

EQUALITY FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

QUARTERLY UPDATE

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

The second quarter of 2015 continued to see EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy develop and grow in new and exciting directions.

From April to June, EPD was involved in numerous projects covering training, outreach, youth empowerment, social media, research and - perhaps most significantly - organizing the national conference *Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace in the Transformation Decade*. This three-day event, attended by 150 participants from all 34 provinces, provided an opportunity for both men and women to share their views on the past and future role of Afghan women in the ongoing peace process.

Extensive training was implemented throughout Panjshir and Parwan provinces on elimination of

violence against women and addressing women's rights from Islamic perspective. Additionally, media facilities, youth networks, filmmaking collectives and social media platforms were established to support the involvement of youth in political engagement and the upcoming elections. Research was conducted in the areas of anti-corruption, the cost of conflict and violent extremism, gender-responsive budgeting, lessons learned through the peace process, and Afghan women developing their own roadmap for peace.

All in EPD, including the members of *Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* and *Provincial Women's Network (PWN)*, look forward to continuing to engage in new initiatives through this already very interesting year.

April - June 2015

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IN THIS UPDATE



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

Supported by The Berghof Foundation, from the 11th to 13th May 2015 EPD hosted a national conference, *Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace Entering the Transformation Decade*. Nearly 150 participants gathered to address lessons learned around women's training and engagement at all levels, and to assess if past initiatives were successful in increasing the capacity of women to participate in the peace process.

On the first day, the objectives of the conference were explained, and all participants were encouraged to express their views and expectations. Ms Fatima Gailani, President of ARCS, encouraged women to unify their voices and define their role within peace talks. Following presentations from Afghan Women's Network and The

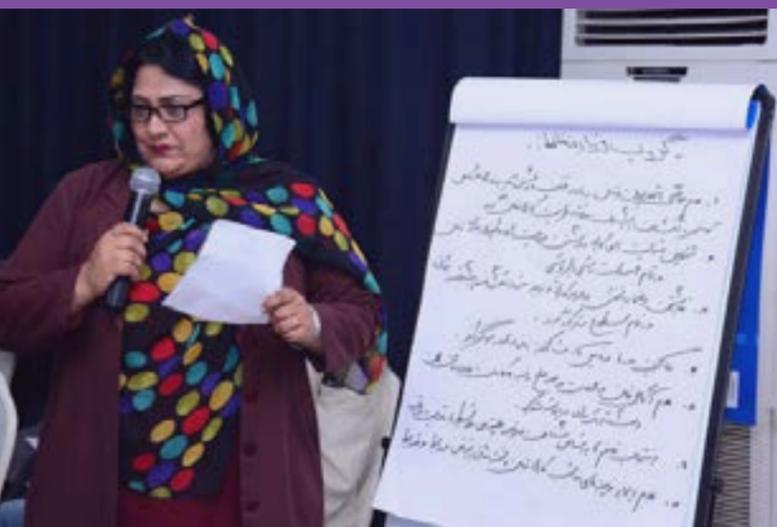
Liaison Office, the documentary, *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, about the women's peace movement in Liberia, was translated into Dari and screened. In the afternoon a group discussion session was conducted to address women's involvement in the peace process, including reflections on the past decade and the effectiveness of the High Peace Council.

The second day consisted solely of group discussions, with the first session on approaches, roles, and perspectives on the peace process in relation to challenges, achievements, opportunities, lessons learned, and future plans and expectations. The afternoon involved groups drafting their own roadmaps for peace, with special consideration paid to the perspectives and roles of women.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN THE PEACE PROCESS

AFGHAN WOMEN'S ROADMAP FOR PEACE ENTERING THE TRANSFORMATION DECADE



The third and final day of the conference began with a panel discussion and Q&A.

