



**GETTING IT RIGHT:
EXAMINING GENDER PROGRAMMING
IN AFGHANISTAN**



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



BAAG's Director and the Getting it Right Conference Afghan participants meet with Justine Greening (Secretary of State at DFID) and Baroness Warsi (Minister of State at FCO)

This paper has attempted to cover the major themes encountered by gender projects in Afghanistan as discussed by BAAG and its partners over one year. This process that led to the culmination of the Getting it Right Conference was intended to correspond to the complexity of the issue at hand as much as possible. It thus involved many Afghan and international experts and activists, without whose technical advice, ground knowledge and intellectual input, this paper may have only been another statistic.

I would like to thank all of those direct and indirect contributors. I would particularly like to acknowledge Anna Nijsters of European Network of NGOs on Afghanistan and Saeed Parto of Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization for facilitating fruitful discussions during the Conference; Naysan Adlparvar, the Reporter, who pulled an all-nighter during the event and captured the depth and details of the discussions in this report; Elizabeth Winter, BAAG's Senior Adviser, who provided valuable advice at every step and to every aspect of the process. Thanks must also go to DFID for their financial assistance and to BAAG members and staff for managing the process.

My special thanks go to the Afghan participants who work in extremely difficult conditions but continue to inspire rights' activists throughout the world.

Jawed Nader
BAAG Director

ACRONYMS

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANP	Afghanistan National Police
APPG-A	All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afghanistan (UK)
APPRO	Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization
AWEC	Afghan Women's Educational Centre
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
BAAG	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
ENNA	European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan
EU	European Union
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FRU	Family Response Unit
HRD	Human Rights Defender
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs (Afghanistan)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
UK	United Kingdom
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
US	United States (of America)
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013 the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG), funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), held a series of consultations on gender in Afghanistan. Building on these a Conference entitled "Getting it Right: Women's Rights in Afghanistan" was held in London on 26/27th March 2014. The Conference aim was to gather Afghan views as to what had been successful in developing gender policy and programming in Afghanistan; what had been unsuccessful and the recommend future actions.

There was a wide range of Conference participation including the Afghan diaspora, BAAG member agencies, the UK Government (Foreign & Commonwealth Office & DFID) and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afghanistan. Discussions were led by four experts in Afghan gender policy and the Director of APPRO, an Afghan research organisation.

Three themes were discussed at the Conference by all participants on 26/27th March:

1. Protection of Human Rights
2. Gender Awareness Training
3. Gender Programming

A fourth theme, Men, Boys and Gender had been discussed by Afghan participants only on 24th March.

This report documents the discussions on all three days; a consolidated analysis of the preceding consultations is in Annex 1.

Other sessions were organised for the visiting Afghan participants alongside the Conference; meetings with UK Government officials - Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, then minister of State FCO - and Members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group and interviews with Reuters, the Guardian newspaper, the BBC and Chatham House.

THEME ONE: Protection of Human Rights

Participants set out the achievements made in advancing women's rights through the creation of institutions and development of formal policies. Discussion then shifted to the current nature of and challenges around violence against women and girls (VAWG), women's shelters and agreement

on the pressing need to protect "human rights defenders" (HRD). There were differing opinions regarding the promotion of women's participation in the political process; whether this should focus on raising the number of women involved or trying to involve high calibre individuals. The way Islam enshrined women's rights was discussed together with the different status of those rights within formal and informal justice systems. An underlying theme throughout the discussion was the way the actual position on human rights differed from the official accounts which over-emphasised the positive achievements.

This last point led to the primary recommendation that it was vital the achievements made since 2001 were protected and extended. To achieve this, the International Community must continue financial and political support and that during the current political transition progress women's rights are neither lost nor sacrificed. Increased levels of funding to appropriate international and Afghan organisations were needed; in particular to extend and expand women's shelters and the protection of HRDs.

THEME TWO: Gender awareness training

There was a wide ranging discussion around gender awareness including the role of the Afghan media, engaging with Islamic scholars to promote awareness, (there was a successful example of this), and the shortcomings of standalone workshops held on the topic.

Gender awareness had made rapid progress over recent years, but for it to be broadened, deepened and extended to rural areas would require more effective ways of working and delivering materials for an Afghan context. The Afghan media could play a powerful role in raising gender awareness. However its impact so far was mixed; to move forward journalists should be offered training in the language and concepts of gender issues and media outlets encouraged to broadcast a consistent and positive message on gender.

Most gender awareness workshops were focussed on the more urban and secure parts of the country and little awareness raising has taken place in insecure areas. Also workshops drew largely on English language materials and western concepts

and Afghan-specific material is needed. Finally holding awareness workshops in isolation from other programme components can lead to the raising of unfulfilled expectations. Ways of meeting these expectations were discussed in Theme Three: Gender Programming.

THEME THREE: Gender programming

There was discussion of successful gender interventions and the reasons for their success. These included factors raised in earlier themes; linking awareness to livelihoods and the quantity and quality of women's participation.

Gender interventions in Afghanistan had produced mixed results and it is essential to improve their impact. A holistic approach can help achieve this by integrating awareness raising activities with those providing community based economic empowerment. It is critical that women are supported to not only gain awareness of their rights and to develop leadership capacities, but also to gain financial independence. This approach also highlights the benefits of women's participation to the wider community, although it is vital to preserve 'women only' areas.

To achieve a focus on impact it is recommended that monitoring and evaluation is strengthened with the evaluation outputs disseminated in Afghanistan's official languages. It is important that existing Afghan capacities to monitor and evaluate gender programmes are developed and exploited especially given the logistical and security restrictions in expat staff accessing programme beneficiaries.

THEME FOUR: Men, Boys and Gender

This session opened with examination of the reasons why 'gender' is mainly interpreted as only concerning 'women's rights' in Afghanistan. This led to discussions covering Afghan masculinity and systems of patriarchy, an examination of the most common types of human rights violations experienced by men and boys in the country, and an acknowledgement that both these rights violations and males themselves had been almost totally excluded in gender programming so far.

The current approach to gender was seen as having contributed to: (i) men responding negatively to and undermining gender interventions; (ii) insufficient opportunities to change men's attitudes and behaviours toward women; (iii) a limited ability to tackle the structural causes of gender inequality; and (iv) a failure to adequately respond to violations of rights experienced by men and boys.

It was therefore considered crucial that a better understanding of Afghan forms of masculinity and patriarchy was integrated into gender policy and programming in Afghanistan. Men should be engaged in interventions working to reduce VAWG while at the same time violations of men's and boy's rights, including practices of bacha bazi, should be monitored and addressed.

NEXT STEPS

Based on the recommendations of the Conference participants, and previous consultations which fed into it, BAAG propose a number of follow-up steps:

- Document and share the findings of the conference with key policy-makers in the governments of the UK, Afghanistan, and other countries involved in providing aid to Afghanistan;
- Translate the conference report into Afghanistan's official languages and make it available to the Afghan government, Afghan NGOs and members of the public;
- Host more networking and advocacy events to support the engagement of Afghan NGOs and experts with international organisations and policy-makers;
- Facilitate opportunities for 'capacity exchange', by supporting international staff working on Afghanistan to learn from Afghan experts and for Afghans to learn from their international colleagues.

In addition, BAAG will seek resources (partners and funding) to explore the following thematic programme options:

- Further discussions and research on policy and advocacy approaches to the issue of violence against women and girl;
- Explore options for the international community, Afghan government and Afghan civil society to provide robust protection mechanisms for human rights and women's rights defenders;
- Further discussions and research on the involvement of men and boys in gender programmes and the need for programmes to address male-specific rights violations and
- A more detailed study of the concept of masculinity in Afghanistan and how that creates both barriers and opportunities when considering gender programmes.



With a realistic expectation of diminished funding on the horizon, it is increasingly important to get to know what has worked but also what has not worked regarding gender in Afghanistan, hence our conference title: Getting it Right.

Frederick Lyons, Chair of BAAG Board of Trustees

The situation of Afghan women holds great symbolic significance in the international intervention in Afghanistan. And yet, while this intervention has achieved some gender-related gains, overall results are viewed as disappointing. With a major post-2014 downsizing of the international involvement at hand, careful work is needed to preserve even these hard won gains.

As a result, and with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) began a series of consultations on the topic of gender in Afghanistan in 2013. Consultations included in-depth discussions with prominent Afghan women's rights activists and international gender experts. The findings of these discussions can be found in Annex One, which contains a briefing note titled: Understanding Gender Issues and Programming in Afghanistan.

The main themes emerging from these consultations were carried forward into a gender conference named 'Getting it Right: Women's

Rights in Afghanistan', held in London on 26th and 27th March 2014. The purpose of the conference was to gather Afghan perspectives on what had worked and not worked with regard to gender policy and programming in Afghanistan, and to identify what recommendations could move things forward in a constructive manner. BAAG's role was to facilitate this process. BAAG's member agencies were invited to make contributions. The process, main findings and recommendations of the 'Getting it Right' conference are captured in this report.

