

Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition – Cycle 2

The Second Monitoring Report – An Update

A Collaborative Initiative by:



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Acknowledgements

This is the second monitoring report following the baseline study: “Afghanistan: Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition”, published in June 2013. Monitoring Women’s Security in Transition (MWST) initiative was commissioned by the Afghan Women’s Network (AWN), with funding and support from Cordaid to monitor and assess the impact on women of the ongoing security transition from international security forces to the national counterparts. This study focuses on how the transition is affecting Afghan women from the perspectives of general security, access to basic rights and justice, and socio-economic wellbeing.

APPRO is responsible for the research component of this project while AWN and Cordaid conduct outreach and advocacy at the national and international levels with support from this research.

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About AWN

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a non-partisan, non-profit network of women that serves as an umbrella organization for 112 NGO members, and 5,000 individual members who are committed to support the women of Afghanistan. AWN has offices in Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad and works through local partners in several Afghan provinces. Primary concerns for AWN are issues related to: gender-based violence, youth empowerment and girl's education. The network also represents and promotes the views of Afghan women in political and social arenas through advocacy and by challenging Afghanistan's leaders to enforce legislative reforms for the protection of women's rights. For more information, see:

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About APPRO

Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) is an independent social research organization promoting social and policy learning to benefit development and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. APPRO is registered with the Ministry of Economy (Registration Number: 1212) as a non-profit, non-government organization, and is headquartered in Kabul,

Afghanistan. APPRO's mission is to measure development progress against strategic reconstruction objectives to provide insights on how to improve performance against the development milestones set by the Afghan government and international donors. APPRO is staffed by national and international personnel with extensive experience in development and scientific research. For more information, see: www.appro.org.af. Contact: mail@appro.org.af.

About Cordaid

Cordaid, based in the Netherlands, has a focus on international development and collaboration in vulnerable regions and areas of conflict. Its mission is to build flourishing communities in fractured societies. Monitoring the transition in Afghanistan is part of Cordaid's program on Women's Leadership for Peace and Security (WLPS). This program aims to increase the capacity of women's networks, give a voice to women at the local level in processes of peace and security, and promote the women's agenda in national and global arenas. For more information see: www.cordaid.org. Contact: stj@cordaid.nl

APPRO takes full responsibility for all omissions and errors.

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List of Abbreviations

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AOG	Armed Opposition Groups
APPRO	Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOWA	Department of Women's Affairs
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women Law
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRU	Family Response Unit
IMF	International Military Forces
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
VTC	Vocational Training Center

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Executive Summary

As the completion date of the security transition by the end of 2014 nears, many Afghans and international community members are wondering what will happen in Afghanistan in the years that will follow. The perception of a surge in insecurity is not uncommon and many worry that the efforts and hard work that was put in Afghanistan by the international community and the many sacrifices made by Afghans, will go to waste. There is grave concern that the achievements in development in general and in women's rights in particular will be reversed after the full transition due the armed opposition gaining an upper hand and ushering in more conservative societal norms particularly for women.

On 18 June 2013, the launch of the fifth and final transition tranche was announced. Once this last tranche is completed, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will be given the full responsibility for security across all of Afghanistan. The purpose of this monitoring report is to track and document changes in women's access to rights and basic services over time in light of the transition.

Some of the key findings indicate that there are reasons to be concerned about a possible regression in women's right in Afghanistan. The findings from this second round of data collection suggest that the heightened sense of insecurity and public fear of suicide attacks and explosions have compelled some families to start limiting their female family members' presence in public life, under the pretext that it has become increasingly insecure outside the home.

Women have grown more wary about their movements in public as a consequence of the perceived or actual increase in attacks by the armed opposition groups and heightened criminal activity due to lessened ability to enforce the law.

Despite the increased public fear, women and community elders that participated in this study maintained that they support ANSF. Most of the key informants stated they were pleased with the idea of Afghans being responsible for Afghanistan's security. However, the continued lack of equipment and professional training for ANP had to be addressed, if the police are to play their role to the full after the transition.

Women's inability to access justice is a persisting challenge. Corruption among justice officials in conjunction with cultural barriers for women to utilize the formal justice system for resolving disputes are stated as the two main obstacles to women's access to justice in Afghanistan. Despite these difficulties, violence against women cases reported by women to legal aid providing organizations such as the AIHRC continue to increase in numbers. Some of the most common cases reported are physical violence and forced and early marriages of women and girls.

With regard to women's access to work and public life, findings show that women with high profile such as businesswomen and other prominent women are feeling an increased pressure by elements that disapprove of their presence in public life. Women working in professions traditionally considered as inappropriate for females, appear to be experiencing an increased level of hostility directed at them. Despite the deterioration in security conditions, most working women demonstrate a high degree of resolve to continue working. There are reports, however, of female teachers and female health personnel relocating from rural to central areas. These

developments could have a very negative impact on women's access to education and health services, especially in the rural parts of the country.

Recommendations

ADDRESSED TO:

NATO

1. Review NATO's role since inception in building ANSF to establish what has been successful and why, and to draw lessons for future forms of assistance. This is particularly important in light of NATO's projected change of role in Afghanistan in the post-2014 period.
2. Future plans should be based on lessons learned and provide targeted support to ANSF, particularly in rural Afghanistan, to address various needs in professional training and mentoring, equipment as well as recruitment.
3. Provide gender sensitivity training and mentoring for not only ANP and ANA, but also for NATO's own trainers, designed with inputs from women's rights and research organizations with expertise on gender.
4. Implement NATO's 2012 guidelines for the realization of UNSCR 1325 at all levels by setting clear targets and collaborating with civil society organizations in implementation and monitoring.
5. Find ways of operationalizing findings from the latest NATO review of its projected activities in Afghanistan after 2014, working closely with civil society organizations particularly on the operational implications UNSCR 1325 for the conduct of NATO-led operations.
6. Facilitate and host consultation meetings between civil society organizations, national and international security forces, and civil society organizations to discuss and act on the findings from the various cycles of the "Monitoring Women's Security in Transition" initiative. A commitment must also be made by NATO to review, on a regular basis, all such efforts and disseminate findings to inform future activities of women's rights organizations in Afghanistan.

GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN

Action needs to be taken in the following areas:

Afghan Local Police (ALP):

7. Select ALP commanders and officers with care and in consultation with communities to minimize the extortive behavior and intimidation by rogue elements.
8. Provide gender sensitivity training and mentoring for ALP, designed with inputs from women's rights organizations.
9. Institutionalize and incorporate ALP into the Afghan National Police, with clear and specific oversight mechanisms and responsibilities. Resources need to be found to provide adequate training, infrastructure, and equipment for ALP personnel.

10. Make it mandatory for ALP to wear formal uniforms on duty so that civilians can identify them as security personnel.

Family Response Units (FRUs):

11. Provide adequate resources for Family Response Units. Such resources must include dedicated spaces, equipment and furniture, and experienced and qualified staff.
12. Provide adequate resources, including training, daycare facilities, and functioning infrastructure to build the capacity of FRUs
13. Develop a functioning recording and filing system of cases of violence against women at FRU and ANP stations, including a monitoring mechanism of cases that have been mediated.

Protection of Women in Workplaces:

14. Provide adequate institutional and material support, with civil oversight, to women's shelters to increase women's access to justice and protection from violence.
15. Facilitate cooperation and joint coordination between the Ministry Of Education and Ministry Of Interior in all districts to increase the safety and mobility of school girls.
16. Identify and implement structural measures, such as safe transport, guarded working spaces, and similar other initiatives to protect the working women and in direct consultation with the working women.

Access to Work and Public Life:

17. Develop mentoring programs for women and men in all ministries, ensuring that there are functioning gender units at every ministry and there are adequate resources to support the ministerial gender focal points.
18. Increase the number of qualified women in senior governmental positions
19. Provide designated places for women in governmental offices and train men in gender-sensitive behavior in contacts with their female colleagues.
20. Initiate ongoing dialogue with women's organizations, community leaders and key public figures to promote women's participation in public life, particularly in rural areas.

CIVIL SOCIETY

21. The Afghan media should continue to draw attention women's rights issues including cases of violence against women, bearing in mind that exposure of issues only the first step. The subsequent steps should include guiding public opinion toward more recognition and acceptance of women's role and contributions in society.
22. Initiate awareness programs for men concerning the EVAW law and the negative impacts of violence in families on society as a whole.
23. Academics, journalists, and religious scholars need to conduct research on speeches by religious leaders to identify ways in which religious institutions could champion against violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY

24. Intensify development programs in areas where international security forces are no longer present. The bulk of such initiatives must be based on Afghan civil society organizations taking the lead.
25. Provide financial and technical supports to civil society, especially women's organizations, to implement programs on women's empowerment and protection. In providing this support, the conditionality by the donors must be provable outcomes and sustainability of impacts.
26. Support skill transfer initiatives, such as proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation and financial accountability for national NGOs so that national organizations can access funding from donors and run programs without an intermediary organization.
27. Support initiatives for community-based development monitoring systems, organized and run by local community member with guidance from national and international civil society organizations.
28. Give impetus to the creation of sustainable work opportunities and economic empowerment of women by supporting programs that take into account local constraints and sensitivities regarding women working outside the home.
29. Ensure synergy and coordination among international actors, in their efforts to advance women's rights and their participation in the development and peace processes as well as the 2014 Presidential Elections. This should include the effective implementation of the objectives concerning women's right in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.
30. Establish a monitoring and reporting system of court cases with the input from legal aid and civil society organizations to inform interventions to reform the justice system.

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Introduction

On March 22, 2011, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, announced the first tranche of the security transition to be completed by the end of 2014. After 2014, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will have the sole responsibility for Afghanistan's national security. On 18 June 2013, the launch of the fifth and final transition tranche was announced. Once this last tranche is completed, the 11 final provinces will have completed their transition and the Afghan forces will be in the lead for security across all of Afghanistan.

The rationale for the transition is to enable ANSF to take charge of national security as part of the state building project that commenced in late 2001. The assumption is that ANSF is now ready to serve its country with its existing pool of qualified personnel and the financial support provided by international military forces (IMF).

Evidence from the baseline report of this monitoring study suggests that the overall security conditions have deteriorated in some (but not all) of the transitioned areas. In areas with deteriorated security there are increased criminal and politically motivated incidents while civilians and civil society organizations – particularly those working on women's issues – are being subjected to greater restrictions in their daily activities and existence.¹ Findings from the first cycle of this research reveal that many challenges remain to be addressed in the post-transition period and before the Afghan security forces are sufficiently prepared to assume the main responsibility in providing security. Moreover, the baseline found that women's groups are concerned that there is minimal, if any, attention paid to ensuring that quality milestones on women's rights are met in terms of the rule of law, governance, access to justice, and security from a women's perspective. Critics are also worried that the security transition is being rushed through as a result of domestic pressures to disengage from Afghanistan by the constituents of the nations that make up IMF and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) rather than a realistic assessment of ANSF's readiness to assume this responsibility for Afghanistan's security.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, women and women's rights groups have increasingly demanded – and received – significant improvements in their conditions and access to public services. Some of the most visible signs of progress are the increased numbers of girls attending school and women working in public offices including schools, hospitals and government offices as civil servants and police personnel. Despite these achievements, however, there are serious concerns regarding the sustainability of these achievements after the IMF/ISAF withdrawal and the full handover of security ANSF.

The purpose of this report, based on data collected in a second round, and the subsequent updates planned in the months ahead, is to highlight changes that have occurred since the baseline assessment and examine whether there are grounds for concern regarding a regression of women's rights in Afghanistan as a consequence of the security transition.

The findings from this monitoring project are targeted at the Government of Afghanistan and the international donor organizations and governments. The findings and recommendations from this and the subsequent updates are intended to inform the policy discourse on

¹ The baseline report of the "Afghanistan: Monitoring Women's Security in Transition" project is available at: <http://www.cordaid.org/nl/publicaties/afghanistan-monitoring-womens-security-transition/>

Afghanistan in the post-2014 period.

Objectives

This report set out to identify and track the positive and negative impacts of security transition on women over time with a focus on the following areas:

- Overall Security and Access to Justice
- Access to Work and Public Life
- Mobility and Access to Services

The goal for this monitoring project is to provide timely and in-depth insights, based on research, to inform decision making and programming by national, international, women's rights and other civil society organizations with mandates to protect and enhance civil life in Afghanistan with a particular focus on women's rights. This project is also expected to contribute to the dialogue on how to protect and enhance the spaces within which civil society organizations operate in Afghanistan in the post-transition environment.

