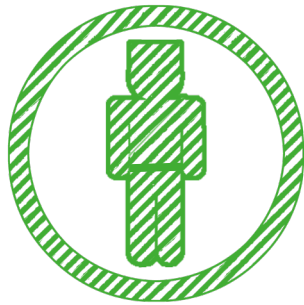


Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card

EVALUATING THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN'S COMMITMENTS TO WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY



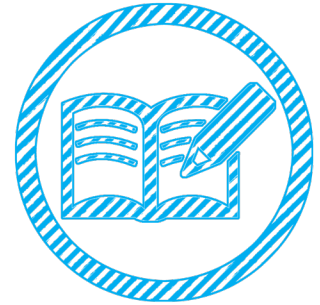
PEACE PROCESS



SECURITY



PUBLIC HEALTH



EDUCATION



ACCESS TO JUSTICE



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



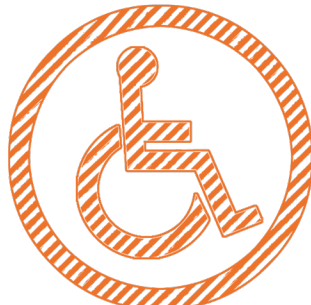
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION



RESOURCES AND SERVICES



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



VULNERABLE GROUPS



AWARENESS RAISING

About the Organization

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by Ms. Nargis Nehan, the Executive Director of EPD. EPD works to build the capacity of women and youth in order for them to articulate their needs in the development, peacebuilding and democratic processes. EPD further aims to mobilize women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability that Afghanistan is facing.

EPD has established platforms for women and youth to come together, establish networks, build trust and confidence, and strive jointly toward transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all forms of violence and discrimination. EPD's Afghans' Coalition for Transparency and Accountability community-led networks monitor service delivery and advocate for good governance and are based in Herat, Bamyan, Nangarhar and Kabul. EPD's Provincial Women's Network community-led networks identify and address issues that are of concern to women in the community and are based in Herat, Bamyan, Nangarhar, Faryab, Kunduz, Kandahar and Kabul.

Furthermore, EPD is one of the lead civil society organizations in Kabul building alliances with other civil society organizations and groups, monitoring government policy-making in the areas of peace and good governance, ensuring human rights and advocating for engagement of civil society. EPD's team, beside traveling around the country and interacting with people to understand their concerns, is also organizing meetings and debates in the center with policy-makers to voice people's concerns. EPD's leadership is attending international events and advocating for effective and sustainable engagement of the international community in Afghanistan.

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Acronyms

ACTA	Afghans' Coalition for Transparency and Accountability	LOTFA	Agency
AFN	Afghani, currency	M	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
AGO	Attorney General's Office	M&E	Mean
AIBA	Afghanistan Independent Bar Association	MAIL	Monitoring and Evaluation
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission	MMR	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
AISA	Afghanistan Investment Support Agency	MoEd	Maternal Mortality Ratio
ALP	Afghan Local Police	MoF	Ministry of Education
AMDG	Afghanistan Millennium Development Goal	MoHE	Ministry of Finance
AMICS	Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	Mol	Ministry of Higher Education
ANA	Afghan National Army	MoJ	Ministry of Interior
ANC	Antenatal Care	MoLSAMD	Ministry of Justice
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy	MoPH	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled
APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme	MoWA	Ministry of Public Health
ASPP	Afghanistan Social Protection Program	MRRD	Ministry of Women's Affairs
AWBF	Afghan Women's Business Federation	NABDP	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
BC	Budget Circular	NAPWA	National Area-Based Development Program
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services	NCO	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
CDC	Community Development Council	NGO	Non-Commissioned Officer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	NPP	Non-governmental organization
CSO	Central Statistics Organization	NRVA	National Priority Plan
DoWA	Department of Women's Affairs	NSP	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
EPD	EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy	PDC	National Solidarity Program
EUPOL	European Union Police Mission	PPC	Provincial Development Committee
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women	PRR	Provincial Peace Council
FRU	Family Response Unit	PTSD	Priority Reconstruction Reforms
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	PWN	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SBA	Provincial Women's Network
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	SD	Skilled Birth Attendant
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	SME	Standard Deviation
GPE	Global Partnership for Education	ToT	Small and Medium Enterprise
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting	UN	Training of Trainers
HMIS	Health Management Information System	UNAMA	United Nations
HPC	High Peace Council	UNDP	UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
IARCS	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission	UNFPA	United Nations Development Programme
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	UNICEF	United Nations Population Fund
IEC	Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan	USAID	United Nations Children's Fund
IGDK	Independent General Directorate of Kuchi	USD	United States Agency for International Development
JICA	Japanese International cooperation	VAW	United States Dollars, currency
		WPC	Violence Against Women
			Women's Protection Centers

Executive Summary

Since 2001, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has made over 2,300 explicit commitments to the women of Afghanistan on gender equality in laws, treaties and agreements, policies, and strategic documents, a figure that does not even include the innumerable verbal commitments made over the past fourteen years. While much of the focus in discussions on government commitments to women's rights center on the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), this document only encompasses a small fraction of the commitments that have been made. This research reviews these commitments in a number of key areas: peace processes, security, health, education, access to justice, violence against women, access to resources and services, political participation, economic opportunity and employment, protection of vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising among the public. It assesses both progress and shortcomings in each of these areas from the perspectives of Afghan women, according to a survey completed with 154 members of EPD's Provincial Women's

Network (PWN) in five provinces of Afghanistan, combined with desk research and stakeholder interviews.

As a baseline for measuring progress regarding the government's commitments, this report aims to take stock of how far the government has come since 2001, and which areas need more focus and improvement moving into the Transformation Decade. The indicators were selected to reflect both the most common commitments throughout policies and documents from the GIROA and the most critical areas for improvement that would represent actual positive change in the daily lives of Afghan women. The Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card will be conducted through EPD's Provincial Women's Network and a report card will be produced annually as a monitoring tool that enables civil society, the Afghan government, and the international community to hold the government accountable to its commitments to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality.

Progress, Stagnation, and Setbacks for Women and Gender Equality

After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan faced daunting challenges in terms of gender equality after six years of abuse and oppression that left very few or no girls in school, a deficit of women professionals such as teachers and doctors, limited women's participation in the labor force, women missing from political activities and decision-making at all levels, and a near complete removal of women from public life. There have been a number of areas of progress as well as setbacks for women in Afghanistan and gender equality since 2001, which is evidenced by the fact that PWN members did not grade the government at an F or an A for any area of their commitments. This reflects that while there are no areas where the government has failed, there are also no areas where women perceived that they have met their commitments.

Today, Afghanistan's Constitution recognizes the equality of men and women. Women account for 28% of the Wolesi Jirga, 21% of Provincial Council members, and 35% of Community Development Council (CDC) members. Of the 6.6 million votes cast in the first round of the elections, the IEC reported that 36% were female voters. 2,185 women have been recruited to the Afghan National Police, compared to only 180 women in 2005. 24% of Afghanistan's civil servants are women.¹

There has been incredible progress in the areas of women's health and education. 74% of health facilities have at least one female staff member. The Maternal Mortality Ratio

(MMR) has dropped dramatically from 1,600 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2001 to an estimated 400 in 2014, and women's life expectancy has been slowly rising, from 58.3 in 2005 to 61.8 in 2012. The fertility rate has lowered from 8.2 in 2003 to 5.1 in 2012. Today, around 3 million girls are enrolled in school. Around 30% of teachers are women, and women make up 54% of students in teacher training. The government has also introduced some affirmative action policies to increase the level of girls' enrollment in tertiary education.

The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law was passed by Presidential decree in 2009, marking a landmark effort to prevent violence against women and punish perpetrators. It criminalizes acts of violence against women including rape, domestic violence, child marriage, forced marriage, *baad*,² and other forms of VAW, totaling 22 specific forms, and specifies punishments for those who commit such acts. The government has established Family Response Units within the Afghan National Police, Women's Protection Centers under the management of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Special Violence Against Women Units of the Attorney General's Office, and Family Protection Centers under the Ministry of Public Health, which are present to varying degrees throughout Afghanistan for the support and protection of victims of VAW. Furthermore, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has a number of offices throughout Afghanistan for women to register complaints and seek advice and legal

¹ The information included in the executive summary can be found in the body of the report with full citations.

² The giving or exchange of women to compensate a crime or killing

support. There has been a positive increase in the level of case registration regarding VAW, with a 28% increase in the level of registration from 2012 to 2013 alone.

Regarding access to resources and information and communications technologies, since 2002, the National Area-Based Development Program has completed more than 612 water and sanitation projects benefiting over 2.2 million people across Afghanistan. Today, 29% of Afghans are connected to the power grid, compared to an estimated 6% in 2002. A remarkable 80% of Afghan women have regular or occasional access to mobile phones.

1,600 women-owned businesses have been registered since 2003. The Afghan Women's Business Federation, which was founded in 2004, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Afghan Ministries of Commerce and Women's Affairs, and has received expressions of support from the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan and the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Women's right to inheritance is afforded in the Constitution, and the Afghan Civil Code recognizes the rights of women to own and sell property and to obtain property through marriage, inheritance, or purchase.

The government has undertaken a number of public awareness campaigns, though mostly with the support of international donors. Campaigns have been undertaken regarding women's access to justice, education, health, women's recruitment to the security sector, and the peace process, among others. Additionally, the government has begun to implement a Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) pilot initiative, including adding gender as a component of the Budget Circular 1 and 2 in the budget process. It has also recognized the need for the collection and incorporation of sex-disaggregated data for gender-sensitive planning, implementation, and monitoring of government programs. The Central Statistics Organization and Ministry of Women's Affairs conducted a 3-day workshop in September 2014 for information sharing and coordination on gender statistics.³ While discussions are a good start, this will need to translate into not only policies but also actual practice to enable the development of more gender-sensitive indicators and program planning, implementation, and monitoring that accounts for the needs of all Afghan women.

However, there have been a number of areas in which there has been a lack of progress at best and setbacks at worst. Women are still grossly underrepresented in the peace process, with only 9 female members on the HPC (13%) and no efforts to date to address women's needs regarding reconciliation or national-level efforts by the government to consult women on national peace processes. Women

civilian casualties have increased by 61% since 2013, and the AIHRC has documented considerable levels of abuse of women by the Afghan National Police. Women still only represent less than 2% of Afghanistan's police forces. There are only 335 female lawyers registered with the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association, more than half of which are in Kabul and Herat and 13 provinces have no female lawyers. Only 8.4% of judges in Afghanistan are women, 6% of prosecutors, and 19% of lawyers. Only 5% of those working in the Huquq departments are women. Though 24% of civil servants are women, there are fifteen ministries with 10% or less female employees, and six ministries with 20% or less female employees, and women have few leadership roles.

While the Constitution guarantees political representation for women in the national parliament of at least two elected members in the Wolesi Jirga from each province, in 2014, the parliament lowered the quota for female Provincial Council members from 25% to 20%. This shift ultimately affects the representation of women in the Meshrano Jirga, whose members are in part selected from the Provincial Councils. Only 400 of the 2,500 delegates to the 2013 Loya Jirga were women, and in the most recent administration only 3 out of 25 ministers were women. Though 36% of voters in the first round of elections in 2014 were women, 52% of women still have some or a lot of fear participating in provincial or national elections, and 28% of women had received no information at all in previous elections.

Though the maternal mortality ratio has declined, it is still the 28th highest in the world, and only 39% of births between 2010 and 2012 were attended by skilled personnel. While Afghanistan's fertility rate has also lowered, it is still the 13th highest in the world. Women generally still lack access to mental health care, though it is estimated that over 60% of Afghans (mostly women) suffer from stress and psychosocial problems or mental disorders. There is still a gender gap of 16% in primary school attendance, and 19% in secondary attendance, and only 3% of girls attend tertiary education. Only 17% of Afghan women are literate, compared to 45% of men, and while female youth literacy has increased, the gender gap has actually widened from 20% to 30%.

Though the EVAW Law has been introduced, its implementation is lacking. Though the registration of cases of VAW increased by 28% from 2012 to 2013, using the EVAW law as a basis for indictment only increased by 2%. The introduction of the Shia Personal Status Law, also in 2009, represented another setback for women by legally limiting Shia women's mobility, allowing marriage under the age of 16, and allowing a husband to deny maintenance to his wife under certain conditions. The Civil Code of 1977, while generally progressive regarding gender equality, has not been updated to remove unequal provisions regarding divorce, inheritance, guardianship, and other areas.

3 "Press Release Central Statistics Organization and Ministry of Women's Affairs Joint Workshop for the Establishment of Coordination between Government Entities on Gender Statistics and Information Sharing," Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Portal, 21 September 2014, <http://demo.afghanistan.af/en/news/press-release-central-statistics-organization-and-ministry-of-womens-affairs-joint-workshop-for-establishment-of-coordination-between-government-entities>.

While access to water and electricity has improved, only 40% of Afghan women report that their family always has access to clean drinking water, and 17% to electricity. 25% of women are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their access to clean drinking water, and 64% to electricity. Only 2% of Afghan women are connected to the Internet for obtaining information, and though 88% of the population lives within the combined network of the four largest mobile network organizations and 80% have some access to a mobile phone, six out of ten Afghan women still do not use mobile phones for accessing information. Women still have a prohibitive lack of options in public transportation, and street harassment remains a considerable issue for women.

Women also continue to face major obstacles regarding economic opportunities. 81% of Afghan businesswomen were unable to access credit or financing, and only 13% have found business opportunities with the Afghan government. Though the laws protect women's rights to inheritance, in reality many women still struggle to claim their rights. In a 2013 study in 10 provinces, only 37% of women had received an inheritance owed to them, compared to 89% of men. Though women are involved in 65% of the agricultural workforce, they still account for a small minority of landowners and continue to lack access to, or control of, economic benefits of their work. Only 4% of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock employees are women.

Afghanistan still generally lacks social welfare programs or support to some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable women, including female-headed households, widows, and disabled women. There are an estimated 1.5 million widows in Afghanistan, who rely on voluntary family or social support networks for survival. Kuchi women also continue to face extreme vulnerability. While 33% of rural women had deliveries attended by skilled health personnel, among Kuchi women this was only 13%. Whereas the net primary attendance rate for girls was 48%, among Kuchi girls it was only 13%. Furthermore, while the government has undertaken public awareness campaigns regarding women's rights, they have mostly been isolated campaigns and an overall framework for government public advocacy and awareness-raising is still missing.

Additionally, in recent years, conservative elements have attempted to roll back women's rights in Afghanistan. In 2012, the Afghan Ulema Council, a religious advisory body consisting of the country's leading clerics, issued a statement which contained some positive rulings on the status of women, among them that women have "[t]he right to property, ownership and commerce", the right to inheritance "according to the principles of the sacred Shariah of Islam", and "[t]he right to choose a spouse according to her own will." However, the statement also went on to enumerate the duties of women and declared, "In consideration of the clarity of verses 1 and 34 of Surah an-Nisa' [of the Qur'an], men are fundamental and women are secondary." There

were also rulings affecting the women's mobility, declaring that women should "avoid mingling with stranger men in various social situations, such as education, shopping, the office and other affairs of life", as well as of "avoid travel without a [Shariah-sanctioned] mahram." President Karzai initially supported the statement, and while the English version of the statement was removed from the website of the Presidential Palace, the Dari and Pashtu versions remained.⁴ Additionally, in 2014, the Afghan parliament passed a law to ban relatives from testifying against one another, which would have serious repercussions in essentially legalizing domestic violence, though President Karzai ultimately blocked the law.⁵

The National Reconciliation, General Amnesty and National Stability Law was passed by Parliament in 2007 despite the fact that President Karzai had promised not to allow such an act. The bill was quietly published in the Afghanistan's national gazette in 2008, making it law, but was not publicly confirmed until 2010.⁶ While this law calls on AOGs to join the peace process, it also provides blanket general amnesty to all political factions and hostile parties involved in any way in hostilities before establishing the Interim Administration.⁷ It allows individuals to bring cases, but in the context of Afghanistan this is virtually inconceivable.⁸ While this law largely applies to macro-level actors, it can generally be regarded as an obstacle to local-level peace and conflict issues in a number of ways by creating a serious trust deficit between Afghan citizens and the government, as well as preventing any accountability of actors who have committed serious human rights atrocities against women.

4 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>.

5 Elizabeth Cameron and Dr. Jorrit Kamminga, "Behind Closed Doors: The Risk of Denying Women a Voice in Determining Afghanistan's Future," Oxfam, 2014, http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp200-behind-doors-afghan-women-rights-241114-en.pdf.

6 "Afghanistan Says It Enacted law to Pardon War Crimes," The New York Times, 16 March 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/17/world/asia/17kabul.html?_r=0.

7 Ibid.

8 "Afghanistan: Repeal Amnesty Law," Human Rights Watch, 10 March 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/03/10/afghanistan-repeal-amnesty-law>.

2014 Gender Equality Report Card

In line with these progresses and achievements, overall the 154 women surveyed for this research graded the government at a C+ in terms of meeting its commitments to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality. This included commitments in the areas of the peace process, security, health, education, access to justice, violence against women, political participation, access to resources and services, economic opportunity, support to vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising. In these eleven categories, the government was assessed most positively (B-) regarding health, education, and awareness-raising. The government was given a C or C+ regarding the peace process, security, access to justice, violence against women, women's political participation, access to resources and services, and economic opportunity, and received its lowest grade of C- regarding support for vulnerable groups.

PEACE PROCESS	C+
Women's involvement in national peace bodies	C
Consulting women in national peace bodies	C
Considering the rights and needs of women in national peace processes	C+
Addressing past grievances of women in national peace processes	C+
Women's involvement in local peace bodies	C+
Consulting women in local peace processes	C
Considering the rights and needs of women in local peace processes	B-
Addressing past grievances of women in local peace processes	C
Considering women's needs in reintegration of former combatants	C

SECURITY	C+
Protecting women and girls' physical safety and security	C-
Security actors' awareness of the rights of women	B-
Security actors' protecting the rights of women	C
Equal employment opportunities for men and women in the security sector	C+
Level of women in the ANP compared to five years ago	B

PUBLIC HEALTH	B-
Women's access to basic health services	B-
Number of qualified female healthcare workers	C+
Availability of female healthcare workers compared to five years ago	B
Accessibility of government health facilities for women	B-
Sensitivity of healthcare facilities to women's needs	B

Women's awareness of strategies for planning when to have children	C-
Deliveries attended by specialized birth attendants	C
Maternal mortality compared to five years ago	B
Women's access to support from government healthcare professionals for emotional and psychological needs	B-

EDUCATION	B-
Enrollment of girls up to secondary education	B-
Enrollment of boys up to secondary education	B
Sensitivity of primary and secondary schools to the needs of girls	B-
Government provision of equal opportunities for boys and girls	B-
Availability of female teachers	C+
Availability of female teachers compared to five years ago	B
Government efforts to recruit qualified female teachers	C
Provision of courses for girls to prepare for university exams	C-
Sensitivity of university facilities to the needs of women	C+
Improvement in women's literacy	B
Sensitivity of literacy courses to the needs of women	B
Availability of Islamic education for women and girls	B-

ACCESS TO JUSTICE	C+
Legal protections for women and girls	B-
Protection of women's rights by government justice institutions	C+
Equality of men and women before the law	C+
Accessibility of government justice institutions for women	C
Safety of accessing government justice institutions for women	C+
Availability of legal support for women	C-
Protection of women by judges, prosecutors, and government justice institutions	C+
Sensitivity of government justice institutions to the needs and interests of women	B
Availability of female government justice officials	C

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	C+
Legal protections for women from physical, psychological, and sexual violence	C+
Government support to female victims of domestic abuse	C-
Availability of government facilities to shelter women who are victims of domestic or family violence	C+
Prosecution of male spouses for domestic abuse	B-
Prevalence of baad as a traditional practice	C
Women's right to refuse to marry	B

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	C
Women's participation in political institutions at the local level	C
Women's participation in political institutions at the provincial level	D
Women's participation in political institutions at the national level	D
Government-provided security for female voting centers	C
Sensitivity of voting center locations to the needs of women	B
Government efforts to provide transportation to and from voting centers for women	C
Government efforts to provide information about elections to women	C+

RESOURCES AND SERVICES	C
Women's access to clean water	B
Women's access to information and communications technologies	C
Women's access to electricity	C+
Sensitivity of the provision of resources to the needs of women	D-
Availability of public transportation for women and girls	C
Safety of public transportation for women and girls	C+
Involvement of women in community decision-making regarding the use of resources	C
Involvement of women in community decision-making regarding development and community reconstruction	C

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY	C
Government support for women entrepreneurs	C
Affirmative action for government positions	C
Government employment of women	C+
Government facilitation of income-generating opportunities for women working in agriculture	C

VULNERABLE GROUPS	C-
Government support to poor female-headed households	C
Government support to Kuchi and nomadic women	D+
Access to services for women with disabilities	C
Government provision of vocational training and economic opportunity for women with disabilities	C
Sensitivity of government policies and programs to the needs of widows	D+

AWARENESS RAISING	B-
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's legal rights	B-
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's access to justice	C+
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding violence against women	C+
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding education for women and girls	C+
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's participation in politics and elections	B-
Efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's participation in peace processes	C+

Introduction

As Afghanistan enters the “Transformation Decade,” there is much discussion about the status of Afghan women and whether the international community has made good on their promises or is leaving them behind. However, over a decade after the establishment of the Constitution and governance system, including the establishment of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), less has been discussed regarding the government of Afghanistan’s various commitments to women. As Afghanistan proceeds with difficult political and security transitions towards a more independent and self-regulating governance system with decreased technical assistance from international actors, the government of Afghanistan’s actions and progress on its commitments to women are of increasing importance.

Since 2001, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has made over 2,300 explicit commitments to the women of Afghanistan or gender equality in laws, treaties and agreements, policies, and strategic documents, a figure that does not even include the innumerable verbal commitments made over the past fourteen years. While much of the focus in discussions on government commitments to women’s rights center on the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), this document only scratches the surface of the commitments that have been made. These commitments cover a broad range of areas, spanning from education and health to access to Internet services and raising public awareness on the rights of women in Islam. Despite the strong rhetorical commitment from the GIROA, overall the advancements made for the women of Afghanistan have fallen egregiously short of these ambitious goals.

Methods

This research takes a mixed-method approach, utilizing desk research and key informant qualitative interviews as well as a quantitative survey. The desk research began from a comprehensive review of over 80 laws, policies, strategies, treaties and agreements issued by the GIROA since 2001. These documents were reviewed for any commitments to women, girls, or gender equality. These commitments were documented, then categorized according to sector and issue area.

From this comprehensive documentation of government commitments, a perceptions survey was developed. The survey consisted of eleven sections according to the aforementioned key areas of government commitments with five to twelve questions per section, and one additional section with demographic information. The quantitative survey was administered to 154 members of the Provincial Women’s Network (PWN) across five provinces—Bamyan,

This paper reviews these government commitments in a number of key areas: peace processes, security, health, education, access to justice, violence against women, access to resources and services, political participation, economic opportunity and employment, protection of vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising among the public. It assesses progress and shortcomings in each of these areas from the perspectives of Afghan women, according to a survey completed with members of EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy’s (EPD) Provincial Women’s Network (PWN) in five provinces of Afghanistan, combined with desk research and key informant interviews. In each commitment area, the GIROA is given a grade from the women surveyed, which is followed by a more in-depth analysis and triangulation with factual information regarding government progress and performance. This research highlights the GIROA’s successes while also identifying areas for continued improvement entering the transformation decade.

As a baseline for measuring progress regarding the government’s commitments, this report aims to take stock of how far the government has come since 2001, and which areas need more focus and improvement moving forward. EPD will conduct the Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card through PWN every year, and an annual report card will be produced as a monitoring tool that enables civil society, the GIROA, and the international community to hold the government accountable to its commitments to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality. This will serve as a monitoring and evaluation process over time whereby progress and perception can be understood as changing and areas in need of more attention and focus can be identified.

Nangarhar, Herat, Faryab, and Kunduz.¹ The survey is representative of the PWN network at a 92% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

The answers to each question followed a numerically coded five-point Likert-type scale with an additional “do not know/prefer not to answer” option. Importantly, the survey tool did not ask women to provide an actual grade, but rather provided a collective set of responses scored on a range of one to five, such as one representing “very much” and five representing “not at all.” From this, a scale variable was created for each of the eleven areas of government commitments, and the mean and standard deviation was calculated for each question. A grading scale was created consisting of an even range for each mean value corresponding to grades A+ through F. A grade was calculated for each section overall according to the scale

¹ Kandahar province was not included in the sample due to a technical error in the survey administration.

variable, and for each individual item from the mean value according to this grading scale. For the purposes of this report, a grade higher than B can be perceived as a generally positive assessment, reflecting improvements but still considerable progress to be made. B- and grades in the C range reflect areas where the government is perceived to have performed less positively and respondents felt less progress has been made, or things have stayed the same. Grades of C- or lower can generally be perceived as negative, where respondents felt the government has made no considerable progress or the progress that has been made has not translated into any meaningful changes in Afghan women’s daily lives.

A second round of desk research was conducted to triangulate participants’ perceptions with other mechanisms for analyzing and understanding progress in each of these key areas, while giving primacy to the perspectives of the participants. Much of the sources referenced are reports or surveys from the UN, World Bank, or other international actors, international or local NGOs, or from the GIRoA itself on the basis of availability of information. Additionally, wherever possible quantitative data and statistics are augmented with data from qualitative and perceptions-based research, which allows for more direct engagement with the self-designated issues of participants and insight into causality and explanation of findings. A number of stakeholder interviews were also conducted

Grading Scale

Grade	From	To
A+	1	1.20
A	1.21	1.59
A-	1.60	1.80
B+	1.81	2.0
B	2.01	2.39
B-	2.40	2.60
C+	2.61	2.80
C	2.81	3.19
C-	3.20	3.40
D+	3.41	3.60
D	3.61	3.99
D-	4.0	4.20
F	4.21	5.00

at the central level with government and international stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education (MoEd), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), United Nation Children’s Fund (UNICEF), European Union Police Mission (EUPOL), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

About the Provincial Women’s Network

EPD established the Provincial Women’s Network (PWN, formerly the Gender Equality Platform) in 2012 to create a platform to bring women from different walks of life together for training and capacity building, and establishing coalitions and alliances both amongst themselves and with other groups in their communities. The members work to learn about the peace and transition processes in Afghanistan and their impacts on women’s lives, promote peace in their communities, resolve conflicts, and monitor women’s issues at the grassroots level. The networks also identify issues in their communities that are affecting women’s advancement and address them.

