

## Policy Brief

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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 applied research and monitoring, evaluations, and training and mentoring. APPRO is registered with the Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan as a non-profit, non-government organization, headquartered in Kabul, Afghanistan with offices in Mazar-e Sharif (north), Herat (west), Kandahar (south), Jalalabad (east), and Bamyan (center). APPRO is the founding member of APPRO-Europe, registered in Belgium, acts as the Secretariat for the National Advocacy Committee for Public Policy (NAC-PP), and is the founder of Center for Good Governance, Gender Analysis, Applied Social Research, Public Administration, and Development (GRAD). For more information on APPRO, see: [www.appro.org.af](http://www.appro.org.af). For more information on APPRO-Europe, see: [www.appro-europe.net](http://www.appro-europe.net). For more information on NAC-PP, see: [www.nac-pp.net](http://www.nac-pp.net). For more information on GRAD, see: [www.grad.edu.af](http://www.grad.edu.af)

This policy brief is based on the findings from two surveys undertaken by APPRO in October 2018 and February 2019, as part of the NAP 1325 Monitor project, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), to conduct monitoring and in-depth research on the implementation of Afghanistan's NAP 1325.

The research report is available from: <http://appro.org.af/publication/fragility-and-making-peace-rights-of-afghan-women-and-peace-with-the-taliban/>

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## Rights of Afghan Women and Peace Negotiations

*After nearly two decades of war, the United States has a moral obligation to ensure that women in Afghanistan are not returned to the horrors of the 1990s – if and when we leave. But, we must also ensure that they are treated much better than they are in countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain, and other nations like Pakistan and Indonesia with whom we have close diplomatic and security relationships. The United States should be leading efforts to press leaders in those countries to treat women equally to their male counterparts..... The United States should be prepared to support and defend the rights of Afghan women – and Afghans more broadly – even as it considers drawing down U.S. troops.[1]*

*Now it was natural, when we saw the dismal circumstances under which Afghan women were suffering when first we came to their country after 9/11, to want to help them. And hopefully, our massive and expensive efforts on their behalf will make their task easier. But the direction some of them seem to be taking in the face of our intended drawdown is worrying me. Emancipation and equality aren't the product of pity or guilt, and you aren't owed them by someone else's army or taxpayer dollars. Seventeen years, 2,500 dead Americans and \$126 billion are enough. More is not only unjustified but wouldn't achieve the desired outcome anyway.[2]*

These two quotes, both from The National Interest, a bimonthly international affairs publication, capture the opposite sides in the current discourse on peace with the Taliban.

The first view holds that Afghan women fending for themselves does not relieve the west of its historical responsibility toward Afghan women. Afghan women came out of hiding in droves after the fall of the Taliban in late 2001. And they stayed out and made themselves present in all aspects of social life, due in no small part to women-centered programming by, and protection from, international donors including the establishment of quotas for women in politics and civil service. These gains are, nevertheless, largely protectable as long as there is a tangible presence in Afghanistan by the west. With a rushed disengagement with Afghanistan by the west, many of these tenuous gains for women would run a high risk of being rolled back.

At the same time, it seems that Afghans, truly, have no other option but to stand for themselves if a peace deal is negotiated without their say and without specific provisions to protect women's rights.

[1] Korb, L.J. (2019, February 23). "The Future of Women in Afghanistan.", Retrieved March 5, 2019, from The National Interest: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/future-women-afghanistan-45252>

[2] Benard, C. (2019, February 27). "Afghan Women are In Charge of Their Own Fate." Retrieved March 5, 2019, from The National Interest: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/afghan-women-are-charge-their-own-fate-45777?fbclid=IwAR1z9BOcnsui8q8qJDa9C2JUxvLn5cVueCyKM6xIankkv41qSjPx4JqTOH8&page=0%2C1>

Two surveys were carried out in October 2018 and February 2019 by APPRO to gain an understanding and appreciation of what different segments of society think of a negotiated peace with the Taliban, how they envisage it and their concerns and worries about it, and what they are willing to give up to attain it.

While, arguably, the findings from these surveys in six provinces cannot be generalized to the whole country, the results provide a minimal evidence base for the ongoing discourse on peace.

## Summary of Findings

**Government Efforts and the Peace Process:** The majority of men and women of all age groups are generally of the opinion that the government's efforts in establishing the conditions for peace have been unsatisfactory. Women in urban areas are more skeptical than men about the government's effectiveness in moving toward peace.

**Women's Role in the Peace Process:** Men and women, different age groups, and urban and rural populations all see women's involvement in peace negotiations as important.

**Inclusion of Taliban in Civil Service:** Forty four percent of the women agree with the inclusion of the Taliban in the civil service after a peace deal, compared to 56 percent of the men. There are no significant differences among respondents from different age groups for each sex. Also, the views of men in rural and urban areas strongly converge, with a slight majority of men agreeing to the inclusion of the Taliban in the civil service.

Women in rural areas are more accepting of the Taliban in the civil service than women in urban areas. Kabul province has the highest percentage of women agreeing to including the Taliban in the civil service after peace while Bamyan has the highest percentage of women disagreeing to the inclusion.

