Female police officers at a Bayan event in Herat in December 2016. Photo by Fatima Faizi ©Oxfam, 2016.

WOMEN, PEACE, SECURITY AND JUSTICE IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER BRUSSELS AND WARSAW

SETTING THE SCENE FOR A TECHNICAL RESEARCH AGENDA

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This Bayan II Discussion Paper[2] connects the aftermath of the Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan with the current reality of women's empowerment and participation in Afghanistan. While the international conferences are important to confirm sustained international support to Afghanistan, there is a serious gap between international political rhetoric and progress on the ground. Afghan women continue to face huge challenges and the implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security seems to have stalled. Structural barriers continue to prevent security, peace building and justice processes from becoming more inclusive. By bridging these two realities, the Discussion Paper sets the scene for a technical research agenda that will help to improve coordination and cooperation among the Afghan government, Afghan and international civil society, and the international community to work out practical ways to implement policies that can effectively contribute to more inclusive security, peace building and justice in Afghanistan. The technical research agenda will subsequently be taken up in a series of applied workshops within the scope of a new program coordinated by the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), Cordaid and Oxfam Novib, and funded by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the third Dutch National Action Plan on 1325 (2016-2019).[3]

Introduction

On July 8 and 9, 2016, the NATO Summit in Warsaw[4] extended the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan beyond 2016. It also confirmed commitments to fund the Afghan National Security Forces until 2020. On October 4 and 5 of that same year, the Afghan government and the international community again met at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan[5] (BCA). In Brussels, they recommitted to structural collaboration on the development of Afghanistan. The international community endorsed a reform agenda presented by the Afghan government and pledged USD 15.2 billion in development aid until 2020.

Despite the diverse nature of the two international events, there are three key commonalities. Firstly, they both confirm the sustained international political and financial support to Afghanistan until at least 2020. The importance of that message should not be underestimated. In recent years, a grim scenario of donor fatigue, forced budget cuts and both military and civilian drawdown from Afghanistan left many wondering whether the country would in fact fall off the international agenda altogether. In that sense, both Brussels and Warsaw manifest a turning point or at least a reinforced commitment to the long-term Afghanistan's Transformation Decade (2015-2024).[6] It must be said, however, that it is also partly the worrying security situation in Afghanistan and the unrelenting refugee crisis that have reinforced and extended international commitments. But even this reflects an important development, as it means that for the first time since the politically motivated security transition process (2011-2014), the situation *in* Afghanistan is considered as the key determinant of current and future contributions by the international community.

Secondly, both conferences have witnessed increased collaboration among civil society as well as joint input from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The direct or indirect involvement of national and international coordination bodies such as the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) and the European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) has resulted in more effective and collaborative participation of civil society. This does not mean that coordination is perfect. There are still significant efforts to be made to ensure the development of common positions and influencing strategies, for example. Too often, joint positioning of civil society seems to be a process that starts from scratch each time an international conference is planned, which can be avoided if common positions and joint interests are more strategically documented and carried through from one event to the next. Lastly, there is also a recurrent debate on who should represent Afghan civil society, a complex negotiation process that often directs attention away from the content. The bottom line is, however, that civil society participation is improving both in quantitative and qualitative terms and now offers a solid basis for further streamlining and improvements in civil society influencing.

Thirdly, both international conferences have reconfirmed the importance of the implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (NAP 1325). The declaration that resulted from the Warsaw Summit stressed the need to "*build*

on recent achievements in empowering women to participate fully in all aspects of Afghan society, including service in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces; and political processes; and fully implement Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325."[7] It reconfirms the commitment of NATO to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, whether through the Gender Advisors (GENADs) to the Resolute Support Mission in Kabul or through the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, Ambassador Marriët Schuurman in Brussels.

At the BCA, the promotion of women participation and women's rights was also high on the agenda. A side event, titled 'Empowered Women, Prosperous Afghanistan', was held on the topic of women empowerment and women socio-political participation. The side event was given more weight through the participation of Rula Ghani, Afghanistan's First Lady. To prepare for the BCA, Afghan and international civil society met ahead of the conference, highlighting the concerns of Afghan women and discussing ways to achieve their active engagement and empowerment in the coming years. They particularly urged the international community to continue to support women and women's rights organizations in Afghanistan.

