



Women's voices in the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Afghanistan Report

Prepared by Medica Afghanistan

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About Medica Afghansitan

Medica Afghanistan (MA) is an Afghan women-led organisation working towards the elimination of violence against women. We seek to improve the quality of women’s lives by providing legal aid, psychosocial counselling, and public advocacy, while also raising awareness and building capacity in the fields of health, education, and law. Medica Afghanistan encourages exchange and cooperation among women from different countries, cultures, social backgrounds and conflicting parties and thus contributes to a process of reconciliation and peace.

More information: <http://www.medicaafghanistan.org/View.aspx?PageAlias=home>

About Women for Women International – Afghanistan

In countries affected by conflict and war, Women for Women International supports the most marginalised women to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, influence decisions in their home and community, and connect to networks for support. By utilising skills, knowledge, and resources, she is able to create sustainable change for herself, her family, and community.

Since we began working in Afghanistan in 2002, we have served more than 51,000 women through our year-long programme, supporting them to increase their average daily personal earnings from \$0.00 to \$1.04 (USD). We also work with male leaders, engaging them as allies in women’s empowerment and have worked over 1,900 male leaders to date.

More information: <http://www.womenforwomen.org.uk/what-we-do/countries/afghanistan>

About GAPS

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) is the UK’s Women, Peace and Security civil society network. We are a membership organisation of 16 NGOs and experts in the field of development, human rights, humanitarian and peacebuilding. We were founded to progress the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Our role is to promote and hold the UK Government to account on its international commitments to women in conflict areas worldwide.

More information: <http://gaps-uk.org/>

Introduction

In November 2016 GAPS received a grant from the FCO to run three in-country consultations with its members and in-country partners. Consultations focused on key women, peace and security themes: women's participation, violence against women, and institutions, security, and legal frameworks protecting women's rights. The consultations will inform the development of a new UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP) and support further engagement with national civil society by the UK.

GAPS' members supplemented the funding to allow for a fourth consultation in Lebanon and Turkey with Syrian women refugees. Consultations therefore took place in four of the UK's six NAP focus countries: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, and the Syria Response.

This report presents a summary of the findings from the consultation in Afghanistan which took place in February 2017. The recommendations in this report are direct outcomes from the consultations, i.e. proposed by participants in the consultation.

The consultations in Afghanistan included workshops, key informant interview (KIIs) and focus groups (FGDs). These were led by Women for Women International UK and Medica Afghanistan. In total, 2 workshops were conducted with civil society/NGO members in both Herat and Kabul; 9 KII with civil society/NGO representatives in Kabul and Herat, and 6 focus groups with women, who mostly availed themselves of the women empowerment programmes offered by the respective NGOs aged between 18- 50.

	# people interviewed	# people in FGDs (6 groups in total)	# people in workshop discussions (2 in total)
Herat	5	30	29
Kabul	4	30	22
Total	9	60	51

Background

Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan as well as its largest city, located in the eastern section of the country with population estimates ranging from 3.5 to 6 million people, and where all the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan reside, including Tajiks, Pashtuns, and Hazaras. Herat is the third-largest city of Afghanistan and it borders with Iran. It has a population of about 436,300 and serves as the capital of Herat Province, situated in the fertile valley of the Hari River. Various local NGOs operate in Kabul and Herat with the vast majority of INGOs and foreign representatives operating from Kabul.

Security remains a major concern in Afghanistan. In 2016, UNAMA documented 11,418 civilian casualties (3,498 deaths and 7,920 injured); marking a 2% decrease in civilian deaths and 6% increase in civilians injured. These figures amount to a 3% increase in total civilian casualties compared to 2015. In 2016, UNAMA documented 1,218 women casualties (341 deaths and 877 injured), representing a 2% decrease compared to 2015. Women casualties caused by ground engagements increased by 7% compared to 2015. Of significant concern, Anti-Government Elements continued to subject women to 'punishments' imposed through parallel justice structures. Sixty-four women civilian casualties (26 deaths and 38 injured) occurred as a result of attacks in which Anti-Government Elements intentionally targeted women in 2016.¹

¹ UNAMA, "Report on Protection of Civilians," 2017, https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_annual_report_march_2016_final.pdf

1. Violence Against Women in Afghanistan

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a pervasive problem in Afghanistan, including the harshest forms of physical violence that are practiced unabatedly still today. In 2016, a man cut off the nose of his 22-year-old wife in Faryab and only a couple of months later, a 14-year-old pregnant girl was set on fire by her husband and her parents-in-law to punish her father for eloping with a cousin of the girl's husband.² In Kabul, at least three separate acid attacks against women were reported in the summer 2016, according to local Afghan news reports.³ A focus group participant from Herat commented that *"in some areas selling rat poison is forbidden because of women's suicides."*⁴

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in the first six months of 2015/16 registered 2,579 cases of violence against women. This represents a 7% increase compared to the previous reporting period, which could be interpreted as women being more aware of their rights or as violations as being on the rise, a view that was also shared by most consultation participants. Out of all of these cases of violence against women reported by the AIHRC, 28% were physical, 7% sexual, 35% verbal or psychological, 21% economic, and 8% were other types of violence.⁵ Consultation participants listed a similar range of types of violence when asked about the types of violence they encounter in their work.

Actual statistics on violence against women are outdated and/or experience various limitations, especially in the survey design and implementation, which makes the establishment of trends and forms of violence experienced by women difficult. In a study undertaken in 2008, 87% of women reported to have experienced at least one form of physical, sexual, psychological violence, or forced marriage.⁶ Among the women surveyed by The Asia Foundation in 2012, 8% said they experienced domestic violence and smaller percentages mentioned other forms of violence.⁷ The same survey found that domestic violence is cited most often in the East (12%), South East (13%) and South West (10%) Afghanistan.⁸ The same survey conducted in 2014 also reported that the perception of domestic violence - one of the major problems facing women, according to the same report - was on the rise.⁹

Whilst participants in the consultations recognised that all women are at risk of VAWG, they noted that women without familial support or safety nets were amongst the most vulnerable to violence. While women are exposed to mostly domestic violence by husbands and other family members - 90% of the cases recorded by the AIHRC in 2012 – perpetrators also included unidentified people in the streets and other public places, taxi and bus drivers, people at work, teachers, clergy, and other people not part of the victim's family.¹⁰ As per the six months reporting of AIHRC in 2015/16, 190 women were killed with 89 deaths caused by Anti-Government Elements.¹¹ The causes of violence against women are multiple and interconnected – including corruption in the government bodies, insecurity, impunity, normalisation of violence, among many others - and are underpinned by unequal gender relations and customs and traditions regulating all levels of society.

