



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Panelist Biographies

The Status of Humanitarian and Protection Efforts in Afghanistan

Panel I



Vicki Aken is the Country Director for IRC Afghanistan, a position she has held since 2017. Before joining IRC, Ms. Aken served as Country Director for GOAL in Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Sierra Leone. Prior to GOAL, Vick worked with the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Health Alliance International in Sudan, embedded in the Ministry of Health's National AIDS Program. Ms. Aken served in the Peace Corps as an education and community development volunteer in Tonga. She holds an MPA from the Evans School of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Washington – Seattle and a B.A. in International Studies from American University.



Astrid Sletten is the Afghanistan Country Director for the Norwegian Refugee Council since July 2020. Prior to this post, Astrid was NRC's roving country director where she was deployed to Iraq, Nigeria, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia. Astrid has more than 19 years of experience in humanitarian emergencies and development work in 13 different countries (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South-Sudan, Sri Lanka and Sudan) with increasing levels of management responsibility including experience leading multi-disciplinary, multi-national, sectoral and agency needs assessments teams in complex environments. Astrid worked at the Norwegian Red Cross, OCHA, and the Norwegian government. She holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University College Sør-Trøndelag (HiST) in Norway and three bachelor's degrees in social economics and social work from the United States and Norway.

Jared Rowell is the Country Director for the Danish Refugee Council in Afghanistan. As one of the largest humanitarian aid agencies in Afghanistan, DRC works in the sectors of emergency response, protection, early economic recovery and mine action. Prior to arriving in Afghanistan in 2018, Mr. Rowell was the Regional Manager for South and East Asia at Mercy Corps, covering a total of 11 countries. Rowell has worked for other international NGOs in Egypt, Jordan, and Kenya, with extensive experience in both humanitarian and development programming.

Moderator



Rhodie Margesson is a Specialist in International Humanitarian Policy in the Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division at the Congressional Research Service (CRS). She conducts research and policy analysis on global humanitarian issues, disaster relief, displaced populations, migration, and some aspects of human rights. Ms. Margesson has also served as an election observer with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union in Africa, the Balkans, and the Caucasus and travelled extensively. Previously, she was an Associate with the Program on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Harvard University and worked in the conflict resolution field on both domestic and international projects. She has also held research and teaching fellow positions at both the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Ms. Margesson earned a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy and a Ph.D. from the Fletcher School.