

## Policy Brief February 2018

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APPRO also acts as the Secretariat for the National Advocacy Committee for Public Policy, comprising sub-committees on Education, Food Security, Access to Justice, Anti-corruption, NAP 1325 and Access to Health. For more

This policy brief is based on the findings from the second round of monitoring as part of the "NAP 1325 Monitor" project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). The data were collected between May and August 2017 through key informant interviews and focus groups discussions with a total of 739 individuals from in rural and urban areas across 22 districts and twelve provincial centers within 12 provinces in the Northern, Eastern, Western, Central, and Southern zones of Afghanistan. The full monitoring report is available from: <http://www.appro.org.af/publication/nap-1325-monitor-monitoring-cycle-2-may-august-2017/>.

## NAP 1325 in Practice: May-August 2017

### Background

More than two years since it was launched, the implementation of Afghanistan's NAP 1325 has been slow, due mainly to delays in the approval of the implementation budget which arose from disagreements between the Afghan government and its international donors. However, programs and projects with objectives consistent with the women, peace and security agenda and the protection and promotion of women's rights have been implemented by different governmental and non-governmental organizations though mostly without direct reference to NAP 1325.

Afghanistan's NAP 1325 was launched in June 2015 to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security. Afghanistan's NAP 1325 outlines specific activities by the government to meet its commitments to UNSCR 1325. Structured under the four Pillars of Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery, the activities are to address the unique needs of Afghan women and promote their participation in peace, reconciliation, and reintegration, protect them from gender based violence, and provide relief and recovery support for women affected by conflicts and violence.

The first part of this brief provides an assessment women, peace and security and implementation of NAP 1325 during the first half of 2017, under the four Pillars of Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery. The second part

of the brief provides the variations in relation to the implementation of NAP 1325 across the 12 provinces followed by recommendations for the government of Afghanistan and civil society organizations.

The findings from this monitoring round indicate that levels of awareness about UNSCR 1325 and Afghanistan's NAP 1325 remain low in governmental institutions and the sizeable NGO community in a majority of the provinces monitored. Only a small number of respondents, mostly senior level government authorities and some women's rights NGOs and INGOs, are aware of NAP 1325, its provisions for women, and its implications for their collective programming.

The security situation is major hindrance to the realization of women's rights and implementing NAP 1325. Changes in the security situation can significantly impact conditions for women. However, changes in the security conditions are far from uniform across the provinces. During the first half of 2017 improvements were reported in Herat, Balkh, Kandahar, Bamyan and Laghman while deterioration was reported in Kabul, Kunduz, Khost, Nangarhar, and Nimruz provinces. No changes were reported in Daikundi and Samangan. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the security situation in provincial centers and the districts across most provinces.

The specific findings from this round of monitoring are grouped under each of the four pillars of NAP 1325.

## **Pillar 1: Participation**

Despite some improvements, women's participation in the civil service and the security sector remains low. The government has not managed to meet its commitment to fill thirty percent of the civil service positions by women. In a majority of the provinces female teachers and female health associates constitute a huge portion of female civil workers. The prevailing patriarchal culture, traditional conservatism, gender based discrimination, corruption and nepotism in the recruitment process, and women's relatively lower education and professional qualifications continue to hamper women's increased participation in the civil service.

There have been positive changes in the workplace environment for women in governmental organizations. In part, this has been attributed to the Anti-Harassment of Women and Children Law, and the establishment of complaints mechanisms for women to report harassment in the workplace – including in the security sector. In some security agencies, segregated facilities such as changing rooms and toilets have been built for the female staff. Also, there have been some training programs and scholarships for the female staff in the security sector. At the same time, no significant changes are reported regarding women's participation in the leadership positions of the security agencies.

Obstacles such as high security threats and various opposition groups' discontent with women's active participation in peace negotiations continue to hamper women's active participation in the formal peace process. However, there are reports of civil society organizations and women's rights organizations participating in consultations on increasing women's role in the new approach being adopted by of the High Peace Council. There are also reports of women being engaged in the informal peace processes and presiding over local conflicts through local councils.

