



Policy Brief: After 16 years- Examining Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan

Summary

Afghan women have made historic contributions to enable environment for their participation, their equal roles in the society as well as continues engagement. In the past 15 years Afghan women have worked hard and emphasized for their inclusive participation as well as their role as decision makers. Despite of several measurable progresses in the past decades, these achievements seem fragile. The changing political, security and economic situation in Afghanistan is equally effecting women's contribution as men. Focusing on goals, measurement and policy instruments this brief lays out the up to date achievements, key problems with current women's empowerment and provides practical recommendations in the area of women, peace security.

Afghan Women's Network as one of the leading women's rights network focusing on policy advocacy aiming to empower and strengthen women across the country. In the year 2016, AWN produced several position papers and policy briefs that emphasized on women's role in security sector, women's contribution in peace processes as well as women's meaningful inclusion as leaders and decision makers. This policy brief is the compilation of previous findings and recommendations in the area of women, peace and security. On the occasion of 16th Anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, AWN aims to launch the paper and carry on national and international policy advocacy calling on smooth implementation.

A glance at Women, Peace and Security Progress- 2001-2016

After decades of war and destruction in Afghanistan, women, peace and security agenda unfortunately had vanished. However this agenda was reshaped and received a lot of attention post 2001 with the interim and elected governments as well as support and contribution of International community.

Women's inclusion in some of decision making roles at the central and provincial level is notable. Women presence in the cabinet, ministries, parliament¹, senate², provincial councils³, security sector and civil society is measurable today. Another important success is improvements in girl's education⁴ as well as their access to higher education locally and internationally. Through access to higher education⁵, women have been able to find suitable jobs within government, civil society and provide sector. In some instances, women with higher education and working experiences are economically empowered and thus add more support to the finances of their houses as compared to men family members. Women have a local presence through formal settings such as district development councils or informal settings such as women's councils where they bring women's prospective.

¹ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Afghanistan-%20Women,%20Peace%20and%20Security%20-%20Summary%20of%20Key%20Documents%202010-13,%20TLO,%202013.pdf>

² Ibid 1

³ Ibid

⁴ <http://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/education.html>

⁵ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002327/232702e.pdf>

Women accesses to formal justice mechanisms have improved over the period of 15 years. Women work in justice sector as judges, defense lawyers and attorneys.⁶ Women social presences are noteworthy in the national and international venues. Women have participated actively in the past Presidential, Provincial Council and Parliamentary elections, participated at national gatherings (Jirga) on important sovereignty and peace related aspects to Afghanistan.

There are several national legislations and policy frameworks⁷ that are used as guarantor for promoting women’s decision making and leadership roles. Similarly the adoption and ratification of international laws such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and Human Rights Declaration etc are important tools that have supported the policy advocacy on women’s meaningful engagement.

Women’s have made some progress in security sector as emphasized in UNSCR 1325 also. While the numbers of women are fairly low in Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), the fact that in culturally diverse and strict society, there is acceptance towards women’s important role in this sector is worth mentioning.

Women have contributed towards promoting peace agenda Afghanistan. This can be recognized through women’s contribution in National Peace Consultative Jirga in 2010 as well as ongoing advocacy for women’s meaningful inclusion in every step of peace related initiatives and decisions.

Afghanistan is 49th country in the world that has now launched a NAP 1325 on women, peace and security. Afghanistan first NAP on implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security was launched by the President of Afghanistan on 30 June 2015.⁸

Afghan Constitution- 1994- Article 22, 43, 44, 53, 54

National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan- 2008- 10 years plan for Ministry of Women’s Affairs

Elimination of Violence against Women Law- 2009- First law that criminalize violence against women a social constraints and not a domestic issue

Afghanistan National Action plan on Implementation of United Nation Security Council Resolution 1325- 2015- Emphasizes on women, peace and security, women as decision makers and peace negotiators

International Convention on Eliminating All forms of Discrimination against Women- towards ending any form of discrimination against women.

