

Parliamentary Inquiry into Issues Facing Diaspora Communities in Australia

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Q 1: Could you advise us on notice how the travel ban on Afghanistan impacted the implementation of your development assistance in Afghanistan?

Australia needs countries like Afghanistan to achieve greater peace and security, and the people of these countries need Australian aid. A travel ban for visitors is a separate issue from the continued delivery of development programs. The two should not be linked, particularly given that development programs are and can be delivered by Afghan people.

DFAT funding decisions related to development programs should not exclude diaspora-led NGOs continuing to work in countries with a current travel ban as long as the following conditions are met:

- only local staff are employed
- comprehensive and practical risk management strategies are in place
- monitoring and accountability requirements can be met without Australian staff travel.

With DFAT's travel ban on Afghanistan in place, the funding for other accredited NGOs (Australian NGO Cooperation Partnership – ANCP) has been halted for Afghanistan. AADO itself receives no funding from DFAT and the travel ban did not halt AADO's program delivery in Afghanistan. All programs are delivered by AADO's team of Afghan staff in Kabul.

The travel ban has affected AADO's work and financial sustainability in two ways:

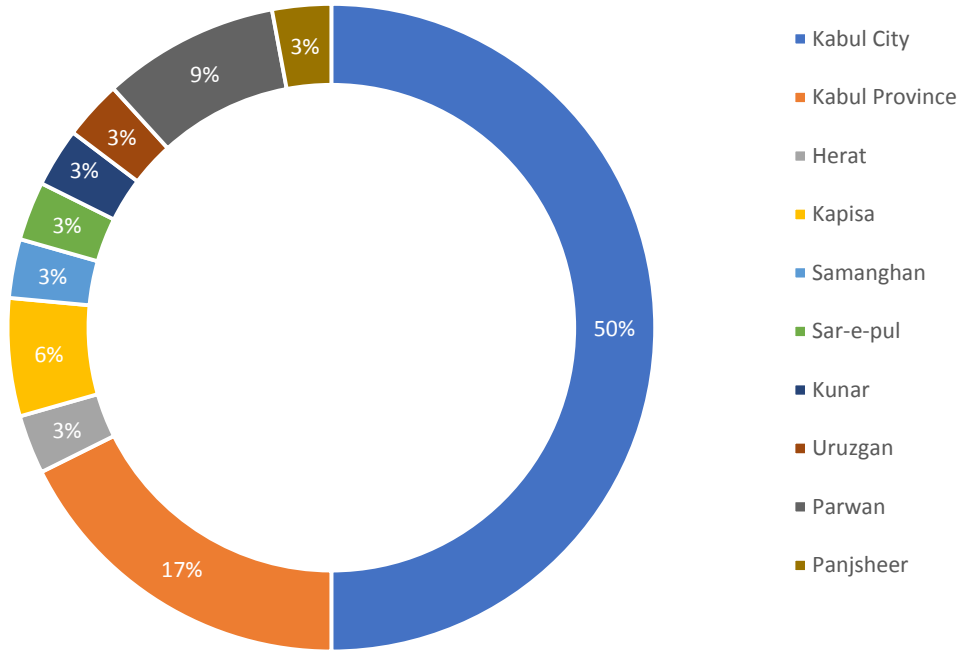
- AADO's Executive Director, Dr Nouria Salehi, has not travelled to Afghanistan to work with the team first-hand while the DFAT travel ban has been in place. Remote monitoring has been increased as a result. However, meetings with key stakeholder groups have not been possible.
- The DFAT travel ban is scaring off Australian philanthropy. As a consequence of DFAT travel ban advice for Afghanistan, a well-matched philanthropic trust interested in supporting AADO's science training work (which is backed by the Afghan Ministry of Education), decided not to proceed with a significant funding grant.

Q 2: Which areas of Afghanistan are you mostly doing work in? Perhaps you could give us some detail around that.

AADO's signature program, the Master Science Teacher Training Program has been delivered multiple times in Kabul city and Kabul Province as well as in many provinces across Afghanistan. Locations and participating schools are selected in close consultation with the Afghan Ministry of Education and the Security Department of Afghanistan.

Provinces where the course has been delivered include: Herat, Kapisa, Kunar, Panjsher, Parwan, Samanghan, Sar-e-Pul and Uruzgan. See figure below, which represents the proportion of students from different Kabul and other Provinces.

MSTT Projects completed by Province 2007 - 2020



Map of locations where AADO has delivered its Science Teacher Training Program



AADO's Literacy and Livelihoods Programs for village women who have missed out on schooling have now been delivered to a total 70 villages and a further 5 villages in progress. These villages are in rural areas within a 50 kms arc north of Kabul. Districts include Qara-Bagh, Kalacon and Qalai and are always selected in discussions between AADO, district Governors and the Afghan Ministry of Education.

Q: Are they mostly programs for women and children or have you moved from those sorts of programs?

The focus of AADO's work continues to be education and training related to professional skills and livelihoods for women and their families. AADO's literacy and livelihoods program targets rural women excluded from education. Men science teachers are trained alongside their female colleagues in our science teacher training programs; in the big cities, AADO recruits 50+% women teachers. AADO has run carpentry training for teenage boys – often breadwinners in female headed households.

AADO's Master Science Teacher Training program was developed in response to the demand for qualified teachers as the country seeks to rebuild its education system. The intention was to retrain women science teachers who had been banned from teaching by the Taliban regime and this has been achieved. It now seeks to train those recruited as science teachers and have leadership skills but only minimal teaching experience or subject qualifications.

Q: How are you working within the Afghan government? For example, Madam Ghani has programs for women and girls. Do you work in consultation with some of the local aid organisations?

AADO has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Afghan Ministry of Education for its programs, which has recently been renewed.

During her regular trips to Afghanistan, Dr Nouria Salehi has met a number of times with the First Lady in her office to discuss AADO's education and training and to seek financial support to augment Australian donations. Mme Ghani has her own interests and priorities in relation to funding. Dr Salehi understands that Mme Ghani's projects support teachers in private schools rather than those in public high schools. AADO's programs aim is to provide education to the most vulnerable, in this case students in public high schools in Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, AADO partners with several national organisations, including the Afghan Health and Rehabilitation Services Organisation (AHRSO) to identify women with disabilities who can be included in its programs. AADO is also a member of Agency Co-ordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), the co-ordinating group for NGOs in Afghanistan.

Q4. If DFAT isn't funding into Afghanistan, is the Palladium group, for example, still receiving moneys from overseas countries?

Are we or the United Kingdom not putting any money into the Palladium group, for example?

I'm interested in whether those large aid organisations are still on the ground there or whether that has really ceased as well.

AADO advises this is not a question it can answer but would like to point out that Palladium is a commercial contracting company that bids for aid program management contracts from government donors, rather than a non-profit NGO like AADO and other international development organisations.

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