THE BAAG GENDER CONFERENCE: 'GETTING IT RIGHT'

Four gender experts were invited from Afghanistan to participate in the 'Getting it Right' Conference. These were Ms. Belquis Ahmadi, Judge Najla Ayubi, Mr. Shaheer Shahriar, and Dr. Soraya Sobhrang. In addition, Dr. Saeed Parto the Director of the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organisation (APPRO) also travelled from Afghanistan to assist with facilitation and specialist input. Relevant members of the Afghan Diaspora, including a representative from the Afghan Embassy in

BOX 1. WHO ARE BAAG AND WHAT DO WE DO?

The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group was established in 1987 to draw attention to the needs of Afghans in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Now, given the changing situation in Afghanistan, BAAG's vision is to contribute to an environment where Afghans can take control of their own development and bring about a just and peaceful society. This vision is achieved by BAAG bringing together its 29 member agencies in addition to members of the wider development community to advocate continued international commitment to Afghanistan; by generating and sharing information and knowledge that emphasises Afghan perspectives to aid policy debate and decision-making; and through strengthening the capacity of Afghan civil society to influence policies on Afghanistan. BAAG is headquartered in London.

London, Afghan students studying in the UK, and independent Afghan analysts also participated.

The Afghan participants were joined by a number of representatives from BAAG member agencies. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the co-chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Afghanistan (APPG-A) were represented at the Conference. A full list of conference participants can be found in Annex Two.

On 24th March 2014, prior to the official two day conference, the visiting Afghan participants were asked to discuss the theme Men, Boys and Gender. Participation was limited to the Afghan conference participants to allow for a frank discussion of a sensitive subject. A list of the participants of this session can be found in Annex Three. BAAG rapporteurs documented this session and all others relating to the conference. During this initial session, facilitated by Dr. Parto, the participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- What is the current situation of men and boys with regard to gender in Afghanistan?
- To what extent do men and boys perpetuate, reduce or experience human rights violations in Afghanistan?
- What recommendations should be made?

On the following day, 25th April 2014, a series of side meetings were organised for the visiting Afghan participants. These included interviews with Reuters and the Guardian newspaper. Engagements with government officials were also scheduled, which included meetings with:

- Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development;
- Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Minister of State, FCO; and
- Members of the All Party Group on Afghanistan in the UK Parliament.

The 'Getting it Right' Conference took place on 26th and 27th March 2014. On the first day, following an opening address delivered by Mr. Jawed Nader (BAAG Director) and an initial panel discussion featuring the four visiting Afghan delegates, all participants were asked to discuss three key themes. These were: (i) Protection of Human Rights; (ii) Gender Awareness Raising; and (iii) Gender Programming.

To encourage discussion participants were divided into two working groups, each of which debated all three themes. Saeed Parto (APPRO) and Anna Nijsters, Advocacy and Communications Coordinator of the European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan (ENNA) facilitated these working groups on a rotational basis. As with all other sessions rapporteurs were present in the working groups.

For each of these three key themes participants were asked to consider the following questions:

- What is the current situation?
- What has worked and what has not? and
- What recommendations should be made?

On the morning of 27th March, the second day of the conference, the BAAG rapporteurs presented a synopsis of the findings and recommendations emerging from discussion of the four conference themes. This was to validate and refine thematic recommendations. However, it proved to be a challenging task given the amount of information to be digested and the number of participants. To expedite the process participants were divided into four groups, each corresponding to one of the themes. Before breaking for lunch, these groups had successfully prioritised the recommendations for each theme.



BOX 2. APPRECIATION FOR THE CONFERENCE AND SIDE MEETINGS

For the first time I felt that we were actually listened to. It felt really good that people were listening to and prioritising our perspectives as Afghans.

Belquis Ahmadi, Afghan participant.

The Afghan Human Rights activists I met were both inspiring and impressive. They told me about the daily struggles they face, including threats to their lives, as they try to secure a better future for women and girls in their country. They are determined to protect the hard-won gains of the last 13 years, as am I. The UK will stand by them and the rest of the Afghan people on this vital agenda.

Justine Greening, Secretary of State for International Development.

The knowledge of the Afghan speakers was very impressive. It was the first time I've heard someone speak with depth about the gender issues faced by men and boys in Afghanistan.

Sadaf Tach, public session participant.

I had a fascinating discussion with empowered Afghan women who are dedicated to improving the lives of other women in Afghanistan. As leading figures in their field they are positive role models for Afghan women and girls.

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, Senior Minister of State, FCO.

The afternoon consisted of a public session. In addition to the existing participants, over one hundred Afghan and international guests attended the public session. These included members of the British press, international NGOs working on Afghanistan, the Afghan Diaspora and the Afghan Ambassador to the UK. Frederick Lyons (Chair of BAAG's Board of Trustees) delivered the opening address. Najieh Ghulami, a noted presenter for BBC Persian, gave the keynote speech during which she reflected on her ultimately successful struggle, as an Afghan woman, to gain the right to determine her own life choices.

The focus of the public session was a panel discussion chaired by Ms. Elizabeth Winter (BAAG Senior Adviser). During this panel discussion the visiting Afghan participants presented the thematic recommendations prioritised earlier that morning. Following this presentation, the panel members responded to questions posed by the audience.

On the day after the conference, 28th March 2014, further side meetings were convened for those participants visiting from Afghanistan. This included interviews with the BBC and with members of the Afghanistan: Opportunity in Crisis project at Chatham House.

REPORT STRUCTURE

In the following section of the report, the opening panel discussion held on the first day of the conference is summarised. Recommendations to improve conferences on Afghanistan are also highlighted.

In sections three to six, each of the four conference themes are addressed in turn. In each of these thematic sections the main findings are discussed

SETTING THE SCENE: THE OPENING SESSION



I want to start with the good news as we've had many gender successes in Afghanistan in the last thirteen years. But, as is common in Afghanistan, good news is followed by bad news. There is still much to be done!

Afghan participant

Mr. Jawed Nader opened the first day of the conference, 26th March 2014, by explaining its purpose to the collected participants. Following a brief presentation of the themes emerging from BAAG's previous consultations, the participants agreed to focus on the four key themes listed in the introduction above. Before discussing these themes, Mr. Nader invited the four visiting Afghan participants to engage in a panel discussion.

Judge Najla Ayubi opened the discussion by highlighting some of the gender-related gains made in Afghanistan. Major milestones have been attained in terms of founding institutions. This includes the establishment of: (i) Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in 2002; (ii) Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) also in 2002; (iii) gender units and gender focal points across government institutions from 2002 onwards; and (iv) High Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women in 2010. More generally, she pointed out the value of Afghanistan's growing civil society sector, specifically the founding of women's shelters in 14 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

With regard to policies, Judge Ayubi referred to the ratification of the: (i) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2003; (ii) Afghan Constitution

in 2004; (iii) National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) in 2008; and (iv) Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law in 2009. A further success is the incorporation of women's quotas in the Afghan Parliament. These included a 25% quota of reserved seats for women in the Wolesi Jirga, or lower house of Parliament, and 17% quota in the Meshrano Jirga, or the upper house of Parliament. Twenty-five per cent of seats were also initially reserved for women in Provincial Councils (although a 2013 parliamentary ruling reduced this quota to 20%).

Dr. Soraya Sobhrang then expanded on Judge Ayubi's comments, pointing out that since 2001 the media have played a major role in raising awareness of gender issues. She also explained how earlier this year Afghan NGOs along with female MPs came together to develop the Women's Charter. The Charter reaffirmed that women's rights are non-negotiable in Afghanistan's on-going peace process with the Taliban and other armed groups.

However, Dr. Sobhrang also pointed out that there was much to be concerned about with regard to the position of women in Afghanistan. While access to education and health provision has dramatically improved for women and girls in Afghanistan, maternal mortality rates remain very high and

² The Amnesty Bill precludes prosecution for war crimes committed in Afghanistan.

education is still not available to the majority of girls in the country. Moreover, the majority of Afghan women are not financially independent, which contributes to their state of disempowerment. And, finally, she explained that women's political participation has decreased in Afghanistan from 25% in 2011 to 18% in 2013. Emphasis was placed on the need for more women to occupy decision-making spaces, especially in Afghanistan's on-going peace process.

Ms. Belquis Ahmadi then went on to list the main challenges facing human rights and gender-focussed organisations in Afghanistan. These included:

- Insecurity and corruption undermining programming;
- A lack of political will to promote women's rights in Afghanistan;
- The EAW Law not being fully implemented;
- Poor governance resulting in limited opportunities for women's political participation;
- Selective enforcement of the rule of law and persisting impunity (including the Amnesty Bill)², which limits the prosecution of those who violate human rights;
- Low capacity of the judicial system and limited numbers of female lawyers;
- The weakening of the formal justice system as a result of international support for the informal justice system;
- Lack of an enabling physical environment, in which facilities for women are not provided by employers;
- Workplace harassment of women and a corresponding 'culture of silence';
- Drug addiction contributing to domestic violence;

- High levels of conflict-induced trauma and the limited availability of psycho-social counselling contributing to domestic violence;
- High levels of unemployment potentially contributing to domestic violence; and
- The long time horizon required to change gender norms and attitudes, and the limited existing educational capacity to do so.

