

Background

Afghanistan is one of the world's largest and most severe human rights and humanitarian crises and a challenging environment for aid operations at present. With human rights actors being mostly present outside the country and humanitarian aid actors inside, platforms for coordination are limited. This can lead to diverging narratives and low levels of collaboration, although both are driven by the same imperative to protect vulnerable Afghans.

On February 8, 2024, DRC's Diaspora Programme hosted the second online workshop in a series focusing on strengthening the dialogue and exchange between Afghan civil society actors inside and outside of Afghanistan. 24 participants explored how aid and human rights actors can enhance coordination and collaboration on advocacy efforts and work towards a cohesive narrative on Afghanistan, drawing on the strengths of each group.

Discussions & Main Takeaways

The panel comprised three distinguished experts: a researcher specialized in advocacy for humanity, a campaign specialist from a human rights organization, and an access and advocacy specialist from a humanitarian organization. The panel discussion was centered on the topics: (1) How to improve coordination on advocacy between aid and human rights actors. (2) Opportunities for closer collaboration by connecting the humanitarian and the human rights crises. (3) Finding common ground to advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable. Subsequent group discussions showed a collective desire to strengthen connections and better connect different rights in advocacy efforts, from the most fundamental right to life to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to education, work, as well as civic freedom. Here are the main takeaways from the discussions.

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Limitations

- A broad coalition or complete alignment is impossible due to the wide diversity of mandates and agendas between human rights activists and humanitarian actors.
- Current practices include discrediting actors with different agendas without respecting the distinction of mandates and avenues for advocacy and engagement inside and outside Afghanistan. All actors should refrain from engaging in such practices.

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Opportunities

- Advocacy efforts can be better coordinated to reflect joint priorities, in particular in public advocacy to protect humanitarian space and upholding a rights-based approach.
- Aid and human rights actors engage with different populations inside Afghanistan and have therefore access to different data. It is an opportunity for bridging information gaps between actors, in particular related to the rights and needs of women and marginalized groups.
- Increased collaboration to support women-led CSOs is a shared interest amongst all groups and should be increasingly reflected in advocacy efforts by showcasing what CSOs can achieve and how they can be supported.

For more information about DRC's Diaspora Programme:

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This project is funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation & Development (BMZ) and supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)