Methodology

The principal idea of this monitoring study is to visit and re-visit a number of selected districts across Afghanistan in four cycles to identify and trace changes between cycles as results of the security transition. This report provides an update to the findings reported in the baseline study. As much as possible, the key informants interviewed for this update report were drawn from the key informants interviewed for the baseline study.

Geographic Focus and District Selection Criteria

The selection of the districts and provinces were based on the following three main criteria:

- 1. Tranche number:** nine districts from tranches one and two were selected. The assumption is that those districts that were handed over to ANSF at the early stages of the security transition will better fit the purpose of this study, since change is more likely to be found in a district after a certain amount of time has passed since its transition.
- 2. Rural or urban representation:** the second criterion was established to maintain a balance in the selection between urban and rural area representation. However, when visiting provincial capitals such as Herat City and Jalalabad, the researchers also examined – to the extent it was possible – what was happening in the surrounding districts.
- 3. Security level:** only districts and provincial capitals that were deemed to be safe enough for the researchers to travel to were visited. Ensuring the personal security of researchers while in the field was a top priority.

Some adjustments were made in the make-up of the districts for the second round of data collection. First, Surobi district of Kabul had to be replaced with an alternative district because the researchers concluded that significant change was not likely to occur in Surobi over time.

Surobi was hence replaced with a rural district in Nangarhar, viewed as more fitting for the objectives of this study. Second, Khuram Wa Sarbagh, a rural district in Samangan, was replaced with the provincial capital, Aiybak, as a result of administrative hurdles created for the researchers by the local officials.

Table 1: Selected Districts for Cycle 2 (to be maintained for Cycles 3 and 4)

#	Selected Districts	Province	Tranche	Type
1	Paghman	Kabul	1	Rural
2	Jalalabad	Nangarhar	2	Urban
3	Sorkhrod	Nangarhar	2	Rural
4	Herat City	Herat	1	Urban
5	Dawlatabad	Balkh	2	Rural
6	Balkh	Balkh	2	Rural
7	Aiybak	Samangan	2	Urban
8	Mehtarlam	Laghman	1	Urban
9	Lashkargah	Helmand	1	Urban

Data Collection Tools

The methodology used to collect data for this study consists of four key tools:

1. Desk-based research on existing literature on the security transition.
2. Interviews with a wide range of individual from in selected districts, organized in categories (see Table 2).
3. Focus group discussions with three selected community groups: elders, working women and housewives (women that do not work outside the home).
4. A series of guiding questions to capture women’s concerns and thoughts about the transition.

In the second round of data collection 163 individuals (mainly women) were interviewed and 21 focus group discussions were held in nine districts located in seven provinces (Table 1). Quantitative figures from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), provincial departments of various ministries and family response units (FRUs) were also obtained to support the findings from the interviews and FGDs.

Table 2: Selected Informant Categories and District

#	Category	Type of Interview	Targeted # of Informants/District
1	ANP/FRU	Individual Interview	1
2	Prominent Women	Individual Interview	2
3	Businesswomen	Individual Interview	2
4	Women Working in Government Offices	Individual Interview	2
5	Working Women	Focus Group Discussion	1
6	Housewives	Focus Group Discussion	1
7	Community Elders	Focus Group Discussion	1
8	Civil Society Organizations	Individual Interview	3
9	Health Clinics	Individual Interview	3
10	Girls' High Schools	Individual Interview	3
11	Vocational Training Centers	Individual Interview	2
TOTAL			21

Working Definitions

In each district, three overarching themes were identified to trace changes over time in women's conditions resulting from the security transition. The three themes were defined, each with four main markers (see Table 3). These markers serve as indicators of change under each theme.

Overall security and access to justice are combined in this report because access to justice was interpreted as part of a set of proxy indicators to monitor women's overall security. Women's ability to access legal aid organizations, courts and other justice institutions such as Afghan National Police (ANP) and Family Response Units (FRUs) served as the overall indicator for tracking changes to women's security in general.

Table 3: Identified Themes to Monitor Possible Change in Women's Security in Transition

Overall Security and Access to Justice:	Access to Work and Public Life:	Mobility and Access to Services:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's sense of security and safety outside their homes • How women currently perceive the ANSF when they have the responsibility of their safety • The level of cooperation and trust between ANSF and the communities • Women's ability to access legal assistance and justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes observed or reported regarding the ability of women to work in public outside their homes since the security transition without endangering their lives • Attitudes shown by communities towards women that work in public • Availability of employment and training opportunities for women • Increase/decrease in the intensity of threats received by working women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's ability to leave their homes and move from one location to another without male company and without fearing for their personal security • The ability of women to access services such as health clinics and schools • Women's ability to visit bazaars for shopping • Women's perceived level of harassment in public places

Access to work and public life are coupled because the two areas are overlapping and one cannot be monitored in isolation from the other. Similarly, access to services in the third and

final theme is viewed as a tool to monitor women's mobility. Clinics and schools were interviewed to assess women's ability to reach them, especially in remote areas, and to establish whether or not their ability to reach these services has changed since the completion of the security transition in their respective districts.

Research Limitations and Constraints – Cycle 2

1. A lack of file keeping and documentation makes it difficult to access reliable quantitative data from the government offices, clinics, ANP and civil society organizations (CSOs). Therefore, the graphs used in this study are provided for illustrative purposes only and are not statistically significant.
2. Insecurity in some of the districts and provinces made it problematic to re-visit two of the provinces, namely Helmand and Laghman. As an alternative to field visits, the researchers held phone interviews with the individuals interviewed in person in the first round.
3. Some of the ministries that had previously issued research permission letters to APPRO were less supportive in the second round. Delays in obtaining permission letters caused delays in the collection of data and the analysis.

Overview of Recent Research

Subsequent cycle reports will be updated to reflect new information and insights from reports, publications, and developments that emerge as this monitoring takes place.

Women's Rights

There have been a number of changes in the regulatory framework that governs women's rights in Afghanistan. Since 2002 women's rights and, more broadly, gender mainstreaming have constituted a crosscutting component within most of Afghanistan's development and reconstruction objectives set by the international donors and agreed to by the Government of Afghanistan. Gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Afghanistan and is identified as a crosscutting theme in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) was introduced in Afghanistan along with the Bonn Agreement in 2002, with the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) overseeing its implementation.² The Government of Afghanistan endorsed the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2003.³ In 2008 the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) was created while in 2009 there was the Presidential Decree on Eliminating Violence Against Women (EVAW).⁴ The mechanisms established to promote and protect women's rights have included the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) in 2002, establishment of gender units within most ministries, and appointment of gender focal points, gender working groups, and gender advisers at some ministries.

2 Working Group 1325 Report (December 2008), available at:

http://www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org/Newsitems/Final_Report_Eval_NAP_1325_12Dec2008.pdf

3 UNIFEM, CEDAW Briefing Kit, available at: http://cedaw-seasia.org/docs/general/CEDAW_Briefing_Kit.pdf

4 There have been serious threats to the EVAW law within the Parliamentary process since May 2013 with the outcome as yet unclear.

Several studies conducted in Afghanistan have been exclusively or partially concerned with progress in matters such as the elimination of violence against women, women's access to services, women's access to justice and women's political participation. A recent report by UNAMA evaluates the progress in the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law between October 2011 and September 2012.⁵ The EVAW law criminalizes brutal acts against women such as forced marriage, rape and forced self-immolation. The report finds that while there are some visible improvements in the implementation of the law by prosecutors and primary courts in their handling of cases of violence against women, the application of EVAW still remains inconsistent. Another key finding by UNAMA is the increased number of women that report violent crimes against them, suggesting that this development is a result of increased legal awareness efforts by civil society organizations, the government and the international community. The study also finds a significant surge in the registration of cases of violence against women by prosecutors.

The majority of the registrations of cases of violence against women were completed in two of the most secure provinces, Herat and Kabul. The reporting of the cases of violence against women by women to the police and the registration of these cases by the police remains low, however. UNAMA reports that only 470 out of the 4,010 cases of violence against women documented by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) are filed and registered by ANP and the prosecutors. Most of the cases reported by women to the provincial Departments of Women's Affairs (DOWAs) and ANP never reach the prosecutors or the courts because they are dropped or resolved as a result of mediation. Likewise, women and families that fear having to bribe or cannot afford to bribe corrupt justice system officials are, according to UNAMA, not able to have their cases dealt with in a just and impartial manner. These findings are strong indications of the impediments women face in terms of access to formal justice.

The report also notes hesitancy by the police to arrest people accused of harming women when they are influential individuals, members of Afghan Local Police (ALP)⁶, Armed Opposition Group members, or people willing and able to pay bribes. Corruption, inefficiency, lack of impartiality and discriminatory behavior by ANP toward women have created a situation where the perpetrators of violence against women can escape justice. ANP officials often consider cases related to women as "family matters" and refer them back to the communities. The reliance by DOWA offices, AIHRC, prosecutors and ANP on traditional justice bodies does not always result in equitable outcomes since the traditional structures for conflict resolution are often dominated by powerful men of the local communities.

There are increasing indications of growing influence by the armed opposition elements on local governance mechanisms and efforts to uphold the rule of law. In some provinces the AOG-led parallel courts and jirgas are entrusted by the communities to act as the only legitimate authority for the delivery of justice.⁷ The increased activities by the AOGs hinder also the mobility of women, especially in remote areas and districts, while impeding their ability to reach formal justice institutions.⁸

5 UNAMA (2012). "Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan" (Kabul: UNAMA).

6 Arbaki or local community militia.

7 UNAMA (December 2012)

8 Ibid.

According to the 2012 biannual report by AIHRC on violence against women in Afghanistan the number of women reporting sexual violence cases increased in 2011 despite the prevailing fear of being ostracized and being at risk of more violence due to speaking up about violence. Cases of sexual violence involve forced sexual intercourse, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion and sexual humiliation and insult. In 90 percent of the cases the perpetrator of violence is reported as the husband, the father or another close male relative. AIHRC identifies several factors that determine women's ability to report violence cases. Women's security, women's awareness of their rights and the availability of AIHRC offices or other legal aid providing offices are mentioned as three important factors.⁹

Developments and Security Challenges in Recent Years

A recent survey by the Asia Foundation finds a wide range of positive developments in Afghanistan in terms of public attitudes towards national security, women's rights and improved quality of education.¹⁰ According to the survey, the main challenges women face in Afghanistan are a lack of education/illiteracy, lack of employment opportunities, and lack of rights. The perception about the lack of education being a main problem rose from 25 percent in 2011 to 29 percent in 2012, while the perception of unemployment being a major challenge had risen from 2 percent in 2011 to 14 percent in 2012, a considerable increase in just one year and perhaps indicating a serious decline in employment opportunities for women in 2012. The perception that a lack of rights is a major challenge for women had, on the other hand, decreased from 14 percent in 2011 to 10 percent in 2012.¹¹ The study further states that according to public perception, Afghan National Army (ANA) is a more professional and honest security institution as compared to ANP. A high percentage of the respondents (67 percent for ANP and 65 percent for ANA) agreed that both ANP and ANA still needed foreign assistance and were not able to operate on their own. The ability of ANSF to perform their duties and public confidence in their abilities to provide security are highlighted as two key concerns in the security transition.

Others have reported that escalating violence in many of the provinces jeopardizes the rights and opportunities of women. Women who pursue opportunities provided for them by the international community and the government, and women who speak up and demand their rights risk their lives as they are accused of being anti-Islamic or Western agents. Women who assume certain civic rights are often subjected to threats, attacks and assassinations.¹² There appears to be a consensus that there is an evident lack of will and support by the government to safeguard vulnerable women in need of protection and support. For example, there are now roughly 400 women imprisoned for so called "moral crimes", the grounds for which are running away from home as a result of domestic violence, having an extra-marital relationship, or being sexually abused.¹³ The courts consider running away as a crime and when women go to the police to seek protection, they are either imprisoned or returned to their homes where they are likely to be punished severely for dishonoring the family. An investigation of safe houses for women alleged that the houses were being used to prostitute women rather than protecting them, an allegation hotly contested by women's organizations, the international donor communities, and the women seeking shelter in the safe houses.¹⁴ Such allegations and counter

9 AIHRC (2012)

10 The Asia Foundation (2012). A Survey of the Afghan People 2012 (Kabul: Asia Foundation)

11 Ibid.

12 Cortright and Wall (August 2012). "Afghan Women Speak – Enhancing Security and Human Rights in Afghanistan."

13 Human Rights Watch (March 2012)

14 Cortright and Wall (August 2012)

allegations only boost the already existing public prejudice against women's shelters and further undermine the few safety nets defenseless women have when in need of support and protection.

