



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



## NARGIS NEHAN

As Executive Director and founder of EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD), I am excited and proud of the progress that EPD has made it since its establishment in 2010, and especially in 2012 and 2013. Over this period, EPD has grown in every sense, with more programs in more provinces, more donors and partners, more staff, and most importantly more members and beneficiaries.

In 2012 and 2013 EPD hosted a number of conferences and awareness raising workshops, including well attended national conferences on making the 2014 elections a success and women and elections. Through our ACTA and PWN platforms, the reach of these initiatives spanned the national level all the way to the grassroots, with local awareness raising activities on issues including women's participation in elections, reducing violence against women, and a series of activities on women's rights from the perspective of Islam. These activities had tremendous results, including mass mobilization of women for civic participation, particularly in the elections, with the support of local traditional, religious, and civil society leaders working together on joint initiatives through EPD platforms.

2012 and 2013 also saw EPD continue to take the lead on the national budget and anti-corruption, including building community based monitoring mechanisms in a number of provinces across Afghanistan. With many success stories coming in, such as ensuring drinking water for an entire village and successful advocacy for the asphaltting of a road through these activities, we are very excited to continue to develop these initiatives and see how much more positive change our members and beneficiaries can bring in 2014.

Because of our tremendous progress, being a relatively newly established organization, and the great wisdom and dedication I see in my team, civil society partners and donors, my passion for working harder for realizing our mission is increasing. I invite you to join our quest. Each person that volunteers, joins and learns about EPD and its activities is contributing to our mission, and every contribution to our mission helps raise the voice of the most underserved and improves the life of someone, somewhere in a remote valley of Afghanistan.

# ABOUT EPD



EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a non-for-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by a number of Afghan professionals who believe in equal rights. Our aim is to increase the capacity of women and youth in order for them to be the front face to represent their needs in development, peace building and democratic processes in the country. We further aim at massive mobilization of women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability Afghanistan is facing. EPD is establishing platforms in different levels of society for women and youth to get together and work for transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all of forms of violence and discrimination. At the national level, in order for individuals or institutions to take an initiative or achieve a national objective, it is very important to build coalitions and carry out joint activities. EPD therefore believes in coalition building and coordination for success.



# EPD VISION, MISSION AND APPROACH

## VISION

We envisage Afghanistan as a peaceful, prosperous and democratic state where all Afghans enjoy equal rights without any form of discrimination.

## MISSION

To empower and strengthen women and youth at the community and policy levels to build coalitions and networks and jointly promote peace building and improve governance.

EPD focuses on three strategic areas:

**PEACE BUILDING** EPD works to encourage and influence the people of Afghanistan, men and women alike, to participate and engage in peace building processes. We aim to empower different groups of society to be the front face of their society, to challenge policy-making process, contribute to political dialogue and processes, and lead peace building in the country.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE** In contributing towards improvement of governance, we aim to increase transparency and accountability of public resources and policies through strengthening civil societies at the community and policy level by engaging them in the process of budget planning, implementation and monitoring of development activities and procedures. We also aim to strengthen communities through active civil society groups to monitor service delivery by the government and keep government accountable to increase quality of services.

**HUMAN RIGHTS** Peace and good governance are critical to ensuring respect for human rights. EPD takes a rights-based approach to development, implementing programming that aims to empower all people of Afghanistan, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or other factors, to know and exercise their rights as Afghan citizens.



## APPROACH

EPD employs an inclusive approach in its efforts to peace building, improving good governance, and access to education for all. EPD mobilizes the communities at the grassroots level, initiates advocacies and builds platforms, where the public could use their voice and demand transparency and accountability from the government as well as better service delivery. EPD proudly maintains itself as a women's organization, requiring at least 50% of its staff to be women and maintaining an all-women leadership structure. However, rather than focusing exclusively on women's issues, we are women working in areas such as the peace process, elections, or anti-corruption issues, with attention to the needs and perspectives of women and youth.