Mr. Shaheer Shahriar was then invited to speak about the role of men and boys with regard to gender in Afghanistan. He explained that integrating men and boys in gender programming should not come at the expense of working with women and girls. The integration of men should focus on preserving their rights in addition to reducing violations of women's rights. He argued for the integration of men for two reasons. On the one hand, the abuse of boys is a relatively common human rights violation that has remained largely unaddressed in the country. On the other hand, most influential figures in Afghan communities are men with limited knowledge of women's rights. Working with them to enable gender programmes and to raise their own awareness could have major impacts on gender inequalities.



BOX 3. AFGHAN CONFERENCES: HOW TO IMPROVE THEM

As part of the orientation session of the 'Getting it Right' Conference, BAAG asked the visiting Afghan participants how, in general, such conferences could be improved. They offered the following recommendations:

- Further broaden the spectrum of participants, engaging with a more diverse set of experts including those from 'grassroots' organisations;
- Increasingly engage the Afghan Diaspora, especially those who have worked on or studied the issues central to the conference;
- Ensure participants are fully briefed before the conference begins;
- Consider that some participants have a limited understanding of both the conference subject matter and the Afghan context;
- Be aware that participants try to impose their own personal and organisational objectives in conference discussions;
- Facilitate discussions around clear objectives, but do not control the outcomes of the conference;
- Develop a plan of action for follow up during the conference;
- Rapidly follow up with the media and policy-makers after the conference is completed;
- Produce a conference report in English and Afghanistan's official languages and ensure it is widely circulated;
- Start with positive points when discussing conference findings;
- Frame recommendations to be engaging and not to "look desperate";
- Utilise the media, and use media friendly language in the conference report, to increase the communication and uptake of recommendations;
- Back up conference discussions and findings with research and data;
- Ensure participants are informed of progress regarding communication of conference findings; and
- Challenge policy-makers on commitments they do not uphold.



THEME ONE: PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The problem is that progress is under threat. We are not talking about improving Human Rights, but preserving those gains already made.

International participant

From the outset of this session participants noted the achievements that had been made mainly with regard to the institutions and policies advancing women's rights in the country. However, the discussion quickly shifted to more critical debates regarding the nature of and challenges surrounding violence against women and girls (VAWG), women's shelters, and the pressing need to protect human rights defenders (HRDs). Differences of opinion were aired in relation to promoting the quantity or quality of women's political participation. A number of topics were also examined, including the relationships between Islam and women's rights and the formal and informal justice systems. Throughout the debate the disconnect between official accounts of human rights violations and the reality 'on the ground' was strongly underscored.

Another aspect of the discussion was the limited inclusion of men in the protection of human rights. This issue will be taken up under Theme Four: Men, Boys and Gender.

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

While many institutional and policy gains have been achieved in Afghanistan, one key theme that was echoed throughout this discussion was the disconnect between policy and practice. Institutions have been established. Legislation ratified. Yet, implementation lags behind. MOWA is under-resourced and sidelined in ministerial politics. No women's shelters operate in the south of the country and elsewhere they are in short supply. Those that do exist remain underfunded and face difficulties in reintegrating vulnerable women back into society.

The ERAW Law has not been fully operationalised and a large proportion of violations remain unreported. This is the result of weak rule of law, a poor judicial system, limited awareness of the ERAW Law, and a general lack of political will to promote women's rights in Afghanistan. In May 2013 there was an attempt to repeal the ERAW Law through

parliamentary debate. In addition, February 2014 saw an attempt to adjust Article 26 of the Criminal Prosecution Code, which would have made it difficult to prosecute cases of domestic violence perpetrated against women and girls. Women's quotas have shared a similar fate. In July 2013 the Afghan Parliament reduced the number of seats earmarked for women in Provincial Councils, from 25% to 20%.

This discrepancy between policy and practice has been exacerbated by the stance of the international community. In many cases donor countries were seen as reluctant to acknowledge the current severity of human rights violations in Afghanistan, given their need—on the verge of troop withdrawal—to demonstrate that progress had been made.

Conference participants drew attention to the severity of women's rights violations in Afghanistan. Research conducted by AIHRC has shown that, in 2013, the reporting of cases of VAWG has increased by 9%³. While this is potentially an unsettling statistic conference participants believed that this increase was also attributable to a greater awareness of women's rights amongst the Afghan public, their growing confidence in the formal justice system, and their enhanced access to the Afghan National Police (ANP).

Differing viewpoints were presented regarding the ANP's handling of such cases.

A number of participants felt strongly that women who had reported cases of sexual violence to the ANP were vulnerable to sexual abuse at the hands of the male police officers. This was attributed to an unprofessional law enforcement service, but also to a culture of impunity within the ANP. Moreover, Family Response Units (FRUs) are under-resourced and therefore unable to suitably respond to cases of domestic violence. Other participants argued that, while sexual abuse by male police officers did occasionally occur, women felt sufficiently safe to report rights violations to the ANP. What was undisputed, however, was the need for more and

³ AIHRC (2013). Violence Against Women in Afghanistan: Factors, Root Causes and Situation. Kabul: Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

better trained female police officers and better resourced FRUs.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human Rights defenders, given the activism they carry out, are subject to threats, violence and assassination in Afghanistan. This threat often extends beyond those working in women's organisations to teachers, doctors, journalists and high profile female figures who actively promote women's rights. With declining security and the pending withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops these risks are set to increase. The international community has a duty to protect those engaging in Human Rights activism in Afghanistan. Current challenges included the limited awareness of this issue amongst the international community, limited coordination and information sharing amongst women's organisations and HRDs, and the lack of coordinated donor supported mechanisms to support HRDs at risk. Follow-up on these issues was thought to be essential.

Two examples of emerging support networks were provided. First, the Asia Foundation has established a regional women's network operating in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Currently without funding, the network has an Urgent Action Fund that would work to protect HRDs. A suitable screening process is still required for the fund. Second, staff members of AIHRC and of the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) had informally provided their phone numbers as an informal emergency 'hotline' for HRDs under threat. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA)—the UN political mission in the country—agreed to transport at-risk HRDs to Kabul, where they were housed in a women's shelter. A small number of donor countries unofficially offer help if these HRDs can reach neighbouring countries.

In both examples the possibility of setting up a temporary protection shelter in Kabul to support HRDs under threat was proposed. However, the plausibility of relocating large numbers of HRDs and their families was questioned.

As can be seen both networks are in the early stages of development and require further funding, development and international support. In addition, only limited efforts have been made by donor countries to protect HRDs in general.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION: QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY?

Discussion of reductions in reserved Provincial Council seats for women opened up a debate on women's political participation. Certain participants felt it was more important to focus on what women are doing in political and public spaces as opposed to only ensuring women occupied them. It was felt that many reserved seats were occupied by 'placed women': women who were put in political posts to further the needs of powerful men or male family members. Even when not 'placed' into positions of authority, many women fail to advocate for women's rights given a general lack of support. This can be partially overcome by providing leadership training to women in decision-making positions.

A number of participants disagreed with this. They explained that the mere presence of women in political forums affected change in Afghanistan, and that these women acted as role models for young women and girls throughout the country.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONTEXT? ISLAM AND THE INFORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The relationship between Islam and women's rights was debated. A more appropriate and digestible understanding of women's rights could potentially be achieved if they were understood in terms of women's Islamic rights. Engagement with Islamic feminist movements and religious scholars was suggested. Yet, caution is necessary. While consultation could be initiated with village level clergymen, higher-level debates on the stance of Islam relative to women's rights should be left to religious scholars. The Constitution should also be utilised as a guiding document.

Furthermore, it is not only Islam with which women's rights needed to be linked, but also Afghan cultural traditions. In many instances violations of women's rights are underpinned by cultural beliefs and practices as opposed to those espoused by Islam. Discussion of engagement with the informal justice system was also followed. In many part of the country, engaging with the informal justice system, operating through jirgas or shuras, was a reality. However, these institutions should only be engaged for consultation purposes and not for decision-making purposes or for cases dealing with crimes and Human Rights violations. These informal institutions do not recognise the law and



are subject to major power imbalances. Women are not routinely involved in decision-making and those with power and authority can easily sway outcomes.

It was pointed out that the international community have been supporting and in some cases strengthening the informal justice system. This was believed to be a response to earlier allegations that they were too insensitive to Afghanistan's cultural context. Certain participants felt this shift in policy is hindering the ability of the formal justice system to protect Human Rights in Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Recognise and base policy on the 'ground realities' of Human Rights in Afghanistan and, throughout the unfolding transition, apply greater political pressure on the Afghan government to protect hard won gains;
- Extend, beyond 2014, financial and technical support to NGOs promoting Human Rights and the position of women in Afghanistan;
- Increase levels of financial support to women's shelters to cover both core costs and their establishment in all provinces of Afghanistan;
- Immediately cease to strengthen, support or use the institutions of the informal justice system, beyond their function as consultation mechanisms;
- Act swiftly, in a coordinated manner, and in partnership with existing Human Rights Defender networks to monitor, protect and relocate (where necessary) Human Rights Defenders in Afghanistan;
- Increase investment in more, better trained and better protected female police officers and Family Response Units. More specifically, invest in raising awareness of women's rights in the law enforcement sector;
- Support engagement with Islamic scholars and Islamic feminist movements to assess possibilities for the promotion of women's rights within an Islamic framework; and
- Adapt Human Rights approaches, tools and language to the Afghan context.