Female participation and employment in the civil service, security sector and the judiciary has made modest progress since 2006. Women in civil service positions increased from 22 percent in 2006 to 25 percent in 2011 while women in the judiciary reached 10 percent in 2011 compared to 4.7 percent in 2006. Women working in the security sector, judiciary and civil service face serious challenges in continuing to work, not only from disapproving family pressure but also from discrimination in the work place. In the education sector, significant progress is made in girls' enrollment, the number of female teachers (the teaching force is now approximately 39 percent female), and the number of schools built across the country. Stronger support for girls' education in some communities has been detected despite some schools, particularly girls' schools, being attacked by the AOG elements and having to close due to increased insecurity. Schools built by NGOs with community participation, however, are considered as less vulnerable to such attacks.¹⁵

The armed opposition now controls a growing number of provincial districts where the government used to be in control. Areas in the northern part of the country previously considered as peaceful are now subject to skirmishes by AOGs and increased violence due to a weakening rule of law. Some have claimed that the opposition's growing strength is caused by the Afghan state's inability to spread its authority and to provide services to the public.¹⁶

The increased insecurity and violence has a stronger impact on women as compared to men. Women are more at risk of becoming victims of sexual assault and physical violence while increased insecurity also reinforces their immobility and increased pressure by their families to keep them at home due to safety concerns. Likewise, research shows that an escalation in violence also increases the number of child and forced marriages in communities. Families prefer to marry off their daughters at a very early age rather than risking them becoming rape victims or forcefully taken by powerful men as their wives.¹⁷

Studies Related to the Security Transition in Afghanistan

Although there are studies available that assess the progress and impact of the pre-2014 transition process from a security perspective, there is little attention paid to the impact of the security transition from a gender perspective.¹⁸ Research about the transition process is mainly concerned with issues related to negotiations and the possibility of a political settlement between the Taliban and the Afghan government, the level of preparedness of the ANSF to assume the responsibility for national security, the international community's interest in remaining in Afghanistan, and the role and influence of key regional actors in the outcome and potential success of the transition process. A major concern expressed in some of the research is ability of the Afghan government to respond to a rushed transition process and the unpreparedness of ANSF to take full responsibility for national security.¹⁹

15 Ibid.

16 Rangelov and Theros (2012)

17 Cortright and Wall (August 2012)

18 See for example: Katzman (January 2013), Stapleton (May 2012), and International Crisis Group (March 2012)

19 Stapleton (May 2012)

Others argue that the potential failure of ANSF to shoulder the responsibility for Afghanistan's security would have devastating consequences, including a full-scale civil war. Challenges within ANA include the prevalence of corruption, low literacy rates, drug addiction, high attrition rates, equipment and recruitment deficits, and a lack of training among personnel. Many ANA soldiers serve in the army without sufficient training. The recruitment policy favors quantity over quality, as the government is striving to achieve the targeted expansion of ANA before the end of 2014.²⁰ Newly published independent research regarding the transition confirms that insecurity in large parts of the country has increased affecting women's mobility adversely, which, in turn, impedes their access to education, health care and participation in public life.²¹

Interviews with 300 women leaders across eight provinces portray a very negative image of women's participation in the transition process and non-existence of gender sensitivity in the transition process.²² In fact, the majority of the women interviewed felt excluded from the consultations that have been shaping the planned steps and activities of the security handover. Furthermore, these women do not feel that ANSF are sympathetic to the needs of women and children, or human rights in general.²³

Development / Humanitarian Aid Delivery in Post-2014

By all accounts, 2014 is a pivotal year for Afghanistan. The two major events of 2014 are the Presidential Elections and the full draw down of the international military forces. While many of the international donor organizations, governments, and military and other technical advisers will remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014, their roles will change from being closely associated and identified as military to non-military.

Afghanistan has been unique in its troubled experience of having development and humanitarian aid closely tied to a military campaign. For many civil society organizations active in Afghanistan the prospect of demilitarized aid are very appealing while everyone is, at the same time, on high alert about the prospect of security being fully handed over by international forces and NATO to ANSF.

Demilitarization of aid is likely to create a number of challenges and opportunities. The main challenge is the heightened uncertainty and the high likelihood of some turmoil, intensifying as we approach the end of 2014. A key aspect of the turmoil is likely to be increased lawlessness and criminality in rural and urban areas. The opportunities include, but are not limited to, the decoupling of the activities of aid and rights organizations from the military, particularly the international forces.

It is worth noting that many aid organizations active in Afghanistan since the early 1990s, and able to continue to operate during the Taliban period, have long ceased operating in areas deemed militarily unsafe. With the departure of the international forces and their replacement with ANSF, it is likely that at least some of the aid and rights organizations will be able to resume their activities without being accused by AOGs of association with foreign forces or governments.

20 Wood (2012)

21 Wilkens (November 2012)

22 Afghan Women's Network (May 2012)

23 Ibid.

DRAFT REPORT: NOT FOR DISSEMINATION OR CITATION

Key Findings from Selected Districts

Paghman, Kabul

Date of visit for cycle 2:
April 2013

Date of previous visit:
October 2012

Tranche:
1

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Community members in Paghman report that they have not experienced any noticeable change in the security situation of their district. Most interviewees even suggested that they feel safer now in public compared to six months ago, in October 2012, when the first round of interviews were conducted. As stated by the interviewees in the first round, the most common fears of Paghman's residents are suicide attacks and roadside explosions. It appears that such attacks have not been common since October 2012, contributing to an increased sense of security. Both housewives and working women reiterated that they feel comfortable and secure when they move in public and when they send their children to school.

In the past six months security has improved and now more people send their daughters to schools compared to the past years...In the past, there were foreigner movements [in Paghman] and we had fear of suicide attacks and explosions thinking that if they were attacked it would affect us as well. But right now everything is fine and we don't have any fear from ANP.
- FGD, working women in Paghman, Kabul

Paghman's community is supportive of their police and has no concerns regarding their conduct since ANP officers are locals and people know them. The main cause for concern is the inability of the police to perform professionally and their corrupt behavior. Women stated that they appreciated female police officers because they felt more comfortable letting policewomen into their homes than policemen.

According to Paghman's FRU, ANP has access to all districts:

Paghman has 114 villages and we have access to all of them but in some areas like the Arghanda area, we have security problems. Suicide bombers and the Taliban come from Pakistan to Maidan and then they come to Arghanda and disappear in the area.
- Individual interview, official in Paghman, Kabul

Women's access to formal justice is very limited in Paghman. Since October 2012, only three family cases had been reported to the FRU. Most cases relating to women's rights are solved by the community shuras and do normally not reach security officials. When women do approach the FRU to report a complaint, the most common way to solve their case is through mediation. It is, however, very likely that women that do request legal assistance from formal justice institutions do so in Kabul since Paghman is in close vicinity of Kabul City and handing in a petition in the capital helps maintaining some degree of confidentiality and preventing the case from going public in Paghman itself.

Access to Work and Public Life

The only places where women are known to work in Paghman are schools, health clinics and teacher training centers. It was reported that there used to be vocational trainings for women in the past, but no such trainings were currently being offered despite the demand for such courses among women. In general people in Paghman are not opposed to educated women working in public places as long as they respect the Islamic dress code and cover themselves accordingly. Currently, working women in Paghman do not face threats for participating in public life. Despite this, very few women appear to be working in government offices. This could be due a lack of affirmative action by the governmental entities, under qualification of the women, or their unwillingness to work as civil servants.

Mobility and Access to Services

Unlike other districts included in this study Paghman's women feel that the level of harassment of women in public spaces has decreased in the past six months since October 2012. Families do not seem to have any concerns regarding their daughters' safety when walking to and from school. ANP is said to show responsiveness toward the security needs of school girls and does regular patrolling of the roads after schools close to make sure that the girls are not harassed on their way home.

No difficulties in movements of women were reported by those interviewed. The personnel at health clinics reported that women continue to access their facilities without difficulties and that the majority of the patients are women.

There is no harassment in Paghman district because everyone knows each other... Our children and daughters are going to school and if they face harassment they will definitely tell us, but until now it has not happened. After the school day finishes, the police patrol the roads to provide security [for school girls] around the school and on their way back home.

- FGD, housewives in Paghman, Kabul

Jalalabad, Nangarhar

Date of visit for cycle 2:
April 2013

Date of previous visit:
November 2012

Tranche:
2

Overall Security and Access to Justice

The main concern for women in Jalalabad's outside their homes continues to be the high level of explosions and suicide attacks which are reported to have intensified since late 2012. The increase in AOG activity has made women feel wary of becoming inadvertent victims when they are in public places. Many parents feel torn between allowing their children to go to school and putting them in risk or keeping them at home where they are likely to be safer.

If we do not let our children go to school and keep them safe [at home], their future will be spoiled and they will remain uneducated. But if they face an explosion or suicide we will lose them.

- FGD, working women in Jalalabad, Nangarhar

There were no reports of police misconduct toward women in Jalalabad. Elders complained, however, that ANP officers have a rude, reckless and unprofessional behavior in public, which damages their standing among the communities. ANA, on the other hand, is generally held in high esteem among the people of Jalalabad. Despite the disapproval of ANP's improper conduct most of the women and men included in this study stated that they approved of Afghan forces being in charge of Afghanistan's security, regardless of their incapacity. Nonetheless, strong sentiment was expressed by the women and men for the international community to continue to support ANA and ANP through providing professional training and resources.

There are several obstacles for women's access to justice in Nangarhar as a province. According to legal aid organizations, corruption in the formal justice system is increasingly becoming a deterrent for ordinary people to use it. Perpetrators of harmful acts against women are said to be treated with impunity and easily released from detention especially when they have the right contacts or sufficient means.

Access to villages in some of the districts is no longer possible because of increased AOG activity and presence. Legal aid organizations and ANP both confirmed that AOGs are known to intimidate villagers to prevent them from approaching formal justice institutions. As a result, fewer legal cases are reported from the districts that have undergone transition. Women and men are for this reason increasingly left with no option but to rely on traditional justice mechanisms in rural Nangarhar.

Now the police are cooperating with us and we are always in contact with them... But regarding justice departments, the situation is worse. There is more bribery in the system now and those with connections always find a way out of jail and the law. Our access [to remote areas] is limited because there is no good security and the opposition groups against the government are increasing their activities day by day.

- Individual interview, NGO official in Jalalabad, Nangarhar

Access to Work and Public Life

The public perception of women participating in public and working outside the home varies, depending on the type of profession. As with other districts, female teachers and health personnel are respected by communities. Similarly, women who work in government offices, for NGOs or other entities are often labeled as immoral because they share working spaces with men.

Female teachers and health workers did not have any complaints about negative community attitudes toward them. In contrast, women working in jobs with higher visibility and profile have a much more negative experience. Businesswomen as well as prominent women in Jalalabad report that their ability to work and continue their professions has become very difficult. Threat messages delivered to prominent women seem to have increased so much that some women have been forced to resign their jobs.

I had a female colleague who received threat messages so many times. She finally decided to quit her job. She was warned that if she did not quit her job, her family members would be kidnapped. So, she resigned.

- Individual interview, prominent woman in Jalalabad, Nangarhar

A side effect of deteriorating security in the more remote districts is the decreased number of small projects that used to provide work opportunities for rural women.

Mobility and Access to Services

Compared to the previous round of interviews in November 2012, women voiced an increased level of fear when moving from one location to another. The sense of deterioration of security has affected women's freedom of movement as well as their access to services. School officials interviewed report that some parents and male family members have started to prevent their daughters from attending school, stating that the situation has become too dangerous. In part, the danger is attributed to intensified AOG attacks and explosions, but also increased criminality including kidnappings and assassinations.

Yes, of course we are afraid for our children when they go to clinics, bazaars or schools. My husband did not let my daughter go to school when she was in 8th grade because of insecurity. She was [walking] alone and we were worrying about her when she walked to and from school.

- FGD, housewives in Jalalabad, Nangarhar

Women are still able to visit clinics and bazaars, though they do this less comfortably and frequently and often in groups of other women and rarely alone. According to some of the women, a worsening economic situation has led to higher unemployment and contributed to an upswing in harassment of women and girls in public by unemployed male youth. ANP is, however, praised for patrolling and monitoring the streets to prevent harassment of young girls and women.

Sorkhrod, Nangarhar

Date of visit for cycle 2:
April 2013

Date of previous visit:
(First visit)

Tranche:
2

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Similar to Jalalabad, the residents of Sorkhrod believe that the security situation of their district in the past six months has changed for the worse with increased suicide attacks and explosions carried out by AOGs. The fear of being harmed by such attacks has heightened women's anxiety, especially, and increased their discomfort when in public.

