

Briefing

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This brief is based on the 2017 and 2018 status reports on the implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 by Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and periodic monitoring reports of APPRO 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 4-monthly basis. For the full APPRO monitoring reports, see: <http://appro.org.af/publications/>

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Implementation Progress of NAP 1325 in Afghanistan

About NAP 1325

National Action Plans (NAP) have been developed by various national governments to localize the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Afghanistan committed to UNSCR 1325 in June 2015 with launching its National Action Plan (NAP 1325).[1] Afghanistan's NAP 1325 was developed to respond to urgent need for the Afghan society to adopt an inclusive and participatory approach in the prevention policy processes and conflict management and create a new space for effective participation of women in peace processes, security and development.

NAP 1325 is organized under the four pillars of Participation, Protection, Prevention and Relief and Recovery as follows:

- **Participation:** Increase participation of women at all levels of decision-making related to peace, security and civil service.
- **Protection:** Ensure the protection of women, vulnerable to various types of violence in conflict and post-conflict societies.
- **Prevention:** Prevent violence against women to ensure their rights and political participation.

- **Relief and Recovery:** Create funding mechanism, economic development opportunities and the provision of relief and recovery services to women from/within conflict-affected communities, IDPs, and survivors of violence.

Overview of NAP 1325 Implementation in Afghanistan

Since 2016, the Government of Afghanistan has published three progress reports on the status of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, highlighting major progress made during the first implementation phase of this plan (2015-2018). While findings from periodic monitoring rounds by APPRO confirm some of the achievements underscored in MoFA progress reports, there remain questions regarding the tentativeness of these achievements and them being prone to systemic challenges in the current state of affairs throughout Afghanistan.

The achievements in implementing NAP 1325 highlighted in the 2017 and 2018 status reports by MoFA are as follows:

- An overall improvement in the participation of women in the peace process. In 2017, a roster of 66 women covering 34 provinces was formed to participate in peace negotiations with the Taliban both in Afghanistan and abroad.[2]

[1] Human Rights Watch. (2016, January 12). *Afghanistan: Set Out Concrete Plan to Involve Women*. Retrieved February 2018, from [hrw.org: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/12/afghanistan-set-out-concrete-plan-involve-women](https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/12/afghanistan-set-out-concrete-plan-involve-women)

[2] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). (2019). Third Progress Report on the Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Kabul: MoFA.

- In 2018, women’s presence in the leadership of the High Peace Council (HPC) increased from 9 to 16 members and 700 elite women from across Afghanistan were identified to participate in the peace process. Further, female employees in the Secretariat of the HPC reportedly increased from 3 to 18 and in the Provincial Peace Committees from 73 to 100.[3]
- Ministry of Justice (MoJ) reports amendments to five laws to increase women’s participation in different levels of government in 2017.[4] These are the Civil Servants Law, Administrative Performance Law, Service Provision Law, Anti-Harassment Law, and Policy on Increasing Women’s Participation in Civil Services. Similarly, in 2018, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) reviewed a number of policy documents to ensure gender-sensitivity. These policies include Industrial Policy of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Local Governance Policy of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), and Gender Policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs (MoHRA).[5]
- As of 2017, over 22 percent of all 399,574 civil service employees were women, 10.3 percent of whom occupy leadership positions.[6] In 2018, this is reported to have reached 27 percent in the civil services and 12 percent in the Judiciary.[7] MoWA, Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Attorney General’s Office (AGO), and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) hold the highest number of female employees.[8] Efforts by the government to increase the number of women in a wide range of sectors include scholarship opportunities for women to take military training abroad, provision of separate workplace amenities for female employees and an incentive pay policy to encourage female job applicants.[9]
- Afghan National Security Forces have been trained by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on human rights, prevention of sexual violence and protection of women. A total of 2,400 security personnel was trained in 2017, of which 343 were women.[10] Similarly in 2018, 616 personnel of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), 482 personnel of police and 2,435 personnel of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) have benefitted from awareness programs held by their respective entities.[11]
- In 2018, MoJ printed and distributed 30,648 flyers about women’s rights throughout the provinces. MoJ has also held awareness programs on the EVAW Law for 14,146 women and 41,661 men as well as broadcasted EVAW messages on the radio in 17 provinces.[12] Further, Special EVAW Courts have been established in 17 provinces and Special Prosecutor’s Offices for EVAW in 34 provinces.[13]
- Cases of violence against women have been investigated as per the EVAW Law provisions with perpetrators being prosecuted for their crimes.[14] In 2017, twenty-nine protection centers were established across the provinces to ensure that female victims of violence receive the support they need.[15] For 2018 it is reported that 10,471 cases of violence against women were addressed by the judiciary, Departments of Women’s Affairs (DoWAs) and Family Response Units in 34 provinces. Also, 545 victims of violence have been cared for in the protection centers in these provinces.[16]
- Psychotherapy units have been established within some health facilities to provide psychiatric counseling for female victims of violence while kindergarten provisions have been made to care for children of female detainees within detention facilities in some of the prisons.[17]
- Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations (MoRR) reports implementation of 14 regulations to better implement the provisions of the IDPs Policy through NAP 1325. The identification and registration of IDPs, their human rights, provision of shelter, subsistence, healthcare and education are top priorities according to MoRR.[18]
- Under the Relief and Recovery pillar, both Citizen’s Charter (CC) and Women Economic Empowerment – National Priority Program (WEE-NPP) have contributed to women’s overall economic empowerment.[19]

