

Briefing

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About APPRO:

Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) is an independent social research organization with a mandate to promote social and policy learning to benefit development and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and other less developed countries through conducting social scientific research, monitoring and evaluation, and training and mentoring. APPRO is registered with the Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan as a non-profit, non-government organization and headquartered in Kabul, Afghanistan with five regional offices. For more information, see: www.appro.org.af

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This brief is based on the fifth round of data collection as part of the NAP 1325 Monitor project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), to monitor progress toward the implementation of Afghanistan's NAP 1325 across twelve provinces (33 districts) on a quarterly basis. Data for this round of monitoring were collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions in 33 rural and urban districts in the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Central, and Western zones of Afghanistan. The 12 provinces were selected to ensure heterogeneity in the social, political, economic, security situation and development focus. For the full report, see:

NAP 1325 Monitor: Cycle 5

Introduction

Progress toward implementing Afghanistan's NAP 1325 has been slow but steady. Similar to the previous cycles, progress has been more noticeable under the participation and to some extent the protection pillars. Reforms in the recruitment policies and procedures have been successful in recruiting more women to the civil service. Women's protection from gender based violence remains inadequate and impunity for violence against women is a major barrier for women's access to justice. Moreover, implementation efforts have been mainly focused in provincial centers, with very low impact in the districts and remote areas.

Awareness of NAP 1325

Raising awareness on NAP 1325 is one of the initial steps for its implementation in Afghanistan. Despite numerous programs undertaken by international organizations, civil society organization (CSOs), and government institutions, the level of awareness of NAP 1325 remains low in several provinces, particularly at the district level. Most such programs have been held in larger cities such as Kabul, Balkh, and Herat, while awareness remains low in other provinces, even among the employees of departments responsible for the implementation of NAP 1325.

Security Situation

Security is one of the main factors influencing the implementation of NAP 1325. This is evidenced in the strong

correlation between progress on implementation of NAP 1325 and relative security in a number of provinces, allowing for access by national and international organizations to conduct awareness and technical training on NAP 1325.

There have been improvements in security in Khost, Laghman and Herat, Kabul, Balkh, Samangan, and Bamyan and deterioration in Daikundi, Nimruz, Kandahar, and Kunduz.

Participation

The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Services Commission (IARCSC) appears to have been successful in efforts to increase the presence and role of women in the civil service. IARCSC has brought reforms in the recruitment processes and has introduced a point based system advantaging women in some provinces. There are some concerns regarding the slow rate of promotion of women to decision making positions, however.

Despite a small number of women appointed to decision making positions in Kabul, Herat and Balkh, women are less represented at the decision making positions. Most working women are employed in the health and education sectors, with little representation at the decision-making levels.

Women's harassment at the workplace remains a major barrier to women joining the workforce. Although the preventive measures such as complaints mechanisms

In Herat, 10,000 women were shortlisted for the initial exams for over 16,000 civil service vacancies.

A woman was appointed as the director of the department IARCSC in Balkh, and three other women were hired as District Police Chief, District Governor, and Director of Family Response Unit (FRU).

There are no female civil servants and no female police officers in Istalif and Khak Jabar districts of Kabul province.

Lack of access to financial resources and political networks represent major barriers to women participating as candidates in elections.

are in place in most government institutions, there are complaints by women that having these mechanisms is insufficient. The number of complaints on harassment remains low due to a lack of trust by the women in the effectiveness of response by appropriate authorities.

No improvements in women's participation in the security forces were reported, despite the ongoing programs aimed at encouraging women to join the security forces including awareness raising and incentives for female members of the security forces. Similarly, women's participation in the peace process remains limited and symbolic, apart from the direct involvement of women in the drafting of the High Peace Council Strategy and their role in a National Consultation Conference on peace.

Women's participation in the parliamentary elections was significant during this round of monitoring. Despite the previous anticipations about women's lack of motivation to participate, women comprised up to 50 percent of the registered voters in some provinces.

However, a majority of the respondents expressed concerns regarding women's lack of awareness and financial and traditional limitations for women to nominate themselves as candidates for the district councils' elections, prior to its postponement by IEC.

Protection

There have been no new formal mechanisms to protect women from gender based violence. Awareness raising programs are said to have contributed to decreased levels of violence against women in some provinces.

Awareness raising programs to increase women's awareness about the available reporting mechanisms and legal provisions for protection have led to higher numbers of cases of violence being reported. Barriers to report cases of violence include insecurity, corruption, women's financial dependence, cultural norms and social stigma, and distance to legal centers.

Improvements are reported in the processing of cases of violence against women in the formal justice system. However, women continue to face discrimination, are victimized by corruption, and subjected to gender-based harassment by some formal justice officials.

There are reports of women being insulted and asked for sexual favors by some justice officials while their cases of violence are being processed. Many cases of violence against women continue to be referred to the informal justice mechanisms such as community and religious leaders, or women's councils, to avoid the time consuming and complicated formal judicial processes.

There has been a slight increase in the number of women working in the judiciary. The absence of female prosecutors, attorneys, and lawyers persists, however, as a major hindrance for women's access to justice particularly in Balkh, Kandahar, Laghman, Kunduz, Khost, and Nangarhar provinces.

A female judge has been appointed to the Supreme Court in Kabul while three female attorneys have been appointed in Daikundi, two in Bamyan, and three in Samangan, during the last four months.

The situation of female prisoners remains unchanged with a general lack of amenities. Women are at risk of sexual harassment and abuse in the female prisons in some provinces.

Children of female detainees continue to be accommodated with their mothers in most prisons and many are deprived of adequate education, health, and other basic services. There are reports of harassment of women by the security forces, in particular by the police, in Nimruz, Kunduz, and Kandahar provinces.