Ms Nazari, Minister of Women's Affairs stated that, "I will remain an avid supporter of women in the peace negotiation regardless of any challenges". Mr. Stanikzai, Head of the Secretariat of the High Peace Council, assured the participants that no decisions would be made in peace talks without the full consent of the people, "I promise that neither the government of Afghanistan nor the political leaders will deal in isolation from the people of Afghanistan". Ms Gagnon, from UNAMA, asserted that, "It is UN policy and practice that peace processes should be fully inclusive and rights based." Canadian Ambassador, Ms Lyons, stressed that "Afghan women have suffered greatly during the

conflicts and are now a huge part of rebuilding the society in all areas, therefore, they must be part of the peace process." Ms. Wardak, Chief of Staff of the First Lady's Office, mentioned that all Afghan women are not educated, so they have limited opportunities to financially support their families. Therefore, the requirements of women from all over the country should be considered in the peace process.

The conference concluded with the release of a statement, in [Dari](#), [Pashto](#) and [English](#), and the feedback forms showed that 94% of the participants rated the conference as 'good' or above, with 37% selecting 'excellent'. The final roadmap report, including a collated list of the ten key areas of concern identified by the participants, will be released in the next quarter. **2**



SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Throughout this quarter, with the support of The Asia Foundation, EPD has continued to conduct 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 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 April and June nearly 1,200 hours of training were conducted across Parwan and Panjshir. It was also possible to address and resolve 26 legal cases brought by vulnerable women who would otherwise have been unable to access the necessary support. **3**

In June, EPD continued a community-based monitoring and anti-corruption project in Herat, Nangarhar, Bamyan and Kabul, supported by Tawanmandi.

100 young male activists from Herat, Nangarhar and the Bagrami district of Kabul received training on community-based monitoring mechanisms, with a further training scheduled to take place in Bamyan in July. The participants developed their own action plans for the monitoring of social projects, and will apply these across the coming quarter. Monthly ACTA network meetings were also held in all four provinces.

Planning has already started for a range of screening events

that are due to be held in July. The Afghani anti-corruption documentary *Erada* will be shown to 8,000 male and female participants, including school and university students, as well as community groups. Each screening will be followed by an open discussion about the film, to discover what the participants have learned by watching, and how this new knowledge and insight could be applied to their daily lives. To ensure that the purpose of these screenings is not misunderstood, the provincial coordinators having been working hard to seek the necessary approval and support from various authorities, including ministries, government departments, and school and university administrations.

COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING AND ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTIVITIES



In July, with the support of IoM, EPD will be commencing an eight-week project to provide the necessary training and support for the establishment of two additional *Afghan's Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* networks in Faryab and Herat, expanding into the Maymana and Guzarah districts.

In July, trainings will be held for 30 male and female participants in each province, addressing the issues of community-based monitoring, peace-building and good governance, to increase their knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm related to engaging in social monitoring and advocacy. During these trainings, not only will teams be formed for the monitoring and addressing of community-

based conflicts, but action plans will be developed for the implementation of activities. A schedule will then be set for bi-weekly meetings, so that the participants can continue to share their experiences, lessons learned and best practices with each other.

Once all of this ground work has been completed, the networks will be formed and will continue to implement their action plans, continuing activities beyond the duration of this particular project. These new networks will then function as community-based mechanisms that monitor, represent and address localized experiences with governmental service delivery, acknowledging and advancing their importance within the wider peace development processes.



ENGAGING IN PEACE DIALOGUES AND RESEARCHING CORRUPTION



RESEARCHING AND UNDERSTANDING THE ECONOMIC COST OF EXTREMISM AND INSECURITY

Also in this quarter, EPD has been working with Internews towards the utilization of social media for political activism and awareness. The aim of the project is to enable Afghan youth to become more politically interested and engaged, following the establishment of media stations in Kabul, Nangarhar, Bamyan, Herat, Kunduz, Faryab and Kandahar throughout March.

200 young male and female members of EPD's *Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)* and *Provincial Women's Network (PWN)* have been trained in the use of social media, and are now actively involved in networking activities, as well as raising awareness about issues in their communities.