# PROGRESS UPDATE FOR 2012 AND 2013



In 2012 and 2013, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy took huge steps in continuing to develop its identity as a leading NGO and member of civil society in Afghanistan. EPD achieved numerous accomplishments in providing training and capacity building for members of parliament, government officials at the national and subnational level, and Afghan men, women and youth in a number of areas, including good governance, anti-corruption, the national budget, human rights, elections, and promoting gender equality and the inclusion of women in key national processes.



In both 2012 and 2013, EPD dedicated itself to becoming the leading civil society organization on engaging with the national budget and advocating for better budget planning and execution and improved service delivery. EPD conducted the first independent civil society organization reviews of the 1391, 1392, and 1393 national budgets, serving as a key source of objective budget information for all civil society actors and a key tool for government accountability. Furthermore, EPD conducted research on the budget planning and execution processes, and took the initiative to involve civil society in claiming an active role in the national budget process.



EPD continued to build its programs and platforms. In only two short years, both the Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) and the Provincial Women's Network (PWN, formerly the Gender Equality Platform) expanded from Kabul-based initiatives to multi-provincial coalitions actively working on their own initiatives while also supporting national-level projects including budget tracking and analysis, women in peace and elections, and community-based monitoring of projects and service delivery.

EPD also continued to build its partnerships with national actors, facilitating cooperation on research and initiatives with the Ministry of Finance, Ministries of Public Health and Education, Ministry of Women's Affairs, the High Peace Council, Parliament, and Provincial Council Members. Through this active engagement, EPD has come to develop a vast network of national and international partners from the grassroots level, civil society and government with which to continue to expand platforms and advocacies into 2014 and beyond.

# PEACE BUILDING

PROMOTING PEACE, CULTURE OF TOLERANCE, AND CUSTOM OF NONVIOLENCE



## HIGH PEACE COUNCIL (HPC) AND CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

EPD contributes to peace building at the grassroots, subnational and national levels. Several initiatives have been undertaken by civil society to work closely with HPC, but with little success. EPD, believing in continuous advocacy, revisited advocacy efforts and managed to establish a joint working committee to work with HPC. After several rounds of meetings with HPC, a draft concept paper was developed and approved by civil society and HPC. The concept paper resulted in the establishment of a formal cooperation framework between HPC and civil society. More than 69 civil society organizations from Kabul and 34 provinces endorsed the cooperation framework. The framework was officially launched and agreed upon in an event attended by civil society, PWN members and international community representatives. EPD together with other civil society partners are having regular meetings with HPC in Kabul.



## “HOW CAN WE MAKE THE 2014 ELECTIONS A SUCCESS” CONFERENCE

EPD held a national conference in December 2013 to bring together all Afghans to identify community strategies to overcome challenges for the 2014 elections and make their votes count. It was widely attended by nearly 200 civil society members (35% women) representing all Afghan provinces and both traditional (community and religious) leaders as well as modern civil society. Youths, women, professional groups and community-based organizations all participated in the conference, held at Safi Landmark Hotel in Kabul.



Afghan civil society actors from across the country endorsed the 2014 elections as a critical event that will determine the future of the country and called on every



citizen to help, monitor and minimize misconduct. Understanding the challenges of insecurity, potential electoral violence, low voter awareness and a high probability of fraud, both modern and traditional civil society members declared their willingness to join efforts in order to enhance awareness about elections, decrease obstacles for women to vote, and minimize fraud and violence.

The conference participants discussed how each of them could contribute to transparent and accountable 2014 presidential and provincial council elections. They prepared a policy paper outlining civil society's preparation for the upcoming election and expectations from the other actors involved.

This conference concluded a series of four regional workshops conducted by the other member NGOs of Salah Consortium - Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO) and The Liaison Office (TLO) on helping to conduct of a successful 2014 elections.

