

EQUALITY FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

QUARTERLY UPDATE

PROMOTING A CULTURE OF COEXISTENCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND PEACE FOR ALL

The first quarter of 2015 represented a busy time for EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy. Not only is the country and government facing various transitional challenges, but conflict and unspeakable atrocities, such as the violent murder of Farkhunda in central Kabul, unfortunately represent an ongoing reality.

From January to March EPD commenced several new projects, and also welcomed many new staff members. Considerable progress was made in research, with the release of two publications; one on the budget-service delivery nexus, and the other the *Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card*. Further research is also being conducted in the areas of corruption, countering extremism, lessons learned by women through the past

decade of the peace process, and national/international dialogues on developing a roadmap to peace.

Extensive training was implemented throughout Panjshir and Parwan provinces on violence against women and addressing women's rights from an Islamic perspective. Additionally, facilities and networks were established to support the involvement of young people in political engagement and the upcoming elections through the utilization of social media.

Building on these strong foundations, everyone within EPD, including the *Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* and *Provincial Women's Network (PWN)*, looks forward to what promises to be a very engaged and interesting year.

January - March 2015

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IN THIS UPDATE

www.epd-afg.org
admin@epd-afg.org

On the 28th of January 2015, EPD launched a critical report on the budget-service delivery nexus, investigating the connections between the national budget process and service delivery. The findings were shared at an event in Kabul attended by representatives from the government, NGOs, civil society and national media.

The report examines the multi-faceted ways national budgeting in Afghanistan affects the quality of education and health service delivery, based on data collected from 8 provinces and extensive research, as a means of addressing deficiencies in the budget process and informing recommendations to various stakeholders.

The research, supported by Open Society Afghanistan,

found that a lack of discretionary budget in the national budget, complex procedures and a lack of capacity at the provincial level (and to a lesser extent at the central level), ubiquitous corruption, and the inability of the Afghan government to facilitate effective mechanisms for provincial budgeting, represent the main deficiencies in the budget process that affect the quality of education and health service delivery in the targeted provinces.

EPD's recommendations for the government, civil society and international donors outline what each sector could undertake to improve the budgeting-service delivery nexus.

The full report is available to download in both [English](#) and [Dari](#).



**AFGHANISTAN
WOMEN'S GENDER
EQUALITY REPORT
CARD**



**STRENGTHENING
ACCESS TO JUSTICE
FOR WOMEN
AFFECTED BY
VIOLENCE**

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**REPORT LAUNCH ON
THE BUDGET PROCESS
AND SERVICE
DELIVERY NEXUS**



On the 12th of March 2015, EPD launched the 2014 *Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card*.

This research, which was supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, measures the commitments made to women in relation to gender equality in laws, treaties, agreements, policies and strategic documents, reviewing these commitments in a number of key areas. It assesses both progress and shortcomings in each of these areas from the perspectives of Afghan women, by surveying 154 members of EPD's Provincial Women's Network (PWN) in five provinces of Afghanistan, combined with desk research and stakeholder interviews.

As the Afghan government assumes more responsibility

through increased on-budget financing, it is critical to revisit the thousands of commitments that have been made to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality. This research shows that, though making these commitments and developing policy is a critical first step, unless they are translated into actual programs, and then furthermore actually budgeted and made real priorities, they have little effect on the daily lives of Afghan women.

The report card will be conducted annually as a monitoring tool to enable civil society, the international community, and the media to hold the government accountable to its commitments to the women of Afghanistan and gender equality.

The report is available in [English](#), [Dari](#) and [Pashto](#).

Throughout this quarter, with the support of The Asia Foundation, EPD has been conducting trainings in Parwan and Panjshir provinces to strengthening the access to justice of women affected by violence.

The goal of the project is to contribute to a sustained reduction in violence against women, and sustainable protection of women's personal security, by strengthening formal and informal justice sectors and raising public awareness of women's rights within an Islamic framework.

The trainings have targeted a wide range of male and female recipients, including the Directorate of Women's Affairs, justice sector representatives, religious leaders, university professors,

students, schoolteachers, Family Resolution Committees members and community actors, and have used culturally-sensitive approaches to ensure that the topics are understood as being compatible with Islamic perspectives.