Women feel comfortable by the presence of ANP in their communities. Some women reported that police officers often assist women to cross roads by stopping the traffic and monitor the school roads to ensure the safety of children. As with most provinces and districts across Afghanistan, in Sorkhrod the community appreciates and respects ANA more than ANP.

Both men and women in Sorkhrod are pleased with the transition of security from international to national forces. Some feel strongly that the number of civilian casualties were lower under ANSF compared to when ISAF/IMF were present in their communities.

We had a lot of problems when we had foreign military presence, but now we live in peace. When foreigners were receiving reports about the Taliban being in some house, they were attacking that house and destroying everything without investigating beforehand.

- FGD, housewives in Sorkhrod, Nangarhar

Most of the women's legal issues are solved in community shuras. FRU and ANP are only referred to as a last resort. Even when a case does reach the FRU, it is often referred back to a local shura for traditional mediation and resolution. Some elders feel strongly that the security officials are not helpful to the women that approach them.

Our ANA and police provide security and they are respecting everyone, but despite this, I have seen that when women go to family response units, the police are not treating women with kindness... Women have some legal problems like inheritance and other issues. Some families are not willing to pay the women's rights after the death of her husband... Since the government is not strong, there is no rule of law and the law is not enforced on people equally.

- FGD, community elder in Sorkhrod, Nangarhar

There were several references to the religious leaders in Sorkhrod increasingly promoting women's rights to education and work. It was also claimed that some religious leaders were speaking against gender-based violence in their Friday prayers. According to some of those interviewed, the religious leaders who address such issues as violence against women are employed and supervised and trained by the government. This points to some of the benefits of formalizing the profession of religious leaders to ensure that they act responsibly and can play roles in promoting and protecting women's rights, especially in the rural parts of the country.

While Sorkhrod is considered as one of the safer districts of Nangarhar, several of its villages such as Barkakrak, Koz Kakrak, Brewnaw and Chamtala were described as inaccessible to the police and government due to AOG presence. It is safe to assume that women living in these villages have more limited access to the formal justice system and less encouraged to use it.

Access to Work and Public Life

There were no accounts of threats against women working or being present in public life. The women that work in public in Sorkhrod mainly work as teachers at schools or as health personnel. Women in Sorkhrod in general do not work in government offices due to main two reasons. First, illiteracy is very high among the women and, second, there are very few governmental jobs in the districts. Also, lack of work opportunities to work after education dissuades many women from pursuing education. Most families are concerned that without job prospects, there are fewer reasons to send girls to schools. The community's perception about women working in public offices, and getting an education, seems to be improving, however:

Now people's level of awareness has increased and they permit their children to study and let women work. Sometime ago, I was opposed to schools and women working outside. I had a gun on my shoulder and I was fighting, but when I realized that my children were growing without education I left my gun and an organization built us a school. The same organization also provided tailoring work for women. Now we want our women to study.

- FGD, community elder in Sorkhrod, Nangarhar

Mobility and Access to Services

Women and girls are able to move in public when they go to school or visit the health clinic. Women prefer to move in public in groups or with their children. The fear of becoming victims to explosions and kidnappings are the two primary concerns of women in Sorkhrod. Women's ability to travel to the health clinics and schools has not changed since the district was transitioned.

Although there was some degree of harassment of schoolgirls in the past years, the level of harassment during this round of interviews and focus group discussions was reported as non-existent. Reportedly, this improvement is due to ANP actively warning and taking action against men and boys who have attempted to harass women and girls in public.

Herat City, Herat

Date of visit for cycle 2:
May 2013

Date of previous visit:
November 2012

Tranche:
1

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Herat province has experienced security deterioration since the previous field visit in November 2012. Assassinations of individuals that defy AOGs have increased in number in the provincial capital and the districts, according to women interviewed. The increased number of assassinations and threats has made the lives of women in public much more difficult. Families in Herat have begun to put pressure on their female family members to give up their public life and remain at home for safety:

By and large, security has worsened. Kidnappings and murder have increased compared to last year as both men and women are getting assassinated...My family is restricting me more and more when they hear of assassinations taking place..., [they worry about me] since I am a businesswoman and I am working. When I leave home I can't anticipate whether I will come back home in the evening.

- Individual interview, businesswoman in Herat

Women especially complain that life in Herat City itself is becoming increasingly dangerous for women that participate in public life. Female civil servants are currently being advised by security officials against traveling to the districts since this would put their lives in danger. Several of the more populated districts such as Pashtun Zarghun, Guzara, Gulran and Ghoryan have been named by ANP as districts no longer safe from ongoing AOG presence.

Women and elders in Herat continue to have very low degree of trust in the ANP's ability to provide security and protect civilians. ANA is viewed in a more positive light. ANA is referred to as more professional than ANP in dealings with the public.

Because of fear of explosions and suicide attacks we feel more danger in the last 6 months [since November 2012]. The ANP and ANA are not experienced, educated or qualified. With 6 months training they cannot handle the security. The police officers are addicted and illiterate, how can they understand what the needs of women are?

- Individual interview, woman working in government office in Herat

The most common reason for women to approach legal aid organizations in Herat appears to be divorce cases, followed by gender based violence and the so-called "run-away" cases. Honor killings and beheadings of women accused of dishonoring their families are also reported as becoming more common.

Despite these developments, governmental sources claim that the number of women that approach them and legal aid organizations with legal complaints continues to rise because women are now better informed about their legal rights and know where to go to receive help. Women do not go to the police without representation because of the expectation that they would receive poor treatment.

Prominent women are facing an increasing number of threats by AOGs for defending women and their rights.

Access to Work and Public Life

The perceived level of threat has increased notably among the women who work in public. The dominant perception of Afghan female NGO workers is one of indecency and immorality. Most working women are employed in the health and education sectors while more and more women are finding employment in government departments. There were no reports of women having given up their jobs due to insecurity or adverse public perception. There were reports of increased psychological pressure on women to reconsider being present in public life and continuing to work, however.

Since the security transition took place, job opportunities in Herat are said to have decreased. Many of the women interviewed reported that work opportunities are fewer, while the competition to find employment has intensified. At the same time, high unemployment among men, the traditional household income providers, has encouraged women to attempt to find work outside the home.

The unemployed men encourage their women to work to earn a livelihood and if women cannot find a job they participate in vocational centers to develop a skill... Even though women are worried about their security they continue to work because of the poor economic situation.
- Individual interview, teacher in Herat

Projects related to women's skill and vocational training are reported to be fewer in comparison to the years prior to the security transition of Herat in 2011.

Mobility and Access to Services

Clinic staff in Herat report that the clinics in the remote areas of the province face many security-related difficulties, as they are continuously targets of looting and threats. Because of heightened insecurity, female doctors and midwives are no longer posted in remote clinics, with adverse consequence for women in these areas. The clinics more centrally located do not appear to be affected by the worsening security situation and continue to receive a steady and increasing number of female patients.

Housewives who participated in focus group discussions reported that harassment of women and schoolgirls by men had increased in the past six months. However, the women also stated that the increase in harassment and insecurity had not dissuaded them from sending their daughters to school.

All mothers are very afraid when their daughters are out of the home and going to school. There are no known kidnapping cases of girls until now, but harassment of young girls in the streets is very common. Girls that go to school out of Jereil [district] take a bus [in groups] and don't travel alone.
- FGD, housewives in Herat

The mobility of women living in the central parts of Herat province does not seem to have changed in any visible way. Women continue to visit the bazaars, go to clinics for medical treatment and send their daughters to school. One noticeable change is the increased fear of the uncertainty that lies ahead and the possibility of security deteriorating.

DRAFT REPORT: NOT FOR DISSEMINATION OR CITATION

Dawlatabad, Balkh

Date of visit for cycle 2:
May 2013

Date of previous visit:
November 2012

Tranche:
2

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Since the previous monitoring visit in November 2012, the security situation appears to have changed for the worse in Dawlatabad. The security officials have less access to the villages due to increased AOG activity while complaints of police corruption have increased. It was also claimed by some of the interviewees that the police abuse their authority to beat up and detain villagers to release them again upon receipt of money. This conduct indicates that the police have adopted a more extortive behavior in Dawlatabad since the previous visit to the district.

The security forces in Dawlatabad are in general viewed as unqualified, ineffectual, lacking resources and ill prepared to provide and maintain security in the district. On the whole, the security deterioration is blamed on the arming of ALP along with ANP's inability to provide security outside the district center.

ANA and ANP are very weak and they cannot control the security situation. Also, they don't have military equipment or guns to fight with. If there is no security in the villages, how can we consider them as security forces? If they are not armed, they will not be able to control the security of Afghanistan.

- Individual interview, female official in Dawlatabad, Balkh

ANP and FRU officers in Dawlatabad confirmed that security had deteriorated due to increased AOG activity along with a reduced ability to enforce the law in some of the villages. The ALP continue to be viewed as troublemakers and criminals by Dawlatabad's residents. Villages with an ALP presence are considered as most unsafe. It was further suggested that there is a spill over effect of the unrest from some of the insecure villages, mainly in the eastern part of the district, to areas that were previously considered safe. The police access to villages has decreased since the previous round of data collection.

As some of the police officers said, the security of the district is now worse and we cannot go to some of the villages after 4pm. No one can go to these villages after 4pm. The police cannot patrol the far villages because the police force does not have enough officers to patrol 64 villages. Right now we have 70 police officers and also we have a lack of equipment.

- Individual interview, FRU officer in Dawlatabad, Balkh

Request for bribes by ANP is reported as being very common in Dawlatabad. Women that wish to file complaints against someone that has harmed them must often pay the senior officials to proceed with the case. The exact number of women that have complained to the FRU is not clear, as records are still not being kept of many of the cases. The majority of the cases that reach the FRU are related to divorce requests and complaints against domestic violence and elopements. Mediation through traditional means is still a very common method to solve women's cases. According to procedure, women are sent to one of the women's shelters in Mazar-e-Sharif only when mediation attempts by the FRU/ANP fail and complainant refuses to return to her family's home. The cases remain unregistered and are referred to the prosecutor's office only after mediation proves to be unsuccessful. This procedure has not changed since the previous round of interviews in November 2012.

Access to Work and Public Life

While some of the more conservative families with low or no education, especially in the more remote villages, still tend to prevent their female family members from accessing higher education and work outside the home, the majority of Dawlatabad's families that live in the center do not object to women working in public. The main obstacle to women's ability to work outside home, apart from the worsening security situation, is the lack of work opportunities. Religious leaders, community elders and men in general are reported as being supportive of women working and contributing to their families' incomes. NGOs and the international organizations are reported to have decreased their vocational trainings and other skills development projects, possibly due to a deteriorating security situation in the district.

The demand among women to work outside the home has increased...educated and uneducated women alike want to work and make themselves busy, but there are no work opportunities for them.

- FGD, working women in Dawlatabad, Balkh

In this round of interviews, women did not report any particular concerns regarding their personal security or receiving threats for working in public. The main complaint was about the lack of work opportunities. Even community elders complained about women not being able to find work, despite having grade 14 or even university degrees. Corruption and an unfair recruitment system in public offices such as schools remains a major issue, affecting women and men. It is claimed that prospective female teachers have to pay bribes or know an intermediary to be recruited.

Mobility and Access to Services

Harassment of women in public is reported as being uncommon. Women report that they do not get harassed when they are moving in public spaces and are able to visit the bazaar freely on their own and without major concerns. Women that live outside the district center, however, generally travel to the district bazaar or clinic together with a close male relative, because the district roads and outskirts are considered as less safe. The ability of the women to move freely on their own is limited to the district center or the nearby villages.

Security officials are reported to be proactive in protecting schoolgirls from harassment. There is regular communication between the schools and security officials in the district center. The security officials warn religious leaders who speak against girls' education or women's rights. The rural areas do not enjoy the same level of protection by ANP due to a lack of resources and personnel, which limit the ability of ANP to patrol in the more remote villages. Another negative impact of the increased insecurity in remote villages is the decreased mobility of vocational training center staff who can no longer monitor projects in the villages:

Our female colleagues cannot go to the villages for monitoring of courses because of insecurity and they are worried because the villagers warn them claiming that the Taliban believe they work for foreigners. Such threats have increased and they are not comfortable traveling to some areas...they only go to areas that are still safe."

