A Question of Implementation

Strategies for supporting the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Afghanistan

By Arne Strand, Astri Suhrke, Torunn Wimpelmann with Samira Hamidi
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIHRC</td>
<td>Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission</td>
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<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghan National Army</td>
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<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghan National Police</td>
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<td>ANPDF</td>
<td>Afghan National Peace and Development Framework</td>
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<td>APRP</td>
<td>Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program</td>
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<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund</td>
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<td>AWN</td>
<td>Afghan Women’s Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBR</td>
<td>Capacity Building for Results</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Citizens Charter</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>community development council</td>
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<td>CMI</td>
<td>Chr. Michelsen Institute</td>
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<td>DOWA</td>
<td>Department of Women Affairs, sub-national office</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<td>EVAW</td>
<td>Elimination of Violence Against Women</td>
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<td>FPC</td>
<td>Family Protection Center</td>
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<td>FRU</td>
<td>Family Response Units</td>
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<td>HPC</td>
<td>High Peace Council</td>
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<td>ICLA</td>
<td>Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance</td>
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<td>IDLO</td>
<td>International Development Law Organization</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>internally displaced person</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
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<td>LOTFA</td>
<td>Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan</td>
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<td>MFA</td>
<td>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defense</td>
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<td>MOF</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance</td>
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<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
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<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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<td>MORR</td>
<td>Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation</td>
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<td>MOWA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women’s Affairs</td>
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<td>MRRD</td>
<td>Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>Norwegian Afghanistan Committee</td>
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<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Action Plan on USCR 1325 - Women, Peace and Security</td>
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<td>NAPWA</td>
<td>National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NCA</td>
<td>Norwegian Church Aid</td>
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<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NORDIC+</td>
<td>Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland, + ad hoc others</td>
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<td>NPP</td>
<td>National Priority Program</td>
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<td>NUG</td>
<td>National Unity Government</td>
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<td>PPC</td>
<td>Provincial Peace Council</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>Resolute Support</td>
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<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>United Nations Office of High Commissioner on Human Rights</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>UNOCHA</td>
<td>United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>UNW</td>
<td>UN WOMAN</td>
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<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council resolution</td>
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<td>WPS</td>
<td>women, peace and security</td>
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<td>WPS-WG</td>
<td>Women Peace and Security (Working Group)</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Afghanistan is one of several countries designated for follow-up and possible support under the Norwegian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015–18, prepared in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325. While Norway has provided significant assistance to Afghanistan that supports women in matters of peace and security, aid activities have not been consistently and coherently articulated with reference to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda as set out in 1325. The aid portfolio is structured around broad, rights-based development themes that conceal the stand-alone significance of WPS issues, as well as the rationale for a coherent strategy to strengthen the protection of Afghan women against violence and enhance their role in negotiating and rebuilding peace.

A window of opportunity has recently opened that supports the case for a more structured and visible WPS theme in Norwegian assistance to Afghanistan. The present Afghan government is reform-oriented and in 2015 launched its own National Action Plan for Women Peace and Security (2015-2018). The Afghan plan provides a framework for increasing awareness and accelerating reform; it also gives Afghan women a platform for formulating and presenting their demands.

The Afghan National Action Plan (NAP) has technical and financial weaknesses but is radical in its intent. Partly as a result, it is facing domestic opposition, evasion and plain administrative inertia. Most of the reforms envisaged - for women’s participation in public policy-making, negotiating and building peace, representation in the security forces, protection against violence, and economic recovery - are contingent upon long-term socio-economic change to empower Afghan women and create respect for their rights. The long term, however, starts now, and judicious international support for the plan can help sustain the forward momentum for reform.

This report examines main developments in Afghanistan in key WPS areas and draws out implications for Norwegian assistance. It notes two major concerns:

**Implementation**: Afghanistan’s formal policy frameworks in WPS areas are mostly in place and enjoy international political and statutory support. The key issue is implementation.

**Sustainability**: After more than 15 years of massive international support, a juncture has been reached. External political and economic support still has a role to play, but sustainable WPS reforms must be driven by well-organized and politically conscious Afghan women.

The main implications for Norwegian aid strategies are set out below (for a complete list, see section 6)

**Policy priorities**

- *Foundational considerations*: Make a long-term commitment to invest in education, health, and economic development; these are foundational for empowerment of women. Current policies and partners are appropriate for this purpose, although shifting some support for education to the tertiary sector would help prepare women to be role models and assume leadership positions in government and civil society.
• **Medium-term perspective:** Invest in targeted capacity building to empower women for greater and more effective participation in public policy decision-making. A focused, distinct, and high visibility initiative in this area would underline Norway’s commitment to the WPS agenda and add momentum to the reform process. One-off events or a series of activities are insufficient for this purpose. An infrastructure that can generate political consciousness and organizational capacity is required, including, as appropriate, the involvement of civil society.

For example, Norway could support Afghan civil society and Norwegian NGOs to research, design and implement a multi-year program with a substantive focus on awareness of the WPS reform agenda, the Afghan Action Plan and strategies for political organization and action. A related initiative could expand gender studies at tertiary institutions in Afghanistan. Both initiatives can draw on long-standing partners with relevant expertise in Afghanistan and Norway.

• **Immediate needs:** Afghanistan’s rapidly increasing population of IDPs needs humanitarian relief and economic recovery. Female IDPs need legal aid to secure their rights. The government’s national plan for IDPs provides a useful framework for action, and Norway has long-standing programs and partners in this area that can be used for increasing assistance.

Administration of aid

• With almost all Norwegian aid since 2013 administered in Oslo by Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, closer and more authoritative coordination between Oslo and the embassy in Kabul is necessary to ensure that projects and programs are integrated with policy informed by local knowledge. A sharper WPS profile in Norwegian aid requires additional local embassy staff who can be a focal point for coordination with Afghan and international actors in a complex area with multiple stakeholders.

• The Afghan Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA) is central for the support of women’s rights, including WPS issues and NAP implementation, but the Ministry’s ability to fill this role is being questioned by Afghan and international stakeholders. Norway should align with other donors to explore structural reforms of MOWA.

Knowledge gaps

The report recommends further studies and evaluations in areas that Norway supports directly or indirectly through the UN (for a full list, see section 6):

• **Projects and programs involving women in local conflict resolution:** Systematic knowledge is lacking regarding the impact on local peace processes, including the roles and effectiveness of both male and female religious leaders.

• **Protection centers:** Updated systematic information is lacking about UN-supported protection centers for women at local police stations (FRUs) and health centers (FPCs).

• **The role and potential of UN Women (UNW) in the WPS field:** Assessment about UNW’s role, particularly in relation to possible MOWA reforms, should be updated.
1. INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is one of several countries designated for possible support under the latest Norwegian National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2015–18).1 The Norwegian plan commenced the same year that the Afghan government launched its own national action plan in this area. Both plans address issues raised by the inspirational UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, which brought the world’s attention not only to the particular difficulties encountered by women in situations of armed conflict, but also to the necessary role of women if violence is to end and a new peace is to be constructed. This study examines developments in Afghanistan in thematic priority areas covered by the national action plans—women’s participation in peace processes and peacebuilding, protection against violence, and access to humanitarian assistance. It also considers implications of these developments for Norwegian strategies of assistance.

Norway’s engagement in Afghanistan developed in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion in 1979, when the government and NGOs supported the resistance with economic, political, and humanitarian assistance. Norwegian NGOs remained as an infrastructure for aid provision during the country’s turbulent 1990s. After the US-led invasion in 2001, Norway’s engagement expanded dramatically in degree and kind.2 In the “long decade” that followed, Norway had military contingents in Afghanistan under US and NATO command, provided significant economic assistance (totaling 8.4 billion NOK in the 2001–2014 period), and had a political presence in support of the UN, the international donor community and the Afghan government. From 2007 and onwards, Norwegian diplomacy included sustained efforts to facilitate a dialogue with the Taliban.

Norwegian policy towards Afghan women and the women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda reflects four mutually supportive influences. Firstly, in the overall international engagement, Afghan women have had significant political and symbolic roles—as victims of extremist Islamic movements, as beneficiaries of the Western-led intervention, and as partners in the struggle for women’s rights and national peace. This is also the case in Norway, where the policy discourse on Afghan women after 2001 merged with a discourse of longer standing on the use of Norwegian aid to promote women’s rights in development. Secondly, the controversial nature of the Norwegian military role in Afghanistan made successive governments search for consensual elements in the engagement. Supporting Afghan girls and women was an important such element.3 Thirdly, Norwegian peace diplomacy in Afghanistan highlighted the importance of women’s role both in the process of eventual negotiations with the Taliban and in the substantive provisions of an eventual peace agreement. More generally,

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https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/09faceca099c4b8b8bac85ca8495e12d2d/no/pdfs/nou201620160008000ddpdfs.pdf.

3 See Astri Suhrke, We Shall Speak When Others Are Silent? Fragments of an Oral History of Norwegian Assistance to Afghanistan, CMI Report R 2015: 11 (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2015),
long-standing Norwegian support for UNSCR 1325 reinforced the importance of WPS issues in Afghanistan as well.

Nevertheless, Norway’s aid program in Afghanistan does not have a distinct WPS profile. A general gender perspective is formally incorporated as a cross-cutting dimension alongside anti-corruption, human rights, and environmental concerns. Norway’s main identifiable contribution with most obvious links to the WPS agenda has been diplomatic and political: facilitating high-visibility events (such as symposia or the inclusion of women in preliminary contacts with the Taliban) and being active in Kabul and in the international discourse on reform.

Norwegian aid to Afghanistan since 2008 has been in the order of 750 million NOK annually, following the government’s decision to increase development aid to match the estimated value of Norway’s military contribution.4 The aid is allocated to three main sectors: rural development, education, and good governance. The aid portfolio at present is deeply lopsided and fragmented.5 The allocations to the World Bank (ARTF, with support for rural development and education) and the UNDP (through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which is mainly used for police and prison staff salaries) and other bi-multilateral support (especially UN Women) constitute about one-third of the entire aid budget for Afghanistan. The remaining two-thirds cover framework agreements that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad have with seven Norwegian and international NGOs as well as numerous small projects. In 2015, the majority of allocations (39 out of 57) were under 10 million NOK each.6

How much of this has gone to support women is difficult to determine from available data. The Norwegian government claims that 35% of its total aid funding to Afghanistan has been used on projects with gender equality as a principal objective.7 In 2009, gender equality was incorporated as a crosscutting dimension of the entire the aid program, which makes the claim seem plausible.

Norway is the single, largest donor to UN Women (UNW) and has in recent years contributed around 22 million NOK annually in core funding to UNW’s Afghanistan office. This represents 28% of its total budget.

Norad data for the 2011–2015 period received for this review show 16 projects with gender equality as the main objective (with a budget of 110 mill NOK), 11 projects where it is a “significant objective,” (with a budget of 77 mill. NOK) and only one project (with a budget of 6.53 mill. NOK) directly tied to the WPS agenda. One Norwegian NGO, the Norwegian Church Aid, received 90% of the funding in the “significant objective” category; this was allocated to its peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities. The rest of the fund was divided between political processes and meetings, capacity building and higher education.

Looking at all the 16 projects in the Norad dataset where equality is defined as the main objective, we find again a distinct concentration. Over half (65%) is allocated to UN Women

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5 Data from Norad’s data base for 2015, online. https://www.norad.no/en/front/toolspublications/norwegian-aid-statistics/?tab=geo
6 Figures are averages based on 2014 og 2105, taken from NORAD’s database
and CEDAW, although the rest is spread out among support for advocacy and women’s rights (almost 20 percent), support for women centers (almost 8%), and then smaller contributions to civic education and capacity building (See Fig I).

Fig. 1: Aid to projects where gender equality is the main objective, 2011-2015


National Action Plans

Norway launched its first national action plan for UN resolution 1325 in 2006 and subsequently prepared a revised NAP for the 2011-2013 period. The work was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The third Norwegian NAP was released in 2015 for the 2015-2018 period.