² Amnesty International, "Afghanistan 2016/17," <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>

³ Fariba Nawa, "Kabul's women seek refuge indoors after a series of acid attacks", <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2016/08/10/kabuls-women-seek-safety-indoors-after-a-series-of-acid-attacks/>

⁴ Herat, FGD with community women

⁵ AIHRC, "Elimination of violence against women – 1394", 2016, http://www.aihrc.org.af/home/research_report/5170

⁶ Global Rights, 2008, Living with Violence: A Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan, 2008.

⁷ The Asia Foundation, A Perception Survey, 2012, TAF, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Surveybook2012web1.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Asia Foundation, "Perception Survey of the Afghan People", 2014, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/Afghanistanin2014final.pdf>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Consultation participants overwhelmingly raised the problems related to notions of honour and masculinity as being central to violence against women when these commented:

“There are many sexist norms that perpetuate violence in the country, for example people - especially men - don’t accept women as political competitors and in general women’s presence in social activities.”¹²

Projects have increasingly recognised the importance of community representatives and influential figures (khon, malik, mullah, arbab) in successful implementation of anti-VAWG projects. According to one participant, while in other contexts perpetrators of VAWG may know that what they are doing is abuse, in Afghanistan even this basic awareness is lacking. Many forms of VAWG within the family are considered a man’s prerogative. Educating leading figures and raising awareness is therefore a necessary first step to address the issue of VAWG. Participants underlined the importance of linking human rights with Islamic principles and showing that they do not contradict each other, as religion is often used as a justification for VAWG. Specifically, mullahs (religious cleric, often with very limited religious education) were identified as being able to play a key role in changing social norms.

The VAWG Protection Framework in Afghanistan:

Enacted in August 2009, the **Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law** represented a landmark in the adoption of legislation addressing violence against women in Afghanistan. The law has established a list of abuse against women that constitute crimes, accompanies with specific sentences for perpetrators. Despite the establishment of EVAW units at the Attorney General Office in various provinces and the roll out of a variety of trainings in support of the governmental bodies by international organisations, the law still experiences major obstacles in its implementation and attempts of further revision and rejection. In 2016, the parliamentary Judicial Commission continued their efforts to amend the law to remove provisions regulating the minimum age of marriage, prescribing punishments for domestic assault, and providing for women’s shelters.

As first points of contact, the **Afghan National Police (ANP)** and prosecutors play a key role in the protection of women victims of violence and in setting a course for proper application of the EVAW law. However, the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) monitoring indicates a loop of inefficiency, corruption and deficiencies at the investigation level by ANP and the prosecution that blocks even some of the most serious cases from reaching the stage where the EVAW law could be applied. The AIHRC has accused the ANP of not only lacking support for women’s access to justice but actually committing abuses against women. The June 2013 report from the AIHRC found that policemen committed nearly 15% of honour killings and sexual assaults recorded between 2011 and 2013.¹³ Similar attitudes were also shared by the workshop participants as they tended to describe police as corrupt, discriminating against women, and being unaware of women’s rights.

General challenges with the ANP and prosecution in denying women’s access to justice were mentioned by consultation participants mostly as ‘lengthy processes’ with corruption/bribery arising at nearly every step. This was similarly summed up by the AIHRC (July 2012) as: disregard for the principle of transparency in dealing with cases; prolonged delays in processing cases (frequently with disappearance of key documents and of evidence during the course of protracted proceedings); weak investigations; deficient and incompetent processes of collecting key witness statements to incorporate in dossiers; inconsistency in

¹² Herat, Workshop with civil society members

¹³ Oxfam, “Women and the Afghan Police,” 2013, https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-173-afghanistan-women-police-100913-en_3.pdf

approaches towards suspects and accused in the same cases, in particular in cases involving influential/high profile people as accused persons, and lack of accountability.¹⁴

Access to justice

Women experience various challenges to accessing services when they experience violence. Typically, as a study has shown, Afghan women (like men) turn first to a family mechanism; if that fails, they turn to community mechanisms; if that fails, they may turn to an external mechanism.¹⁵ State mechanisms include formal state actors, such as judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement agents, women's rights advocates, lawyers, and other private individuals working in NGOs, in shelters, for legal aid providers, and for other non-profit organisations. These have greatly expanded in the past decade and, consequently, so have the reported cases of abuse. According to the same study, women mostly went to AIHRC and DoWA when seeking justice.¹⁶ These, however, still have a limited reach and competence on women's rights. Similarly, NGOs have also expanded but are still mostly confined to urban areas. A workshop participant commented:

"The majority of cases of violence against women reported to police and prosecution offices is solved outside the formal justice system— through mediation because of pressure for withdrawal of complaints - by elders with traditional dispute resolution mechanisms."¹⁷

Reliance on informal bodies was also attributed (by consultation participants) to a lack of trust in state institutions and the formal justice system, which is perceived as slow and corrupt and often lacks presence in rural areas. On the other hand, the desire to protect and restore family honour and community reputation also lead to a preference for the informal system, whose decisions are 'more respected.' Such decisions, however, are based not on individual rights, but on concepts of honour and community harmony. The rights of the individual, especially women's, are not considered. A 'traditional' sentence in rape cases, for example, is to order the rape victim to marry the rapist. Women are excluded from these decision-making processes.