## A NORTH DIALOGUE AND SOUTH TRAINING ON WOMEN'S CIVIC PARTICIPATION:

Afghan women's participation in the electoral process is their democratic right and responsibility as citizens of Afghanistan. Moreover, it is vital that Afghan women gain awareness about exercising their rights as citizens and responsibility for voting in order to ultimately contribute to good governance, equality and peace by going to the polls and voting consciously. EPD organized a North Dialogue, titled "Women and Elections", where 80 women from 23 provinces of Afghanistan participated. The participants included civil society activists, directors of Women's Affairs Departments, members of High Peace Council and women's networks, university staff members and schoolteachers. The women believed that women's votes are determinative, and determine the legitimacy of the elections. They raised their concerns regarding the challenges that threaten them in elections and outlined their suggestions to the government of Afghanistan, civil society and International Community in a press conference.



On the same topic, EPD organized a South Training for the women coming from the southern region of Afghanistan. In addition, a one and a half day consultation was organized with these women. The aim of the consultation was to discuss and understand the views of women from the south about elections and peace processes. The findings will be included in a policy paper to be published after the Presidential elections that will look at the challenges, success, and lessons to take forward reflecting on the concerns that women identified in these consultations.

## CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION OF AFGHAN WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PEACE BUILDING AND NETWORKING

Building the capacity of female members of parliament and the provincial councils has been one of the main focuses of EPD since its establishment. In order to create an atmosphere of cooperation, EPD established dialogue interaction between Afghan female parliamentarians and female Parliamentarians of India in order for them to exchange ideas on better and effective gender mainstreaming at the political level in these countries. With support from Delhi Policy Group and the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan, rounds of interactions were arranged with policy makers and civil society representatives from India. They shared about Indian women's experiences in the struggle for political participation and working for women's development in India. The Planning Commission of India met with Afghan female parliamentarians and delivered a presentation on the Development Plan for India. The presentations discussed support for communities and partnerships with the private sector that were included in the development plan. Meetings with the Ministry of Women and Children Development of India included a discussion on further collaboration to support women in Afghanistan. Female MPs requested that the Minister ensure that scholarship opportunities for Afghan students have a requirement of 50% female Afghan students.

## INTERACTION OF INDONESIAN PEACE ACTIVIST WITH AFGHAN WOMEN

Like Afghanistan, there are many other countries where women have experienced violation of their basic human rights, poverty, lack of education, high fertility rates and little or no decision making power. The question is how women of these countries managed to overcome some of these challenges and are continuing their struggles for equality. Realizing the fact that each and every Afghan has an important role to play in Afghanistan's peace building, EQUALITY



for Peace and Democracy invited Mrs. Shadia Marhaban, a Peace and Women's Rights Activist from Indonesia to interact with Afghan female teachers, students, Provincial Peace Committee Members and Members of Parliament and share her experience of struggles, challenges and achievements and listen to Afghan women's challenges and advise them about conflict management skills for tackling radicalization and increasing women's participation in peace processes.



# GOOD GOVERNANCE



PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PUBLIC POLICIES, STRATEGIES, AND RESOURCES



## INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AFGHANISTAN 1393 NATIONAL BUDGET

Through the Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) Platform, EPD performed an independent review of 1393 National Budget and presented its observations and recommendations to Afghan civil society, media and international community, in a press conference.

ACTA's specific findings on the proposed budget included: MoF's ambitious revenue target, increased allocation of ordinary budget for security sector and contingency, low budget allocations for health, education and social protection. ACTA was also concerned about noticeable gap in financing of budget deficit.

## EXPANSION OF ACTA AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL

EPD established ACTA chapters in Qala e Ahmad Khan Village of Bagrami District of Kabul, Kama and Behsood Districts of Nangarhar, Panjab and Shibar Districts of Bamyan and Enjeel and Ghoriyan Districts of Herat. The ACTA teams have since been involved in monitoring service delivery by the government and empowerment of youth and women to participate in monitoring the government performance and demanding transparency as well as better services from the government.

## TRAINING AND FILM SCREENING FOR COMMUNITIES ON COMBATING CORRUPTION

EPD training specialists developed comprehensive training curriculum consisting of four major parts: 1) Anti-corruption, 2) Good Governance, 3) National Budget, and 4) Community Based Monitoring Mechanisms.

