

December 13, 2022

Dear Ms. **Melinda Good**, Mr. **Illango Patchamuthu**, and additional World Bank leadership,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to first applaud the World Bank's recent resumption of two Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) projects worth \$893 million, both the Emergency Education Response in Afghanistan, and NGO/civil society organizations Capacity Support. The informally ongoing ARTF projects continue to provide urgent and essential food, health, and education services to the people of Afghanistan. As the World Bank's leadership considers an imminent decision on formal engagement with the *de facto* authorities of Afghanistan and whether to open an office in Kabul, we now write to encourage this move.

In early 2021, the ARTF was “the World Bank’s [largest and longest-standing](#) single-country multi-donor trust fund,” assisting thousands of Afghans before August 2021. Emergency authorized World Bank programs since then have continued to benefit Afghans; a formal restart would strengthen the infrastructure of paused projects, allowing for a true investment in the Afghan people. Reestablishing a premier organizational presence on the ground would also strengthen the efficacy of aid distribution across the country and lead the way for international work in Afghanistan. We remain concerned about the closures of girls secondary schools and the roll backs of women’s rights under the Taliban. We believe, firmly, that the best way forward to assist Afghan women and girls is to reject isolating Afghans and to assist their survival and empowerment by the day-to-day presence of senior management staff such as those of the World Bank in the country. With a country office, the World Bank could launch additional programs to support teacher salaries, fund private and community-based schools, and bolster other ways for girls to learn until the ban is lifted.

We undersigned groups possess decades of experience in international humanitarian work and have played an active role in Afghan advocacy since the Taliban takeover, including early petitioning to the World Bank regarding the ARTF for teacher and health worker salaries in 2021, visiting Afghanistan to consult with teachers, local leaders, students, and de-facto provincial authorities, and sustained engagement with key Congressional and international NGO actors. Our goal is to promote reinvestment in Afghan financial sectors, stabilize the country’s economy, and address one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world — priorities the World Bank has the capacity to help address.

We appreciate your organization’s efforts in support of the Afghan people and look forward to its continuation with this decision by your leadership.

Signed,

Unfreeze Afghanistan

Afghan Sustainable Economic Foundation

Center for Economic and Policy Research

CODEPINK

Hindus for Human Rights

Just Foreign Policy