any posts or updates in the months before 15 August 2021, and some other organizations loosely established after the recent events in Afghanistan provided sometimes multiple daily updates on their activities to remain closely in touch with their stakeholders.

Overall, the diaspora organizations in US and Canada had a stronger online presence compared to the European organizations despite the slightly lower number of organizations based in North America covered in this report. Their online presence was measured through their reporting and update frequency through their websites and official organization accounts on social media platforms. For ADOs in the countries neighboring Afghanistan, however, reports and updates of activities were almost non-existent considering the limited operational space and political sensitivities within their countries of residence.

In addition to geographical differences, factors such as ethnicity and the age range of core members were some of the indicative elements in taking a specific approach or facing certain challenges. For instance, Hazara diaspora organizations experienced more ethnically charged questions and comments from their donors and the wider community compared to other diaspora groups. Interestingly, the generation gap was brought up as both a challenge and a success factor by the interviewed ADOs. Organizations with a younger age range for their core members reported experiencing difficulty in engaging older diaspora members, suggesting the different approaches and thought processes taken by the older generation as a challenge. However, ADOs with core members across multiple age ranges emphasized their successes in broader community outreach by utilizing the diverse approaches proposed by their members of various age ranges.

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[16] Drawn from an annex: DRC/Maastricht University (2019).

## 4.2 Areas of Focus

**All the interviewed diaspora organizations had gone through a change in their areas of focus or approach since the Taliban takeover. For the already active and well-established organizations, the main changes included new focus areas entirely or an escalation of efforts in their activities.**

Organizations that were largely inactive before the recent events in Afghanistan quickly began to mobilize their resources for making meaningful contributions to their cause. The change in focus and approach was also influenced by some of the practical and logistical challenges resulting from the evolving political situation.

The online monitoring revealed that 48% of the organizations posted most frequently about ongoing advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns. Following those, emergency fundraising campaigns and community mobilization posts accounted for 15% and 14% of engagement, respectively. The remaining 24% belonged to activity reports mainly focusing on direct services provided to the people in Afghanistan, welcoming newly relocated Afghans, and holding information sessions for asylum seekers and donors. Except for two organizations in Canada, all ADOs reported on at least one activity related to either awareness-raising or emergency fundraising.

### 4.2.1. Advocacy & Awareness Raising

In the weeks leading up to and the months following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns were a key area of focus for Afghan diaspora organizations worldwide. Their activities ranged from interviews with local and international news agencies and media to directly contacting national-level political leaders and decision-makers. Advocacy and awareness-raising has taken several forms. The following section reviews the use of protests to raise awareness, direct media engagement, joint official statements and open letters, and online petitions. This was complemented by direct diaspora engagement with political leaders in countries of residence and hosting panel discussions on key advocacy issues.

**Protests & Demonstrations**

To bring communities' attention to the situation in Afghanistan, ADOs organized protests in various cities around the globe, often with unified messaging among them.[17] Diaspora organizations backed these events, whether they were initiated by their organization or other ADOs, by sharing posters and calling for volunteers to join and support with logistics. Collaboration was evident between ADOs which previously did not work together. Preparation for the events usually started by discussing the objectives, the resources available internally, and the potential gaps. Then the members would reach out to their network, including potential ADO allies, for further planning and collaboration, dependent on their existing networks. For the ADOs already active and trusted in their community, mobilizing resources was reported to be smooth. Interviewees reported their community members proactively reaching out to them to learn about ways they could provide support, whether financially or through donations of items and volunteering. However, for younger or mostly inactive ADOs, the process and the success rate differed. Unlike their well-known counterparts, they did not have the advantage of their community members reaching out to them and had to go through their usual processes for community mobilization.

"We have a WhatsApp group and when we see the need to organize the protests we get in touch with other ethnicities and have a couple of meetings and divide the responsibilities and try to get together with people from different groups and when the decision is made, we use telephone and word of mouth to speak with our own communities…, for protests, if it's coordinated well in advance between ethnic groups it goes well but if they invite others in the last minute, people won't show up."

[17] For examples in Australia, Germany, Sweden, the United States, Netherlands and Greece see: Samia O'Keefe & Keane Bourke (2021). 'Thousands join Perth rally over Afghanistan humanitarian crisis after more evacuation flights confirmed', 22 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102050705/https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-08-22/perth-rally-over-unfolding-humanitarian-crisis-in-afghanistan/100397326; Kate Connolly (2021). 'Attention turns to arriving refugees after Germany ends Afghanistan airlift', 26 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210924220845/https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/26/attention-turns-refugees-after-germany-ends-afghanistan-airlift); ANI (2021). 'Afghans hold demonstration against Taliban in Sweden', 23 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210822210732/https://www.aninews.in/news/world/europe/afghans-hold-demonstration-against-taliban-in-sweden20210823020625/; NPR (2021). 'Afghans In The U.S. Protest The White House's Handling Of Afghanistan', 16 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211101035921/https://www.npr.org/2021/08/16/1028016123/afghans-in-the-u-s-protest-the-white-houses-handling-of-afghanistan; Fronista, P. & S. Misinas (2021). 'We want peace from the world,' Afghans protest in Athens, Reuters 28 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102051220/https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/we-want-peace-world-afghans-protest-athens-2021-08-28/

One of the key awareness-raising events following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan was the international solidarity protests held by the diaspora community on 28 August 2021. The messaging and invitations started circulating online 12 days before the event. It was promoted by international media[18], humanitarian organizations, and prominent diaspora community members, spanning across continents and calling for Afghans and non-Afghans alike to join the march organized for 28 August 2021. Although some variations existed in the messages and placards brought in by the protesters, the unified messages of "Stop Killing Afghans" and "Afghan Lives Matter" were communicated in all the protests spanning across 41 cities in 17 countries.[19] According to one of the interviewees, the coordination among ADOs in various countries only improved over time. Prominent diaspora members and ADOs live-streamed events and published multiple videos in the following days which generated significant online support through their social media accounts. Other protests in August and September 2021 were aimed at pressuring the international community to not recognize the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, advocating for the evacuation of at-risk Afghans and sanctioning Pakistan, and in support of the Panjshir resistance.[20][21]

Although some segments of the Afghan society within Afghanistan and among the diaspora hold Pakistan responsible for the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan, it is important to note that not all diaspora communities support all the diverse messages across all protests. It would be difficult to concretely assess which ADOs did not support certain messages and why. ADOs do not always include information that would suggest their support of any particular segment of Afghan society. During the course of this review, although none of the ADOs were captured officially speaking against a certain cause, their social media accounts did not include any posts for promoting them either. For instance, prioritizing the advocacy for saving the lives of Hazaras as a particularly at-risk group, as opposed to keeping the messages unified for all Afghans, was only promoted by some ADOs.

"Our advocacy is not about the development of Afghanistan, it's about survival. We are not talking about the Taliban not being good for democracy... We spearheaded the change! But now the Hazara are being targeted only because of their religion and ethnicity."

[18] See for example: Frontista & Misinas (2021).

[19] Andrew Brinker (2021). 'Advocates, allies rally against US withdrawal from Afghanistan', 28 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211105072122/https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/08/28/metro/advocates-allies-rally-against-us-withdrawal-afghanistan/

[20] The Panjshir Resistance refers to a militia-led resistance movement against Taliban rule led by the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan. The NRFA is led by Ahmad Massoud, who is a former diaspora member (born in Iran, educated in the UK at Sandhurst and Kings College University of London). He returned to Afghanistan (Panjshir Valley) to lead a movement against the ongoing US-Taliban peace agreements in 2019. He fled Afghanistan on 6 September 2021 as the Taliban took the Panjshir valley. He is currently in an unknown location and has vowed to lead a resistance.