At the same time, the behavior of the police toward women in other provinces is said to have improved. This improvement is attributed to training and awareness programs focused on women's rights and ethical behavior by the security forces.

In Bamyan, women's trust in the formal judicial institutions has increased due to the appointment of female prosecutors.

Victims of sexual violence are sometimes insulted or asked for sexual favors by some formal justice officials.

The most common types of violence experienced by women are, physical violence, psychological abuse, deprivation from inheritance rights, verbal harassment, sexual harassment, forced divorce, death threats, underage and forced marriage, denial of alimony, rape, torture, and exchange marriage (baad).

Prevention

Changes in levels of violence against women vary across the provinces, with reported decreases in Kandahar and Khost and increases in several other provinces. As before, the increase in reported cases of violence is attributed to increased awareness of women's rights among women and men.

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The special EAW courts have been effective in implementing the EAW Law and addressing cases of violence against women accordingly in most provinces. However, impunity for the perpetrators of violence against women, corruption and nepotism within the law enforcement institutions, government's inability to prosecute the perpetrators in insecure areas, and intervention of local power holders in the legal process, remain as substantial barriers in efforts to eradicate violence against women in several provinces.

Awareness campaigns for reduction or elimination of violence against women have been conducted in Balkh, Bamyan, Kandahar, Kunduz, and Samangan provinces by the AIHRC, the Departments of Women's Affairs, and a number of NGOs. However, a bulk of these programs have been concentrated at the provincial centers, and awareness remains low in the districts.

Relief and Recovery

Relief and recovery assistance for women have been mainly focused in Kabul and to some extent the provincial centers. Programs designed to assist women to find employment opportunities have also been mainly implemented in the provincial centers. For example, the PROMOTE project was mentioned mostly

in Kabul. Some programs to assist women to start small businesses, such as handicrafts, have been implemented in rural areas in several districts.

Access to education and health services remains unchanged with relatively better services in the provincial centers and limited access in the districts. A lack of female teachers at girls' schools continues to hinder girls' attendance at schools due to the fact that families in the more conservative communities do not want their girls to be taught by male teachers.

Access to shelters for victims of gender based violence remains limited in most provinces, and has deteriorated in others. The shelter in Laghman province has been closed, for example. The public perception of women's shelters remains negative and the government has not taken any measures to address this.

Some minor improvements are reported in the safe houses in Kabul, Balkh, Bamyan, and Daikundi.

The provision of basic services and assistance for widowed and disabled women and female IDPs was reported to have improved across several provinces.

I/NGOs and the government have distributed food stamps, clothes, cash, and basic services in most provinces. A large portion of such services are provided by I/NGOs.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the monitoring information to date. In subsequent monitoring briefs, the recommendations not addressed to date will be carried forward and added to as appropriate with new recommendations based on new information.

Funding and the implementation of NAP 1325: An ongoing complaint by women's rights organizations, other NGOs, and the government has been that the international donors are providing no additional funds for the implementation. Given the crosscutting nature of NAP

Impunity for the perpetrators of violence against women secured through corruption and nepotism within the law enforcement institutions, government's inability to pursue the perpetrators in insecure areas, and intervention of local power holders in the legal process remain as the main barriers to eradicating violence against women.

Public perception of women shelters remains negative.

1325, focus by all parties should be placed on how to make linkages between NAP 1325 requirements and current general budgeting and programming practices, rather than inaction on the account of no earmarked funds being available to implement NAP 1325.

Link current women-centered initiatives by various government departments to NAP 1325:

Natural partners for this endeavor at the national and provincial levels would be the Afghan National Police, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Health, and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance. Other partners should include women's councils and the multi-year, multi-million dollar, PROMOTE project being implemented by private sector contractors of USAID to empower women.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the lead ministry for implementing NAP 1325, should lead a coordinated, intragovernmental awareness campaign on NAP 1325:

Despite the periodic reporting by most ministries on various themes, including on women's issues, there is uneven awareness of NAP 1325 and its objectives within many ministries and departments. An intensive awareness campaign led by the MoFA and followed by NAP 1325-specific reporting mechanisms at each ministry would go a long way in addressing the unevenness in knowledge of NAP 1325 and actions to implement it.

Strengthen media awareness of NAP 1325:

MoFA should work closely with women's rights organizations and other NGOs in engaging the media to publicize NAP 1325.

High Peace Council's incorporation of NAP 1325:

NAP 1325 calls for greater representation and active participation of women in conflict resolution and peace processes. HPC should make effective use of NAP 1325 for its peace consultations at the national and provincial levels.

Inclusiveness in implementation of NAP 1325:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs must develop formal and inclusive mechanisms to engage with civil society on NAP 1325 on an ongoing basis as a means to gather insights and expertise for better and more effective implementation of NAP 1325.

Accountability in implementation of NAP 1325:

In addition to utilizing insights from civil society for better implementation of NAP 1325, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must devise a system of reporting, based on concrete evidence, to the public on its own performance to implement NAP 1325, underlining accomplishments, failures, and ways forward.

Enhance capacity and knowledge of negotiation and conflict resolution:

Increased skills in negotiation and conflict resolution will continue to be needed for a variety of government employees and civil society representatives, both male and female. NAP 1325 should be used to "brand", publicize, and build awareness and support for training and awareness programming in negotiation and conflict resolution.

Increasing number of women not enough, but a good start:

More women should be appointed in decision making positions at national and sub-national levels of government with institutional mentoring support and clear plans and resources to integrate their roles and increase their professional abilities.