Women seeking justice face the greatest barriers when they try to access state justice mechanisms (if compared to referring to the family or community); the fear of the consequences of going outside the home (community stigma or disapproval, physical retaliation from family members, loss of economic sustenance, and so on) is even more intense at this level than at the community level.¹⁸ The barriers that women face include: the internalisation of violence; the assumption that women have fewer rights than men; and association of shame and dishonour with exposing private matters to strangers or outsiders.¹⁹ Consultation participants raised similar issues affecting women seeking justice but skipping important and more subtle points on women's barriers for accessing justice. The same study has highlighted a more subtle point: that women are afraid of breaking taboos associated with taking problems outside of the community, which can influence the perception of community leaders as being incompetent and unable to protect community members, which results in collective shame.²⁰ It is frowned upon when men do it but, when women do it, it provokes an even fiercer condemnation.

¹⁴ "Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan," UNAMA, December 2012, http://unhcr.org.ua/attachments/article/818/UNAMA%20report_women%20AFG_2012.pdf.

¹⁵ Luccaro, Tim and Gaston Erica, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan: Individual Versus Community Barriers to Justice," United States Institute of Peace, 2014, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW98_Women's-Access-to-Justice-in-Afghanistan.pdf.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kabul, Workshop with civil society members

¹⁸ Luccaro, Tim and Gaston Erica, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan: Individual Versus Community Barriers to Justice," United States Institute of Peace, 2014, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW98_Women's-Access-to-Justice-in-Afghanistan.pdf.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Women - as the same study further elaborated and was confirmed during the consultations - are afraid that going to formal justice actors will not only be of little help but will also expose them to physical abuse or prosecution by state actors without any action against the perpetrator; a likely difficult or impossible return to former lives (especially after staying in shelters); incompetence and poor legal enforcement of the state; and lack of female participation and representation. Women also face more 'practical' barriers like the lack of information about where to go, low levels of literacy, lack of basic documentation (like marriage certificates, IDs), the need to travel great distances, and the costs of legal representation fees.²¹ One aspect that overwhelmingly arose during consultation is women's fear of losing their children. One participant commented:

"A woman cannot go to the court and obtain a divorce, for example. A woman can forget everything but not her child. Women think that their husband will take their child."

Access to NGO services:

Women's rights organisations provide a vital source of support and services to women survivors of violence. They face significant challenges in providing this assistance and the consultations raised one particular challenge: the prerequisite to register a woman/girl escaping violence with The Ministry of Women Affairs.

"The women's protection centres cannot accept women escaping violence until the Ministry of Women's Affairs registers or refers the case to them. But the ministry only works from 8 am to 4 pm and some cases happen out after 4 pm but no one takes responsibility for the case and the women have to go to the police, or sleep in the street, or face additional sexual violence because they have nowhere to go. We have had a few such cases."²²

Consultation participants also raised the problems arising in the health sector, especially in the forensic departments as *"staff being all male"* and the *"general lack of confidentiality"* in the hospitals on cases of violence along corruption as to *"change the results of the tests."*²³ While the problem of virginity tests (that are routinely performed on women accused of 'sexual crimes')²⁴ was not explicitly raised in the consultation, it was implied when they mentioned the problems these experience at the forensic departments.

NGOs play a vital role in prevention and protection of victims of violence. These provide guidance, legal representation, psychosocial assistance, shelter, empowerment programmes aside prevention activities such as campaigning and advocacy on violence against women. A civil society member commented:

"As the need is immense and the number of activists - even if growing - is still small. The activists tend to operate day and night [and] that often results in women harming their own health. Activists can be psychologically and physically stranded. If they are successful, the tension increases as many girls/women (and men) place their hope on them - from the clients they support to the politicians and other stakeholders, who want to change the society and increase gender justice."

Women protecting victims of violence face many challenges and risks. Aside the risks mentioned for protecting women's rights in general, consultation participants added: threats from family members of the defendant; misconception on the role of lawyers among community members (who are not acquainted with formal justice institutions); and threats from government officials (without further specifying the types of threats received); and sexual harassment.

"Mostly women who work for women's rights are always at risk. They receive warnings through phone calls. They receive warnings from male family members of the women whom they are defending. Even they are asked to stop working on the case face to face... Mostly they have no other solution but to tolerate."

²¹ Ibid.

²² Kabul, Workshop with civil society members

²³ Herat, Workshop with civil society members

²⁴ Pazhman Pazhohis, "Afghanistan: The High Price of Virginity", IWPR, January 2017, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghanistan-high-price-virginity>

Recommendations: Supporting VAWG Survivors

Recommendations for the international community around addressing VAWG in Afghanistan fell under three main areas:

1. Support long-term, normative change:

- Increase public knowledge and awareness of women's rights and importance of women's participation. In order to reduce violations of women rights awareness and understanding of the concept and importance of women's rights and enabling women's voices to be heard must be increased among communities, civil society, media, academia, religious leaders and others.
- Notions around men and masculinities lie at the core of violence against women. Creating programmes on responsible and shared parenting at the community level with the possibility of partnering with schools and parent-teacher-community associations. These programmes should address patterns of raising girls and boys that perpetuate gender roles, norms and values and notions of masculinities that promote gender inequalities and domestic violence.
- The international community should put diplomatic pressure on the Afghan Government to ensure that women's rights are effectively incorporated into the education system and geared towards changing social norms on women's rights, such as ending violence against women and girls, women's civil rights, and women rights in Islam (for example inheritance, divorce, women's education rights). School curricula require a thorough revision from a gender perspective. Introducing innovative gender mainstreaming programmes in the curriculum of the schools, colleges and universities should redefine the roles of men and women, including women as leaders, and the rights of boys and girls, such that traditional views that promote gender inequality and violence are disrupted. The curriculum needs to include a gender-sensitive framework for teachers, parents and students to comprehend the meaning of gender equality.
- Involve local key actors in the process of changing values and male gender norms in the traditional structure of Afghan communities. These actors – that deeply influence both men and women - include community leaders, elders, religious leaders, teachers, and other community decision makers. Engaging them is fundamental for improving gender relations in communities. In implementing these programmes and projects, men should be involved as partners in gender equality.
- Religious leaders are among the most influential members in the communities, especially due to their status as repositories of knowledge on Islam. As women's rights from a secular perspective are seen with suspicion among the communities, promoting women's rights through the lens of Islam is fundamental as consultation participants often implicitly and explicitly pointed out. Partnering and training religious leaders should be prioritised by the international community.