Further, EPD conducted two rounds of Training of Trainers for its seventeen employees covering both Kabul and provincial staff, which included field coordinators, trainers and program officers. The training topics included good governance; national budget and cycle of budget; causes and roots of corruption and encountering corruption; role of civil society in monitoring and encountering corruption in government policies and procedures; and community based monitoring on service delivery. Subsequently, EPD delivered trainings on the same topics for 140 youths in Kabul (all districts), Nangarhar, Bamyan and Herat. A documentary around combating corruption which named "It is our Money, Where has it gone?" was screened to a total number of 8,149 community members in the mentioned provinces.

## CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS ON BUDGET PLANNING AND EXECUTION PROCESSES

EPD conducted trainings on good governance, combating corruption, national budget and monitoring of public service delivery to 450 women and youth from Kabul (Bagrami District), Nangarhar (Behsood and Kama Districts), Herat (Enjeel and Ghooryan Districts), Bamyan (Panjab and Shebar Districts), Kunduz, Faryab, and Kandahar. The trainings provided the participants with knowledge and tools to mobilize and monitor the public service delivery. Through this project, a Community Based Monitoring Mechanism was established in each area where the trainings were conducted.





## 1391 AND 1392 NATIONAL BUDGET ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

EPD, through Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) has pioneered to utilize national budget as a monitoring tool on government service delivery. ACTA conducted 1391 national budget analysis, which provided details to Afghan parliament to help them review and finalize national budget. The process also gave an insight into the national budget from civil society perspective in terms of national budget planning, execution, monitoring and reporting with special emphasis on the role of community in the entire process. The analysis also looked at the Gender Based Budgeting practices in place to ensure gender mainstreaming is taken into account in the national budget. The 1392 National Budget was reviewed based on some key indicators such as Tokyo Accountability Framework, Afghanistan status on Open Budget Index, Fair distribution of resources and fiscal sustainability.

## CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT IN BUDGET PLANNING EXERCISE

As for the fiscal year 1392, EPD step forward to further enhance the role of civil society organization in the national budget planning process utilizing Health and Education Sectors as an entry point. As round of series of workshops, EPD organized half day workshop with health and education focused civil society organizations to consult and review 1392 health and education sectors budget. The aim of the national consultation was to review 1392 health and education sectors proposed budget and gives comments and suggestions from the civil society perspective.

## ACTIONS TAKEN ON CASES OF CORRUPTION IN AFGHANISTAN

During 2012 ACTA has taken action and demand transparency in several cases of corruption in Afghanistan. ACTA sent an open letter to UN Special Representative in Afghanistan on the fund embezzlement in Law and Order Trust Fund and asked for further information and disclosure of audit reports to Afghan Public. As a result UNDP published the audit and investigations committee report on their website with public access to the information. ACTA also sent an open letter to chairman of Central Bank for civil society review and investigation of Kabul Bank crisis. ACTA were informed that the Independent Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (IMEC) have been given the task to conduct independent investigation of the Kabul Bank crisis.

ACTA also stepped forward to conducted independent review and investigation of corruption allegations against seven employees of Ministry of Finance and shared the information with general public that in fact those who were detailed by Attorney General's office on possible corruption were indeed that ones that reported the corruption case to Attorney General's office and due to their late response the actual perpetrators ran away from the country.

## TRAINING ON GOOD GOVERNANCE TO MPS AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

The training module "Good Governance and Using Budget as a Monitoring Tool for Government Service Delivery" was developed and per-tested in Kabul. The Provincial Council members in 34 provinces were delivered this training. During the training, specific sessions on the role of PCs in the budget execution was particularly discussed and different modules were particularly were shared to ensure active participation of civil society in budget planning and monitoring. Subsequent to that, EPD gave training to 25 members of parliament on the national budget planning, execution and monitoring. The training module also contains the process of national budget formulation, allocation and execution processes.