In Herat and Kandahar provinces, the percentages of women agreeing and disagreeing to the inclusion of the Taliban are similar. Except for Bamyan, the majority of the male respondents agree to the inclusion of the Taliban in the civil service, with Herat having the highest percentage, at 77 percent. The views among men for and against the inclusion are divided almost evenly in Kandahar province.

Divergences between the views of women and men are most prominent in Balkh and Herat, and most convergent in Kandahar.

**Recruitment of Taliban in Security Forces:** Among women of different age groups there is strong convergence, with the majority disagreeing to the Taliban being incorporated in the security forces. The highest level of agreement to the incorporation is among those over the age of 40, while the lowest level of agreement is among those aged between 26 and 40 years of age.

Among men aged 40 years and older, there is an overwhelming majority in favor of the incorporation. This majority is smaller for the 26-40 age group and smallest for the 18-25 age group. Views in urban and rural areas on incorporation of the Taliban into the security forces are largely convergent. Apart from urban women, the majority of the men from urban and rural areas and women from rural areas are in favor of incorporation. Women in urban areas opposed to incorporation are a sizeable minority, at 48 percent.

For men and women, agreement to the recruitment of Taliban into the security forces tends to increase among older age groups. At the provincial level, there are significant differences between the provinces, particularly among the women. A majority of the women in Nangarhar and Kandahar agree to the recruitment of Taliban into the security forces, while the majority of the women in Kabul, Balkh and Bamyan tend to disagree with the incorporation.

Disagreement is the strongest in Bamyan, which is also the only province where a majority of the men disagree with the incorporation of the Taliban into the security forces. Among men, agreement to incorporation is the strongest in Herat, followed by Balkh and Kabul.

Views of male and female respondents are most convergent in Kandahar and Nangarhar, and to a lesser extent, Bamyan, with Bamyan mirroring Kandahar and Nangarhar. The lowest percentage of men disagreeing to the incorporation is from Herat.

**Releasing Taliban Prisoners:** A majority of those surveyed disagree with releasing Taliban prisoners. There is a convergence of views between men and women on this issue, though with a higher percentage of women disagreeing. There is also a convergence of views among different age groups and urban and rural populations. The most pronounced convergence of opinion among men and women on opposing the release of Taliban prisoners is in the 18-25 age group. In the Over 40 age group, 62 percent of the women oppose the release, compared to 46 percent of the men.

Opposition to the release is the strongest in Bamyan. A similar convergence of views between men and women is observed in Nangarhar with similar percentages of women and men disagreeing with the release of Taliban prisoners.

Views of men and women strongly diverge in Herat and Kabul, where the percentages of women disagreeing is almost twice as much as those of the men.

**Amnesty for Taliban:** A majority of those surveyed disagree to an amnesty for the Taliban, though this is much more prominent among female respondents than male respondents. Twice as many women disagree with an amnesty than men.

The views of women on amnesty for the Taliban converge among all age groups, though respondents aged above 40 tend to agree more to an amnesty than the other two groups. Opposition to an amnesty is the strongest among women of 18-25 and 26-40 age groups.

Women in Bamyan express the highest level of opposition to an amnesty, at 90 percent, compared women in Kandahar at 32 percent. The second highest percentage of women disagreeing with an amnesty is from Herat.

A sizeable majority of men in Kabul province agree to an amnesty, the highest percentage among all provinces. The highest percentage of men disagreeing to an amnesty is from Nangarhar at 69 percent, followed by Bamyan at 68 percent.

Views of men and women strongly converge in Nangarhar, Kandahar and Bamyan and diverge the most in Balkh, Kabul and Herat.

**Revisions to the Constitution:** The majority of the men and women surveyed disagree with changes to the Constitution, with women's majority being slightly higher than men's. A significant percentage of the women, at 17 percent, have no opinion regarding revisions to the Constitution.

Among the age groups, the 18-25 group has the strongest opposition to revisions of the Constitution, while in the Over 40 age group, a sizeable minority of men agree to revising the Constitution. Across all age groups, there are sizeable percentages of women with no opinion regarding changes to the Constitution.

Except for Kandahar, in all other provinces the majority of the women disagree with revising the constitution. The disagreement by women is strongest in Bamyan, followed by Kabul and Herat. The highest percentages of women agreeing to revisions in the Constitution are from

Kandahar and Nangarhar. Uncertainty, or having no opinion, among women about revising the Constitution is strongest in Balkh, followed by Kabul. Views of men and women are most convergent in Kandahar and Nangarhar.

Provinces where the views of men and women diverge the most are Herat and Kabul. In Herat, 60 percent of the women are opposed to revising the constitution, compared to 42 percent of the men. In Kabul, 63 percent of the women disagree to revisions in the Constitution, compared to 47 percent of the men.

The highest percentages of men agreeing to changes in the Constitution are in Herat, followed by Kandahar, Kabul, and Balkh.

**Amendments to Women-centered Laws:** Overall, there is a 50/50 split between those who expect changes to women-centered laws and those who do not. Almost one quarter of the women surveyed do not have an opinion on the issue.