There are structural similarities but also significant differences between the current Norwegian NAP and the Afghan NAP:

- The Norwegian NAP has an international focus; the Afghan NAP has a national focus.
- The Norwegian NAP has a separate section calling for gender perspectives and gender sensitivity in international operations (UN and NATO); the Afghan NAP has similar provisions for Afghan security forces.
- The Norwegian NAP refers to violence against women mostly in the context of armed conflict; the Afghan NAP focuses almost exclusive on “everyday violence” against women.
- The two NAPs have fairly similar provisions dealing with the peace processes and peacebuilding. These provisions emphasize participation of women on all levels in public policy institutions and processes, including representation in the armed forces and the police.
Both plans require political awareness, consistent pressure and ample resources for implementation. In designated conflict or post-conflict countries, external support has important functions in this regard and, as in Afghanistan, may be essential in certain phases. But external support cannot substitute for internal drivers of change. After 15 years of heavy international assistance to reconstruction and peacebuilding, it is clear that Afghan political forces —especially committed and well-organized Afghan women — must spearhead implementation of the WPS agenda in their country. That requires support for foundational measures, above all, help to build the socio-economic and educational infrastructure that can enable Afghan women to interpret and promote the WPS agenda. In the short term, both the Norwegian and the Afghan NAPs outline a set of partly overlapping policy priorities that provide a framework for action.

Reform movements for women’s rights and equality in Afghanistan are much older than the NAP launched by the present Afghan government. The roots of reform go back to the early 20th century. They were revitalized after 2001 and endorsed by several plans and compacts before the current Afghan NAP, including the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) 2008–2018. The present Afghan NAP is an additional arrow in the quiver to reach the targets.

The Afghan plan was launched in June 2015 and is structured according to the four “pillars” of 1325 (participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery), but adapted to Afghan needs. The most important adaptation is in relation to protection. While “protection” in 1325 primarily refers to situations of armed conflict, the Afghan NAP focuses on protection of women against “everyday violence,” whether perpetrated in the domestic or public arena. The same applies to prevention. The NAP covers prevention and protection themes in considerable detail. The other most detailed category in the Afghan NAP is participation, which includes women’s participation in government (civil service and elected positions at the national and sub-national level), and the armed forces and the police.

In all the areas addressed by the plan, most Afghan women are deeply disadvantaged and vulnerable. They hold few public positions that permit effective participation in the comprehensive reconstruction and state-building program initiated after 2001. They are even more sparsely represented in current peace processes. They are vulnerable to violence from the escalating war between the government and the insurgents, and even more so to widespread harassment and abuse that amounts to pervasive “everyday violence.” Great strides have been made in terms of health and primary education since 2001, but even in these areas Afghan women lag behind their counterparts in most other developing and so-called “post-conflict” countries.

Gender relations in Afghanistan are shaped by underlying material conditions and social structures that are difficult to alter in the short run. A plan that in its intent is radical relative to the status quo, like the Afghan NAP, will meet resistance. Yet change during the past 15 years has modified values and social structures to give reformists more political elbowroom. A

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A growing class of professional and influential women has become the spearhead for change, supported by reformist Afghan politicians and, critically important, consistent international assistance. Increased availability of mobile phones and the use of social media have been instrumental in informing and engaging women.

President Ashraf Ghani is a noted technocrat and reformists who, supported by his wife, has promoted women’s rights from the time the National Unity Government was formed in 2014. The government’s commitment to the most recent NAP has nevertheless been questioned. The plan itself was only launched after considerable delays and significant donor pressure. The NAP budget was costed late, and it was assumed that donors would finance most of it. As a result, the plan is in danger of becoming a parallel project generating funds for its home institution, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, rather than a plan firmly anchored in overall government practice. Most goals are general or descriptive of change (not absolute benchmarks), with baseline figures in theory to be established in the beginning of the reporting period (the first quarter of 2016). Monitoring mechanisms by the line ministries and NGOs are embedded in a huge and detailed reporting system that goes to the Office of the President through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Other declarations and plans reinforce the Afghan NAP’s message. At the 2016 Brussels international conference on Afghanistan, the government committed itself through the “Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF)” to four deliverables under NAP, including establishing special prosecution units for violence against women in all provinces. The Afghan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) presented at the conference refers to a gender strategy and women’s economic empowerment, although it has no specific reference to the Afghan NAP or the role of women in peace-negotiations or peacebuilding.

The commitment by Afghanistan’s president notwithstanding, it is unclear how much political capital he can spend on women’s rights given the other problems facing his government. The National Unity Government has been in more or less constant crisis since it was formed. The Afghan state continues to be extremely financially dependent on donors. It is militarily hard pressed by insurgents. By late 2016, insurgents of various kinds seriously contested or controlled about 40% of the country, according to US military authorities.9 In this situation, consistent pressure from Afghan reformists and judicious support from external actors are essential if the WPS agenda is to go forward and the gains become irreversible.

The principal responsibility for mainstreaming gender issues in the public administration lies with MOWA, established in 2002. MOWA has been the target of extensive criticism in the donor community as well as civil society for failing to lead on gender policy and to mainstream gender perspectives across the government. This culminated in calls in late 2016 to close down the ministry. Reports paint a picture of a ministry plagued by political appointments, poor capacity, and low standing in the government and among donors and civil society.10 Such problems, of course, are not unique to MOWA.

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2. PEACE PROCESSES AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

2.1 Background

2.1.1. The national level

The construction of Afghanistan’s new post-2001 political order formally recognized the importance of women’s role in making and building the peace. This was hardly surprising given that liberation of women was part of the public rationale for the US military intervention. At the time, there seemed to be no contradiction between promoting women’s rights and securing the peace.

A decade later, however—when Taliban and other militants had mounted a sustained insurgency and peace talks were on the horizon—women’s rights were juxtaposed against peace. To counter this understanding of the relationship between peace and rights, and to prevent the latter from being traded for the former, Afghan women activists and their international supporters have consistently demanded that women must be included in the peace process.

Nonetheless, Afghan women continue to have had limited presence at international conferences and in national institutions addressing matters of peace and security. A recent report by the Afghan Women’s Network (AWN)—a prominent Afghan women’s organization—characterizes their presence as “not meaningful.”

Presence versus participation

The formal presence of women in the Afghan peace process is assured through quotas. Women made up 21% of representation in the national peace jirga called by President Karzai in 2010. The structures it set up, the High Peace Council to promote reconciliation and integration of Taliban fighters, had 13% women (nine out of 70) and a similar proportion was achieved in its provincial counterparts. A quota for women (24%) was also applied when Karzai called a national jirga in 2013 to advice on the future military relationship with the United States.

Quotas for women in institutions that address national security and peace processes are the new normal. Representation, of course, does not equal influence. AWN has complained that appointments to the High Peace Council were symbolic and “meant to fill seats in the name of gender equity.” Some women in the Council have reported that they are “treated as tokens.”

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13 Samira Hamidi, background paper prepared for this report (2017) (on file with authors). The goal is to have 25% women in provincial peace councils.
and some appointments to peace councils at both the national and provincial level are made on the basis of patronage rather than merit.\textsuperscript{15}

Women’s influence also depends on the role of the institution. National \textit{jirgas} have primarily performative and symbolic functions. This applies to the High Peace Council as well. Its reintegration program has mainly integrated with low-level Taliban commanders (some of whom subsequently re-joined the militants) and does not have a strategic policy role directed towards the Taliban leadership. The provincial peace councils established to oversee reintegration in their respective provinces have similar functions.

High Peace Council members have been involved in preliminary talks between the government and the Taliban. The talks in May 2015 included three women.\textsuperscript{16} Later the same year, the Norwegian government brought a group of Afghan women to meet Taliban members in Oslo.

Documentary evidence of Norway’s support for peace negotiations in Afghanistan, where the issue of women rights has been central, remains classified and could not be accessed for this report. A general account of Norway’s role has recently been made public, but it says relatively little about the role of women’s rights (see section 2.2.).\textsuperscript{17}

Although meetings with the Taliban are shrouded in much secrecy, it is clear that several meetings involving the government and the insurgents have taken place, and that very rarely have Afghan women been present.\textsuperscript{18} Importantly, Afghan women were not asked for advice or recommendation in preparation of the roadmap to peace that the governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China adopted at their third quadrilateral Consultative Group in Islamabad in February 2016.\textsuperscript{19} However, Afghan women have taken part in civil society dialogue with Pakistani counterparts, and Pughwash organized a series of meetings in Afghanistan and in the region with female representation.\textsuperscript{20}

The High Peace Council did play a role in the 2016 negotiations for amnesty and reintegration of the long-standing militant Islamist, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and his commanders. One of the nine women on the Council participated in these negotiations, as the Afghan government has carefully pointed out.\textsuperscript{21} The negotiations did not touch on a feared trade-off of women’s rights

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\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. This is according to UNDP, the UN agency that finances the secretariat of the High Peace Council. See UNDP, “Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP),” www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/operations/projects/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/aprp/, accessed 3 February 2017.
\textsuperscript{17} NOU, \textit{En god alliert}, 9.
\textsuperscript{18} In 23 known “rounds of talks” involving the Afghan government, Taliban and international representatives in the 2005-2014 period, no women were present at all, and only present on two occasions in such talks between the government and the Taliban. Oxfam, \textit{Behind Closed Doors} (2014). https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2014-11-24/afghan-women-frozen-out-peace-talks-danger-losing-gains-made-fall
\textsuperscript{21} The woman was Habiba Sarobi, who earlier had distinguished herself as the governor of Bamyian, at that time the only female governor in the country.
\end{flushleft}
for peace – questions of power-sharing and women’s rights were not discussed – although controversial questions of amnesty for grave human rights violations were raised.

Women turn to indirect channels

Expecting that “it is highly unlikely” Afghan women would participate in direct negotiations with the Taliban, women have turned to other channels to bring their views to the table.22 This includes advocacy in relevant organizations (e.g., presenting statements on behalf of Afghan women at NATO meetings), developing a dialogue with key national security officials in the Afghan government, maintaining a close dialogue with women in relevant institutions (e.g., in the High Peace Council), lobbying for appointment of women to high-level positions in security institutions (especially the army and the National Security Council), and working closely with embassies in Kabul that can provide a forum for advocacy and exchange of information.

The main organizational vehicle for such efforts appears to be the recently rejuvenated Women, Peace and Security Working Group (WPS-WG), which started meeting again in January 2016. Co-chaired by an Afghan activist and the Finnish embassy in Kabul, with UN Women providing secretariat support, the group has become a structure for information-sharing and coordination on UNSCR 1325 issues and the implementation of the Afghan NAP. The group has a reasonable—though certainly not exclusive—claim to be a voice of concerned Afghan activists and their international supporters.

2.1.2. The sub-national level

There is little systematized information about the nature and function of the provincial peace councils established under the High Peace Council. They are a potentially important vehicle for women’s voices in the peace process because this process itself has a strong local dimension. The insurgency is diverse, relatively fragmented, and its impact on the community is shaped by local power struggles and alignments. At present, the councils serve mainly as a two-way informational national level, including on issues relating to women’s rights and awareness about the Afghan NAP. AWN recently recommended strengthening the provincial peace councils as key building link between the local and the blocks to ensure women access to the reconciliation and reintegration processes.23

Some provincial peace councils have taken a broader conflict-resolution role. Afghan NGOs report that unresolved cases from village peace committees—established on NGO initiative in several districts and in some areas affiliated with village community development councils (CDCs)—can be referred to the provincial peace councils.24 Most cases handled by the committees are disputes over land and water as well as family matters (notably, inheritance, custody rights over children, and violence against women).

Local conflict resolution and reconciliation/reintegration are in principle distinct fields but can overlap in practice. For example, training women in local conflict resolution may give them

24 Interviews with Norwegian Church Aid and Afghan NGOs, Kabul, 31 October 2016.
skills to address conflicts related to political questions of reconciliation and reintegration. A number of national and international organizations have projects under the broad heading of “local conflict resolution” (including the US Institute of Peace and the Asia Foundation). Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has worked in this area since 1994, including in systematic capacity building of their Afghan partner NGOs.