# HUMAN RIGHTS

EMPOWERING WOMEN, YOUTH AND ALL PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN TO REALIZE THEIR RIGHTS AS AFGHAN CITIZENS AND HUMAN BEINGS

## ASSESSING SECURITY, CORRUPTION, MILITARIZATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AID FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AFGHAN WOMEN

EPD, in partnership with Women's Regional Network (WRN) conducted a research to assess security, corruption and militarization and effectiveness of aid from the perspective of Afghan women. EPD provided technical support and conducted interviews with women of diverse backgrounds, in eight provinces of Afghanistan. The research provided an opportunity for women to make their voices heard, and it contributed to knowledge in the domain of gender.

WRN is a network of individual women who are civil society leaders from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan and who put joint efforts towards ensuring peace and security in the region through strengthening women's rights in their respective countries.

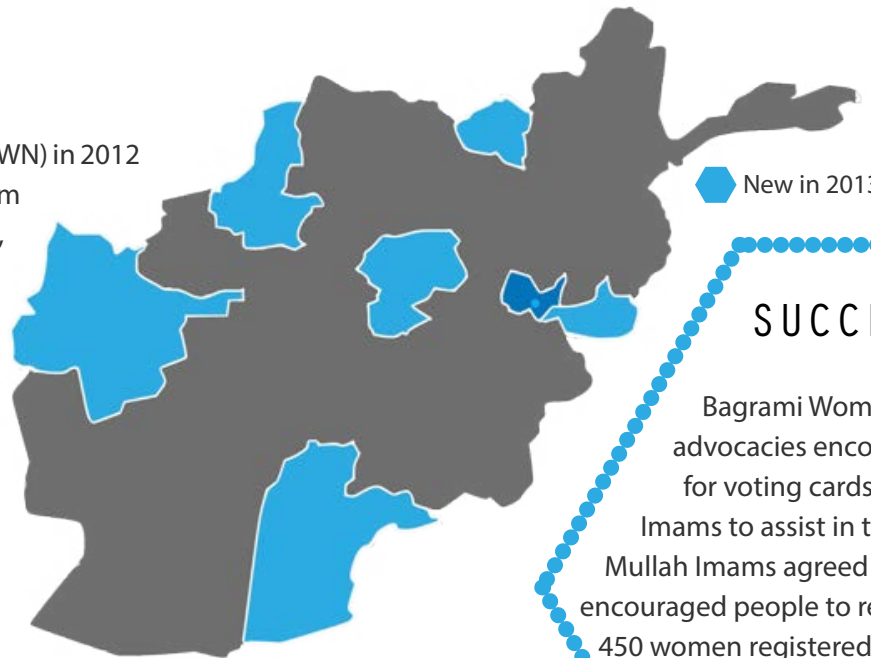


# PROVINCIAL WOMEN'S NETWORK (PWN) IN 2013

EPD established the Provincial Women's Network (PWN) in 2012 for creating a platform and bringing women leaders from different walks of life (parliament, provincial council, government, civil society, private sector, media and academia) together for networking, coalition building, monitoring women's advancement and carrying out joint advocacies.

In 2013, the PWN (formerly the Gender Equality Platform) expanded its presence from a Kabul-based platform to an Afghanistan-wide coalition, opening new women's networks in Bagrami district of Kabul, Behsood and Kamad districts of Nangarhar, Injil and Ghooryan districts of Herat, Shebar district of Bamyan, and in the provincial centers of Faryab, Kunduz, and Kandahar. Two rounds of capacity building training were carried out with 210 members of the Provincial Women's Network on topics including human rights, women's political rights, political rights in Islam and Afghanistan law, government structure and responsibilities, the law and constitution of Afghanistan, democracy in Islam, civil society, and the role of women in elections. Separate trainings were also conducted on anti-corruption and good governance. A Provincial Women's Network guide was also established.

In each province, male supporters were also engaged, and the documentary "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," about female nonviolent peace activists in Liberia, was translated into Dari and Pashto and screened to show how women can take part in activism and claim a role in peace processes.



## SUCCESS STORY

Bagrami Women's Network carried out advocacies encouraging women to register for voting cards. They approached Mullah Imams to assist in transferring their message. The Mullah Imams agreed and advocated for elections and encouraged people to register for voting cards. As a result, 450 women registered themselves and obtained voting cards. The advocacy activities of Bagrami Women's Network successfully engaged local women and resulted in women willing to vote who were otherwise disinterested in taking part in upcoming elections.