- Individual interview, VTC teacher in Dawlatabad, Balkh

Balkh (district), Balkh

Date of visit for cycle 2:
May 2013

Date of previous visit:
December 2012

Tranche:
2

Overall Security and Access to Justice

The security situation in Balkh district appears to have changed for the better in the past five to six months since the previous field visit. Working women, housewives and elders all report that they feel safer when they are outdoors and that the AOG presence is less felt. There are reports of closer cooperation between the community and ANSF to maintain security in the district. According to security officials and community elders alike, the security situation of Balkh has improved mainly because the trust and cooperation between ANP and the communities of Balkh has grown stronger.

Thank God that compared to other districts security in Balkh is good... here is safer than other districts and the reason is people are unified here... Even in the isolated parts of the district the police cooperate with us and the police station tries to provide security. Girls go to school and women go to the clinics without any harassment.

- FGD, community elders in Balkh (district), Balkh

ANP in Balkh is struggling to extend its services across the district, mainly because it is understaffed. Despite this, women are comforted by the presence of the ANP officers, mainly in the district center, who patrol and watch over the public space. Most of the interviewees felt that ANSF would be able to maintain security once the IMF/ISAF withdrawal is completed toward the end of 2014, on the condition that ANSF are provided sufficient resources.

ALP appears to have improved its image and reputation among Balkh's residents. In the previous round, most women interviewees expressed fear and intimidation by the presence of ALP in their communities. During the second visit, however, it was clear that ALP had become more accepted and trusted by the community.

In some villages there are local police [ALP], we don't know what they do or how they work. They just come to the police chief and take their orders. We haven't seen any [local] police harassment or disturbance.

- FGD, working women in Balkh (district), Balkh

Corruption is reported as being one of the main issues with the public's access to justice. Corruption by many officials is practiced indiscriminately of gender. Reports of requests for bribes by justice and law enforcement officials make people hesitant to use the formal justice system. Dispute resolution through traditional shuras is often favored by most, as this is the less costly method.

The majority of cases that reach the FRU in Balkh are related to divorce, gender based violence and elopements. The FRU's procedures in solving cases have not changed since the previous visit with mediation still being used as the primary tool to solve family disputes.

Access to Work and Public Life

No hostility was reported toward women that work in public. Working women feel that most people are supportive of and have respect for women that have jobs and are able to contribute to their household income, especially women that work as teachers. Women working in government offices are also respected to a large extent while NGOs and other international organizations are generally considered as culturally unfitting work places for Afghan women. The increased support for working women may be related to an increased sense of security due to very few AOG attacks in the district.

It is important that our families trust us. We leave home do our work and come back home. In Balkh most [working] women are teachers. We come to school with our Chadori teach and come back home. People see us and they say nothing, but they don't like women working in NGOs. Women who work in NGOs here commute from center.

- FGD, working women in Balkh (district), Balkh

The main complaint working and home-based women was the lack of work and training opportunities in their district. Unemployment was said to have increased in the past six months while there are fewer possibilities of receiving vocational training and skills development courses. It was suggested that the lack of work opportunities in general have also increased the demand for bribes by people who are in positions to recruit others.

There are no work opportunities for women and bribery has increased a lot. If a person wants to be a teacher she must pay a bribe of 400-1000 US dollars. Girls study 6 years at the university but they look for work for 3 years. They take a test and get good marks but they won't get the job because someone with a middleman or someone that pays the bribe will get the job.

- FGD, working women in Balkh (district), Balkh

There were no accounts of threats against women working as civil servants. This could be because very few women work in government offices or NGOs in Balkh. Most women work either as health workers or teachers.

Mobility and Access to Services

Women's mobility and ability to access services such as education and healthcare has not suffered in any way in the past six months. Harassment continues to be uncommon and the police have maintained efforts to monitor public spaces and protect girls commuting between school and home. The women repeatedly stated that although they were sometimes scared of walking in public for fear of criminals, the streets and roads of Balkh were in general safe. Women are able to do their shopping in the bazaars and visit clinics on their own. It is mainly women that travel from more remote villages that tend to travel with their male relatives or husbands.

None of students or female staffs faced any harassment. Three or four months ago boys verbally harassed a few girls. The girls told me about this and we reported to the police. They arrested those boys and now the problem is solved."

- Individual interview, girls' high school staff member in Balkh (district), Balkh

Aiybak, Samangan

Date of visit for cycle 2:
June 2013

Date of previous visit:
December 2012 (Khuram Wa Sarbagh district of Samangan)

Tranche:
2

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Samangan appears to have changed the most for the worse with regard to its security situation. Since early 2013 the sense of insecurity has intensified. Many of the women that were interviewed in Aiybak voiced deepened anxiety and fear about leaving their homes and moving in public spaces.

The feeling of unrest has increased in recent 6 months. When we go to work and come back, we feel insecurity, especially because of the increased rumors about [school] poisoning and suicide... Because people have fear, even if a tire explodes, immediately student's mothers come to school because they think that sound was caused by an explosion.

- FGD, working women in Aiybak, Samangan

Community members in Aiybak reported that the presence and violent attacks by AOGs have increased in the past six months. One interesting variation is the change in peoples' responses regarding their sentiments about the security transition of their province. In the previous round, most women and men interviewed in Samangan's Khuram Wa Sarbagh district expressed satisfaction about the departure of international security personnel, stating that there was little benefit for the community from the presence of international forces. Six months later however, the sentiment is very much the opposite:

When foreigners were here, everywhere was safe and calm. But now it seems ethnic war and conflict is starting. People say because the foreigners are leaving Afghanistan, war will start again and we fear this. Also, the government does not attempt to provide security.

- FGD, housewives in Aiybak, Samangan

ANP and ANA are in general viewed as behaving professionally. Yet their capacity and ability to provide security is questioned. Their numbers are considered as too few, while they also lack modern equipment to effectively fight AOGs. ANP in Samangan stated that there were several areas such as Taykhana and Gavdara in Samangan that had AOG presence and unrest. The police want to monitor these areas but cannot because of insufficient personnel and equipment including arms. ANP is also making an effort to cooperate with the communities in some of these insecure areas by holding consultation meetings with local community elders and council members.

Women in Samangan feel that they are able to go to the police station to file a complaint should they need to, but not without worrying about somebody seeing them walking in to the police station. There is a strong fear of being criticized and stigmatized as a result of going to the police to resolve domestic issues.

Legal bodies such as the court and the prosecutor's office in Samangan are reported as having improved their conduct and sensitivity toward women's cases, especially in comparison to previous years. The main obstacle to the public access to justice is corruption or fear of extortion. Civil society organizations report that accepting bribes in exchange for favorable

rulings is common practice among many officials. This is especially detrimental for women since perpetrators of violence against women can often escape justice through bribery.

Access to Work and Public Life

The attitude of Samangan's population towards women working in public does not seem to have changed in any noticeable way. None of the working women interviewed had fears about their safety. Moreover, unlike in other provinces, women in Samangan did not express any concerns about being threatened for working in public. Insufficient opportunities for work and training s were repeatedly stated as a major concern during interviews. Many of the interviewees stated that since the transition, there are fewer skills development and vocational training courses, along with fewer work opportunities in general, making it difficult for even the educated women to find work.

Mobility and Access to Services

The news about female students being poisoned in girls' schools across Afghanistan has had a negative impact on families' willingness to send their daughters to school in Samangan. There are indications that some families are not allowing their girls to attend school for fear of their safety.

Most religious leaders in Samangan are considered as being supportive of girls' education as long as girls cover themselves according to the traditional and Islamic custom. ANP in Aiybak was reported as patrolling the roads in civilian clothing to catch men harassing women or creating nuisance for schoolgirls on their way to and from school:

Girls were harassed a lot in past years but in the recent year or 6 months, we have police in civilian clothing and a committee that protects girls in public. The people and the education department cooperate with each other to protect the girls. There is not much harassment of women in the bazaar either. This is not like in Kabul.

- FGD, working women in Aiybak, Samangan

No significant change was found in terms of women's mobility and access to services. Working women and housewives stated that women could go to the bazaar, schools, clinics or friends' houses without any difficulties. Clinics report that the number of female patients that visit them on a daily basis is the same as in late 2012. The main challenge faced by the women in more remote areas is the long distance to health facilities. Some women have to walk more than two hours on foot to reach a basic health center.

Mehtarlam, Laghman

Date of visit for cycle 2:
July 2013

Date of previous visit:
December 2012

Tranche:
1

Overall Security and Access to Justice

In December 2012, the security situation of Laghman had deteriorated particularly since the ANSF took over the security responsibility from ISAF in July 2011. Most of the districts surrounding Mehtarlam, the provincial capital of Laghman, were occupied by AOGs and were inaccessible. The only zone that was still considered as somewhat safe was Mehtarlam itself. Women working in public offices and organizations reported that they were unable to go to work for fear of being targeted by AOGs.

The current situation of Laghman, however, is reported as having improved slightly. ALP and ANSF have, with the assistance of IMF, managed to push back AOGs from the occupied districts. ANSF have also placed police checkpoints in strategic locations. These checkpoints have enabled people to move more freely and brought back some degree of security to the province.

The security has been so critical in the past six months here in Laghman. Rockets have been fired and explosions have happened daily against checkpoints. But since checkpoints were placed everywhere four months ago, security has improved. Now government officers and women can go to work...Security isn't fully there, because sometimes Taliban attack checkpoints at night and during the day they fire rockets.

– Individual interview, working woman in Mehtarlam, Laghman

Despite the improved security situation women are still very conscious of the risks they face when they leave their homes. The number of threat calls and letters sent to working women has increased. Women and elders in Mehtarlam are supportive of ANP and ANA and feel that more assistance should be provided in training and equipment. But, they also worry that neglect of the needs of ANSF may have very serious consequences:

The transition may create insecurity because the Taliban is getting more powerful and increasing their reach. Also, the local police who are appointed to provide security are not reliable. They misuse their positions. In the beginning when the local police was formed in Laghman, they were good but they are getting bad day by day because the government does not pay attention to them and is not giving them a suitable salary.

– Individual interview, health worker in Mehtarlam, Laghman

The view of the ALP has changed. Previously, the interviewees expressed an appreciation of the local police, claiming that they were performing well in their fight against the armed opposition. But the conduct of ALP is said to have changed over time. In this round of data collection, ALP was accused of looting people's private homes, intimidation and using violence. With regard to harassment of women, however, no claims were made against ANSF or ALP. Women in Laghman do not feel harassed or maltreated by the security officials.

The negative impact of the insecurity on women's willingness to approach formal justice institutions prevails. Most cases related to women's rights never reach the formal justice system in Laghman. Instead, they are referred to community shuras where local leaders issue judgment. When the cases do reach legal aid organizations, DOWA or the FRU they are often resolved

through mediation. Women's cases are only referred to the formal justice system when mediation between the parties fails. But, when women complainants are referred to the judicial departments, they often encounter requests for bribes, which they can seldom afford to pay.

Women face a lot of corruption and bribery problems [in justice offices]. Even the doorman won't let a woman enter if she does not pay him... Corruption and bribery are a lot and without money no one solve women's problems.

- Individual interview, businesswoman in Mehtarlam, Laghman

Access to Work and Public Life

The public views about women working outside the home vary in rural and urban areas of Laghman. In the center, religious leaders often mention women's right to education and work in their speeches, as long as women respect the Islamic rules and cover themselves accordingly in public. In the rural parts of the province the religious leaders are increasingly objecting to women working outside of their homes. In part, rural religious leaders act more conservatively because of more direct threats of having to face AOGs in their communities. There are reports of rural religious leaders having been assassinated by AOGs for speaking in support of women's rights in the past. The influence of such leaders on the communities' views of women's rights is considered vital.

Mullahs' promotion [of women's rights] has decreased in the past 6 months [since December 2012]. Mullahs are afraid because the opposition killed many [religious leaders]. They can't preach because they are afraid of the opposition...

- FGD, community elders in Mehtarlam, Laghman

The disapproval towards women's right to work in religious speeches appears to be gradually increasing over time since the security transition. It is claimed that it is the increased insecurity that is the primary cause behind this disapproval.

Mullahs in their speeches about women say that if a man let's his wife leave home to go to work, he should be shamed for allowing this. They say that women shouldn't go to work and girls shouldn't go to school. When our husbands and sons go to the mosque they say the mullahs speak about these things. These negative speeches have increased day by day.