Several NGOs have emphasized involvement and training of religious leaders, given the importance that Islam accords to conflict resolution and peace-building. The NCA had in 2016 an ongoing project in this area, called the “Religious Actors for Peace”, that so far has included 108 women from 13 provinces. Working with religious leaders, in particular, those who support women’s rights, has become quite attractive in Afghanistan in recent years, although the quality and usefulness of such interventions vary.

Women are themselves increasingly becoming religious actors. In Kunduz, Badakshan, and Takhar, several thousand women and girls are enrolled in madrassahs with relatively extremist orientations. In Herat, women reportedly travel to Pakistan for preacher training. While little is known about these developments and the religious orientation of the different training programs, they appear to reinforce unequal gender relations, although in ways novel to Afghanistan where women conventionally have received little formal religious training. The development also relates to the current emphasis on countering violent extremism, an area where Norway has an ongoing engagement.

In several projects, conflict resolution skills are included as part of overall community development objectives, e.g. the World Bank-financed, new program under ARTF, Citizens Charter (see section 3.3). Many NGOs have experience with this from previous programs, typically with separate training for men and women. Conflict resolution skills can also be usefully appended to other professional training programs. The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) has provided conflict resolution skills in its training of midwives, based on their trusted role and ease of access in the local community.

There is at present no systematic overview of the impact of such programs and activities on local peace processes and their sustainability.

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25 Suhrke, We Shall Speak, 16.
27 Since 2014 the project has trained 464 religious Sunni and Shia leaders in peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills, including 108 women from 13 provinces. The project is funded by the British Embassy in Kabul and through NCA’s Norad framework agreement. Norunn Grande, Religious Actors for Peace in Afghanistan: Evaluation 3rd Phase of Project 2015–16 (Lillehammer: Nansen Centre for Peace and Dialogue, 2016).
29 Countering violent extremism (CVE) is the emerging platform for global discussions on terrorism, replacing the previous discourse on “the war on terror.” For the UN’s 2016 action plan in this regard, see UN General Assembly, Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (24 December 2015), https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/citff/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism.
2.2 Current reform issues: Presence, visibility, and skills

The key terms in the national and international discourse on securing women’s rights in an eventual peace process are “presence,” “visibility,” and “skills.” While some international human rights organizations have called for Afghan women to unite behind a set of red lines, representatives of Afghan women—a large and diverse constituency—have so far only demanded “full and meaningful participation,” without specifying what that means in terms of specific processes or substantive rights to be protected.\(^{30}\)

The demand for full and meaningful participation is not new and was stressed in the run-up to the 2014 transition to greater international military disengagement. Subsequent international preoccupation with crises elsewhere in the world has underscored for women activists the need to keep the demand upfront and visible internationally, particularly to the United States and other governments that hold important keys to an eventual peace. International support for women’s rights is also viewed as important to amplify women’s voice vis-à-vis Afghan authorities, although tempered by awareness that this can be exploited by conservative adversaries.

Afghan reformers recognize that skilled women negotiators are needed, even if they are to serve in the backroom or out of sight as advisers. The Afghan NAPs emphasizes the need to prepare rosters of female negotiators on the national and provincial level, build capacity among women to develop peace strategies responsive to women’s concerns, and train women in negotiation strategies. Discussions in the WPS Working Group have reinforced the point, and some donors have responded. The Canadian embassy in Kabul had by mid-2016 compiled a list of 25 women as negotiators. Sweden is supporting the training of women in mediation skills for peace processes.

On the sub-national level, Afghan activists note significant knowledge gaps. Women in peace councils and other local community structures have insufficient knowledge about peace processes, the NAP, and the workings of national peace-related structures.\(^{31}\) To improve the situation, and bring women in the provinces into the national debate on peace and security, AWN has proposed ways to strengthen links between local peace committees, provincial peace councils and Kabul-based networks and institutions.

2.3 Assessment

Afghan women’s participation in the national-level peace process is constrained by their generally subordinate role in Afghan society and the post-2001 political power structure, particularly as it relates to military and security issues. The Taliban’s stated unwillingness to

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\(^{30}\) Human Rights Watch, “Afghanistan.” The WPS-WG, in a “non-paper” presented to the government on the eve of the NATO summit in June 2016, called for “meaningful participation in the peace process and reconciliation efforts” and for the government to acknowledge “the importance of women’s role in the development of strategies and in future activities of the restructured HPC.” WPS-WG, (10 June 2016. In 2012, AWN, which represents a network of Afghan civil society organizations, had found it unlikely that women would have a seat at the table. A 2016 position paper on the peace process dealt exclusively with process, but the only specifics offered related to the demand for a quota: “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.” AWN, “Afghan Women.”

\(^{31}\) Hamidi, background paper, 12; interviews with NGOs, Kabul (October–November 2016).
negotiate with women is an added barrier. Norway’s efforts to lessen such constraints have taken diverse forms: a strong principled, public stand for women’s participation, concrete support to realize this through high-visibility events (e.g., the side-event to the 2016 Brussels international conference on Afghanistan), participation in the WPS Working Group, and separate Norwegian attempts to establish contacts with the Taliban and make space for women’s rights in an eventual peace process.

An understanding of the relationship between peace and rights that reflects the view of Afghan reformers as well as international principles requires that donors, including Norway, continue to support Afghan women’s demand for effective participation in national deliberations on peace and security. Prerequisites are representation at relevant international conferences and national events if a peace process with the Taliban develops. Institutionalization would strengthen participation, e.g. along the lines of the WPS Working group, that could bring together national and international stakeholders in a more continuous policy debate. Including women at the provincial level in such a structure, as the reform discourse emphasizes, is essential for fuller impact.

Whether Norway should invest politically in continuing to develop contacts between Taliban and select Afghan women cannot be assessed on the basis of information available for this report. The 2015 meeting in Oslo was applauded by the Afghan women involved and had much support in Norway, but the effects are difficult to judge. Such initiatives are at any rate not a substitute for continuous work in-country to channel women’s voices into peace talks.

The lack of systematic, independent evaluations makes it difficult to assess efforts by NGOs to promote peace through local level conflict resolution. If local conflicts involve violence against women, a negative effect may be that women will be discouraged women from seeking redress through formal government bodies and institutions of justice (see section 4).

32 The Norwegian Commission on Afghanistan in its report, NOU (2016) pp.153-4, suggests that the contacts might have contributed to broaden Taliban’s views of women, but presents only limited evidence based on classified documents for its conclusion. Taliban is at any rate a movement composed of many and shifting factions, and the NOU only discusses developments up until 2014.
3. PEACEBUILDING

3.1 Women’s participation in public policy development and decision-making

3.1.1. Background

Quotas have given women a sizable presence in elected bodies at the national level (27% in the lower house and 19% in the upper house of the Parliament), and about the same at provincial level. In the civil service, women have less presence, at least on the mid-and top level. Political appointments to high-level positions have increased somewhat under the present government. Participation of women in high-level delegations to international meetings remains low. Despite 15 years of massive international support and growing concerns about the sustainability of aid programs, the evidence suggests that effective local capacity building has been limited.

Elected institutions

The presence of women in political institutions has contributed to a political discourse where women’s rights have become more visible, acceptable and formalized. Yet women are divided along ethnic, political and social lines. There is no consensus on what constitutes “women’s strategic interests.” Further constraints lie in the very limited powers of the Parliament itself. Corruption through vote-buying is rife.

On the sub-national level, the election law originally gave women a 25% quota in the provincial councils. When the law was amended in 2013, the quota was first eliminated altogether. Intense pressure by women and their international supporters succeeded in restoring the quota, albeit initially reduced to 20%. In the last elections to provincial councils (2012), women exceeded the quota by securing 27% representation. There is no quota for women in the district councils, and elections to district councils at any rate have yet to be held. On the community level, community development councils and women’s shura have provided venues for participation (see sec. 3.3).

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33 A coalition of reformists won a landmark legislation that criminalized violence against women (the 2009 EVAW law), stopped legislation that would erode present gains (the elimination of quotas for women in provincial councils), and modified legislation that threatened basic rights of women (the Shia Personal Status Law). These gains were not achieved through parliamentary proceedings, however, but through other, more informal channels.

34 The Parliament has little de facto budgetary power as a very large proportion of the state’s revenues comes from donors and is negotiated by the executive branch. Moreover, the electoral system discourages political party structures, rewards localized interests, and discourages development of issue-based politics.


**Political appointments**

The National Unity Government has made a point of selecting women for high political positions, although in quantitative terms, successful appointments represented only a modest change from the past.38 By April 2016, women had been given four ministerial positions, nine women were appointed as deputy ministers, four as ambassadors, and two as provincial governor. President Ghani also nominated a female judge to the Supreme Court. This was the first time in Afghanistan’s history that a woman had been nominated to the Supreme Court.

Yet the forces of reaction were strong. The Parliament rejected the Supreme Court nominee. Ghani’s appointment of female governors also faced difficulties. Local protests linked to a rival candidate prevented one governor from entering her province for some time, while a conservative groundswell of opposition forced the other one out after a few months. Women not projecting strong leadership seemed particularly vulnerable. The Minister of Women’s Affairs narrowly survived a vote of no-confidence in July 2016. Two other female ministers were voted out by the Parliament in November the same year as part of a general parliamentary challenge to the executive branch.39

**The civil service**

The previous Afghan action plan (NAPWA) and the present NAP both aim for women to fill 30% of civil service positions by 2018. This compares with about 22% at present.40 Reaching a higher figure can be done with relative ease by filling lower rank positions with women. This has been a pattern to date, with women holding less than 10% of positions in the top four civil service grades combined.41

There are marked differences between ministries. A slight majority of civil servants in the Ministry of Women’s Affairs are women (as might be expected), but women hold only 5–7% of the positions in three other ministries that are key to the substance of women’s rights: Interior (police), MRRD (rural development) and Justice. The differences between provinces are marked as well. In Herat, a province with a somewhat liberal reputation, one-third of all civil servants are women. Khost is at the other end of the spectrum with women constituting only 2% of the civil service.42 Although civil service appointments in principle are made at the central level, local factors clearly matter.

Civil service systems are slow to change under the best of circumstances. Despite continuous efforts since 2001 to base civil service appointments in Afghanistan on merit rather than patronage, the results are modest. Institutions of public administration are nodes of power in the country’s political economy; here male factions dominate. Additional constraints are limited mobility, security and family concerns, and female-unfriendly work environments.

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38 The first administration in the post-2001 order had two women in a cabinet of 29. A decade later, the number had gone up to three, and under the present government to four. Towards the end of Karzai’s presidency (in 2012), there was one female governor and one female mayor in Afghanistan (both in Hazara-dominated areas). GNWP, Women Count.
39 Sara Parkinson et al., Afghanistan Gender Country Profile (USAID Afghanistan, 2016).
40 Ibid
42 World Bank, Women’s Role, 108–110.
Even provinces that have a substantial number of female students, and hence a pool of local candidates, have very few women in the provincial administration.43

3.1.2. Current reform issues: Protect the quotas and mobilize for effective participation

Although Afghanistan’s constitution gives women sizable quotas in the Parliament, women activists and their supporters are not complacent. They see threats to the proper use of quotas, such as abuse (putting up women candidates to front other interests), misuse (allowing men to occupy a quota seat if not enough female candidates come forward), and perverse effects (allocating a quota seat to a woman who wins an open seat).44 Quotas that are not guaranteed by the constitution are in the danger zone (as the provincial councils affair demonstrated).

Other subjects of concern are socioeconomic and cultural constraints that discourage women from running for office in the first place, as well as obstacles to effective campaigning if they do. Social demographics have so far limited recruitment of female candidates to professional or political elites, yet even these women are hampered by insecurity and limited mobility. Security was a major issue in the 2009 and the 2012 elections, leading to demands that the government provide security guards for female candidates.45 Women with limited family resources will need support for escort and other assistance to run a campaign, and support for training and advice are important for most.46 Regulatory change that appears innocuous can adversely affect women. A one-time proposal from the Karzai government that public servants forfeit their salary when holding political office would have severely restricted women, as many female candidates are teachers.