2. Support and strengthening of state and non-state VAWG services

- The international community should commit to further funding shelters for women who have experienced VAWG and specific hospital facilities for VAWG survivor. This should be part of a holistic approach – as participants pointed out - which includes immediate protection of women in addition to their rehabilitation. Addressing women's economic empowerment should therefore be tailored to their individual needs as they are often stranded in shelters and have little hope for a return to a normal life afterwards.

- Existing structures, such as Family Response Units and EAW prosecutors, need to be expanded and strengthened. This refers notably to the need for qualified female staff, which is often lacking outside of major cities. Female police units for example require better training and more support systems.
- Women's participation in the legal and justice systems is also key to ensuring that VAWG is prevented and women are protected.

2. Access to Funding for Women's Rights

A fundamental issue raised in the consultation was access to funding for women's rights organisations in Afghanistan. A major obstacle for advancing gender equality and women empowerment is the short-term availability of funding and a 'project-based approach' where longer-term funding would allow for a greater impact of programming and would promote organisational growth rather than the threat of closure or downsizing at each project completion.

This is a symptom of a wider problem related to the international involvement in funding on gender issues. Aside lacking a clear gender agenda, international funding has been slowly diminishing and respondents mentioned competing interests among NGOs with a respondent even mentioning the existence of 'threats among NGOs.'²⁵ An NGO representative explained:

*"The economic situation of women's rights organisations in Afghanistan is also challenging. The international community is slowly withdrawing but on the other hand, the number of girls/women's organisation and other civil society groups grows – that is what creates competition between civil society members instead of a growing solidarity and mutual support."*²⁶

The availability of funding in the past led to the mushrooming of a variety of NGOs working on women's rights in Afghanistan with various degrees of commitment to the cause of women's rights. In fact, the latter was implied by the participants when they demanded closer scrutiny and monitoring of programmes related to women's rights or *"providing funding for those who work for women honestly"*²⁷ or *"some of the funding was spent by women who didn't believe in women's rights and they made fake documents for the international community."*²⁸

*"Unfortunately, those who don't have money believe in women's rights but those who have money and funding, they don't believe and don't work for women's rights."*²⁹ Kabul KII, NGO representative

*"Some of women's rights organisations have not done much because most of them mostly think about the economic side of the projects and don't honestly believe and work for women's rights."*³⁰ Herat CSO workshop

The latter is also a sign of some women's rights being excluded from the 'gender funds' available in Afghanistan. The latter is especially clear when some consultation participants demanded 'visas for HRDs' (Human Rights Defenders) or 'temporary residences abroad', which actually was made available by the European Union but they do not seem to be aware of it. It is clear that actual 'classes of HRDs' were created where inevitably those closer to donors - in terms of language (English) and physical proximity (based in Kabul and/or major urban centres) - stand greater chances of being funded and better supported.

Recommendations: Funding

- In order to allow smaller organisations, groups, and other actors to apply for funding, the requirement of proposals in English should be changed, as the latter is one of the main obstacles experienced by women when these mention the need for 'capacity building' as it often literally refers to English language

²⁵ Kabul, Interview with an NGO representative

²⁶ Kabul, Interview with an NGO representative

²⁷ Herat, Interview with an NGO representative

²⁸ Kabul, Interview with an NGO representative

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Herat, Workshop with civil society members

courses. Considering that the vast majority of consultation participants never heard of the UK Women, Peace, and Security funding, the latter should be better publicised and made available to civil society members.

- It is crucial to also provide core funding for organisational and capacity development to make women's organisations strong and sustainable.
- It is important to have 'standalone' WPS budgets, which are actually dedicated to the implementation of the WPS agenda. Funding mechanisms must work and be accessible for WPS actors. Funding mechanisms must meet the needs of WPS actors by being flexible and ranging from small to big funding opportunities.
- Considering the vital role that women's organisations play in the GBV prevention and protection of VAWG survivors, ensure funding for the organisations that have demonstrated an impact on women's lives.

3. Human Rights Defenders: Risks and Challenges

Human rights, including the equality of men and women, are enshrined in the chapter two of the Afghan Constitution (2004), both at a national level and regarding the international treaties ratified by the Afghan government. As a member of the United Nations Afghanistan should observe the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) which was adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly. Afghanistan lacks, at present, any legislative or otherwise codified measures, which offer specific protection for the HRDs. Article 58 of the Constitution gives, however, the mandate to the AIHRC to monitor, foster and protect human rights at national level. It also establishes complaint mechanism at the AIHRC, useable by each individual for violation of personal human rights.³¹ The European Union Plus 63 (EU+, which includes Canada, Norway and Switzerland), developed a local strategy for protecting Afghan human rights defenders, in consultation with local stakeholders, and based on the European Union Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders. The main problem noted was the lack of effective interpretation and implementation of relevant laws by the Afghan authorities.³²

Advancing women's rights can come at a high cost with women human rights defenders experience considerable risks in Afghanistan. A study conducted in 2014 with over 50 interviews with women human rights defenders from different provinces of Afghanistan found that they experienced threats, harassment, intimidation, physical attacks on their family members and property and unlawful killings.³³ The discussions conducted for the present consultations confirmed these findings. Workshop participants mentioned phone calls that threatened women with kidnapping and killing; threatening them with negative publicity with claims such as *"We will take your video and share it,"* which can potentially hurt the reputation of women leading to serious condemnation by their families and communities. Other forms of abuse included harassment, including by government officials, insults, and mocking. Powerful individuals can pose obstacles to women's rights work, as an NGO representative from Herat explained, especially in rural areas:

*"We are implementing some activities in a district of Herat. A woman from our organisation was working there, she selected participants based on pre-determined criteria. But a powerful person in the district introduced other potential participants to her but she refused to select them. She received some warnings and now she is not willing to work there anymore and prefers to work in the city only."*³⁴

Focus groups and workshop participants felt hopeless on how to handle security risks faced by HRD. These mostly deal with risks by restricting their activities and/or travel at the expense of their involvement in important issues therefore inevitably reducing their overall effectiveness, as a civil society member from Herat commented: *"When violence against a woman occurs and we ask women's rights organisations to participate in a demonstration, they mostly reject and we can gather only ten women."*