- Individual interview, teacher in Mehtarlam, Laghman

Other obstacles to the presence of women in public spaces are the increased threats and continued lack of work opportunities. Although many government offices in Mehtarlam are looking for female employees, many women are reluctant to work in a government office in the current climate of enmity. Tolerance towards women working anywhere but schools and health facilities is reported as having decreased as families have become stricter as a consequence of the conflict escalation between ANSF and AOGs. There are fewer development projects in rural areas, particularly in skills development and awareness raising for women, as a result of diminished security. Most projects that are designed to benefit women and increase their work opportunities are limited to the center of Laghman.

Mobility and Access to Services

Women's freedom of movement varies in rural and urban areas. Women in Mehtarlam report that they are comfortable enough to visit the bazaar for shopping, going to the health clinic or

other locations within the city limits but they prefer to move in groups or with their children rather than alone. Their comfort level in public space has improved slightly compared to late 2012 when the security situation was at its worst, though women still prefer to minimize their movement in public. Women from rural Laghman visit Mehtarlam only when accompanied by a close male relative. Six months ago in December 2012, people in general could not travel in and out of Mehtarlam. This situation appears to have improved slightly.

Girls' access to schools has suffered extensively in recent months. Schools report that families in rural districts are more reluctant to allow their daughters to walk to schools. Also, it has become increasingly difficult to recruit female teachers for schools located outside the provincial center. Fewer girls are reported as being present at school since the security transition took place. The people in Laghman feel that these negative developments are a direct result of the handover of security to ANSF. Elders in Laghman complained that harassment of women and girls in the streets had increased, forcing families to keep their women folk at home and preventing girls from going to school.

DRAFT REPORT: NOT FOR DISSEMINATION OR CITATION

Lashkargah, Helmand

Date of visit, cycle 2:
July 2013

Date of previous visit:
December 2012

Transition tranche:
1

Overall Security and Access to Justice

Helmand's overall security situation has deteriorated markedly in the six months that followed the last visit in December 2012. Assassination threats have increased against women who work outside their homes, for government offices, and the security sector. While ANA still enjoys a positive reputation and some level of trust by women and the general public, ANP and ALP are generally considered as corrupt and uncaring about women's security. The non-responsive attitude of ANP in Helmand has created disillusionment among women and the wider public. Women no longer consider it worthwhile to report threats or violence to ANP.

Most respondents worried about the uncertain future of Helmand, considering it very likely that the AOGs might take full control of the province eventually. ANA and ANP are reported as insufficiently prepared or equipped to provide security for Helmand. AOGs have increased their intimidation and threat campaigns, especially against female civil servants and security officials. There are also accounts of AOG members forcing villagers to host them in their homes at gunpoint.

Our friends in [...] district say that the Taliban come at night and threaten them to let them into their house. They say if you don't house us we will kill you. We have reported this problem to the council and governor several times but it remains unresolved. They have to house them at night and the military and police can do nothing.

– Individual interview, teacher in Lashkargah, Helmand

Only central Lashkargah seems to have preserved a limited degree of security while the districts and villages surrounding the center have become increasingly insecure. The main cause behind ANA and ANP's inability to drive out AOGs is described as lack of professional training in military combat as well as shortage of military equipment.

We never rely on police and especially not on local police. Most of them are [drug] addicts that sleep while they are sitting in their chairs. ANP are a little better but they are not ready to assume the security [responsibility] of Afghanistan because they were not trained properly and [they] don't have equipment and tools.

– Individual interview, female civil servant in Lashkargah, Helmand

Women frequently stated that police officers often harass women and schoolgirls in public. It was reported by several of the interviewees that police often follow women on the back of motorcycles or insist on giving them their phone numbers. Such unprofessional behavior and harassment of women by police officers clearly undermines their credibility and public trust in their ability to deliver security and justice.

Formal justice institutions are described as particularly weak, inefficient and non-responsive to the public's needs. It was also stated that more traditional courts have been established by the AOG, mainly in the districts but also in central Lashkargah to which communities, including some women, turn to in pursuit of justice. The credibility of formal justice institutions in Helmand seems to have suffered further during the first half of 2013. Women in Helmand complain that

the justice officials in Lashkargah do not offer them sufficient assistance when they seek justice. Often, women are sent from one office to another without knowing who is supposed to assist them with their petitions. Reportedly, justice administrators in Lashkargah are more obliging when women have legal representatives with them. Otherwise they are simply ignored. Mediation is the most commonly used method to solve cases related to family disputes and violence against women.

Most cases that involve women's rights abuses remain within the walls of the family homes. If a woman chooses to make a family dispute public by making a formal complaint, she is accused of dishonoring her family and will most likely be ostracized by family and community.

Access to Work and Public Life

The number of women working in public offices does not appear to have changed much in the past six months since December 2012. Most women continue their work despite increased fear of risking their lives. Instances of women carrying spare burqas and shoes on their way to and from work to avoid identification have increased. The increased anxiety about personal security is caused by two factors. First, the number of women that have been assassinated in recent months has increased. Second, working women now receive phone threats more frequently compared to when they were first interviewed in late 2012.

Communities in the provincial center do not seem to have strong objection to women working outside of the home or at schools, clinics and even government offices. However, in rural districts women working outside the home are often accused of being involved in immoral deeds such as having extramarital relationships. Similarly, religious leaders in Lashkargah promote girls' education and tolerate women working, provided that they wear the Islamic hijab when in public. In contrast, the religious leaders in rural areas are said to openly denounce girls' education as well as women appearing in public life in any way. The women complained that the negative speeches of religious leaders in the rural Helmand had a significant impact on women's access to education as well as work.

Mullahs in the center that are paid by the government are good and approve of women's rights, girls' higher education and women working. But mullahs in the rural districts and villages do not approve of women's right and girl's higher education.

– Individual interview, female civil servant in Lashkargah, Helmand

Since late 2012 the number of projects to provide trainings for women in Helmand has increased. It was also reported that women were now more present as civil servants in government offices. The reports by women in Helmand indicate that despite the many cultural barriers and security threats women are forced to face in public life, women are still willing to take risks and continue pursuing work opportunities.

Mobility and Access to Services

Women report that since spring 2013, they have started feeling increasingly distressed and anxious when in public spaces. Many of the interviewees reported that while they used to be able to do their shopping at the bazaar on a daily basis in the previous years, they now visit the bazaar only when necessary, trying to minimize their movement in public as much as possible. These negative changes are said to be products of the intensified threats and assassination campaigns of AOGs since early 2013 targeting women in public life.

Women are less frequently seen without closely related male relative when they go to the clinic or when doing shopping in the bazaar. Also, harassment of women and schoolgirls in the streets is perceived as more common compared to the first round of this monitoring study. It was suggested that schoolgirls often do not mention the harassments they endure for fear of being taken out of school by the parents.

It's normal that women can't travel in the city alone because of all the harassment. Even national police harass women. Several months ago while I was going home, a police on a motorcycle followed me for a while as I entered my friend's home. These incidents happen a lot. Instead of providing security, the police are unethical.

– Individual interview, female teacher in Lashkargah, Helmand

There were also reports of female clinic staff starting to resign from their posts more frequently as a consequence of the deteriorating security situation of Helmand. The women worried that this negative development would have serious repercussions for women's access to healthcare.

DRAFT REPORT: NOT FOR DISSEMINATION OR CITATION

Analysis of Women’s Security in Transition - Cycle 2

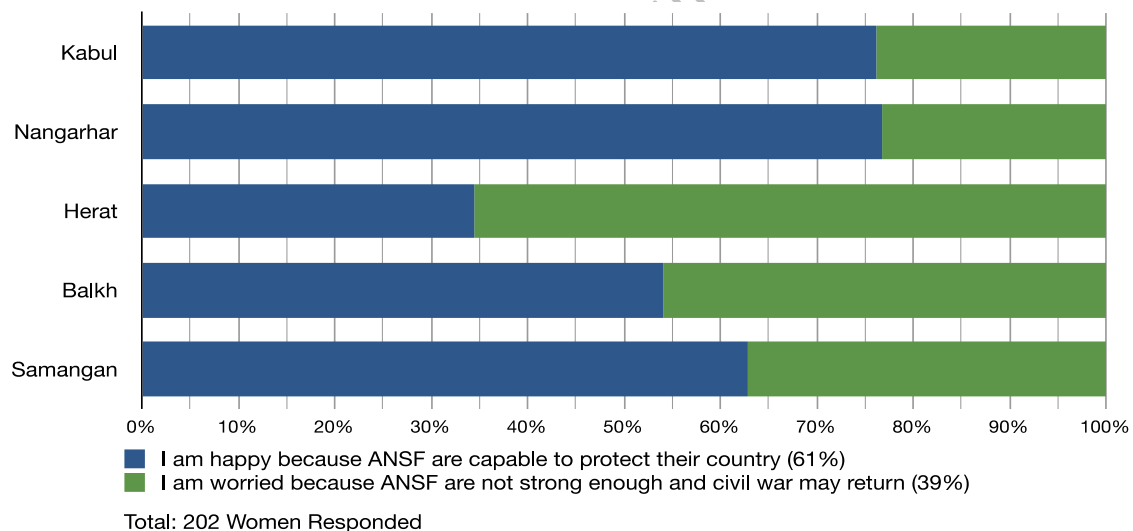
Overall Security and Access to Justice

Changes in the overall security situation across the nine districts vary depending on factors such as the level of cooperation and trust between communities and ANSF, the spillover effect from insecure villages to secure areas through increased AOG activity and kidnappings and unlawful activities by criminal groups.

Most districts included in this study, with the exception of Balkh and Paghman, show signs of a heightened sense of anxiety by the public, and especially among women who work or spend time outside of their homes. The anxiety is in part a product of intensified AOG offensives but also due to increased instances of kidnappings and assassinations carried out by AOGs and criminal gangs.

Several of the districts show that families have become stricter toward their female family members, limiting their presence in public spaces, on the pretext of protecting them against harm.

Figure 1: Women’s Sentiments About Security Transition – By Province *

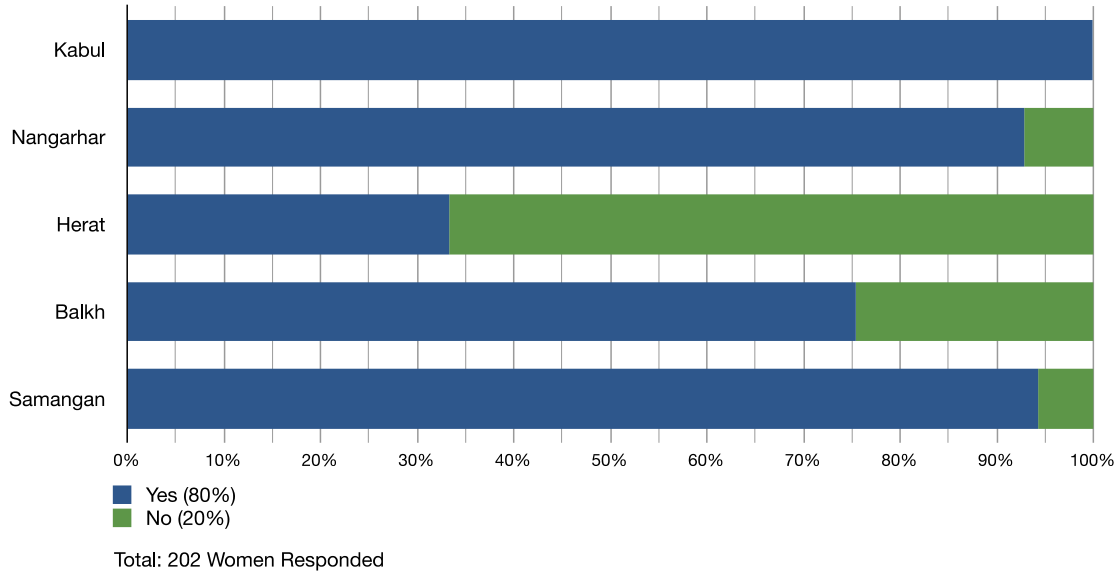


* Quantitative data were not collected for Laghman and Helmand in Cycle 2. In five of the provinces quantitative data were collected based on a short survey of the women. The results reported in this section are based on the data from Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh, and Samangan. Cycle 3 will report on the findings from the quantitative data from all provinces / districts.

Generally speaking, women and elders across the nine districts are pleased with the fact that ANP is now responsible for the provision of security in their communities (Figure 1). The main complaints, however, remain unchanged since the first visit to the districts, namely that ANP is still lacking adequate military equipment and training as well as suffering from insufficient number of police officers. In most districts, the police force appears to be understaffed and unable to provide security, allowing spaces for AOGs to exert themselves. This is situation is more common in rural areas. All communities call for more training and suitable military

equipment for ANP by the international community, as both women and men do not feel that ANSF has the capacity to provide security in its current form.