The joint Communiqué of the BCA mentions the importance of "(…)*funding for the National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as the Afghan government's commitment to ensure participation of women in all peace processes*."[8] However, at the BCA the participants gathered did not really address some of the common concerns of civil society, for example, concerning the effective funding and implementation of the NAP 1325 through appropriate integrated ministerial plans and the required connections to the district and provincial levels of governance.

Moving beyond Warsaw and Brussels

Despite the clear importance of international conferences such as the Warsaw Summit and the BCA, such events are not the forums where policy changes are made or programs implemented. Given the pre-cooked nature of most statements and declarations, in which good intentions, compliments and promises often do not go beyond paying lip service to civil society, these events are not the key podia for international advocacy. In that sense, it is what happens after such international conferences that truly matters. When the spotlights are no longer on the high level speeches, donor pledges and political rhetoric, the Afghan government, the donor community and civil society have to show that they are serious about their respective responsibilities. This also demands greater involvement from civil society to go beyond generically formulating demands and clearly show what their own contributions could look like.

While both the Warsaw Summit and the BCA have been important to keep Afghanistan on the global radar, these international events also embody the gap between the international political rhetoric and the reality on the ground in Afghanistan. In that sense, moving beyond Warsaw and Brussels means looking into ways of how this gap can be bridged and how real progress can be made in Afghanistan. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is a clear example. The international commitments to inclusive security and inclusive peace building are important, but they are far removed from the reality in Afghanistan, where there are serious challenges for the effective coordination and implementation of the NAP 1325. Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 was endorsed by the president on June 29, 2015. However, one and a half years later, there still seems to be too little progress towards its implementation.

This Discussion Paper will especially focus on inclusive security, inclusive peace building and inclusive justice. These concepts will be explained in more detail below. The paper does not pretend to provide a detailed overview of the current status and progress in these domains, but rather presents a practical outlook that will help to identify key elements to better understand what works in making the Women, Peace, Security and justice framework a reality.

Inclusive security

Inclusive security can be broadly defined as the active and meaningful participation and structural inclusion of citizens, vulnerable groups, women and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in policies, structures and mechanisms for addressing basic security and protection. One important aspect is the inclusion of women in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. The number of women in the security force has gradually increased over recent years, but currently seems to be stalled at numbers far below the targets of the Afghan government. At the moment, there are around 3,330 female police officers on a total of 157,000 (around 2 per cent). In the Afghan army, there are around 1,400 women on a total of 195,000 (around 0.7 per cent). For next year, the *tashkeel* (staffing plan) for the Ministry of Interior contains at least 2,000 more female positions which would replace the same amount of men. That could potentially bring the number of women working for the Ministry to 5,969 but there is no clear deadline for this. The approved total female positions in the *tashkeel* of the Ministry of Defense is 5,005, but it is not clear whether this is a realistic target given the lack of progress in recent years.

Various research reports have documented the structural challenges that explain these low numbers.[9] The Afghan NAP 1325 calls for *"women's active and effective participation in leadership positions of security agencies"*. However, with few exceptions such as Brigadier General Hekmat Shahi Rasooli, Director of the Human Rights, Women Affairs and Children Department of the Ministry of Interior, women do not reach senior or decision making positions. This is partially related to societal norms and traditional attitudes, but illiteracy, low levels of education and lack of capacity of women also explain the difficulty to appoint women at higher levels. In general, there is still no critical mass of women (and women's rights champions) within the security forces that would help normalize their meaningful presence and attract more women.

A structural problem is that the security institutions currently do not provide an enabling environment for the meaningful inclusion and participation of women. Their role is often still considered merely symbolic or worse: degrading them to servant positions in which they clean, cook or serve tea for their male colleagues. There is also a lack of facilities where women can eat, shower or change separately from men. Moreover, women are often not fully respected by male colleagues as they, for example, do not work at night or have to leave early because of family duties. Women in the security forces face stigmatization and even (sexual) violence and intimidation, whether within the security institutions or outside in the communities. Because of the discrimination in society, some women are scared to wear their uniforms. Faced with discrimination or intimidation within the security forces, women hardly have access to female superiors or effective complaint mechanisms. The newly established internal complaint mechanism within the police and the 86 Police Women Councils at provincial level are steps in the right direction, but they need to be properly monitored to assess their effectiveness.