PWN serves to primarily build a social support network amongst members and the wider community to mentor, coach, counsel, and build trust so they can begin to help each other, rather than depending on outsiders. While local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and projects are very beneficial, the PWN approach seeks to create a platform that does not depend on formal facilitation or funding-driven activities. PWN aims to build networks based on individual women coming together and taking ownership to develop their own initiatives to address what they see as the most critical issues facing their communities. Once trust is built among members, they can identify other groups and build alliances for the advancement of women. EPD

provides support to PWN through a self-reliant approach, where EPD provides assistance in establishing each network and provides training and technical support to PWN members, then allows their membership to decide their own objectives and priorities, while facilitating capacity building and support in the process.

Through this platform, EPD also creates a space for dialogue and interactions, organizing campaigns at the local and national levels. EPD has hosted national conferences on women and elections, and on women’s involvement in the Loya Jirga. PWN members attend these advocacy activities, ensuring that there are linkages between the trainings and activities they undertake in their communities and processes occurring at the national level. An additional key component of PWN is facilitating interaction with government officials and bodies. Meetings have included attendees such as Human Rights Directors, Provincial Council members, line ministry representatives, and police. Through ensuring the attendance of government officials at meetings, the PWN platform facilitates a working relationship between government and women at the community level. There are currently Provincial Women’s Networks in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Herat, Kunduz, Faryab, and Bamyán provinces, with over 300 members.

Study Demographics

Of the 154 respondents surveyed for this research, all were female. 23% were 20 years old or younger, and 31% were between 21 and 35. 6% were between 36 and 45, 6% between 46 and 55 years old, and 15% were age 56 or older. 19% did not disclose their age. 39% of respondents were married, 29% unmarried, 4% widowed, and 28% did not disclose their marital status. 19% of those surveyed were Pashtun, 29% Tajik, 14% Hazara, 10% Uzbek, 2% Turkmen, and 26% did not disclose their ethnicity.

11% of survey respondents were illiterate, and 2% literate with no schooling. 4% completed primary school, 10% secondary, 19% high school, and 19% had completed a four-year degree or postgraduate studies. However, 35% did not

disclose their level of education. 18% of those surveyed were salaried workers in the private sector, and 17% in the public sector. 11% were self-employed, and another 4% do in-home income generating activities. Only 5% classified themselves as unpaid family workers and 5% unemployed, while 40% did not know or chose not to answer.

Though 43% of respondents elected not to disclose their monthly household income, 19% had a monthly household income of less than 3,000 AFN (50 USD), 24% between 3,001 and 10,000 AFN (175 USD), 11% between 10,001 and 15,000 AFN (260 USD), and 3% above 20,001 AFN (350 USD). 54% of respondents reported that women contribute to their monthly household income.

Limitations and Challenges

This study has a number of limitations. First, it is not representative of all Afghan women. PWN only covers six provinces of Afghanistan, and while there is representation regionally, Kandahar was excluded from this year's survey due to a technical error in survey administration, so no views from women in the south are reflected in this report. As evidenced by the survey demographics, PWN members are more educated and economically active than Afghan women on average, and many more women in PWN are from households where women contribute economically than average Afghan households. Many PWN members are active members of civil society and advocates for women's rights within their communities. Therefore, as women with more economic access, education, mobility, and likely more supportive households, the views of PWN members cannot be said to be representative of the views of all Afghan women.

The use of the five-point Likert scale throughout the survey could have limitations in response bias. However, the five-point scale was evenly distributed with two positive responses, one neutral response, and two negative responses to avoid acquiescence bias. Reverse coding was applied at random to mitigate primacy and recency effects, where respondents tend to choose either the first or last option in a list. Additionally, the survey was self-administered (meaning that it was distributed to PWN members who filled out the survey themselves then returned it to the PWN Coordinator) in an effort to counteract unnecessary influence other participants may wield on their colleagues and groupthink. However, for the 11% of respondents who are illiterate (likely much higher considering the 35% who did not disclose their education level), the survey

was administered verbally by the PWN Coordinator or completed with the support of other PWN members, which could have influenced these women's responses.

Additionally, many of the statistics and figures in Afghanistan are estimated. Afghanistan has not conducted a national census since 1979, so much information on the issues discussed in this report relies on informed estimation, particularly for figures from the period immediately after the fall of the Taliban. Furthermore, compared data on the same topic are not always from the same source, which limits the validity of the comparison. However, throughout this research, efforts were made to ensure that data came only from credible sources and that comparative data from the same organization or survey was used wherever possible. Given this limitation these comparisons should not be taken as absolute but rather contextually informative, reflecting general progress and/or setbacks on key indicators for women and gender equality.

Despite these limitations, while this survey is not representative of all Afghan women, it can still be considered a useful gauge for measuring women's perceptions of government performance. As female community leaders PWN members are active and accessible for women within their community, and as advocates for women are in touch with the needs and challenges of Afghan women. PWN members undertake programs and initiatives at the local, provincial, and national levels, and as such are engaged with the everyday challenges facing Afghan women as well as the larger context and government policies and practice in Afghanistan at all levels.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s Overall Performance regarding Women and Gender Equality

Overall Government Performance ¹	C+
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1 M=2.78, SD=.29

Overall, women surveyed for this research graded the government at a C+ in terms of meeting its commitments to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality, which included commitments in the areas of the peace process, security, health, education, access to justice, violence against women (VAW), political participation, access to resources and services, economic opportunity, support to vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising. In these eleven

categories, the government was assessed most positively (B-) regarding health, education, and awareness-raising. The government was given a C or C+ regarding the peace process, security, access to justice, violence against women, women’s political participation, access to resources and services, and economic opportunity, and received its lowest grade of C- regarding support for vulnerable groups.

Peace Process



Overall Performance¹



¹ M=2.70, SD=.60

The Afghan government has made many commitments to supporting women and gender equality, such as striving for more inclusion of women in the country's peace processes as a means to ensure that the fragile progress in women's rights is maintained and women do not become a "casualty of peace".¹ The GIRoA has made commitments regarding peace in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), and the National Priority Program (NPP) on Peace and Reconciliation, among other policy, legal, and strategic commitments. NAPWA recognizes and supports the implementation of UN Security Council 1325 and reaffirms:

...[the] important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

The government states that it will develop a peace education strategy with consideration to the role that women could play, and will develop detailed strategies on integrating women into the Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice in Afghanistan. The GIRoA commits to pursuing mechanisms for transitional justice and to cooperating with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) to involve and seek the views of women from academia and the local community in truth-seeking mechanisms. They also state that the government will support women's involvement in conflict resolution activities, the establishment of reconciliation committees, and in reconciliation and mediation. Lastly, NAPWA acknowledges women as the primary victims of conflict in Afghanistan and declares a plan to develop a reparations program that benefits women.

The NPP on Peace and Reconciliation focuses more singularly on the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), and stipulates, "The integral role of women throughout the peace process will be promoted and ensured." This document commits to ensuring that women will be seated on the High Peace Council (HPC), and Afghan women will play a vital role in monitoring the peace and reintegration processes and advising the government on how to promote peace. It states that women HPC

and Provincial Peace Council (PPC) members should be involved in outreach, negotiations, and grievance resolution processes.

Overall, women gave the GIRoA a C+ regarding the peace process and women at the local and national levels. Women in Faryab and Kunduz were significantly more positive about the government's performance in this area than women from Bamyan and Nangarhar, and the least positive in Herat.² There was a significant difference among women of different ethnicities,³ where Uzbeks and Pashtuns reported more positive perceptions about government performance than Tajiks and Hazaras.⁴ There was no significant difference in perceptions of the government's efforts towards peace and women among women of different ages, income level, or marital status. However, there was a significant correlation with level of education, where more educated women perceived government performance in this area more poorly.⁵

² F(4, 99)=5.85, p<.001; Bamyan (17) M=2.75, SD=.59; Herat (26) M=3.04, SD=.39; Nangarhar (20) M=2.81, SD=.73; Kunduz (20) M=2.52, SD=.54; Faryab (21) M=2.31, SD=.49

³ F(5, 89)=5.41, p<.001

⁴ Pashtun (20) M=2.52, SD=.60; Tajik (39) M=2.99, SD=.54; Hazara (16) M=2.77, SD=.62; Uzbek (16) M=2.22, SD=.48; Turkmen (2) M=2.22, SD=.16; Other (2) M=3.06, SD=.39

⁵ R=.277, p<.05

¹ Stefanie Nijssen, "The peace process and Afghanistan's women," Civil-Military Fusion Centre, 2012.

National Peace Processes

Women's involvement in national peace bodies ¹	C
Consulting women in national peace processes ²	C
Considering the rights and needs of women in national peace processes ³	C+
Addressing past grievances of women in national peace processes ⁴	C+

1 M=2.82, SD=.92

2 M=2.94, SD=1.23

3 M=2.64, SD=1.16

4 M=2.75, SD=.98

Following the London Conference in 2010, President Karzai announced a plan to convene a Consultative Peace Jirga to discuss the way forward for engaging the Taliban and armed opposition groups. The National Consultative Peace Jirga was convened in June 2010 at the Loya Jirga Tent in Kabul with 1,600 delegates in thirteen categories, including Members of Parliament, Provincial Council members, religious scholars, tribal leaders, civil society representatives, and Afghan refugees from Iran and Pakistan.⁶ The National Consultative Peace Jirga only had 334 women participants (20%).⁷ Though the outcomes received mixed reviews, it endorsed the creation of the HPC⁸ and legitimized the APRP program,⁹ which was initiated in 2010 with the objective of reintegrating lower-level fighters into local communities and providing incentives to encourage fighters to abandon the Taliban cause, explicitly aiming to promote peace through a political approach. The Jirga furthermore produced a resolution that stated, "The people of Afghanistan demand a just peace which can guarantee the rights of all citizens in particular women and children."¹⁰

In this survey, women gave the government a C regarding women's involvement in national level peace bodies, and the same grade for consulting women in national peace

processes. The HPC has 9 female members out of 70. A female HPC member Gulali Noor Safi emphasized in 2012 that "our mission is to figure out how to keep the role of women active in the HPC and not have our presence serve only as a statistic."¹¹ The 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. However, a recent report showed that despite the rhetoric in government commitments, negotiations and peace talks have as of yet taken place behind closed doors "without Afghan women's knowledge, input or involvement."¹²

According to previous EPD research, the HPC and the broader Afghan government approach to the reconciliation process have furthermore been criticized as falling short in terms of public outreach and involving civil society, as well as the process being marred by a lack of transparency. This has amounted to a considerable disconnect between government peace efforts and the views of Afghan civil society, which is particularly troubling with regards to women's issues and the risk of losing gains made regarding women's rights over the past decade.¹³ An APRP official felt that women's participation in national-level peace processes is not on the agenda of the government, and commitments that are made are not budgeted for.¹⁴ A gender tracker was developed to monitor who is doing what on the ground and to increase coordination, but it was never utilized due to lack of support.¹⁵

The GIRoA was given a C+ in both considering the rights and needs of Afghan women in national peace processes and in addressing the past grievances of women in national peace processes. The AIHRC conducted a survey and wrote a report titled "A Call for Justice" in 2005, through which

6 "The Resolution Adopted at the Conclusion of the National Consultative Peace Jirga," High Peace Council, 4 June 2010, http://www.hpc.org.af/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=28&Itemid=12&option=com_content.

7 Zarin Hamid, "Security Council Resolution 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report Afghanistan," Afghan Women's Network and Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2010, http://www.gnwp.org/sites/default/files/resource-field_media/Afghanistan.pdf.

8 Mariam Safi, 'Afghan Peace Process: Are We On the Right Path?', Diplomatic Courier, 24 Jan 2013, <http://www.diplomaticcourier.com/news/regions/central-asia/386-the-afghan-peace-process-are-we-on-the-right-path>.

9 Emily Winterbotham, 'Healing the Legacies of Conflict in Afghanistan: Community Voices on Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation,' *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*, January 2012, https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/2162_1326102513_2012-01-09-areu-healing-the-legacies-of-conflict-in-afghanistan.pdf.

10 Wahida Samad, "Women and peacemaking in Afghanistan: Room for optimism?" HD Centre, 12 January 2012, http://www.hdcentre.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Our_work/Mediation_support/Current%20activities/1%20Gender%20and%20Mediation/Gender%20main%20page/2%20Sous%20page%20Women%20at%20the%20Peace%20Table%20Asia%20Pacific/Supporting%20documents/Women%20and%20peacemaking%20in%20Afghanistan%20-%202012%20January%202011.pdf.

11 Stefanie Nijssen, "The Peace Process and Afghanistan's Women," 3.

12 Elizabeth Cameron and Dr. Jorrit Kamminga, "Behind Closed Doors," 2014.

13 Hannah Partis-Jennings and Marie S. Huber, "Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan: Looking Back to Move Forward," EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, August 2014, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WPS-paper.pdf>.

14 Interview with UNDP-APRP official, 11 December 2014.

15 Interview with UNDP-APRP official, 11 December 2014.

4,151 Afghans across Afghanistan and in refugee settings were consulted, including 1,114 women. In this report, 69% of women had been a victim of a conflict-related crime. To 42% of women, justice meant punishment by the courts, and 76% of women ranked justice as very important to them. 58% of women felt that war criminals should be brought to justice immediately, and 91% felt that human rights abusers should be removed from official posts. Despite this widespread consultation, the report was not widely utilized or incorporated into plans for peace and reconciliation, and the needs and perspectives of women collected by the government were largely ignored. Since this 2005 effort, there have been no national-level efforts by the government

to consult women on national peace processes.¹⁶ The HPC document “Peace Process Roadmap to 2015” released in 2012 is an ambitious document outlining a plan which envisions that the Taliban, Hizb-e Islami and other armed insurgent groups in Afghanistan would give up armed opposition and become active participants in Afghanistan’s political and constitutional processes by 2015, with all foreign troops having departed from the country by this time. The document mentions women only once, and at no point does it refer to the need to mainstream gender concerns or women’s perspectives in peace and reconciliation processes.

16 “A Call for Justice: A National Consultation on Past Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan,” Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 25 January 2005, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/47fdad50.pdf>.

Local Peace Processes

Women’s involvement in local peace bodies ¹	C+
Consulting women in local peace processes ²	C
Considering the rights and needs of women in local peace processes ³	B-
Addressing past grievances of women in local peace processes ⁴	C
Considering women’s needs in reintegration of former combatants ⁵	C

1 M=2.70, SD=1.12
2 M=2.91, SD=1.26
3 M=2.57, SD=1.17
4 M=2.83, SD=1.26
5 M=3.19, SD=1.13

At the local level, peace processes often center on disputes and local conflict, as well as reintegration processes and subnational activities in the national peace process through the PPCs and APRP. Local disputes often stem from family issues, land disputes, water and resource disputes, access to services, tribal and ethnic disputes, local power struggles, and local-level manifestations of national-level conflict. Traditional structures such as jirgas, shuras, maliks, and religious leaders often play important roles in mediating local conflict.¹⁷ Though no formal registration exists, it is estimated that as much as 80% of disputes are resolved outside the formal justice system through these mechanisms.¹⁸ Though the Constitution and laws of Afghanistan provide protections for women, with this level of cases resolved outside the formal justice system, these protections have little meaning for women.

There are currently no formal or legal linkages between the formal and informal justice sector, or formal jurisdictions and allowed sanctions for informal bodies. Though much work was done on the Draft National Policy on Relations

between the Formal Judicial System and Dispute Resolution Councils from 2008 to 2010,¹⁹after the appointment of a new Minister of Justice in 2010 the work on the policy was discontinued and replaced by a new draft law that is still pending in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).²⁰ The lack of a meaningful framework for cooperation between local bodies involved in peace and dispute resolution and the formal justice sector constitutes a failure on the part of the GIROA in effectively considering and protecting the rights and needs of Afghan women.

In the survey, women gave the government a C+ for women’s involvement in local peace bodies. Formally, there is a quota of three to five women for each PPC. The total number of members in each PPC depends on the number of districts, where there should be one member per district.²¹ However, an APRP official noted that women’s participation in subnational entities is mixed, and that while the target

19 Noah Coburn, “Informal Dispute Resolution and the International Community in Afghanistan,” PeaceWorks and USIP, 2013, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW84-Informal%20Justice%20and%20the%20International%20Community%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>.
20 “Justice and Governance in Eastern Afghanistan: Review of Government Engagement,” The Liaison Office, n.g., http://www.tloafghanistan.org/2014%2001%2016%20Provincial%20%20Kabul%20Level-Government%20Engagement_formatted.pdf.
21 Ann Wilkens, “Missing the Target,” 2012.

17 Lisa Schirch, “Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan,” USIP, 2011, http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Designing_a_Comprehensive_Peace_Process_for_Afghanistan.pdf.
18 “Rule of Law in Afghanistan,” USIP, n.g., <http://www.usip.org/programs/projects/rulelaw-afghanistan>.

for PPCs was 50% women's representation, in practice this is hardly the case.²² 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.²³ The report also found that women and girls often worked collectively in groups and in women-only spaces,²⁴ 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. This is compounded by certain masculine identity models (those aspects of male identity linked to perceptions of what it means to "be a man") and traditional patriarchal structures such as tribal and religious leaders, which can constitute obstacles to women's engagement with peace processes.²⁵

The government was similarly given a C for efforts to consult women in local peace processes and a B- for consideration of the rights and needs of women in local peace processes. Local-level peace bodies can have a high record of discrimination against women by traditional and religious leaders as patriarchal bodies. Another report found that these informal mechanisms often do not act in favor of women or preside over practices conducive to gender equality.²⁶ Furthermore, no formal reparation program benefiting women was ever instituted and funds distributed through the APRP generally go exclusively to male heads of family.²⁷ Though APRP includes a gender mainstreaming policy, APRP still has a low presence of women especially at the decision-making level, limited gender-specific monitoring and evaluation of reintegration activities, and a limited understanding of the APRP among women. Research has found that the role of women in reintegration across Afghanistan is varied, 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. The research found that in Kunduz, where reintegrates have joined the Afghan Local Police (ALP), these were opposing women taking a public role in the community or addressing complaints with the

government. Importantly, the research found that women have no right to accept or reject reintegrates from their community.²⁸

The government was given a C in both addressing past grievances of women in local peace processes and considering the needs of women in the reintegration of former combatants. Another report from 2014 found that the reintegration programs of former combatants does not consider the needs and interests of women, and that the capacity of women at the local level needs to improve in order to foster women's subnational involvement in the peace processes.²⁹ EPD's previous research on Afghan women's perspectives on peace and security found that women's opinions on reintegration echoed those on peace talks and reconciliation, with reintegration cited as another major security concern for women and the people of Afghanistan. For many participants, discussions of Taliban reintegration in their communities were associated with fear of threats, insecurity, and violence, and several again strongly rejected the inclusion of the Taliban. Women cited a trust deficit based on past experiences that continues to paint the Taliban as a considerable threat, particularly for women. In this research, participants expressed fear that allowing the Taliban to return to society would have a negative effect and the reintegrated fighters would renew violence and anti-government activities in their communities.

In EPD's Women's Perspectives Series, many of those consulted opposed the idea of any reintegration process altogether, suggesting a failing in the reconciliation process. Themes of reconciliation include healing, truth, justice, and reparation, which should be addressed at the political, national, and local levels.³⁰ The consistent resistance to reintegration by participants would suggest that the reconciliation process in Afghanistan has failed to provide a forum for addressing past grievances and allowing women to envision a future of a unified post-conflict Afghanistan. This points to the larger issue of a lack of gender-sensitive frameworks at all levels of the peace process in Afghanistan. At the national level, women are still under-represented in processes of peace, reintegration, and reconciliation in institutions such as the HPC. At the local level, many decision-making and dispute resolution bodies are highly patriarchal.

22 Interview with UNDP-APRP official, 11 December 2014.

23 "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/>.

24 Ibid.

25 Hannah Partis-Jennings and Marie S. Huber, "Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan," 2014.

26 Zarin Hamid, "Women Count—Security Council Resolution 1325: Civil Society Monitoring Report 2012," Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, 2012, http://www.gnwp.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Afghanistan_Report.pdf.

27 Ann Wilkens, "Missing the Target," 2012.

28 "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.

29 Chris Snow and Sam Brett, "The Home Front," 2014.

30 Enrique Sanchez and Sylvia Rognvik, "Building Just Societies: Reconciliation in Transitional Settings," United Nations, Workshop Report, Accra, Ghana, 5-6 June 2012, <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Reconciliation%20workshop%20report%20WEB.pdf>.

Security



Overall Performance¹

C+

¹ $M=2.67, SD=.74$

As with the category of peace, government documents, strategies, policies, and laws outline a number of key commitments to women in terms of security. NAPWA stipulates that the government will promote a gender perspective and women's participation throughout the security sector, which is echoed in the ANDS commitment to "promote gender mainstreaming and gender balance throughout the security sector" and to "increase the number of qualified female staff throughout the security sector."

The ANDS recognizes that in all policies and programs men and women have equal rights and responsibilities through the security sector. The government commits to increasing awareness of gender issues and women's rights, raising women's decision-making role, and ensuring women have equal employment opportunities within the security sector. The government also commits to putting monitoring mechanisms in place to realize goals for gender equality regarding security. In NAPWA, the government commits to

building and sustaining a secure environment that enables women to live a life free from intimidation, fear and violence, and which supports their participation and leadership in promoting and maintaining peace and security.

Overall, women in this survey gave the GIRoA a C+ in terms of security, which assessed government performance in terms of the protection of women and girls, security actors and women's rights, and attempts to increase the number of women working in the security sector. There was no significant difference in perceptions of the government's performance between provinces or among women of different ethnicities. There were similarly no significant differences according to age, marital status, education level, or employment status. However, women with higher levels of monthly household income perceived government performance in the area of women and security more poorly than those with lower incomes.¹

¹ $R=-.268, p<.01$

Protecting Women and Girls

Protecting women and girls in terms of physical safety and security¹

C-

¹ $M=3.27, SD=3.47$

The women surveyed for this research gave the GIRoA a C- in terms of protecting women and girls' physical safety and security. Recent EPD research found that physical insecurity is still a central impediment to women's daily lives in Afghanistan,² reflecting larger trends where violence and insecurity have been consistently viewed as the biggest problem facing Afghanistan as a whole for the past several years.³ EPD's previous research found that women still feel threats to their safety from suicide attacks, attacks on girls going to school, general insecurity in rural areas, tribal conflicts, and conflict between warlords.⁴

Other research has noted that the hostile environment in Afghanistan forces women to restrict their movement, self-censor, and restrict participation in the public sphere.⁵ Furthermore, women that work for the government or

local and international organizations as well as women's rights and human rights activists are often targeted for intimidation or attacks,⁶ which was also found as a concern from women's rights activists in EPD's previous research. This is particularly important as insecurity and its effects on women have been consistently on the rise. 2013 was the most violent year in regard to civilian injuries and deaths since 2009 with an increase of 34% among women compared to 2012.⁷ 2014 greatly surpassed 2013 in terms of women's casualties from conflict-related violence, with 909 women casualties (298 deaths and 611 injuries), a 21% increase from 2013.⁸ Taken in whole, these statistics corroborate the perceptions of Afghan women that the GIRoA is underperforming in terms of protecting women and girls in Afghanistan.

² Hannah Partis-Jennings and Marie S. Huber, "Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan," 2014.

³ Zach Warren, "Afghanistan in 2014: A Survey of the Afghan People," The Asia Foundation, 2014, <http://afghansurvey.asiafoundation.org>.

⁴ Hannah Partis-Jennings and Marie S. Huber, "Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan," 2014.

⁵ "Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police," Samuel Hall Consulting and Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2011, http://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/assets/boell.de/images/download_de/democracy/PPS_new.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Afghanistan Annual Report 2013: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict," United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2014, http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/Feb_8_2014_PoC-report_2013-Full-report-ENG.pdf.

⁸ "Afghanistan Annual Report 2014: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict," United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2015, <http://www.unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/human%20rights/2015/2014-Annual-Report-on-Protection-of-Civilians-Final.pdf>.

Security Actors and Women's Rights

Security actors' awareness of women's rights ¹	B-
Security actors protecting women's rights ²	C

1 M=2.59, SD=.92

2 M=2.81, SD=1.00

Security actors received moderately low marks from the women surveyed regarding their awareness and protection of the rights of women. Security actors averaged a B- in terms of their awareness of women's rights and a C in terms of their protection of the rights of women. In EPD's previous research on women, peace and security, participants discussed abuse of power by the police and persons of authority, and discussed the need to educate and develop the national police force. Some women expressed a distrust of police, feeling they are often dishonest or corrupt, and noted that police vetting needs to be improved to ensure police do not have criminal pasts.⁹

The AIHRC has accused the Afghan National Police (ANP) of committing abuses against women. The June 2013 report from the AIHRC found that policemen committed nearly 15% of honor killings and sexual assaults recorded between 2011 and 2013.¹⁰ A 2011 police perceptions study found that only 33% of Afghans feel that ANP always treat women with proper respect.¹¹ Fewer than 20% of Afghans would turn to the ANP to report violence against women and less than 30% for sexual offenses and assault,¹² indicating a low level of awareness of or support for women's rights among formal security actors. While 62% of men would report a matter to the ANP alone, only 37% of women stated they would do so.¹³ Furthermore, the ANP has been accused of intimidating and harassing citizens, including threats of sexual abuse.¹⁴

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has taken some positive steps to address problems regarding gender among security actors, including three days of gender and human rights training in the eight-week basic preparation for patrolmen-level officials, and additional sessions at the noncommissioned

officer (NCO) and officer levels.¹⁵ An official from the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) commented that the MoI code of conduct has been used to train 20,000 police officers, and many Training of Trainers (ToTs) have been organized to promote the sustainability of the training efforts.¹⁶ Furthermore, Family Response Units (FRUs) were established in 2006 for addressing family violence, children in trouble, and female victims of crime. According to a 2013 assessment, there were 165 semi-functioning FRUs across Afghanistan. However, of these none had separate interview rooms and there were limited facilities for female officers.¹⁷ The MoI also approved the Gender Strategy Implementation Plan in August 2014, which is a 3-year plan, but a LOTFA official noted that it is another wish list and its goals are unrealistic.¹⁸

Women also face issues regarding their rights in terms of compensation for conflict-related loss. One report found that Code 99¹⁹ and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled (MoLSAMD) payments do not ensure equal access for women in terms of compensation and support for conflict-related loss. While women are allowed to apply for assistance, sociocultural issues can prevent women from pursuing claims and receiving help. This report found that men often speak on behalf of women, and male relatives often initiate the application process, receive monetary payments, and execute financial decision-making on their behalf. Furthermore, women without a male relative to advocate on their behalf are sometimes unable to receive help at all after the loss of the male head of household and primary provider for the family.²⁰

With regards to gender mainstreaming, the Gender Directorate of the MoI has been established to, among other responsibilities, collect gender-related data as a means to collect statistics that are gender-sensitive and can be disaggregated. The latest LOTFA report indicates

9 Hannah Partis-Jennings and Marie S. Huber, "Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan," 2014.

10 "Women and the Afghan Police," Oxfam Briefing Paper, 10 September 2013, http://www.iawp.org/campaigns/Afghanistan/Oxfam_bp-173-afghanistan-women-police-100913-en.pdf.