Figure 2: Women’s Trust in ANP and ANA’s Ability To Protect – By Province

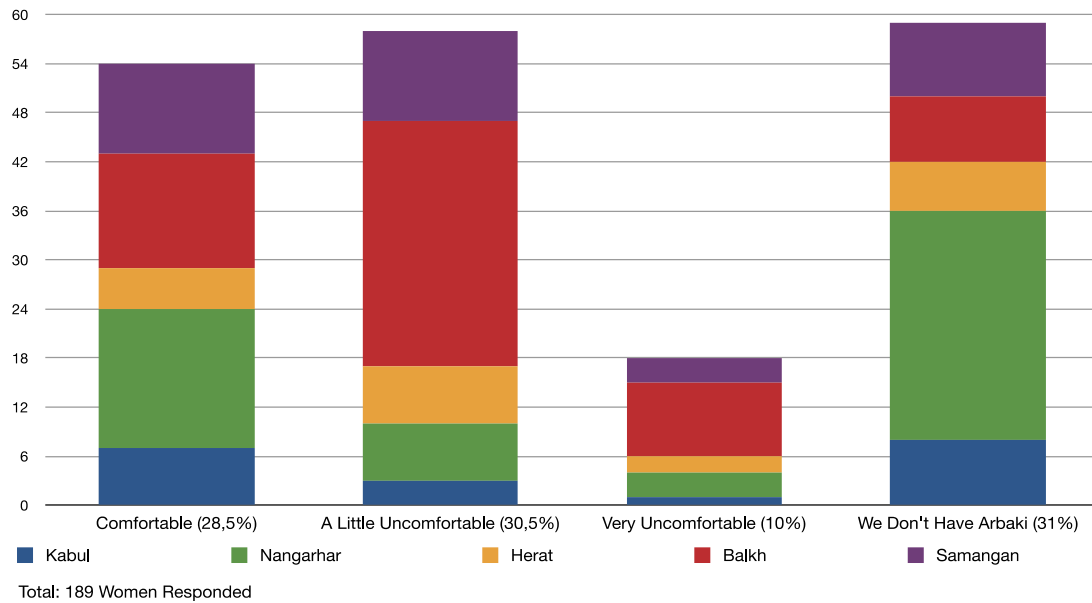


Women in Kabul, Nangarhar and Samangan, expressed stronger confidence in the ability and willingness of Afghan Security Forces to protect them. In comparison, women in Herat and Balkh indicated a higher level of cynicism regarding the abilities of the security forces (Figure 2).

Despite serious complaints about ANP, such as accusations of endemic corruption and ineffectiveness, the communities are in general supportive of the police and seem to cooperate with them in a joint effort to provide some degree of security.

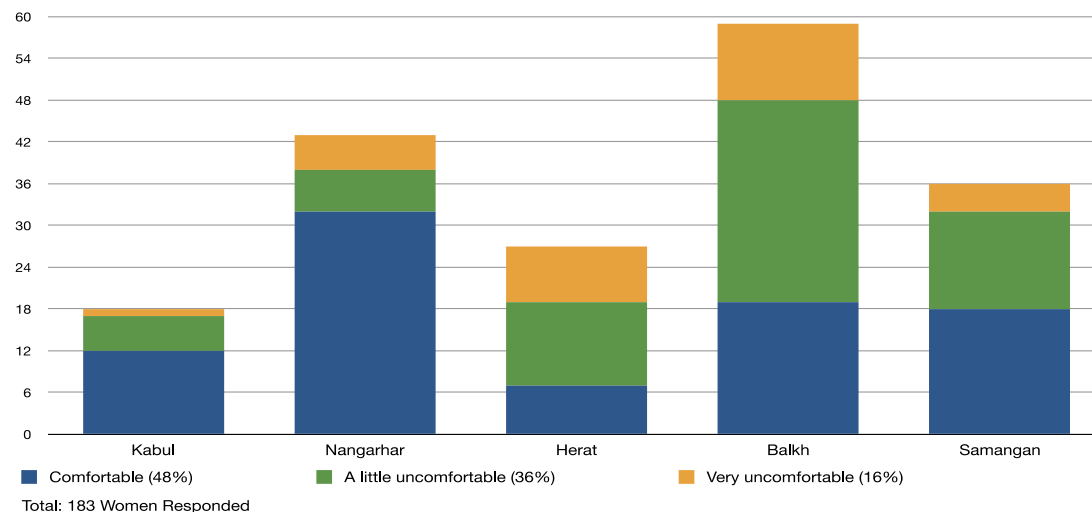
There is less of a support shown toward ALP, however. Most women with ALP in their communities indicated that they feel uncomfortable when crossing paths with non-uniformed ALP members. Apart from the continued discomfort of having ALP in their communities, women seemed in general less distressed by their presence, in comparison to the findings from the first round of interviews, approximately six months ago (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sentiments About Having ALP in Their Community – By Province



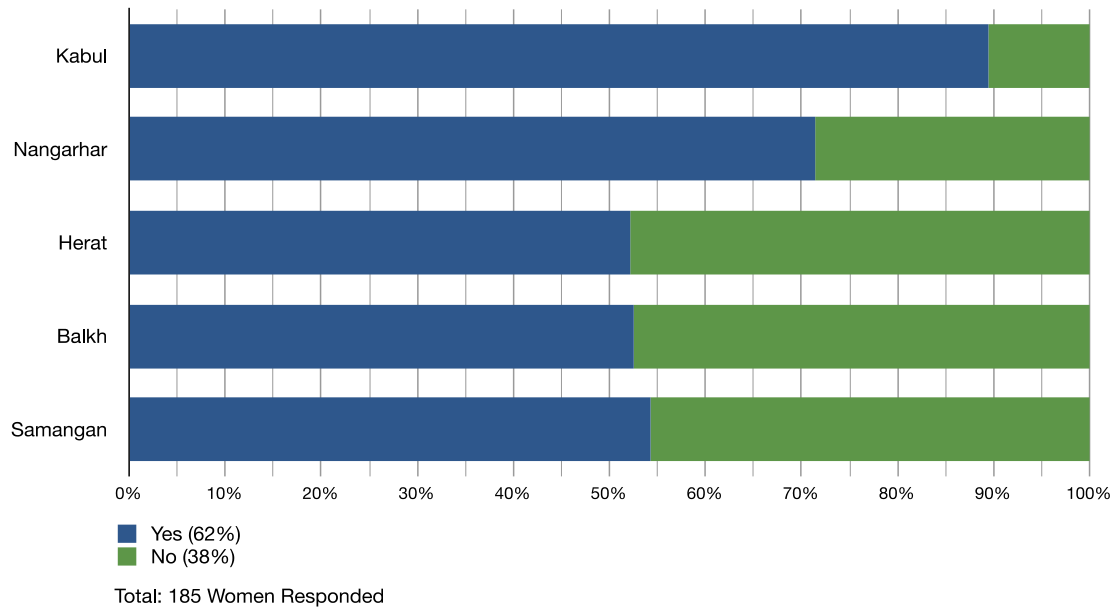
Women’s inability to reach the formal justice system remains one of the key challenges. Corruption and cultural constraints are the two impediments that continue to prevent women from accessing justice. Although justice branches such as the prosecutors’ offices and courts have seemingly improved their sensitivity toward women’s cases to some extent, the demand for bribes by officials appears to a major impediment to wider use by the public. Perpetrators of violence and crime against women continue to go unpunished as long as they have the means to bribe their way out of formal legal system. This commonly shared view seriously undermines the credibility of the formal justice system, which is often the last resort for women in the quest for justice.

Figure 4: Comfort Levels About Approaching the Police and Prosecutor’s Office – By Province



Remarkably, the majority of women who felt uncomfortable about approaching the police and the prosecutor’s office were women from the provinces of Balkh, Herat and Samangan. Women in Nangarhar, in contrast, appeared to have the least qualms about approaching the police and the justice system (Figure 4).

Figure 5: Confidence in the Formal Justice System and the Protection of Women’s Rights by Authorities – By Province



When asked whether they felt that the formal justice system was able to assist and protect women, 62% of the survey participants responded yes. Women in Balkh, Samangan and Herat indicated that they were more skeptical about the formal justice system protecting and serving them, while women in Nangarhar and Kabul seemed to have higher confidence (Figure 5).

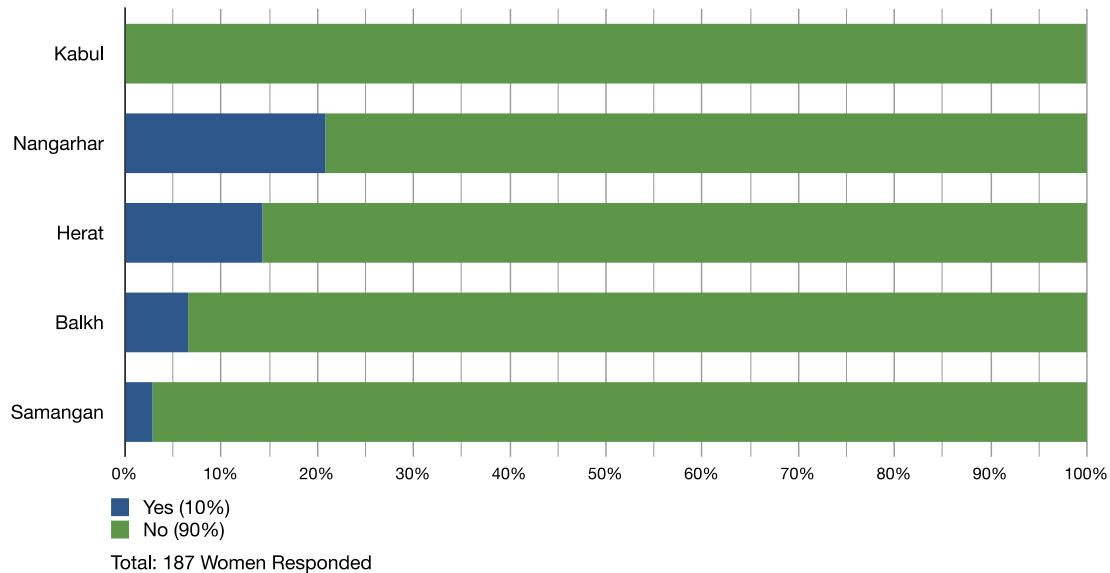
Access to Work and Public Life

The findings from interviews show that women with higher profiles, such as businesswomen or other prominent women, are currently experiencing an increased level of danger. The threats directed at women with professions considered as inappropriate have increased in the past six months since the previous round of interviews.

There is a positive correlation between attitudes of communities toward women working in the public domain and the level of security, the level of education of the families, the type of the profession in question, and the work place of the women. Segregated environments such as girls’ schools and health clinics, where women work with mainly other women, do not present major problems for the women who work there. Tolerance is much lower for women working in governmental offices and NGOs. Provinces such as Herat, Balkh and Samangan seem to be more accepting of women working as civil servants and working alongside men, while Nangarhar and Laghman display a higher degree of disapproval of such positions for women. NGOs and other international organizations are unacceptable to most people in all of the seven provinces mainly

because women work with other men and foreign men.

Figure 6: Women Having Considered Quitting Employment Because of Insecurity – By Province



Despite deteriorating security and threat to personal safety in public spaces, most of the women stated that they would not consider giving up their jobs. The highest number of women stating that they were considering giving up their jobs were in Nangarhar and Herat (Figure 6).

Since the transition, many international organizations have decreased their activities, and in some cases terminated, their programs. There are signs of increased nepotism and corruption in the recruitment procedures in public service including in the teaching profession. Women complain that it is very difficult to find work unless someone is paid a bribe or there is an intermediary.

The general impression among the women is that more women work outside their home now compared to 3-6 months ago. Women in Kabul and Herat generally seem to believe that the number of women that work in public has remained more or less the same, while the majority of women in Nangarhar, Balkh and Samangan are under the impression that more women work outside their homes.