Consultation participants feel that the Afghan government is unsupportive where their requests for protection are not taken seriously when they mentioned *"the government didn't pay any attention to us and they told us when something happens to you and you have evidence for that, only then come to us."*³⁵

The consultations also revealed some difficulties in cooperation with various government bodies and that consultation participants are deemed as 'unresponsive' or in general as having 'weak coordination'. Additionally, women's rights organisations sometimes feel they lack legitimacy, especially due to the fact that working on women is perceived as being imported from the West. Other barriers mentioned by consultation

³¹ Situation of human rights defenders, 2014, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu-local-strategy-for-human-right-defenders-in-afghanistan-2014_en.pdf

³² Amnesty International, "Their Lives On The Line: Women Human Rights Defenders Under Attack In Afghanistan"

³³ Amnesty International, "Their Lives On The Line: Women Human Rights Defenders Under Attack In Afghanistan," 2015, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Dropbox%20-%20Amnesty%20WHRDs%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf><https://amnesty.dk/media/1183/afghanwomen.pdf>

³⁴ Herat, Interview with NGO representative

³⁵ Herat, Interview with an NGO representative

participants were sexual harassment, a general lack of capacity among civil society members, opposition from families and communities, and the underpinning customs and traditions prevailing in Afghanistan, including uneasiness with women's presence in public spaces. While affecting the whole of Afghan society, increased level of insecurity plaguing Afghanistan considerably affect HRDs' work that in general makes activities more difficult to implement and the further spread of conservative ideas more difficult to fight. People tend to confine themselves at home, which is especially detrimental for women's freedom of movement.

Recommendations: Supporting HRDs

- The international community should make commitments for the protection of women HRDs. The international community should work with the Government of Afghanistan to prioritise the security of women's rights activists as currently there is very little/no commitment to security of women rights' activists and these women are operating at their own risk with limited coping mechanisms.
- Women human rights defenders should be provided with exposure to working environments where they can learn from the security and protection mechanisms used by other organisations. Such exposure, such as exchange visits will help Afghan women human rights defenders to learn from the experiences of other countries. It is paramount that women working in rural and distant areas also participate in the programme.
- The international community should offer funding for and/or directly train women's rights organisations to deal with security challenges. Local organisations have limited capacity to deal with security threats and as such are very vulnerable to any security threat or attack. The latter should ensure that female members of provincial offices are also included as these are the women exposed to the greatest risks. These could be also covered by various insurance packages.

4. Women's Participation

The present section explores some of the constraints that women experience for participating in political, economic, and social life, followed by an exploration of women's participation in peace, justice, and security. Women symbolise honour in the Afghan society and the latter needs to be preserved to protect the overall morality of society. *Purdah* or sexual segregation is the most blatant aspect of this attempt to protect societal morals where its breaching results in condemnation and even death. While women's role is to manage home, a man has the responsibility to procreate, support, and protect the family and country, confirmed a recent study on masculinities conducted in various provinces of Afghanistan.³⁶ Afghan men are perceived to possess the qualities of being brave and, at the same time, honourable. However, a common theme that emerged in the same study is the loss of sense of integrity and worth in men's inability to live up to the expectations that society sets upon them.³⁷ Women that are active in economic, social, and political life inevitably bend or breach these norms. At the same time, precisely women's presence in social, political, and economic life represents a major power force and condition behind the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The limitations to women's participation in political, social, and economical life do not need further introductions as Afghanistan is among the countries that score lowest on the Gender Development Index (171st out of almost 190 countries).³⁸ Consultation participants provided an endless list of limitations, which could be all reduced to two main denominators: patriarchy and customs/traditions.

*"Women are often asked to demonstrate their skills and legitimacy to participate in decision - making. They need to justify their participation. Men are not asked these questions."*³⁹

As of 2004, 27% of the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga (or lower house) are reserved for women through a constitutional provision (Article 83), along with one sixth of seats in the 102-member upper house (Meshrano Jirga) (Article 84). Provincial councils also have a reserved seats provision, although this is stated in the electoral law and not the constitution, and was reduced in 2013 from 25% to 20. Combined, these provisions form a considerable political space for women and, to date, their participation in elections as voters (averaging around 36% over five elections) and candidates (around 10% of all candidates in parliamentary and provincial council elections) has been notable in a context where many rural women rarely leave the family compound.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, despite women's participation in the political sphere and various appointments in different ministries, their role remains symbolic as women often pointed during the consultations acknowledging the need for more women in leadership and decision-making roles.

Consultation participants overwhelmingly raised a persistent lack of education, especially among girls in Afghanistan and generally low literacy levels as negatively affecting nearly every aspect of their lives, including access to economic opportunities. It was also mentioned as a barrier for women to seek justice, as root cause of VAW, and as one of the main obstacles for women's political participation. The Afghan Ministry of Education estimates that there are presently more than 9 million students (40% of which are girls) in primary and secondary schools, an impressive increase from an estimated 1 million students in 2001.⁴¹ However, based on earlier data about 32%, of the school-age population, the majority of which were girls,

³⁶ AREU, Men and Masculinities in Afghanistan, February 2016, https://swedishcommittee.org/sites/default/files/media/1601e_the_other_side_of_gender.pdf

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ UNDP, "Gender-Development Index" <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI>

³⁹ Kabul, Interview with NGO representative

⁴⁰ Anna Larson, "Women and Power: Mobilizing Around the EAW Law in Afghanistan, ODI, 2016, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10277.pdf>

⁴¹ USAID, Education Fact Sheet, July 2016, <https://scms.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/07%20FINAL%20Sector%20Fact%20Sheet%20OED%20July%202016.pdf>

remained out of school.⁴² A study conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)⁴³ provided some reasons for children dropping out of school such as school being too far, ancillary costs of education (like uniforms, textbooks, transport, etc.), insecurity, inappropriate treatment of teachers, and other minor issues.⁴⁴ More specifically, girls additionally report dropping out of school because they also lack parents or guardians to look after them; family does not allow them; shortage of female teachers; and early marriage.⁴⁵

