

Ms Lyn Beverley
Committee Secretary

By email: FADT.SEN@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Beverley

Re: Inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan

Please find on the following page, my response below to the Question on Notice, due to audio difficulties experienced during the hearing.

Many thanks for the opportunity to provide this response on notice.

Yours sincerely

Ms Nadine Haddad
Senior Policy Lead, Conflict and Fragility
World Vision Australia



THE SENATE
**SENATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE REFERENCES
COMMITTEE**

**Inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan
Questions on notice
World Vision Australia**

Question 1 – provide the lost audio on notice

Senator RICE: I'm struck by the contrast between your saying that you are able to continue to provide aid as an international aid organisation and what we've heard of the Taliban's complete rejection of anything associated with international organisations. Is it different in different parts of the country? Are some but not other organisations able to operate?

Mr Tinkler: From Save the Children's perspective, yes, it is different in different provinces. In some provinces where the Taliban have been in de facto control for many years we've been operating in that situation, and, therefore, the ability to continue programs has been somewhat easier than in other provinces. But I'd just add that this is not unique in the sense that, whether it be North Korea, Tigray in Ethiopia or other places, we often have to negotiate difficult operating environments in order to maintain our connection to our mission.

Ms Haddad: Matt covered some of the points, but it is dependent. We do work with communities. Our work is based on community acceptance. We have been in the country working in what was previously Taliban controlled areas and we have negotiated access. So we do work [inaudible]—

Senator RICE: You've dropped out, sadly.

CHAIR: You've dropped out, Ms Haddad. We've lost your audio.

Additional Response – from Nadine Haddad – World Vision Australia

So we do work [inaudible] across various areas within Afghanistan. I want to reiterate the depth and breadth of experience organisations like World Vision bring to the table when operating in such contexts. Before the Taliban takeover, World Vision had been working in areas under Taliban control for almost 20 years. Almost 60% of our operational areas were under TB control. As such, we have extensive experience negotiating and navigating challenges. Our staff are highly skilled and trained in negotiation skills. Needless to say, that central to all this is our ability to convey our neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Senator Lambie asked earlier in the hearing about armed guards. Our view is that this would create the opposite effect. In other words, this would diminish the perception of our

neutrality and would cost us the most precious asset we have- and that is the trust of the community we work with.

We also wanted to emphasize that humanitarian action is much more than just bringing goods in and distributing them. Supplies and distribution are a key element to our humanitarian action, but it is usually embedded in a more holistic program delivery and engagement with the community.

If we may give an example of a life-saving intervention World Vision undertakes in Afghanistan, it is the emergency infant and young child feeding programs. We set up these safe spaces where mothers can breastfeed, rest, eat and receive skilled counselling about breastfeeding and nutrition. This is essential to prevent many young children from falling into malnutrition in the wake of the looming hunger crisis.

Senator Lambie asked us to be realistic about the situation in Afghanistan. We can assure you that the truth will be hard to hear. The truth is that thousands of children will perish if we do not intervene in time.

Senator Fierravanti-Wells also asked if the story of the 8 Hazara orphaned children is what we will expect. This is the tip of the iceberg. Every day, children and their families will be starved to death- they are unable to afford food or medical services. For many, they will be unable to afford the fuel to reach a medical centre. As winter sets in, many villages and towns will be cut off entirely for weeks and months. What this means, is that thousands of children will slowly perish due to starvation, sub-zero temperatures and illnesses.

World Vision implores the committee to put forward humane and compassionate recommendations for the children in Afghanistan. We urge you to recommend the Government of Australia deliver a food security package to address crisis levels of hunger and reduce barriers to enable the flow of funds into Afghanistan, so we can do what we are meant to do.

Thank you for your consideration.