The 2015 NAP calls for measures to improve the participation of both female candidates (through training, money, and protection) and female voters (through awareness campaigns and female-friendly procedures at polling stations.) Beyond this, the question facing Afghan reformers is how to transform presence into effective participation without a functioning political party structure. In most countries, political parties are the vehicles for political mobilization, training and organization, which are foundational for effective participation. In Afghanistan, political parties are weak and under existing law cannot formally field candidates.

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43 A World Bank study found that Laghman province, women comprised 44% of the student body and only 5% of the officials in the provincial administration. The equivalent numbers for Khost were 24% and 2%, respectively. World Bank, Women’s Role, 110.
in elections. That leaves informal coalitions of individuals, social network or civil society as tools for political capacity building.47

In the state administration, each ministry has been instructed to prepare a plan for using quotas and recruitment committees to reach the targeted 10% increase in female civil servants. An important development since the inauguration of the National Unity Government has been official attention to the widespread problem of workplace harassment in government offices, which is also noted in the NAP. The Anti-Harassment Regulation of October 2015 that addresses this and sets up a complaint mechanism is a necessary first step to improve the situation. However, the regulation contains weaknesses, and efforts are underway to establish an independent complaints organ.48

3.1.3. Assessment

Civil service reform remains critical. While politically less visible than political appointments, civil service reform (e.g., through affirmative action provisions for women) has some immunity to political events such as a change of government and is thus more sustainable. Yet it is also a Herculean and long-term task. It is unclear what channels of influence are available to Norway and other donors in this area, apart from continuing to hold the government to its commitment to implement provisions of the Afghan NAP, which are also referenced in several recent documents (SMAF at the 2016 Brussels conference and ANDPF).

MOWA occupies a special position at present. Its role has been difficult. “Gender mainstreaming” was an abstract and new concept in Afghanistan in MOWA’s early years, and there was little ownership in political circles of the ministry’s mainstreaming mandate. Effective implementation of its mandate would have required considerable technical skills as well as strong political standing in the cabinet and the government as a whole.

MOWA’s self-understanding appears to be to serve as a “ministry for women.” This had led to much symbolic activity (e.g., Women’s Day) and some competition with the numerous women’s rights NGOs. What substantive mainstreaming work has been undertaken (e.g., NAPWA and gender units) has had little bearing on government policy or practice. The gender units established in government ministries tend to be staffed with junior personnel who are marginalized. Some observers also note a perverse effect whereby the existence of a dedicated ministry for women’s affairs tends to isolate and marginalize gender issues.49

Nonetheless, MOWA has not been without impact. The ministry’s offices on the provincial level (DOWAs) are mandated to serve as a referral organ for women with legal issues. DOWAs have often been an important resource for women suffering from abuse, although this function is not in line with MOWA’s mandate. (This task belongs formally to the provincial departments of the Ministry of Justice.) MOWA has also contributed to drafting and finalizing important policies and regulations such as the NAPWA, the EVAW law, the Anti-Harassment Regulation of 2015, regulation of high marriage expenses, and reform of the family law, even if inputs have been uneven. Working with German aid, MOWA is setting up units for gender responsive

47 The Afghan NAP identifies MOWA and Women’s Commissions in the Parliament as key actors for implementation.
48 The current regulation provides for complaints to be taken to managers, as opposed to an independent organ.
49 Larson, Women and Power.
budgeting in select ministries, and supports EVAW commissions at the national and provincial levels.

Nonetheless, a consensus is emerging among donors that structural reform of MOWA is necessary, and that absent such reform capacity building will produce few results. MOWA’s major supporter until recently (the US through The Asia Foundation) has in particular articulated this view. Key problems are perceived to be unqualified staff, both at the director level and below, unclear job descriptions and weak leadership. By late 2016, four key positions were on track for Capacity Building for Results (CBR). However, broader reorganisation would require ability to withstand internal discord and external Afghan political pressure. Many MOWA staff in both Kabul and the provinces have political connections, including to parliamentarians, that complicate effective reform.

To abolish the ministry, as has been mentioned in donor circles, would send a strong negative signal and appear to confirm conservative visions of Afghan society. Most administrative structures can be reformed; once they are abolished, or even organizationally diminished, establishing a structural equivalent is difficult.

Effective donor support for MOWA requires a careful balance between reinforcing the ministry’s position as the central government institution for women’s rights and gender equality, while refraining from pressuring MOWA to take on roles that it is not equipped to perform. This could mean supporting “agents of change” within the ministry and carefully put its public role center stage. By contrast, MOWA was not invited to the women’s ‘side event’ at the 2016 Brussels conference and appears to have played a secondary role in the Norwegian-supported Kabul symposium the same year.

UN Women (UNW) and its predecessor UNIFEM have been principal sources of support for MOWA. Following criticism that the UN agency tended to do MOWA’s work rather than build MOWA’s capacity, UNW has reduced its work with the ministry, although it still collaborates to monitor women’s shelters and engage in related matters (see section 4.2). UNW staff recognize that these are stopgap efforts and not long-term capacity building.

UNW’s largest programmatic focus in Afghanistan, and arguably its most significant footprint to date, is on violence against women. The agency supports pro-women legal reform through its work with the Parliament (including technical inputs to draft legislation), manages a fund for activities related to the law on Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW), aids MOWA in monitoring shelters, and supports EVAW commissions (see section 4.2). It also supports gender responsive budgeting and women’s economic empowerment. Independent analysts have positively evaluated key UNW programs in the WPS field. However, UNW works in many sectors, raising questions about whether some consolidation may be advisable.

In the elective political arena, reformers call for political vigilance to protect existing gains. The absence of conventional political parties nevertheless makes it difficult for external actors to support women’s strategic policy issues in this arena. Assistance to groups or individuals during election time naturally opens for charges of favouritism. Common initiatives and

programs, such as those organized by UNDP to train women candidates, reduce such problems. Norway contributes to UN programs, particularly UNDP, to support elections.

Norway has played a visible role in developing platforms for women’s empowerment, notably the Oslo Symposium on Women's Rights in Afghanistan held in 2014 and the follow-up event in Kabul in 2016. Apart from keeping women’s rights and the WPS agenda in political focus, these events potentially create networking opportunities for Afghan women. Yet the Kabul symposium was in part also a missed opportunity. The “output paper” with recommendations translated into Dari and Pashto was disseminated only after some delays. The symposium website requires update and improvement. The Office of the President appears to be actively following up the symposium recommendations, but this was not known to the broader circle of participants. Participants also have reported a lack of clarity about follow-up procedures, including who is responsible for monitoring implementation of the recommendations.

A delicate balancing act is again required. The symposia (in particularly the Kabul event) have become primarily the first lady’s domain. Other partners (MOWA and AWN) have reported less involvement and sometimes difficulty in obtaining information. To Norway, the fact that the first lady’s office has taken this degree of ownership is a success in terms of anchoring the symposia with the government, although it limits the scope for Norway to influence questions of coordination and substance. Importantly, the activities lack institutional ownership. If provincial symposia are to be arranged (which is on the agenda) and are to be more than one-off events, they need an institutional anchor. An institutional architecture involving, for instance, the WPS Working Group, MOWA, and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) - incidentally, all entities supported by Norway - would provide continuity and strengthen current efforts to create nationwide awareness of the Afghan NAP and WPS issues.

MOWA has reportedly expressed a wish to be more involved in arranging the first provincial symposium, which is to take place in Faryab. Although the ministry’s known weaknesses are a concern, MOWA could usefully monitor the follow-up of recommendations of future symposia, by updating and mobilizing the participants and the public more broadly, as well as by holding the government and donors to account for appropriate follow-up. The Citizens Charter structure (see section 3.3) could play a role in providing input on issues for debate and the nomination of participants. A good quality website with updates on progress in local languages is fundamental. The same applies to the use of radio and TV in Faryab to reach out to the rural population.

Norway also supports two areas that are indirectly important for the WPS agenda: human rights and education. The AIHRC, the country’s preeminent human rights organization, has received consistent and strong core support from Norway since its establishment. Smaller, ad hoc and more targeted support has gone to organizations that work in various aspects of human rights.51

Education is foundational. Norway has until now mainly supported primary and secondary education, but turning female presence in institutions of public policy into effective participation requires role models and leadership. That means investment in tertiary education

for women (as well as men). A shift in Norwegian support for education towards the tertiary sector could also exploit synergies with similar programs currently underway (such as the US “Promote” program and the World Bank’s new program in this sector).

Corruption is another general problem that affects women in particular ways. Widespread corruption “limits both women’s access to positions and their ability to execute leadership without conforming to more dominant influences,” a recent study found.52

3.2. Women’s participation in the security forces

3.2.1. Background

The number of women in the security forces has increased somewhat, but the work environment discourages recruitment and promotion of women and exposes women and their families to security risks. Measures to improve the work environment have been identified and some formal changes have been instituted, but implementation remains inadequate. Social and cultural constraints remain long-term barriers to participation.

The armed forces

In 2005, only 147 women served in the Afghan National Army (ANA), including two pilots in the ANA’s Air Corps. Most of the 100-plus women served in Kabul, and most were in medical, logistic, and communications positions. The National Military Academy enrolled only men. Recruitment policies did not favor women.53 A decade later, there were 1,400 women in a force of 195,000, and 400 female recruits were studying at the National Military Academy. Recent initiatives to recruit and train females at the military academy are designed to increase these numbers further. A manual on gender sensitivity is in use at the National Military Academy.

At present, women still represent only 0.7% of ANA personnel. The plan announced by the Ministry of Defense in 2010 to have women in 10% of all uniformed positions in the ANA by 2020 clearly was unrealistic. In 2016, the National Security Directorate reported that it employs 700 women nation-wide, apparently mostly in clerical, medical, and logistics support.

The obstacles to greater participation are social, cultural, and administrative. There is a widespread perception in many communities, as well as in the ANA itself, that it is not “proper” for women to serve in the military. Women who serve typically face discrimination, harassment, and unfair promotion policies; many lack transportation, equipment, and access to advanced training.54

Operation Resolute Support

ISAF’s successor mission, Resolute Support, has a Gender Office, in line with NATO’s Action Plan for 1325. According to the plan, all alliance operations must incorporate a gender perspective that cuts across all essential functions of a mission. The mandate of the Resolute

52 Parkinson et al., Afghanistan.
54 AWN, Policy Brief: Afghan Women Empowerment in Security Sector (June 2016). This information is based on a survey of women serving in the police and the military.
Support Gender Office is to “train, advise, and assist Afghan leadership to ensure that an appropriate gender perspective is incorporated into planning for all policies and strategies within the security ministries and through implementation at the ANA corps and ANP equivalent levels.”\textsuperscript{55} The overall key objective is to increase women’s participation in the uniformed services through mission support in three areas\textsuperscript{56}:

- MoI and MoD/ANA to implement approved strategies and plans on gender integration;
- MoI and MoD to provide safe training and working environment (facilities) for women;
- MoI and MoD to take actions to eliminate gender-based violence and other types of violence and sexual harassment of women.

The NATO mission views this as a work in slow progress. The Gender Office concluded in late 2015 that continued structural obstacles to reform made it necessary to revise downwards the earlier targets for a quantitative increase in female uniformed personnel in the ANA. Given current recruitment and retention rates and limitations on annual training capacity for women, the Gender Office aims to have 5,000 uniformed women in the ANA by 2025.

*The police*

Ensuring women’s representation in the police force has been on the reform agenda since 2001. Already in March 2003 Amnesty International urged the interim Afghan Administration and international donors to develop policies and set targets for the recruitment of women in the police. The organization called for a non-discriminatory working environment and appropriate training to improve the skills and secure promotions of female police. More than a decade later, Afghan women activist, rights organizations and international consultants penned similar recommendations.\textsuperscript{57}

The general rationale for recruiting women is clear: a police force that is representative of the country’s diversity is more effective in carrying out its functions within the framework of the law. In Afghanistan, there are additional reasons. Women are more likely to trust the police and report abuse if there are female police officers. Given the widespread violence against women—including from serving police officers—this has become a principal justification for increasing women’s participation in the force: it is a matter of protecting women’s rights. Studies also indicate that a police force with female members will elicit more trust in the community than an all-male force, and is more open to community policing arrangements.\textsuperscript{58}


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 85.