[21] Examples of protests: IranInternational (2021). 'Afghans Protest Against Taliban, Pakistan In Kabul And Tehran', 7 September 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102052107/https://old.iranintl.com/en/world/afghans-protest-against-taliban-pakistan-kabul-and-tehran; The VIE (2021). 'Anti-Pakistan protests erupt across world for its role in aiding Taliban', 16 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102052153/https://thevie.in/2021/08/16/anti-pakistan-protests-erupt-across-world-for-its-role-in-aiding-taliban-world-news/

While protesting and holding demonstrations might be commonplace in several regions, in some countries they were met with some resistance from local authorities. For example, in August and early September 2021, the Afghan diaspora in Iran held several protests. Although the messaging on dates and locations of these gatherings was not usually publicized before the event, the protesters were able to gather in their target locations. The protests mostly took place in front of UN agencies and the Pakistan Embassies in several cities.[22] Protests focused on supporting the Panjshir resistance, with chants stating "death for the Taliban and Pakistan". The participants of these protests were mostly the diaspora community members, except for a few Iranian human rights advocates who were detained by the police after participating in one of these events. Similar events occurred in Russia. Some Russian activists were arrested while participating in a gathering in support of Afghan women.

**Media Engagement**

Another key tool utilized by diaspora organizations was their active engagement with the media in countries of residence. Prominent individuals from the Afghan diaspora and ADOs gave multiple accounts of the situation in Afghanistan to voice the concerns of their communities. Interviews were held with local TV and radio stations as well as international broadcasting agencies.[23] Key messages focused on advocating for the rights of all Afghans, against the persecution of Hazaras, as well as the evacuation of at-risk groups such as known human rights activists and female journalists. In media engagement, the link between the individual and the ADO behind them was generally not emphasized.

This appears to be more related to the fame and trust factors that the individual well-known diaspora members can bring to certain issues. It may also be the case that the media was interested in hearing more 'personal accounts' of circumstances and the experience in Afghanistan. Similarly, in online newspapers and websites, when interviewing members of the diaspora in protests and other advocacy and awareness-raising events, only the name of the individual was mentioned, and their involvement with an organization, without naming the organization.[24]

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[22] See: BBC Persian (2021). 'Afghans' anti-taliban protest in Qom', 16 August 2021. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKKQb8VX8pI

[23] Examples of ADO media engagement: BBC (2021). 'BBC Newshour: Afghanistan: Why are the Taliban persecuting the Hazara?', September 2021. https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09xck0z;  Altena, B. (2021). 'In de jaren 90 vluchtte hij zelf voor de taliban, nu helpt Edris Mahtab Afghanen die in Nederland aankomen', Een Vandaag, 19 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102141612/https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/item/in-de-jaren-90-vluchtte-hij-zelf-voor-de-taliban-nu-helpt-edris-mahtab-afghanen-die-in-nederland-aankomen/; Draaisma, M. (2021). 'Make Afghanistan a Canadian election issue, new group urges political parties', CBC 21 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211002110043/https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/canadian-campaign-for-afghan-peace-afghanistan-federal-election-humanitarian-crisis-1.6148969

[24] See, for example: Bergengruen, V. (2021). "'Completely Helpless.' Afghan Americans Scramble to Help Family Back Home", Time Online, 24 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102141858/https://time.com/6090955/afghan-american-diaspora-withdrawal/

## Open Letters & Statements

ADOs and coalitions of ADOs published official statements and open letters to political leaders and the UN to advocate for the rights of the people of Afghanistan.[25] During the online monitoring phase, nine official statements and open letters were published by the organizations reviewed in this study. These statements covered issues and demands on resettlement, humanitarian aid, diplomacy and human rights. For example, an open letter by the Canada-based Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative (AYEDI), demanding an expansion of the Afghan resettlement program and immediate humanitarian assistance, among other things, has been endorsed by 2,226 Canadians and 49 national and international organizations. A joint statement by the members of the Hazara civil society and diaspora organizations demanded UNHCR and migrate-recipient countries facilitate and expedite the relocation of Hazara asylum-seekers, take into consideration the situation on the ground for the Hazaras, and put an immediate stop to the deportation of Hazara asylum-seekers to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Hazara Committee in the UK, an umbrella organization for all the Hazara communities across the country, was the primary signatory of a letter to the Home Office's Minister for Refugee Resettlement to support the resettlement of Afghan refugees through community sponsorship, urging them to recognize the Hazara as a vulnerable group under the rule of Taliban. Open letters and statements were also published by ADOs not particularly active on social media; for these ADOs, the statements were published on their website. For the ones which were posted on social media, the feedback received (i.e., likes, comments) was generally similar to the other posts published by the organization.

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[25] See, for example: Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative (2021). 'Canadian Campaign for Afghan Peace', 17 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210928103440/https://ayedi.ca/ccap/; Hazara International (2021). 'Hazara Diaspora Organizations' Statement on the condition of Hazara Refugees and Asylum-Seekers', Public Statement, 20 June 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102101210/https://www.hazarainternational.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Hazara-Diaspora-Organizations-Statement-on-the-Condition-of-Hazara-Refugees-and-Asylum-Seekers-.pdf; Hazara Committee, UK (2021). 'Let us Welcome Afghan Refugees through Community Sponsorship', 27 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102101402/https://twitter.com/hazaracommittee/status/1431290641888260098

## Petitions

Afghan diaspora organizations also set up online petitions in Australia, the Netherlands, the UK, and Germany to advocate for the evacuation and resettlement of vulnerable Afghans and to ensure the necessary policy changes to facilitate resettlement would be made as a matter of urgency.[26] The primary target audience of these petitions was the relevant governing bodies of the respective countries. The petitions were publicized through the social media accounts of initiating ADOs and were further reshared by other diaspora organizations, demonstrating online collaboration and support across ADOs. The signatories of these petitions were from diverse backgrounds including Afghan and non-Afghan individuals, other ADOs, and international non-profit organizations. The petitions had varying levels of success, with some still ongoing, and for others, the success gained was used to take further concrete actions. For instance, a petition shared by the KEIHAN Foundation collected 32,219 signatures after requesting an urgent policy for the evacuation of Afghans who have worked with the Dutch military and Dutch NGOs. The petition was handed over to the members of parliament and subsequently affirmed by the cabinet to be carried out in full. The level of success for these petitions seems to be influenced by factors such as the initiators' network and objectives, as well as the political environment in their country of residence; the higher number of signatories does not necessarily translate to further actions taken by governments of countries of residence. It is also important to note that a lack of evidence regarding further action should not be considered a failure. Petitions are usually only a segment of larger advocacy campaigns that require more time to show visible results.

## Direct engagement with policymakers

ADOs in North America, Europe, and Australia reported engaging directly with their representatives and policymakers in their countries of residence. They have organized in-person meetings and presentations, as well as sent text messages to specific politicians. Afghan diaspora organizations have also used online campaigning techniques such as using hashtags and sending selfies directed at certain individuals. In Australia, under the campaign #ActionForAfghanistan, Baba Mazari Foundation requested everyone to post a selfie with a printout of an image calling for 20,000 more extra places for people most at risk from the Taliban, tagging the Australian Prime Minister and the Immigration Minister. While choosing trending hashtags such as #20kTuesday or #AfghanistanCrisis made it difficult to concretely assess the number of posts originally generated as a direct result of the campaign itself, the original posts on Baba Mazari Foundation and Action for Afghanistan Facebook pages generated close to 100 likes, comments and shares. Representatives from the Afghan Women's Organization in Canada also met with Canadian government officials to present their request for policy changes to create a separate refugee program for at-risk Afghan women and for the government to engage with the Afghan diaspora in matters related to international development, immigration, and refugee policies. Similarly, the Hazara Committee in the UK reported on how support from a member of the House of Lords for the protection of Hazaras led to recognition of them as a vulnerable group following continuous advocacy campaigns. Although more time would be needed to assess the results of these direct engagements, some immediate results are already visible. For instance, now the Hazaras are recognized as a vulnerable group in the UK.

