

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy

Annual Report 2015



EPD | EQUALITY
for Peace and
Democracy

Message from the Interim Executive Director

I am pleased to present the annual activity report of EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPDs) at a time when Afghanistan has entered the crucial Transformation Decade. In comparison to previous years, 2015 was the year of tremendous development and progress for EPD.

During the past 12 months, EPD expanded its area of coverage from 7 to 15 provinces, strengthened its relations with national and international stakeholders, launched a number of important research reports and assessments, held trainings on numerous issues and was placed at the top of the list of active Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Afghanistan.

Among the reports launched by EPD in 2015, "Cost of War and Violent Extremism" was an outstanding report that received widespread media coverage. The report unearths the costs borne by the people and government of Afghanistan as a result of war and conflict. Moreover, EPD facilitated the launch of "2015 Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card" which assesses progress and shortcomings of the Government of Afghanistan in relation to its explicit commitments on gender equality in a number of areas. Another significant report launched by EPD was on Building a Better Budget. It assesses linkages between the national budget process and service delivery and explains how deficiencies in the budget process affect the quality of services. Lastly, similar to previous years, EPD also released its review of 1395 National Budget Draft which aims to enable people to understand the budget and its impact on their daily lives.

In 2015, EPD hosted a number of conferences and held trainings on different topics. The most prominent among them was the "Conference on Afghan Women's Roadmap to Peace" which was attended by women from all over Afghanistan. Similarly, trainings on Increasing Community-Based Monitoring of Public Service Delivery, Gender-Responsive Budgeting, Women's Rights from Islamic Perspective, Costs of Violent Extremism Toolkit and Community, Provincial and National Dialogue On Costs of War and Extremism were also successfully conducted by EPD. These activities had incredible results, including mass mobilization of women, citizen activism to promote government transparency and accountability, and promoting active participation in peace and political processes.

The considerable achievements of EPD along with its rapid progress in 2015 makes me optimistic about its performance and success in the upcoming year. We have a number of exciting initiatives planned for 2016, including continued work through our PWN and ACTA platforms, activities promoting women's involvement in national peace dialogues, innovative new research, film screenings, and further collaboration with and training of community people and government actors at all levels.

I hereby encourage all Afghans to contribute to our mission by taking part in our initiatives. We continue to empower women and youth and other segments of the society at policy and grass-root level throughout Afghanistan to be at the forefront of change and ensure equality at all levels. We believe that equality guarantees prosperity and progress of future generations.

I also invite you to join our journey. Each person that volunteers for, works with, and learns about EPD and its activities is contributing to enhancing the voices of Afghan citizens and helps to improve the life of someone, somewhere in a remote valley in Afghanistan.



Edrees Omarzad

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EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy

About EPD

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. EPD was established in early 2010 by Ms. Nargis Nehan, the Executive Director of EPD. EPD works to build the capacity of women and youth in order for them to be the front face in presenting their needs in development, peace building and democratic processes of the country. EPD further aims at mass mobilization of women and youth to contribute to overcoming the challenges of instability that Afghanistan is facing. EPD establishes platforms for women and youth to come together, establish networks, build trust and confidence, and strive jointly for transforming Afghanistan into a democratic country free of all forms of violence and discrimination.

Vision

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

EPD's mission is to empower and strengthen women and youth at the community and policy levels for building coalitions and networks and promoting human rights, peace and good governance. EPD focuses on the following three strategic areas:

Peace and Security: EPD works to empower and encourage the people of Afghanistan, particularly women and youth, to participate and engage in peace building, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and mediation at both the national and grassroots levels.

Good Governance: In contributing towards improved governance, EPD aims to increase the transparency and accountability of public institutions for public resources and policies. EPD empowers communities by training and engaging them in the process of budget planning and execution and monitoring public service delivery and implementation of development projects to keep government institutions accountable for quality of their services.

Human Rights: Peace and good governance are critical to ensuring respect for human rights. EPD takes a rights-based approach to developing and implementing programs that empower all people of Afghanistan to know and exercise their rights as Afghan citizens regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or other factors. EPD believes that women's rights are human rights, and empowering Afghan women is a key component of EPD's mission.

Approach

EPD employs an inclusive approach in its peace building, good governance, and human rights efforts. EPD mobilizes communities at the grassroots level, initiates advocacy initiatives, and build platforms where the public can come together and demand transparency and accountability, and better service delivery from the government. EPD proudly maintains itself not only as women and youth focused but also a women and youth led organization, requiring at least 50% of its staff to be women and 60% youth. EPD also maintains an all-women leadership structure. However, rather than focusing exclusively on women's issues, EPD is working in areas such as the peace process, elections, or anti-corruption issues with special attention to the needs and perspectives of women and youth.