11 "Police Perception Survey – 2011: The Afghan Perspective," UNDP and ACSOR, 2011, <http://www.undp.org.af/Publications/KeyDocuments/2011/PPS-Eng%20Version-2011%20Final%20Lowest%20Res.pdf>.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 "Compilation prepared by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21: Afghanistan," Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 11 November 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/52ea4c8a4.pdf>.

15 "Women and the Afghan Police," 2013.

16 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

17 "Law and Order trust Fund for Afghanistan: 2013 Second Quarterly Project Progress Report," United Nations Development Programme, 2013, http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/projects/AFG/LOTFA_Phase%20VI_QPR_Q2_2013.pdf.

18 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

19 Code 99 funds are monetary payments offered to civilians for war-related deaths and injuries through the President's Code 99 fund.

20 "Caring for Their Own: A Stronger Afghan Response to Civilian Harm," Center for Civilians in Conflict, 2013, http://civiliansinconflict.org/uploads/files/publications/Afghan_Report_2013_smaller_final.pdf.

that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) monitoring and evaluation(M&E) team has provided support on how to establish such a system, including different methodologies and improving existing data sources such as the human resources database. The goal is to collect data—such as exact numbers on female police and civil staff, women’s career paths, and promotion opportunities—to inform better policy-making and strategies that can improve the recruitment and retention of female employees within the ANP and MoI.²¹

21 “2014 First Quarter Project Progress Report,” Law and Order Trust Fund for

Additionally, 50 Gender Units have been established across Afghanistan with biannual meetings led by MoI to discuss progress and challenges.²² However, the grades of B- and C regarding security actors’ awareness and protection of women’s rights indicates that there is still considerable additional effort required on behalf of MoI and other stakeholders to ensure the issue is adequately prioritized and meaningfully addressed.

Afghanistan (LOTFA), 2014, <http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/crisisprev/LOTFA/LOTFA-1QPR-2014.pdf>.
22 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

Recruiting Women to the Security Sector

Equal employment opportunities for men and women in the security sector ¹	C+
Level of women in the ANP compared to five years ago ²	B

1 M=2.72, SD=1.31
2 M=2.18, SD=.89

The Afghan government has made commitments to ensure that women’s needs and interests in securing their safety are taken into consideration by recruiting women to the ANP and MoI civil service, and gender mainstreaming across the MoI and police forces. Over the past decade, the GfRoA has launched several initiatives to recruit women to the ANP, and have facilitated a modest rise in their numbers from 180 women out of 53,400 ANP in 2005 to 1,441 women out of 157,000 in 2013.²³ Furthermore, the tashkeel of the ANP reserves 3,249 jobs for female civil servants and police officers, though women still fill fewer than half these jobs.²⁴ Only 1% of the ANP are women and women comprise less than 0.5% of the Afghan National Army (ANA).²⁵

Despite the government commitments²⁶ and international support from LOTFA and the European Union Police Mission²⁷ (EUPOL) (for example, EUPOL and the MoI signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to establish a Female Police College in Kabul²⁸) progress has been slow to recruit women in the ANP and MoI. According to the latest report from LOTFA, 2,185 women have been recruited for the ANP and MoI²⁹ representing less than 2% of the police forces,

which is much lower than the MoI’s target of recruiting 5,000 women as outlined in the recently launched Strategic Implementation Plan on Solidarity of Female Personnel Affairs with ANP.³⁰ Possible constraints that have been identified are the insecurity for women in the workplace, lack of retention conditions, a lack of a welfare package, limited abilities for promotion, and a lack of women in leadership positions.³¹ Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of political will. For example, the literacy requirement is considerably higher for women than for men, and there has been inadequate response to abuses against female police officers.³² An investigation by National Public Radio in 2012 found allegations of widespread sexual abuse and rape of policewomen in Mazar-e-Sharif, and furthermore found evidence that senior policemen were demanding sexual favors in exchange for promotions.³³ An Oxfam report found that negative attitudes and practices continue after women have been recruited; policewomen lack basic items such as uniforms, receive little to no training, and are often given menial tasks such as making tea.³⁴ This furthermore reflects patriarchal social norms, whereby policing and provision of security are traditionally viewed as a “masculine” sphere for which women are unsuited. This perception can be observed around the world,³⁵ and is likely a considerable

23 “Women and the Afghan Police,” 2013.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 “Institutional reform assessment of Ministry of Interior for implementation of ten year strategic plan,” Silsila Consultancy Services, 2013, <https://ipcb.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/institutional-reform-assessment-report-final.pdf>.
27 “EU police mission in Afghanistan: Factsheet 2014,” EU Police Mission, 2014, http://www.eupol-afg.eu/sites/default/files/EUPOL%20Afghanistan_Factsheet%20_September%202014.pdf.
28 This was mentioned in the interview with the EUPOL Gender Adviser. The press release can be found here: <http://www.eupol-afg.eu/node/500>.
29 “First quarter project progress report,” Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, 2014.

30 “Strategic Implementation Plan on Solidarity of Female Personnel Affairs with ANP,” Ministry of Interior Affairs, 2014.
31 “First quarter project progress report,” Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, 2014.
32 “No Time to Lose: Promoting the Accountability of the Afghan National Police,” Joint Briefing Paper, CIVIC, HRRAC, Oxfam, and PTRO, 10 May 2011, <http://civiliansinconflict.org/uploads/files/publications/no-time-to-lose-may2011.pdf>.
33 “Women and the Afghan Police,” 2013.
34 Ibid.
35 See for example Anastasia Prokos and Irene Padavic, “There Oughtta Be a

issue in Afghanistan as a society with deeply engrained gender division and widely held normative models of masculinity and femininity.

Conversely, outside of the government, there appears to be growing public acceptance of female police, where a UN-backed survey from 2012 found that policewomen were more trusted to resolve a crime fairly, and EUPOL has suggested that increased numbers of policewomen could contribute to improving popular support for the state.³⁶ In a 2011 survey, 67% of men and 72% of women stated they would be more likely to report a crime if the police officer were female.³⁷ In 2014, 37% of men and 42% of women agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable for women to work in the army or police. While this leaves a long way to go, it does indicate shifting beliefs about women's representation in the security sector among the public. These findings reflect that while gender normative beliefs may be preventing the advancement of women within security institutions, it could be less of a societal obstacle. Despite this, the GIRoA has yet to adequately prioritize the recruitment of and effective support for female police.

However, a EUPOL official interviewed for this research noted that there appears to be some high-level support through finalizing the strategy for female police officers and the Gender Implementation Plan and some high profile women within the MoI, though still half of the positions earmarked for women within the tahskeel are filled by men.³⁸ Contradicting this, however, the EUPOL official also commented on a recent development where MoI attempted to weaken the Gender Unit, which was prevented through response from the international community.³⁹ The official also noted that they are not aware of any efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data or an M&E system that accounts for gender within MoI.⁴⁰ An official from LOTFA noted that MoI

is beginning to put more effort into female recruitment, having recruited 200 women in 2014 compared to around 70 in previous years; all of the new recruits have a high school diploma or higher, and were sent for four months of training in Turkey. The official also noted that the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goal (AMDG) of 30% female representation is very unrealistic, and that 3% would even be a laudable achievement.⁴¹

MoI has made some efforts to address issues that female policewomen face, including issuing a Directive on Sexual Harassment in 2013, though research has found that these are not enforced at the local level or effectively monitored by MoI, and there is little or no police awareness of this policy or relevant laws and strategies such as the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law and NAPWA.⁴² Furthermore, Oxfam research found that a lack of female-friendly facilities increases the vulnerability of policewomen, with few female-only or locking bathrooms and a lack of separate facilities in police stations. Additionally, policewomen who are harassed or victimized struggle to receive support, with a 2010 helpline for policewomen regarded as generally ineffective.⁴³

While the findings of this research demonstrate that some progress has been made, more than a decade on in security sector reform a grade of C+ in terms of gender-equal employment opportunities and less than positive perceptions regarding the gender-awareness of the security sector reflect a serious issue that needs to be addressed moving forward. UNSCR 1325, in addition to considerable research,⁴⁴ has demonstrated that gender equality and women's participation in security institutions and decision-making is critical to sustainable peace. It is important that the structures of security sector reform themselves are gender equitable and promote gender equality early on to contribute to an enabling environment for long-term sustainable peace.

Law Against Bitches': Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training," *Gender, Work and Organization* 9, no. 4 (August 2002): 439-459.

36 Ibid.

37 "Police Perception Survey," 2011.

38 Interview with EUPOL official, 11 December 2014.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

42 "Women and the Afghan Police," 2013.

43 Ibid.

44 See Valerie M. Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F. Emmet's research on gender equality and state security in *Sex and World Peace*.

Public Health



Overall Performance¹

B-

1 $M=2.56$, $SD=.63$

Afghan women faced a serious healthcare crisis under Taliban rule. Restrictions on women's mobility placed considerable limitations on women's ability to reach medical facilities. Furthermore, the quality of women's healthcare also diminished greatly with prohibitions on male-female contact that prevented male doctors from properly diagnosing women, as well as halting programs for training female healthcare providers. All female hospital personnel, including physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, were prohibited from working in public medical facilities, aside from one facility with only 35 patient beds.¹ The lack of training and professional practice for female physicians and norms regarding women's access to healthcare presented significant obstacles even after the fall of the Taliban.

Facing these challenges, the GIRoA made a number of commitments to Afghan women in terms of their health, with a general aim to ensure women's emotional, social, and physical wellbeing and to protect their reproductive rights. In NAPWA, the GIRoA committed to strengthening the quality and improving women's access to the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and increasing investment in training women health workers. In the ANDS, among other documents, the government committed to increasing the number of qualified female health workers and reaffirmed commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) mandate to eliminate discrimination and ensure equal access to healthcare for men and women, including the provision of information and advice on family planning. It furthermore asserts the need to continuously strengthen the empowerment of women to make decisions regarding their own and their family's health. NAPWA also stipulated that periodic health services would be provided in schools and universities to ensure children's, young girls, and women's access to health care.

The government has also made ambitious commitments regarding women's reproductive health, including increasing resources for, and effectively implementing, the National Reproductive Health Strategy and reducing fertility rates, as well as enforcing a policy of mandatory capacity on reproductive health services, family planning, and handling of VAW cases in all health facilities. Importantly, ANDS also asserts that as partners of women, men should be encouraged to learn birth preparedness, antenatal care (ANC), delivery and postnatal care, as well as helping to reduce new mothers' workloads, encourage a nutritious

diet, and follow up on care. It also calls upon men to be positive mediators to reduce pressure for women to have many children soon after marriage. These commitments recognize the need to reshape social gender norms that are currently harmful to women in a way that promotes women's safety and health as well as a more equitable division of parenting responsibilities and decision-making between men and women.

The GIRoA has strongly committed to reduce the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in NAPWA, ANDS, NPPS, and the AMDGs—committing to reduce MMR by 50% between 2002 and 2015, and to 25% of the 2003 level by 2020. They furthermore committed to employing at least one female health staff in every health facility by 2013.² By 2016, the GIRoA has planned to have 80% of health facilities with a skilled birth attendant from a baseline of 68% in 2012, 100% of health facilities with at least 3 modern family planning methods from a baseline of 81%, and 50% coverage of deliveries attended by a Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) from a baseline of 34%.³

Overall, women in this survey gave the GIRoA a B- in terms of health, which assessed government performance in terms of women's access to healthcare, family planning and reproductive health, and emotional and psychological support for women. There was no significant difference in perceptions of the government's performance between provinces or among women of different ethnicities. There were similarly no significant differences according to age, marital status, education level, or employment status. However, women with higher levels of monthly household income perceived government performance in the area of health more poorly than those with lower incomes,⁴ perhaps reflecting more access to and therefore observation of government health services, or awareness of higher standards of adequate healthcare.

1 Stephanie Dubitsky, "The Health Care Crisis Facing Women Under Taliban Rule in Afghanistan," American University Washington College of Law, Human Rights Brief 6, no. 2, 1999, <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1576&context=hrbrief>.

2 NPP – Health for All Afghans.

3 MoPH National Reproductive Health Strategy 2012-2016.

4 $R=.225$, $p<.05$

Women's Access to Healthcare

Women's access to basic healthcare ¹	B-
Number of qualified female healthcare workers in government health facilities ²	C+
Availability of female healthcare workers compared to five years ago ³	B
Accessibility of government health facilities for women ⁴	B-
Sensitivity to women's needs in terms of facilities ⁵	B

1 $M=2.55$, $SD=.88$

2 $M=2.63$, $SD=.95$

3 $M=2.33$, $SD=.86$

4 $M=2.46$, $SD=1.24$

5 $M=2.01$, $SD=1.03$

Women surveyed for this report gave the GIRoA a B- regarding women's access to basic health services. The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) developed the BPHS in 2002 as a guide for the health services the GIRoA would provide for all Afghan citizens in areas that would have the greatest impact on major health problems, be achievable in terms of infrastructure, be cost effective, and give equal access to healthcare in both rural and urban areas.⁵ According to Ministry of Public Health's Health Management Information System (HMIS) reports, the total number of active BPHS facilities increased from 1,075 in 2004 to 1,829 in 2011, increasing by 70%, and the average number of rural population covered by each active BPHS facility decreased from 15,175 to 10,849 in the same period.⁶ What's more, the total number of patient visits to BPHS facilities increased from 2.0 million to 44.8 million per year, and the average number of patients receiving health services daily at clinics increased from 6,537 in 2004 to 143,046 in 2011, though these numbers are not disaggregated by sex and also reflects a fourfold increase in the number of BPHS facilities reporting regularly.⁷ However, life expectancy for women in Afghanistan has been consistently rising, from 58.3 in 2005 to 61.8 in 2012, compared to 59.3 in 2012 for men.⁸

Though women gave the government a B for the availability of female healthcare workers compared to five years ago, the government still received a C+ from the women surveyed for the number of qualified female healthcare workers in government health facilities. According to the 2013-2014 Statistical Yearbook from the Central Statistics Organization (CSO), including both contract workers and officials, the Ministry of Public Health employed 1,106

female staff in the provinces compared to 4,709 men, and 1,918 women in the center compared to 4,869 men.⁹ However, this still represents considerable progress, where between 2004 and 2012 the number of health facilities in Afghanistan increased from 496 to 2,047, of which 1,680 were primary care facilities and 74% had at least one female staff member.¹⁰ According to MoPH reports, the percentage of community health workers who are female was 48% in 2011.¹¹

Very promisingly, 40% of Kabul Medical University's students at the beginning of 2013-14 were female, much higher than the average 19% female share of enrollment in Afghanistan's public higher education institutions.¹² In public higher education institutions in the center and the provinces, women comprise 24% of students in general medical faculties, 38% in the faculty of public health, 29% in the faculty of medical treatment, 54% in the faculty of stomatology, and 64% in the faculty of nursing.¹³ Additionally, 32 midwifery schools were established in 2010, though this has been reduced to 22.¹⁴

Women surveyed gave the GIRoA a B- in terms of accessibility of healthcare facilities for women. According to a 2009 study, over 85% of Afghanistan's population had access to basic healthcare within a two-hour walk.¹⁵ In the 2014 Survey of the Afghan People, an impressive 90% of women reported they could reach a working clinic or hospital

5 John R. Acerra, Kara Iskyan, Zubair A. Qureshi, and Rahul K. Sharma, "Rebuilding the health care system in Afghanistan: an overview of primary care and emergency services," *International Journal of Emergency Medicine* 2, no. 2, 5 June 2009, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2700223/>.

6 William Newbrander, Paul Ickx, Ferozuddin Feroz, and Hedayatullah Stanekzai, "Afghanistan's Basic Package of Health Services: Its development and effects on rebuilding the health system," *Global Public Health* 9, no. 1 (Jul 2014): S6-S28.

7 Ibid.

8 The World Bank Data, <http://data.worldbank.org>.

9 "Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2013-2014," Central Statistics Organization, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2014, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Government%20Civil%20Service%20Employees.pdf>.

10 "Afghanistan: Better Outcomes for Women, Children, and the Poor: A Decade of Tremendous Progress," The World Bank, 18 April 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/04/18/afghanistan-better-health-outcomes-women-children-poor>.

11 William Newbrander, Paul Ickx, Ferozuddin Feroz, and Hedayatullah Stanekzai, "Afghanistan's Basic Package of Health Services," 2014.

12 "Statistical Yearbook 2013-14: Education," GIRoA Central Statistics Organization, 2014.

13 Ibid.

14 Interview with JICA-RHPH official, 10 December 2014.

15 John R. Acerra, Kara Iskyan, Zubair A. Qureshi, and Rahul K. Sharma, "Rebuilding the health care system in Afghanistan," 2009.

within one hour, 8% within two hours, and 3% more than two hours. 41% of women reported they would reach such a clinic or hospital by walking, 4% by animal, 27% by car or truck, 12% by motorcycle, 1% by bicycle, 2% by bus, and 2% by rickshaw.

Despite this impressive improvement in level of access on paper, a two-hour walk poses considerably different challenges for women than men in Afghanistan. Issues such as security, culture, and tradition could bring into question whether a two-hour walk could be considered “accessible” for Afghan women, particularly for female-headed households or in rural and remote areas. The same 2009 study found that at least 300,000 people lost access to primary care services due to violence in 2008, and that utilization of services in secure provinces is three times more than in areas with security issues.¹⁶ Furthermore, lack of infrastructure and poor road networks can make some areas inaccessible during winter or in other inclement weather, especially for those with serious health issues.¹⁷ It can also be more difficult to have female staff in more rural areas, though MoPH has created a hardship financial incentive for female personnel who are going to remote areas.¹⁸

Even when women can reach clinics and hospitals, they are not always designed in ways that are responsive to their needs. The GIRoA was given a B in terms of the sensitivity of health facilities to the needs of women. Though the aforementioned presence or lack of female health personnel and accessibility of clinics and hospitals are factors of gender sensitivity in the health sector, the responsiveness of facilities to the needs of women also includes factors such as their physical location, design and layout, user fees, and the availability of specific technologies

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Interview with JICA-RPHI official, 10 December 2014.

and medications. For example, a 2013 research found that some clinics lack waiting rooms for patients or are too large to heat in the winter. Others did not have adequate pharmacy space for storing medications.¹⁹ In another study, the lack of waiting areas for female patients was also cited as a barrier to women’s access.²⁰ In another example in the area of reproductive health from 2008, only 1% of health facilities had complete and functioning sets of obstetrical care equipment. 71% of facilities charged user fees, compounding the finding that facilities with user fees also had lower skilled birth attendant usage.²¹ Furthermore, a MoPH assessment in 2013 found insufficient capacity to treat gender-sensitive issues such as physical and sexual violence and mental health, especially for women.²²

Though the HMIS collects data on public health and much of the data on national programs have sex-disaggregated data, some of the programs do not have sex-disaggregated information. A JICA official working in the MoPH felt that indicators are currently inadequate, and the MoPH needs to know how much is spent on male and female health. Currently, the GIRoA is spending 4 USD per capita on health, compared to the international standard minimum requirement from the WHO of 15 USD per capita, and the gender breakdown of revenue benefit incidence is largely unknown.²³

19 Marie S. Huber, “‘If You Built Your Own House, Would You Then Destroy It?’: Community Involvement and Sustainability of PRT Development Projects in Afghanistan after Transition,” Integrity Watch Afghanistan, December 2013.
20 “Increasing access to health care services in Afghanistan with gender-sensitive health service delivery,” World Health Organization, 2013, http://applications.emro.who.int/dsaf/EMROPUB_2013_EN_1585.pdf.
21 Maureen Mayhew, MD, MPH, Peter M. Hansen, PhD, David H. Peters, MD, DrPH, Anbrasi Edward, PhD, MPH, MBA, Lakhwinder P. Singh, DPHI, Vikas Dwidevi, PGDHM, Ashraf Mashkoor, MD, and Gilbert Burnham, MD, PhD, “Determinants of Skilled Birth Attendant Utilization in Afghanistan: A Cross-Sectional Study,” American Journal of Public Health 89, no. 10 (October 2008): 1849-1856.
22 “Increasing access to health care services in Afghanistan with gender-sensitive health service delivery,” World Health Organization, 2013.
23 Interview with JICA-RPHI official, 10 December 2014.

Maternal and Reproductive Health

Women’s awareness of family planning ¹	C-
Deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants ²	C
Maternal mortality compared to five years ago ³	B

1 M=3.36, SD=.2.61
2 M=2.99, SD=2.70
3 M=2.33, SD=.94

Though there are still many challenges, considerable progress has been made in terms of women’s reproductive health, which has been acknowledged as an area where improvement would have a considerable impact on other areas such as poverty reduction, women’s empowerment

and participation, children’s health, and education.²⁴ Three quarters of all maternal deaths occur during delivery or in

24 See for example Vanessa M. Boulanger, Kathryn L. Falb, Jane Shuma, and Jennifer Leaning, “Inaction on Maternal Mortality: Qualitative Evidence of the Impacts of Maternal Deaths on Living Children in Tanzania,” PLoS One 8, no. 8, 2013, <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0071674>.

the immediate postpartum period, which can be mitigated by having competent health workers with midwifery skills present during delivery. There has been notable improvement in the MMR, from the absolute highest MMR in the world at an estimated 1,600 deaths for every 100,000 live births in 2001, to an estimated 400 per 100,000 live births in 2014.²⁵ However, women in this survey still rated the government's performance consistent with other areas, rating the attendance of deliveries by SBAs a C, and maternal mortality compared to 5 years ago a B. Preventable maternal deaths are often a result of delays in recognizing danger signs, deciding to seek care, reaching care, or receiving care at health facilities, where women generally still do not take independent decisions regarding their own health and still often require accompaniment for seeking healthcare services.²⁶ Though the MMR in Afghanistan has lowered considerably, it still ranks 28th highest in the world.²⁷ According to the most recent Afghanistan mortality survey in 2010, with the number of annual maternal deaths, there is nearly one maternal death every hour in Afghanistan.²⁸

The 2012 Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (AMICS) survey found that, of births occurring in the past two years, 39% were delivered by skilled personnel, highest in the central region and lowest in the southern region. Doctors assisted with 20% of births, midwives or nurses with 16%, and midwives with 2%. This was also a considerable improvement from the estimated baseline of 6% in 2003.²⁹ Delivery by C-section was less than 4%, compared to the global standard range of 5-15%.³⁰ According to this 2012 report, only 33% of births in Afghanistan are delivered in a health facility, including 28% in public sector facilities, while 65% still occur at home.³¹ These figures demonstrate that though progress has been made, the assessment of women surveyed for this research can be seen as a reflection of the considerable improvements that still need to be made. An official from JICA at MoPH explained:

With regards to comprehensive services, there are so many obstetric services that are operated by SBAs and now more than 1,000 health facilities are providing such services. Most of them are female [...] There used to be traditional SBAs without training or equipment. Now there are midwifery schools. However, most of the deliveries occur at home—64% of all deliveries—but advancement is there; 47% of all

the deliveries are attended by SBAs whether at home or in health facilities.³²

In 2012, prenatal coverage was 39%, increased from 6% in 2003, and institutional deliveries were at 43%, up from 7% in 2004. In 2012, 48% of women received ANC at least once during pregnancy, with much lower rates in the southern region and higher rates in the central region, and only one out of every six mothers received antenatal care at least four times.³³ Of those who had given birth to a child two years prior to the AMICS survey, 20% had a blood sample taken during an antenatal care visit, 35% blood pressure check, 24% a urine sample. Only 12% had received all three.³⁴

There has been some progress as well in terms of family planning, though women in this survey still rated that awareness of women in their community of family planning strategies a C-. This is very important in terms of women's health, with global estimates that up to 35% of maternal deaths could be avoided by preventing unintended pregnancies.³⁵ In 2012, 21.2% of married women were using contraception, most commonly injectable contraception (10% of married women), followed by the pill (6% of married women). Use of contraception was correlated with higher education levels and wealthier householders.³⁶ This is a considerable increase from the estimated baseline of 5% in 2003, but still far from the AMDG target rate of 50% by 2015.³⁷

The 2012 AMICS found that 10% of women between the age of 15 and 19 have had a live birth, 14% have begun childbearing, and one out of every four women between the ages of 20 and 24 had a live birth before age 18.³⁸ Furthermore, women with less education and from poorer householders were much more likely to have a live birth before age 18.³⁹ According to the World Fertility Report 2003, the fertility rate (births per woman) in Afghanistan was 8.2,⁴⁰ whereas in 2012 it had lowered to 5.1.⁴¹ However, according to 2012 data, this rate was still 13th highest in the world.⁴²

The JICA official interviewed noted that women's health is at risk as Afghanistan enters political and security transition,

25 "State of World Population 2014," UNFPA, 2014, http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf.

26 "Increasing access to health care services in Afghanistan with gender-sensitive health service delivery," World Health Organization, 2013.

27 The World Bank Data, <http://data.worldbank.org>.

28 "Afghanistan: Maternal and Perinatal Health Profile," World Health Organization, 2012, http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/epidemiology/profiles/maternal/afg.pdf.

29 "MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health," UNDP Afghanistan, 2014, <http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/mdgoverview/overview/mdg5/>.

30 "Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: Monitoring the Situation of Women & Children," Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF, June 2012, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AMICS-Jun24-2012-FINAL..pdf>.

31 Ibid.

32 Interview with JICA-RHPH official, 10 December 2014.

33 "Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: Monitoring the Situation of Women & Children," Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF, 2012.

34 Ibid.

35 Douglas Huber, Nika Saeedi, and Abdul Khalil Samadi, "Achieving success with family planning in Rural Afghanistan," World Health Organization, December 2009, <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/3/08-059410/en/>.

36 "Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey: Monitoring the Situation of Women & Children," Central Statistics Organization and UNICEF, 2012.

37 "MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health," UNDP Afghanistan, 2014.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 "World Fertility Report 2003," UN Population Division, DESA, 12 March 2004, http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldfertility/Preface_Content.pdf.

41 "Afghanistan: Maternal and Perinatal Health Profile," World Health Organization, 2012.