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[26] See: Afghanistan-Australian Advocacy Network (2021). 'CALL TO ACTION: Australia Must Bring Afghans to Safety', 31 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102091234/https://www.change.org/p/prime-minister-scott-morrison-action-for-afghanistan/u/29538100?lang=en-CA; KEIHAN Foundation (2021). 'Save our Afghan colleagues and partners', 17 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102092627/https://evacueerafghanen.petities.nl/; Afghan Council of Great Britain (2021). 'Evacuate Vulnerable Families of British Afghans Now!', 8 September 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210923064323/https://www.change.org/p/evacuate-the-vulnerable-families-of-british-afghans-now ; Visions for Children e.V. (2021). 'We stay in Afghanistan and demand the support of the German government!', 10 September 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20210918144337/https://www.change.org/p/wir-bleiben-in-afghanistan-und-fordern-die-unterst%C3%BCtzung-der-bundesregierung

**Information Sessions & Panel Discussions**

In addition to sharing and translating official governmental guidelines for asylum and resettlement purposes, some ADOs held several panel discussions and information sessions to raise awareness on available resources, the situation in Afghanistan, challenges, and the ways forward. These sessions were held by individual organizations, as well as coalitions of ADOs, both in an online format or in-person, often live streaming them through their social media accounts for the public. The content and the target audience for these live sessions were also diverse, covering potential migrants and refugees in Afghanistan, the neighboring countries, and the diaspora communities around the world.

To inform Afghans of available resources, ADOs conducted live Q&A sessions for both the people in Afghanistan hoping to resettle in another country, and the diaspora community trying to sponsor and support the relocations. These sessions often included information on the migrant and refugee recipient country's policies regarding resettlement and complemented their translated how-to materials explaining the process in detail. Abad and YAAR foundations in Germany dedicated a live discussion session to providing information on Germany's emergency visa on 20 August 2021. Participants had the option of joining via Zoom or watching the session live on Clubhouse, YouTube, or Facebook. On the same date, the Afghan American Community Organization in the US conducted a live Facebook session on immigration options for Afghans in Afghanistan while holding a Q&A session to respond to all the questions in the comment section. Given the interest in these sessions, some ADOs expanded support for those in Afghanistan and their families abroad. The Afghan Community & Welfare Centre in Walsall, UK, provided a 24/7 helpline number to answer questions regarding the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme.

Online and in-person panel discussions involving Afghan and non-Afghan actors and subject matter experts were held on a range of topics covering the current situation in Afghanistan and possible outcomes of the Taliban takeover. The Gofteman Project, which is an initiative taken by Abad and YAAR Foundations in Berlin, started their weekly discussion program in early August 2021 on the future of Afghanistan. Their panels include experts from the Afghan diaspora community, as well as current residents of Afghanistan. The Afghan-American Foundation's panel discussion focused on the repercussions of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and how the US should respond. They organized the session on 24 August 2021, and invited Afghan-Americans with senior roles in government and civil society as their panelists. On 10 September 2021, the Afghan Diaspora Unity Council initiated a series of weekly Zoom panel discussions, to assess and analyze the situation in Afghanistan, and to identify common objectives which can be shared by all political parties. The panelists are being selected from diaspora organizations with diverse political backgrounds, as well as individuals in Afghanistan. The discussions took place in both Farsi and Pashto with the moderator translating both languages.

For the categories of content posted on ADOs' social media accounts, live streams usually receive the most feedback and engagement. The ADOs reviewed in this study conducted 26 unique information sessions and panel discussions generating more than 14,800 likes, views, shares, and comments with close to 12,000 of them belonging to two live sessions on Australia's humanitarian visa. Although panel discussions also attracted user interaction with debates taking place among the viewers in the comments section, compared to information sessions and Q&As on visas and resettlement opportunities, they did not receive an extensive viewership. It must be noted however that some of these live sessions were conducted over Zoom or Clubhouse, and it was therefore impossible to capture the number of participants for those sessions through the online monitoring of ADOs' social media accounts.

### 4.2.2. Emergency Fundraising

ADOs rely on community donations to sustain their activities; the amount of trust an ADO has amongst their community greatly affects their success. As a result, ADOs invest considerable time and energy to engage with their communities - often on an individual level - to build that trust. For both the well-established organizations and the less experienced ones, close interactions with their donors and community members are among the most important means of sharing information. Afghan diaspora organizations organize fundraising dinners, as well as cultural and sports events as their primary means of engaging with their donors. Fundraising efforts reportedly also take place using phone calls to friends and families, as well as with the wider community. Despite the consensus on the importance of regular engagement with the community, diaspora organizations' activities are limited to their available resources. To overcome this challenge, some ADOs have resorted to taking some of their communication activities online, which gives them a far better reach at a much lower cost, but also has its limitations such as excluding face-to-face interactions. This change was also influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced more people to start using online tools as their primary means of communication. Ultimately, successful fundraising activities seem to be linked to organizations with continuous engagement and transparent reporting on previous donations.

In the weeks leading up to the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, Afghan diaspora organizations started to put a stronger focus on their fundraising activities. During the online monitoring phase of this study, fundraising activities of 26 distinct organizations were recorded, with more than half of them using online crowdfunding services and others publishing their individual or organization bank and PayPal accounts. For some, full visual campaigns were created with extensive imagery and description as to why the donations were being collected, and how they will be used. For others, it was only the bank information along with 'urgent help needed' as the description. Similar to other ADOs' activities, the methods used for their fundraising also depends on their available resources. Setting up a successful online campaign usually requires a certain level of technical capacity, and for the traditionally run ADOs, the donor base may prefer offline donations. ADOs' choice of fundraising method also affects their reporting habits. Online crowdfunding platforms usually report the total amount raised as the campaign progresses, yet with other methods such as direct bank deposits, the total amount of funds raised is largely absent from ADOs' fundraising campaigns.

GoFundMe, a major crowdfunding platform, was the main tool for the ADOs who had decided to use this approach. For this report, close to 200 GoFundMe campaigns related to Afghanistan – but only 14 were recorded as ADO-run fundraising campaigns, raising over 900,000 USD by mid-October 2021. The majority of campaigns were created by Afghan and non-Afghan individuals and mainly focused on bringing former colleagues and family members to safety. The ADO-run campaigns were all from English speaking countries and had various levels of success. Some of these fundraising campaigns were started jointly with a coalition of ADOs, and others, while run individually, were shared and promoted by other diaspora organizations. Given the total number of ADO-run GoFundMe campaigns reviewed, and the variety of factors that can influence the success of any crowdfunding campaign, it would be difficult to assess the reasons behind their performance. However, it appears that the more successful campaigns also had a strong promotional strategy and a broad focus as to where the funds will be spent. A significant difference between the successful and less successful campaigns was the amount of follow-up information and updates provided by the campaigning ADOs. This is particularly true for the campaigns with larger target amounts; there was an expectation that they should be providing frequent updates on how the funds are being spent over social media or their website.

