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Committee Secretary
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
By electronic upload

Mahboba's Promise Responses to Questions from the Inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan

Reports from within Afghanistan indicate that despite the UN Security Council passing a resolution exempting humanitarian assistance activities from the sanctions targeting the Taliban, it is still extremely difficult for many organisations to deliver financial aid and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

- a. What is your perspective on this issue? What measures have you taken to be able to continue to deliver financial and other assistance in Afghanistan?

Mahboba's Promise (**MP**) acknowledges that the current situation in Afghanistan does present challenges to deliver financial aid and humanitarian assistance to people on the ground. However, Mahboba's Promise, since the onset of the Taliban take over, has effectively been able to administer financial aid and humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands. This emergency aid includes shelter, food, water, medical supplies, and assisted relocation efforts for displaced peoples.

Mahboba's Promise currently operates in four regions across Afghanistan, being Kabul, Badakhshan, Takhar and the Panjshir Valley. We are currently planning to expand to the Kandahar region in the coming months.

In each of these regions, Mahboba's Promise projects are strongly embedded into local communities and continue to operate in the current hostile environment. In some of the regions, Mahboba's Promise as an organisation has been operating for decades.

Having these grassroots connections with local communities has allowed Mahboba's Promise to take the relevant actions necessary in its operating model to continue to administer humanitarian aid and assistance in Afghanistan. Mahboba's Promise has never stopped administering aid throughout the Taliban takeover, even to the extent that we were administering aid on the day of the Taliban takeover. Prior to the Taliban taking over Kabul, Mahboba's Promise took actions to ensure that they had financial liquidity and were able to continue to work during the chaotic situation that soon ensued.

The situation on the ground does present new challenges which have required significant changes to the way our organisation operated. However, Mahboba's Promise has undergone these changes effectively and continues to be able to provide humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands of vulnerable people.

To this end, although many organisations have struggled, organisations like MP with strong local networks have been able to remain effective.

A network of partnerships, whether it be with UN based organisations, Australian Government funded organisations or NGO's would best utilise distinct parties expertise would significantly mitigate the challenges faced by organisations.

b. What additional measures could be put in place to further assist the delivery of humanitarian aid in the country?

A network of partnerships, whether it be with UN based organisations, Australian Government funded organisations or NGO's would best utilise the diverse expertise of different groups and significantly mitigate the challenges faced by organisations. Other organisations can for example, leverage our grassroots networks to deliver aid in places where it is difficult for them to reach.

Greater collaboration between Australian aid organisations like Mahboba's Promise and the Australian Government can ensure aid is delivered as soon as possible, in the best way possible.

Although this does not speak to humanitarian aid, Mahboba's Promise also emphasises the importance of allocating funding that targets girls education. Consistent rhetoric from the Australian Government that demands the rights of girls to be educated, coupled with tangible projects which facilitate this, will significantly further equal education possibilities in the country.

To this end, Mahboba's Promise has begun planning educational opportunities targeting over ten thousand girls who are currently denied a schooling education.

2. Do you have a view on how Australia's \$65 million funding in immediate humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan, announced in September 2021, is being delivered? What is this package delivering on the ground?

Mahboba's Promise does not have visibility as to how this funding is being delivered. We strongly recommend the Australian Government to leverage the experience and grassroots connections of organisations like Mahboba's Promise, to ensure aid is delivered directly to those who most require it. Although the humanitarian situation requires an immediate aid response, longer term sustainable solutions must also be built and funded.

We welcome contact from the Australian Government as to how this aid can be best distributed, given the ongoing humanitarian crisis.