42 The World Bank Data, <http://data.worldbank.org>.

particularly reproductive health. The official explained that donors such as the World Health Organization (WHO), JICA, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank finance most reproductive health programs. They felt that while the government has developed the capacity to implement the programs, health facilities may be closed if funding decreases and there will

again be access problems, increases in maternal mortality, and a lack of family planning services. The official felt that the government’s abilities to sustain and continue to make gains in these areas will be affected by funding schemes and on-budget versus off-budget aid.⁴³

43 Ibid.

Psychological Support for Women

Women’s access to support from government healthcare professionals for emotional and psychological needs ¹	B-
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1 M=2.60, SD=1.32

Emotional and physiological support is generally covered under mental health services, where mental health describes “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”⁴⁴ Prolonged conflict and trauma, violence and insecurity, and poverty have led to increased vulnerabilities in terms of mental health in Afghanistan, with specific vulnerabilities for women due to restrictions on mobility and social support resulting from gender disparities.⁴⁵ According to a 2003 mental health assessment, 73-78% of women living under Taliban policies and 28% of women in non-Taliban controlled areas exhibited signs of major depression.⁴⁶

With this, mental health services were integrated into the BPHS in 2009.⁴⁷ A 2013 WHO report found that there was a perception that basic health units did not have mental health care services and depression could be treated with home remedies, where healthcare providers also reported insufficient training and medicines for delivering quality mental health services.⁴⁸ The same report cited research where 36% of mothers in refugee camps had indicators of postpartum depression, with 91% of those having suicidal thoughts.⁴⁹

In 2010, the MoPH and WHO reported that over 60% of Afghans (mostly women) suffer from stress and psychosocial problems or mental disorders.⁵⁰ Similarly, the former

Deputy Health Minister stated in 2010 that an estimated 2,300 women or girls are attempting suicide each year.⁵¹ A 2011 report found that half of the Afghan population over the age of 15 is affected by depression, anxiety, and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and that social restrictions and taboos are obstacles for women’s access to mental health services in Afghanistan.⁵² This report found that there is a 60-bed mental health hospital in Kabul that consumes most of the mental health budget for MoPH, which has a shortage of qualified staff and no clinical psychologist.⁵³ According to the same report, in 2011 there were only two internationally recognized psychologists in Afghanistan, neither of which were practicing, and there were no trained clinical psychologists or psychiatric nurses,⁵⁴ though another report cited 42 psychologists and psychiatrists in the entire country.⁵⁵ According to 2011 data, only 182 people out of every 100,000 were treated in mental health facilities, and only 29% were women.⁵⁶

These statistics show that despite the commitment to provide mental health services through the BPHS, Afghan women are still receiving little to no mental health care. Considering this, the grade of B- given by women in this survey is not likely a reflection of availability of services, but rather a reflection of continued low public awareness regarding mental health and the purpose and benefits of mental health counseling and support.⁵⁷

44 WHO definition
 45 “Over 60 Percent of Afghans Suffer Mental Health Problems,” Global Research, Centre for Research on Globalization, 11 October 2010, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/over-60-percent-of-afghans-suffer-mental-health-problems/21389>.
 46 LL Amowitz, M. Heisler, V. Iacopino, “A population-based assessment of mental health and attitudes toward women’s human rights in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Women’s Health* 12, no. 6 (2003): 577-87.
 47 Ghulam Dastagir Sayed, “Mental Health in Afghanistan: Burden, Challenges, and the Way Forward,” World Bank, Health, Nutrition and Population Discussion Paper, August 2011, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/HEALTHNUTRITIONAND-POPULATION/Resources/281627-1095698140167/MHinAfghanistan.pdf>.
 48 “Increasing access to health care services in Afghanistan with gender-sensitive health service delivery,” World Health Organization, 2013.
 49 Ibid.
 50 “Over 60 Percent of Afghans Suffer Mental Health Problems,” Global Research, Centre for Research on Globalization, 11 October 2010, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/over-60-percent-of-afghans-suffer-mental-health-problems/21389>.
 51 “Women & Mental Health in Afghanistan,” Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, n.g., http://www.cw4wafghan.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/pages/3.1_women-and-mental-health.pdf.
 52 Ghulam Dastagir Sayed, “Mental Health in Afghanistan,” 2011.
 53 Ibid..
 54 Ibid..
 55 “Women & Mental Health in Afghanistan,” Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, n.g.
 56 “Afghanistan: Mental Health Atlas 2011,” Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, World Health Organization, 2011, http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/profiles/afg_mh_profile.pdf.
 57 Rachel Woloszyn, “NGO Voices on Social Protection,” ACBAR Advocacy Series, April 2008, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/E566F49E60D6CD44C12576F600380EF4-Full_Report.pdf.

Education



1 $M=2.50$, $SD=.58$

Similar to healthcare, women experienced significant setbacks in terms of education under the Taliban. Under the Taliban, the majority of girls' schools closed and gross enrollment fell from 32% to a mere 6.4%.¹ Facing this dismal baseline, the GIRoA has made a number of commitments regarding not only girls' education, but also literacy and education of adult women who were left behind for nearly a decade.

Key to improving women's education is enrolling girls and women, and promoting retention of female students. In NAPWA, the government committed to increasing the enrollment and retention rates of girls and women at all levels of education, including vocational and informal education. Targets were set at a 50% increase in girls' enrollment share in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools; 70% net enrollment in primary schools for girls; 50% female net enrollment in universities; 50% increase in retention rate of females in education. NAPWA also commits the government to introducing incentives designed to reduce the dropout rate for girls. CEDAW also requires Afghanistan to eliminate discrimination and ensure access for men and women on an equal basis in terms of curricula, examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standards, and school premises and equipment.

By 2020 all children in Afghanistan, both boys and girls, should be able to complete a full course of primary education according to the AMDGs, requiring a long-term annual average increase in school attendance of between 5% and 6%. To increase girls' access to education, the NPP Education For All outlines plans to establish community-based education programs to reach 348,000 students, at least 60% of which should be girls, based on the MoEd Community-Based School policy. This program was meant to target areas where children, mainly girls, do not have access to education, or cultural barriers to girls' mobility make home and community-based schooling the only viable education option. The NPP Education for All furthermore planned for the relocation of female teachers to rural areas, with incentive salaries for female student teachers from districts with low female enrollment.

Increasing girls' enrollment in Afghanistan is directly related to increasing female teachers and women's participation in policymaking regarding education. In NAPWA, the GIRoA committed to attaining equal participation of women in all positions and levels of the education system, from teaching to policymaking, and adopting and implementing affirmative

action policies for recruiting female teachers and women's entrance examinations for tertiary education. In the ANDS, the GIRoA commits to adopting strategies to hire more women professionals and retaining female teachers who were dismissed during the Priority Reconstruction Reforms (PRR) process and re-employing them.

However, in Afghanistan, significant barriers remain for girls and women to even access the classroom. Considering this, in NAPWA the government commits to creating an enabling environment where girls and women have equal access to all levels of education, equal treatment in the classroom, and equal opportunities to complete the highest possible level and quality of education. They commit to reduce the constraints to girls' and women's access to education, increase access in both rural and urban areas, and implement public outreach campaigns to raise awareness on the importance of female education, including information campaigns based on Islamic principles supporting female education. Furthermore, NAPWA commits the Ministries of Education, Transport, and Interior to create a task force to explore how best to provide girls with adequate transportation to schools and to develop policies and programs accordingly.

In terms of higher education, ANDS outlined plans for universities to identify and enhance infrastructure to accommodate female students, as well as to develop and implement policies to increase the percentage of female students to at least 30%. The ANDS Education Sector Strategy furthermore commits the government to providing preparatory classes for girls to prepare them for college entrance examinations.

Regarding adult female education, the government has targeted a 50% reduction in female illiteracy. NAPWA outlines the government's commitments through the Constitution and CEDAW, and commits the government to increasing adult and functional literacy programs, particularly those aimed at reducing the education gap between men and women, including considering distance learning initiatives for adults. ANDS committed the government to training 17,000 teachers and 3,500 mullahs in the delivery of literacy courses, with at least 30% being female teachers.

Overall, women surveyed for this research gave the GIRoA a B- in terms of girls' and women's education, which included primary and secondary education, university education, literacy, and Islamic education. There was no significant difference in perceptions of the government's performance

1 Ashley Jackson, "High Stakes: Girls' Education in Afghanistan," Oxfam Joint Briefing Paper, 24 February 2011, <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/afghanistan-girls-education-022411.pdf>.

regarding education according to ethnicity, level of education, marital status, or employment. There was also no significant difference according to education level or age. However, there were significant differences in overall perceptions of the government's performance regarding women's education, where women in Kunduz had the most positive perceptions, and Faryab the worst.²

2 F(4, 118)=1.54, p<.01; Bamyan M=2.40, SD=.41, Herat M=2.46, SD=.64, Nangarhar M=2.55, SD=.49, Kunduz M=2.21, SD=.48, Faryab M=2.94, SD=.62

Primary and Secondary Education

Enrollment of girls up to secondary level education ¹	B-
Enrollment of boys up to secondary level education ²	B
Sensitivity of primary and secondary schools to the needs of girls ³	B
Government provision of equal education opportunities for boys and girls ⁴	B-

1 M=2.44, SD=1.28

2 M=2.03, SD=1.26

3 M=2.11, SD=1.17

4 M=2.40, SD=2.11

There has been considerable progress from 2001 in girls' enrollment. As of 2014, some 8 to 10 million Afghans are enrolled in school, of which a third are girls.³ According to 2010 data from MoEd, 71% of eligible children were enrolled in primary school, and 58% of the children registered were completing the course. However, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education still has considerable room for improvement. According to data from the Afghanistan National Education Profile in 2014 from the Education Policy and Data Center, 36% of boys aged 7-12 are out of school, compared to 53% of girls the same age.⁴ At the secondary level, 47% of boys aged 13-18 are out of school, and 72% of girls.⁵ The 2011-2012 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) from CSO found that education opportunities for girls and women are still few, despite the narrowing gender gap in education and literacy.⁶ Net primary attendance ratios for girls and boys were 48% and 64% respectively, compared to 29% and 43% in 2005,⁷ showing that while primary attendance has increased for both boys and girls, the gender gap has actually increased slightly from 14% in 2005 to 16% in 2011-12. Furthermore, the NRVA showed a large gap between Kuchi girls and other girls in Afghanistan, where Kuchi girls' primary attendance ratio was only 13%. Net secondary attendance rates for girls and boys were 23% and 42% respectively.⁸ A UNICEF official

highlighted the issue of retention for gender equality in education:

If you look at the basic data that has been collected and analyzed in the education sector, the number of children who were enrolled in the education sector was less than 1 million, and of that number almost no girls were enrolled in the public schooling system. Now, when you look at the education statistic from 2013, 9.7 million children go to (grade 1-12) school and of that 33% are girls [...] Starting from 0% of girls enrolled to 33% girls enrolled is an improvement. But if you look a little deeper at grade 1 who are enrolled in general education, then when the children progress to the higher grade the retention is lesser and lesser. There is a low retention rate in education system. This is one of the big challenges in education.⁹

Drawing on a government presentation on the NPP Education for All, the official further explained:

When you look at grade 12, from the 1.1 million in grade 1 you only have 274,883 children left. This is a small amount. Of that amount, girls were only 99,904. The gap is so big. The more the children go up to the higher grades, the higher the gap between boys and girls.¹⁰

3 "Universal Primary Education by 2020: In Peril for Afghan Girls?" United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 58 Parallel Session, 12 March 2014, <http://www.ifuw.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/UN-Website-Version-Final.pdf>.

4 "Afghanistan National Education Profile: 2014 Update," Education Policy and Data Center, 2014, http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC%20NEP_Afghanistan_0.pdf.

5 Ibid.

6 "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12: Education," Central Statistics Organization, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2012, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Chapter8%20EDUCATION.pdf>.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Interview with UNICEF Official, 17 December 2014.

10 Ibid.

demonstrating that participants felt there is still room for improvement in the government's efforts at gender parity in education.

As reflected in the still-wide gender gap in enrollment and attendance rates, which greatly increase with the level of education, there are still a number of key obstacles for girls' enrollment. These include poverty, insecurity and instability, forced marriage, lack of family support, girls' occupation in domestic labor and child care, lack of female teachers, long distances to attend school, quality of education (including unqualified teachers, limited curriculum, and low teacher salaries), lack of girls-only schools, harassment, and lack of community support.¹¹ There are continued shortages of classrooms, books, desks, and basic learning materials.¹² The 2011-12 NRVA found that 34% reported girls are unable to attend primary school due to cultural reasons, with others reporting barriers including geographic distance (29%), insecurity (5%), and poverty (4%).¹³ 52% cited

11 "Universal Primary Education by 2020," United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 58 Parallel Session, 2014.
12 Sean Carberry, "Are Afghanistan's Schools Doing As Well As Touted?" National Public Radio, 24 October 2013, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2013/10/24/240482395/are-afghanistans-schools-doing-as-well-as-touted>.
13 Lida Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Where do Afghan Women Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?" PRIO, Background Brief for the Symposium Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan, November 2014, http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/prio/Where%20Do%20Afghan%20Women%20Stand%20on%20Education%20and%20Economic%20Empowerment,%20PRIO%20Paper.pdf.

cultural reasons for girls' inability to attend at the secondary level, and 53% for the tertiary level.¹⁴ The UNICEF official interviewed also felt that the gender gap in education is due to the shortage of female teachers and parents not wanting to send their daughters to school with male teachers, as well as long distances to school and cultural restrictions on girls walking long distances.¹⁵ A MoEd official explained that security is one of the biggest issues preventing girls from education, as well as cultural barriers including forced and child marriage.¹⁶

Participants in this research gave the GIROA a B in terms of sensitivity of primary and secondary schools to the needs of girls, likely reflecting these continued challenges in terms of security, transportation, location of schools, and public infrastructure. For example, in 2011-12 only 48% of households were within two kilometers distance of a facility for girls' primary education.¹⁷ In rural areas, this was only 36%.¹⁸ However, the grade of B can be considered a positive reflection of the government's efforts at improving accessibility of education for girls and increased enrollment in primary and secondary education.

14 Ibid.
15 Interview with UNICEF Official, 17 December 2014.
16 Interview with MoPH official, December 2014.
17 "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12: Education," Central Statistics Organization, 2012.
18 Ibid.

Availability of female teachers ¹	C+
Availability of female teachers compared to five years ago ²	B
Government efforts to recruit qualified female teachers ³	C

1 M=2.70, SD=1.26
2 M=2.19, SD=1.03
3 M=2.89, SD=1.13

The government was not assessed as positively regarding their efforts to increase the number of female teachers, a key prerequisite for increasing girls' access to education. While participants gave the GIROA a B in terms of improvement in availability of female teachers compared to five years ago, they still gave a C+ for the availability of female teachers, and a C regarding government efforts to recruit qualified female teachers. Nationally, around 30% of teachers are female, though the majority of female teachers are in Kabul (74% of all teachers), Balkh (53%) and Herat (47%).¹⁹ There are some provinces where the share of female teachers is under 2%, which corresponds to provinces with lower percentages of girls in secondary and higher education.²⁰ This shows little improvement, where in 2008-9 45,678 out of 164,783

teachers were female, constituting 28% of teachers.²¹ Notably, 54% of students in teacher training programs are female, though only 20% of teachers in teacher training institutions are female.²² To some extent, this likely reflects a social norm that regards teaching as an appropriate profession for women. Evidencing this, in 2014, while only 32% of men and 49% of women agreed or strongly agreed that it is acceptable for women to work at NGOs, and 57% of men and 75% of women that it is acceptable for women to work in government offices, 76% of men and 86% of women felt the same about women working in schools. This may in part explain shifting normative understanding of women's role in education, where even with too few female teachers

19 Lida Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Where do Afghan Women Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?" PRIO, Background Brief for the Symposium Women's Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan, November 2014, http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/prio/Where%20Do%20Afghan%20Women%20Stand%20on%20Education%20and%20Economic%20Empowerment,%20PRIO%20Paper.pdf.
20 Ibid.

21 "Statistical Yearbook 2008-9: Government Employees," Central Statistics Organization, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2009, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Full%20Chapter.pdf>.
22 "Report on Implementation of Beijing Declaration Platform for Action 2010-14," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Human Rights and Women International Affairs Department, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, May 2014, http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/afghanistan_review_beijing20.ashx.

to accommodate students, female students are still able to pursue teacher training.

Despite the government’s commitment to increasing women’s participation in all aspects of education, from teaching to policymaking, the 2014 CSO Statistical Survey showed that only 76,401 of the MoEd’s 256,163 government employees are female, constituting only 30%. What’s more, many teachers still have only basic education with minimal training or knowledge on pedagogy.²³ Other research has found that the shortage of teachers affects quality of education, as newly recruited teachers often have little experience or knowledge on teaching, recruitment processes are not always merit-based, and low wages of around 5,000 AFN per month (100 USD) with teachers covering their own transportation and lunch expenses continue to deter women from pursuing careers as teachers.²⁴ The problem of teacher salaries could be especially cumbersome if donors do not continue their support; it is estimated that the current number of teachers in Afghanistan would consume 90 to 95 percent of the national revenue.²⁵ The UNICEF official further reiterated the issue of unqualified teachers:

The percentage of female teachers is 33%, but this figure includes both qualified and unqualified teachers. There’s a big issue with unqualified teachers affecting the quality of education. The government has improved both the number of teachers and quality of teachers. In terms of number of

qualified teachers that have been trained in the training colleges, it should be enough for the next 5 to 6 years if they continue to have 15,000 to 30,000 graduates per year. But the issue is the recruitment and deployment of female teachers [...] Here they produce like a factory, but not all production will be deployed or recruited to schools. That’s why a lot of teachers with a degree end up getting a job with the police or as an administrator.²⁶

However, there have been efforts to incentivize female teachers working in insecure districts or areas with a low level of female teachers, such as that outlined in the NPP, though this is also implemented with the support of development partners. The UNICEF official interviewed for this research explained:

Development partners try to use the fund from Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support the Increased Number of Female Teachers component, recruiting and deploying female teachers to the schools in the districts where they don’t have female teachers. About 200-250 districts out of total 400 districts have no or very few female teachers. There’s a package of incentives for these programs to support female teachers working in these districts. This type of strategy is used as a short-term strategy. Another strategy that they are trying to implement is to have female scholarships to support grade 12 graduates to go to teacher training colleges in that district [...] This will be a long-term strategy, which is reflected in the national strategic plan. A lot of things will be tested. When they have completed the short-term strategy, they need to see how they can multiply or scale up the number of female teachers through the medium and long-terms strategies.²⁷

²³ Lida Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Where do Afghan Women Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?” 2014.
²⁴ Ahmad Shaheer Anil, Melike Karlidag, and Saeed Parto, “Implementation of the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan: An Assessment,” Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization, March 2014, <http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/APPRO%20Implementation%20of%20the%20NAPWA%20Assessment%20Mar2014.pdf>.
²⁵ Interview with UNICEF Official, 17 December 2014.

²⁶ Ibid.
²⁷ Ibid.

Tertiary Education

Provision of courses for girls to prepare for university entrance exams ¹	C-
Sensitivity of university facilities to the needs of women ²	C+

¹ M=3.32, SD=1.13
² M=2.79, SD=1.37

Women surveyed for this research ranked the government lower in terms of gender sensitivity of tertiary education. Tertiary education includes teacher college (grades 13-14), technical college (grades 13-14), undergraduate education (grades 13-16), and postgraduate education. The net tertiary attendance ratio for girls and boys in the 2011-2012 NRVA were 3% and 8% respectively.²⁸ Only 0.5% of girls from rural areas are able to attend tertiary education, compared to 4.4% of boys.²⁹

There has been considerable progress from 2002, when there were no females in 19 governmental higher education institutions.³⁰ However, while female students comprised 21% of those enrolled in public higher education universities

en Stand on Education and Economic Empowerment?” 2014.
³⁰ “Report on Implementation of Beijing Declaration Platform for Action 2010-14,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs Human Rights and Women International Affairs Department, 2014.

and institutes in 2008,³¹ they only comprised 19% in 2012³² and 19% in 2014,³³ showing no improvement or progress to achieving the government's goal of 30% female enrollment in university. In 2013-14, female students only constituted 18% of new students in government universities. When accounting for both government and private higher education, levels have been generally consistent according to CSO figures from 18% female enrollment in 2011-12 to 19% in 2013-14, with 38,489 female students enrolled in public or private higher education.³⁴

One area in which the government has committed to facilitating increased numbers of women in tertiary education is the provision of courses for girls to prepare for university entry exams (Kankor). Despite this commitment, previous EPD research has found that women feel they have little to no access to Kankor Examination preparatory courses throughout Afghanistan, or where the classes are available they are prohibitively expensive or not segregated by sex, presenting another barrier.³⁵ Furthermore, those surveyed in this research gave the government a C- in terms of provision of such courses for women. Though more and more women have been taking the examination, from 15% in 2007 to 26% in 2008, to 27% in 2010, the pass rate for boys in 2010 was 24% versus 14% for girls.³⁶ Similarly, the government's National Higher Education Strategic Plan from 2014 notes that over the past three years girls have had lower scores on the Kankor than boys, which is attributed to the larger number of male students taking pre-Kankor courses and the lack of access to such courses for women.³⁷

Another key area of focus in terms of government commitments has been improving the sensitivity of universities to the needs of women, including hiring more

female teachers, affirmative action policies, and making actual facilities more women-friendly such as constructing female dormitories. Though there has been some progress, significant challenges in this area remain, reflected by the C+ assessment given by PWN members regarding the gender-sensitivity of higher education. Though there has been much progress from no female teachers in higher education in 2001, there is still a critical lack of female teachers in government higher education institutions. Only 642 of the 4,496 teachers in higher education are female, constituting only 14%, a slight decline from the 15% in 2011-12.

One positive development is that the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has introduced a degree of affirmative action policies for girls' entry examinations, where Kankor examination results from 2012-13 showed that female students who scored over 230 out of 360 were admitted to faculties, while the criterion was a score of 250 for male students. Similarly, the minimum score for females admitted to private higher education institutions free of charge was lower than that for males, and female students who scored 167 were admitted to 2-year degrees at public and private higher institutes with reduced fees.³⁸

One critical barrier for females seeking higher education is a lack of accommodation and secure housing, which has been recognized as a key challenge by the MoHE in several policy documents. Despite commitments to build additional housing and making housing more gender sensitive, in 2013-14, only 3,965 female students were living in dormitories, compared to 59,387 male students, constituting only 7% of those utilizing dormitory accommodation for public higher education. This was only a slight increase from the 6% female share of dormitory accommodation in 2011-12.³⁹ The number of female students utilizing dormitory accommodation was only 17% of total female students in public universities, compared to 60% of male students.⁴⁰ This represents only a modest increase from the 13% of female students accommodated in university dormitories in 2011,⁴¹ indicating that there remains much progress to be made in terms of making university accommodation more gender-responsive.

31 "National Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2010-2014," Ministry of Higher Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, November 2009, http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_HESP_2010-2014.pdf.

32 "Higher Education in Afghanistan: An Emerging Mountainscape," The World Bank, August 2013, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/05/000333037_20130905112816/Rendered/PDF/809150WP0Afgha0Box0379822B00PUBLIC0.pdf.

33 "Statistical Yearbook 2013-14: Education," GfRA Central Statistics Organization, 2014, [http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Education%20part%20one\(1\).pdf](http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Education%20part%20one(1).pdf).

34 Ibid.

35 "Women's Access to Higher Education in Afghanistan: Understanding the Current Situation," EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, July 2011, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Final-Womens-Access-to-Higher-Education-in-Afghanistan-English.pdf>.

Marie S. Huber, Maurits Rade, and Shamsia Noori, "Independent Review of Afghanistan 1394 Draft National Budget: A Snapshot of Resources, Allocations, and Public Finance Management Performance," November 2014, http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/1394-Budget-Snapshot_English.pdf.

36 Janne Lexow, "Afghanistan Education Sector Gender Equality – Situational Analysis," Nordic Consulting Group, July 2012, http://ncg.no/novus/upload/file/Afghanistan%20Education%20Sector_%20Gender%20Equality%20Situational%20Analysis%20Final%20Report.pdf.

37 "National Higher Education Strategic Plan: 2015-2015," Ministry of Higher Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Draft version, 4 December 2014.

38 "Report on Implementation of Beijing Declaration Platform for Action 2010-14," Ministry of Foreign Affairs Human Rights and Women International Affairs Department, 2014.

39 "Statistical Yearbook 2013-14: Education," GfRA Central Statistics Organization, 2014.

40 Ibid.

41 "Gender Challenges in Higher Education: the Critical Need for Residence Halls for Female Students," Ministry of Higher Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 10 January 2011.

Improvement in women's literacy ¹	B
Sensitivity of literacy courses to the needs of women ²	B

1 $M=2.38$, $SD=91$

2 $M=2.26$, $SD=1.19$

Illiteracy is among the biggest issues facing women in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan as a whole. Literacy is critical for a number of reasons. A 1% increase in women's literacy is three times more likely to reduce deaths among children than a 1% increase in the number of doctors. The families of women with some education tend to have better housing, clothing, income, water, and sanitation.⁴² In developing countries, a child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to live past the age of five.⁴³ With this, the government has acknowledged the effects of female illiteracy on the health, well-being, productivity, and prosperity of Afghan society as a whole,⁴⁴ and has made reducing female illiteracy a commitment in a number of national and international forums.

Though exact figures are difficult to obtain, in the period from 2001 to 2003 it is estimated that between 5%⁴⁵ and 14% of women over the age of 15 in Afghanistan were literate.⁴⁶ The most recent NRVA from 2011-12 found that the literacy rate of adult women is still low, at 17%, compared to 45% for men. 32% of females aged 15-24 are literate, compared to 62% of male youth.⁴⁷ Women in this research gave the government a B in terms of efforts to improve women's literacy, likely reflecting the steady improvement in literacy in the past decade, from 20% female youth literacy in the 2005 NRVA to the most recent rate of 32%, but still reflecting a need for further improvement in this area. Notably, though youth female literacy has improved, the gap between male and female youth has actually widened, from 20% in the 2005 NRVA to 30% in the 2011-12 study.⁴⁸

42 "Helpdesk Report: Women's Literacy and the Links Between Maternal Health, Reproductive Health and Daughter Education," Human Development Resource Centre, 8 July 2010, <http://www.heart-resources.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Womens-Literacy-July-2010.pdf>.

43 Dr. Anthony Cree, Andrew Kay, and June Steward, "The Economic and Social Cost of Illiteracy: A Snapshot of Illiteracy in a Global Context," April 2012, http://www.worldliteracyfoundation.org/The_Economic_&_Social_Cost_of_Illiteracy.pdf.

44 "Afghanistan National Literacy Action Plan: 1391-1394," Literacy Department, Ministry of Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2012, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/Afghanistan.pdf>.