There is a high convergence of views among age groups and between rural and urban residents. Women in rural areas are slightly more opposed to changes in laws than their urban counterparts.

Except for Kandahar and Nangarhar, the majority of the women in all other provinces disagree with changes to the laws. Bamyan is the only province where a strong majority of both female and male respondents disagree with amending existing laws.

Except for Bamyan, all other provinces have significantly high percentages of women without opinions about changes to laws, with the highest percentage being Balkh, followed by Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul.

Bamyan has the highest percentage of men disagreeing with changes to the laws. In all other provinces the majority of the men agree with changes to the laws, with Balkh having the highest percentage, followed by Nangarhar, Herat, and Kabul.

Over one quarter of the men in Kandahar have no opinion about changes to the laws. In Kabul the percentage of men with no opinion is around one fifth of the men.

**Security Conditions After Peace:** An overwhelming majority of all those surveyed expect improvements in security conditions as a consequence of peace. There is convergence of views on the positive impact of peace on security conditions among different age groups, between urban and rural dwellers, and, to some extent, among the provinces.

Women in Nangarhar are the most optimistic about security improvements, followed closely by women in Herat and Balkh.

The men in Balkh are the most optimistic, followed closely by Herat Nangarhar. The men in Bamyan are the most pessimistic about security improving after peace.

**Peace and Women in Civil Service:** There is relative convergence of views between men and women, among different age groups, and between urban and rural residents on the consequence of peace for women in the civil service. Women tend to expect more strongly than men in changes to the presence and role of women in the civil service.

At the provincial level of analysis, the difference of views between men and women regarding changes to women's conditions in the civil service after peace is most pronounced in Herat.

The highest percentage of women expecting change to the presence and role of women in the civil service is from Balkh, followed by Kandahar and Herat.

**Peace and Participation of Women in Elections:** The majority of the respondents are of the view that a peace deal with the Taliban will lead to changes in women's participation in elections. The views of men and women about changes to conditions for women to participate in elections are most convergent in Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Bamyan.

A relative convergence in views is observed among age groups, and between urban and rural residents, though higher percentages of men and women in rural areas expect changes than urban residents. The percentage of women expecting changes to women's participation in elections is higher in rural areas than urban areas.

Herat stands out with the views of men and women being almost the complete opposites with the majority of the women expecting changes to their participation in elections and the majority of men expecting there would be no change.

Kandahar has the highest percentage of women expecting change, followed by Balkh, Herat and Nangarhar. The highest percentage of men expecting change is from Nangarhar and Kandahar, followed by Bamyan.

**Peace and Women's Access to Formal Justice:** The majority of respondents believe there will be changes in women's access to formal justice following a peace deal. There is a relative convergence among age groups for both

sexes, and between urban and rural residents. Women in rural areas are more inclined to believe women's access to formal justice will change.

The majority of women in all provinces believe there will be changes in their access to justice following a peace deal with the Taliban. Provinces where women most strongly believe there will be changes are Kandahar, Balkh, and Herat. A significantly high percentage of women in Kandahar have no views on the question.

The divergence of views between men and women is most pronounced in Herat, where an overwhelming majority of men expects no change and an overwhelming majority of women expects change. A similar, though less pronounced, pattern exists in Balkh.

**Peace and Women's Mobility:** The majority of respondents expect that a peace deal with the Taliban will lead to changes in women's access to the public space and mobility. There is high convergence of views between men and women from the different age groups, and between the urban and rural populations.

The highest percentage of women expecting changes to their mobility is from Kandahar, followed closely by Balkh and Herat. The highest percentage of women expecting no change is from Bamyan, followed by Nangarhar and Kabul.

The overwhelming majority of men in Herat expect no change in women's presence in public spaces and mobility. The views of men and women diverge the most in Balkh and Herat.

**Peace and Women's Access to Education:** There is convergence in views on changes to access by women to education across the various age groups. Expectation of change is more pronounced in rural areas for both men and women.

In rural areas, the percentage of men expecting change in access to education is higher than the percentage for men in urban areas.

The overwhelming majority of the women expect that their access to education will change after a peace deal. This is most prominent in Kandahar and Balkh, followed by Herat and Nangarhar. The views of men and women diverge strongly in Herat, Balkh, and Kabul, with men and women leaning toward opposite views.

In Herat, the vast majority of male respondents expect no change in access to education for women.

**Peace and Women's Access to Shelters:** The majority of the men and the women expects changes in access to shelters. The views are almost identical among different age groups of female respondents. Of the three age groups for men, the Over 40 group has the highest percentage for expecting change. The lowest percentage for expecting change is from men aged between 26 and 40 years of age. Respondents in rural areas are more expecting of change than their urban counterparts.

Women's responses are relatively consistent across provinces. The highest percentage of women expecting change in access to shelters is from Kabul, followed by Herat, Balkh, and Bamyan.

A key divergence of views between men and women on the question of access to shelters is Herat, where an overwhelming majority of the women expect change, compared to a sizeable majority of the men expecting change. In Kabul, the proportion of men and women expecting changes is much higher than that of the aggregated data for all provinces.