Solving these challenges requires a change in the attitudes of Afghan men and women, local communities and the public institutions involved. It also demands practical improvements such as a safer working place, opportunities for career progression and promotion and public awareness regarding the role and added value of female police officers and soldiers in society. While changing attitudes and societal norms will take time, there is an important (shorter-term) opportunity to focus on a more instrumental approach which highlights the added value of female police officers and soldiers, for example in terms of their access to intelligence or their roles in searching women. However, these tactics cannot replace a much needed longer term approach to changing societal norms and gender equality.

Inclusive peace building

Inclusive peace building can be broadly defined as the active and meaningful participation and structural inclusion of citizens, vulnerable groups, women and CSOs in formal and informal peace process at the local, national or international level. When it comes to the meaningful participation of women, there has been hardly any involvement in previous formal or informal peace negotiations.[10] The recent peace negotiations with the jihadist group Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin could be considered an exception. Habiba Sarabi, Deputy Head of the High Peace Council and the first woman with a senior position, was present at the preparatory talks. She says that her participation allowed for the effective representation of women in the peace talks.[11]

The participation of Sarabi in these negotiations perhaps offers some hope for future peace negotiations with the Taliban. But it all depends on whether the High Peace Council will play a leading role in such peace negotiations and whether women such as Sarabi can help change government institutions which have so far generally sidelined women in peace and reconciliation efforts. In a future peace process with the Taliban, the stakes will also be much higher than with Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, as the latter was severely weakened and had a more fragile starting position in the negotiations. Negotiations with the Taliban will provide a true test case of whether the Afghan government is serious about inclusive peace building and whether they are willing to 'condition' such peace talks from the start by including women representatives.

In the absence of a formal peace process with the Taliban, there is an opportunity to focus much more on the role of women in local processes of peace and reconciliation. The conflict in Afghanistan that is discussed at international conferences is often limited to coordinated attacks on high-profile targets, tensions with neighboring countries, and clashes between the Taliban and Afghan forces. This, however, is only a fraction of the conflict Afghans themselves are faced with in their daily lives. Most conflict takes place at the local level and revolves around disputes *inter alia* related to land or water allocation, legal affairs, poverty, unemployment, religious affairs or the rights and obligations of customs.

The link between inclusive peace building and local communities has of course not been completely missing. Initiatives such as the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Process (APRP), Oxfam's Building Afghan Peace Locally (BAPL) program and the Monitoring Women's Security in Transition project of the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO), the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Cordaid provide important lessons learned. There is, however, much more that can be done at the district and provincial level where the implementation of the NAP 1325 is crucial for

the overall success of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Because of the weak linkages between different levels of conflict resolution, work on local peace-building initiatives has not yet been successful in opening a national debate and still has limited capacity to affect national level policy and dialogue on issues regarding peace, dispute resolution and social inclusivity.

The lack of formalization between official justice and governance structures and local, often informal, peace building initiatives still represents one of the major challenges to the creation of a comprehensive peace building model for Afghanistan. Strengthening this link is vital for local peace building to help ensure a responsive and accountable government in a fractured political landscape. Inclusive local peace building can go a long way to providing the 'bottom up' part of the puzzle, supplying the building blocks for a strategic framework for peace-building.

Inclusive justice

Inclusive justice can be broadly defined as the active and meaningful participation and structural inclusion of citizens, vulnerable groups, women and CSOs in policies, structures and mechanisms for the delivery of fair and effective justice services. Although it is a crucial link for both the inclusive security and inclusive peace building components of the Afghan NAP 1325, it is often neglected in discussions on the WPS agenda. In combination, the security and justice sectors are crucial in guaranteeing the protection of Afghan women and girls.

While in the last few years awareness raising campaigns by the Ministry of Justice and civil society have had some impact on improving women's awareness of their rights, little progress has been made in terms of increasing women's access to justice services and the protection of their rights within the formal justice system.[12] Generally women are not empowered to approach the formal justice system due to discouraging experiences ranging from being harassed, being undermined or frustrated by the deliberate delays and the institutionalized corruption. Other factors include limited or lack of female judges, prosecutors and police officers at the provincial level. Women also feel that being empowered will not solve their problem unless systems and institutions are equally changed and empowered to respect and pursue their interests.