[3] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). (2019). Third Progress Report on the Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Kabul: MoFA.

[4] MoFA (2018), p. 17

[5] MoFA (2019), p. 7

[6] MoFA (2018), p. 12

[7] MoFA (2019)

[8] MoFA (2019), p. 10

[9] Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO). (2018a). NAP 1325 Monitor; Monitoring Cycle 4: January - April 2018. P. 8. Retrieved February 15, 2019, from appro.org.af: <http://appro.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-07-15-NAP-1325-Monitor-Cycle-4-1.pdf>

[10] MoFA (2018), p. 32-33

[11] MoFA (2019), p. 29

[12] MoFA (2019), p. 29

[13] MoFA (2019)

[14] MoFA (2018), p. 21

[15] MoFA (2018), p. 26

[16] MoFA (2019)

[17] MoFA (2018), p. 27

[18] MoFA (2018), p. 36

[19] MoFA (2019)

While recent findings confirm women's increased presence in the peace process, especially in the HPC and the Provincial Peace Councils across the provinces, women's presence has been primarily symbolic.[20] Further, women's involvement in the peace process is more pronounced in Kabul, while in other provinces, particularly in the rural districts, women do not have any role in or awareness of the peace process.[21]

Similarly, despite improvements in the treatment of women by the security forces, largely attributed to awareness raising programs, there continue to be complaints about harassment by the police of victims of gender-based violence in some provinces, particularly in Kunduz, Kandahar, and Nimruz.[22] Recently, in Bamyan, two police officers raped a woman and subsequently escaped the province to avoid prosecution.[23]

Women's employment remains heavily concentrated in education and health sectors while very few women occupy leadership positions and their numbers are lower in other sectors.[24]

Despite the earmarked management positions being considered for women in some of the government entities, most women are unwilling to assume such positions, in part due to the threat these positions pose to their life.[25]

Lack of female employees is more pronounced in rural districts as compared to provincial centers.[26] Many government institutions in rural districts have no female employees, particularly in Bamyan, Daikundi, Kandahar, Laghman and Nangarhar.[27]

While the monitoring data acknowledges that women's access to formal justice has improved in some parts of the country, cases are often resolved in favor of the men and corruption due to intervention by powerful figures prevail. The Special Prosecutor's Offices for EAW are absent in all districts.[28]

Despite the ongoing efforts to reduce violence against women throughout the country, women still experience all 22 types of violence as defined in the EAW Law.[29] Moreover, prosecution of cases of violence has weakened, with perpetrators of violence against women escaping justice in some cases by joining AOGs.[30]

Protection centers exist mainly in provincial centers while the public's perception of the centers remains largely negative. Also, there are no safehouses in Kandahar, Laghman and Khost provinces.[31]

In Nangarhar, female victims of violence are reportedly treated similar to prisoners, confined to in-door environments. Further, it is reported that safehouses do not admit women who are addicted to drugs, homeless or deportees.