Setting a realistic fundraising target for what the fundraised amount will be used for is also considered a key factor in the success of crowdfunding campaigns. For instance, a fundraising campaign to secure the safety of at-risk Afghan women had a target amount of 1,350,000 GBP, but was only able to raise 7,155 GBP before closing the campaign after 28 days. Another campaign, aiming to raise 200,000 CAD to resettle vulnerable Hazaras was only able to collect 4,013 CAD, after more than a month of being active. Neither of these two campaigns provided any updates on how the collected funds were spent. Yet, a coalition of ADOs pledging to support displaced families was able to raise 107% of their original target amount of 350,000 USD. Similarly, the Canadian Afghan Lawyers (CALA), in partnership with Children Without Borders, achieved their goal by raising their target amount and providing the Afghan newcomers with relief packages and essential items. Wellness Worldwide for Sustainable Communities and Children of War, both ADOs based in the United States, ran successful crowdfunding campaigns providing food and relief items to 340 displaced families and 350 municipality workers in Afghanistan. Although these campaigns provided regular updates on how the funds were spent, they did not always include details on the number of items bought or the people affected by conflict and displacement served.

Some of the negative aspects of crowdfunding platforms were also experienced by both the donors and diaspora organizations. From the potential donors' perspective, the possibility of fraud and corruption was a key factor when deciding to support an organization, as opposed to directly sending their donations to a trusted individual. Although these views are not specific to online crowdfunding platforms and affect all fundraising activities, lack of personal interaction - and in particular in the absence of regular campaign updates - acts as a strong deterrent for some of the potential donors. Crowdfunding platforms usually implement processes to address and mitigate fraud, which can also sometimes hamper fundraising efforts in the event of a crisis. In the aftermath of any major crisis, there is usually a surge in fundraising campaigns and some authentic campaigns may fail to meet the requirements of platforms if they did not comply with the terms of service.[27] As a result, they may have their fundraising pages removed. This is more likely to happen if the campaign is set up by an individual as opposed to an organization. During this study, at least one ADO requested their donors to stop donating to their GoFundMe campaign and instead donate through PayPal. It is also important to note that while for some organizations there was no data captured regarding their fundraising activities, they had a strong focus in this area without reflecting it online.

### 4.2.3. Community Engagement

For all of the ADOs interviewed for this study, engagement with the community appears to be key. Ad-hoc cultural events, fundraising galas, and yard sales of donated items are among the methods they often use to bring the community together. Some organizations have taken these activities further, directly linking the importance of community engagement as 1) a trust-building exercise, and 2) a means to engage the non-diaspora community and raise awareness. For many ADOs, the greater part of community engagement and mobilization takes place offline and on an ad-hoc basis. The interviewed ADOs further elaborated on their community engagement approach, saying when a specific issue arises, the core members organize a meeting to discuss the needs and plan their engagement strategy based on the available and required resources. The core members then reach out to their networks in-person, via phone or messaging apps. Some of these organizations maintain an online space such as a WhatsApp group for their group information sharing and conversations, and for others, the communication takes place on an individual basis. For younger or less established organizations, these outreach activities mostly involve the family and friends, and for the larger organizations such as international NGOs and umbrella organizations, there are usually regular internal coordination meetings that can involve multiple communities spanning across the country or even worldwide. Those communities will in turn reach out to their local members and organizations to further spread the word.

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27 See: Heather Schlitz (2021). 'Look out for fake donation links for Afghanistan and Haiti relief', 23 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211102114320/https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-avoid-donate-relief-scams-afghan-istan-haiti-afghan-refugees-2021-8?international=true&r=US&IR=T; Kieran Press-Reynolds (2021). 'An Instagram meme page that raised $7.2 million to evacuate people from Afghanistan spent $3.3 million on canceled flights, according to a report', 1 October 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211005054315/https://news.yahoo.com/instagram-meme-page-raised-7-170408358.html

"Unfortunately, all of our team members are Hazara and most of the donors are Hazaras. We don't have many non-Hazaras reaching out to us. Oftentimes we had people enquire who our funds go to, and ask if they are only Hazaras…We don't discriminate… attacks on school impacted non-Hazara, and we reached out to them."

Out of the 60 diaspora organizations reviewed in this study, 52 had a Facebook account, 26 an Instagram account, and 22 a Twitter account, with some organizations having active accounts on multiple platforms. They also relied on these platforms to engage the wider society, particularly in light of the current political situation, which has garnered a significant amount of media attention and public interest. Regular calls for donations of money and goods as well as volunteer support were posted on social media accounts.

Similar to their fundraising campaigns, the amount of work and the choice of formatting varied among different organizations' posts. For some, these requests came in with a detailed explanation of why they are needed and the posts were accompanied with engaging messages, images and videos to further promote their cause, while for others, a simpler route was taken. User reactions to community mobilization posts online was also different among these platforms, with Facebook and Twitter posts getting below 10 likes on average, while on Instagram, the average number of likes rose to more than 200 The difference in user behavior on these platforms is usually maintained even for the organizations who posted similar content across their multiple social media accounts.

Through their several posts online, ADOs requested their communities' support for a diverse range of volunteer activities, such as helping to sort the donated items, supporting the organization of protests, providing medical and interpretation services for the recently relocated individuals, and joining the welcoming committees of newly arrived Afghans. Volunteers were usually asked to come forward by calling a phone number or filling out an online form; however, on at least three occasions where volunteers were needed to foster unaccompanied Afghan minors or short-term placement for Afghan families, Q&A sessions were provided to better inform the prospective volunteers on the process and the requirements associated with this work.

"A lot of community work is based on building networks. We have individuals who come from different backgrounds and bring different networks. Also, in terms of age we are diverse. We have 20 somethings to 50 somethings… [the older generation] understands the politics of elders and how to work with them. I've spent most of my life here and I engage with non-Afghans."

Afghan diaspora organizations also shared some good practices and innovative approaches they had taken with regards to community engagement and mobilization. For one organization, a key success factor was to diversify their community events to attract different segments of their community from various backgrounds and age ranges such as organizing auctions, concerts, and food festivals. ADOs also engaged with Afghan and non-Afghan social media 'influencers' to expand their reach. Mahboba's Promise conducted a live Instagram chat with Australian model and activist Ruby Schofield to help raise awareness on the current situation in Afghanistan and to provide support with their fundraising activities. In Canada, Children without Borders collaborated with Tamanna Roashan of DressYourFace in their fundraising activities as well as forming new coalitions with other ADOs.

For some organizations, reaching out to and partnering up with non-Afghan communities and organizations was an integral part of their activities, which supported their overall aim of integration, as well as a more resultful community mobilization strategy. Windmill Theatre Co in Australia raised over 12,000 AUD for Baba Mazari Foundation by collecting online donations as well as donating their ticket sales. In the UK, Beacon Community Church and their team of volunteers supported Afghan Community & Welfare Centre Walsall with sorting and preparing of the donations received to be distributed to the newly resettled Afghans. Concise messaging was another tool for ADOs to gain their communities' trust concerning need-based donation requests. For instance, some ADOs made sure to keep the donors up-to-date with the exact list of items required and when the needs were met through daily message updates and virtual shopping lists.