THEME TWO: GENDER AWARENESS RAISING

Media has played a major role in raising awareness of gender in Afghanistan, but it has not been utilised sufficiently.

Afghan participant

Discussion of gender awareness raising addressed a number of topics. These included the actual and potential impact of the Afghan media upon raising gender awareness in Afghanistan, and the possibility of engaging with Islam and religious scholars to promote awareness of gender. The shortcomings of awareness raising through workshops were also touched upon. At the same time, participants also discussed ways of raising awareness at the global level through better coordinated advocacy campaigns.

MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF THE AFGHAN MEDIA

The media and access to information has burgeoned in Afghanistan since 2001. The Internet and social media have proliferated, albeit mainly in urban centres. There are numerous television stations both at national and regional levels and news services have flourished. This has contributed to the rapid spread of the language of Human Rights and gender throughout the country. Television shows *Amanullah*⁴ and *Niqab*⁵ (The Mask) and radio drama *New Home, New Life*⁶ are particularly noted for the positive impact they have had in promoting awareness about gender. Radio services, including Azadi Radio and Salam Watandar, and television stations, including 1TV, Ashna TV and Tolo TV, are amongst those media outlets working to promote gender and women's rights in Afghanistan.

In most cases, awareness raising undertaken since 2001 has only delivered a superficial understanding of gender. The vast majority of the Afghan public lack a working understanding of gender and women's rights. As such, the media remains a largely untapped resource.

Many Afghan journalists support women's rights and produce news reports promoting gender. While well intentioned these reports often fail to correctly portray gender and related concepts. Afghan journalists could therefore benefit from tailored trainings on gender and human rights. Plus, training them to undertake more investigative journalism could have a positive impact on gender awareness across the country.

Afghanistan is experiencing "gender fatigue". To exploit the potential of the Afghan media there is a need for refreshing and innovative ways to present gender and women's rights issues. This could be achieved by exploiting new types of media, the use of new language, the use of innovative programme formats or unconventional messaging, and through engaging with Islam.

Methods to better utilise the Afghan media include the use of differing types of media (radio and social media) and of media messaging (to target different population demographics or geographic areas of the country). Where Facebook is currently used it is mostly in English and often not suitably contextualised.



⁴ A TV drama that portrays the life of an empowered female police officer.

⁵ A TV series where women, hidden by a niqab (mask), describe personal stories of domestic violence.

⁶ A BBC radio drama that includes issues on numerous topics including women's rights.



A number of challenges to gender awareness raising exist in the Afghan media sector. These included the high costs of TV and radio spots, both media with potentially high impact. Not only do donors normally refrain from funding such media products, but it was also felt that the media made no attempt to support NGOs in using these products.

More generally of concern is the inconsistent and disparaging portrayal of women and girls on Afghan television. A television channel may show a programme in support of women's rights and then one-hour later air material that is derogatory to women. Where TV stations agree to promote women's rights they should adopt a code of conduct ensuring that their programming has consistent and non-derogatory messaging.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN AWARENESS RAISING: ENGAGING ISLAM?

A significant proportion of the gender messaging supported by the donor community is not contextualised to the Afghan context. It is based on western concepts and ideas that are disconnected from Afghan realities, and which are mainly translated from English into Afghanistan's official languages. There is a need for gender and women's rights messaging to be culturally sensitive, to be grounded in an Islamic framework, and not only translated into but conceived in official languages and based on relevant topics.

How this is to be achieved was a hotly debated topic. With regard to cultural sensitivity, the importance of emphasising positive aspects of Afghan culture was

highlighted. This included drawing constructively on Afghan history and Islam, in a bid to undermine negative stereotypes emphasising violence. Yet, at the same time it was also felt that directly challenging negative aspects of Afghan culture could stimulate positive change.

An example of the work of the Asia Foundation in grounding awareness raising within an Islamic framework was presented. A number of religious scholars were engaged by the Foundation's staff and, after discussing women's rights with them, they were asked to develop relevant booklets and communicate pertinent messages during Friday sermons. The booklets once finalised were then distributed throughout Afghanistan. Now these scholars are some of the Asia Foundation's strongest advocates for women's rights.

While well received this example drew a note of caution, in that "the response to a [policy] flip should not be a [policy] flop". By this it was implied that while working with religious scholars is an innovative way of promoting women's rights, it is also an unpredictable process. Careful monitoring processes should be in place when working with religious scholars to ensure they promote women's rights as opposed to a more conservative agenda. It is also important to engage literate, knowledgeable and liberally minded religious scholars.

Finally, it is necessary to improve coordination of NGOs with religious scholars in relation to gender mainstreaming. This is vital to facilitate the exchange of information and the generation of lessons learned.

IMPROVING AWARENESS RAISING WORKSHOPS

The limitations of awareness raising workshops were touched upon in this theme. Given a lack of coordination, which leads to the duplication of efforts, and the prevailing insecurity in the country it was pointed out that most awareness raising workshops have been focussed on the more urbanised and secure parts of the country. Little awareness raising has taken place in insecure areas. It was also pointed out that these workshops largely drew on English language materials and western concepts to raise awareness. Contextualisation is needed.

Another important shortcoming is the delivery of such workshops in isolation from other programme components, which mainly leads to the raising of expectations. This will be taken up further in the discussion of Theme Three: Gender Programming.

STRENGTHENING AWARENESS RAISING AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

It is also important to raise awareness of gender outside Afghanistan. The goal of such global level awareness raising is to lobby donor governments to adopt improved gender policies, to provide funding for associated gender programming and to respond to gender related issues, in a timely manner, as they emerge in Afghanistan. This goal can be achieved indirectly by devising emotive campaigns aimed at the citizens of donor countries, or by engaging donor governments directly.

For this to happen, linkages must be expanded and strengthened between local organisations working on gender in Afghanistan and international NGOs that have the capacity to campaign in donor countries. To this end, it would be valuable to compile a database of NGOs working on gender in Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE GENDER AWARENESS RAISING

- Building upon the NAPWA, develop a national gender strategy that in turn lays out a strategic approach to awareness raising in the sector;
- Preserve and expand 'space' in the Afghan media to raise awareness of gender issues through and beyond the current transition process;
- Promote the use of innovative awareness raising approaches by using underexploited media types (e.g. radio and social media); better targeted

media messaging (e.g. between urban and rural audiences); and using easily understood, more contextualised (e.g. using Afghan cultural or Islamic framings) and personalised language (e.g. discussing mothers, wives and sisters as opposed to abstract women);

- Support a consultative process with Afghan media outlets aimed at raising awareness of inconsistencies in gender messaging, and with the goal of establishing an appropriate code of conduct;
- Expand financial and technical support to gender-focussed NGOs to utilise TV and radio spots, whilst also engaging media outlets to discuss the possibility of subsidising the broadcasting of such products;
- Increase training opportunities for journalists on both gender issues and the value of investigative journalism for raising awareness of women's rights;
- Support the mapping, establishment and strengthening of networks, with a database, and linkages between Afghan and international NGOs with the aim of supporting global awareness raising efforts;
- Build upon existing projects exploring the framing of women's rights within an Islamic framework, ensuring better coordination between and strong monitoring processes within these projects; and
- Collect, translate and disseminate gender awareness raising toolkits and materials, in Afghanistan's official languages, which also use contextualised case studies and concepts.

THEME THREE: GENDER PROGRAMMING

When undertaking a gender programme, gender components need to be linked with livelihood, health or education components. Men can then see that women are involved in the implementation of projects. It shows that women can convey benefits to their community.

International participant

During discussion of gender programming participants initially highlighted successful gender interventions, before recounting some of the reasons they believed them to be effective. Issues raised under previous themes, such as linking awareness raising activities to livelihood activities and the debate regarding the quantity and quality of women's participation, were also revisited. Finally, the conference participants also examined the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of gender programmes and the modalities through which they were funded.

GENDER PROGRAMMING: WAYS OF WORKING AND DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

A number of gender programmes, or programmes with gender components, were deemed to be somewhat successful by the participants. These included the National Solidarity Programme (NSP)⁷, various microfinance programmes⁸, women's shelter projects, and a project implemented by the Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC), which brought men and women together to discuss their respective rights and ways of working together. The differing programmes were viewed as successful for a number of reasons, including that, to varying degrees, they: (i) were contextualised to the Afghan context; (ii) emphasised the participation of ordinary people; (iii) engaged both women and men; (iv) linked awareness raising activities with livelihood activities; or (v) demonstrated to the wider community the value of women's participation.

The importance of linking awareness raising activities with livelihood, educational or health activities cannot be overemphasised. As opposed to simply raising awareness and expectations, this linkage provides women with the possibility of gaining financial independence. At the same time, by engaging both men and women it is possible to demonstrate the benefits of women's participation to the wider community, thereby raising their status.

CHANGING INEQUALITIES: WOMEN VERSUS MEN?