45 Mohammad Ali Sitigh and Mohammad Shafi Haqmal, "Literacy and Adult Education in Afghanistan: Achievements and Challenges," Ministry of Education, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, n.g., http://www.accu.or.jp/esd/forum_esd_2010/program/program12_01/pdf/text5.pdf.

46 "Moving Beyond 2 Decades of War: Progress of Provinces, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2003 Afghanistan," Central Statistics Office and UNICEF, 2003, <http://www.childinfo.org/files/AfghanistanMICS2003.pdf>.

47 "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12," Central Statistics Organization, 2012.

48 Ibid.

There also remain staggering inequalities between women. In 2010, while one in five women aged 15-24 in urban areas was literate, only one in every 15 was literate in rural areas, and a staggering one in 50 in the poorest areas.⁴⁹ Similar inequalities were apparent in youth literacy, where 60% of urban female youth were literate compared to 23% in rural areas and less than 2% of Kuchi female youth.⁵⁰ Among the challenges still facing women in rural areas are inaccessibility of villages, insecurity, low levels of family literacy, heterogeneity of ethnicity and language, conservatism, distrust towards formal schooling, weather and climate, and a deficiency of female teachers.⁵¹

Recognizing these inequalities, the GIROA has rhetorically prioritized increasing female literacy, partly through the provision of literacy courses. However, women in this survey also gave the government a B regarding the sensitivity of literacy courses to the needs of women. According to CSO, in 2013-14 there were 23,952 literacy courses, of which 9,951 were for women, and a total of 567,913 literacy students, of which 256,850 were women. This shows that despite the fact that the literacy rate of men is much higher than women, the government is actually providing more literacy courses for men, and services to a higher number of male than female students. Women's share of literacy course students has decreased from 51% in 2011-12 to 45% in 2013-14.⁵² Furthermore, only 4,780 out of 12,149 literacy teachers are women.⁵³ Previous EPD research conducting Community Score Card assessments in four provinces found that though classes are available, many women felt that the timing, location, and structure of the courses make them inaccessible for many women, and several noted that literacy courses are more commonly provided by NGOs or international organizations than the government.⁵⁴ These figures reveal staggering shortfalls in the government's commitments to ensure that women and Kuchis are targeted specifically for literacy training, and a long way to go to the NAPWA goal of reducing female illiteracy by 50% by 2018 in spite of the moderately positive grade of B given by the women surveyed in this research.

49 "Universal Primary Education by 2020," United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 58 Parallel Session, 12 March 2014.

50 "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12," Central Statistics Organization, 2012.

51 Ibid.

52 "Statistical Yearbook 2013-14: Education," GIROA Central Statistics Organization, 2014.

53 Ibid.

54 Marie S. Huber, Maurits Rade, and Shamsia Noori, "Independent Review of Afghanistan 1394 Draft National Budget," 2014.

Islamic Education

Availability of Islamic education for women and girls ¹	B-
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1 *M*=2.41, *SD*=1.07

Though gender inequality in general education is often discussed, the gender gap in opportunities for Islamic education is often overlooked, despite repeated government commitments to increase access for girls. As reported by the NRVA, 70,000 women and 80,000 men aged 25 and older have completed Islamic Education.⁵⁵ CSO provides no gender breakdown of statistics on religious education, and other research also noted the difficulty of finding figures demonstrating gendered trends in Islamic education.⁵⁶ However, women surveyed for this research scored the government at a B in terms of providing Islamic education opportunities for women and girls, and other research noted that discussions with religious scholars indicate that there

has been notable expansion in opportunities for female students in private institutions providing Islamic education in recent years.⁵⁷ However, there is some indication that government oversight regarding the quality and content of Islamic education is lacking, according to a BBC report in 2014 on a madrasa with over 6,000 female students in Kunduz province receiving religious education that undermines women’s rights. The MoEd further confirmed that there are around 1,300 unregistered religious schools operating in Afghanistan, compared to 1,100 state-run madrasas,⁵⁸ highlighting an area that requires further government attention regarding women’s religious education.

55 Lisa Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Women’s Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan,” 2014.
56 Lisa Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Women’s Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan,” 2014.

57 Lisa Nadery Hedayat and Kristian Berg Harpviken, “Women’s Rights and Empowerment in Afghanistan,” 2014.
58 Malyar Sadeq Azad, “The Afghan madrasa accused of radicalizing women,” BBC Afghan, 16 March 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26418558>.

Access to Justice



Overall Performance¹

C+

¹ $M=2.76$, $SD=.57$

The GIRoA has made commitments in its Constitution, laws, and in international conventions to enable women and girls to exercise their rights on equal terms with men and boys. NAPWA commits the government to strengthening women's participation in law making and the administration of justice on equal terms with men, as well as institutionalizing gender analysis, gender programming, and gender indicators in the process of legislation and the administration of justice. It also includes commitments to affirmative action policies to ensure women's participation in law making, administration of justice, and law enforcement bodies.

In support of this, NAPWA includes provisions for enhancing the accessibility of information for women to better understand, assert, and defend their rights. This, as well as ANDS, also pledges reviewing laws to conform with the Constitutional commitments to gender equality as well as amending or abolishing laws that are discriminatory against women, particularly in terms of citizenship, marriage, divorce, property and inheritance, as well as criminalizing violence against women and harmful traditional practices. To support this, NAPWA also stipulates that redress mechanisms for women who have suffered violence would be included on the reform agenda. The ANDS commits to amending procedural codes to address the needs of witnesses, especially women.

NAPWA acknowledges women's needs for greater access to legal services, and commits to establishing legal aid clinics, supporting organizations providing legal counseling to women, paralegal training to women, establishing a national network of defense attorneys, referral services in MoWA's Legal Department and the MoI, and establishing and strengthening Family Courts. It furthermore addresses the need for training of law enforcement agencies to respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination, with special emphasis on laws regarding gender-based violence, child and forced marriage, as well as referral mechanisms for government institutions such as hospitals and schools to refer VAW and forced marriage cases to law enforcement.

The government targeted a reduction in gender disparity in access to justice by 50% by the end of 2015, and a complete elimination of gender disparity in this area by 2020 in the ANDS. ANDS also recognizes that this requires government efforts to enhance access to the formal legal system for women. The government planned to have functioning Family Response Units staffed by all-female police officers

in every province, and to link them with Special ERAW Units of the Attorney General's Office (AGO).

CEDAW, to which Afghanistan is a signatory, requires Afghanistan to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women, establishing legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men, and ensuring the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination through competent national tribunals and other public institutions.

Despite these ambitious commitments, women in this research gave the government a C+ in their overall performance increasing women's access to justice. Additionally, there were differences according to ethnicity, where Uzbek respondents felt the government's participation was most positive and Tajiks the most negative.¹ There was no significant difference in perceptions of access to justice by level of education, marital status, age, income level, or employment status. There were significant differences according to province, where PWN members in Faryab perceived government performance regarding access to justice most positively, while in Herat perceptions were the least positive.²

¹ $F(5, 102)=3.11$, $p<.05$, Pashtun $M=2.71$, $SD=.55$, Tajik $M=2.91$, $SD=.51$, Hazara $M=2.79$, $SD=.58$, Uzbek $M=2.34$, $SD=.38$

² $F(4, 110)=4.59$, $p<.01$, Bamyan $M=2.77$, $SD=.57$, Herat $M=3.05$, $SD=.53$, Nangarhar $M=2.66$, $SD=.55$, Kunduz $M=2.65$, $SD=.61$, Faryab $M=2.47$, $SD=.38$

Legal Protections

Legal protections for women and girls ¹	B-
Protection of the rights of women by government justice institutions ²	C+
Equality of men and women before the law ³	C+

1 M=2.43, SD=1.13

2 M=2.76, SD=1.05

3 M=2.79, SD=1.17

On paper, there have been a number of advances since 2001 in terms of legal protections for women. The Constitution of Afghanistan declares that men and women are equal, and the ERAW Law was a significant achievement in terms of providing legal protection of women from violence. However, there have also been efforts to pass legislation that would push women's rights back. As previously mentioned, while the ERAW Law was passed by Presidential decree, the Parliament has yet to pass the bill. The Shia Personal Status Law, signed in 2009, still legally limits Shia women's mobility, allows marriage under the age of 16, and allows a husband to deny maintenance to a wife who is "disobedient" or denies him conjugal rights.³ A bill put forward by parliament in 2014 (but not signed by the President) proposed a change to a section of the criminal code Prohibition of Questioning an Individual as a Witness that would protect men who abuse their wives, children and sisters by banning the relatives of an accused person from testifying against them. However, women in this research gave the GIRA a B- in terms of legally protecting women and girls, reflecting these legislative advances and setbacks for women.

Additionally, the government was given a C+ regarding the protection of the rights of women by government justice institutions, indicating that while legal provisions do exist, they have not translated into actual rights and protections for Afghan women in their daily lives. A study on women's access to justice in 2014 documented case studies demonstrating that the formal justice sector continues to fail women through violating their rights in divorce, domestic abuse, child custody, rape and sexual assault, forced marriage, inheritance, and running away.⁴ In section 8, we will see that despite the passing of the landmark ERAW Law, awareness and implementation of its provisions remain low among formal justice actors.

Women surveyed gave the GIRA a C+ in terms of the equality of men and women before the law. Despite the

provision in Article 22 of the Constitution, "The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law," men and women in Afghanistan are often not treated as equal before the law, especially in matters regarding family law and divorce. The UN observations on the combined initial and second periodic reports of Afghanistan on the implementation of CEDAW noted concern about the existence of multiple legal systems regarding marriage and family relations and their "discriminatory impact on women." It also noted concern regarding the Shia Personal Status Law, and the unequal and limited rights for women to divorce and guardianship of children under the Civil Code of 1977. Under the Civil Code of 1977, whereas men are entitled to extra-judicial divorce with no preconditions, women are only entitled to judicial divorce under certain conditions, and mothers are entitled to guardianship of children, but only up to a certain age after which fathers are entitled to full guardianship of their children.⁵ It furthermore noted the deprivation of women's inheritance rights, low registration of marriages and divorce, and the persistence of forced marriage, child marriage, and polygamy, and how these continue to contribute to gender inequality that disadvantages women.⁶ The issues noted below regarding women's access to formal justice systems furthermore contributes to inequality by preventing them from testifying and seeking support from the formal justice sector for asserting, protecting, and promoting their legal rights.

3 "English Translation- Shiite Personal Status Law," USAID, April 2009, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4a24ed5b2.html>.

4 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "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.

5 "Civil Law of the Republic of Afghanistan, Official Gazette No. 353," Published 5 January 1977, Translated by Afghanistan Legal Education Project, 2014, <http://alep.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Civil-Law-of-the-Republic-of-Afghanistan.pdf>.

6 "Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: Concluding observations on the combined initial and second periodic reports of Afghanistan," United Nations CEDAW Committee, 23 July 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/publisher/CEDAW/CONCOBSERVATIONS/AFG,51ff5ac94,0.html>.

Accessibility of Formal Justice Institutions

Accessibility of government justice institutions for women ¹	C
Safety of accessing government justice institutions for women ²	C+
Availability of legal support for women ³	C-

1 M=2.90, SD=1.10

2 M=2.74, SD=1.16

3 M=3.21, SD=.843

The key state justice and judicial institutions in Afghanistan include the Supreme Court (stara mahkama), the AGO (loy saranwali), the police (sarandoi), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (wezarate-e-adelia), and the prison service. While progress in rebuilding the Afghan state justice system during the past ten years has been slow and patchy, it has nevertheless been noticeable; several hundred judges, prosecutors, prison wardens, and thousands of police personnel have been trained; a number of justice institutions have been refurbished, with several new ones built from scratch. Progress has also been made in building administrative capacity within the existing justice institutions. Progress in rebuilding Afghanistan's state justice system has included the establishment of the Independent Bar Association of Afghanistan, legal aid departments in Kabul and in three provinces, the Independent National Legal Training Centre in Kabul, and a committee for the simplification of judicial bureaucracy. Moreover, there has been an agreement between the AGO and MoJ on the development and implementation of measures to improve prosecution processes, and the introduction of common telephone numbers for use by the public to register complaints.⁷ However, despite this progress, considerable issues remain regarding the accessibility of formal justice institutions for all Afghans, and particularly for women. Women surveyed for this report graded the GIRoA at a C regarding the accessibility of government justice institutions for women.

22% of women reported having had a dispute or formal case they needed help resolving in the past two years, and of those, roughly one out of three (34%) had taken their case to the Huquq Department (under the MoJ) and 44% to the State Court. According to data from the 2014 Survey of the Afghan people, 56% of those who had taken a case to the Huquq Department in the past two years were women, and women constituted 52% of those reporting they had taken a case to the State Court. However, of women who had taken cases to the Huquq department, disputes were primarily over land or property, followed by family

problems (24%). Cases taken to the State Court by women were also primarily over land or property (57%), followed by family problems (28%), with few cases involving divorce (4%).⁸ These figures reflect the still low level of accessibility of formal justice institutions for women. Limited mobility and long distances to access state services in urban or semi-urban areas, low levels of literacy, and bureaucratic and administrative barriers are among the many factors that limit women's access to justice.⁹

Corruption is endemic in Afghanistan's formal justice sector. A survey revealed that in 2009 Afghans paid around \$2.5 billion U.S. dollars in bribes—a figure equivalent to twenty-three percent of the Afghanistan's gross domestic product.¹⁰ According to the 2014 National Corruption Survey, courts are considered the most corrupt institution (34%), followed by MoJ at 26%. MoJ was considered the fourth most corrupt (17%).¹¹ AGO offices are generally perceived as more corrupt than courts at any level. The district AGO office is viewed as the most corrupt judicial organ (50%), followed by the provincial AGO office (41%) and the provincial court (29%).¹² The corruption of the judiciary has significant consequences in terms of access to justice for women. Perceptions of corruption discourage women from seeking out the formal justice system, where many cases brought by women are unsettled, withdrawn, or simply closed due to corruption or use of influence on the justice system.¹³ With women's limited access to financial resources, accessing formal justice systems can be impossible when judges, prosecutors, and police expect bribes or compensation for their services.¹⁴

8 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

9 Tim Luccaro, Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan", USIP, 2014,.

10 "CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN: BRIBERY AS REPORTED BY THE VICTIMS," UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME, 2010, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghanistan-corruption-survey2010-Eng.pdf>.

11 Mohammad Razaq Isaqzadeh, "Corruption Survey 2014," Integrity Watch Afghanistan, 2014, http://www.iwaweb.org/ncs/_2014/docs/national_corruption_survey_2014_english.pdf.

12 Ibid.

13 Sima Simar, "Corruption is a brutal enemy of Afghan women," Thomson Reuters Foundation, 3 May 2013, <http://www.trust.org/item/20130502130716-v16ht/>.

14 Ibid.

7 Ali Wardak, "State and non-state justice system in Afghanistan: the need for synergy," 2009, [https://www.law.upenn.edu/journals/jil/articles/volume32/issue5/Wardak32U.Pa.J.Int'l.L.1305\(2011\).pdf](https://www.law.upenn.edu/journals/jil/articles/volume32/issue5/Wardak32U.Pa.J.Int'l.L.1305(2011).pdf)

At the point of approaching formal justice bodies, women are scared of being sexually harassed. Judges tend to have conservative views on women and take discriminatory decisions; there is a general incompetency and lack of enforcement, as well as a lack of female officials.¹⁵ These factors all contribute to considerable safety risks for women in accessing the formal justice system, reflected by the grade of C+ given for the safety of accessing justice institutions for women. When they turn to formal actors such as the police, judicial institutions, and government officials, women still run the risk of criminal sanctions for committing “moral crimes.”¹⁶ In 2012, Human Rights Watch released a report stating that over 400 women and girls in Afghanistan were imprisoned for “moral crimes,” a figure which constituted about half of all non-juvenile women in Afghanistan’s prisons, and almost all girls in juvenile detention facilities. Many of these women had been imprisoned for running away, often fleeing abuse in the context of domestic violence or forced marriage. The ANP are often a first point of contact for women in accessing government institutions and seeking access to the justice sector. However, often police side with fathers or husbands, subscribing to the social norm that women who leave home without permission are “bad” and guilty of immorality.¹⁷ Statements are collected from women under intimidation and often without legal counsel, which can lead to their conviction and imprisonment.¹⁸ Furthermore, as discussed regarding women’s security, ANP personnel have been accused of actually being the perpetrators of violence against women at disturbingly considerable rates.

Aside from the risks stemming from the attitudes and behaviors of formal justice and security actors, women face considerable social risks in attempting to access state mechanisms. Consequences of going outside the home for support could include social stigma, disapproval, physical retaliation, and loss of economic sustenance, and these risks intensify when a woman goes outside of community structures such as shuras, elders, and religious leaders to access the formal justice system.¹⁹ Research has found that many women will only seek out state and external mechanisms after they have tried and failed to resolve their dispute within the home or the community, and only when faced with a “serious” issue, such as life-threatening physical violence.²⁰ In another research, reasons for not going to police or the courts included that her family would not allow her, people would tease her, people would think she is a “bad” woman, or her husband or even her own

family would not let her return home.²¹ Normative barriers associated with the “shame” of seeking out the formal justice system continue to pose risks to women’s safety if they seek state support.

Further compounding this issue is the lack of access to legal support for women. With high levels of illiteracy and low awareness of rights and legal frameworks, all Afghans, and particularly women, need the support of qualified professionals in advocating for and protecting their legal rights. However, 65% of those who reported having the help of professional legal services in 2013 were men.²² Fees involved with legal representation and a lack of options can prevent women from accessing legal support, and legal support for women is often undertaken by NGOs in lieu of state mechanisms.²³ Only 1,738 lawyers are registered with the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), which presents access issues for all Afghans, but of these only 335 are women; of those, nearly half are in Kabul and Herat, presenting an even more considerable barrier for women.²⁴ Legal aid workers and women’s rights activists have also raised the issue that defense counsels sometimes deprive women of their legal protections when they do not personally agree with her decisions or actions, or they don’t have adequate awareness of her individual rights.²⁵ Notably, of the 2,159 complainants who were able to access the AIHRC to register a case of VAW in 1392, only 1,070 cases received legal assistance.²⁶ The women surveyed for this research felt the government has performed particularly poorly in this area, grading them at a C- regarding the availability of legal support for women.

15 Tim Luccaro, Erica Gaston, “Women’s Access to Justice in Afghanistan,” USIP, 2014.

16 “‘I Had to Run Away’: The Imprisonment of Women and Girls for ‘Moral Crimes’ in Afghanistan,” Human Rights Watch, 2012, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0312webwcover_0.pdf.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, “Women’s Access to Justice in Afghanistan,” USIP, 2014.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 “Visualizing Afghanistan,” The Asia Foundation.

23 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, “Women’s Access to Justice in Afghanistan,” USIP, 2014.

24 “Women’s Professional Participation in Afghanistan’s Justice Sector: Challenges and Opportunities,” IDLO, 2014, http://www.idlo.int/sites/default/files/IDLO_Afghan%20Legal%20Professionals%20full%20report.pdf.

25 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, “Women’s Access to Justice in Afghanistan,” USIP, 2014.

26 “Violence Against Women in Afghanistan 1392,” Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 1392, <http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/PDF/Violence%20against%20women%20Eng.pdf>.

Formal Justice Institutions

Protection of women by judges, prosecutors, and government justice institutions ¹	C+
Sensitivity of government justice institutions to the needs and interests of women ²	B

1 M=2.78, SD=1.10

2 M=2.36, SD=1.24

Overlapping with issues surrounding the implementation of laws regarding women's rights is the protection of women by judges, prosecutors, and government justice institutions. Women in this research gave the GIRoA a similarly low grade in this regard, averaging a C+. Tellingly, in terms of going to formal institutions for support, many women still prefer to go to the AIHRC or Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA) rather than to justice institutions.²⁷ In the 2014 Survey of the Afghan People, only 22% of women reported that there is an organization, institution, or authority where women can go to have their problems resolved. By far the most common answer of which institution this would be was the DoWA. Only 1% of women from across all of Afghanistan reported the court and only 0.2% the AGO.²⁸ However, of women surveyed in 2014 who had brought cases to the Huquq Department in the past two years, 52% somewhat or strongly agreed that the Huquq Department is fair and trusted, and 78% reported the same regarding State Courts.²⁹ These figures would suggest that once women actually access formal justice mechanisms, they have considerably positive experiences. However, it could also be that women are only able to access formal justice mechanisms when officials are willing to accept and prosecute their cases in protection of their rights. Even if the former is true, the grade assigned by women in this research indicates that there are still low perceptions among women that justice institutions and their actors will protect women, which in turn limits the ability of justice institutions to do so.

27 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan," USIP, 2014.

28 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

29 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

According to a EUPOL official, the AGO recently developed a Gender Action Plan, which is more concrete than the Mol Action Plan and includes a target of 30% women's representation within the AGO. EUPOL and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) also recently began a program called Unas Mushtarak (Women Together) in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kabul at the request of the Chief Prosecutor in Herat, who is a woman, to train police and prosecutors to improve collaboration specifically regarding women. According to the Chief Prosecutor in Herat, women are becoming more confident reporting violence and there are gradually more women working in the AGO.³⁰

Interestingly, the highest grade for the GIRoA regarding women's access to justice was the sensitivity of government justice institutions to the interests and needs of women, for which the government was graded at a B. This could perhaps relate to the treatment of women once they receive legal support from formal justice actors, as reflected in the survey conducted by The Asia Foundation. This could also reflect the support women can receive from institutions such as DoWA and AIHRC, which while beyond the scope of the justice sector, are state institutions. Registry of cases with these institutions by women is much higher than among justice institutions, reflecting that these institutions are perceived as providing a viable option for women seeking state support on issues, and that they are relatively sensitive to women's needs.

30 Interview with EUPOL official, 11 December 2014.

Female Justice Officials

Availability of female government justice officials ¹	C
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1 M=2.86, SD=1.21

The GIRoA received a C in terms of availability of female government justice officials, corroborated by a starkly low level or representation of women in the formal justice sector. Only 8.4% of judges in Afghanistan are women, 6% of prosecutors, and 19.3% of lawyers.³¹ Moving outside

of Kabul, these figures are dramatically lower, where only 2.8% of prosecutors are women.³² Of the 1,466 professional employees of the AGO in the 2012-2013 tashkeel in provinces other than Kabul, only 41 employees are female (3%).³³ Similarly, data from the Supreme Court indicated

31 "Women's Professional Participation in Afghanistan's Justice Sector: Challenges and Opportunities," IDLO, 2014.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

that the 148 female judges are only in 16 provinces of Afghanistan, leaving 18 provinces with no female judges. However, information from the 2013 Afghan Women Judges Association annual meeting revealed that female judges are only actually working in five provinces of Afghanistan due to security and social problems.³⁴ As of 2013, only one Prosecution Office was led by a woman (Herat), and women prosecutors headed the Special EAW Unit of the AGO in five provinces.

There has been progress in women's registration as lawyers with the AIBA. Whereas only 6% of registered lawyers nationwide in 2008 were women, women now constitute 19% of those registered with the AIBA. However, as previously noted, the majority of these were in Kabul and Herat, with a considerable number of the remaining lawyers in Balkh and Nangarhar, indicating that female lawyers are

34 Ibid.

largely confined to highly populated and urban areas. There were 13 provinces with no female lawyers registered in 2013.³⁵

In 2010, 16% of professional staff in the MoJ in Kabul were women, though women only constituted 2% of MoJ employees nationwide. This figure increased to 19% in Kabul in 2013 and remained at 2% nationwide. There were only 10 female professionals working in MoJ Legal Aid Departments in 2013, and only 5 in Huquq Departments.³⁶ No woman has yet been appointed to the Supreme Court, though there are now 9 female "legal advisors" to the Supreme Court. These figures are indicative of the continued need for recruitment and investment in the development of female legal professionals in the Afghan government.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

Violence Against Women



Overall Performance¹

C+

¹ $M=2.68$, $SD=.56$

VAW has been a key focus of government commitments to women since 2001, particularly following the legacy of abuses during the Taliban and civil war. In NAPWA, the government commits to establish and strengthen mechanisms that can be utilized by female victims of violence throughout the country, and set up Family Response Units (FRUs) across Afghanistan. Furthermore, the government commits to building shelters close to FRUs throughout the country to provide women with a secure place to go when they are facing and reporting violent acts. ANDS commits to establishing FRUs that are staffed by all-female police officers that are functional in all provinces and effectively linked with the Special VAW Units in the AGO.

Importantly, NAPWA directs the Mol to work with other institutions dealing with women's rights, health, and rule of law to promote cooperation, as well as with non-state organizations to facilitate women's recourse and ensure that perpetrators of VAW are held accountable. This commitment is important, considering women may often reach out to health service providers or other actors instead of police or justice officials, and accessible and efficient referral mechanisms must be in place from these institutions.

The government has also recognized the need for training and awareness-raising among security and justice officials regarding VAW in numerous instances. NAPWA recognizes the need for increasing the capacities of police to address VAW, as well as public officials and civil society. ANDS outlines a plan to increase the number of justice professionals with specialized training in investigating and prosecuting VAW, with a particular focus on sensitive and effective interviewing techniques for victims and witnesses.

NAPWA recognizes the need to not only criminalize but also prosecute traditional practices that are harmful to women's emotional, social, and economic wellbeing, and to reduce their occurrence, including child and forced marriage. The EVAW Law commits to the objectives of: (1) ensuring Sharia and legal rights and protecting the human dignity of women; (2) maintaining family integrity and fighting against customs, traditions, and practices which contradict Islamic Sharia and cause violence against women; (3) protecting women who are victims or at risk of violence; (4) preventing violence against women; (5) providing public awareness and training on violence against women; (6) prosecuting perpetrators of violence against women. The Law further criminalizes 22 specific forms of violence, including: sexual assault; forced prostitution; recording and publishing victims' identities; burning; forcing one to burn herself

or commit suicide; causing injury or disability; beating; buying and selling women; giving baad; forced marriage; prohibiting the right to marriage or right to choose a spouse; underage marriage; abusing, humiliating, or intimidating; harassment/persecution; forced isolation; forced addiction; depriving from inheritance; prohibiting access to personal property; prohibiting from the right to education, work, or access to health services; forced labor; marrying more than one wife without observing Article 86 of the Civil code; denial of relationship.

The EVAW Law also outlines the rights of victims of violence. Victims are entitled to prosecute offenders of violence based on the provisions of the law. They are entitled to access to shelters or other safe places, as well as access to free emergency health services. They are entitled to advocates or legal aid providers. Victims are due compensation for damage resulting from the act of violence, and have the right to confidentiality.