Police effectiveness also increases because women officers can carry out duties that custom
precludes men from doing (e.g., searching females at checkpoints or searching the women’s
section of a household).

In quantitative terms, there has been significant progress. In 2005, the Afghan National Police
(ANP) employed 180 women in a total force of 53,400. By 2013, 1,551 women were serving
in a force that had grown to 157,000, that is, women now comprise about 1% of total personnel.
Three years later, in 2016, the number of women employed by the ANP had almost doubled to
2,937, thus nearly catching up with India in percentage terms (where women constitute 5% of
the police force), and 700 new police officers were in training (600 in Turkey and 100 at the
Police Academy in Kabul). That was up from 40 trainees in 2003. However, the government’s
target of 5,000 policewomen by the end of 2014 was not reached. More worrying, according
to women’s rights activists, jobs reserved for women on the tashkeel (personnel budget) of the
ANP were either filled by men or left vacant.  

The United States, Germany, and EUPOL have financed major programs to support the
development of the ANP, while UNDP is the principal multilateral channel for financing. A
major recent corruption scandal involving the UNDP trust fund, LOTFA led to improved
systems of oversight. The fund mostly pays for ANP salaries, but as fund administrator, the
UNDP is well positioned to take a lead in matters of police reform. The agency has several
programs in this area. It supports Family Response Units (FRU) at district police stations that
employ policewomen to investigate domestic violence (see section 4), gender mainstreaming
units in the police for recruiting and training policewomen, and union-type assemblies of
policewomen at the provincial level (Police Women Associations). LOTFA also funds training
of several hundred female police cadets in Turkey.

3.2.2. Current reform issues: Quality in the work environment before quantity

The focus on increasing the number of women in the force has been pushed by both Afghan
reformers and international donors, in particular through LOTFA. Yet critics are increasingly
questioning whether this is the right priority. They note that the most important goal is a proper
work environment—free from harassment and abuse, with separate facilities for women, tasks
commensurate with capabilities, and promotions based on merit. UNDP expressed similar
concerns in 2013, announcing a shift in its annual program emphasis from increasing the
number of policewomen to improving the work environment.

Reformists and their international supporters broadly agree on the reasons why progress has
been so slow and uneven and, by extension, on what needs to change. While socio-cultural
values limit the pool of recruits, there is some indication of change on the community level

59 AWN, Afghan Women Empowerment.
60 UNDP Afghanistan, “Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA),”
lotfa/, accessed 3 February 2017.
61 AWN, Afghan Women Empowerment; Oxfam, Women and the Afghan Police; Suhrke, We Shall Speak, 20.
62 “The Ten-year vision of the MoI aims at increasing progressively the percentage of females in the police to
reach 10% over the 10 next years. This target might be reached only on conditions that the MoI becomes a
gender-responsive institution.” Devex, Assessment of Family Response Units (FRUs) Staff Capacity and
Working Conditions in Afghanistan, RFP no. MoI/LOTFA/RFP/006/2013,
https://www.devex.com/funding/tenders/assessment-of-family-response-units-frus-staff-capacity-and-
working-conditions-in-afghanistan/135400 (last visited 3 February 2017).
where respondents say it is proper for women to work in the police. Within the police, however, there is widespread resistance in the leadership as well as among the rank and file to hire women. Failure to provide a female-friendly work environment remains a deep concern. Women are not as a matter of course given uniforms, vehicles, and other support that enable them to carry out their work. Separate restrooms facilities are lacking. Additional training, even in basic skills, is not provided as needed (in 2013, 70–80% of policewomen were illiterate). Policewomen are exposed to violence and harassment in the office and in the public sphere. Similar constraints affect recruitment and promotion of in the army.

Important institutional elements for reform are now in place. The 2015 Anti-Harassment Regulation provides for a complaints mechanism. This was strengthened by a recent inter-departmental agreement that authorizes the AIHRC to monitor, investigate, and report harassment and violations of human rights in the security forces committed by security force personnel throughout the country.

With support from UNDP, policewomen’s associations have been formed in 82 districts to provide a forum for voicing demands and offering mutual support. In addition, a Gender, Human Rights and Child Unit was established in the Ministry of Interior in 2013, headed by a female general, with units also on the sub-national level. A similar gender unit has been established in the Ministry of Defense. A government-donor mechanism in police matters (the International Police Coordination Board) is designed to coordinate projects and policies, and, although it does not have a specific gender focus, is a forum for discussing reforms. For example, posting say four or five female police to each large police station could create a critical mass for women’s voice and mutual support in the work environment similar to that offered by policewomen’s associations at the provincial level.

The Afghan NAP covers women in the security forces in brief and general terms. The plan’s stated principal objective is to increase women’s leadership role in this sector through improved recruitment and promotion policies in the ministries of interior and defense, more separate training facilities to speed up recruitment and unspecified other incentives to encourage women to join and stay.

AWN has been a strong voice for increasing the numbers of women in the security sector. The network has called on the Ministry of Defense to launch a nationwide recruitment campaign in schools, through television, and on billboards, as well as outreach to elders and community councils, to change attitudes towards female police officers. AWN also calls on donors and NATO to attach conditions to funding that support women-friendly recruitment and promotion policies.

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64 Oxfam, Women and the Afghan Police.
66 Oxfam, Women and the Afghan Police.
67 Oxfam, Women and the Afghan Police.
3.2.3 Assessment

Change in the gender composition in the security sector has been part of the general reform agenda introduced after 2001, although reform efforts have mostly focused on numbers and reaching quantitative benchmarks. Yet the emerging consensus among reformers and analysts is that improving the work environment for female police officers must precede, or at least go in tandem with, efforts to reach quantitative targets. NATO’s Resolute Support Gender Office has noted that “many women in the ANP and ANA, as well as their family members, receive threats and are subject to harassment”.68 The point has practical as well as moral implications. As a Norwegian aid official with long experience in Afghanistan put it: donors need to think about what kind of environment they place these women in, and the risks to which they expose them.69

The list of qualitative reforms that can improve the work environment and reduce risks to women and their families is by now well known to the principal stakeholders. The question is implementation.

Changing organizational culture in security institutions is a difficult and slow task, as demonstrated by the experience of countries with much stronger commitment and mechanisms to uphold women’s rights. The record of Afghanistan’s security forces over the past 15 years shows that steady pressure and an appropriate institutional framework do yield results, and change is easier to implement in some parts of the country than others. International support and pressure have been a necessary condition for reform in the past and will remain so in the foreseeable future.

Donors have some leverage and may head the call from women activists to attach conditionality to funding to speed up reform.70 Norway is not a likely actor for reforms in ANA, but participation in NATO’s Resolute Support gives access to alliance deliberations and some possibility to influence gender perspectives and priorities in the security forces. A larger and more effective female contingent in the police force is particularly important as it gives dual value—improved policing and better access for women to justice. As a major and regular contributor to UNDP’s LOTFA, Norway is in a position to promote reforms in the ANP.71

3.3. Economic Reconstruction

Economic reconstruction has been an ongoing, huge effort since 2001. The present perspective is no longer post-conflict economic reconstruction, but economic development in general. The most recent vision is set out in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017–2021 (approved at the 2016 Brussels meeting) and the National Priority Program (NPP) for Women Economic Empowerment. The ANPDF has a general gender strategy and calls for economic empowerment of women, but, apart from a reference to budgeting for implementation of the Afghan NAP, has no reference to the NAP or to a WPS perspective.

68 DOD, Enhancing Security and Stability, 12.
69 Suhrke, We Shall Speak, 20.
70 AWN, Afghan Women Empowerment.
71 UNDP/LOTFA is the second largest item in Norway’s aid to Afghanistan, accounting for NOK 90 million in aid in 2015 and NOK 60 million in 2014.
The flagship program in the World Bank’s Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, the National Solidarity Program, which was tailored to a post-conflict situation, has been replaced with a program designed for community development in more generic terms called the Citizens Charter. This program has a conflict resolution component that targets 12,000 communities over the next four years. NGO implementing partners are in a position to build on gender awareness and conflict resolution skills among CDC members, and can draw on relationships with provincial peace councils.

The Afghan NAP does not deal with economic reconstruction as such, but discusses measures to create economic security for vulnerable women in conflict zones under the heading of “relief and recovery”. Offering higher education so women can qualify for civil service appointments is one option presented. Reviving old factories to provide female-only employment is another. The rest of the plan focuses on support for women in emergencies, in particular, female IDPs, who now represent a major humanitarian challenge. This report does not discuss gender perspectives in economic reconstruction and development in general, but looks at support for women in conflict zones, especially IDPs (see section 5).
4. PROTECTION

As noted at the outset, the Afghan NAP has adapted the term “protection” in the WPS discourse to mean protection of women against domestic violence and discrimination. Its centerpiece is the implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law through stronger legal mechanisms, close monitoring of the judiciary, awareness campaigns and improved access to justice for victims. A related theme is access to health and psycho-social support for survivors of such violence.

The plan mirrors the importance Afghan activists and their international supporters attach to the problem of violence against women. In statistical terms, an oft-cited study suggests that 87% of women in Afghanistan experience physical, sexual, or psychological violence during their lifetime, with 62% experiencing multiple forms. Traditional justice systems continue to work against women’s rights, while social norms and legal hurdles discourage women from seeking redress through the formal system. Those who do so risk criminal sanctions for committing moral crimes. International supporters of women’s rights in this area tread carefully, recognizing the dangers of a political backlash.

4.1. Background

The legal framework

Afghanistan’s legal corpus is a complex mixture of Islamic jurisprudence and statutory law. The two most important bodies of statutory law (the Penal Code of 1976 and the Civil Code of 1977) are based on mostly orthodox interpretations of Sharia (Hanafi fiqh).

Much progress has been made since 2001 to construct a statutory legal framework that recognizes gender equality with respect to rights and criminalizes violence against women. Afghan reformists and international actors who seek to hold Afghan authorities accountable can now invoke national legal standards and not only international rights. Yet significant legal ambiguities remain, and a key strategy of women activists and their supporters has been to develop Afghanistan’s statutory body of law that criminalizes violations of rights.

The landmark bill to protect women against violence, the much-discussed 2009 EVAW law, is an outcome of this strategy. For the first time in Afghan history, a wide range of violence against women was criminalized — physical violence (e.g., sexual assault, beating), forced and underage marriage, polygamy, the denial of inheritance, and prohibition of access to education, work, health services, and shelters. The bill very significantly adds to the Penal Code of 1976.

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73 Critically important here is the 2004 Constitution of, which in the words of an eminent Afghan legal scholar “stands out for its advocacy of women’s equality.” Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Afghanistan’s Constitution Ten Years On: What Are the Issues? (Kabul: AREU, 2014), 28. The Constitution’s provisions on “fundamental rights” are gender neutral, including the rights to life (art. 23), to liberty and human dignity (art. 24), and to immunity from torture (art. 29), and thus represent a legal guarantee against some forms of violence against women. In addition, article 22 prohibits discrimination among citizens and declares that women and men have equal rights and duties. Yet the Constitution opens for conflicting interpretations by declaring that “no law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam” (Art. 3). Moreover, the Constitution admonishes the courts to follow sharia jurisprudence in matters where statutory law is silent (art. 132).
At present, the bill is a presidential decree that remains controversial and unratified by Parliament. Its unsettled status is a central issue for women’s rights advocates.

Progress to reduce legal discrimination against women in family matters has been slow. The present statutory family law consists of provisions in the 1977 Civil Code on marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance. Reformers consider these to be profoundly discriminatory against women. The law places women (and girls) in a subordinate and dependent position relative to male family members. It also indirectly supports violence against women by making it difficult for them to break out of a violent marriage due to unfavorable provisions governing divorce, custody, child maintenance, and marital property rights.