While discussing the point above a debate unfolded on the best way to facilitate changes in gender inequality. Two opposing standpoints emerged. The first advocated a confrontational approach to stimulate change. Women should be supported and encouraged to directly confront men, who in turn simply have to deal with any discomfort arising from the presence of empowered Afghan women. The second standpoint promoted a more amicable engagement, in which overt confrontation was avoided. While these standpoints were not reconciled, a related insight emerged: regardless of the manner in which Afghan women and men engage, it is important that 'women only' spaces are preserved in gender programming so as to sustain women's empowerment.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN GENDER PROGRAMMING

Monitoring and evaluation was raised as a recurrent issue throughout the various thematic discussions held during the 'Getting it Right' Conference. Poor monitoring and evaluation contributes to weak gender programming. A number of shortcomings were identified.

First, given insecurity and pressure from donors to move forward with implementation, (disaggregated) base line information was rarely collected. This made it very difficult to track programme impacts and to make course corrections during implementation. Second, where base line or monitoring data was collected there was limited capacity within Afghan NGOs to sufficiently analyse the resulting information. Such data is often filed away and under utilised. Moreover, donors do not prioritise the development of such analytical skills within Afghan NGOs. Third, given the social and non-tangible nature of gender it is difficult to develop indicators to measure changes in gender

⁷NSP is a nationwide programme in Afghanistan that engages communities to elect male and female Community Development Councils (CDCs). In each community, the two CDCs then receive funding—dependent upon the size of the community—which is spent on one or more projects that they self define.

⁸Microfinance programmes provide a series of small loans to self-help groups, usually composed of women, which each woman can invest (usually in a small business).



inequalities. Without suitable indicators it is difficult to track programme impacts. Again, donors do not usually provide support to Afghan NGOs to develop this capacity. Fourth, there are insufficient evaluations commissioned, translated and disseminated. Evaluations that are critical and raise lessons learned are often perceived as negative. Such evaluation reports are often kept internal to the donor organisation and valuable lessons are not disseminated. Furthermore, those evaluations that are in the public domain are rarely translated into Afghanistan's official languages.

Who carries out M&E is also important. Most donors have a preferred organisation, which is usually from the country the donor represents and may have little or no experience of Afghanistan. This favouritism limits the development of M&E capacity within Afghan NGOs. More importantly, given the current levels of insecurity and the corresponding inability of international staff to access project sites, existing Afghan capacities should be exploited and developed. The need for Afghan M&E expertise will most likely increase as a result of transition.

Also, given gender segregation common in Afghan society, men are unable to engage with women for M&E purposes. As such, it is important that female staff capacities be developed if gender programmes are to be monitored and evaluated effectively in the future.

FUNDING MODALITIES: CONDITIONALITY, 'RING FENCING' AND SCALE

Funding modalities also have an impact on the quality of gender programming in Afghanistan. This includes aid conditionality⁹. While this has resulted in the widespread integration of gender components in programming across Afghanistan, conditionality has also produced much tokenism. In many cases, those individuals integrating a gender component in their programming have not been provided the training or support to either suitably value or utilise it. In other cases, there is little political will in governmental entities to implement gender programming. As such, gender components are often poorly designed and under resourced. While conditionality should be continued, training should also be offered to change attitudes and assist with the design of gender components.

The 'ring fencing' of funds is another important issue with regard to gender programming. While this can be controversial for donor countries, it is a valuable way of maintaining a continued focus on gender programming in Afghanistan. Gender budgeting, or assessing the effects of budgetary allocations upon the situation of men and women, can be a valuable way of both promoting and monitoring the impact of aid on gender outcomes.

Finally, the scale of donor funding had implications for gender programming. The manner in which

⁹Aid conditionality is where aid is only provided when a condition, set by the donor, is met. In this case, the condition is the integration of a gender component in development programmes.



contemporary development projects are being funded was questioned. Given the large scale of funding and the challenges of monitoring misspending, donors (particularly the US and UK) are increasingly employing private contractors to manage multi-million dollar programmes. *Tawanmandi*¹⁰ and *Harakat*¹¹ were noted as two programmes that still provided grants to smaller NGOs in Afghanistan. Where possible, funding should be provided directly to Afghan NGOs.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE GENDER PROGRAMMING

- Increase and earmark funding for gender programming throughout the developing transition, with particular emphasis on directly supporting Afghan NGOs;
- Ensure women's participation and decision-making authority at all levels of programming and institutional structures, whilst also supporting the development of their leadership skills;
- Promote the integration of women's rights and/or gender components in all programming, through (where possible) the use of conditional aid;
- Preserve 'women only' spaces in gender programming;
- Link gender awareness raising activities with economic empowerment/livelihood activities to match raised expectations with the possibility of greater financial autonomy;
- Embed gender activities within broader community-based programming with the aim of highlighting women's participation and accruing tangible benefits for the community;
- Actively encourage the use of and capacities for M&E in gender programming, including disaggregated base line data collection and analysis, the development and tracking of appropriate gender indicators, and evaluations/impact assessments;
- Contract Afghan NGOs to monitor and evaluate donor funded gender programming;
- Increasingly utilise and further develop the M&E expertise of Afghan staff members, including women, while also engaging female and male community members for M&E purposes; and
- Translate evaluations, lessons learned and research into Afghanistan's official languages and disseminate widely.

¹⁰ Tawanmandi—funded by UK, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland—is a programme aimed at strengthening the capacity of Afghan civil society and their relationship with the Afghan government. It does this partly through the provision of small grants.

¹¹ Harakat, primarily funded by UK, is an organisation that provides grants to Afghan governmental, private sector and NGOs to improve Afghanistan's business climate.

THEME FOUR: MEN, BOYS AND GENDER

Behind every successful Afghan woman there is a supportive father, brother, or husband.

Afghan participant

The session on men, boys and gender in Afghanistan opened with discussion of the reasons why ‘gender’ is mainly interpreted as only concerning ‘women’s rights’ in Afghanistan. This was followed by discussions covering Afghan masculinity and systems of patriarchy to an examination of the most common types of human rights violations experienced by men and boys in the country. A fourth element of the discussion related to participants explaining why it is important to engage men and boys in gender programming in Afghanistan.

GENDER PROGRAMMING: NEGLECTING MEN?

Commonly, in Afghanistan, the concept of ‘gender’ is taken to equate to ‘women’s rights’. The vast majority of gender interventions are chiefly aimed at improving the life circumstances of women and girls. This skewed interpretation of gender mainstreaming is the result of a series of factors. First, and perhaps most importantly, is the politicisation of the role of women in Afghan society. Participants discussed the extent to which women were used as a “tool” to justify both the US invasion in 2001 and the lasting presence of the international community in Afghanistan. The politicisation of women in Afghanistan has bolstered the standpoint of those opposing the Afghan government and its international backers. It is important to note, however, that the politicisation of Afghan women did not begin in 2001, but has been a long standing issue in Afghan politics.

Second, participants felt that most international gender experts had applied value-laden interpretations of gender when working in Afghanistan. This has led to the development of polarised and stereotypical views of men and women in Afghan society: Afghan women are mostly viewed as powerless victims who need to be rescued from violent Afghan men. Third, and related to the previous factor, international experts implementing gender programming without a detailed understanding of Afghan cultural practices

have promoted gender norms that are inappropriate for the context of Afghanistan. They have neglected to adequately engage issues linked to masculinity and the role of men in either furthering or reducing gender inequalities.

Fourth, the drive by donor countries to rapidly disburse funds—particularly in the early years of the international intervention—has had the effect of producing shortsighted gender programming. This has resulted in many short-term projects aimed at assisting women rather than longer-term programmes aimed at more comprehensively addressing gender inequalities and involving men.

Fifth, and finally, participants explained the difficulties of communicating the meaning of gender to Afghan women and men given the lack of a corresponding word in any of the official languages of Afghanistan. The participants themselves had great difficulty in agreeing a common term, as they were often constrained by the association of terms, such as *‘jensiyat’*¹², with sexuality and sex framed in terms of biological differences. Some participants felt that to avoid the automatic rejection of the notion of ‘gender’—viewed as a western ideal—corresponding concepts in Afghanistan’s official languages were required. Others believed that such debates were simply academic. They argued that, if loan words such as ‘Internet’ and ‘technology’ have been adopted into Afghanistan’s official languages, then the term ‘gender’ could also be.

MASCULINITY IN AFGHANISTAN: ORIGINS AND CONSTRAINTS

Afghan masculinity was discussed at a number of points during the thematic discussion. In other words, participants pointed out the ways in which social expectations of men’s behaviour contributed to inequalities experienced by women. One aspect frequently highlighted was the perception of men as ‘bread winners’ and the psychological and financial pressure this exerts upon them in a country marked by poverty and unemployment. Moreover, in Afghan society men whose female family members

¹² Most commonly translated from Farsi/Dari as ‘sexuality’.



work—especially when they do not—are typically viewed as “unmanly” or “cowardly”. When men are unable to provide for their families, and more so when their wives can, tensions mount.

In addition to the impacts of poverty and unemployment discussed above, the Afghan participants discussed the contribution of Islam and traditional Afghan childrearing practices in forming perceptions of masculinity and femininity. It was felt by participants that the unequal treatment of Afghan girls and boys within the home—common in Afghanistan—strongly contributed to the polarisation of perceived roles and responsibilities. Participants pointed out that in Afghan culture boys are usually favoured with attention, food and are preferentially educated. At the same time, the participants believed that the majority of Afghan girls are bred to be dependent.