The perceptions of those surveyed for this research reflect that little progress has been made in the eyes of Afghan women, as participants gave the government a C+ in terms of meeting its commitments regarding violence against women, including legal protections, government support mechanisms, and implementation of the laws and reduction of VAW. There were no significant differences in overall perceptions regarding VAW among respondents according to province, employment, or marital status. Similarly, there were no significant differences according to age, income level, or education. However, there were significant differences among respondents of different ethnicities, where Uzbeks perceived government performance most positively and Tajiks and Hazaras least positively.¹

¹ $F(5,109)=2.94$, $p<.05$, Pashtun $M=2.54$, $SD=.57$, Tajik $M=2.82$, $SD=.51$, Hazara $M=2.72$, $SD=.57$, Uzbek $M=2.42$, $SD=.38$

Legal Protections

Legal protections for women from physical, psychological, and sexual violence ¹	C+
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1 M=2.86, SD=1.21

The EVAW Law in Afghanistan was drafted in 2008 and enacted by presidential decree in 2009. It criminalizes acts of violence against women including rape, domestic violence, child marriage, forced marriage, baad, and other forms of VAW, totaling 22 specific forms, and specifies punishments for those who commit such acts. The law outlines the responsibilities of seven ministries and public institutions for enforcing the law, including the police and judiciary. Despite this landmark law and its comprehensive provisions, women surveyed gave the government a C+ regarding legal protections for women from physical, psychological, and sexual violence.

Even 5 years after its enactment, the EVAW Law is still controversial in Afghanistan, and the effectiveness of the law remains low. In 2013, a dramatic debate over the law in the parliament, which has not yet ratified it, ended after only

15 minutes. A number of conservative MPs angrily opposed the law for being against Sharia law and wanted to reopen sections on the criminalization of forced and child marriage based on these provisions being “un-Islamic”. Among the challenges cited in the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) report for effective implementation of the EVAW Law, it was noted that many judicial personnel and police officers had a negative view of the law or were reluctant to apply it, based on biases and exposure to conservative interpretations of Sharia law. Therefore, while the actual performance of the government in terms of passing legal protections is positive through the president’s action on the EVAW Law, it has had little effect on actual practice, contributing to the low score given by women in this survey regarding legal protections, which are still largely perceived as inadequate.

Government Support Mechanisms

Government support to female victims of domestic abuse ¹	C-
Availability of government facilities to shelter women who are victims of domestic or family violence ²	C+

1 M=3.23, SD=.883

2 M=2.68, SD=1.15

A number of institutions have been expanded or created in an attempt to facilitate increased support from the government for victims of VAW, including the Special EVAW Unit of the AGO, FRUs in police stations of the MoI, and Women’s Protection Centers (WPCs), run by both the state and NGOs with oversight from MoWA.

FRUs, a unit of the ANP, were established in 2006 for addressing family violence, children in trouble, and female victims of crime. As of May 2013, there were 184 FRUs in 33 provinces with 354 police assigned to them, including 24 female police. The FRU is part of the Criminal Investigation Division and its members can contribute to investigations into cases of violence against women. However, in practice, FRUs mainly handle domestic disputes and domestic violence, and are rarely involved in investigating cases of rape, self-immolation, or forced marriage. An official interviewed for this research indicated that though it is planned for MoWA to establish an M&E plan for FRUs in 2015, its implementation depends on donor funding that has not yet been committed.²

A EUPOL official felt that, despite improvements, the head of the FRU in the MoI does not have a strong position within the ministry and does not have effective support. For example, in 2014 there was a conference on EVAW within the MoI supported by LOTFA, which was well attended, but no high-level officials from MoI attended. The FRUs do not get many cases, though the official also explained that they had heard of plans to establish a one-stop center for female victims of violence funded by UNDP.³ Another official interviewed explained that although the head of each FRU is meant to be a woman, in reality they are mostly men due to a lack of personnel. The LOTFA official also noted a lack of willingness, low understanding among police officers of how the FRUs should function, and low understanding or trust of the FRUs in society.⁴ Issues preventing MoI from effectively providing support include a lack of private rooms for women reporting cases of VAW, and a lack of social skills among staff to properly listen to women’s stories.⁵ The Special EVAW Unit of the AGO was established in

3 Interview with EUPOL official, 11 December 2014.

4 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

5 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

2 Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

2010 to investigate and prosecute cases of VAW and to support and assist victims. The EVAW Unit was integrated into the tashkeel of the AGO in 2010 and can accept cases from anywhere in Afghanistan. The first such unit was established in March 2010 in Kabul, with a second one following in Herat a year later. Since then, VAW Units have been established in Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyan, Kapisa, Nangarhar and Parwan. The EVAW Units are meant to abide by Afghan laws and Sharia principles to combat gender crimes and injustices including rape, forced marriage, underage marriage, domestic violence and self-immolation.

Women's Protection Centers (WPCs, more commonly referred to as shelters) in Afghanistan act in accordance with the regulations and guidelines of MoWA. Different organizations refer women to WPCs, including the Attorney General's Commission on Violence Prevention, the AIHRC, provincial Huquq Departments, Primary Court for Personal Status, the Department of Huquq at MoWA, Afghan Women's Network, and police jurisdictions. WPCs are meant to be safe places for women to go, and are responsible for the security of their staff and the women in their care, but can also request assistance from MoI for security.

When a woman is referred to a WPC, the center must create a file for the woman and notify MoWA within 24 hours. Without the victim's permission, the WPC staff are not allowed to inform her family of her presence at the center, and even if the family is informed, the location should never be revealed to family members. All persons related to the WPCs, including attorneys, MoWA, and anyone working at the shelters, is legally required to observe confidentiality in order to protect the staff and women there. Women admitted to WPCs are meant to be provided legal counsel, who is supposed to draw up an action plan with the case manager, and WPCs are meant to provide mediation, health services, vocational training and education, and a basic standard of living.

A woman protected by a WPC will be released from the WPC under the following circumstances: after the finalization of the court order in the primary, appellate and supreme courts and/or the settlement of the case via mediation and reconciliation, if there are no threats to her safety in the future; she remarries in compliance with the laws of Islam; her legal issues are resolved through competent courts; she completes her education or finds a job; she finds a place to live or is accepted by close relatives and documents are produced to confirm the close relation. However, in all cases, the woman's safety is a prerequisite for release.⁶ Additionally, the MoPH has established Family Protection Centers in six provinces where survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) can seek counseling, medical treatment, and legal information. According to the UN Population Fund

(UNFPA) and MoPH, there are plans to expand health sector response to GBV to 12 new provinces by 2017.⁷

Despite these positive developments in government services and mechanisms regarding VAW, women surveyed for this research still gave the GIRoA a C- regarding their support to female victims of domestic abuse, and a C+ regarding the availability of government facilities to shelter women who are victims of family violence or domestic abuse. At many police stations, women cannot reach the FRU without first going through the duty officer and explaining their issue. In the absence of FRUs or visible women police officers, women victims often do not approach police stations willingly, fearing they will be arrested, their reputations stained or worse. The next section on implementation of laws demonstrates that despite the establishment of the Special EVAW Units of the AGO, their prosecution of cases is still very low, and with only a few provincial offices, awareness, accessibility, the utilization of such institutions will likely remain low. In 2013, there were 18 women's shelters in Afghanistan, increased from 14 in 2011. However, less than half of Afghanistan's provinces had a women's shelter, and there were no shelters in the southern half of the country. Additionally, the shelters are entirely funded by international donors.⁸

While the passage of the Regulations on Women's Protection Centers passed in September 2011 appears positive in recognizing the critical service that shelters managed by either the government or NGOs provide, and setting standards for their operation designed to safeguard residents' rights and dignity, there was a large degree of controversy around the draft regulation. Human Rights Watch and other organizations criticized the draft in that it would result in the closing of some shelters, restrict women's freedom of movement, make forensic examinations compulsory, reduce the protection of residents from abusers, and could result in the expulsion of women still in need of safety. The regulations have come in the wake of continued controversy surrounding shelters, which allow women autonomy and facilitates their independence from abusive husbands and family members.⁹ The shelters have been the source of controversy, with the Minister of Justice accusing the shelters of "moral corruption," and a report from 2013 indicated that the government has shown no interest in funding shelters through the government budget.¹⁰

7 "Urgent Action Needed to Strengthen Health Sector Response to Violence Against Women," UNFPA Afghanistan, 30 November 2014, http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/afghanistan/2014/11/30/11037/urgent_action_needed_to_strengthen_health_sector_response_to_violence_against_women/.

8 "Afghanistan: Surge in Women Jailed for 'Moral Crimes,'" Human Rights Watch, 21 May 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/21/afghanistan-surge-women-jailed-moral-crimes>.

9 "Afghanistan: Government Takeover of Shelters Threatens Women's Safety," Human Rights Watch, 13 February 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/13/afghanistan-government-takeover-shelters-threatens-women-s-safety>.

10 "Afghanistan: Surge in Women Jailed for 'Moral Crimes,'" Human Rights Watch, 2013.

6 "Women's Protection Center Guidelines," Ministry of Women's Affairs, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, July 2014, http://issuu.com/idloneWS/docs/women_s_protection_centers_guidelin.

These facts and figures, combined with the grade given by the PWN members, demonstrate that while the government has made important steps in establishing institutions to support victims of VAW, there is still considerable progress to be made in terms of actually providing meaningful support for victims of VAW from government institutions across all sectors.

Implementation of Laws and Reduction of VAW

Prosecution of male spouses for domestic abuse ¹	B-
Prevalence of <i>baad</i> as a traditional practice ²	C
Women's right to refuse to marry ³	B

1 M=2.45, SD=1.17

2 M=3.07, SD=1.21

3 M=2.12, SD=1.24

When women do report abuses, their cases are often not properly registered and offenders are rarely prosecuted. A 2012 UN report on the implementation of Afghanistan's EVAW Law concluded that the lack of "empowered female police" to investigate cases, as well as a lack of awareness of the law among the police, were key factors in the ANP's failure to tackle VAW effectively¹¹ Even though the EVAW Law forbids *baad* and forced marriage, women in this survey still gave the GIRoA a C regarding the prevalence of *baad* and a B regarding women's right to refuse to marry.

Depending on sex and age, experiences of violence differ. Of the women surveyed by The Asia Foundation in 2012, 8% said they experienced domestic violence, and smaller percentages mentioned forced marriage/dowry (6%); the issue of domestic violence is cited most often in the East (12%), South East (13%) and South West (10%). Respondents' citation of domestic violence has remained fairly stable since 2006; however, 2011 (9%) and 2012 (8%) recorded the highest percentages to date.¹² In a study undertaken by Global Rights based on a survey of 4,700 households, 87.2% of women reported to have experienced at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological violence or forced marriage.¹³ Though this figure is often cited as current, a similar study has not been conducted to measure changes in this percentage since 2008.

In the first six months of 1392, more than 6,611 cases of violence against women from 2,159 complainants were registered with AIHRC. Out of those cases, 2,039 involved physical violence, apparent in 31% of all reported cases, including beating, kicking, slapping, pulling out hair, using weapons such as knives and boiling water, poisoning,

amputation, and murder. 1,672 cases were verbal and psychological violence, 1,340 were economic violence, and 453 were sexual violence (including rape, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, demands for 'illegitimate sexual acts', husband's extramarital relations, sexual insults and humiliation or being forced to watch pornography). Cases included prevention from education, *badal*¹⁴ and *baad* marriages, forced marriages and forced divorce, early marriage, prevention from visiting relatives, or expulsion from the home. There were 120 recorded cases of honor killings.¹⁵ It is very likely that violence against women is underreported due to sociocultural barriers for women to report cases and traditional means of addressing such issues within the family or community.¹⁶

The number of cases registered has been steadily rising, increasing by 28% from 2012 to 2013 alone, and a similarly considerable increase in 2014.¹⁷ Though this figure has sometimes mistakenly been interpreted as a rise in VAW, it is actually likely a positive figure, reflecting an increase in the actual reporting of cases of VAW against a baseline of essentially zero cases reported and recorded in past years. However, this increased reporting has yet to be met with adequate prosecution and enforcement of the law in such cases. As one example, women surveyed for this report graded the government at a B- regarding the prosecution of male spouses for domestic abuse, indicating that many perpetrators of VAW are still getting away with their crimes in the absence of effective legal prosecution.

14 Literally meaning revenge, *badal* refers to the payment required for an offense, which can include *baad*.

15 "Violence Against Women in Afghanistan 1392," Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, 1392.

16 M.H. Hasrat and Alexandra Pfefferle, "Violence Against Women in Afghanistan," AIHRC, 2012, http://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/VAW_Final%20Draft-20.12.pdf.

17 "Afghanistan Launches campaign to Curb Violence Against Women," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 2014, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-women-violence/26709965.html>.

11 "Women and the Afghan Police," 2013.

12 The Asia Foundation, "Visualizing Afghanistan."

13 D. Njohowne and L. Oates, "Living with Violence. A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan," Global Rights, 2008, accessed at: http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf?docID=9803

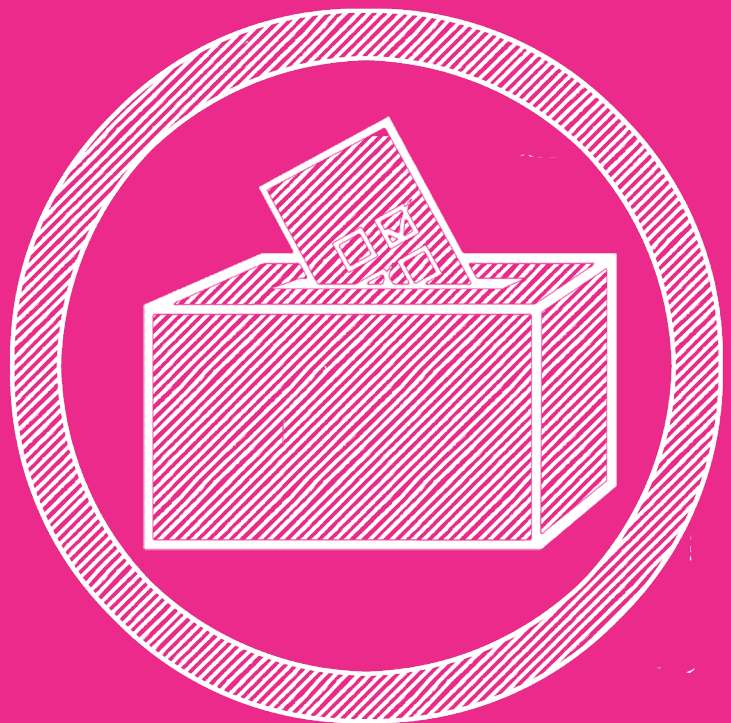
In a 2011 report most cases for the ERAW Unit of the AGO came from Kabul province. Though 285 cases were registered from March 2010 to March 2011, the unit filed only 21 indictments in these cases with the courts.¹⁸

18 "A Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women Law in Afghanistan," UNAMA and OHCHR, November 2011, http://unama.unmissions.org/portals/unama/human%20rights/november%2023_unama-ohchr-joint-report-on-implementation-of-eraw-law_eng.pdf.

UNAMA found that from October 2012 to September 2013, in 16 provinces prosecutors registered 650 incidents of VAW, but the ERAW Law was only used in 17% of cases, and the courts only applied the law in 60 decisions.¹⁹ Though the registration of reported incidents increased by 28% from the previous year, using the ERAW Law as a basis for indictment only increased by 2%.

19 Ibid.

Political Participation



Overall Performance¹

C

¹ M=3.06, SD=.52

Women's political participation has been a focal point of efforts to promote women's rights in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is signatory to CEDAW, which requires state parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country. It also requires Afghanistan, as a party to CEDAW, to ensure women, on equal terms with men, the rights: to vote in all elections and public referenda; to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof, and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government. Additionally, the AMDGs commit the government to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, with a target increase of female participation in elected and appointed bodies at all levels of governance to 30% by 2020.

In the area of leadership and political participation, NAPWA stipulates the goal of attaining a critical mass of women active in communities and political life. To facilitate this, NAPWA outlines plans to develop and institutionalize a strategic framework and policies that foster women's leadership and participation in public life, especially in the areas of policy and decision-making. The Government commits to creating a high-level task force under Cabinet and Presidential purview responsible for women's leadership, as well as investigating complaints of discrimination against women who are in office or seeking positions. Additionally, the government commits to an affirmative action policy with both short- and long-term approaches for structured participation of women at the central and provincial levels, as well as a career planning and capacity building program for women at all levels, including specific programs for women working in Community Development Councils (CDCs) and Provincial Development Committees (PDCs). The document outlines plans to implement mandatory gender awareness-

raising courses for decision, policy, lawmakers, and other key officials in national and provincial governments, as well as establishing family care systems for men and women workers. The last means of building women's capacity includes civic education courses for women and girls across the country.

ANDS similarly aims for improved access for women to wider political participation at the national and regional levels. It states that women will constitute an increasingly important voice in Afghan society and politics, that the numbers of women in the legislature will increasingly reflect the gender balance of the population, and political representatives will address barriers to access to political opportunities for women. ANDS planned to establish Women's Councils at the district level and gender awareness-raising of senior officials in government, with the expected outcome of improved participation of women in governance. In the gender equity crosscutting sector strategy, ANDS plans to promote women's participation in political processes as voters, office seekers, and office holders, to swiftly punish those preventing female involvement in elections, and to provide safe transport to and from polling stations.

Overall, women surveyed for this research gave the government a C regarding women's political participation. This included women's participation in political institutions at the local, provincial, and national levels, providing security, transportation, and gender-sensitive female voting centers, and efforts to provide information to women regarding elections. There were no significant differences in overall perceptions regarding women's political participation among respondents according to province, employment, marital status, or ethnicity. Similarly, there were no significant differences according to age, income level, or education.

Women's Participation in Political Institutions

Women's participation in political institutions at the local level ¹	C
Women's participation in political institutions at the provincial level ²	D
Women's participation in political institutions at the national level ³	D

¹ M=3.04, SD=1.27

² M=3.75, SD=.99

³ M=3.82, SD=1.12

Women gave the government a C regarding women's participation in political institutions at the local level. Though Provincial Council, District Councils, and Municipal Council seats are reserved for women in this policy, there are no seats reserved for women on Village Councils.¹ Community governance is often through traditional informal structures or CDCs, which are community-level institutions established through the National Solidarity Program (NSP) of the government Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). The purpose of the NSP is to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects, and promote good local governance to empower rural communities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihoods. The NSP requires a level of female participation in CDCs, and female members constitute around 35% of CDC members.² However, mixed or women's CDCs are often only given a role in addressing "women's projects" in the community such as sewing or literacy courses. The first female District Governor was appointed in 2013 in Jawzjan province, constituting only one female governor out of Afghanistan's 398 districts.

Women felt that even less progress had been made regarding women's participation in political institutions at the provincial and national level, such as Provincial Councils, parliament, and other bodies. The GIRoA was graded at a D for women's political participation at both of these levels. In the 2009 Provincial Council elections, 333 female candidates ran for seats nationally, constituting 10% of the candidates,³ and women won 28% of the seats available, of which 20 were non-quota winners.⁴ In 2014, 308 candidates on the ballot were female nationally, constituting 11% of candidates,⁵ and women won 21% of the seats available, of which 18 were non-quota winners.⁶ Afghanistan's first female Provincial Governor was appointed in 2005 in Bamyán province, and remains the only female governor out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, though she vacated her position as Provincial Governor to serve as Zalmay Rasool's second vice presidential candidate in the 2014 presidential elections.

In the last parliamentary election in 2010, 69 women were elected to seats in the 249-seat Wolesi Jirga (House of the People). The Constitution guarantees political representation for women in the national parliament of at

least two elected members in the Wolesi Jirga from each province.⁷ In 2014, the parliament lowered the quota for female Provincial Council members from 25 to 20 percent. This shift ultimately affects the representation of women in the Meshrano Jirga, whose members are in part selected from the Provincial Councils. Of the 102 members of the Wolesi Jirga, 34 are elected from the Provincial Councils. While Afghan women have managed to make a place for themselves in the traditionally all-male Loya Jirga over the past decade, only 400 of the 2,500 delegates to the 2013 Loya Jirga were women. While still a long way to go for achieving gender equality in decision-making and women's active participation rather than simply representation, this does at least indicate a normative shift where women are at least recognized as having a right to a place at the table. In the Transitional authority, only two Cabinet positions were held by women—Minister of Women's Affairs Habiba Sarobi, and Minister of Health Sohaila Siddiqi. In Karzai's first administration from 2004 to 2009, Amina Afzali served as Youth Minister (position merged with the Minister of Culture in 2006). Masooda Jalal and Husn Bano Ghazanfar subsequently served as Minister of Women's Affairs, and Sediqa Balkhi served as Minister of Work, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled in 2006. In Karzai's second administration, only three women occupied Cabinet posts, leading only 3 out of 25 ministries—Minister of Women's Affairs Husn Bano Ghazanfar, Minister of Public Health Soraya Dalil, and Minister of Work, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled Amina Afzali. The level of women's representation in these posts has largely remained consistent since 2001.

With women's participation at an estimated 35% locally, 21% of Provincial Council members, and 28% of the Wolesi Jirga, there have been some important gains for women's political participation. However, less than 1% of District Governors and none of current Provincial Governors are women, and women only occupied 12% of ministerial positions in the last administration. In his campaign President Ghani promised to nominate at least four female ministers. When cabinet nominees were announced, the list introduced by President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abudllah Abdullah included only three women, none of whom were approved,⁸ and it is not yet clear how many women will actually be appointed to ministerial posts. Even four cabinet posts would only constitute 16% women's representation. While some progress has been made towards the target of 30% by 2020, in other areas there is still a long way to go, and what progress has been made largely relies on quotas in place for women's participation, which have already been targeted and are still under threat.

Security issues also jeopardize women's representation. There have been a series of attacks on women politicians,

1 IDLG Subnational Governance Policy

2 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan," USIP, 2014.

3 "Presidential and Provincial Council Elections," EU Election Observation Mission Final Report, 20 August 2009, http://www.eods.eu/library/FR%20AF-GHANISTAN%202009_en.pdf.

4 "Provincial Councils 2014: How did the women do?" Afghan Elections, 29 May 2014, <http://afghanelections14.com/2014/05/29/provincial-councils-2014-how-did-the-women-do-1/>

5 "Elections in Afghanistan: April 5 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections," International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 27 March 2014, http://www.ifes.org/~media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2014_IFES-Afghanistan%20Presidential%20and%20PC%20Elections.pdf.

6 "Provincial Councils 2014: How did the women do?" Afghan Elections, 2014.

7 Constitution of Afghanistan

8 Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Afghan women protest at absence of female ministers in the new cabinet," *The Guardian*, 3 February 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/feb/03/afghan-women-protest-absence-female-ministers-new-cabinet>.

including a car bomb attack on Member of Parliament Shukria Barakzai, kidnapping of Member of Parliament Fariba Ahmadi Kakar in 2013, the shooting of female senator Rooh Gul in 2013, and the murder of Lieutenant Islam Bibi in Helmand province in 2013.⁹ Several other female politicians

9 “Taliban kidnaps female Afghan politician, attacks undermine women’s rights campaign,” Reuters, 13 August 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/08/13/taliban_kidnaps_female_afghan_politician_attacks_undermine_womens_rights_campaign.html.

have been attacked or killed. These security threats for women politicians continue to undermine advances in women’s political representation. The insecurity for women politicians has had an apparent effect on women’s perceptions regarding running for political office. In 2014, 75% of women reported that they would feel some or a lot of fear running for office, compared to 52% in 2006.¹⁰

10 “Visualizing Afghanistan,” The Asia Foundation.”

Women’s Participation in Elections

Government-provided security for women’s voting centers ¹	C
Sensitivity of voting center locations to the needs of women ²	B
Government efforts to provide transportation to and from voting centers for women ³	C
Government efforts to provide information about elections to women ⁴	C+

1 M=2.98, SD=1.42

2 M=2.18, SD=1.11

3 M=2.84, SD=1.15

4 M=2.73, SD=1.19

The first round of the 2014 Presidential Elections took place on April 5, 2014. According to information from the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC), 12 million people were eligible to vote. Over 3 million voter cards were distributed since May 2013, of which 35 percent were issued to female voters. Of the 20,795 polling stations in the 2014 elections, 8,573 were open for female voters (41%). The Mol recruited 13,690 female searchers, and trained 581 female police and 2,245 searchers to provide security for women voters in the election. As of March 18, 2014, a total of 72,401 observers had been accredited, of which 12,915 (18%) were female.¹¹ Of the 6.6 million votes cast in the first round of the elections, the IEC reported that 36 percent were female voters. In the second round, the IEC reported that 9,325 of the 23,136 polling stations (40%) were for women and 36% of the votes were from female voters.

While this is a considerable level of women’s participation, it has been stagnant at best and even slightly declined. In 2004, the number of women who registered for the elections was 42%, and women cast around 40% of the vote in both the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections.¹² Previous EPD research found that some of the main challenges still facing women for civic participation include security, cultural and

11 “Elections in Afghanistan: April 5 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections FAQ,” International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 27 March 2014, http://www.ifes.org/~media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2014_IFES_Afghanistan%20Presidential%20and%20PC%20Elections.pdf.

12 Margherita Stancati, “Women Playing an Unusually Public Role in Afghan Presidential Elections,” The Wall Street Journal, 2 April 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304157204579475322060072290>.

religion-based constraints, timing and mobility, autonomy of women’s votes and using women for fraud, corruption, a lack of trust in the electoral process and candidates, and women’s access to information regarding various aspects of the elections.¹³

Women surveyed for this research also felt a number of these concerns. PWN members gave the government a C regarding government-provided security for female voting centers. In 2014, 52% of women reported that they would have some or a lot of fear participating in a provincial or national election. This was actually an increase from 2006, when only 43% of women reported the same.¹⁴ In 2014, 64% of women were somewhat or very concerned with security threats during the last election, and in 2013 80% of women reported that security played a role in deciding whether or not to vote in an election.¹⁵ Previous EPD research found that while the Ministry of Interior’s efforts to increase security on Election Day were considerable, only addressing security on the day of the election is not enough. The legacy of election-related violence and threats to women who are active in civic processes remain a deterrent for women’s participation throughout the entire elections process, and not enough has been done to positively counteract the perception of insecurity among women.¹⁶

13 Marie S. Huber and Hannah Partis-Jennings, “Women and Elections in Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities for Future Civic Participation,” EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy, October 2014, <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/WE-paper-English.pdf>.

14 “Visualizing Afghanistan,” The Asia Foundation.

15 “Visualizing Afghanistan,” The Asia Foundation.

