

2.3.1 Land Border Crossing and Humanitarian Freight Corridors

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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.

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 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.

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. The 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

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.