Women's participation in the political sphere continues to be impeded by

traditional conservatism and the prevailing patriarchal culture, security threats, women's lower levels of literacy and professional qualifications and lower access to financial resources and power networks. Women's presence is higher in the Parliament and provincial councils than at the local level political spheres. There are still suggestions that women's interest in participation in elections remains adversely affected by the allegations and reports of electoral fraud in the 2014 elections, compounded by concerns about the deterioration of the security situation.

## **Pillar 2: Protection**

There have been some improvements in women's access to formal justice but women's protection from gender based violence remains a major concern. A weak rule of law, prevalence of impunity for perpetrators of violence against women, corruption and discrimination against women in judicial institutions, and women's low awareness of their constitutional rights are the constraints in the protection of women against gender-based violence. In a majority of cases female victims are unable to report cases of violence as a result of family restrictions and pressure, fear of social stigmatization and retaliatory violence.

Implementation of the EVAW Law has resulted in the establishment of the Special Court of Violence Against Women at the provincial level, processing cases of violence against women based on provisions of the EVAW Law. There is also regular monitoring of cases of violence against women by the AIHRC and civil society organizations. There are, at the same time, reports of women facing sexual harassment and demands of sexual favors in different formal environments.

There are reports of improvements in the treatment of women by the Afghan National Security Forces, particularly in major cities and provincial centers, reportedly due increased awareness of women's specific needs among the security personnel.

### **Pillar 3: Prevention**

Afghan women continue to be subjected to numerous forms of violence across the country, with types of violence varying from province to province and between urban centers and rural areas. Physical assault, forced and early marriages, deprivation of inheritance and property rights, verbal assault and threats, rape, homicide, denial of access to financial resources, and forced divorce are the most common forms of violence against women. Increasing unemployment and rising poverty rates are said to have contributed to the frequency and severity of different forms of domestic violence against women.

Perpetrators of violence against women are not fairly tried or punished due to the prevailing corruption, impunity and discrimination against women in the formal judicial system. In most cases the perpetrators avoid prosecution through paying bribes or using the influence of power holders to influence the decisions of the courts. In less secure districts the perpetrators of violence sometimes flee to the territories controlled by armed opposition groups to avoid prosecution and punishment.

### **Pillar 4: Relief and Recovery**

The provision of relief and recovery services for women remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas. Women's access to employment opportunities is severely limited while the general rise in unemployment across the country has led to an increase in internal displacement and movement toward major population centers in search for employment and basic amenities, often creating additional hardship for women.

Despite numerous interventions, including professional and vocational training, start-up funds and equipment to increase

women's ability to undertake income generating activities, the vast majority of the women, including female headed families, suffer from a lack of access to basic resources for income generating activities.

Women's access to basic services such as education and health services remain inadequate in most provinces, particularly in rural areas. Insecurity and lack of female teachers continue to impede girls' enrollment and attendance at schools. Provisions of health services for women also remain inadequate due to the lack of female doctors and female health associates. This is particularly evident in remote districts.

Provision of relief and recovery services for survivors of gender based violence remain inadequate in all provinces. Despite allegations of the representatives of health departments regarding availability of psychological services for survivors of violence against women at the public hospitals, the hospitals with these services have serious shortages of professional service providers. The reputation of women's shelters remains impaired among communities and most women avoid seeking shelter in safe houses, if they exist, due to a fear of stigmatization or further violence as punishment. In addition, there are some allegations of female victims of violence becoming victims of sexual abuse in some shelters.

The inadequacies and insufficiencies of basic services for women are exacerbated in communities that host the internally displaced families, particularly Kunduz, Khost, and Nangarhar provinces.

Female IDPs can use the existing education and health facilities in their host communities, but the findings from monitoring suggest that the influx of IDPs often results in an increase in demand for already stressed basic health services.