Security and justice sectors

Since Afghan society is segregated by gender, women's access to opportunities in the formal justice institutions and security heavily depends on the presence of women in the formal justice sector as several participants raised during the consultations. As of 2014, less than 2% of the police force consisted of women⁴⁶ with a slight increase to slightly over 2% in 2016 where among 150,000 police there were 3326 women, 2937 police and 389 civilian).⁴⁷

"They [women] can go to the hospital, psychosocial counsellor, female defence lawyers, and women protection centres. But still they cannot fully trust the police for registering their cases."⁴⁸

Though the Ministry of Interior had set a target of recruiting 5,000 women by 2015, this goal was not met. Possible constraints that have been identified and brought up during the consultations are the insecurity for women at the work place, negative perceptions, lack of retention conditions, a lack of a welfare package, limited abilities for promotion and a lack of women in leadership positions.⁴⁹

Similar numbers are reported by the Ministry of Defence where 1,400 staff are women (out of a total 195,000 members of staff) - less than 1%. This is on a par with 400 women currently studying at the National Military Academy and 700 women working at the National Directorate of Security (with total number of employees classified).⁵⁰ A recent policy brief from the Afghan Women's Network argued that recruitment of women campaigns are lacking along a lack of awareness raising campaigns on the importance of women in Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF), lack of uniforms, access to vehicles and weapons if compared to their male colleagues, and lack of capacity and the ability to improve it.⁵¹ Some of these concerns were also raised by consultation participants although they focussed on issues specifically concerning women in the police as other security actors are unlikely to represent a priority for civil society members.

Participants raised the problem of the lack of women in the judiciary and legal sector. Based on various statistical data gathered by The International and Development Law Organisation from various governmental institutions, wide disparities in the number of male and female legal professionals evidenced between 2008 and 2010 persisted, albeit with some meaningful gains. By 2013 the number of female judges increased from 7.2 % (in 2010) to 8.4%. According to Supreme Court Figures in Balkh there are 8 female judges (of total 97 positions) or 8% and the majority of judges mostly being present in Kabul, with 12 women in the Supreme

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The study, based on mixed-methods, involved 5,089 respondents (mainly school children, parents, out of school children, and other education-related stakeholders) in 26 provinces of Afghanistan.

⁴⁴ Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission 'Fair Access to Education of Children in Afghanistan', AIHRC, 2009. [<http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/fair-access-children-education-afghanistan>]

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Interior Affairs, "Strategic Implementation Plan on Solidarity of Female Personnel Affairs with ANP," 2014.

⁴⁷ Afghan Women Network, "Policy Brief: Afghan Women Empowerment in Security Sector June 2016,

⁴⁸ Kabul, Workshop with civil society members

⁴⁹ Law and Order Trust Fund, "First quarter project progress report," 13.

⁵⁰ Afghan Women Network, Security Policy Brief, 2016, www.awn-af.net/index.php/cms/download/994

⁵¹ Ibid.

Court (of total 119 positions) and 58 in the Appeal Court (of total 266).⁵² Female lawyers have also increased over time and make up 19.3% (or 335 compared to 18.3% registered in 2011) of the lawyers registered with Afghanistan Independent Bar Association. Among these, 141 work in Kabul (the highest number among all the provinces). Unlike the percentage of female judges and lawyers, the number of prosecutors actually decreased, from 10% in 2010 to 6% in 2013.⁵³ The women employed at the Ministry of Justice rose from 28 in 2010 to 37 in 2013.⁵⁴ Women entering the justice sectors experience a variety of obstacles for studying and working as legal professionals including a lack of safe transportation, appropriate accommodation facilities to attend law or Shari'a faculties, or compulsory legal training based in Kabul.⁵⁵ An interview participant also raised the problem of widespread corruption - which does not require further introductions in the Afghan context - and as also affecting women in the justice sectors:

*"Most of women who are graduates of law do not work in the legal sector. We have some colleagues that work in the office but not in the court. This corruption should be ended so that women could join."*⁵⁶

Peace-building

Workshop participants did not discuss peace-building in depth, the below points relate to broader concerns over women's role in leadership positions which are related to peace-building efforts. Afghanistan's High Peace Council (HPC) has only 9 female members out of 70. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) and Joint Secretariat also adopted a Gender Policy in 2011 as a means to further promote women's involvement in the peace processes within the government.

When it comes to the meaningful participation of women, there has been hardly any involvement in previous formal or informal peace negotiations where the recent peace negotiations with the jihadist group Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin could be considered an exception. Habiba Sarabi, Deputy Head of the HPC and the first woman with a senior position, was present at the preparatory talks claiming that her participation *"allowed for an effective representation of women in the peace talks."*⁵⁷ A participant identified the lack of a comprehensive approach linking high level peace negotiations and grassroots movement, which would *"create synergies and make women's voices stronger."*⁵⁸

Although APRP has a gender mainstreaming policy, there is still a low presence of women in the programme, limited gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation of reintegration activities, and a limited understanding of the APRP among women. Research has found that women's role in reintegration across Afghanistan varies, where in some areas women peace councils meet with both formal and informal governance structures, though most identified their role as being confined to the family unit, mostly involved in household disputes as mediators.⁵⁹ At the subnational level, the APRP is structured to include the Provincial Peace Councils (PPCs). There is a quota of three to five women for each PPC.⁶⁰

⁵² IDLO, "Women's Participation in the Justice Sector in Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities, IDLO, 2013, http://www.idlo.int/sites/default/files/IDLO_Afghan%20Legal%20Professionals%20full%20report.pdf

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Herat, Interview with NGO representative

⁵⁷ Jorrit Kamminga and Akram Zaki, "Women, Peace, Security, and Justice after Brussels and Warsaw, December 2016, http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/Bayan_WPSJ_Discussion_Paper.pdf

⁵⁸ Kabul, Interview with NGO representative

⁵⁹ "The Home Front: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Peace and Reintegration Programme," Peace Training and Research Organization, March 2014, http://www.ptro.org.af/site_files/13990989651.pdf.