When it comes to justice, most Afghan women and men often rely on traditional or informal dispute resolutions mechanisms and institutions, such as the *shura* or *jirga*.[13] Many women will only seek out state and external mechanisms after they have tried and failed to resolve their dispute within the informal justice mechanisms, and only when faced with a 'serious' issue, such as life-threatening physical violence.[14] According to a recent study, *"the existing body of research indicates that these institutions exclude women, their decisions are not officially recorded and recognised; and decisions reached within the contexts of jirga and shura sometimes violate Afghan law, Shari'a and human rights principles*."[15]

Although under certain conditions Afghan women may prefer informal over formal dispute resolution, traditional shuras are male dominated bodies. Over the last few years, governmental and non-governmental actors supported female representation in shuras and the establishment of separate female shuras. However, the number of female shura members that Afghan women can turn to for support remains limited.

While there has been an increase in the number of female lawyers and judges, the majority are working in Kabul due to the ongoing insecurity,

and economic and cultural constraints. There are limited numbers of female lawyers and judges who are working in the other provinces of Afghanistan. According to the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA) there are currently 677 female lawyers out of a total of 2,897 lawyers registered with AIBA who are working as defense lawyers and advocates. The current number of female lawyers shows a 75 per cent increase compared to 2014 when there were only 300 female lawyers. However, the majority are working in Kabul with a few female lawyers based in Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan and Herat.

According to the Afghanistan Women Judges Association, the number of female judges increased from 41 in 2007 to 320 as of July 2016. At that moment, there were 187 female judges working in Kabul, 21 in Herat, 11 in Balkh, 2 in Takhar and one in Baghlan, while the remaining women who completed the Judicial Training Course are working in other positions and professions. Afghan female judges face a range of obstacles and are threatened by anti-government elements, social stigma, and suffer from gender based discrimination, and a lack of capacity building opportunities which limit their presence in judicial organs and justice institutions in Kabul and other provinces.

A report of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) in 2014 identified other practical impediments for women from the provinces, including lack of safe transportation and appropriate accommodation facilities for women to attend law or Shari'a faculties or compulsory legal training in Kabul.[16] The limited or inexistent inclusion of women in the formal justice system, and particularly the underrepresentation of professionally trained female judges and other justice professionals in rural areas, continue to have adverse impact on Afghan women's access to justice.

Inclusive justice is an important objective on its own, but it is also crucial for the effective implementation of the WPS agenda. Without linking inclusive security to inclusive justice, there can be no effective implementation of the NAP 1325. An important part of the link between security and justice is a well-functioning case referral system, which is one of main entry points when establishing and strengthening the necessary linkages between inclusive security and justice. So far, security and justice (support) programmes in Afghanistan have often been regarded as separate spheres with few or no linkages between them. This may, for example, explain why there is no mention of (inclusive) justice in the declaration of NATOs Warsaw Summit. The NAP 1325 offers a much needed linking pin between both sectors.

International and national coordination on the NAP 1325

Under the Afghan NAP 1325, a Steering Committee was set up as the principle agency responsible for the development, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP. This Steering Committee is headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and collaborates with other government bodies, with civil society and with international organizations. The Steering Committee has recently approved an implementation plan for the NAP 1325, but at the time of researching this report, this plan had not been shared by the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Brussels, an update on the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) was presented that included as deliverables for 2017 and 2018 to "[d]*emonstrate progress in implementing NAP 1325 as specified in its implementation plan through annual published reporting in 2017 and 2018, including by increasing the percentage of female civil servants from the current level (2015 baseline)*

by 2 percentage points in 2017 and an additional 2 percentage points in 2018."[17]

On the topic of inclusive justice, the SMAF contains the following deliverables: "*Special court division (Dewan Khas) on violence against women established in 15 provinces by December 2017 and the remaining provinces by December 2018. In addition, dedicated violence against women prosecution units established and functional, including adequate staffing, in all 34 provinces by December 2017. The Government commits to increase incrementally the percentage of women serving as judges and prosecutors in these special courts and prosecution units.*"[18]

A total of 55 million USD has been budgeted to implement the NAP of which the Afghan government has pledged around 11 million and the international community the rest. However, even if the funding is channeled effectively through the organizations and line ministries implementing the NAP, and these agencies manage to coordinate effectively, there is another key impediment that can hamper implementation: the lack of thematic and operational skills of civil servants and other stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the NAP 1325. Much more investment is needed in the necessary capacity building of both civil society and civil servants dealing with crucial tasks such as (budget) monitoring and policy implementation.