A Facebook page, [EPD-Youth Group](#), has been established and is regularly updated with news and comments from the groups in all of the provinces. Although it was only established in May, the page already has over 250 'likes'. In June, a Twitter account was also launched, [EPDYouthGroup](#). There have already been over 100 tweets, and the number of followers continues to grow.

Additionally, the youth members have also received training on video production and planning, and are currently working on making films that will address issues that the participants think are of particular relevance to youth. Please also see the Success Story on page 6 to learn more about this innovative project.

PREPARING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW ACTA NETWORKS IN FARYAB AND HERAT



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 has integrated research and training targeting a variety of stakeholders, including reintegrees, regional peace builders and community actors, all of which will culminate in the drafting of an inclusive document entitled *Roadmap to Peace*.

This will be discussed and presented at a national symposium, to be hosted by EPD later in the year, then finalized at a further regional event.

Additionally, EPD, with the support of Cordaid, has been conducting research into women in legislature and corruption.

The approach has investigated whether there are significant predispositions, values and behavioural differences towards corruption that differ between male and female MPs. It is hoped that this research can be utilized to promote increased female participation to counter corruption.

Between April and June, over one hundred MPs completed a survey to assess their awareness and perspectives in relation to these issues. This information will be analysed and reported in the following quarter.

In this quarter, EPD continued 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.

Ninety nine interview were conducted with ministry representatives (MoI, MoD, MoEc, MoPH, MoEd, MRRD, MoPW) and Provincial Peace Committee members across seven provinces, with four key informant interviews (UNAMA, MoI, MoEc and MoF) also conducted in Kabul.

The data has been analyzed, and the final report is due to be launched in late August.

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA AND FILMMAKING TO SUPPORT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS & ELECTIONS



SUCCESS STORY

Media Station, Jad-e-Mokhabrad, Herat
As part of the youth engagement project being implemented with Internews (mentioned above), media stations were established by EPD in seven provinces. Here the two coordinators from Herat share their perspectives about how successful the project has been so far.

'For me, and our youth members, this project has enabled us to learn lots of new skills and perspectives related to social media. It is very important to engage youth in social issues, particularly at a time when many youth are leaving Afghanistan due to unemployment and security concerns.

It is very effective to empower and invest in youth in their communities, so they will stay and help their country to grow, rather than walk away. It has been a new idea and it has worked very well.'

Fatima Farahi



DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Cordaid	Open Society Afghanistan
United States Institute of Peace	International Organization for Migration
United Nations Development Programme	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Tawanmandi	The Asia Foundation
The Berghof Foundation	Internews

where we work

1. Kabul
2. Faryab
3. Kunduz
4. Herat
5. Bamyan
6. Kandahar
7. Nangarhar
8. Panjsher
9. Parwan



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>



'For this project I initially came to Kabul to receive a training on using social media, then trained another 30 participants in how to use Facebook, Twitter and hashtags for advocacy and awareness.

After the media station was established, this project has bridged the gap between youth and the wider civil society action community.

The youth members have been actively engaged, advocating for change and the addressing of youth-related issues. It has been very effective, and so far we have recognised many challenges and shared that information to those in

other provinces through the social media platforms. For example, we advocated for final year university students to be treated more fairly by their universities, visiting the administration with other students, and advocating for their rights. The university chancellor listened to their concerns, and provided further opportunities for students to resit any exams that they might have missed or failed due to unreasonable treatment.

We also held a campaign to raise awareness among youth about the election, and offered them an opportunity to share their views. Over two days, we collected thousands of signatures from students pledging their commitment to voting and engaging in the upcoming election.

The overall impact of this project has been that youth have been able to share up-to-date information about their issues and challenges, and raise awareness in both local and national communities. This has encouraged youth to not be isolated from society, but to learn how to engage with local and national decision-makers and make their voices heard.

This project has been very useful, and we would like it to continue.'

Bashir Ahmad Qureshi