Mobility and Access to Services

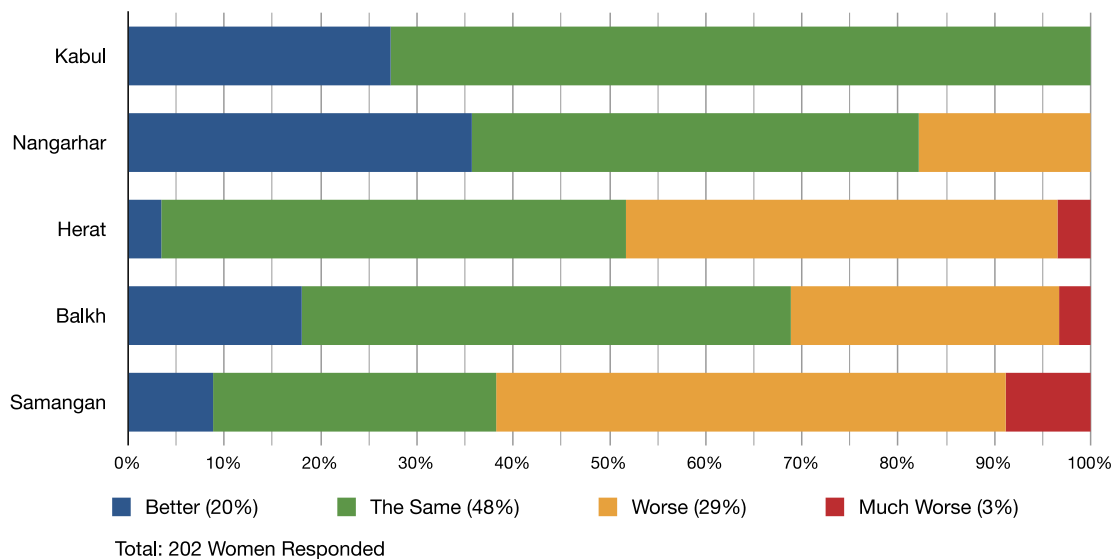
Women working in the health sector in some of the more insecure provinces are reported to be leaving their jobs, or wanting to be relocated from rural areas to the center. Female teachers are more reluctant to accept posts in rural areas where there is a higher level of insecurity. These developments have serious consequences for women's access to health and education services in some of the more remote areas.

The majority of elders and religious leaders promote girls' access to education. However, there are indications of girls in Nangarhar being deprived of education as a result of perceived

increase of insecurity. Some families feel that it has become too dangerous for their daughters to walk or travel to and from school. There is increased public fear becoming victims to suicide attacks and explosions, kidnappings and other crimes.

Women report that they are able to visit the bazaars for shopping but have an increased sense of discomfort about being present in public. Women in Herat and Samangan especially, suggested that their sense of security in public has lessened in the past 3-6 months as insecurity has surged (Figure 7). More and more women travel in the company of their husbands or a closely related male relative when go outside of their homes. This is more common in the rural areas, however.

Figure 7: Perceptions of Security Now Compared to October / November 2012 – By Province



The level of harassment of women and girls in public is reported as having increased in provinces such as Nangarhar, Herat, Laghman and, to some extent, Helmand. The rise in unemployment is cited as a major cause this development.

The ANP in provinces such as Samangan, Balkh, Nangarhar and Paghman were praised for their continued efforts to patrol the roads, especially when schoolgirls are walking to and from school.

Conclusion

The findings of this second monitoring report suggest that the security situation in the majority of the examined districts has indeed deteriorated since the initial field visits approximately six months ago.

There are strong signs that indicate intensified activities by the armed opposition and increased pressure on ANSF. This is noticeable especially in the rural / more remote parts of the country. While ANA is still held in high regard by the communities for being a professional security force, ANP and ALP are considered as less professional, corrupt and indifferent to security needs and the protection of women's rights. ANP's inability to meet public expectations is, to a large extent, caused by insufficient investment in its professionalization particularly in civil society / police relations and adequate resources.

ANA has been at the center of attention for international security assistance while ANP has been receiving the same attention. ANP is currently struggling to deal with sometimes rapid deterioration in security, especially in the rural areas of the country. But, they have insufficient personnel and lack adequate training, vehicles and other essential equipment. A continued negligence of ANP's needs could have dire consequences, especially in the rural areas where AOGs are most active to gain longer term control. At a minimum, longer term control by AOGs is likely to challenge many of the hard-won rights of women in the affected areas.

The wide practice of nepotism and corruption are two main factors impeding women's access to the formal justice system. Women and legal aid organizations and civil society members have repeatedly stated that the custom of paying bribes to justice officials makes women doubtful about the utility of the formal justice system for their grievances and that women only use the formal system as a last resort. The women engaged in the last round of data collection further asserted that justice officials are often dismissive of women's grievances when approached by women.

There are increasing indications of traditional courts being established, with a reputation of delivering more swift and transparent decisions to resolve conflicts and issues though not necessarily equitably for women. Regardless, there are increasing indications that women are also seeking justice through the traditional courts.

The existence of parallel justice bodies along with accusations of corruption against the formal justice institutions is particularly damaging to the credibility of the justice system and law enforcement. Addressing the problem of corruption within the justice system of Afghanistan, however difficult, is crucial in encouraging the communities to use them.

With regard to the Family Response Units (FRUs) of the ANP and their management of women's rights cases, most cases that reach them are still being resolved through mediation. Moreover, records and files are very poorly maintained, if at all. The lack of filing and record keeping makes it challenging for the FRU officers to follow up with cases that were resolved through mediation, which in turn increases the vulnerability of women that file a complaint against a family member and return home after mediation.

The anxieties and general fear of working women are more noticeable in the second cycle, especially among prominent women. These anxieties are reported as being caused by mainly a surge in the number of threats against and assassinations of women with public profiles. Many of the working women interviewed during the second round said that they received phone threats more frequently compared to when they were first interviewed. Despite the heightened intensity of threats against women in public life, whether through harassment and threats or assassination attempts, women have so far shown a strong sense of commitment and resilience by refusing to resign from their jobs or withdrawing from public life.

A key obstacle to women's ability to work outside the home, apart from the increased risks they take, is diminished work opportunities compared to before the transition. The drop in job opportunities is partially explained by the decrease in development work, which in many cases is linked to the withdrawal of the international forces. In many of the sites visited the internationally funded development organizations – national and international – have reduced their presence and development activities. The few governmental and non-governmental jobs that remain for women are subject to nepotism in the recruitment process. The women complained that it was very difficult to find work unless someone was paid a bribe or there was an intermediary.

There are also reports of women working in the health sector, in some of the rural parts of more insecure provinces, requesting to be relocated to the center or leave work altogether, as a result of security deterioration. Similarly, female teachers appear to be more reluctant to accept posts in rural areas where there is a higher level of insecurity. Also, schools report that families in rural districts are more hesitant to allow their daughters to walk to school while in some cases girls are being deprived of going to school because their parents deem it too unsafe.

Lack of work opportunities for newly graduated girls further dissuades families from sending their girls to school, since they see little use in letting their daughters endure security risks, spend years to attain an education, and end up staying at home because of the lack of work opportunities.

If the above chain reactions continue women are likely to suffer from critical setbacks, particularly in rural areas, in terms of access to basic rights and services such as healthcare, education and work opportunities.

The mobility of women in provincial centers remains mainly intact. There are indications of some degree of reduced mobility in more remote districts, however, with many women expressing an increased sense of discomfort about being present in public due to the surge in insecurity or changes in the perception of women in public life.

The international donor organizations and governments committed to remaining in Afghanistan beyond 2014 have indicated that they will increase their focus on training qualified Afghans to build capacity in Afghan institutions rather than relying on international experts. This increased focus on training Afghans should include particular attention to improving civil / ANSF relations and the importance of human rights, fighting corruption, and the legitimacy of free and fair elections.

For the international donors and governments remaining in Afghanistan beyond 2014, serious

creativity will need to be applied to how aid funds are released to the Government of Afghanistan. A key conditionality for the release of funds must be proven intent and action to engage civil society and rights organizations in government decision making on social and economic development.

Regarding the conditions of women, the government will need to demonstrate that it is willing and able to increase the spaces for women's participation in social, economic, and political spheres while making every effort, including seeking international assistance, to ensure that women are fully provided for and protected in these newly created and vulnerable spaces. The protection of women and their rights in the spaces created for, and by, them since 2001 is particularly important in the Afghan National Police, governmental ministries, and civil society organizations.

Recommendations

ADDRESSED TO:

NATO

1. Review NATO's role since inception in building ANSF to establish what has been successful and why, and to draw lessons for future forms of assistance. This is particularly important in light of NATO's projected change of role in Afghanistan in the post-2014 period.
2. Future plans should be based on lessons learned and provide targeted support to ANSF, particularly in rural Afghanistan, to address various needs in professional training and mentoring, equipment as well as recruitment.
3. Provide gender sensitivity training and mentoring for not only ANP and ANA, but also for NATO's own trainers, designed with inputs from women's rights and research organizations with expertise on gender.
4. Implement NATO's 2012 guidelines for the realization of UNSCR 1325 at all levels by setting clear targets and collaborating with civil society organizations in implementation and monitoring.
5. Find ways of operationalizing findings from the latest NATO review of its projected activities in Afghanistan after 2014, working closely with civil society organizations particularly on the operational implications UNSCR 1325 for the conduct of NATO-led operations.
6. Facilitate and host consultation meetings between civil society organizations, national and international security forces, and civil society organizations to discuss and act on the findings from the various cycles of the "Monitoring Women's Security in Transition" initiative. A commitment must also be made by NATO to review, on a regular basis, all such efforts and disseminate findings to inform future activities of women's rights organizations in Afghanistan.

GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN

Action needs to be taken in the following areas:

Afghan Local Police (ALP):

7. Select ALP commanders and officers with care and in consultation with communities to minimize the extortive behavior and intimidation by rogue elements.
8. Provide gender sensitivity training and mentoring for ALP, designed with inputs from women's rights organizations.
9. Institutionalize and incorporate ALP into the Afghan National Police, with clear and specific oversight mechanisms and responsibilities. Resources need to be found to provide adequate training, infrastructure, and equipment for ALP personnel.
10. Make it mandatory for ALP to wear formal uniforms on duty so that civilians can identify them as security personnel.

Family Response Units (FRUs):

11. Provide adequate resources for Family Response Units. Such resources must include dedicated spaces, equipment and furniture, and experienced and qualified staff.
12. Provide adequate resources, including training, daycare facilities, and functioning infrastructure to build the capacity of FRUs
13. Develop a functioning recording and filing system of cases of violence against women at FRU and ANP stations, including a monitoring mechanism of cases that have been mediated.

Protection of Women in Workplaces:

14. Provide adequate institutional and material support, with civil oversight, to women's shelters to increase women's access to justice and protection from violence.
15. Facilitate cooperation and joint coordination between the Ministry Of Education and Ministry Of Interior in all districts to increase the safety and mobility of school girls.
16. Identify and implement structural measures, such as safe transport, guarded working spaces, and similar other initiatives to protect the working women and in direct consultation with the working women.

Access to Work and Public Life:

17. Develop mentoring programs for women and men in all ministries, ensuring that there are functioning gender units at every ministry and there are adequate resources to support the ministerial gender focal points.
18. Increase the number of qualified women in senior governmental positions
19. Provide designated places for women in governmental offices and train men in gender-sensitive behavior in contacts with their female colleagues.
20. Initiate ongoing dialogue with women's organizations, community leaders and key public figures to promote women's participation in public life, particularly in rural areas.

CIVIL SOCIETY

21. The Afghan media should continue to draw attention women's rights issues including cases of violence against women, bearing in mind that exposure of issues only the first step. The subsequent steps should include guiding public opinion toward more recognition and acceptance of women's role and contributions in society.

22. Initiate awareness programs for men concerning the EVAW law and the negative impacts of violence in families on society as a whole.
23. Academics, journalists, and religious scholars need to conduct research on speeches by religious leaders to identify ways in which religious institutions could champion against violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL DONOR COMMUNITY

24. Intensify development programs in areas where international security forces are no longer present. The bulk of such initiatives must be based on Afghan civil society organizations taking the lead.
25. Provide financial and technical supports to civil society, especially women's organizations, to implement programs on women's empowerment and protection. In providing this support, the conditionality by the donors must be provable outcomes and sustainability of impacts.
26. Support skill transfer initiatives, such as proposal writing, monitoring and evaluation and financial accountability for national NGOs so that national organizations can access funding from donors and run programs without an intermediary organization.
27. Support initiatives for community-based development monitoring systems, organized and run by local community member with guidance from national and international civil society organizations.
28. Give impetus to the creation of sustainable work opportunities and economic empowerment of women by supporting programs that take into account local constraints and sensitivities regarding women working outside the home.
29. Ensure synergy and coordination among international actors, in their efforts to advance women's rights and their participation in the development and peace processes as well as the 2014 Presidential Elections. This should include the effective implementation of the objectives concerning women's right in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.
30. Establish a monitoring and reporting system of court cases with the input from legal aid and civil society organizations to inform interventions to reform the justice system.

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