The number of women needing support from safe houses is far higher than what the centers can accommodate.[32] In provincial centers, some of the women are, however, provided with legal and psychiatric counseling.[33]

It is widely believed that women and girls' access to education has substantially improved over the years. However, in Arghandab and Daman districts of Kandahar there are still no girl schools.

In areas controlled by AOGs, girls are permitted to attend school until grade six. Lack of professional teachers, insufficient learning materials such as textbooks, absence of standard provisions such as labs and libraries, and lack of proper infrastructure remain as the main barriers to women's access to education.[34]

IDPs are being provided with monetary support, economic empowerment programs, health services and education. These forms of support are unevenly distributed across various provinces, while the number of IDPs steadily increases.[35] This is also true for widowed and disabled women in most parts of the country.[36]

[20] Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO). (2018b). *NAP 1325 Monitor; Monitoring Cycle 5: May - August 2018*. Retrieved February 15, 2019, from <http://appro.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-09-31-NAP-1325-Monitor-Cycle-5-1.pdf>

[21] APPRO. (2019). *NAP 1325 Monitor Monitoring Cycle 7: January – April 2019*. Retrieved March 30, 2020, from <http://appro.org.af/publications/nap-1325-monitor-monitoring-cycle-7-january-april-2019/>

[22] APPRO (2018b), p. 22

[23] APPRO. (2020). *NAP 1325 Monitor Monitoring Cycle 9: September – December 2019*. Retrieved March 30, 2020, from <http://appro.org.af/publications/nap-1325-monitor-monitoring-cycle-9-september-december-2019/>

[24] APPRO (2018b), p. 10-11

[25] APPRO (2019), p. 15

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] APPRO (2020), p. 15

[28] APPRO (2019), p. 24

[29] APPRO (2019), p. 29; APPRO (2020), p 35

[30] APPRO (2019), p. 29

[31] APPRO (2018b); APPRO (2019), p. 35

[32] APPRO (2020), p. 29

[33] APPRO (2018a, 2018b)

[34] APPRO (2019), p. 33

[35] APPRO (2018a), p. 29-30

[36] APPRO (2019), p. 35

To following recommendations can be made in addressing the above challenges.

Recommendations

1. Facilitate representative and engaged participation of women in the peace process, particularly in negotiations with the Taliban.
2. Ensure that women's representation in the peace process is inclusive of all Afghan women, including those in rural areas. Concrete measures need to be in place to avoid a hijacking of the peace process by a handful of well-known female activists based in Kabul.
3. Continue awareness raising programs for ANSF personnel on the topics of women's rights, ERAW and human rights treaties.
4. Allocate earmarked leadership positions for women in the civil service and security sectors.
5. Ensure the security and safety of women who occupy positions in governmental entities, particularly in more conservative provinces and rural districts.
6. Expand the Special Prosecutor's Office for ERAW to major districts.
7. Enhance cooperation and coordination among security forces to prosecute perpetrators of violence against women.
8. Expand protection centers to Kandahar, Khost, and Laghman provinces, as well as in major districts across Afghanistan.
9. Conduct periodic monitoring of the living conditions of women in protection centers to ensure they have basic amenities, are well-treated and are protected.
10. Provide premises and learning materials for schools and provide ongoing awareness on the importance of girls' education, preferably through religious scholars in grassroots communities and particularly in the more conservative communities.
11. Establish a monitoring mechanism on the distribution of aid to IDPs and vulnerable women to ensure that the aid reaches the most vulnerable recipients.