The most significant international coordinating body on WPS is the working group on 1325 that meets in Kabul every month and provides a platform to discuss and coordinate various activities related to the implementation of the NAP 1325. It is co-chaired by the Finnish Embassy and the Women and Peace Studies Organization (WPSO), while UN Women provides the secretariat. It consists of a good mix of representatives from international institutions, International NGOs, Embassies and the relevant Afghan ministries. Ministries are frequently represented at the level of deputy ministers. But the working group hardly involves Afghan civil society, especially beyond Kabul, which means that it fails to take on board some of the crucial civil society input from the district and provincial levels.

Towards a technical research agenda

The technical research agenda should be considered as both a structural follow up and a practical addition to the discussions that are already regularly taking place, whether internationally or in Afghanistan. It consists of a series of technical workshop that will be organized within the scope of a new program coordinated by the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), Cordaid and Oxfam Novib, and funded by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the third Dutch NAP 1325 (2016-2019). The technical research agenda will be flexible and is intended to include any theme or issue of the WPS and inclusive justice agenda where the expertise, knowledge and advice of experts and practitioners needs to be brought together in a more focused, technical process to produce practical solutions for the better or more effective implementation of policies, programs or guidelines.

Technical workshops should not be considered as parallel structures. They will not duplicate but rather reinforce existing mechanisms. As such, they should as much as possible be rooted in the existing coordination and cooperation platforms on WPS issues. That means that, for example, they should at least be announced at the broadest level of the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG) and more focused coordination bodies. Concretely, the latter means that they should be linked to the ongoing work of the Women, Peace and

Security working group in Kabul, as well as to the relevant Post-Brussels Civil Society Monitoring Working Committees such as the one on Rule of Law and Human Rights. Where relevant, it should also be linked to WPS related platforms in other countries such as the Afghanistan country group that was set up under the current Netherlands' NAP 1325.

Thematic recommendations for the technical research agenda

Based on the lessons learned of previous programming on WPS, including the Bayan II project, the following eight themes are recommended as thematic focus areas for the technical research agenda. They do not represent an exhaustive list and are only intended as examples of what kind of issues the technical research agenda could address. The agenda should ultimately be shaped by the challenges encountered and by the needs of the practitioners involved in the coordination, monitoring or implementation of the NAP 1325 and related policies. Most of the thematic areas suggested below are still quite broad. The technical workshops are also intended to focus on more specific sub-themes. The more specific the topic addressed is, the more effective the technical workshops can be when it comes to delivering practical solutions and concrete ways of working together among the stakeholders involved.

1. Coordination of capacity building efforts and resources: It is essential to address the lack of thematic and operational capacity needed to properly implement the Afghan NAP 1325 and related policies and processes. This requires basic training about the NAP and the actors, processes and laws related to it, but also more in-depth and practical training related to how it can be effectively implemented to contribute to inclusive security and justice. Have the various existing training efforts already been mapped? How can the training materials and efforts be connected and shared in an effective way that avoids duplication? Where are the gaps in capacity building and how can these be filled? How can training effectively address both the needs at the ministerial level but also those in the provinces?

2. Changing attitudes and beliefs: Community awareness on rights, roles and perceptions, as well as behavioral change is equally crucial for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. But what kind of awareness raising activities or campaigns have so far been effective in contributing to the normalization of women's presence and participation in the security and justice sectors? Has there been a mapping of such activities at the national and provincial level? And what could be the benefits of a more (short term) instrumental approach to women inclusion in the security, justice and peace building institutions vis-à-vis the (longer term) approach of gender equality? What are the lessons learned so far in terms of engagement with various conservative elements in society, including religious and community leaders? How can the negative impact of harmful gender norms be decreased?