16 Marie S. Huber and Hannah Partis-Jennings, “Women and Elections in

While transportation to polling centers is an issue for all Afghans, it has gender-differentiated impacts; whereas men are inconvenienced by having to walk long distances or find other means of transportation, women may be prevented from voting altogether if there is no “acceptable” means of transportation available. Respondents also felt that the location of women’s polling centers is somewhat positive, but inadequate in consideration of needs. Women gave the sensitivity of the location of voting centers a B, but government efforts to provide transportation for women to and from voting centers a C. There were patterns in research around the 2014 elections where many citizens expressed concerns over the location of polling centers, which are often far from voters’ homes and people have to walk several miles to cast votes. The government does not provide transportation for citizens, and the distance and location of polls can be prohibitive for women.¹⁷ In a survey prior to the 2014 elections, 67% of respondents felt that locating polling stations close to women’s homes would be an effective means of increasing the turnout of women voters in their community.¹⁸

The women surveyed also felt that the government has a long way to go in terms of providing women with elections information, grading the government at a C+ in this regard.

Afghanistan,” October 2014.

17 Marie S. Huber and Hannah Partis-Jennings, “Women and Elections in Afghanistan,” October 2014.

Saeed Murad Rahi and Hodayun Bashir, “The 2014 Afghan Elections and Beyond: A Seven-Province Study of Community Concerns,” USIP and Lapis, 7 April 2014, [http://www.whiteband.org/sites/default/files/The%202014%20Afghan%20Elections%20and%20Beyond%20\(Lapis%20Report\).pdf](http://www.whiteband.org/sites/default/files/The%202014%20Afghan%20Elections%20and%20Beyond%20(Lapis%20Report).pdf).

18 “A Survey of Public Perception on Elections and Civic Education,” USAID and Democracy International, April 2013, <http://democracyinternational.com/sites/default/files/ECE%20Survey%20Report.pdf>.

In a survey prior to the 2014 elections, Afghans wanted more information about the candidates (80%), security arrangements to protect voters (47%), location of polling stations (42%), Islam and elections (30%) how to vote for candidates (28%), and information about voter registration (23%). Those surveyed (of which 49% were women), stated that the best ways of receiving election-related information were radio advertisements (85%), talk radio (80%), television (75%), Friday prayer at mosques (81%), or through local women’s groups (66%). Only 59% reported receiving election information directly from the government. However, in another 2013 survey, 61% of Afghan women reported that they got their information about elections and who to vote for from friends and family. 7% got their information from a mosque, 14% from community shuras, 3% from bazaars, and 14% did not know or refused to answer.¹⁹

In the 2013 survey, 28% of women stated that in previous elections they had received no information at all regarding previous elections, and only 26% of women had attended a community or village event about elections in the past three years.²⁰ In another pre-election survey, only around 30% of women knew that the IEC is primarily responsible for organizing elections.²¹ EPD’s previous research on women and elections found that women generally felt that they (and women generally) continue to lack access to information for women regarding laws and elections processes, voting rights, and about the candidates and their platforms.²²

19 *Ibid.*

20 “A Survey of Public Perception on Elections and Civic Education,” USAID and Democracy International, 2013.

21 “Afghan Perceptions on Democracy and Elections,” Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan, 2013-2014.

22 Marie S. Huber and Hannah Partis-Jennings, “Women and Elections in

Resources and Services



¹ $M=3.02$, $SD=.48$

The GIRoA has also made commitments to gender mainstreaming in resources and services, an often-overlooked topic regarding gender inequality. In the ANDS, the government commits to gender mainstreaming policies in the energy sector, promoting gender equitable access to transportation, gender mainstreaming policies in the mining sector, and ensuring access to Information and communications technologies (ICTs) for all Afghans, men and women alike. Additionally, in the 2004 Securing Afghanistan's Future document, the government commits that sports facilities will be available for women and men in all provinces.

Access to resources, and environmental and resource management, are critical issues for women. The government also acknowledges the right of both men and women to participate in environmental decision-making, and commits to local government units deliberately promoting the participation of women in environmental management and ensuring that their views are considered in policymaking.¹ The government further commits to providing technical and financial support to water resource development for small-scale water use with particular attention to the needs of women. In the ANDS, the government acknowledges that women's access to and use of critical agriculture infrastructure, such as irrigation canals, storage and value chain facilities, has a generating role. Women should be included in the identification and selection process of projects within the NSP and National Area-Based Development Program (NABDP), and priority should be given to contracting women's groups for particular infrastructural works. The MRRD Gender Policy further stipulates the equitable distribution of rural development and reconstruction benefits for women and men in all provinces of Afghanistan. Furthermore, CEDAW, to which Afghanistan is party, requires states to ensure to women the right to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels, as well as participation in all community activities.

Transportation is a huge issue of gender inequality in Afghanistan, and the government outlined plans in the ANDS to investigate the feasibility of training and employing female drivers and conductors for public transportation, as well as police officers, with a goal of employing women for 20% of these positions by 2013. Additionally, ANDS commits the transport sector to ensure that women are consulted and their needs are taken into account in the planning and design of infrastructure, and will address their particular

needs (such as security, clean and accessible public toilets, etc.) and roles (such as caring for small children) in the process. The government clarified that these gender-sensitive needs were to be met as soon as possible in all public terminals, and in all public sector governance institutions' office and field facilities.

However, women surveyed for this research gave the government a C in terms of access to resources and services, including women's access to clean water, ICTs, electricity, public transportation and women's involvement in decision-making regarding community resources and development. There were no significant differences among respondents according to province, marital status, ethnicity, or employment, or according to age, number of children, level of education or income. However, respondents who reported that women contribute to their monthly household income were more likely to perceive access to resources and services more positively than those who lived in households where women did not contribute to monthly household income.² This relationship indicates that when women have access to and take part in household financial decision-making, access to resources and services (or the perception) improves.

¹ ANDS Volume 2 – Governance, Public Administration and Human Rights Sector Strategy

² $t(100)=2.06$, $p<.05$; Women contribute $M=2.98$, $SD=.426$, Women do not contribute $M=3.20$, $SD=.516$

Resources

Sensitivity of access to resources to the needs of women ¹	D-
Women's access to clean water ²	B
Women's access to electricity ³	C+
Women's access to information and communications technologies ⁴	C

1 M=4.13, SD=1.17

2 M=2.34, SD=1.03

3 M=2.75, SD=1.23

4 M=3.05, SD=1.19

Access to key resources such as water, electricity, land, and other natural resources is also often marked by gender inequality in Afghanistan. Despite government commitments to mainstream gender throughout the provisions of resources and services, the lowest grade given to the GIRoA in this assessment was for the sensitivity of access to resources to the needs of women, for which the government was given a D- by the women surveyed.

In a country where women often bear the burden of most household work, access to clean water is a critical concern. In many areas, especially remote parts of Afghanistan, women have to walk several kilometers to collect drinking water for their families. There have been some critical steps to addressing this issue, with the NABDP implementing more than 612 water supply and sanitation projects benefiting over 2.2 million people across Afghanistan since 2002.³ Women gave the government a B in terms of facilitating women's access to clean water, likely reflecting these efforts, but also indicating that more work is needed to address the needs of women regarding water supply and sanitation. In 2014, only 9% of women reported getting drinking water for their family from piped water inside their compound, and 37% from a personal well. 8% got water from a neighbor's house, 19% from a public community well, 5% from a public community tap, and 21% from a river or spring. Only 40% of women reported that their family always has access to clean drinking water, and 14% for irrigation. 25% of women were somewhat or very dissatisfied with clean drinking water in their area, and 40% with water for irrigation.⁴

Similarly, access to electricity is a crucial issue for gender equality. Access to electricity can dramatically cut the amount of time spent on household work, and access to electricity can considerably impact women's time use. This furthermore frees up time for women and girls to participate in things like education, which has long-term implications for gender equality. There has been considerable progress regarding access to electricity. In 2002, only 6 percent of

Afghans had access to reliable electricity, compared to today when 29 percent of Afghans are connected to the power grid.⁵ However, 70% of the 4-5 million Kabul residents (12% of Afghanistan's population) constitute those with access to electricity. Even in Kabul, where access is relatively good, there are power blackouts of up to 15 hours, and regular electricity cuts throughout the winter months,⁶ suggesting a bleak picture outside of well-connected urban areas. Less than half of all households in Afghanistan have a regular electricity supply.⁷ In 2014, only 17% of Afghan women reported that their household always has access to electricity, compared to 18% who reported they only sometimes have access, 14% who rarely have access, and 34% who never have access to electricity. 64% of women were somewhat or very dissatisfied with electricity in their area.⁸

Women did not rate the government as positively in facilitating women's access to ICTs, for which they graded the government at a C. ICTs include any communication devices or applications such as radio, television, mobile phones, computers, the internet and mobile data, etc. In 2006, 86% of women reported having a radio in their household, and 37% a TV set. 37% of women had a functioning mobile phone within their household. In 2014, 39% of women reported using a mobile phone for obtaining information, and only 2% the internet. 75% got information from radio, and 56% from TV.⁹ While not directly comparable, these figures demonstrate that women have not made significant gains in accessing ICTs. Their level of access to radio remains fairly consistent, though more women report access to TVs. A study from 2012 found that 80% of Afghan women surveyed had regular or occasional access to mobile phones, 48% of which owned a mobile device and 32% of which have to

5 "Achievements in Afghanistan," USAID, August 2014, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/Achievements%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf>.

6 Mohsin Amin, "Power to the People: How to extend Afghans' access to electricity," Afghanistan Analysts Network, 3 February 2015, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/power-to-the-people-how-to-extend-afghans-access-to-electricity/>.

7 "Environmental health," World Health Organization, 2014, <http://www.emro.who.int/afg/programmes/eh.html>.

8 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

9 Ibid.

3 "Local decision-making improves women's lives in Afghanistan," UNDP, 2014, <http://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/successstories/badghiswomenandwater/>.

4 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

borrow a mobile phone from a family member or neighbor when needed.

Even though 88% of the population lives within the combined network of the four largest mobile network organizations,¹⁰ 6 out of 10 Afghan women still do not use mobile phones for accessing information. However, there are indications that this is improving, as the study from 2012 showed that 67% of women who owned a mobile phone had acquired it in the past two years, and of those who had obtained

10 "Connected to Opportunity: A Survey of Afghan Women's Access to Mobile Technology," Afghan Women's Capacity Building Organization and USAID, May 2013, http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/survey_afghan_women_mobile.pdf.

a phone in the past year 64% were under the age of 25.¹¹ Half of the women surveyed cited the cost of mobile phone usage as a prohibitive factor. The lack of access to ICTs is a considerable issue for women, not only in terms of access to communications and information, but also other critical services as 25% of those who owned a mobile phone used it to access commercial services, including those related to health and education.¹² Access to communication and mobile phones additionally has a security dimension, as women with access are more connected and able to seek protection and support from both domestic and external violence.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Transportation

Availability of public transportation for women and girls ¹	C
Safety of public transportation for women and girls ²	C+

1 $M=3.16$, $SD=1.31$

2 $M=2.69$, $SD=1.08$

A lack of women-friendly public transportation is a huge barrier to gender equality, where women's options for transportation are limited. In 2014, 76% of women reported that nobody in their household owned a car. 48% of women reported that their household did not own any bicycles, and 52% had no motorcycle.¹³ Even in homes where household members own a bicycle or motorcycle, these are generally considered inappropriate means of independent transportation for women.¹⁴ Though it is slowly improving, there are very few women drivers; in 2011, Kabul only issued 312 driving licenses to women, a record level.¹⁵ In many areas, sociocultural restrictions make it difficult for women to walk if they are alone. In a pilot study in April 2011, women reported that they face verbal assault daily, and also experience physical harassment including groping, pinching and slapping when walking on the street.¹⁶ In Kabul, harassment is also prevalent in public buses, so most women choose to take shared mini-van taxis or street taxis with few passengers, though these options are only accessible to those who can afford them.¹⁷ What's more, harassment of women in public spaces appears to be worsening. In a study covering twelve provinces in 2014, research found that in all but two provinces harassment of women in public spaces

13 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

14 "The Challenge of Becoming Invisible: Understanding Women's Security in Kabul," Heinrich Boll Stiftung and Samuel Hall Consulting, 2012, <http://samuel-hall.org/REPORTS/The%20Challenge%20of%20Becoming%20Invisible.pdf>.

15 Miriam Arghandiwal, "Afghan woman pushes for rights from behind the wheel," Reuters, 15 May 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/15/uk-afghanistan-driving-women-idUSLNE84E02520120515>.

16 Noorjahan Akbar, "Afghan women fight back against harassment," Al Jazeera, 13 July 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/07/201171113305407580.html>.

17 "The Challenge of Becoming Invisible," Heinrich Boll Stiftung and Samuel Hall Consulting, 2012.

had remained the same or become worse in the past two months,¹⁸ possibly a reflection of unease regarding public safety and security in the aftermath of the 2014 elections and entering into the security transition.

The Ministry of Transport administers public transportation systems in Afghanistan, managing the Millie Bus system. These buses are operated by private drivers and are used for mass transit.¹⁹ However, through over 1,000 Millie buses have been donated to the Afghan government since 2001, in 2014 only 100 buses were active.²⁰ In Kabul alone, an estimated 2,000 Millie buses are needed to meet public transportation needs, and many cities across Afghanistan have no public transport facilities.²¹

Though public transportation issues present challenges for all Afghans, they have much more serious implications for women. Men face considerably less issues with mobility. They have many more options available for transportation, including walking, bicycle, driving, motorcycle, and use of taxis and public transport with little fear of sexual or physical harassment. The government has a long way to go in addressing women's needs regarding public transportation.

18 Saeed Parto, Ehsan Saadat, and Khalid Siddiqi, "Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition – Cycle 4," October 2014.

19 Abdullah Habibzai, Shabnam Habibzai, and Carlos C. Sun, "Overview of Transportation in Kabul City, Afghanistan," n.g., http://web.missouri.edu/~sunc/Kabul_Transp_TRB.pdf.

20 Shukria Kohistani, "90pc Millie Buses not operational," The Kabul Times, 20 October 2014, <http://thekabultimes.gov.af/index.php/opinions-social/4197-90pc-millie-buses-not-operational-motca.html>.

21 Sayer Zaland, "Transportation woes due to dearth of Millie bus," Afghan Zariza, 7 April 2014, <http://www.afghanzariza.com/2014/04/07/transportation-woes--due-to-dearth-of-millie-bus>.

Women's Involvement in Decision-Making on Resources and Services

Involvement of women in community decision-making regarding the use of resources ¹	C
Involvement of women in community decision-making regarding development and community reconstruction ²	C

1 $M=3.00$, $SD=.90$

2 $M=3.12$, $SD=.93$

The government has further recognized the need to facilitate the involvement of women in decision-making on resources and services. This includes women's involvement in community-based structures such as shuras, as well as the aforementioned CDCs through the NSP. The purpose of the NSP is to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects, and promote good local governance to empower rural communities to make decisions affecting their own lives and livelihoods. CDCs are meant to analyze the priorities and problems in their community and assess their needs.²² CDCs manage projects in a number of key sectors related to resources, development and community reconstruction, including irrigation, power, transportation, water supply and sanitation.

Though women constitute around 35% of CDC members, women only occupy around 3% of CDC leadership roles.²³

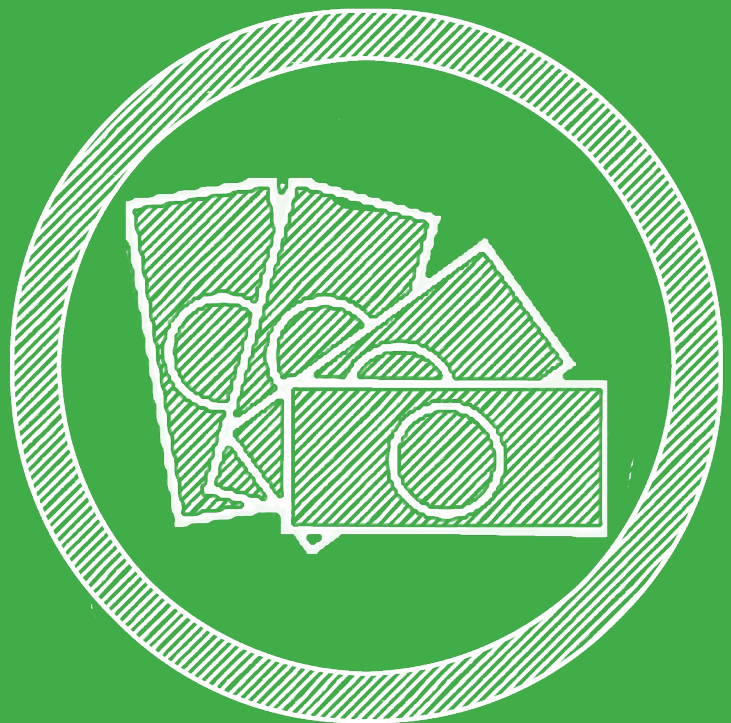
22 Farid Ahmad and Farzam Rahimi, "The Role of Community Activities on Rural Development in Afghanistan," April 2013, http://www.nispa.org/files/conferences/2013/papers/201304291438210.Paper_Farzam.pdf?fs_papersPage=9.

23 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan," 2014.

Though women are meant to have decision-making roles through the CDC, in practice there are four general types of CDCs regarding gender integration—standard mixed CDCs, segregated elected male and appointed female shuras, segregated elected male and female shuras, and male-only CDCs.²⁴ While these different types present mechanisms for women's participation even in socioculturally non-permissive environments, they also allow for the marginalization of women in actual decision-making processes. Women surveyed for this research graded the government at a C both in terms of women's involvement in community decision-making regarding the use of resources, development, and community reconstruction. This indicates that though the establishment of CDCs with criteria for women's involvement is a positive step, more efforts are needed to move from women's representation to participation in decision-making regarding community resources and development.

24 Farid Ahmad Farzam Rahimi, "The Role of Community Activities on Rural Development in Afghanistan," 2013.

Economic Opportunity



Overall Performance¹

C

¹ $M=2.83$, $SD=.62$

Women's economic opportunities have also been a key focus for women's empowerment and promoting gender equality. In NAPWA, the government commits to promoting an environment conducive to women's entrepreneurship and leadership in the private sector, through creating an enabling economic and social environment conducive to the full development and realization of women's economic potential. This includes: gender analysis of macroeconomic policies, including trade; developing gender-sensitive socioeconomic surveys that account for sex-disaggregated data and women's productive work and non-monetized contributions to the economy; developing and strengthening institutional mechanisms and the reform of policies and procedures; incorporating gender concerns into all programs and activities designed to increase women's access to employment and income-generating activities. ANDS outlines the conceptualization of a Private Sector Employment Strategy for Women to yield pro-women employment strategies in the private sector.

The government has also recognized that women's economic opportunities are related to social welfare and inheritance. ANDS further commits to diversification of market-based arrangement for social protection, financial market literacy, and the introduction of community-based insurance schemes. It stipulates that future government policies will introduce measures to enforce women's rights to inheritance. Also in the ANDS, the government commits to reducing the number of female-headed households that are considered to be in poverty by 20%, and increasing the employment rate of female head of households by 20% by March 2011. This included a plan to provide skill development training to 150,000 unemployed citizens, of which 35% should be women and 10% disabled individuals by the end of 2010.

CEDAW additionally requires Afghanistan to ensure the same employment opportunities for men and women, and the right to free choice of profession and employment,

the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service, and the right to receive vocational training and retraining for women. It furthermore requires the right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment regarding work of equal value, and equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work. Reflecting these commitments, the AMDGs include promoting gender equality and women's empowerment by reducing gender disparity in economic areas by 2020.

Women surveyed for this research also felt that the government's performance and progress regarding women's economic opportunities leaves room for improvement, grading the GIRoA at a C in this area. This included government support for women entrepreneurs, affirmative action for government positions and government employment of women, supporting and enforcing women's rights to inheritance, government efforts to provide training and education for women to work in health and education, and facilitate income-generating opportunities for women working in agriculture. There were no significant differences among respondents according to province, marital status, age, or income level. Interestingly, there was also no significant difference according to employment status, likely reflective of the sample which mostly comprised women who had salaried employment in the public or private sector. However, there was a significant difference in perceptions of government performance according to ethnicity, where Uzbek and Pashtun respondents had more positive perceptions than Tajik and Hazara respondents.¹ Additionally, there was a significant relationship between level of education and perceptions of government performance regarding women's economic opportunities, where women with higher levels of education tended to perceive government performance in this area more negatively.²

¹ $F(5, 93)=2.72$, $p<.05$; Pashtun $M=2.68$, $SD=.60$, Tajik $M=2.98$, $SD=.63$, Hazara $M=2.97$, $SD=.49$, Uzbek $M=2.51$, $SD=.57$

² $r=.217$, $p<.05$

Support for Women in Business

Government support for women entrepreneurs¹

C

¹ $M=2.93$, $SD=.89$

Support for women entrepreneurs and women in business is a key facilitator of women's economic empowerment, and has been a focus of government commitments to women. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are key to Afghanistan's economic development, constituting 85 percent of Afghan businesses, half of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and employing more than one third of the labor force.³ Women play a major role in Afghan industry, including agriculture,

³ Mujib Mashal, "Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Regional Trade in Afghanistan," University of Central Asia Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Working Paper no. 24, 2014, <http://www.ucentralasia.org/downloads/UCA-IPPA-WP24-Eng.pdf>.

jewelry, carpets, and embroidery, but receive few benefits for their work.⁴ Women-led businesses face a number of challenges, including limited access to markets and credit, illiteracy, and economic policy-making that is often dominated by men, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA).⁵

According to data from AISA, 1,600 women-owned businesses have been registered in Afghanistan since 2003, most of which are in the handicraft and business service sectors and are largely subsidized by international donors. While this is a considerable number of women-owned businesses, AISA currently has a directory listing approximately 37,767 companies currently active in Afghanistan.⁶ According to a report from 2013, 78% of businesses owned by Afghan women are small businesses, and they employ over 5,500 workers. 38% reported earning a monthly income between 30,000 AFN and 50,000 AFN. Around 80% of Afghan businesswomen have attended an institute of higher education.⁷

However, Afghan businesswomen face a number of challenges. 81% of Afghan businesswomen were unable to access any credit or financing. 47% do business with the international community and 40% with the domestic market, but only 13% had found business opportunities with the Afghan government. Nearly 90% did not have partnerships with other businesses or institutions and 75% did not belong to a business association.⁸ Women's access to finance can be a key challenge, with banks and microfinance institutions often offering loans that rely on property or land ownership, which is limited for Afghan women.⁹ Additionally, banking institutions often provide loans at high interest rates, between 15% and 17%, which can be prohibitive for entrepreneurs.¹⁰ In a roundtable discussion hosted by an NGO on Afghan women in business in 2013, participants felt that the government should promote Afghan-made products and provide more support to SMEs. Participants noted that many products and services are outsourced, undermining Afghan businesses, and that there are no groups in the government lobbying for the rights of women in business.¹¹ The Ministry of Commerce

and Chamber of Commerce have also been criticized by women for not providing real assistance for women, and a lack of premises for specifically female-run enterprises in industrial parks.¹²

The Afghan Women's Business Federation (AWBF) was founded in 2004 with support from the Ministry of Commerce and USAID, and has developed into an umbrella organization for over 80 women's business associations in Afghanistan. The AWBF has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Afghan Ministries of Commerce and Women's Affairs, and has received expressions of support from the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan, the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Afghan Association for Civil Society.¹³ The establishment of this federation, as well as signed agreements and support from the government, are positive developments. However, much of AWBF's activities seem to be supported by international donors, and it is unclear how much actual support or coordination the government provides aside from the rhetorical.

However, there is some evidence of improvement in terms of women's participation in the labor force. Of the 131,001 members of National Employees Unions in 2013-14, there were 40,447 female members (31%). There were 512,393 union members in Afghanistan of which 155,983 were women, including members of the Journalists Council, Craftsmen Union, Youth Union, Afghanistan Women Union, Afghan Women Social and Cultural Services Union, and Doctors and Health Staff Union. 22% of Afghans in 2014 reported that female family members contribute to household income, compared to 14% in 2009.¹⁴ According to data from the World Bank, the female labor force participation rate was around 16% in 2013, which has been gradually increasing since 2001.¹⁵

4 Petra Dunne, "Hope for Afghanistan's Women Entrepreneurs?" The Asia Foundation, 7 August 2013, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2013/08/07/hope-for-afghanistans-women-entrepreneurs/>.

5 Mujib Mashal, "Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Regional Trade in Afghanistan," University of Central Asia Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Working Paper no. 24, 2014, <http://www.ucentralasia.org/downloads/UCA-IPPA-WP24-Eng.pdf>.

6 "Investors Directory," AISA, 2013, <http://www.aisa.org.af/directory.php>.

7 "Afghan Women's Economic Participation: 2013," Building Markets, 2013, <http://buildingmarkets.org/products-services/afghan-women-economic-participation>.

8 Afghan Women's Economic Participation," Building Markets, 2013.

9 Mujib Mashal, "Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Regional Trade in Afghanistan," 2014.

10 Petra Dunne, "Hope for Afghanistan's Women Entrepreneurs?" The Asia Foundation, 7 August 2013, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2013/08/07/hope-for-afghanistans-women-entrepreneurs/>.

11 Petra Dunne, "Hope for Afghanistan's Women Entrepreneurs?" 2013.

12 Fawzia Ihsan, "Breaking through in business," Afghanistan Today, 9 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-today.org/article/?id=340>.

13 "Afghan Women's Business Federation Holds First Annual National Conference," USAID, 2009, <http://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/news-information/press-releases/afghan-women-s-business-federation-holds-first-annual>.

14 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

15 The World Bank Data, <http://data.worldbank.org>.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action for government positions ¹	C
Government employment of women ²	C+

1 $M=2.89$, $SD=1.14$

2 $M=2.70$, $SD=1.11$

A key area of government commitment to facilitating women's economic participation has been affirmative action within public sector employment. However, while a number of policy and strategic documents have proposed the idea of affirmative action to ensure recruitment of women and reduce gender disparity in staffing, there are few actual policies in place. Corresponding to this, women surveyed gave the government a C in terms of implementing affirmative action that promotes women's employment in civil service positions. The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) established a Gender Directorate in 2010 to "create a suitable situation that men and women have equal rights and opportunities in civil service." The mission of the Gender Directorate is to mainstream gender in all rules, regulations, policies, plans and projects of IARCSC, and develop capacity of women employees in ministries and government organizations. The Directorate's strategic goals include mainstreaming gender, establishing official relations and cooperation with other departments and female civil servants, conducting training and capacity development programs for women in civil service, raising awareness among civil servants, and ensuring the implementation of the civil service gender policy in recruitment processes and conflict resolution among IARCSC staff.¹⁶ The Directorate has conducted recruitment campaigns with female students and trainings for women, but there are limited activities reported regarding the Directorate on the IASCRC website.¹⁷

16 "Gender Directorate," IARCSC, 2014, <http://www.csmd.gov.af/index.php/gender>.