The curriculum covers the EVAW Law and 18 differently-themed training booklets, including child protection, inheritance rights, hijab, women's role in family and society, and the relationship between husband and wife.

Between January and March over 1,100 hours of training were conducted across Parwan and Panjshir. It was also possible to address and resolve over 30 legal cases brought by vulnerable women who would otherwise have been unable to receive support.

In the first week of January 2015, EPD, with the support of UNDP Gender Equality Project (GEP) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, conducted a four-day gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) training for the programme, policy and planning, budgeting and gender units of six different ministries (MoPH, MoHE, MoWA, MAIL, MRRD and MoE).

The training sessions, which followed the manual developed by EPD, covered the basic concepts of gender, gender-based violence, gender mainstreaming, government budget processes and reforms, gender and the national budget process, GRB tools, applying GRB in the budget process, the design of gender-sensitive indicators, as well as

international case studies. The aim was to develop the understanding of GRB among the participants, to enable and encourage them to incorporate GRB into their ministry's policies and programs, as well as to make their budget and programs sensitive to the needs and priorities of gender and vulnerable groups.

At the end of the training the participants expressed that their knowledge and appreciation of GRB had been improved, and that they understood that proper coordination should be applied between departments for the mainstreaming of gender concerns into budgets, policies, programs, projects, and day to day operations of the ministries.

**GENDER-RESPONSIVE
BUDGETING TRAINING
FOR MINISTRY
REPRESENTATIVES**



Supported by The Berghof Foundation, EPD will be hosting a three-day national conference in May 2015 to discuss the status of women in the post-transition phase and the new government, and to link subnational with national discussions on peace processes with special consideration to women's experiences and objectives.

The conference will gather over 130 participants to address lessons learned around women's training and engagement at the national, subnational, and grassroots levels, and assess whether and how past initiatives were successful in increasing the capacity of women to participate in the peace process.

It will also initiate a national-level dialogue to ensure that

the gains women have made are not lost, and that the needs and perspectives of women are included in the peace process after transition.

Additionally, it will facilitate the increased participation of women in discussions on peace and reconciliation, and how to increase the active participation of women in national dialogues and peace processes.

The conference will culminate in the development of both a report outlining the challenges and opportunities for women's participation in the peace process, and an actionable accountability tool involving all stakeholders entitled the *Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace Entering the Transformation Decade*.



PEACE DIALOGUES AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE



COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND INSECURITY

Also in this quarter, EPD has been working with Internews towards the establishment of media stations in Kabul, Nangarhar, Bاميان, Herat, Kunduz, Faryab and Kandahar, to enable Afghan youth to become more politically aware and engaged.

By improving access to social media, the intention is to mobilize Afghanistan's youth by promoting 'netizenship', thus increasing involvement in democracy and governance, making them able to not only make informed political decisions themselves, but to hold elected officials and candidates accountable.

With the assistance of a professional media consultant, a training curriculum and comprehensive media guide have been developed that will support youth to utilize resources such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Google+ Hangout for political activism and civic engagement, thus improving their coordination, participation, advocacy and outreach in advance of the upcoming elections.

In the following months, 200 young male and female members of EPD's *Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* and *Provincial Women's Network (PWN)* will be trained and actively involved in the project, enabling them to increase their interest and involvement in democracy and governance issues on a wider and longer-term scale.

AFGHAN WOMEN'S ROADMAP FOR PEACE ENTERING THE TRANSFORMATION DECADE



EPD is also involved in the national dialogue *Roadmap to Peace*, alongside the other members of the Salah Consortium (PTRO, CPAU, TLO and HREVO).

Supported by Open Society Afghanistan, this coordinated project will integrate research and training targeting a variety of stakeholders, including reintegrees, regional peace builders and community actors, before culminating in a draft of an inclusive document entitled *Roadmap to Peace*.

This will eventually be discussed and presented at a national symposium, then finalized at an international dialogue. Both of these events will be hosted by EPD later in the year.

Additionally, EPD, with the support of Cordaid, will be conducting research into women in legislature and corruption. The approach will investigate whether there are predispositions, values and behavioural differences towards corruption that differ between male and female MPs. If there proves to be a relationship, this would provide a valuable tool for promoting increased female participation as a means of countering corruption. Alternatively, it will find possible explanations for why Afghanistan is the exception to the well-established relationship that exists in cross-national research, and can provide recommendations for reform regarding corruption that exists in other countries.

