

Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under Secretary General  
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
United Nations  
New York, NY 10017  
USA

CC: Acting Head of Office, OCHA Afghanistan  
Humanitarian Coordinator Afghanistan, Mr. Robert Watkins

24 June 2010

Dear ERC Holmes,

We, the undersigned 31 NGOs, write to express our deep concern with the continuing challenges within OCHA to adequately resource staff and carry out its mission in Afghanistan.

In 2008, 27 NGOs called for the re-establishment of an independent OCHA office in Afghanistan. With the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation, OCHA was needed to lead independent humanitarian coordination and support humanitarian efforts to respond to increasing displacement, civil protection concerns, shrinking humanitarian space and lead humanitarian advocacy with the parties to the conflict. We welcomed your mission in June 2008 and the resulting decision to establish one of OCHA's largest missions globally. Meanwhile, the humanitarian needs remain critical in Afghanistan, and the complex operating environment renders OCHA's coordination role absolutely essential for NGOs to do their job on the ground.

We are aware that at the global level, OCHA has committed to improve its human resources system in order to more rapidly recruit, deploy and maintain qualified and diverse staff. Despite this intention, staffing levels still remain critically low in Afghanistan, 18 months after the establishment of the OCHA office. OCHA staff numbers are significantly lower than its approved capacity of 73 due to a virtual freeze on UN recruitment and a shortage of national staff.

We acknowledge the achievements of OCHA within the constraints of limited resources, including facilitating the production of two humanitarian action plans and regional contingency plans and the set-up of five field offices, information management tools and the Emergency Response Fund. Yet, both the Kabul and field offices have been under severe strain and have been unable to make progress on strategic functions, such as information analysis and cluster support, due to inadequate staffing and material resources.

Basic coordination, planning and information-management requirements exceed OCHA's capacity, especially in the regional offices. For example, the southern office, which faces the most complex humanitarian challenges, has a single representative managing civil-military relations, information management and coordination. Further, OCHA has only a handful of national staff, many of whom have been temporarily seconded from UNAMA due to UNDP's recruitment process, which is responsible for hiring national staff. High attrition rates with no replenishment have also left offices incapacitated.

We are especially concerned that after June 2010, OCHA Afghanistan's senior management team will be virtually non-existent, and to date, only a few temporary replacements appear to have been identified by OCHA New York, despite a commitment made in March. In addition to filling the Head of Office position, OCHA requires a strong team of dedicated and *experienced* humanitarian professionals in the national and regional offices.

As the humanitarian needs in Afghanistan are at a critical stage, we call on you to urgently redouble recruitment efforts and investigate secondment options to strengthen OCHA Afghanistan's effectiveness in facilitating independent and principled humanitarian coordination, outreach and response. In this regard we would request a meeting in New York between your office and representatives of the NGO community to discuss these issues and how we might also be able to support your efforts.

Yours sincerely,



1. ACTD

2. ActionAid



3. AfghanAid



4. Afghanistan National Re Construction Coordination

AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL RE-CONSTRUCTION COORDINATION



5. Aid Afghanistan for Education

6. BRAC Afghanistan



7. CAFOD



8. CARE



9. Care of Afghan Families



10. Christian Aid



11. Concern



12. Coordination of Afghan Relief





Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance

CHA

13. Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance



14. Cordaid



15. CWS – P/A



16. DACAAR



17. Helping Afghan Farmers Organization

18. Ibn Sina Afghanistan



19. International Assistance Mission

20. International Medical Corps



21. INTERSOS 

22. Japan International Volunteers Center





23. Medair **MEDAIR** International



24. Medica Mondiale



25. Merlin



26. Mission East



NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL

27. Norwegian Refugee Council



28. Oxfam



29. Swedish Committee for Afghanistan Swedish Committee for Afghanistan



30. Terre des Hommes

aide à l'enfance / Kinderhilfe  
aiuto all'infanzia / child relief / [www.tdh.ch](http://www.tdh.ch)



31. Welthungerhilfe