17 "Civil Service Management Department," <http://www.csmd.gov.af>.

These rhetorical commitments have clearly not translated into meaningful employment of women in the civil service. According to the 2013-2014 CSO Statistical Survey, only 93,761 government employees were women out of 388,056, constituting 24%, which has dropped from 31% in 2005.¹⁸ However, only 2% of employees in the Office of the President were women, and 5% in the Office of Administrative Affairs. Women also constituted less than 20% of employees in six ministries, and 10% or less in fifteen ministries.¹⁹ Only four ministries had more than 20% female employees—MoPH (24%), MoEd (30%), MoLSAMD (62%), and MoWA (56%).²⁰ Notably these are also the ministries that have had women ministers with the exception of the MoEd, which employs a number of female teachers. Women surveyed for this research gave the government a C+ regarding employment of women in the civil service.

18 "Factsheet on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan," UNAMA, 2007, http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/SecurityCouncilMonitor/Missions/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_WomenGirlsFactsheet_2009.pdf.

19 Ministry of Economy (13%), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (10%), Ministry of Justice (8%), Ministry of Finance (7%), Ministry of Tribal Affairs (8%), Ministry of Transport (10%), Ministry of Water and Power (7%), Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (10%), Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (4%), Ministry of Higher Education (15%), Ministry of Public Works (6%), Ministry of Commerce and Industries (7%), Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (12%), Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj (0.8%), Ministry of Information and Culture (12%), Ministry of Repatriation and Refugees Affairs (13%), Ministry of Urban Development Affairs (10%), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (7%), Ministry of Defense (14%), Ministry of Interior (7%), Ministry of Counternarcotics (5%).

20 "Government Civil Service Employees by Ministry and Department," CSO, 2014, <http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Government%20Civil%20Service%20Employees.pdf>.

Women's Inheritance

Legal protections for women's inheritance ¹	C+
Government protection of women's rights to inheritance ²	C+

1 $M=2.65$, $SD=1.11$

2 $M=2.73$, $SD=1.91$

There are considerable legal protections in place for women's inheritance in Afghanistan. Article 40 of the Constitution allows every Afghan citizen to acquire and use property within the limitations of the law, and Article 22 stipulates that men and women have equal rights and

duties before the law. However, Article 3 stipulates that no law shall "contravene the tenets and provisions of the holy religion of Islam in Afghanistan." Sharia law dictates shares for each family member in inheritance, which commonly interpreted entitles women to only half of a man's share

of the same degree.²¹ Inheritance rights in Sharia law are very specific, and while women are named as entitled to inheritance in a number of relations, including wife, sister, mother, grandmother, and daughter, each is given a prescribed share of the estate, which is in turn modified if the deceased is also survived by someone else in the inheritance line. For example, the share of a brother or sister is zero if the deceased is survived by a descendent on the male side of the family or a male ancestor on the male side of the family.²²

However, in Afghan law, the Afghan Civil Code of 1977 dictates property rights. It recognizes women's right to own and sell property, and women's right to obtain property through marriage, inheritance, or purchase.²³ It also entitles women to *mehr*, a sum of money or other property that a wife is entitled to receive from her husband unconditionally in their marriage. The Civil Code affords her ownership of her *mehr*, and she cannot legally be pressured or forced to cede her ownership rights to her husband or any other person.²⁴ The Civil Code includes 109 provisions related specifically to the topic of inheritance, and names sisters, wives, daughters, full sisters, half sisters from the father, daughters of daughters or daughters of sons, grandmother and great grandmother on the male side as quota holders to specific shares. According to Article 2007, women with no children are entitled to one fourth, and women with children are entitled to one eighth.²⁵ It also provides that one daughter is entitled to half, and two or more to two thirds; full sisters are entitled to half or two or more two-thirds; full grandmothers are entitled to one sixth. Article 2027 outlines six persons who cannot face total exclusion from inheritance, including mother, daughter, and wife, though they can face partial exclusion.²⁶

However, in reality, many Afghan women struggle to claim their rights to inheritance. The struggle can be lifelong, making women vulnerable to poverty and economic instability. Furthermore, research has found that traditional practices intersect with denying women's inheritance, such as forced marriage to another male relative to keep any inheritance within the family.²⁷ A 2013 study of attitudes regarding women's inheritance rights in ten provinces found that 89% of men had received an inheritance owed to them, compared to 37% of women, and 45% of women

and 55% of men believed women do not have the right to inheritance.²⁸ Of those who believed women do not have a right to inheritance, reasons given included 43% who believed women's right to inheritance is negated by cultural norms, 8% that it will cause animosity with her brothers, 6% that women are the property of others, and 44% that women simply should not get their inheritance. Some believed that women do not have the right to own property.²⁹

More positively, a 2014 survey across Afghanistan found that only 13% of men and 15% of women somewhat or strongly disagreed that a daughter is entitled to part of her deceased father's inheritance.³⁰ Women also face social pressure to cede their inheritance rights, out of fear that the family may disown her, or are expected to give their inheritance to their brother or male family member as a rite of custom, with the general understanding that the family member who receives the inheritance will look after her interests for the rest of her life.³¹

Inconsistent registration practices of property and marriage also serve as barriers to women's legal claims to inheritance. Though marriage registration is required and encouraged by the government, marriage registration is still uncommon for many Afghans, which presents complications for widows when they try to claim their rights without legal documents proving the terms of marriage.³² Additionally, complicated and contradicting land management systems complicate the registration and security of ownership of property, which further complicates women's attempts to legally claim their right to inheritance.

Furthermore, little awareness or enforcement of codified laws prevents women's inheritance. Women are often unaware of their right to inheritance, and even where women are aware family and community leaders often do not acknowledge those rights, and this issue also manifests in the formal justice sector. Of the aforementioned 63% of women who had not received their inheritance in the 2013 study, 19% stated that they had sought help from the government to claim their inheritance but still could not claim it, and 33% of these women were asked for bribes. 44% of women in this study felt that their lack of information about legal procedures impeded their ability to claim their inheritance, compared to only 15% of men. 23% reported being mistreated or discriminated against by state institutions when they tried to claim their inheritance through legal channels.³³

21 "Women and Property Rights," Canadian Women for Afghan Women, n.g., http://www.cw4wafghan.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/pages/cw4wafghan-womenspropertyrights-factsheet2_0.pdf.

22 Mary F. Radford, "The Inheritance Rights of Women Under Jewish and Islamic Law," Boston College International and Comparative Law Review 23, no. 2, 2000, <http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1205&context=iclr>.

23 Shaharazad Akbar and Taiba Pirzad, "Women's Access to Property in Afghanistan: Law, Enforcement and Barriers," QARA Consulting, May 2011, http://www.harakat.af/site_files/13623054771.pdf.

24 "Women and Property Rights," Canadian Women for Afghan Women, n.g.

25 Civil Law of the Republic of Afghanistan.

26 Ibid.

27 "Harmful Traditional Practices and Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women in Afghanistan," UNAMA and OHCHR, 9 December 2010, http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Publication/HTP%20REPORT_ENG.pdf.

28 "Women's Access to Inheritance," Women and Children's Legal Research Foundation, September 2013, www.wclrf.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Womens-access-to-inheritance-English-book.pdf.

29 "Women's Right to Heritage and Property," Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, 2011, <http://www.wclrf.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Womens-access-to-inheritance-English-book.pdf>.

30 "Visualizing Afghanistan," The Asia Foundation.

31 Tim Luccaro and Erica Gaston, "Women's Access to Justice in Afghanistan," USIP, 2014.

"Women and Property Rights," Canadian Women for Afghan Women, n.g.

32 Shaharazad Akbar and Taiba Pirzad, "Women's Access to Property in Afghanistan," 2011.

33 "Women's Right to Heritage and Property," Women and Children Legal

The government has not taken measures to incentivize inheritance and property ownership for women through mechanisms such as tax incentives. Despite an effort from MoWA and the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries to promote gender equality through tax laws, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) rejected the proposal, arguing that tax laws do not allow for positive or negative discrimination.³⁴ Furthermore, there are no incentives for registering marriages, and the government has not taken any action to introduce such measures to promote marriage

Research Foundation, 2011.
34 Shaharzar Akbar and Taiba Pirzad, “Women’s Access to Property in Afghanistan,” 2011.

registry and, by extension, the protection of women’s inheritance rights.³⁵

Therefore, despite the legal protections in place (though in some cases reinforcing gender inequality such as through unequal shares for the same degree of relation), women surveyed gave the GIRoA a C+ in terms of legal protections for women’s inheritance, and a C+ for protecting women’s rights regarding inheritance. This indicates that beyond putting legal protections in place, much more action is needed from the government to afford and protect women’s rights to inheritance in Afghanistan.

35 Ibid.

Women in Agriculture

Government facilitation of income-generating opportunities for women in agriculture ¹	C
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1 M=2.99, SD=1.00

In Afghanistan, women are involved in 65% of the agricultural workforce.³⁶ On average, agriculture accounts for one third of Afghanistan’s GDP.³⁷ However, while women undertake a majority of the work, they account for only a small minority of land ownership, have limited access to agricultural training and resources compared to their male counterparts, and often do not control the economic benefits of their work. Additionally, differences in rights and responsibilities in the household discussed in this report lead to an inequitable distribution of resources, and that reduces agricultural productivity. There is clear evidence that female-owned plots are less productive than ones owned by men, and that reducing inequality in the allocation of resources in the household could increase income for agricultural households. In most countries the distribution of physical and human capital for agriculture favors men. Compared with agricultural plots managed by men, women’s plots typically have significantly lower yields and lower inputs of labor; they use fertilizer less

intensively and make lower profits. There is good evidence that achieving gender equality could increase agricultural profits and yields.³⁸

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) formulated a gender mainstreaming policy and strategy in 2009, as well as a Gender Unit. However, as previously stated, in the most recent CSO Statistical Survey, the ministry only had 4% female employees, which indicates that mainstreaming gender equality has not been adequately prioritized within the ministry, and that women’s perspectives are still severely lacking from government policy- and decision-making regarding agriculture. Women surveyed for this research similarly felt that the government has not made adequate progress in addressing gender inequality in agricultural income-generation or meeting their commitments to facilitating women’s economic empowerment through agriculture, grading the GIRoA at a C in terms of facilitating income-generating opportunities for women working in agriculture.

36 “Women’s Right to Heritage and Property,” Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, 2011.
37 “Agriculture in Afghanistan: Growing the Economy, Jobs, and Food Security,” Presentation for ARTF Strategy Group Meeting, 20 May 2014, http://www.artf.af/images/uploads/ASR_PPT_for_ARTF_Strategy_Group_Meeting_May_20_2014.pdf.

38 John Ward, Bernice Lee, Simon Baptist and Helen Jackson, “Evidence for Action: Gender Equality and Economic Growth,” Chatham House and Vivid Economics, September 2010, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Energy,%20Environment%20and%20Development/0910gender.pdf>.

Vulnerable Groups



Overall Performance¹

C-

¹ $M=3.22$, $SD=.57$

The government has committed to considering the needs of a number of vulnerable groups, including poor female-headed households, Kuchi and nomadic women, women with disabilities, and widows. These protections are provided for in the Afghan Constitution, which states “the state shall guarantee the rights of retirees, and shall render necessary aid to the elderly, women without caretaker, disabled and handicapped as well as poor orphans, in accordance with the provisions of the law.”

Commitments outlined in ANDS were in the areas of economic and social development as well as social protection. The government committed to introducing benefits for chronically poor female-headed households, victims of violence, and other categories of women “at risk”. The ANDS also outlines emphasis on social protection, including the establishment of referral systems and networks for vulnerable groups and individuals with a focus on women. There are also multiple commitments to provide vocational trainings for widows, chronically poor and disabled women. In support of these commitments, ANDS planned to conduct a survey to collect data about female-headed chronically poor households with small children.

Furthermore, ANDS places these commitments as an obligation of the Afghanistan Compact, and commits the government to improving assistance in this category including support during the winter such as payments and food parcels, skill development, distributing agricultural resources, and facilitating microfinance and employment with priority for female heads of chronically poor households for civil service employment. The Electoral Law also makes special provisions to ensure Kuchi women’s

political representation, mandating that in each Kuchi electoral zone, one seat shall be allocated for the male, and three female candidates who poll the highest votes at Kuchi zones shall be recognized as winners.

Afghanistan is also party to the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, which recognizes that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discriminations, and requires states to take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment of them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It stipulates that state parties shall put in place effective legislation and policies, including women- and child-focused legislation and policies, to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with disabilities are identified, investigated, and prosecuted.

Women surveyed for this report graded the government at a C-, indicating that the government has not yet met its commitments to supporting and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups, including poor female-headed households, Kuchi and nomadic women, women with disabilities, and widows. There was no significant difference among respondents according to marital status, ethnicity, employment, age or income level. However, there was a significant difference according to province, where women in Bamyan perceived government performance most positively, and women in Herat the most negatively.¹ Additionally, women with more education felt that the government had performed more poorly.²

¹ $F(4, 113)$, $p<.05$; Bamyan $M=3.00$, $SD=.44$, Herat $M=3.44$, $SD=.64$, Nangarhar $M=3.10$, $SD=.36$, Kunduz $M=3.17$, $SD=.63$, Faryab $M=3.15$, $SD=.54$
² $r=.256$, $p<.01$

Government support to poor female-headed households ¹	C
Government support to Kuchi and nomadic women ²	D+
Access to services for women with disabilities ³	C
Government provision of vocational training and economic opportunities for women with disabilities ⁴	C
Sensitivity of government policies and programs to the needs of widows ⁵	D+

¹ $M=2.82$, $SD=1.08$

² $M=3.57$, $SD=.98$

³ $M=3.16$, $SD=.91$

⁴ $M=3.14$, $SD=1.00$

⁵ $M=3.41$, $SD=1.10$

Overall, PWN members felt that the government has performed poorly in terms of support for vulnerable groups of women. The GIRoA was graded at a C in terms of support to poor female-headed households, access to services for women with disabilities, and provision of vocational training and economic opportunity for women with disabilities. The government was given a D+ in terms of support to Kuchi and nomadic women, and to sensitivity of government policies and programs to the needs of widows. It is important to note that there were no Kuchi respondents in this survey and only 4% of respondents were widowed. Therefore, perceptions on government support to these groups are likely based on perception and observation rather than personal experiences.

Research from 2008 found that a significant share of Afghan women fall within the category of “chronically poor”, as defined by the AMDG goal of resources amounting to 1 USD per person per day for five years. The same research found that the most vulnerable among Afghanistan’s chronically poor women are ‘mature’ women who lack any male support but have family dependents, i.e. female-headed households.³ According to the 2011-12 NRVA, less than 1% of households are female-headed, representing 0.4% of the population. While this figure may seem small, it amounts to 102,000 people of the total population. The absence of a male head of household signifies a highly vulnerable position for all household members regarding income security and social protection.⁴

The NRVA furthermore found that 57% of women over the age of 65 are widowed, and 17% of women aged 40 to 64. There are an estimated 1.5 million widows in Afghanistan, one of the highest proportions in the world.⁵ Women tend to get married earlier than men, and become widowed earlier in significantly larger shares.⁶ Widows also face considerable vulnerabilities. For example, the widowed and divorced in both urban and rural areas tend to be more food insecure compared to other groups.⁷ While widows under the age of 35 may be able to remarry, widows over the age of 35 are generally unable to do so. What’s more, if a young widow decides to remarry, she often has to leave her children behind with her deceased husband’s family, making the decision to remarry undesirable for many mothers.

In 2014, UNAMA interviewed 60 women widowed by conflict-related violence, and found that more than one in four had experienced violence after the loss of their husband in the form of verbal abuse, expulsion from the family home, forced remarriage, physical abuse or social

ostracism. All 60 women reported that their financial situation had worsened significantly, and only one-third had received financial compensation from the government, mostly in the form of small one-off payments rather than a regular stipend.⁸ Widows who are unable to remarry often have to rely on their children or other family members, generally sons if present and old enough to work, to provide for them; however, this cannot be guaranteed.⁹ With virtually no welfare system¹⁰ and limited access to payments for conflict-related loss,¹¹ widows rely on voluntary family and social networks for survival. Disabled women are also extremely vulnerable. Poor disabled women are more likely to become chronically poor than other women, and employment opportunities for disabled women remain scarce.¹²

According to a statement from Minister of Women’s Affairs Husn Banu Ghazanfar in 2012, MoWA and MoLSAMD had cooperated in drafting a law to strengthen state support to women who lack caretakers, are orphans, elderly, or are handicapped.¹³ However, the status of this law is unclear. According to a request for expressions of interest issued by MoLSAMD in August 2014, the ministry intends to introduce Afghanistan Social Protection Program (ASPP), a national social safety net program, in line with the Social Protection Sector strategy of the ANDS. The main objective of the proposed new ASPP is to support very poor families of mothers with young children facing hunger in Afghanistan. These efforts to address the issue of the vulnerabilities of these groups of women are a promising step. However, until these commitments on top of the preexisting ones that have been made since 2001 are translated into actual programs and support systems, the government is failing Afghanistan’s most vulnerable women.

Kuchi women are consistently more vulnerable than other women. For example, while 33% of rural women in the 2011-12 NRVA had deliveries attended by skilled health personnel, among Kuchi women this figure was only 13%. 46% of women in rural areas had received antenatal care, compared to only 23% of Kuchi women.¹⁴ Whereas the net primary attendance ratio for girls was 48%, Kuchi girls’ primary attendance ratio was only 13%.¹⁵ These figures

8 “Afghanistan Annual Report 2014: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,” UNAMA, 2015.

9 Amelie Banzet, Marjan Kamal, Petty Pascal, Johan Pasquet, and Francois Grunewald, “Research on Chronically Poor Women in Afghanistan,” 2008.

10 “Afghanistan: Family-related determinants of poverty,” IRIN Asia, 8 April 2010, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/88732/afghanistan-family-related-determinants-of-poverty>.

11 “Caring for Their Own: A Stronger Afghan Response to Civilian Harm,” Center for Civilians in Conflict, 2013, http://civiliansinconflict.org/uploads/files/publications/Afghan_Report_2013_smaller_final.pdf.

12 Amelie Banzet, Marjan Kamal, Petty Pascal, Johan Pasquet, and Francois Grunewald, “Research on Chronically Poor Women in Afghanistan,” 2008.

13 “Statement by H.E. Dr. Husn Banu Ghazanfar, Minister of Women’s Affairs,” At the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 2 March 2012, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/general-discussions/member-states/Afghanistan.pdf>.

14 “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012,” CSO, 2012.

15 “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012,” CSO, 2012.

3 Amelie Banzet, Marjan Kamal, Petty Pascal, Johan Pasquet, and Francois Grunewald, “Research on Chronically Poor Women in Afghanistan,” March 2008, http://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/CPW_report_hand-ove-_march2008.pdf.

4 “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012,” CSO, 2012.

5 “Afghanistan: Bleak prospects for country’s estimated 1.5 million widows,” IRIN Asia, 30 January 2008, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/76492/afghanistan-bleak-prospects-for-country-s-estimated-1-5-million-widows>.

6 “National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-2012,” CSO, 2012.

7 Ibid.

demonstrate that where Afghan women are already vulnerable, Kuchi women are even more so, and the state has done little to address the needs of Kuchi women. The Independent General Directorate of Kuchi (IGDK) was established in 2005 as a formal structure for facilitating government representation and for addressing problems facing the Kuchi population. The IGDK has established local Kuchi directors at the provincial levels, who have regular meetings to discuss and manage issues related to the Kuchi within their jurisdiction and provide information to the

IGDK for planning and management purposes.¹⁶ Beyond this, there is little information on the IGDK, which launched a website in 2013 but still contains no information, including what the government is doing to address the needs and vulnerabilities of Kuchi women and girls.

16 Michael J. Jacobs and Catherine A. Schloeder, "Extensive Livestock Production: Afghanistan's Kuchi Herders, Risks to and Strategies for their Survival," in *Rangeland Stewardship in Central Asia: Balancing Improved Biodiversity, Conservation and Land Protection*, Victor Squires, ed., 2012 (Netherlands: Springer Netherlands), 109-127.

Awareness Raising



Overall Performance¹

B-

¹ $M=2.59$, $SD=.56$

Along with the government's commitments to women in all of these areas, the government has repeatedly asserted that it will undertake awareness-raising activities in each area, educating the public on women's rights and promoting gender equality through public campaigns, advocacy with mullahs, teachers, government officials, youth, and men and women. These commitments appear throughout the ANDS, NPPs, NAPWA, and several other policies and strategies.

PWN members gave the government a B- for their performance in raising public awareness and advocacy for women's rights regarding legal rights, access to justice, VAW, education for women and girls, political participation, and women's involvement in the peace process. There was no significant difference among respondents according to province, marital status, ethnicity, or employment status. There were also no significant differences according to age, level of education, or income level.

Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's legal rights ¹	C+
Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's access to justice ²	C+
Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding violence against women ³	C+
Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding education for women and girls ⁴	C+
Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's participation in politics and elections ⁵	B-
Government efforts to raise awareness among men and women regarding women's participation in peace processes ⁶	C+

¹ $M=2.63$, $SD=.94$

² $M=2.67$, $SD=1.06$

³ $M=2.67$, $SD=1.11$

⁴ $M=2.61$, $SD=1.03$

⁵ $M=2.60$, $SD=.98$

⁶ $M=2.74$, $SD=1.15$

Ultimately, gender equality in Afghanistan is inextricably interlinked with culture, tradition, and social attitudes. Acknowledging this, awareness-raising is a critical area of activity for government efforts to promote gender equality. The women surveyed felt that the government has made some progress in raising awareness among both men and women regarding women's participation in politics and elections, grading the government at a B- in this area. However, in every other area, including awareness-raising on legal rights, access to justice, VAW, education for women and girls, and women's participation in the peace process, PWN members graded the government at a C+, indicating that more government investment in awareness-raising on gender equality and women's rights is critically needed.

The Afghan government has undertaken some awareness-raising campaigns, though mostly in partnership with international actors. For example, the Supreme Court and MoJ broadcast a radio drama, "Law is Law," to increase awareness of the ERAW Law supported by the USAID Formal Rule of Law Program.¹ UNICEF is also supervising community

mobilizing through the GPE, implemented through on-budget support, which focuses on areas where there are no girls enrolled in schools. This program focuses on raising awareness of community-based schools and accelerated learning programs.² MoJ undertook a 16-day campaign under the UN Secretary General's Campaign to End VAW (UNiTE) in 2014 in the provinces with outreach regarding awareness-raising on the FRUs, which was supported by LOTFA,³ as well as a national recruitment campaign in 2012.⁴ The MoPH has a separate department called the Health Promotion Department that works on awareness-raising and developing TV and radio spots and public messaging. Every year they celebrate Women's Day, Motherhood Day, TB Day, Malaria Day, and other health-related days.⁵

The HPC and Gender Unit have made advocacy efforts to

USAID, <http://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/afghan-justice-institutions-raise-awareness-women's-rights-radio>.

² Interview with UNICEF Official, 17 December 2014.

³ Interview with EUPOL official, 11 December 2014.

⁴ Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

⁵ Interview with UNDP-LOTFA official, 10 December 2014.

⁶ Interview with JICA-RPHI official, 10 December 2014.

¹ "Afghan Justice Institutions Raise Awareness of Women's Rights via Radio,"

include women in peace processes. HPC female members and the Joint Secretary Gender Unit staff facilitated the Loya Jirga, organized a conference on peace and women's political participation, and participated in N-Peace activities.⁶ However, awareness-raising has not been institutionalized, and mostly consisted of ad hoc campaigns. There has been one very good example of an independent government initiative in the 2014 Afghan Women's Call for Peace campaign, which has shown potential to involve women in the peace processes at the local level. The one-month campaign's aim was to widely circulate a call for peace petition and collect signatures of women across the country. It called for the government, armed opposition groups and the international community to search for common ground as a foundation for a peace settlement. This was the largest

6 "2013 annual project progress report," Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, 2014.

national campaign for peace where women were involved, resulting in 250,000 signatures collected in 34 provinces. The campaign was accompanied by local events that promoted women's political participation.⁷

While campaigns such as these are a model for government public engagement on women's issues, many of the government campaigns are one-off efforts or celebrations rather than part of an overall advocacy and awareness-raising strategy. The status of women as discussed in this report evidences that much more is needed to fulfill the government's commitments to women in the area of awareness-raising.

7 Ibid.

Conclusion

This research and Gender Equality Report Card comes at a critical time as Afghanistan enters the Transformation Decade. As the Afghan government assumes more responsibility through increased on-budget financing, it is critical to revisit the thousands of commitments that have been made to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality. As this research has shown, though making these commitments and developing policy is a critical first step, until they are translated into actual programs, and then furthermore actually budgeted and made real priorities, they have little effect on the daily lives of Afghan women. Moving forward, promoting GRB will play a crucial role in this regard by training government actors to account for the gender-differentiated needs of the citizens of Afghanistan in budget planning, implementation, and evaluation and incorporating formal GRB requirements into the budget process.

It is important to note that there are a multitude of approaches and solutions available for addressing the many issues facing women. For example, to address women's access to healthcare, the government could build more health clinics, provide incentives for women studying in medical fields, initiate public transportation schemes to transport women to hospitals and clinics, implement and expand mobile health worker programs, conduct public awareness-raising campaigns regarding women's access to healthcare, promote social support for alternative means of women's transportation, or a combination of any or all of these approaches. The approaches listed in this example could be initiated by any number of government actors, including MoF, MoPH, MoHE, or the Ministry of Transport. Meaningfully addressing the issues facing women will require cooperation across government actors and effective communication and authority at both the subnational and central levels to ensure that policy and decision-makers are well informed about the realities and needs on the ground, and that local actors are provided the resources and support to implement programs that facilitate positive change. Ultimately, moving forward on the government's commitments will require creativity, cooperation, and, most importantly, political will.

In conclusion, the 2014 Gender Equality Report Card has created a foundation for annually monitoring the government's progress. EPD hopes civil society and the international community, as well as those within the Afghan government, use this tool to advocate for real change and hold the GIRoA accountable on its commitments to women and gender equality in Afghanistan.

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EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by Ms. Nargis Nehan, the Executive Director of EPD. EPD works to build the capacity of women and youth in order for them to be the front face in presenting their needs in development, peace building and democratic processes of the country. EPD further aims at mass mobilization of women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability that Afghanistan is facing. EPD establishes platforms for women and youth to come together, establish networks, build trust and confidence, and strive jointly for transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all forms of violence and discrimination.