A committee mandated to review the Civil Code provisions on family matters from “a gender equality perspective” was established in 2008 with support from MOWA. Two years later, the committee had a draft ready, but it has since been buried in the Ministry of Justice. Afghan women and MOWA have publicly protested the Ministry of Justice’s inaction. Family law is not mentioned in the Afghan NAP, perhaps because of its sensitivity.

Apart from the exceptions noted above, the principal constraints on the protection of women do not lie in the law, but in weak public protection mechanisms and, more fundamentally, the socio-political and economic conditions that limit women’s ability to access justice. President Ghani has recognized the connection between women’s inability to access protection and their dependent economic status and is currently prioritizing economic empowerment, as reflected in the ANPDF.

Public Protection Mechanisms

Increasing criminal prosecution of violence against women and establishing protection services for victims have received much national and international attention since 2001. A special prosecutor’s office for EVAW cases was established in the Attorney General’s Office. By late 2015, 20 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces had such dedicated units. The units have a mixed reputation of being women friendly but suffering from poor management. Prosecutors, judges, lawyers, and local leaders are being trained in the provisions of the law. A nationwide structure of EVAW commissions has been established to monitor its implementation. Specialized EVAW courts staffed with female judges are being set up across the country. Nevertheless, a
minority of such cases come before the courts. A 2012 UN study found there was “a long way to go”; three years later another UN study reached the same conclusion.78

Persistent corruption, inefficiencies and gender–based prejudices in the legal system help explain why domestic violence cases do not reach the courts. Another factor is the reluctance of families, including the women themselves, to transgress deeply held social norms that discourage domestic matters from being brought into the public domain.79 More fundamentally, women’s dependence on their families constitutes an underlying constraint that criminal justice alone cannot address: women cannot place their breadwinners in jail, nor will they risk losing access to their children.

Little is known about what is happening in the family courts. Initial research suggests that some women (and families) use the EVAW prosecution units to gain leverage in civil claims (typically over dowry, divorce, and child custody) where they have some legal rights. Once their civil claims are obtained, they withdraw the criminal claim (typically beating), thereby grossly inflating withdrawal rates.80

Other specialized units designed to lower the threshold for women to report violence have been established as adjuncts to public service facilities. They are staffed by female officials on the assumption that this makes it easier for women to seek assistance. The scheme started with family response units (FRUs) located at the district police stations, with support from UNDP in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior. The first FRU was established in 2006 in Kabul. By 2013 (the latest available count), there were 17 units in Kabul and slightly over 100 in the rest of the country.81

The FRUs have attracted considerable interest. Assessments in 2011 and 2013 were cautiously optimistic. The units studied were functioning, but they were mostly handling simple family disputes. Some had no separate entrance, and some were headed by male officers, thus raising the threshold for women to enter and report abuse. A number of female officers assigned to the units had inadequate training, poor equipment, and little institutional support for the investigative and forensic tasks of violent crime that they were supposed to undertake.82 The problems suggest structural obstacles and an institutional culture in the police force that is not amenable to quick fixes.

Family protection centers (FPCs), which are attached to local health centers, are another variety of specialized units. The FPCs are supported by UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health. The assumption is that the local health clinic is a likely point of contact for victims of violence when the women seek aid for their injuries. The centers are designed to

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79 Torunn Wimpelmann, Mohammad Jawad Shahabi, and Farangis Elyasi, The Specialized Units for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women in Afghanistan: Shortcuts or Detours to Empowerment? (Kabul: Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security/ Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2016); World Bank and Samuel Hall Consulting, Gender and Justice Study: Obstacles to Justice (Washington: World Bank, 2013); UNAMA and OHCHR, Eyes of Afghan Women.

80 Wimpelmann, Shababi, and Elyasi, Specialized Units.

81 Devex, Assessment of Family Response Units.

82 Samuel Hall Consulting, Women’s Perceptions; Oxfam, Women and the Afghan Police.
have female staff trained to assess the situation and provide medical and counselling services to victims of violence. As well, these female staff can make referrals for legal, financial, or psycho-social support and collect forensic evidence for potential prosecution. The program was launched in 2013, and by early 2016 such centers were established in six provinces, with plans for six new FPCs to be opened later in the year.83 The program has been positively reviewed internally in UNFPA.84

Shelters for women who seek to escape abusive family situations have become a significant, though controversial, public protection mechanism. The shelters have received much international publicity and funding, and it is important to understand their potential as well as limitations.

Social norms place extremely rigid restrictions on the mobility of Afghan women; this makes reaching a shelter in itself an immediate and hazardous problem. Residents in shelters are often accused of “being prostitutes”—a general term for women of low morality. Shelters have been funded or run by international NGOs in cooperation with Afghan partners; this has made them vulnerable to political attacks of being Western impositions that have broken up Afghan families and eroded Afghan values. At one point (in 2011), it seemed the government wanted to take control of the shelters and MOWA became involved. With that conflict diffused, some MOWA offices at the provincial level (DOWAs) now assist women who escape abusive situations by helping them reach designated shelters or physically sheltering the women themselves. Practice is not uniform, but depends on personal engagement. Given their sensitive role, shelters and their supporters typically keep a low local profile. Afghan and international NGOs report increased awareness about shelters among women in both urban and rural areas, thus increasing the potential for women to seek protection.85

4.2 Current reform issues: Legal gaps and implementation

How best to close present gaps in the legal framework is an ongoing issue among reformists and women activists. Key subjects are the status of the EVAW law and its reconciliation with the Penal Code, as well as reform of the family law. The Afghan NAP is conservative on this point, calling only for assessment of legal gaps but no legal reform in matters affecting violence against women in the plan’s short-term window (2015-18). Virtually all aspects of strengthening the government’s efforts to implement EVAW provisions are on the reformists’ table. Maintaining and securing the functions of shelters is another major concern.

Numerous donors are active in the protection field. UNW has a special fund for channeling donor assistance to shelters, and has an important program for survivors of violence. The United States has a corresponding mechanism for funding of shelters through the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. Several shelters appear to receive bilateral donor funding or other donations as well. Yet the shelters cannot be more than a temporary refuge for most women. Given the dependence of Afghan women on their families, the question of what comes “after the shelter” is central, but difficult. The Afghan NAP has flagged the issue by identifying the need for financial and psycho-social support to

85 Interviews in Kabul, 31 October and 1 November, 2016.
these women. Some transitional or half-way houses are now being set up. Government funding of such shelters and related support will constitute an important recognition of their role.

In the UN, there is an apparent division of labor in the protection field. UNDP supports the FRU at police stations, UNFPA supports FPCs in health centers, and UNW has a special fund for women’s shelters. UNDP also supports legal reform and is about to launch a large program for rehabilitation of victims. The United States has funded a broad-based program for legal reform (JSSP), partly through funding to the Italian-based NGO, IDLO, which has a long and solid track record in supporting legal reform in Afghanistan. IDLO works extensively with the Attorney General’s Office to support the specialized prosecution units on EVAW. DFID has a large program for training judicial staff and funds UNFPA’s family protection centers. Japan has been supporting the EVAW commissions. Many smaller NGOs have worked to strengthen local, informal conflict resolution bodies and to link them with formal institutions, although this remains controversial amongst Afghan women activists. Most other donors directly or indirectly support programs for the protection of women and awareness campaigns.

4.3. Assessment

Implementation of extant legal provisions for protection of women through the courts is necessarily a long-term process. So are changes in social-cultural norms that now constrain families and victims from seeking redress through formal, public institutions. Women’s dependence on the family unit for social and economic survival is a root cause for the low prosecution of abuse. In view of this, UN agencies have called for changes that can be implemented in the shorter term, in particular, a standardization of current mechanisms for dispute mediation.86

Norway is not a bilateral funder for programs to protect women and improve their access to justice. Norwegian support is channeled indirectly through core funding to the UN agencies involved. Given the crowded and complex donor landscape in this area, this seems prudent.

86 UNAMA and OHCHR, Justice through the Eyes of Afghan Women. Mediation now takes place in a variety of settings, including in the formal judicial branch; however, the UN report described it as arbitrary, without clear, standardized procedures. Ibid.,3-4.
5. HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS

5.1. Background

Protracted conflict, open warfare and general insecurity have over time produced huge internal displacements and extensive urbanization that have severely affected Afghan women. The recent eviction of Afghans from Pakistan has added to the problem, as many are prevented from returning to their area of origin and end up as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

As of August 2016, Afghanistan has 1,475,000 IDPs, of which 260,000 were newly displaced. Over the summer of 2016, almost 100,000 registered refugees returned monthly from Pakistan, in addition to unregistered Afghans returning without UNHCR assistance. A survey by the NGO DACAAR indicate that more than 40% of returnees to the Nangarhar province relocated to their previous properties and land, the remaining settling in camps close to Jalalabad or Kabul. The agreement reached between the European Union and Afghanistan at the 2016 Brussels conference opens up for large-scale return from Europe of rejected asylum seekers. If carried out, this will further compound the IDP problem.

The relief and recovery section of the Afghan National Action Plan has a separate section on IDPs. The strategic objective is to “improve the quality of service delivery to IDPs” with an expected result of “protecting IDP women.” Reference is made to the government’s “National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons,” endorsed in November 2013 (as the first in Asia). The policy outlines IDPs’ rights and specifies the roles of ministries and their humanitarian and development partners. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR) is the focal point, with other ministries, including MOWA, holding sectoral responsibilities and with provincial authorities responsible for developing provincial action plans.

Protection of female IDPs against sexual and gender based violence is a major concern, requiring safe spaces for women and children in the emergency phases. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for issuing tazkeras (identity papers) and disseminating information to female IDPs, with support from MOWA for awareness raising. MOWA, in coordination with Ministry of Public Health and Justice, is tasked to ensure that physically or sexually abused women and children have access to shelters, medical and psycho-social care and free legal assistance. In addition to confirming the rights of IDPs to health services and education, the National Policy on IDPs specifies that

> Women, including widows, shall be assisted in claiming their inheritance or access to their mahr and, where necessary, they shall get free legal assistance to recover their housing, land and property or get compensation for housing, land and property that has been destroyed or damaged.

The Afghan NAP’s strategic objective may not be sufficiently broad to ensure both service provision and legal and physical protection. In the UN system, the Office for the Coordination

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87 For details see the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre’s webpage on Afghanistan at http://internal-displacement.org/database/country/?iso3=AFG.
88 Interview in Kabul, 28 January 2017
89 Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (25 November 2013)
90 Ibid.46.
of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), not UNHCR (with its formal protection mandate), has responsibility for IDPs. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which assists returnees to reestablish themselves in Afghanistan, is primarily a service provider. A large number of international and national NGOs primarily provide assistance delivery. Some NGOs combine the legal and physical protection sides, including the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which combines service provision with information, counseling and protection initiatives.

Several UN humanitarian programs supported by Norway assist the IDPs. In addition, several NGOs with framework agreements with Norad and the Norwegian MFA are likely to encounter returnees and IDPs in their geographical and thematic areas of work; this offers an opportunity to adjust their regular and preplanned programming accordingly. Some NGOs today run development programs that aim to build up community disaster response capacity. The role of women in such responses is frequently overlooked, but nonetheless important. With a large male out-migration for work purposes, women often provide immediate life-saving assistance.91

Every Afghan province has IDPs, although three distinct groups are identifiable.92 Protracted urban displacement is increasing in general.93 Most IDPs and returnees move to places where they have family ties or connections. This makes “community based approaches to dealing with displacement . . . essential,” as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons notes in his End of Mission Statement of 20 October 2016.94 He further acknowledges that displaced women and girls require particular attention, and that female-headed households and widows often face barriers to obtaining their land and other property rights. Women also have problems obtaining the Afghan identity documents required for accessing services and purchasing land or property. Over half (56%) of (registered) IDPs are children, and many are not in school. An estimated quarter of the IDP population resides in areas inaccessible to the UN. There is consequently little information about their needs.