# AFGHAN COALITION FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (ACTA) IN 2013

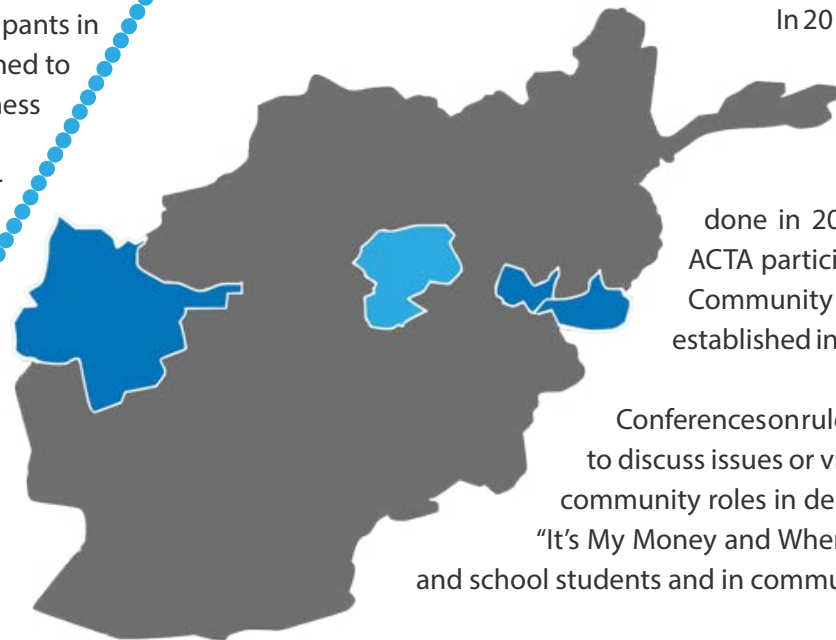


## SUCCESS STORY

In December, the Bamyan ACTA team conducted an awareness program titled "Role of Afghan Women in the Upcoming Elections" A total of 80 women from Bamyan province attended the program, and took part in discussions on past experiences and current challenges and opportunities. The participants in this program came together and planned to take an active part in raising awareness among the women of Bamyan regarding participation and their role in the upcoming elections.



The Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) was launched in November 2011. It is a coalition of civil society organizations, networks and associations as well as individuals at the national and community levels who are voluntarily advocating for transparency and accountability of public policies, strategies and resources. ACTA chapters are active in community based monitoring, budget tracking, and monitoring government service delivery.



 New in 2013

In 2013, EPD expanded ACTA's presence in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat, and launched a new ACTA chapter in Bamyan province. Trainings were provided in a number of areas, with much additional work done in 2013 to prepare for a series of trainings to ACTA participants and on ACTA-related topics in 2014. Community Based Monitoring Mechanisms were also established in each province with ACTA presence in 2013.

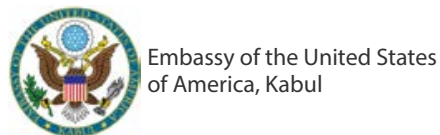
Conferences on rule of law and justice were held in each province to discuss issues or violence against women. Documentaries on community roles in demanding transparency and accountability, "It's My Money and Where Has It Gone," was screened to university and school students and in communities for both men and women.

# DONORS AND PARTNERS



## 2012 - 2013 DONORS

In 2013, EPD had the privilege of working with a number of national and international donors on projects in all areas of EPD activities.



## NATIONAL PARTNERS

Ministry of Finance  
Ministry of Women's Affairs  
Women's Commission of Parliament  
Youth Division of Ministry of Information and Culture  
Budget Committee of Parliament  
Provincial Councils  
Provincial Peace Committees

## AFFILIATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS

Afghan Civil Society Joint Working Group  
Peace Watch Committee  
Afghan Women's Advocacy Coalition  
Salah Consortium