3. Monitoring of the NAP 1325: The monitoring of the implementation of the NAP 1325 requires more coordination and joint efforts. While the Afghan NAP 1325 foresees an important role for civil society as a critical watchdog, the monitoring efforts are currently scattered with several parallel monitoring exercises such as the *Monitoring Women's Peace and Security* project, implemented by APPRO, Cordaid and Equality for Peace, and Democracy (EPD), and the annual monitoring that AWN has been carrying out since 2010. It is great that several donors, including the Netherlands and Sweden, have shown willingness to invest in monitoring through civil society, but such efforts are much

more effective and impactful if they are linked up. How can linkages be established effectively?

4. Linking up institutions, mechanisms and policies around gender-sensitive security sector reform: Various institutional and coordination challenges explain the lack of effective interaction between different national and international actors and between different levels of government that are involved in gender-sensitive security sector reform. Taking into account the existing policies and coordination mechanisms, how can strategies and plans related to such reforms be better coordinated? How can the security and justice sectors be bridged to increase effective law enforcement and protection?

5. Linking up provincial authorities around the Afghan NAP 1325: For the effective implementation of the NAP 1325 at provincial level, several provincial authorities need to be linked up. These include the provincial departments of Defense, Interior, Justice and Women Affairs, the Provincial Councils, the Peace Councils, and where relevant other provincial bodies directly or indirectly linked to (or responsible for) the provision of inclusive security and justice. How can these authorities be linked up most effectively? What mechanisms and strategies are already in place?

6. Linking national and provincial level authorities around the Afghan NAP 1325: The various activities undertaken at the provincial level that aim to foster the implementation of the NAP 1325 (e.g. CSO networking, evidence-based advocacy, capacity building and linking of provincial authorities) will also need to be linked to national level stakeholders and especially to the line ministries in Kabul which are responsible for the provision of inclusive security and justice. What are the lessons learned so far on the best mechanisms and strategies to effectively link the national and provincial level? How can these be further improved?

7. Linking informal and formal justice to support the protection, security and justice needs of women: Informal justice is a fact of life in Afghanistan. While the balance between informal and formal justice may change in the future, it is difficult to influence in the short term. Faced with both a formal and informal justice sector, how can these two sectors be linked better? What lessons learned are available when it comes to such linkages? Which ways of linking the formal and informal sectors produce the best outcomes for women's access to justice and for the protection of women and girls? What opportunities exist to move towards an increasingly coordinated case referral system between informal and formal justice? What other practical linkages can be established to solve some of the contradictions and incompatibilities between formal and informal justice mechanisms?

8. Linking the security and justice sectors more firmly to support the protection, security and justice needs of women: The Afghan government and the international community have a vested interest in better linking security and justice. CSOs can contribute by highlighting both challenges and opportunities of these linkages within the broader framework of the Afghan NAP 1325. But they can also pinpoint best practices when it comes to practical connections, for example, by looking at evidence of legal cases. What are the best practices and lessons learned so far about practical and strategic linkages between both sectors? What type of linkages produce the best outcomes for the access to justice and the protection of women and girls?

Concluding remarks

The potential research agenda outlined above already shows how many challenges still remain. Some of these need to be addressed urgently to break the deadlock of the WPS agenda in Afghanistan. This is especially important at a time when growing insecurity and instability again demonstrate the urgent need for inclusive security, peace building and justice. To further encourage the debate, this Discussion Paper concludes with some questions, which might trigger some of the more sensitive or most challenging issues related to the implementation of the WPS and inclusive justice agenda:

- What are realistic expectations for Afghanistan if the number of women working in the security sectors in high-income countries is often still (very) low?
- Is the pace of the internationally-driven WPS agenda going too fast for Afghanistan's traditional values and cultural norms to catch up?
- Is it desirable to sometimes (temporarily) disregard the women's equality agenda in favor of more instrumental approaches that highlight the added value of the work of female judges, police officers and soldiers?
- Can symbolic participation of women be as important as meaningful participation?
- While informal justice is still often the only reality for women and girls, what end state is expected from efforts to increasingly link formal and informal justice?
- Is there enough attention for the training of Afghan civil servants (including soldiers, policemen and judges) in the midst of all capacity building directed at Afghan CSOs?

Endnotes

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