"We are in comparison small so we don't have a lot of money to spend in Afghanistan. We have been organizing Sunday markets and Christmas markets and we sell things and objects that have been donated to us by local people and these contributions are the main source of our funding. And we put it on sale and people can pay whatever they want and then we try to send it to Afghanistan to our colleagues there. It's a simple process. We don't get money from any organization or government; we are just a group and organize these events. When we distribute, we take pictures and report to the authorities in Germany."
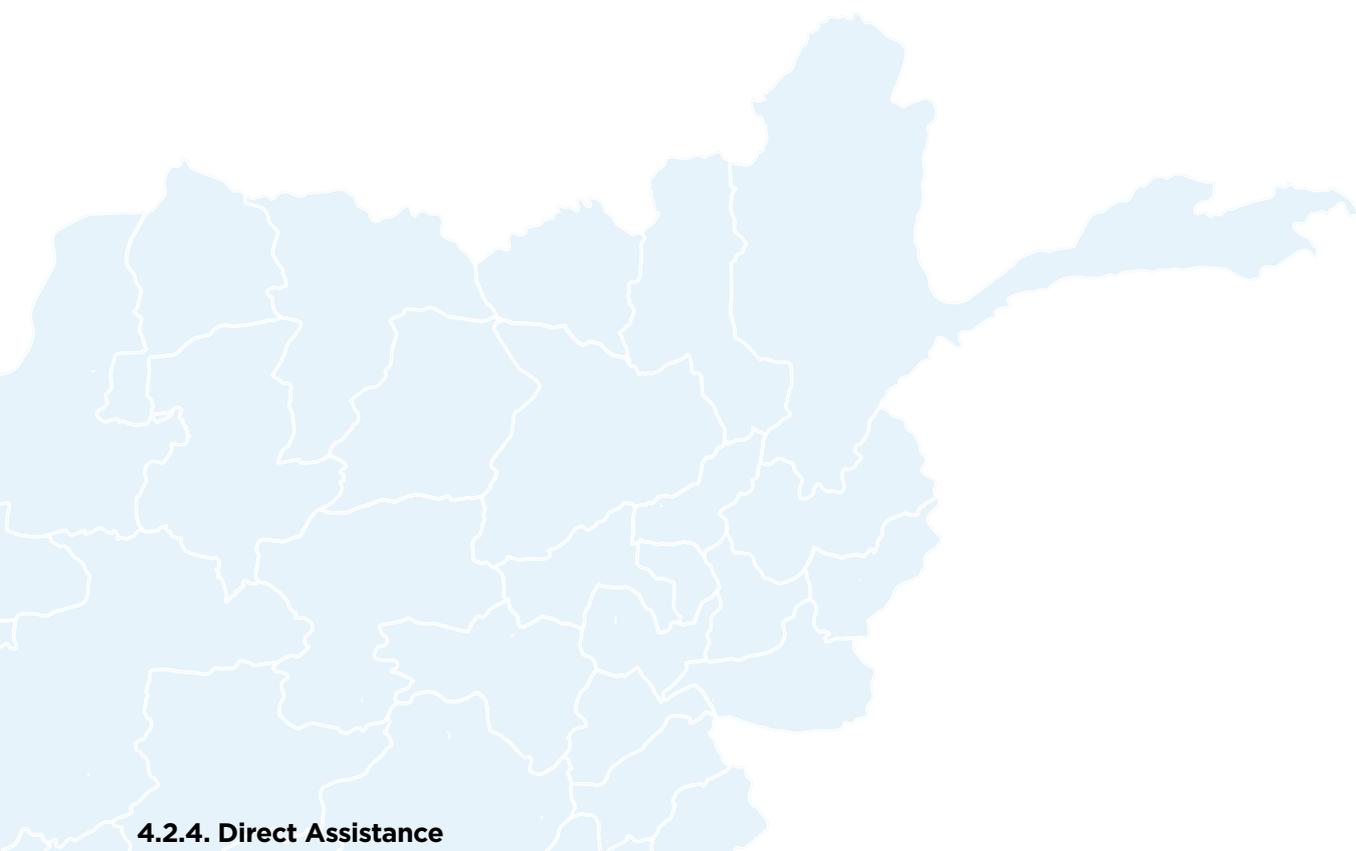
### 4.2.4. Direct Assistance

Afghan diaspora organizations continued to provide direct assistance to thousands of vulnerable individuals despite the serious challenges faced in the aftermath of the Taliban takeover. Their main area of focus was supporting the displacement affected populations, whether internally displaced, or newly relocated to a refugee recipient country. In Afghanistan, there is evidence that ADO support largely included distributions of food and non-food relief packages, and to a lesser extent, cash, shelter, and medical services. However, it should be noted that many ADOs considered that information-sharing regarding services delivered in Afghanistan may put the volunteers or the people of concern at risk and as a result, refrained from publishing public updates on the exact nature of their activities or kept it to a minimum with limited identifying information. Out of the 26 identified ADOs with an active fundraising campaign, eight organizations – including two with a joint campaign – provided at least one update through their social media accounts or fundraising campaign page on how the donations were distributed.

Although some ADOs had sub-offices and bases in various cities of Afghanistan, for many, the loss of access to their volunteers in-country significantly hampered their ability to deliver services. Furthermore, the collapse of the banking system in Afghanistan restricted them from directly depositing funds to their available volunteers. Despite these hindrances, several diaspora organizations found alternative methods to continue their services in multiple provinces across Afghanistan. The interviewees generally refrained from disclosing the exact nature of these alternative financing approaches, with some adding they were still trying to come up with solutions. However, with regard to their loss of access to their volunteers, some mentioned that they were able to rapidly reconstruct their volunteer networks based on the references made by their trusted groups of individuals and creating a snowball network of new volunteers. On two separate fundraising campaigns, ADOs mentioned they used their existing structures in Afghanistan to rapidly respond to the needs of the displaced in Kabul, with one of them saying they had transferred some funds to Afghanistan before 15 August 2021.

Considering the large number of internally displaced individuals who had come to Kabul and the enormous needs of the newly arrived population, several ADOs focused their activities in this area. Some organizations also included the number of people they reached in their fundraising campaign updates. Children without Borders along with Watan Project based in Canada, reported on cash and relief package distribution to at least 336 families in Kabul, Ghazni, Mazar-Sharif and Faryab provinces, with each package worth between 150 and 300 CAD. Wellness Worldwide and Vision for Children provided updates on food and relief package distribution in Kabul to 1000 individuals and 111 families, respectively. Children of War, another ADO with an active fundraising campaign, provided regular updates on their food and relief items distribution reaching to 340 families and 350 municipality workers in Kabul, Maidan Wardak, Nangarhar, and Ghazni. Other means of direct diaspora support to Afghanistan included shelter and medical services. A German diaspora organization working in the health sector established a mobile health clinic in Mazar to provide medical assistance, and another organization from Australia that runs safe spaces for widows and orphans managed to support the relocation of 900 at-risk families and individuals to safe spaces. An ADO was also able to transfer funds to their volunteers in Pakistan to deliver financial support to the newly displaced Afghans taking shelter in a mosque.

ADOs invested significant effort in facilitating the resettlement and welcoming of the newly relocated Afghans in their countries of residence. Individuals and coalitions of Afghan and non-Afghan organizations came together to assist the newcomers in settling in their new communities with ADOs in the United States, UK, Australia, Sweden, and Netherlands, reporting on various activities to welcome new refugees through their social media accounts. Even though the number of refugees reached was largely missing from the updates, ADOs included regular pictures and videos of donated items as well as their distribution activities. Aside from group and one-on-one online legal support, they mobilized their communities to temporarily house some of these families and coordinated with local hotels and accommodation facilities to provide shelter. They also called for donations of food and non-food items, which was met with significant community support. Both the interviews and the online monitoring of social media revealed the difficulty experienced by some ADOs in managing the scale of donations, leading them to request a pause in donations to sort and distribute the received items. The difficulty in rapid large-scale response also held true for the needs assessment of newly resettled refugees. Considering the horrific circumstances experienced by many of these newly relocated Afghans, diaspora organizations also tried to provide them medical and mental health support by connecting them with volunteer physicians and mental health experts.

## 4.3 Accountability

Despite significant challenges, Afghan diaspora organizations used various measures to ensure accountability to their donors and the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve. Given many diaspora organizations run on membership contributions, the reporting line between donors, and recipients of their services is not always clear. Therefore, the continuous support of their members through their membership fees could be an indication of satisfactory results. For instance, an ADO with a focus on culture would organize a cultural event for their community, with its costs being covered by the participants' donations. However, in response to the recent events in Afghanistan, many ADOs experienced exponential growth in their donor base. A large number of these new additions either had prior knowledge about these organizations or had come in contact through individual references.