One Afghan participant extended this argument to suggest that these prescribed roles and responsibilities are underpinned by Islamic thought. This drew mixed responses from the other participants who did not necessarily agree. The participant argued that, “... from an Islamic point of view, men are responsible to provide food, shelter and clothes”, which is compounded by the fact that, “women are given half the right to inheritance compared to their male counterparts”. The participant concluded that these tenets of Islam contribute to Afghan forms of masculinity and femininity.

THE VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MEN AND BOYS

Men and boys—like women and girls in Afghanistan—suffer greatly as a result of poverty, conflict, and power inequalities. Yet, the violation of men’s and boy’s rights have largely been neglected. Common violations of men’s rights include: (i) ‘forced marriage’¹³; (ii) non-voluntary recruitment in the Afghan security forces (as a result of pressure to defend family honour); and (iii) more generally, sexual abuse experienced by young men.

Common rights violations experienced by boys include: (i) being forced to drop out of education in circumstances of poverty; (ii) corporal punishment in home and educational settings; and (iii) *bacha bazi*¹⁴, a form of pederasty in which young boys are sold to, or forcibly acquired by, powerful predatory males to signify status and for entertainment and sexual purposes.

Bacha bazi is especially concerning. It is important to initially disassociate this act of pederasty from homosexuality within Afghan law, before raising the related awareness of legal professionals. These efforts would also have to be supported by wider drives to both raise—in a non-emotive manner—the awareness of the Afghan public and to lobby the Afghan government to enforce such legislation.

¹³ Both in terms of ‘arranged marriage’ and marriage to multiple wives.

¹⁴ Literally translated from Dari to ‘playing with boys’.

WHY ENGAGE MEN IN GENDER PROGRAMMING?

We have to be careful when talking about gender and women's rights. We are getting negative reactions from men because we are always only talking about the rights of women... We have to take the position of men into consideration, even if it's just about working with men to reduce violence against women... And, men and boys have many issues too: limited access to education and employment, forced labour, and boys are sexually abused. We need to do justice to men's rights.

Afghan Participant

As is reflected in the above quotation, participants raised three main justifications for engaging men and boys in gender programming. First is the need to avoid negative reactions from men regarding the concept of gender. This undermines the ability for Afghan NGOs and women's rights activists to work with women, and in some cases could result in retaliatory violence against the very women and girls they aim to help.

Second, it is important to address the very real violations of men's and boy's rights in Afghanistan. It was argued that these violations should not be overlooked or underemphasised simply because they are happening to men or boys.

Third, in a male dominated environment such as Afghanistan, it is necessary to work with men and boys to not only change their attitudes and behaviour toward women, but also to better understand masculinity and patriarchy and the effects they have on gender inequalities in Afghan society. In this last regard, one participant strongly argued for a shift in the focus of gender programming. The participant believed that only when gender programming took up the more challenging task of changing the mind-sets of men (including Islamic clergymen, religious scholars, and community leaders) would major shifts in gender inequality be witnessed.

The participants acknowledged that the scale of rights violations experienced by women and girls are more severe than that those experienced by men and boys. Yet, they emphasised that every violation, regardless of the gender of the victim, should be taken seriously. As such, they called for a balancing of gender work in Afghanistan. They believed this was required for fairness, but would also more

effectively contribute to the reduction of gender inequalities given the context of Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE INTEGRATION OF MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER PROGRAMMING

- Acknowledge the role of men and boys in transforming gender relations in Afghanistan and therefore engage them through gender policy and programming;
- Recognise that integrating men in gender programming goes beyond engaging Islamic clergymen, religious scholars and community leaders to incorporate fathers, brothers, husbands and sons in communities across Afghanistan;
- Take action to better understand, monitor and reduce violence, discrimination and gendered norms experienced by Afghan men and boys;
- Utilise the media to question and provide alternatives to traditional views on Afghan masculinity and femininity;
- Gender sensitise mainstream educational curriculum to challenge traditional roles and responsibilities of men and women;
- Use technical language to non-emotively raise public awareness of bacha bazi;
- Support the prosecution of bacha bazi by differentiating it from homosexuality in the Criminal Procedure Code and other legislation, whilst also raising the related awareness of legal professionals and the public;
- Build networks of like-minded women and men who can work together to reduce gender equality;
- Create cross-gender opportunities for women and men to enter into dialogue about issues linked to gender roles and responsibilities; and
- Adapt terminology to make sex crimes non-gender specific, to equate Human Rights with not only the rights of women but also of men, and for gender to incorporate both men and women.

CONCLUSION: GETTING GENDER RIGHT

Yes, the security situation in Afghanistan is concerning. Yes, the rights of women remain precarious. Yes, in many cases anti-women attitudes remain. And, yes, the ideal conditions for Afghan women are far away. But, since 2001, Afghanistan has changed beyond recognition and so have the Afghan people. Journalists, artists, aid workers, members of the media, engineers... they all have a strong motive to remain in Afghanistan and to change the lives of current and future generations of Afghan men and women.

Jawed Nader, BAAG Director, Closing Remarks



BAAG staff and the Afghan participants with the co-chairs of the APPG Afghanistan, Sandra Osborne MP, Tobias Ellwood MP and Sir Robert Smith MP

In the public session, held on the afternoon of 27th March 2014, the four visiting Afghan participants presented a synopsis of the thematic findings and recommendations outlined in the preceding sections of this report. They emphasised the critical importance of four key themes for getting gender right in Afghanistan. These were: protecting Human Rights achievements, enhancing gender awareness raising, focussing on the impact of gender interventions, and integrating men and boys into gender programming. They are summarised below.

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS

It is crucial that the International Community ensure continuing financial and political support to protect and extend Human Rights achievements made in Afghanistan since 2001. Political pressure must be stepped up on the Afghan government to ensure that concessions are not made with respect to women's rights in the unfolding political transition.

Throughout the transition, it is also vital that increased levels of funding be made available to international and Afghan NGOs working to promote Human Rights and improve the situation of Afghan women and girls. In part this funding should be allocated to expand the number of women's shelters and to cover their core costs. It should also be utilised to support and develop existing networks to protect

HRDs. This in turn demands donor countries take up the mantle of responsibility and respond in a coordinated manner to the growing threats faced by HRDs in Afghanistan.

ENHANCING GENDER AWARENESS RAISING

Public awareness of gender and women's rights has rapidly progressed in recent years in Afghanistan. Yet it is imperative that more contextualised and increasingly effective ways of working are adopted. This is vital if awareness of gender is to be broadened and deepened across the country. The reach of awareness raising activities and messages should be extended to insecure and rural areas.

At the same time, consumers of the media—Afghan women and men—must be better understood. In doing so they could be targeted with more appropriate types of media, better forms of messaging, and through more suitable language and concepts.

The Afghan media must also be encouraged to better align with awareness raising efforts. On the one hand, this requires the provision of training opportunities to Afghan journalists to improve reporting on gender issues. On the other hand, it means ensuring media outlets broadcast positive and consistent gender messaging.

FOCUSSING ON THE IMPACT OF GENDER INTERVENTIONS

Gender interventions have produced mixed results in Afghanistan. It is essential to improve their impact. Adopting a holistic approach to gender programming that integrates awareness raising activities alongside economic empowerment and community-based activities can help achieve this. It is critical that women are supported to not only gain awareness of their rights and to develop leadership capacities, but also to gain financial independence. At the same time this approach has the effect of highlighting the benefits of women's participation to the wider community. Yet it is also vital to preserve 'women only' spaces in such interventions.

To realise such a focus on impact it is also important that M&E be strengthened. This must be matched with the translation and dissemination of evaluation outputs into Afghanistan's official languages. Furthermore, in light of widespread insecurity and restrictions in accessing programme beneficiaries, it is important that existing Afghan capacities to monitor and evaluate gender programmes are further developed and exploited.

INTEGRATING MEN AND BOYS IN GENDER PROGRAMMING

A major gap in gender programming in Afghanistan is the almost total exclusion of men and boys. Pursuing such an approach to gender has contributed to: (i) men responding negatively to and undermining gender interventions; (ii) insufficient opportunities to change men's attitudes and behaviours toward women; (iii) a limited ability to tackle the structural causes of gender inequality; and (iv) a failure to adequately respond to violations of rights experienced by men and boys.

It is crucial that men and boys, and better understandings of Afghan forms of masculinity and patriarchy, be integrated in gender policy and programming in Afghanistan. Men should be engaged in interventions working to reduce VAWG. At the same time, the violations of men's and boy's rights, including practices of bacha bazi, should be monitored and reduced.

BOX 4. MOVING FORWARD: CONFERENCE FOLLOW UP

As part of the 'Getting it Right' Conference BAAG asked the participants what follow up should be undertaken. The following actions were agreed:

- Document and share the findings of the conference with key policy-makers in the governments of the UK, Afghanistan, and other countries involved in providing aid to Afghanistan;
- Translate the conference report into Afghanistan's official languages and make it available to the Afghan government, Afghan NGOs and members of the public;
- Host more networking and advocacy events to support the engagement of Afghan NGOs and experts with international organisations and policy-makers; and
- Facilitate opportunities for 'capacity exchange', by supporting international staff working on Afghanistan to learn from Afghan experts and for Afghans to learn from their international colleagues.

