



To the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation Mr. Benjamin Dousa

ActionAid Afghanistan and Sweden: Do not abandon Afghanistan's Women and Girls

Dear Mr. Dousa,

ActionAid International has been present in Afghanistan since 2005, fighting poverty and exclusion by empowering communities to claim their rights. We are deeply concerned about last year's decision by the Swedish Government to withdraw its long-term development assistance from Afghanistan. The decision leaves behind one of the world's most vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls who face severe restrictions on their rights and opportunities.

Afghanistan is affected by the climate crisis, regular extreme weather events and natural disasters. In the fall of 2025 several provinces were struck by earthquakes killing and injuring thousands of people, while around 8,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, leaving thousands displaced without basic supplies. Health systems are overwhelmed, clinics are closed and hospitals struggle to cope.

The disaster compounds an already dire situation in which nearly half the population requires humanitarian assistance, including millions of women and children who face acute malnutrition and systematic restrictions on their rights. IPC warns that around 17.4 million Afghans are likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between November 2025 and March 2026, including 4.7 million in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) with some seasonal improvement during April–September 2026. Meanwhile, 2.6 million Afghans returned from Iran and Pakistan in 2025, to a country facing poverty, instability and a severe funding shortfall.

For over 20 years, Sida-funded programs have strengthened food security, disaster resilience, and women's empowerment. ActionAid's work with the Afghanistan Resilience Consortium has helped over 15,000 households improve food security and strengthen infrastructure and livelihoods. This long-term, community-based approach shows that sustained development cooperation is imperative to respond to immediate emergencies, and to strengthen resilience, support livelihoods, and enable communities to withstand and recover from crises.

Sweden has a proud legacy of principled international development cooperation. As we approach the five-year mark of the Taliban return to power in August 2026 ActionAid urges the Government of Sweden to reconsider its Afghanistan policy and restart Sweden's engagement through conditional long-term development assistance tied to policy shift dialogue. The Afghan people — and especially Afghan women and girls — must not be abandoned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Srikanta Misra".

Srikanta Misra
Country Director
ActionAid Afghanistan

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Åström".

Victor Åström
Country Director
ActionAid Sweden