To ensure accountability to their donors, some ADOs organized Q&A sessions before and after conducting their activities to explain the process and answer any questions their stakeholders might have. Online Q&A sessions were open to the public and were conducted to help prospective and current donors make informed decisions. Online Q&As were also helpful for putting a face to the organization to help their trust-building process. Moreover, ADOs published updates sometimes accompanied by location information, images and videos of their activities. The frequency of these updates varied among ADOs with some posting updates after each round of distribution for instance, and for others on an ad-hoc basis. The level of care taken by different ADOs was also varied when it came to protecting the identity of the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve.

"... our work is based on community trust. Whatever fund we received... everything goes to the cause. So, when we distribute the teams would document exactly what was given to whom and so we could report back to donors. Now they have to operate in secrecy so we can't post things online so we can't report to donors the way we used to do."

Even though in theory the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve could reach out to the same social media accounts, given their displacement situation and the overall internet penetration rate in Afghanistan, that seems very unlikely. This lack of access to service providers is exacerbated by some organizations' need to conduct their activities in secrecy, often leaving the volunteer directly responsible for aid delivery as the sole contact person. Yet, some ADOs are taking steps to protect the rights of the people affected by conflict and displacement they serve by instructing their volunteers to be open to feedback and to pass on the information back to the organization for further action.

## 4.4 Coalitions and Coordination

Following the crisis in Afghanistan, new coalitions were formed and old coalitions were strengthened. In an effort to maximize the support, Afghan diaspora organizations actively reached out to one another and tried to form new coalitions with other ADOs with similar objectives. Children without Borders in Canada reported on their new coalition with Aliza Zara Legacy Foundation in the Netherlands, which was formed with the help of Tamanna Roashan, an Instagram influencer. Together, they raised 10,000 CAD which was distributed to 67 vulnerable families in Afghanistan. For organizations who were already working in partnerships, coordination calls and meetings become more regular and frequent. However, not all the ADOs were able to keep the momentum going; some are already facing difficulties in keeping the coalitions active.

ADOs have vastly different experiences regarding coordination. Less established organizations may have difficulty locating other like-minded ADOs. Multiple diaspora organizations voiced their concerns on the lack of an up-to-date database of active Afghan diaspora organizations that can be used for making the initial contact. Others who are new to forming coalitions expressed difficulties in maintaining these coalitions while managing their different priorities and objectives.

"Within the team we have weekly meetings with collaboration with communities. We have regular meetings and we try to engage the local communities ... then the local communities work with their local organizations. We haven't so far coordinated with other NGOs but recently we have been working to coordinate with larger NGOs."

Forming new coalitions seemed to occur through individual connections of ADO members. Some ADOs mentioned coming into contact with persons from other organizations at conferences and events involving other diaspora organizations, or having met through mutual friends. For instance, one interviewee mentioned that a mutual friend put them in touch with another ADO, after they shared their idea for organizing a protest. Coalitions are usually formed around a specific objective or idea that is shared among the coalition members. The focus of these objectives is not always long-term. For instance, ADOs may easily come together when there is a crisis or when they have been selected by a donor to work jointly on a project. However, they do not necessarily have the will, skill, or resources to continue staying in the coalition. Ad-hoc and project-based partnerships are not always limited to moments of crisis, nor are necessarily donor-driven. ADOs also seek partners from other diaspora organizations or NGOs in Afghanistan based on their needs and the identified gaps in their resources. To identify a partner, ADOs usually reach out to their network of trusted individuals to be put in touch with relevant organizations. They also search online for other organizations that can complement their resources and support them in achieving their objectives.

"[On forming new coalitions], We are very proud. This is an outcome we didn't expect. We previously had tried to create a coordination platform which failed miserably but now other Afghan diaspora organizations have contacted us and we have contacted them and communication is flawless."

Coordination among pre-existing coalitions took place through regular and ad-hoc meetings. Given the current limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of these meetings were held online. The coordination process for these coalitions is often straightforward. Once an issue is identified, a call for a meeting will be arranged and the participants will get notified through WhatsApp groups, emails, or phone calls. After discussing with the members, a group decision will be made and in case of any necessary further action, the tasks will be divided based on the available resources and capacities. There are several global and country-level coalitions formed by the diaspora such as the Afghan Diaspora Unity Council, and the World Hazara Council who operate at the global level. Another Afghan-initiated, country-level coalition is an umbrella of German organizations coming together to maximize the results of their efforts by having a unified voice. The coalition, which involves organizations such as Abad e.V, AFGHAN e.V, and YAAR Foundation, is being supported by GIZ, with the aim of becoming self-sustaining in the coming years. Meanwhile, the Hazara Committee in the UK is a coalition of Hazara organizations and communities that has strong ties with other Hazara organizations outside of the UK. The interviewees did not mention taking a different approach in their coordination process in response to the current situation in Afghanistan; however, they believed working in coalitions helps them to better advocate for their rights with a unified voice.

"Unfortunately, I can't see any coalitions and coordination in Denmark. Of course, some had some projects together but they don't work together. I have been an advisor board member for diaspora. Until now I can't see any cooperation and they have their own projects."

[On coordination among coalition members] We have elected a leading group from all the other organizations as managing group and they are having meetings and reaching out to us with email, phone and in-person. Also, when the COVID allows we try to meet in person. We've had workshops and other exchanges online."

The majority of joint fundraising campaigns were organized among country-level coalitions of ADOs. For instance, Children without Borders in Canada organized a fundraising campaign supported by their partner ADOs such as Watan Project, Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative, Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services, and the Canadian Afghan Lawyers Association. Similarly in the United States, Afghan Unity DFW, collaborated with Maruf Dallas to collect donations in order to support the newly resettled refugees. Although these coalitions had organized several joint fundraising activities for providing direct support, explicit mentions of coordinated activities relating to service delivery in Afghanistan were rare. This could be another consequence of ADOs taking precautions when reporting on activities in Afghanistan since joint fundraising activities could indicate a level of coordination in processing and distributing those funds. Meanwhile, coalitions of Afghan diaspora organizations were able to organize several awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns with high levels of exposure engaging other ADOs, non-Afghan INGOs, as well as policymakers worldwide.

**4.5 Challenges**

The following section highlights some key challenges that were identified over the course of the research. These challenges were highlighted by key informants, but also indicated through the review of social media posts.

**Contextual Challenges**

Contextual challenges resulting from the fall of the former government in Afghanistan had a significant effect on the activities of Afghan diaspora organizations. The deteriorating security situation caused by the threats of persecution continued to push many Afghans away from their homes and into displacement. The interviewees also raised their concerns on threats of persecution of individuals who had collaborated with international agencies and to minorities further aggravating the situation, and as a result, severely contracting ADOs' operational space.[28] For the majority of Afghan diaspora organizations that heavily rely on their volunteer networks to operate within Afghanistan, the worsening security environment meant either a total loss of access to their contacts, or the possibility of putting the lives of their volunteers at risk. These challenges were further exacerbated by a total collapse of the banking system in Afghanistan, preventing some ADOs from transferring the necessary funds to conduct their activities. However, given that this study was conducted in the immediate aftermath of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, the long-term consequences of these challenges remain unknown.

"Now everything has collapsed in Afghanistan. We did have partners but now we don't have any contacts. We had interviews [prior to Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan] but the organizations have stopped working. Our connection is interrupted. Short term we cannot partner up mainly because of security concerns."

"People who are working with us are asking us how to get out and we can't do anything directly and we try to show them the governmental process to ask them to try and have hope. It is devastating for us and the projects."