The Special Rapporteur finds insufficient attention and resources are allocated to the provinces and districts where IDPs reside, as well as limited engagement by ministries with relevant competence. Principal development frameworks for Afghanistan—the ANPDF, and the Citizens Charter—“should ensure that vulnerable groups including IDPs and returnees are included in development processes,” he concludes in his statement.95

91 This became evident in a review of earthquake assistance in northern Pakistan where communities are similarly organised.
92 The first group consists of families fleeing war and includes those from Helmand and Uruzgan provinces in the south and Faryab and Kunduz in the north. These families primarily seek refuge locally (often in areas difficult to access by aid agencies), but some move in with relatives in cities such as Kandahar and Kabul. The second group consists of families returning from Pakistan, primarily to eastern Afghanistan. Some are headed by women and in some cases several families band together under one male head of household. These families are mainly establishing themselves close to Jalalabad in Nangarhar province, on the outskirts of Kabul, or with relatives in these two cities. The third group (predominantly men until now) are those returning by plane from Europe to Kabul. They either stay in the capital, reunite with family in Pakistan or Iran, or try to re-emigrate to Europe. Author’s interviews with NGOs, Kabul October/November 2016.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
5.2 Current reform issues: Implementing the national IDP policy

The gap between well-formulated policy documents and governmental action is considerable. Forced returns from Pakistan and prospects of increased return from Europe have increased the demand on the Afghan government to provide assistance and meet the needs of female IDPs, as identified in general terms in the Afghan NAP. An adequate response, however, is constrained by several factors beyond the “constants” of the internal power struggle in the government and accusations of corruption. The stalled peace negotiations with the Taliban have led the Afghan side to blame Pakistan for interference and support for “terrorism,” leading Pakistan to force more refugees across the border. A peace agreement might reduce these political tensions, but would not necessarily ameliorate domestic, local conflicts within Afghanistan where IDPs seek shelter.

Aid agencies are uncertain whether MORR and its provincial offices can effectively manage support and ensure protection of the IDPs and coordinate their activities with other ministries, UN organizations and NGOs. The Afghan government has repeatedly requested additional funding to meet NAP objectives, despite the APND statement that government budgets have factored in the costs of implementing UN Resolution 1325 and the National Priority Program for Economic Empowerment of Women. A government preoccupation with additional funding, and for which Ministry, might have a counterproductive effect among donors and other stakeholders in the NAP.

UN and NGO projects supporting female IDPs have been positively evaluated, although these organizations at times operate in parallel with the government system.96 The World Food Programme and other UN and intergovernmental agencies provide much needed humanitarian assistance, although evaluators have questioned whether all assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries.97 The sustainability aspect of IOM’s project approach is likewise questioned and needs to be addressed in dialogues over funding.98

The NRC is frequently referred to as a “lead agency” on IDP issues in Afghanistan, including on protection aspects. The organization’s flagship program, Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA), has been very positively evaluated.99 The evaluation does not provide a gendered breakdown of clients, but NRC’s own statistics find that 45% of ICLA beneficiaries are women. Caseload details indicate that the principal legal problems faced by women relate to identity documents (tazkira), ownership and inheritance rights, and separation

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cases. Appropriate reforms to strengthen women’s legal rights in these areas are highly relevant to NAP and WPS objectives.

5.3. Assessment

The Afghan government has limited ability to protect the needs of women and girls in the looming IDP crisis. The principal government ministry, MORR, and its provincial units have demonstrated limited capacity for effective action. Returnees who are not integrated are likely to shift into the IDP population as well.

The NAP has few details on how to secure the rights of female IDPs, and the ANPDF provides no additional references. The ANPDF deals with socio-economic inclusion of women in general, but does not take into account the particular disadvantages of women who have been physically displaced. The new flagship program of the World Bank and the Afghan government for community development, the Citizens Charter, by contrast, makes specific references “to help ensure that vulnerable groups, such as women, returnees, IDPs, widows and persons with disabilities are included in the development process.” Similarly, the CDCs’ envisaged subgroups on conflict resolution and gender, if properly trained, could address the negative effects of conflict and violence on female IDPs. Key Afghan officials nevertheless remain vague on how the CDCs subgroups will be organized in the villages and how the relevant ministries, NGOs, and private businesses will coordinate. In this situation, female IDPs could easily be marginalized unless supported by strong advocates in the MOWA, the NGOs, and the donor community.

The situation is germane to a central priority in Norwegian policy engagement towards the Afghan government and the relevant ministries to (i) ensure that consistent attention is paid to the protection of and assistance to IDPs in general, (ii) provide displaced women and girls with identity documents enabling them to claim property and other rights and (iii) ensure that the Citizens Charter prioritizes support for female IDPs.

UN agencies and NGOs need funding to provide assistance to the rapidly increasing numbers of returnees and IDPs. At the same time, it is important to ensure that assistance is gender sensitive, that is, that the particular needs of displaced women and girls are identified, understood, and responded to, and that protection and rights support is rendered accordingly. Service delivery and protection can be integrated in a single program, as the NRC’s ICLA program has demonstrated.

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100 NAP’s short section on IDPs identifies strategic objectives (“improve the quality of service delivery to IDPs”), and specific action (“implementation of IDPs Policy Provisions on UNSCR 1325”), and lists reporting channels for these efforts.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR NORWEGIAN STRATEGIES OF SUPPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Some progress in the WPS area has been made in Afghanistan since 2001. The pace is slow, reflecting underlying social constraints and, in the Afghan context, the radical nature of change envisaged. Further progress requires consistent pressure, strong, coordinated action, and a long timeframe. A legal framework in support of women’s rights in the WPS area is—with some exceptions—in place, as are important formal organizational structures. Women have some presence in public decision-making, but entrenched social and political resistance makes it difficult to translate presence into effective participation.

The relationship between initiatives in the informal justice sector and woman’s legal rights is controversial. While some donors look to involve religious leaders (including women) in local conflict resolution, it is not clear this will protect and safeguard women’s rights.

Implementation of the 2015 Afghan National Action Plan (NAP) is faltering. The NAP has support in limited political and elite circles, but is hardly known outside these groups. In rural areas there is limited knowledge of women rights, the NAP and government policies. This is particularly the case in areas outside the government’s control.

Political commitment at the highest level of authority is necessary but not sufficient for decisive change. Other necessary factors include capacity building in public structures and civil society (including on the provincial level), and a strong Afghan women’s movement to spearhead action on the reform agenda that has crystallized over the past decade and culminated in the 2015 NAP.

International support has been a critical factor in the articulation of reform and achievements to date. At this point, a juncture has been reached. Afghans and donors alike ask whether reform has become too dependent on international funding and assistance, raising questions about sustainability and underlining the need for new capacity building strategies. This applies to the WPS field as well as to reform in general.

The administration of Norway’s aid has from 2013 onwards been placed in Oslo for security reasons, with the main responsibility assigned to Norad and the MFA. The embassy in Kabul manages only a few small projects, yet it has primary responsibilities in the policy field in Afghanistan. This situation is not conducive to good integration of projects/programs with policy informed by local knowledge.

6.2 Recommendations

Long-term investment in economic development, health, and education are foundational and necessary to empower women to play a greater role in matters of peace and security. Higher education has a special significance by preparing women for leadership positions and to initiate collective action. In the short run, a targeted capacity building strategy is needed to help Afghan women build organizational capacity for political action that can drive the WPS reform agenda in a sustainable manner.
To build capacity, donors must focus on quality rather than quantity. Viable strategies require systematic knowledge and an understanding of gender issues that goes beyond supporting “women’s projects.”

A prerequisite for a more strategic Norwegian engagement in the WPS field in Afghanistan is a closer integration of aid projects with policy. In return, this requires more authoritative coordination between the embassy and relevant Norad and MFA offices.

Below are more detailed recommendations for the areas discussed in this report. Rather than directing each item to specific policy units, we recommend that the relevant departments in Norad, the MFA, and the embassy in Kabul jointly discuss, prioritize, and delegate responsibility for follow-up and identify an appropriate coordination process. Norad, the MFA, and the embassy also should develop a strategy for dialogue with multilateral organizations and NGOs, including the use of framework agreements to support the objectives of the Afghan NAP through programming and advocacy work.

**General recommendations**

1. **Areas for further study**

Despite a long international engagement and numerous studies, we still have limited policy relevant knowledge in key areas of women’s situation in Afghanistan. We therefore recommend further studies of the following themes:

**Judicial practices**

- Map practices of the present statutory family courts to better understand enforcement of women’s rights in relation to divorce, custody, and *mahrr* (bridegroom’s mandatory gift to his prospective bride), as well as to identify the principal obstacles to women’s access to justice in this field.
- Map enforcement of women’s property and inheritance rights by civil courts and analyze variations in practices.

**Protection centers**

- Conduct an updated assessment of the effectiveness and possible improvement of UN-supported protection centers attached to police stations (FRUs) and health centers (FPCs).

**Local peace processes**

- Undertake a systematic overview of the impact of programs supporting local peace processes and their sustainability, including the role of male and female religious leaders, and any documented outcomes of such programs.
- Conduct a study of women as emerging religious actors and what this means for gender relations and countering violent extremism.
Awareness

- Map knowledge about the Afghan NAP agenda outside Kabul and identify ways to improve dissemination, ownership, and participation in its implementation.

2. Administration of aid

To address the present fragmentation of responsibility for WPS-related projects and to ensure better integration of aid projects with policy, we recommend:

- Regular consultations between the MFA, Norad, and the embassy in Kabul on policy and organizational developments, progress on implementation of the Afghan NAP, and areas/activities with potential for policy engagement in Kabul or internationally.

- Delegation of policy engagement and authoritative coordination on NAP matters to the embassy in Kabul, as well as the provision of any additional resources required.

- Employment of a senior Afghan female gender and development advisor at the embassy in Kabul, tasked to (i) follow implementation of the Afghan NAP and gender dimensions of the ANPDF and Citizens Charter; (ii) follow the dialogue in the WPS Working Group and other women’s rights networks; (iii) maintain contact with Norwegian funded organizations and activities; and (iv) update and advise on policies and priorities.

- Establishment of a biannual meeting in Kabul between the MFA, Norad, the embassy in Kabul, and Norwegian funded organizations undertaking WPS projects to ensure the transfer of experiences, to provide updates on policy matters and initiatives, and to explore opportunities for more joint programming.

- Review the aid portfolio to assess whether the fragmentation that characterizes the general aid portfolio also applies in the WPS field and if consolidation of funding is appropriate.

- Use the gender working group in ARTF consultations to support WPS dimensions, where relevant.

- Use the leadership of the Nordic+ group to promote the above initiatives.

3. Key policy issues

- Recognize that higher education is foundational for effective participation and for the emergence of a new generation of technical/gender specialists (both male and female). Consider shifting some of the current support in the educational sector (primary/secondary) towards the tertiary sector, with a particular aim of assisting women to obtain higher education.

- To strengthen the foundation for awareness and leadership in WPS matters, prioritize support for gender studies at Afghan universities. Norway has in this area a wealth of expertise and international networks of women to draw on.
• Ensure that the results of high-visibility events (such as the Kabul 2016 symposium) are properly disseminated (including through a good website) and linked to a WPS related structure that can carry the debate into the provinces and districts.

• Maintain support for and facilitate women’s participation in high-level conferences relating to WPS.

Recommendations within specific thematic priorities

1. Peace processes and negotiations

Policy direction

• Use policy dialogue to support the unified demand of Afghan women for inclusion in peace talks, preparatory talks, and high-level consultations with the government. Expand the participation of women in such initiatives to include individuals beyond those holding senior posts in Kabul.

• Use the WPS Working Group and ongoing donor initiatives (e.g., rostering, seminars) to support the creation of technical capacity among women for peace building and conflict resolution that could be offered to the HPC secretariat and other relevant actors.

2. Peacebuilding

2.1. Institutions

Policy direction

• MOWA occupies a potentially central place in the institutional landscape for support to women’s rights and WPS/NAP issues more specifically. However, capacity building in the absence of structural reform is likely to have little effect. Norway should align with other donor initiatives to support the implementation of such reforms.

• MOWA needs restructuring and continued support on the policy and administrative side from other Afghan institutions, in particular the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance. Support is here a two-way process. As implementation of the Afghan NAP rest with these and other government entities, they depend upon quality advice from MOWA.