⁶⁰ Ann Wilkens, "Missing the Target: A report on the Swedish commitment to women, peace and security in Afghanistan," Kvinna till Kvinna, Operation 1325, and Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, November 2012, <http://kvinna.tillkvinna.se/en/files/qbank/2dace78f80bc92e6d7493423d729448e.pdf>.

A research with case studies in Balkh and Kabul provinces found that women participate to some degree in mediation and peacebuilding, but women's peacebuilding activities were mostly focused on the domestic sphere.⁶¹ The report also found that women and girls often worked collectively in groups and in women-only spaces,⁶² which provides a safe space for activities, but could also prevent women from participating in traditionally male-dominated structures such as jirgas, shuras, and other bodies that maintain a monopoly on community decision-making on peace issues.

Recommendations: Women's Participation:

Recommendations from the consultation fell under five key areas:

1. Strengthen women's participation in security and justice (especially ANSF):

- In order to better protect women and girls needing or using justice and security mechanisms, recruiting and retaining women in the ANSF – especially in the police - is crucial. The international community should therefore support ANSF (MoI, MoD and NDS) and other relevant institutions with technical and financial aid for planning and implementation of Afghanistan NAP 1325, including the importance of Resolute Support to engage with ANSF from a women's rights and human rights perspective, raising awareness of ANA and ANP, ensuring they respect and have willingness to work with women.
- The international community should measure the progress of women within ANSF through conditions on fund allocation for recruitment and retention of women.
- As women in ANSF often perform secondary tasks they should be further supported in terms of promotion and career advancement. Women's leadership and decision making roles should increase inside ANSF aside the respective Gender Departments. Ensure that women are promoted to the higher echelons to serve as role models for other women wishing to enter and rise through the ranks. Nonetheless, the latter should be based on merit, years of experience, and skills.
- Support the design and expansion of female - targeted recruitment campaigns and attitudinal change on women in ANSF including TV spots, with the establishment of female role models, school seminars, brochures, billboards, postcards detailing the importance of women role in ANSF. As radio reaches the most remote areas of Afghanistan, radio dramas have proven an effective mechanism for spreading ideas and influencing attitudinal change in listeners across Afghanistan. The latter needs to be coupled with TV spots as these are more common in areas with electricity supply.
- Support positive discrimination on the establishment of incentives for recruiting and retaining women in the ANSF. These could include various benefits in terms of facilities made available to women in ANSF, financial support, and other benefits. The outreach must target districts and villages using local women and male religious scholars, community elders and existing community councils.
- Support ANSF in the establishment of a direct complaint mechanism where women can file complaints on disrespect, discrimination and sexual harassment with confidence and trust as well as appoint a trustworthy board to oversee the cases immediately after these are submitted.
- Put in place operating practices, incentive systems and performance measures to motivate and reward new forms of policing that respond to women's needs.

⁶¹ "From the Ground Up-Country focus: Women's roles in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan," ActionAid, Institute of Development Studies, and Womankind Worldwide, 2012, <http://www.womankind.org.uk/2014/02/country-focus-womens-roles-in-local-peacebuilding-in-afghanistan-liberia-nepal-and-sierra-leone/>.

⁶² Ibid.

- In order to protect women and girls using justice mechanisms, the international community should: recruit more women in justice, end impunity, and in further pursue the establishment of the rule of law in Afghanistan.

2. Support an inclusive peace process and women's peacebuilding

- The international community should support women's representation in the HPC and increase the capacity of women in civil society on various aspects on peace-building in terms of knowledge and practice. The latter should include close coordination with women who are involved in the HPC, such as capacity building support at provincial and district level.
- The international community should consider programming for building the capacity of women activists on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and peace-making. Increasing women's capacity and knowledge in this area will better enable them to actively advocate for women's inclusion.
- The international community should ensure that women from all backgrounds and political spheres are integrated into peace processes as negotiators and mediators at all levels, and their needs, concerns and suggestions are reflected in all peace agreements. Pave the way for women from all backgrounds – including survivors of violence, widows, youth, youth, returnees and internally displaced people – to actively participate in decision-making bodies related to peace and reconstruction.
- Promote a civil society observatory for the peace processes to promote the effective participation of civil society in peace building processes. The monitoring of the implementation of the NAP 1325 requires more coordination and joint efforts. While the Afghan NAP foresees an important role for civil society as a critical watchdog, the monitoring efforts are currently scattered with several parallel monitoring exercises such as the Monitoring Women's Peace and Security project, implemented by APPRO, Cordaid and Equality for Peace, and Democracy (EPD), as well as the annual monitoring that AWN has been carrying out since 2010.
- The international community should support the development of a programme, which works on attitudinal change of male and female HPC Members to increase their awareness of women's rights and women's roles in the HPC.
- The international community should ensure it continuously reviews and where necessary, calls into question women's low participation in the HPC and other peace process-related meetings.
- Through funding for capacity building to the Afghan civil service, the international community should ensure that quota requirements for women civil servants is retained. It should monitor the programme to ensure the women cover decision-making positions and can influence the discussions.

3. Support women's economic participation and empowerment

- Aside from women's participation in political life, participation of women in the economy is also essential to improve gender equality efforts in Afghanistan that often starts with economic independence, as it was overwhelmingly shared by consultation participants. Therefore, funding proven and effective programming on women's economic empowerment, from livelihoods to creation and support of small businesses is an important step for achieving gender equality. Overall, the latter influences the perception on women in other areas as consultation participants commented "*when men see that their women can gain money too.*"

4. Provide support around elections:

- The international community should ensure that women's participation in the political process and institutions is invested and planned for. The community mobilisation of female voters must happen soon.
- The international community should use diplomatic pressure to ensure that there are more female candidates at each level of future elections.
- The international community should increase funding for training of female candidates in the future elections.

5. Education

Education remains a core problem to be addressed in Afghanistan. Improving the quality of education and children's learning outcomes remains a priority.