[28] For example, see: Amnesty (2021). "Afghanistan: Taliban responsible for brutal massacre of Hazara men – new investigation", 19 August 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20211031145227/https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/afghanistan-taliban-responsible-for-brutal-massacre-of-hazara-men-new-investigation/

**Lack of core funding**

Although not specific to Afghan DOs or the current situation in Afghanistan, lack of funding to support organizational and administrative costs was the primary challenge raised by the majority of ADOs. Many added that the overall unstable funding situation significantly hinders their ability to provide their much-needed services despite having the necessary skills and concrete work plans. Despite the current growth in ADO engagement and fundraising activities, the interviewees felt that lack of core funding would affect the continuity of their services in the future. Moreover, they do not have the resources to carry the administrative burden of major donor grants. Lack of resources both directly and indirectly affect ADOs' fundraising abilities. As the majority of members involved in diaspora organizations work on a voluntary basis, they do not always have the time to systematically engage with their communities, and as a result of weak community engagement strategies, their community mobilization abilities also decrease. This is especially true when the home country or the community is not faced with a sudden crisis.

"Since the organization is non-profit, there is no budget. If we exclude the DRC budget, we don't have any money even for the sim cards. Regarding this issue our capacity is also limited, some coordination and organizing events takes a lot of time and organization's capacity is limited. When we do have a bit of budget, we do it and when we don't have the budget, we actually ignore even good opportunities and good events."

**Lack of registration in country of residence**

Afghan diaspora organizations' fundraising challenges are not limited to their lack of resources. Issues with registration in their country of residence was a key issue, with many organizations operating informally or as community groups. This presented challenges for obtaining a bank account for their organization. In the absence of proper banking and registration information, their use of online crowdfunding platforms is limited due to the anti-fraud measures, as mentioned above. For instance, to set up a fundraising campaign on GoFundMe as a non-profit, registration documents need to be submitted along with the fundraising page. If an organization cannot produce these documents, the campaigns will have to be registered under individuals and cannot benefit from charity specific features. In the absence of showcasing their brand and identity, it would also be difficult for the prospective donors to trust the campaign.

**Fraud and corruption risks**

The possibilities of fraud and corruption, although not specific to the current situation, have always been a threat to diaspora organizations conducting activities in Afghanistan. Both the governments of their countries of residence and the ADOs themselves always try to minimize the associated risks. A German diaspora organization which provides basic needs services in Kabul and the surrounding areas mentioned that they always form direct partnerships with their target schools and hospitals to avoid potentially corrupt individuals in the government of Afghanistan. Now with the unstable situation in Afghanistan and the Taliban failing to receive the recognition of other governments, it is anticipated that the situation can take a turn for the worse and further complicate the transfer of funds to project sites.

**Insufficient cross-ADO networks**

Insufficient networking opportunities is another major challenge particularly affecting the younger ADOs. Often the question comes down to where to start. For some diaspora organizations, the lack of a central and up-to-date database that includes all ADOs' information such as their field of activities means the only other way is to meet in person. Although in-person networking events have enormous benefits, they are often too costly for ADOs to organize. Moreover, networking events organized by larger NGOs for instance, do not necessarily help the ADOs to form long-term coalitions since for some it is not clear whom to select as their potential collaborators. Meanwhile, online networking events seem to be only tolerated as a necessity of current circumstances rather than a more practical and cost-effective choice.

**Loss of communication/connection with Afghanistan**

ADOs' loss of access to their partners and volunteers was another significant challenge experienced by some organizations - though this was not a universal experience and affected organizations to varying degrees. Diaspora organizations that do not have a field office in Afghanistan mainly work through their network of volunteers and, for some, existing communication channels were deemed too unsafe to rely on. Similarly, ADOs that were engaged with public and governmental institutions, as well as non-profit organizations, suffered from the official and unofficial closures. A UK-based ADO that was offering scholarships to women and worked in partnership with universities across Afghanistan had to cease their activities since their female students were afraid to participate in their classes. Another ADO that was in the process of forming partnerships with local NGOs in Afghanistan mentioned losing contact following the recent events, suggesting many local NGOs have stopped their work either because of the security situation or their staff leaving the country.

"We have been tackling a lot of challenges in insecure areas around Kabul ... after the fall of Kabul we are completely disconnected and we have lost contact with our contact persons in Kabul. They were local people connected to the organization or some people in this organization and now they are in hiding. We are really suffering from the current situation and we don't know how things are going on."

# 5.
# CONCLUSION

The Afghan diaspora and ADOs in particular have shown rapid self-mobilization in response to the current crisis in Afghanistan. For the majority of ADOs, self-mobilization and re-evaluation of focus areas had already taken place in few weeks leading up to the fall of Kabul. The Taliban's attack on Malistan district of Ghazni province[29] in early July was indicated as a turning point for multiple organizations. The early period of the Taliban offensive led the ADOs to already be refocusing efforts on providing direct support to the displaced and to intensify their awareness-raising campaigns of the risks of Taliban rule. In this sense, ADOs seemed to be prepared for the inevitability of the Taliban taking over in the weeks leading up to 15 August 2021.

Second, it can be concluded that - as the majority of diaspora organizations rely on donations from the community and membership fees to support their activities - there was a sudden rise in fundraising campaigns. ADOs relied on various approaches for their fundraising efforts from placing calls to individuals in their immediate networks, to using major crowdfunding platforms such as GoFundMe. In some cases, this level of fundraising - and the complexity of the situation - required a great deal of adaptability.

Third, some early successes from ADOs were visible in the areas of awareness-raising and advocacy. Similar to mobilization for fundraising and priority shifts, awareness-raising and advocacy campaigns began before the Taliban were fully in control of Afghanistan and were effective in echoing the voices from within Afghanistan who largely felt that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan was premature. Many ADOs asked the international community to hold the US and NATO forces accountable for the many lives that could be at risk as a direct consequence of the decision to withdraw. They also questioned the motives of Afghanistan's neighboring countries that provided support to the Taliban and pushed back on recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan - both questions which garnered a significant amount of media coverage. During this period and the chaotic evacuation period that followed, diaspora organizations also put a significant and multifaceted focus on the evacuation of at-risk individuals such as women's rights activists, female judges and reporters, as well as persons collaborating with foreign governments and agencies. Their efforts ranged from organizing protests to raise awareness and setting up fundraising campaigns, to directly engaging with the evacuation logistics. To raise awareness, they organized unprecedented worldwide protests with unified messaging to advocate for the lives of people in Afghanistan. The protests were able to raise awareness on the situation of Afghanistan amongst the general public.

[29] Ibid

These awareness-raising campaigns were accompanied by advocacy messages targeting governments of countries of residence and policymakers for recognizing the risks and facilitating the resettlement of vulnerable individuals. Direct advocacy through petitions and engagement with governments of countries of residence did see some degree of effectiveness in addressing policy, but also influencing public opinion. Although many of these campaigns are still ongoing, there are examples of successful cases showcasing the achievements of Afghan diaspora organizations. For instance, as the direct result of Hazara diaspora organizations' campaigns focusing on the rights of Hazaras, Canada, Australia and the UK are now recognizing the Hazara as a vulnerable group.

Community engagement and communication through hosting Q&A sessions on resettlement options for Afghans as well as family and organizations looking to support family and friends in resettlement addressed a very specific gap in information flow. The use of live streaming services as well as video conferencing - only further normalized by the COVID-19 era - was put to use.

Overall, 35 emergency fundraising related posts were recorded for the ADOs reviewed in this report. Fundraising campaigns were also organized on online crowdfunding platforms in countries such as Canada, Australia, and the US with the aim of supporting the vulnerable and displacement affected individuals in Afghanistan, as well as the newly relocated Afghans in their countries of residence. Many of these were effective and resulted in tangible assistance being provided to newcomers and those in transit.