• If Norway is to request that UNW scale up its support to MOWA in a more comprehensive and long term way (e.g., for organizational development), this should be linked to structural reforms, with a buy-in from the leadership of MOWA. Absent these conditions, a more limited approach is advisable, implemented through UNW or other organizations, such as political support plus assistance in select areas (e.g., gender responsive budgeting or technical assistance in a few fields). The early experience of UNIFEM in supporting MOWA must inform future initiatives.
• Support increased intake of women in the civil service through policy dialogue with the Afghan government. The number of women currently is below the government’s 30% commitment.

Programming

• Working with other key donors, Norway should initiate an evaluation of UNW during the core funding phase (2014–2017). Pending that, Norway should encourage UNW to consider consolidating its activities, possibly shifting some of them away from economic empowerment and towards EVAW, legal reform, identity papers (including marriage certificates), and legislative participation.

• Funding through UNDP/LOTFA can be leveraged to promote police reforms on the national and especially the sub-national level. Key issues here are ensuring a quality work environment, creating a “critical mass” of women in individual units to ensure voice, and enhancing the role of provincial policewomen associations and family protection units (FRU) at district police stations. FRUs have dual value because they both employ female police officers and enhance women’s access to justice.

• As part of the bid to increase women’s representation in government offices, Norway should consider ways to support current government efforts to address harassment in the workplace, in accordance with, and even going beyond, the 2015 Anti-Harassment Regulation. Efforts are underway to establish an independent complaint mechanism; this could be followed up with offers of technical assistance for awareness raising and training of all government employees.

• Anti-harassment measures are also important in the police and the army. More training/awareness programs on human rights and women’s rights education are needed. Norwegian support can here be channelled through UNDP/LOTFA and Resolute Support.

2.2. Civil society

Policy direction

• Encourage Afghan women’s organizations supported by Norway to be inclusive and ensure engagement with organizations and women throughout Afghanistan.

• Engage with organizations receiving Norwegian funding to discuss ways of supporting Afghan NAP objectives through their activities.

Programming

• Strengthening ties between Kabul women’s movements and women in the provinces requires more knowledge about existing initiatives and more than ad hoc events. The WPS Working Group and Afghan and Norwegian NGOs could be encouraged to research, design, and implement a multi-year program with a substantive focus on raising awareness of the WPS agenda.

• Explore with other donors the establishment of a WPS trust fund for Afghan civil society initiatives.
3. Protection

Policy direction

- This is a crowded field with many large and well-established actors. Norway should not aim to take on major new substantive commitments in this area. Norway should maintain support to the UNW shelter program, including an independent evaluation of how the shelters function and can be improved, and consider support for Family Protection Centers attached to health clinics through UNFPA.

Programming

- Further knowledge is required on the functioning of family courts and women’s access to inheritance and property (through civil courts), so that possible entry points for Norwegian support can be identified.

- Women working in the public political sphere need protection. Norway can support the establishment of the national protection and complaints mechanism currently planned and fund security training for working women.

4. Humanitarian assistance

Policy direction

- Engage at a policy level with the Afghan government, MORR, and MOWA on mechanisms for protection and assistance to female IDPs, prioritizing the issuing of identity documents (tazkeras).

- Work through the Nordic+ group to (i) ensure attention to the Afghan NAP in ANPDF implementation, (ii) enhance inclusion of IDP support in the Citizens Charter, and (iii) identify ways to strengthen the capacity and responsiveness of MORR and its sub-national offices.

- Align with other donors to work through the ARTF and its Gender Working Group to ensure that the Citizens Charter program prioritizes IDPs support through the established Community Development Councils.

Programming

- Prioritize humanitarian funding for vulnerable women and girls in conflict zones through emergency multi-sector assistance to female IDPs with identified needs.

- Continue support for counseling and legal assistance to IDP.

- Encourage Norwegian NGOs with established competence in the area of protection and disaster response training of women to transfer knowledge to communities, Afghan NGOs, and government entities so as to ensure greater sustainability of the activities.
## Annex I – List of interviews in Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Where</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharifa Azimi</td>
<td>Director of Women Affairs</td>
<td>DOWA</td>
<td>Faryab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latif Bashardost</td>
<td>Chief of Party</td>
<td>Asia Foundation</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Carter</td>
<td>Head of Program</td>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan DeCamp</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durukhshan Esmati</td>
<td>Gender Advisor</td>
<td>Office of the President</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shahla Farid</td>
<td>University lecturer</td>
<td>University of Kabul</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghulam R. Fariwar</td>
<td>Program Analyst</td>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Feinzig</td>
<td>Director, Women’s Empowerment Program</td>
<td>Asia Foundation</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wazhma Forough</td>
<td>Gender Advisor (MOD); Director (WPSO)</td>
<td>MOD; WPSO</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayed Hashem</td>
<td>POC on UNSCR 1325</td>
<td>MFA</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmad Hassan</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul H. Himmat</td>
<td>Master Trainer</td>
<td>Afghan Development Association</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muzhgan Jalal</td>
<td>Peace Program Officer</td>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khadija</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinkai Karkhail</td>
<td>Member of Parliament; Ambassador to Canada</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noor Marjari</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
<td>Afghan Women Skills Development Centre</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mujtaba</td>
<td>Program Assistant</td>
<td>Green Way Organization</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nabila Musleh</td>
<td>Deputy Minister</td>
<td>MOWA</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankar Narayanan</td>
<td></td>
<td>World Bank, Kabul</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassina Nekzad</td>
<td>Program Manager</td>
<td>AWN provincial office</td>
<td>Herat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orzala Ashraf Nemat</td>
<td></td>
<td>Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan Norqvist</td>
<td>Senior Program Manager</td>
<td>Embassy of Sweden</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manizha Paktin</td>
<td>Female Entrepreneur; Lecturer</td>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>Mazar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parween</td>
<td>Program Officer</td>
<td>NAC</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Rahin</td>
<td>University Lecturer</td>
<td>University of Balqh</td>
<td>Mazar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Robillard</td>
<td>First Secretary</td>
<td>Embassy of Canada</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najla Sabri</td>
<td>Gender Focal Point</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homa Sabri</td>
<td>(no title available)</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasina Safi</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>AWN</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elzira Sagnybaeva</td>
<td>Country Representative</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
<td>Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Naeem Salimie</td>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>Coordination of Afghan Relief</td>
<td>Kabul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laila Samani</td>
<td>Women’s Rights Activist</td>
<td>EPD</td>
<td>Herat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Norad Senior Advisor Kari Trædal Thorsen took part in some of the interviews in Kabul in early November 2016. She also engaged with the authors in reflection over these initial findings and identification of further themes and persons for interview.

The authors also engaged in three group events that provided opportunities to collect data about WSP initiatives in Afghanistan:

- focus group discussion in Kabul with Salah Consortium, which included representatives from TLO, AWEC, SDO, EPD, CPAU, PTRO and APPRO;

- lunch at the Norwegian embassy in Kabul with the ambassador of Spain; diplomats from Sweden, Finland, and Norway; and national staff from the Norwegian and Danish embassies and.

- presentation of draft reports to and the receipt of comments from staff of the Norwegian MFA and Norad in Oslo on 11 November 2016.
Annex II – Terms of reference

Assessment and recommendation for a more strategic and holistic approach to Norwegian engagement in the women, peace and security agenda in Afghanistan

Mandate

1. Background

Afghanistan has been chosen as one of five focus countries for follow up of the Norwegian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP on WPS) 2015-18. Women have experienced tremendous upheaval throughout the history of Afghanistan and forced to bear the brunt of three decades of conflict and insecurity. Women’s human rights deteriorated to unprecedented levels during the conflicts and war as they were denied their basic rights, including access to education, healthcare and employment. After the collapse of the Taliban regime, women have made a number of gains. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to realize women’s full and equal rights. As a response to the challenges faced, the Afghan Unity Government (GI RoA) launched in June 2015 Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace and Security (NAP on WPS) 2015-2022. The plan outlines priority actions that needs to be taken and agencies responsible for the implementation. The aim of the plan is to increase women’s participation in the peace processes and the security sector as well as to address issues around protection and relief, and recovery services for women.

The NAP on WPS is an integral part of Afghanistan's National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). Successful implementation of the NAP on WPS require close cooperation between the government, civil society and conflict affected communities. GI RoA bears the overall responsibility for the implementation through the implementing agencies mentioned in the NAP on WPS. The international community, donors and international organizations are however important partners in the implementation, providing technical and financial assistance. Norway is already supporting implementation of different elements of the Afghan NAP on WPS, but a more strategic and holistic approach is needed in order to make sure that the support responds to the needs and gaps in the most efficient and effective manner.

2. Objective

2.1. A better understanding of the current situation, including the institutional capacity of implementing agencies, in key areas of importance to the implementation of Norway’s NAP on WPS, and how it responds to priorities in Afghanistan’s NAP on WPS. Particular focus shall be given to:

Peace processes and peace negotiations
- Women’s formal and informal participation in peace negotiations and peace processes at all levels.

Peacebuilding
- Women’s participation in policy development and decision making processes in post-conflict situations and during peacebuilding at all levels.
- Women’s participation in, and protection by, armed forces and police, including a general assessment of priority given to follow up of NATO’s action plan on WPS.
- Women’s access to justice.
- Gender perspective in economic reconstruction efforts, especially World Bank’s management of Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and UNDP’s management of Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA).

Humanitarian efforts
- Gender perspective in humanitarian organizations funded by Norway.
2.2. Identify and assess the capacity, strategies and priorities of relevant cooperation partners such as the UN, the World Bank (ARTF) and international, Norwegian and national NGOs in regard to implementation of the Norwegian and Afghan NAP on WPS.

2.3. Given comprehensive needs for support, and the active involvement of other international partners, provide guidance to where Norwegian engagement can be more strategic and holistic, and efficient and effective, in responding to Afghanistan’s NAP on WPS, and achieving the objectives of the Norwegian NAP on WPS.

3. Scope

3.1. Describe and analyze the situation regarding women, peace and security in Afghanistan vis a vis implementation in the areas listed in 2.1

3.2. Describe and analyze capacity and activities of key actors in areas listed in 2. Current partners shall be prioritized, but also other relevant actors may be considered.

3.3. Describe and analyze current support (development cooperation, political and security) of Norway that is relevant to the Norwegian and Afghan NAP on WPS.

3.4. Identify Afghanistan’s needs in the short and long term vis a vis implementation in the areas listed in 2.1.

3.5. Recommend priorities regarding a more strategic and holistic Norwegian engagement and support to ensure an efficient and effective and joined up approach to Afghanistan’s NAP on WPS implementation.

4. Methodology

Use ANPDF and Norway and Afghanistan’s NAPs on WPS as key reference points, including MFA’s Guide on how to work with Women, Peace and Security. The team will assess existing documentation and previous studies. Team members will make a field visit to Afghanistan for mapping of and interviews with key actors and experts in the area of WPS. Due to the current security situation field visits to the provinces will not be done, but phone interviews will be done to ensure as broad a geographical representation as possible.

The team will maintain close dialogue with the Embassy during the course of the mission(s) and give debrief at the Embassy in Kabul at end of mission(s). Findings and recommendations shall be disseminated to Norad and the MFA (Embassy on VC) in Oslo at the end of assignment.

5. Timeline and deliveries

The main part of the assessment and the field visit should take place from medio August to medio October 2016.

Tentative timeline:
- Pre-study with draft outline of approach and report: 15 September
- Visit to Kabul: Phase 1: Late August. Phase II: October- Early November 2016

- Deliverables:

Draft report: 20 October 2016
Final report: 15 November 2016

The final report shall be maximum 30 pages. It shall contain:
- An analysis of the situation, including needs and activities of key actors, based on chapter 3 above.
- Outline of area(s) of priority in short and long term
- Focused and practical recommendations for the MFA and Norad to ensure a strategic and holistic approach to the Norwegian Engagement on WPS in Afghanistan, taking into account limited access to new funds, limited staff/personnel resources and the need for having a manageable number of development partners.

The embassy, MFA and Norad shall have 10 days to provide their comments