



# AID AND CONDITIONALITY

White paper

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**Norwegian Afghanistan Committee**

In the late summer of 2021, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. The funding of the Afghan state was immediately cut off to ensure compliance with the US and UN Security Council sanctions targeting the Taliban. This new political and financial situation poses a set of questions for humanitarian and development actors in terms of what conditions to set on their future support to Afghanistan. How to set such conditions, and how to negotiate with a new Taliban-led government that is imposing strict restrictions on women and girls and is widely being considered as a threat to fundamental human rights, are amongst these questions.

The dilemmas and challenges aid and development organizations are now facing in Afghanistan are not new to the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) with over 40 years of experience in the country. This whitepaper aims to provide clarity on how our programs will be continued without compromising our values in the complex and everchanging political, socio-economic, and security setting of Afghanistan.

## **The NAC approach to conditionality**

Over the last 40 years our organisation has worked adjacent to changing regimes and powerholders. We have a strong local presence and trust in communities, and knowledge of cultural and traditional mechanisms and political nuances. For NAC, conditionality is about how to apply our values and working principles, in the complex and everchanging political and normative setting in Afghanistan.

NAC applies a contextualized, dialogue-based approach to promote our values, aiming to find common ground with room for action and local solutions.

Rather than establishing strict conditions we strive to establish a principled and pragmatic approach, ensuring broad community acceptance, without losing sight of the goal of equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of gender, age, abilities, disabilities, backgrounds, and circumstances.

NAC is guided by the principle of do no harm. We promote our values and principles towards powerholders consistently and gradually to ensure long-term and sustainable social change, with the realization that change requires dialogue based on mutual respect, trust, and contextual understanding. A zero tolerance for corruption is non-negotiable.

## Vision and strategy

NAC's vision is to contribute to a peaceful Afghanistan, free from poverty, where rural communities are empowered and resilient, valuing equality and diversity.

We work in rural and hard-to-reach communities, in different geographical areas, with a conflict-sensitive, multisectoral, integrated approach. The objective is to empower income-poor female and male community members from diverse ethnic, religious, social, and economic backgrounds to improve their livelihoods.

NAC is conducting both humanitarian and long-term development interventions, with a triple nexus approach, saving lives, providing education and healthcare, while increasing food security and improving livelihood opportunities.

Regardless of which government is in place there is a need to continue developing effective and sustainable service delivery structures in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



**SDG 2 and 13:** Sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and disaster risk reduction .

**SDG 4 and 5:** Education from pre-primary to tertiary levels.

**SDG 3 and 5:** Education of healthcare workers; support for community owned and run basic healthcare services with the aim of reducing maternal and newborn mortality rates.

**SDG 16:** Dialogue and conflict transformation in multi-cultural communities.

NAC strives to act as we speak in applying our values through our work with partners and the communities we support, and in all aspects of the organization itself ensuring gender and ethnic diversity within our workforce.

## Values and principles

The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence are central to our identity and manifested through our operations. Our work is guided by a core set of values:

### Independence

NAC's work shall not be dictated by political, religious or commercial actors or interests.

### Integrity

NAC has zero tolerance for corruption. Anti-corruption efforts are an important component within all of NAC's programs and initiatives.

### Accountability

NAC is accountable towards its members, donors, project partners, and communities. We act to enable access to information and ensure transparency and active participation in our processes of planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

### Alignment with human rights and international development agendas

All NAC programs, projects and initiatives are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN conventions, and resolutions, considering Afghan national and local strategies and priority plans.



## Key areas for conditionality

The Taliban takeover in August 2021 raises important questions on what conditions to set on short- and long-term development support to Afghanistan. In relation to our program activities, NAC has defined the key areas for conditionality to be corruption and human rights, particularly women's rights.

## CORRUPTION

NAC has zero tolerance for corruption. Corruption is a crime, and there is no room for compromise.

### **To reduce corruption risks and vulnerabilities, NAC will conduct:**

- strict monitoring of the programs, projects, activities, and initiatives we are involved with.
- timely, systematic, and effective response to complaints in accordance with NAC's Anti-Corruption Policy and Handbook, Whistle Blower Policy, and other compliance mechanisms.
- community-based approaches to monitoring.
- third party monitoring when needed.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The right to education, health, work, freedom of movement, and freedom of speech is essential to NAC's work.

### **NAC promotes and negotiate for:**

- the right to pre-school, primary and secondary education for all girls and boys.
- equal opportunities for young women and men to tertiary education of good quality.
- inclusion and diversity in education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, social and economic backgrounds.
- access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- safe and secure employment and work conditions for youth, men, and women.
- safe, secure and enabling environments for humanitarian and development workers and their families.

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS

NAC views women as partners and agents for change. NAC aims to challenge the traditional norms which cause restrictions, discrimination, and violence against women. Women's rights must be ensured equally in both urban and rural areas.

### **NAC promotes and negotiates for:**

- women's right to justice, education, health, employment, mobility and participation in society including as decision makers at all levels.
- acceptance to include women and girls in all project activities.
- acceptance to promote employment of women in all sectors.

### **To be able to achieve its objectives NAC will:**

- increase the number of female staff in management and senior technical positions.
- conduct systematic capacity building of female staff to ensure greater career opportunities for women within the organization.
- improve women's working and psychosocial conditions.
- engage men in creating enabling environments for women.
- support women's mobility, safety and security.
- promote the rights of women, children, youth and women with disabilities within the organization and among key partners within the communities we support.

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