BAAG hope that this report will generate further discussion at both organisational and policy maker level. The recommendations of the conference and earlier consultations reflect the multiple and interconnected layers of responsibility for improving the impact of gender programming in Afghanistan.

BAAG will explore further opportunities to examine ways in which donors, the international community, and most importantly, Afghan civil society can develop effective gender programming which brings long-term and lasting change for Afghan women and men, girls and boys. Specifically, BAAG will seek resources to explore the following thematic programme options:

1. Further discussions and research on policy and advocacy approaches to the issue of violence against women and girl;
2. Explore options for the international community, Afghan government and Afghan civil society to provide robust protection mechanisms for human rights and women's rights defenders;
3. Further discussions and research on the involvement of men and boys in gender programmes and the need for programmes to address male-specific rights violations and
4. A more detailed study of the concept of masculinity in Afghanistan and how that creates both barriers and opportunities when considering gender programmes.

ANNEX ONE: UNDERSTANDING GENDER ISSUES AND PROGRAMMING IN AFGHANISTAN

The international community has allocated vast sums of funding to improve the lives of women in Afghanistan. While some gains have been made since 2001 progress is disappointing and gains may yet be undone. To better understand the nature of gender issues and related programming in Afghanistan a series of discussions were held with Afghan and non-Afghan actors. In 2013 BAAG undertook in-depth consultations with four prominent international gender experts on Afghanistan and five leading Afghan women's rights activists. This briefing note summarises the key themes and recommendations emerging from these consultations.

1. MISCONCEPTIONS: THE SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GENDER IN AFGHANISTAN

Our consultations indicate there are many misconceptions about the situation of women in Afghanistan. Most notable was the expectation that simply overthrowing the Taliban would deliver changes in gender relations. This, in turn, led to short-term 'quick fix' projects to secure the advancement of women. These are often not well thought out and fail to take into account the sensitivities of Afghan society. Moreover, gender projects are often conceived as isolated projects. Whereas, in reality, they are politically linked to the broader issues of basic freedoms, pluralist politics, development and tolerance in Afghanistan. Education of girls and boys and civic education in gender issues should play a part in this. How Afghan women fare in the years to come will largely depend on the approach of future governments and what happens more broadly in Afghan society.

Another misconception is that, while women only need to be made aware of their rights it is men's attitudes to gender issues that need to be changed. Yet, in reality Afghan women are sometimes complicit in perpetuating a cycle of behaviour, which further entrenches gendered norms. Empowering Afghan women through education and employment would therefore be more effective in the long run than awareness raising alone.

In addition, gender programmes in Afghanistan are

often launched without taking into account that the local staff involved in such projects have been traumatised by decades of war. Often these staff members are working in a demanding role, in a stressful environment, and are struggling with their own and others' trauma. More attention should be given to identifying and providing personal support to such individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopt a long-term approach to transforming gender relations, which provides civic education and promotes education and employment for women and girls;
2. Address the role of women in furthering gender inequalities in future programming; and
3. Provide therapeutic support and guidance to traumatised human rights defenders.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

While many women and girls in Afghanistan experience physical, sexual, economic or psychological violence, accurately assessing the extent of violence is very challenging. This is the result of the absence of baseline data, the lack of an agreed definition of violence against women and girls (VAWG), and traditional sensitivities in discussing such incidents.

The Law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) was ratified by Legislative Decree in 2009. It is one of the key legal mechanisms protecting women from violence in Afghanistan. It does this by criminalising several differing types of violence against women, by ensuring compensation to victims of violence, and by providing for a faster response to crimes of this type. However, the implementation of the EVAW Law is limited at best. The weak rule of law, the minimal awareness of the judiciary and the Afghan public regarding EVAW, and a general lack of political will are considered to be the main contributing factors.

Protection of female victims of violence through the provision of shelters has been an effective mechanism in Afghanistan. However, shelter

services (education, skills development and legal aid) and their reach are often insufficient. Shelters face a variety of societal, funding, and capacity constraints. Firstly, shelters face much unjustified criticism from conservative elements in Afghanistan for harbouring 'shamed women' and 'prostitutes'. Yet, media and rights groups have, with some success, raised awareness regarding the need for and value of shelters. Many creative TV and radio programmes regarding domestic violence and traditional harmful practices have been aired. Secondly, shelters have been affected by international aid cuts. Many shelters have been forced to stop support to current and new residents as they face discontinuation of funds beyond 2014. Moreover, international donors mostly provide short-term project grants, leaving shelters without long-term core funds. Thirdly, due to increasingly high numbers of violence victims, their unique cases and inconsistencies in legal procedures, shelter managers are primarily engaged in immediate support activities. These cases often result in prolonged litigations. Thus, the rate of residents leaving shelters remains low. A further contributing factor is the stigmatisation they face in mainstream society.

The appropriate location of shelters is another disputed issue. Donors establish/support shelters based on the number of female victims in a given province. Yet, the usefulness of a shelter often also depends on the attitude of female victims regarding the shelter. While there is an important need for donors to fund shelters based upon demand, there is an associated requirement to extend sensitisation activities in shelter projects.

The Afghan and international media have been influential actors in countering violence against women in Afghanistan. On one hand, they have raised Afghan women's concerns at national and global levels, and on the other, they have raised the legal awareness of the Afghan public. Nonetheless, there is room for major improvements, as media coverage of women issues has at times been counter-productive. On occasion, there is a tendency to exaggerate the plight and/or achievements of Afghan women. Our consultations imply a more realistic and accurate view of Afghan women need be communicated. While it is recognised some reporters may be compelled to emphasise certain aspects of women's issues, many

do not triangulate their findings thus potentially delivering partial or inaccurate stories. Moreover, the various Afghan media outlets have inconsistent women's rights approaches. While dedicated women rights programmes strive to cautiously approach the various issues women face, certain comedy shows—often on the same channel—demean women and belittle their rights. Comedy is a great tool for changing societal attitudes however.

Our consultations indicate women's rights activists are at great risk in Afghanistan, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that all have experienced intimidation or violence. Those who operate women's shelters are especially at risk. This issue is compounded by women's rights organisations being unable to suitably protect their at-risk staff; activists being unable to obtain international visas should they need to escape violence; the failure of the international community to provide mechanisms to support activists experiencing severe threats or violence; and the fact that perpetrators of crimes against activists are rarely brought to justice by the Afghan security services. Shelter organisations have established a national network which will give them a more powerful voice, but secure funding would allow staff to spend more time on documenting their experience to add weight to their policy recommendations and the further development of their services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adequately resource the EVAW Law High Commission (in Kabul) and Provincial Commissions. The responsibilities of various constituent members of Provincial Commissions should also be codified;
2. International donors should continue to urge the Afghan Government and Parliamentarians to support the implementation of the EVAW Law, by reminding the Afghan Government of its Constitutional commitments and international obligations including adherence to the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, and consider conditionality to reinforce this;
3. Educate judges, judicial staff and the general population about the EVAW Law;
4. International NGOs should more proactively support the implementation of the EVAW Law, given their relative insulation from the pressures of conservative elements in Afghanistan;
5. Afghan civil society should limit critiques of the

EVAW Law by conducting comparative studies of similar laws in other Islamic countries and disseminating findings;

6. Review all major Afghan laws from a gender perspective and enact necessary amendments;
7. The Afghan Government should support shelters financially and ensure that relevant ministries have consistent programmes and public statements regarding shelters;
8. International donors should provide long-term core support to shelters to improve their services and capacity to manage and document cases. They should also facilitate cooperation between shelters in Afghanistan and other countries to allow for mutual learning;
9. Shelters should continue to raise awareness of their role and services through the national network and to build trust with local communities;
10. International and Afghan media should adopt more robust information sourcing mechanisms. They should cross-check their information with women groups;
11. International donors to the Afghan media should urge the adoption of a gender policy that is balanced and consistent across all their programming;
12. Integrate a protection component into human rights programmes, whilst also establishing emergency mechanisms to support activists experiencing severe threats or violence; and
13. Ensure perpetrators of crimes against women's rights activists and other high profile female figures are brought to justice. Special attention should be paid to crimes committed by members of the security forces or government officials.

3. GENDER, MEN AND BOYS

It is often assumed that gender work only relates to improving the situation of women. Our consultations suggested that greater attention is required to integrate men and boys into gender programming. This is not to suggest that women's focussed programming should be compromised, but that a more balanced approach should be adopted. Unbalanced programming can lead to men dismissing gender as irrelevant, which creates further obstacles and hostility.

There have been successful examples of involving men and boys in gender programmes, but these

have been limited in number. Our consultations suggest that in Afghan society obtaining the support of male members of the family, male community leaders and male politicians is necessary to create sustainable women's rights programmes. It is essential that a long-term approach be taken—working with men—to ease women into their new roles.

