

Report of the Regional Roundtable on the Afghanistan Situation, 17 November 2022

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The Roundtable

Representatives of states, the UN, multilateral development banks and NGOs discussed possible avenues to address challenges related to Afghanistan.

This report does not necessarily reflect ADB positions or views.

Current Challenges in Afghanistan and Host Countries

Afghanistan's economy is in a dire state. Unless basic needs are met, refugees will not return.

Donor resources have become very tight, and aid to Afghanistan is politically difficult. Many donors - ADB included – do not engage directly with the Taliban. Afghanistan may now be less visible on international radar screens, which could lead to dangers down the line.

Security in Afghanistan has improved, reducing the costs of providing aid, but the Taliban is not focused on issues around displaced people.

Pakistan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan and Iran host large numbers, and asylum applications in Europe are trending up. Some host countries face major pressures and require external support. Educational systems in host countries are facing particular challenges, as they come under increasing demand.

Addressing these Challenges

Aid remains essential, with many open questions about what will be most effective. How to marshal sufficient resources to bring the economy back to a low-level equilibrium is another key question.

Current assistance is overwhelmingly humanitarian but longer-term approaches are also required. If humanitarian issues are not addressed, they will become protracted development problems. An effective humanitarian-development aid nexus is needed.

Moving to longer-term approaches, agriculture and irrigation are possible entry points, without requiring Taliban engagement. Building human capital, including through vocational training, is key, with care needed for appropriate methodology and quality assurance. Local institutions will need to be sustained, and data is critical.

Linking Afghanistan to foreign markets can help boost the economy. There was a wish for more private sector investment and increased funding from regional donors.

Conclusion

A young woman, now in Pakistan, addressed the roundtable about the wish of Afghans to continue their education abroad and to contribute to their host countries. Without the right documentation, however, enrolment is often not possible.

Her intervention succinctly and clearly underscored the urgent need for practical solutions that match the real needs of individuals, putting people at the center of development.