Women in Leadership	Number
Ministers	4
Deputy Ministers	9
Ambassador	4
Parliamentarians	69
Senators	22
Provincial Council	296
Governors	1
Deputy Chair- HPC	1

Institution	Percentage of Women
Attorney General	6%
Supreme Court	8 %
Ministry of Interior	2 %
Ministry of Defense	1 %

Ongoing Challenges:

The challenges highlighted in this section are gathered from AWN’s papers published throughout the year 2016 however, it is important to emphasize that these challenges are identified after consultations conducted throughout the year with over 500 women in all provinces of the country. These challenges once again re affirms that despite of the gains highlighted above, women still suffer from major insecurity, discriminations, harmful traditional and cultural practices and violence. It is also noted that despite of the fact that there are

⁶ <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO1403/S00272/women-in-afghanistans-justice-sector.htm>

⁷ <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/uncategorized/timeline-of-womens-rights-in-afghanistan/>

⁸ <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/afghanistans-national-action-plan-on-uns-cr-1325-women-peace-and-security>

national laws and policies in place, women are present in government and civil society, addressing girls and women's overall challenges is not been enough.

Participation and Decision Making Roles

1. Women participation in local governance is fairly low. In 10 provinces where women are consulted, they have shared that there are only 1-2 women holding leadership position across their province.
2. Due low presence and dominance of men in most of the provinces, women are not consulted on important provincial discussions and decisions.
3. Protection and safety of women working in key positions across the country is one of the key challenges that have already affected women's participation.

Violence and Discrimination against Women

4. While there is formal justice mechanism, Afghan government have specific obligations towards the law to support women empowerment and equality, there is weak rule of law, women's access to justice and law implementation. Almost a year ago Farkhunda's⁹ an Afghan citizen was brutally murdered in the center of the city. Despite of available and enough evidence, justice is not brought.
5. According to AIHRC¹⁰, year 2015 has been the deadliest year for women in Afghanistan. Unfortunately crimes such as killing, stoning, lashing, cutting body parts of women and rape has happened to women and girls across the country. While ERAW law criminalizes all the mentioned crimes, there is no mechanism to find out perpetrators, proceed with judgment and provide all kind of support to women and girls victims of violence. In 2016 most inhumane incidents of violence against women have occurred. There are no reports available on arrest and prosecution of perpetrators.

Peace and Reintegration

6. Unfortunately in the recent produced "roadmap to peace" document women were neither consulted nor asked for recommendations. There is no guarantee that in the possible upcoming formal peace talk, women will also be involved. Absence of women in the peace process means lack of transparency and inclusiveness and sidelining half of the population.
7. While women welcome the nomination of female vice chair and advisors to HPC new structure, the 9 women members (Kabul) and 133 (provinces) responsibilities are being on hold. Moreover since establishment of HPC, women roles and contributions are questioned due to their low level of expertise on peace building and conflict resolution skills as well as their leadership roles to take the lead on peace negotiations.
8. In 2016 quadrilateral meetings held by four countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, US and China) did not include any women in Afghan delegation. This clearly shows lack of political will to include women meaningfully beyond participation and giving them decision making and leadership roles.

Women in Security Sector Reform

9. The major challenge towards recruitment of women in ANSF (MoI, MoD, and NDS) has been weak recruitment campaigns. There has been almost no awareness raising initiatives to target communities at the district and villages on the need and role of women in security sector. This has resulted in continues negative perception of communities on the role of women in ANSF. Women who complete their term as trainees or return from abroad scholarships are hardly appointed in key roles within ANSF structure due to low political will and existing discrimination. Majority within ANSF believe women lack capacity to carry specific roles. Despite of existing positions within ANSF structures for women, these are occupied by men or are vacant with no interest to appoint women who are in waiting lists.
10. There is an ongoing discrimination and negative perception within ANSF towards women. Majority of women in security sector believe that there is no culture of respect towards women. Women are mostly perceived as second citizens and vulnerable. Women face discrimination for their promotion, appointment to appropriate posts as per their experience and access facilities and training support as

⁹<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/06/farkhunda-afghan-judge-sentences-four-to-death-over-mob-killing>

¹⁰ <http://ariananews.af/latest-news-fa/خونين-ترين-براي-زنان-افغان-حقو/?lang=fa>

men. These all have resulted in women losing confidence and interest in their roles. Complaints of sexual harassment, assault, and coercion within the forces are widespread. Despite of a new policy on fighting against sexual harassment at work place and certain decrees issued by leadership, there has been no complaint and follow up mechanism to support women at risk of discrimination and harassment.