Following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban, diaspora organizations continued their wide range of activities. They started to capitalize on their previous and newly formed coalitions with other ADOs, and national and international non-governmental agencies. The ADOs also reached out to the private sector and political figures in their communities and countries of residence to advocate for policy changes. They used social media to inform the public on the situation of Afghanistan and conducted numerous legal information sessions to support the individuals trying to take asylum.

Despite the serious challenges, ADOs continued to provide direct support to the internally displaced populations and other vulnerable groups in Afghanistan as well as supporting and welcoming the new Afghan migrants into their community within their country of residence. The direct support in Afghanistan however, was now being conducted in secrecy to avoid harming the volunteers and the people of concern. The risk of individuals in Afghanistan being associated with foreign entities also hindered ADOs' ability to publicly report on their activities.

Despite impressive efforts, the realities of the situation in Afghanistan did not allow for the majority of at-risk persons to find safety. This also included ADOs' partner organizations and individuals who were their contact points in Afghanistan for aid delivery. The consecutive and sudden changes in the context and the ensuing chaos forced some of these contact points into hiding and as a result, many communication networks collapsed. A large number of diaspora organizations used WhatsApp as their primary tool for communication and coordination with Afghanistan, and although not an issue for everyone, many activities were affected by this loss of communication.

# 6.
# RECOMMENDATIONS

**The intended purpose of this report was to gain a better understanding of how the diaspora organizations engage and organize themselves in response to the immediate aftermath of conflict escalations and during crises, to identify opportunities and challenges. The recommendations outlined below were made based on this report's findings:**

**Conduct organizational self-assessment training.** One of the key reasons for organizations to collaborate is to partner with other organizations which share the same ideas and complement each other. To facilitate mutually beneficial engagement among ADOs, it is important to clearly outline strengths and improvement areas. Ideally, the pieces of training should be conducted over multiple sessions for the ADOs to receive initial training on the process to run the self-assessment with their team members and to receive feedback on a follow-up Q&A session.

**Organize events with clear objectives.** Afghan diaspora organizations have varying levels of experience and a diverse range of needs. Networking events are often valued for younger organizations looking to introduce themselves and discover allies. For more experienced ADOs, other clear incentives should be involved as they most likely are already engaged with their extended network. By understanding the diverse needs of participants, targeted events should be organized with clear intended takeaways.

**Support coalitions in countries of residence by involving relevant donors.** Long-term plans should be put in place focusing first on country-level coalitions and coordination. By focusing on country-level coalitions as opposed to regional or global ones, the shared context and operational space will contribute to a shared experience with regards to some of the challenges and opportunities. Moreover, the associated costs of running in-person meetings will decrease, which can support more frequent sessions. Having country-level coalitions will also make potential engagements with other countries easier in the future. Connecting ADOs and relevant donors such as DFID for UK and DANIDA for Denmark through multi-year plans, will ensure sustainable results which go beyond single project partnerships. Donor support should also involve a transitioning plan designed by the ADOs to identify or create key milestones that would serve as successive indicators in support of moving from a donor-led initiative to self-sustaining coalitions, with the final milestone being 'self-sufficiency' (as defined by the ADOs).

**Develop short and targeted e-learning courses to increase their online profile.** Despite extensive resources available online on topics such as online safety, media awareness, and digital marketing, the targeted information necessary for these specific types of organizations is still limited. ADOs rely extensively on digital communication with their partners and volunteers in Afghanistan and their countries of residence. Therefore, issues such as ethical reporting when posting video footage of their activities, and protecting themselves and their stakeholders online when communicating through social media and giving interviews, is of utmost importance. By creating short, and targeted courses for non-technical users, ADOs without dedicated or in-house resources can also benefit from the general guidelines necessary for every organization.

**Translate key DEMAC documents to Farsi/ Pashto**. A large number of Afghan diaspora organizations and, particularly, DEMAC and DRC's Diaspora Program partners reside in Europe and their language is not English. Although some have English speaking members, they do not always have the necessary resources to make key documents available to all members. By providing translated versions, DRC can ensure a broader reach. Translation of documents could be limited to training material, and summary reports, or ideally, could contain relevant context analysis and needs assessment reports to support providing the "full picture" for populations of concern such as the situation of Afghans in neighboring countries.

**Conduct comprehensive financial management training.** Lack of proper financial management is one of the key factors putting non-profit organizations at risk of failure. Similarly, some ADOs are already suffering from an absence of adequate financial planning which has prevented them from achieving their goals. In developing financial management training for diaspora organizations, topics such as accountability, financial risk mitigation and managing a potential influx of funding should be prioritized. Moreover, ADO targeted financial management training should also cover the prerequisites such as ADO registration and obtention of business bank accounts, in addition to resource mobilization to secure their core funding.

# ANNEX A

# MAPPING OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS FOR ONLINE MONITORING

| Organization | Location |
|---|---|
| Abad | Germany |
| Afghan Action | UK |
| Afghan American Community of Washington | US |
| Afghan American Community Organization | US |
| Afghan American Foundation | US |
| Afghan Association of Ontario | Canada |
| Afghan Australian Advocacy Network | Australia |
| Afghan Business Council | UAE |
| Afghan Community and Welfare Center | UK |
| Afghan Council of Great Britain | UK |
| Afghan Diaspora Council | Australia |
| Afghan Diaspora for Equality and Progress | US |
| Afghan Learning Academy | US |
| Afghan Medical Community in Pakistan | Pakistan |
| Afghan Network for Social Services | Canada |
| Afghan Refugee Solidarity Association | Turkey |
| Afghan Refugees in Pakistan | Pakistan |
| Afghan Students Association | UAE |
| Afghan Unity DFW | US |
| Afghan Women's Organization | Canada |
| Afghan Women's Support Forum | UK |
| Afghan Young Leaders | Australia |
| Afghan Youth Association | UK |
| Afghan Youth Association in Denmark | Denmark |
| Afghan Youth Engagement and Development Initiative | Canada |
| Afghan Youth Movement of Canada | Canada |
| Afghanistan and Central Asian Association | UK |
| Afghanistan Literature House | Iran |
| Afghans of Seattle | US |
| Afghansk diaspora i Sverige | Sweden |
| Afghanska Förening i Sverige | Sweden |
| Afghanska Kulturföreningen i Borås | Sweden |
| Baba Mazari Foundation Inc | Australia |

| | |
|---|---|
| Canadian Afghan Lawyers Association | Canada |
| Canadian Hazara Humanitarian Services | Canada |
| Children Without Borders | Canada |
| Dansk- Afghansk forening ved Næstved | Denmark |
| Dansk Afghansk Humanitær Forening | Denmark |
| Deutsch-Afghanische Gesellschaft e.V. (DAGEV) | Germany |
| From Street to School | Denmark |
| Governance and Reform Advisory | UK |
| Hazara Committee in UK | UK |
| Hazara international | Global |
| Imam Javad Charity Foundation | Iran |
| Katib Cultural Association | Denmark |
| Keihan Foundation | Netherlands |
| Ketab Relief Organization | US |
| Lalehaibarchi ریشه یابی مهاجرت های بین اسفانستانه مقیم اصفهان | Iran |
| Mahbouba's Promise | Australia |
| Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan | US |
| Salal förbundet i Sverige | Sweden |
| Sayyed al Shohada Charity | Iran |
| The Children of War | US |
| The Doctors' Association for Afghan Refugees | Germany |
| United Afghan Association | US |
| Verein für Afghanistan Förderung e.V. | Germany |
| Visions for Children | Germany |
| Watan Project | US |
| Wellness WorldWide | US |
| World Hazara Council | Belgium |

O DEMAC DIASPORA
EMERGENCY ACTION
& COORDINATION