It is also important to understand notions of masculinity in Afghanistan. Men are expected to provide for their families and can feel disempowered if they fail to do so. Gender work that discusses the responsibilities placed on both men to provide for their families and women to sustain them are more successful at transforming gender relations. This crucially entails recognising the discrimination, violence and gendered norms experienced by men and boys, including: pressures to join security forces to fight for family honour; sexual abuse experienced by young men in the security forces; incidents of severe malpractice in state and privately run orphanages; and the solicitation of dancing boys by predatory males. In Afghanistan, as a society that prizes masculinity, this topic must be broached publically and interventions targeting Afghan men are required to help unpack such expectations and experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Include women and men in gender programming, recognising the role that men have played in both supporting women and perpetuating gender inequalities; and
2. Acknowledge the violence, discrimination and gendered norms experienced by Afghan men and boys, and facilitate opportunities for public discussion and private reflection of such issues.

4. GENDER PROGRAMMES: DRIVERS OF SUCCESS, AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

There has been some good gender and women's programming, but it is a sensitive topic as gender is by nature political. Donors have initiated several major programmes to tackle gender inequalities in Afghanistan. These are of three main types: (i) policy frameworks and processes to counter the marginalisation of women in decision-making; (ii) direct funding of women's NGOs and local organisations engaging with women; and (iii) development projects providing services to women and aiming to reduce gender inequalities.

Our consultations indicate that all three types of programme include unnecessarily complex, unresponsive and overly bureaucratic procedures. They are confusing to those implementing them, do not respond quickly to real time issues, and allow little room for negotiation. They will also be unsustainable when funding levels decline.

The approach to gender programming in Afghanistan has also been inconsistent, delivering uneven progress. Gender interventions should focus on all sectors, including health care, education, and livelihoods, for example. Our consultations suggested that providing women access to justice is a key priority.

In part such inconsistent programmes are the result of either a total lack of, or tokenistic, consultations during their design phase. Often these programmes had been designed and agreed in advance (which also leads to the duplication of efforts). Where consultations are held in a large gathering the most powerful, often the most conservative, will speak first and others will then concur with what had been said. Moreover, short-termism (as discussed above) and a corresponding lack of suitable monitoring and evaluation further undermines the quality of gender programming. Too often donors seek only anecdotal evidence of change and only request 'success stories'.

The importance of quality staffing was also a key factor in the success of gender programmes. In the 1990s, young inexperienced Afghan women were employed as Gender Focal Points to 'tick the gender box'. Unsurprisingly these women had neither the knowledge nor the authority to address the required issues. At the same time, female expatriate staff did not necessarily have the contextual knowledge of Afghanistan and were largely appointed to provide a 'female perspective'. Later, donors and international NGOs began to recruit elite Afghan women on the basis of their gender, status and English language skills rather than their experience or expertise. These women tended to be young graduates from Kabul, usually without practical work experience, management capacity or research skills. There are, however, presently many very capable Afghan women and men working on gender issues in Afghanistan.

At the same time gender-related training is of varying quality. If the training agency is too

prescriptive creativity is stifled and activists become less resourceful. Yet, where gender training programmes use innovative approaches, perhaps using drama or role-play exercises, they are particularly successful. Moreover, training for women in planning and negotiating with male colleagues and decision-makers often gives them confidence. Training for people who are managing women is also important, especially in how to report on and/or deal with sexual harassment. Education regarding the benefits of the involvement of women and the support of men who can advocate for women's inclusion in processes, particularly those relating to peace, are also highly successful. More generally, gender training can be improved. The most successful having been carried out in mixed male and female groups and by male and female co-trainers, whether Afghan or non-Afghan, with expertise and a long-term commitment to the country.

In addition, our consultations indicated that successful gender programmes often drew on lessons learned thereby avoiding classic gender pitfalls. Yet, the staff of many gender programmes in Afghanistan do not have access to the quality reports and resources that enable learning. 'Experts' rarely research what has occurred before, and where they do they often cannot find the required information. Good research and evaluations do exist but many assessments are not widely distributed and some are not published at all, especially if they recount failures. At the same time, the number of 'lessons learned' workshops has declined and those that do take place generally only discuss success stories. The fact that few documents are published in Dari or Pashto compounds this problem.

While many Afghan women's organisations have successfully enabled change with the support of international donors, certain donor policies have been detrimental to effective gender programming in the country. This includes inconsistent funding policies, with some donors requiring women's organisation with a specialised approach to gender programming and others requiring a more generalist approach. This has constrained institutional development in the sector. Secondly, where evaluations are undertaken, the rigid evaluation mechanisms employed by donors do not take into account either the range of gender issues or the variations in gender inequality found across the differing geographical regions of Afghanistan.

Thirdly, donor requirements for high levels of English fluency are detrimental to the survival of genuine 'grass roots' gender organisations. Fourthly, donors promote an overemphasis of the quantity, as opposed to the quality, of women's participation. For example, the numbers of female Members of Parliament is often focussed upon as opposed to how meaningful their participation is.

Consultations show that donors have also courted a specific type of female activist, funding their organizations and their trips to speak at international conferences abroad. These trips, while promoting learning also takes activists away from their organizations regularly and for long periods. In addition, activists are given no time to rest on their foreign tours, landing jetlagged and going immediately into non-stop meetings before flying home again and going straight back to work. Many Afghan activists understandably resent this apparent favouritism and feel that more attention should be given to supporting a wider group of activists. Urban Afghan activists, for example, may not have the best understanding of the situation and needs of rural women.

Finally, international NGOs have often done their best to support Afghan civil society by speaking out against the infringement of civil liberties. Yet, most international donors have remained notably quiet at these times, apparently reluctant to criticise the Afghan government publicly. Our consultations suggest that benefits may be witnessed if donors were more willing to publically support human rights programmes by challenging the Afghan government on appropriate occasions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Undertake meaningful consultation processes during the design phases of gender programmes, and train Afghan staff members with the necessary skills to do so;
2. Utilise flexible monitoring and evaluation systems—that are sensitive to gender differences across Afghanistan's geographical regions—to improve gender programme quality;
3. Recruit expatriate and Afghan gender staff based on their experience and expertise, not as a result of solely their English language skills, gender, or status;
4. Ensure gender training is non-prescriptive, adopts innovative approaches, and is undertaken by male and female co-trainers in mixed-gender sessions;
5. Train female staff members to negotiate with male counterparts whilst also sensitising men to the value and appropriate ways of working with women;
6. Ensure gender programme reports, lessons learned and evaluations, whether positive or negative, are made more widely available; and
7. Collect, translate into Dari and Pashto, and disseminate seminal documents addressing gender in Afghanistan.

FURTHER READING: SEMINAL DOCUMENTS ON GENDER ISSUES IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (2013). *Women in Transition in Afghanistan*.

Azarbajjani-Moghaddam, Sippi (2006). *Women's Groups in Afghan Civil Society: Women and Men Working Towards Equitable Partnership in CSOs*. Counterpart International.

International Crisis Group (2013). *Women and Conflict in Afghanistan*. Asia Report 252.

Winter, Elizabeth (2010). *Civil Society Development in Afghanistan*. London School of Economics.

ANNEX TWO: 'GETTING IT RIGHT' CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

NAME	ORGANISATION	GENDER
Adam Walton	University of London	Male
Anna Nijsters	European Network of NGOs in Afghanistan	Female
Aziz Hakimi	Afghanistan Monitor	Male
Belquis Ahmadi	Independent (Consultant)	Female
Bethan Cansfield	Womankind Worldwide	Female
Cintia Lavandera	Womankind Worldwide	Female
Elaha Soroor	Independent (Afghan Singer and Student)	Female
Elizabeth Winter	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Female
Farhad Javid	Marie Stopes International	Male
Howard Mollett	CARE International	Male
Jawed Nader	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Male
Jenny Humphreys	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Female
Karla McLaren	Amnesty International UK	Female
Kate Hughes	Amnesty International UK	Female
Katrina McCreddie	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)	Female
Khadija Abbasi	Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva	Female
Lina Amir	Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation	Female
Monica Encinas	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Female
Najla Ayubi	Asia Foundation	Female
Nazifa Haqpal	Embassy of Afghanistan in the United Kingdom	Female
Orzala Ashraf	School of Oriental and African Studies	Female
Saeed Parto	Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization	Male
Sandra Osborne	All-Party Parliamentary Group on Afghanistan	Female
Shaheen Chughtai	Oxfam	Male
Shaheer Shahriar	Tadbeer Consulting	Male
Soraya Sobhrang	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission	Female
Tania Aria	University of Southampton	Female
(Chevening Scholar)	Female	Female
Yoko Yamashita	CAFOD	Female
Zahir Mohseni	Rastan Foundation	Male

ANNEX THREE: MEN, BOYS AND GENDER SESSION PARTICIPANTS

NAME	ORGANISATION	GENDER
Aziz Hakimi	Afghanistan Monitor	Male
Belquis Ahmadi	Independent (Consultant)	Female
Elaha Soroor	Independent (Afghan Singer and Student)	Female
Jawed Nader	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Male
Khadija Abbasi	Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva	Female
Najla Ayubi	Asia Foundation	Female
Shaheer Shahriar	Tadbeer Consulting	Male
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