- The education system needs to better respond to and support children's learning needs, for example by improving teacher's training particularly literacy teaching skills, providing better quality textbooks and other learning materials, promoting children's reading at home and in the community, and in setting national standards for learning outcomes.
- Involve communities and children in education. Promote community participation and mobilisation of influential community members and religious leaders in the management of schools. Establishing and supporting participatory groups or 'school shuras', Parent Teacher Student Associations, Mothers Committees or Student Councils, to manage and monitor education improves the quality of education and plays a critical role in student retention.
- Keep children in school by focusing on retention, especially for girls since drop-out rates are very high. Increasing the number of female teachers, and girls' schools, expanding community-based and accelerated-learning classes, and making schools more girl-friendly, such as by ensuring there are separate toilets for girls and surrounding walls, would help in keeping more girls in school. Schools also need to be child-friendly and free from violence so children could work in a protective learning environment.
- Include conflict transformation, peace building, and gender equality issues in the curricula of schools and universities.

Adult education is also important:

- Provide literacy classes to women and girls who are not able to attend formal classes. Families generally support education of girls/women but they experience a variety of obstacles such as high levels of poverty as families are not able to pay for uniforms and stationery or insecurity with schools far from homes where parents fear that girls will be harassed on the way. Once these obstacles are removed women and girls likely join learning activities.

5. Institutions, Security, Justice and Legal Frameworks

A variety of initiatives have been endorsed by the Government of Afghanistan to promote gender equality in Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement has served as a foundation for the establishment of democratic governance in Afghanistan, and recognised that the participation of women and attention to their rights and status are both a requirement and a vision of the national peace and reconstruction process. Afghanistan has also agreed to a range of international standards on women's rights⁶³ and has developed national protections, including: the Constitution in 2004; The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) (2007-2017); the Afghanistan Compact; the Afghanistan National Development Strategy; the Elimination of Violence against Women Law; and the National Action Plan (NAP) to implement the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2015 – 2022). Despite these laws and policies, Afghanistan lacks effective implementation or in some cases an actual implementation mechanism as consultation participants pointed out on several occasions.

Furthermore, contradiction between laws can cause barriers to women and girls' empowerment and the advancement of gender equality in Afghanistan. This was raised as a major concern among consultation participants, especially among those, who offer legal support for women. EVAW Law itself experiences some limitations, including Article 39 that bars prosecution of EVAW crimes provided by articles 22 to 38 if the victim or her relative has not filed a complaint; the adoption of the article 26 of the criminal procedure code that exempts the relatives of the accused from testifying (or gives them the option to not testify) in criminal cases – even though women mostly experience domestic abuse.⁶⁴

The use of the 'attempt to *zina* or unlawful sexual intercourse' (crime) is often used to incriminate women running away from home, but this is not actually a crime under Afghan law. Women often run away from home to escape abusive relationships and not because they want to have unlawful sexual intercourse, as it is therein implied. Other established practices include the use of mediation by the judiciary to avoid prosecution of violence against women' cases even in criminal cases; discriminatory provisions of the Shia Personal Status Law, such as the requirement of the husband's authorisation for his wife to leave the home; the husband's legal right to have authority over his wife and children in Civil Law; unequal and limited rights for women to divorce and obtain guardianship of children under the Civil Law; and the permission of polygamy under certain circumstances.⁶⁵

The EVAW law has been added to the revised Penal Code as a separate chapter, which was approved on the 7th of March 2017. As an interviewee explained:

"The revised Penal Code will take effect after it is published in the Official Gazette of the Ministry of Justice. And the EVAW Chapter will take effect after it is approved by Parliament. If the Parliament doesn't approve the EVAW Chapter, the EVAW Law will remain a stand-alone law unless the Parliament rejects it."

Improvements of the penal code are welcome but they are not enough to address the issue of VAWG holistically therefore EVAW as a separate law remains very important for addressing VAWG. If the EVAW Law is re-opened for debate in the Lower House, it is likely to result in the decriminalisation of child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, reignite unproductive debate and draw unwanted attention to the EVAW decree.

⁶³ Including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

⁶⁴ Medica Afghanistan, "The use of EVAW Law in Medica Legal Practice," 2012, <http://www.medicafghanistan.org/Files/Annual%20and%20other%20reports/EVAW%20Report-English%20Version.pdf>

⁶⁵ UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) "Concluding observations on the combined initial and second periodic reports of Afghanistan," July 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/publisher,CEDAW,,AFG,51ff5ac94,0.html>

In October 2015, a Sexual Harassment Law was passed, which makes illegal and punishable to harass a woman. The Anti-Harassment Regulation, which contains fourteen articles, gives women the right to file complaints against any type of harassment – psychological or physical abuse, or threat of abuse – they may experience in the workplace or institutions of learning.⁶⁶ While the latter was also welcomed as a milestone for improving gender equality in Afghanistan, it also raised concerns as being loose, which might end up harming women, instead of helping them, an NGO representative described the law as:

“incomplete, replete with errors and largely unenforceable. Despite the law being well intentioned, it may lead to mishandling of complaints and cause harm to survivors, who are depending on the law for redress and justice. Before and after the incident, it is important to ensure that women also have protective measures in place.”⁶⁷

Recommendations: Institutions, Security, Justice and Legal Frameworks:

- The international community should use its influence, diplomatic efforts and development funding to increase pressure on the Afghan government to ensure that women’s rights legislation is effectively implemented in Afghanistan, including the National Action Plan 1325, the ERAW Law, and the various conventions to which Afghanistan is signatory.
- For the effective implementation of the Afghan NAP at provincial level, several provincial authorities need to be linked up. These include the provincial departments of Defence, Interior, Justice and Women Affairs, the Provincial Councils, the Peace Councils, and where relevant other provincial bodies directly or indirectly linked to (or responsible for) the provision of inclusive security and justice.
- The international community should support the revision of the gender biased legislation that poses barriers to gender equality and women empowerment.
- The international community should provide funding to build the capacity of the Police Department to build the capacity of police to respond to VAWG by using the ERAW Law as a foundation and tie its efforts to existing mechanisms for training of MOI in Afghanistan.
- Considering that the vast majority of disputes are still solved by shuras and jirgas, the International Community should support building the capacity of the jirgas and shuras on the ERAW Law.

⁶⁷ Kabul, Interview with NGO representative

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