11. Women in ANSF still face literacy, technical and capacity deficiencies. It is believed that the women in security sector still have lower general knowledge as well as technical information about their role. Although, initiatives have been planned for the capacity building of women in security sector however this has not been long term, effective and enough. Women still believe they need to fully understand their role. Women have difficulties in getting study time through higher education or attend seminars and workshops relevant to their job. In most instances, their male supervisors do not give women permission to benefit from such initiatives.

Taking Actions- Looking Forward Solutions

While reaffirming the progress made and notifying once again the existing challenges that slow down women's progress and empowerment in Afghanistan, AWN would like to recall on the following collected key forward looking solutions:

Afghanistan NAP 1325 Implementation

1. We call on National Unity Government to emphasize on development of specific ministerial plans by identified ministries in the Afghanistan National Action on implementation of UNSCR 1325 for implementation and accountability.
2. We call on international community for supporting implementation of Afghanistan NAP 1325 through funding and technical support. We also call for specific conditions to be made on these funding for monitoring, accountability and effectiveness.
3. Monitoring of NAP 1325 implementation by CSOs as an independent step for accountability and transparency must be funded by donors. If a civil society oversight is not established, implementation of NAP, the progress indicators cannot be measured and the weaknesses will not be improved.

Participation and Decision Making Roles

4. We call on Afghan government to focus on women's representation at the local governance. More women governors, directors and deputy directors must be planned by the government with authority and decision making responsibilities as identified in Afghanistan NAP 1325.
5. We call for an increase in number of qualified, experienced and strong women in government across the country. Women must be assigned as per their education background, experiences and skills in government positions so that their contribution is measured and impactful.
6. Government should review the affirmative action policy with a view to increasing women's representation to 30 percent at all levels of governance as agreed in civil service commission strategies and plans.

Violence and Discrimination against Women

1. Violence against Women must be fought seriously by the government. We call on the National Unity Government to ensure that incidents of violence against girls and women are considered top priority by the rule of law institutions. Perpetrators are found, arrested and judgment is carried on in accordance with national laws such as EAW law.
2. As per Afghanistan NAP 1325, we call for design and implementation of medical interventions including psychosocial support for women victims of violence.
3. We call on more targeted, regular and people friendly awareness raising campaigns, media interactions, engagement of local authorities and influential leaders for finding root causes of violence against women, prevention measures and solutions towards reducing any form of violence especially sexual violence against women.

Peace and Reintegration

1. We emphasize and call on increasing number of women experts with peace building, conflict resolution and negotiations skills within the new structure of HPC in Kabul and across the country. Women believe that their engagement with other women at community level can add a lot of strength and value on peace building efforts.

2. We call on NUG to select female participants in the upcoming peace negotiations on the basis of their knowledge of the issues, their speaking skills, and their decision-making, negotiation, mediation, and consensus building skills. At least 25 percent of the peace negotiators should be women.
3. Afghanistan National Action on implementation of UNSCR 1325 must be closely monitored. The successful indicator for effectiveness of this plan would be finding experienced and qualified women in HPC, during peace negotiations stages as well as after signing peace deals/ agreements.

Women in Security Sector Reform

1. We urge for designing and expansion of female- targeted recruitment campaigns including TV spots, school seminars, brochures, billboards, postcards detailing the importance of women role in ANSF, available carriers and incentives including monetary, facilities and benefits. The outreach must target districts and villages using local women and men religious scholars, community elders and existing community councils.
2. Women can equally contribute in strategic decisions and policy making processes. We encourage ANSF to increase women leadership and decision making role ANSF beside Gender Directorates.
3. We call on immediate action of ANSF to establish a direct complaint mechanism where women can file complaints on disrespect, discrimination and sexual harassment with confident and trust as well as appoint a trustworthy board to oversee the cases immediately after submission.
4. We call on international community to support ANSF (MoI, MoD and NDS) and other relevant institutions with technical and financial aid for planning and implementation of Afghanistan NAP 1325.