2.3.1 Land Border Crossing and Humanitarian Freight Corridors

- Overview
- Main regional trade routes and existing and planned infrastructure

Overview

Afghanistan is a landlocked mountainous country. It is bounded by Iran (921 km – 572 mi), Turkmenistan (804 km – 500 mi), Uzbekistan (144 km – 89 mi), Tajikistan (1357 km – 843 mi), China (91 km – 57 mi) and Pakistan (2670 km – 1660 mi).

Main regional freight routes and entry points through the national land border crossings are particularly significant to the humanitarian context. The geopolitical complexity of the region, the internal volatile security and the seasonal constraints on road accessibility have oriented the main humanitarian agencies operating in Afghanistan to investigate mitigation options against supply disruptions. Planning and developing potential alternative freight routes is considered a necessary precaution measure.

Most of humanitarian incoming sea-bound freight have traditionally used Pakistan Karachi and Port Qasim harbours as the main route, being the most cost effective and shortest route to the ocean.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan borders have recently (2017) experienced custom blockage episodes. Freights pass through the border have been subjected to delays and demurrage costs.

(For info, see: "2017 Border Closure" paragraph in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durand_Line)

Challenges represented by unpredictable accessibility of the traditional border points through Pakistan, and the complexity of the humanitarian logistics milieu have oriented some of the main humanitarian agencies operating in the Country (HCR, UNICEF and WFP), to assess alternative supply routes, as a contingency planning option for non-disrupted humanitarian goods streaming.

In addition to the above considerations, land border crossings might also be used for compensating insufficient national infrastructure, security blockages, or seasonal constraints:

- Security constraints impede, at the date of the assessment, the use of national road connecting Herat and Mazar. The two locations can be connected through the national ring road direction south or, potentially, through the shorter Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan via the Torghundi and Hairaton borders.
- The north-eastern region (Badakhshan province) mountainous area, not accessible from within Afghanistan during the winter period, might be reachable through Tajikistan Ishkashim border.

In consideration of the fact that transnational supply route necessarily entails developing consolidated information on custom procedures, and contracting with transporters and customs clearing agents, it is essential to have information on a perspective that exceed the country boundaries.

This LCA provides basic indications and links with relevant information of neighbouring countries, including Pakistan Karachi and Bandar Abbas Port, and the main road entry points description. – see map -
Afghanistan is currently carrying out a customs reform and modernization that aim at “improving the organization logical definition of roles, fair recruitment system, accountability, conduct and disciplinary rules, training support and a built-in mechanism for promotion of ethics in the staff”.

Infrastructures and equipment modernization is also needed, as the venues for the customs clearance process are insufficient.

“The Afghan Customs Department has been entrusted with the additional responsibility of creating and operating Customs Infrastructure facilities, though such activity is not within the core competence of any customs organization. In view of the existing poor facilities, creation of physical infrastructure of terminal buildings and cargo handling equipment assumes urgency in the interest of trade facilitation.” [mof.gov.af/en/page/421]

Main regional trade routes and existing and planned Infrastructure

Land

The main northern corridor links with cargo flow on the principal horizontal freight axis Kyrgyzstan/Kazakhstan/Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan, that reach Russia and China network eastbound, and reach European countries and Baltic sea ports, westbound. The network consists of road and railway infrastructures.

Main entry points for this option are: Torghundi and Hairaton.

The Trans-Asian Railway Network, flanked by the Trans Asian Road network, is partially planned or under construction. The below links are indicative of the Trans Asian existing and planned networks.

Maps:
https://sites.google.com/site/indianoceancommunity1/trans-asian-highway

Info: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Asian_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Asian_Railway)

Sea

Main sea-bound freight, alternative to Pakistan routes, is Iran Bandar Abbas port.

Bandar Abbas is connected through road and railway with Mashhad, Iran. Mashhad is road connected to Afghanistan through entry point Islam Qala to nearest city Herat. Mashhad it is connected via railway to Afghanistan Hairaton border crossing.

Cargo reaching Mazar-i-Sharif, through the Heiraton border preferably use the railway infrastructure from Bandar Abbas to train terminal in Heiraton.

Cargo with destination Herat use the faster road option through Zaranj/Islam Qala border.

Additional information:

Iranian customs authority request all original copies of the documents to start the clearing procedure. Indicatively, customs procedures, inspection and loading lead-time is relatively slow. 10 days as an average is expected for this procedure, before the cargo is loaded on trucks or train.

MAIN COUNTRY LAND BORDER CROSSINGS

Pakistan - Peshawar Link:

Pakistan – Spinboldak Link 2.3.2 Pakistan/Afghanistan

LCA Karachi Port

LCA Bin Qasim Port

LCA Uzbekistan (Hairaton) Border Crossing

LCA Riga Port

2.1.1 Iran Port of Bandar Abbas (Shahid Rajaee)