In this quarter, EPD also commenced the project *Countering Violent Extremism through Understanding and Raising Awareness on the Economic Cost of Extremism and Insecurity*, supported by USIP.

As a 2014 survey of Afghan people by The Asia Foundation found that 32% of respondents had 'a lot' or 'a little' sympathy for armed opposition groups, this project addresses the potential lack of will for countering insecurity and violent extremism as a driver of conflict. While rights-based and peace building approaches have inherent value, a more practical approach that puts violent extremism into financial and economic terms can demonstrate to local leaders the development, human capital, and economic prosperity their

community loses in the context of insecurity, and demonstrate to government actors at the local, subnational, and national level the costs of violent extremism in terms of GDP, revenue collection, investment ratio, and human capital. This approach serves to augment existing tools for promoting peace in terms of awareness raising and peace training, advocacy, conflict resolution, and research.

Aside from analysis in terms of expenditure and loss of human life, there has been no previous effort to promote countering violent extremism as a priority on the basis of financial and economic costs. This project aims to fill this gap, through the implementation of a mixture of both research and advocacy activities.

SUPPORTING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT & ELECTIONS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA



NEW STAFF AT EPD

Palwasha Hashimi Research and M&E Officer

Ms. Palwasha holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Kabul University. She previously managed and coordinated several national level projects and surveys in the Ministry of Communications and IT as an e-Government Coordination Manager, and also has extensive experience of implementing research as a Research Project Manager in ACSOR. Ms. Hashimi is responsible for various research, development, translation, advocacy and communication activities within EPD, and is fluent in Pashto, Dari, English and Urdu.

Why did you choose to join EPD, and what do you most enjoy about your work?

I have previously worked in both government and private organisations, so wanted to join an NGO to see if the perspectives and working styles were different.



It is interesting for me to work with EPD, because my job is varied and some of the circumstances can be challenging, but I believe that the work is very meaningful and worthwhile.

Shamsia Elham Program Officer

Ms. Shamsia was educated in Pakistan and India, and received her BBA degree from the University of Pune. Ms. Elham previously worked as a project officer with a grassroots empowerment NGO in Pakistan, providing vocational training and academic support to women and youth in their local communities.



Why did you choose to join EPD, and what do you most enjoy about your work?

I joined EPD because I had worked with women before in Pakistan, but working in Afghanistan is very different and interesting, particularly in relation to the peace process, gender and grassroots empowerment.

I enjoy working with EPD, because the work covers many issues and skills, so it provides lot of opportunities for me to learn. I love being a part of an organisation that has such a strong reputation for being committed to the rights and opportunities of both youth and women.

Farzana Doosti Senior Program and Research Assistant

Ms. Farzana graduated from the Kabul University Faculty of Science with a bachelor's degree in biology. She then received her master's degree in education from Karlstad University, before spending five years working as a teacher and teacher trainer. Ms. Doosti also conducted quantitative research of the teaching methods of high school biology teachers within Kabul City. She is fluent in Dari, Pashto, English and Persian.

Why did you choose to join EPD, and what do you most enjoy about your work?

I joined EPD because I worked before in scientific research and education, but really wanted to develop new skills in social research, especially related to women and gender issues in Afghanistan.

I am aware that there are many vulnerable women within the country, who face many challenges in their homes and communities, so enjoy being able to support them and make a contribution towards improving their lives.



DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Embassy of the Kingdom
of the Netherlands

United States
Institute of Peace

United Nations
Development Programme

Tawanmandi

The Berghof Foundation

Open Society Afghanistan

The Asia Foundation

where we work



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Currently, EPD offers two platforms, *Afghan's Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* and *Provincial Women's Network (PWN)*, under which college and university students or fresh graduates can volunteer in different positions.

This represents a fantastic opportunity to be a part of the dynamic EPD team, and gain on the ground experience of project management, event management, research and operations.

To learn more go to: <http://www.epd-afg.org/working-with-us.html>

To read more about the organization and all of our work, email us at admin@epd-afg.org or visit our website at www.epd-afg.org.

You can also follow us on Facebook, at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/EQUALITY-for-Peace-and-Democracy-EPD>