PROGRESS UPDATE 2015

In 2015, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy undertook activities such as trainings, provincial and community dialogues, researches, service delivery monitoring and awareness raising programs to promote good governance, peacebuilding and reduce violence against women.

EPD has brought a lot of improvements in the structure and capacity of Provincial Women Networks (PWNs) and Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA). As the number of PWN platforms were expanded from 7 to 15 provinces, it also conducted numerous trainings for the purpose of building the capacity of provincial coordinators and network members. As a result, provincial coordinators and network members cooperated with EPD in conducting field

researches and holding provincial and community dialogues. Moreover, EPD established two new ACTA networks in the provincial capital of Faryab and Guzara district of Herat province, which voluntarily work to address problems at the community-level and monitor delivery of public services.

Furthermore, in 2015, EPD research department conducted several researches to examine and study various issues in Afghanistan. Research on “Cost of War and Violent Extremism” was an outstanding report and received widespread media coverage. Likewise, EPD conducted a research on “Gendered Aspects of Political corruption” which concentrated on the involvement of women in politics and was completed with participation of MPs in the survey. The review



of 1395 draft national budget was another major achievement of the research department and it highlighted progress made as well as offered a number of recommendations for better preparation and execution of budget. Last but not least, an assessment of the Afghan market (Rapid Market Assessment) was done with aim of identifying barriers that hinder women entrepreneurs' access to market.

EPD has screened documentaries and films in different provinces to increase public awareness and encourage people to take steps towards elimination of corruption and resolving problems at the community-level. The viewers of these documentaries were from different genders, social backgrounds, ages and

classes of the society. Meanwhile, PWN and ACTA platforms advocated for reduction of violence against women and solved a number of cases in their communities. In addition to contributing to reduction of domestic violence, they also actively monitored public service delivery in order to limit the level of corruption in a non-violent and cooperative manner.

EPD also held trainings in Kabul and provinces on different topics such as research methods, collection of data, women rights from Islamic perspective and implementation of UN resolution 1324. Successful initiation and conduct of dialogues at community, provincial and national levels as well as a number of launch events were also part of EPD's activities during this year.



EPD works in three major areas of Good Governance, Human Rights and Peace Security. Accordingly, in this reports EPD activities in 2015 are divided into 3 sections:



**Good
Governance**

**Human
Rights**

**Peace and
Security**

Preparing a Better Budget

While the government of Afghanistan was in transition, EPD launched a critical report on the 28th of January, 2014 at the Park Star Hotel in Kabul on the budget-service delivery nexus, interrogating the linkages between the national budget process and service delivery. The event's aim was to share EPD's findings with Afghan citizens and national media in order to engender a public debate on budgeting and service delivery. An audience of around 50 people from civil society, NGOs and

government and several national media attended the event. The event's panel consisted of Mr. Edrees Omarzad representing EPD, Mr. Hayatullah Bayan representing EPD's Afghans' Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) network, and Mr. Farhad Faqiri representing the project's donor Open Society Afghanistan (OSA).

With the ongoing political and security transition entering the Transformation Decade, effective budgeting will become even more crucial with impending budget constraints as foreign aid is likely to decline. 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 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 an effective mechanism 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 recommen-

dations for the government, civil society and international donors outline what each specific sector could undertake to improve the budgeting-service delivery nexus. The report argues that an increase of discretionary authority in the national budget, effective accountability mechanisms such as a government-wide M&E system, and a more participatory budget process could improve budget efficiency, ensure better quality service delivery and potentially restore the public's faith in the government.



Community-Based Monitoring

In 2015, with the support of IoM, EPD conducted project to provide necessary trainings and support for the establishment of two new ACTA networks in the Maymana district of Faryab Province and Guzarah district of Herat Province. In July, trainings were held for 30 male and female participants in each province addressing the issues of community-based monitoring, peacebuilding and good governance in order to increase their knowledge, capacity and enthusiasm related to engaging in social monitoring and advocacy. It was necessary to ensure that the networks can function independently beyond the timescale of the project, with only minimal support from EPD. During these trainings, teams were formed to monitor and address community-based conflicts. Moreover, action plans were developed for the effective implementation of activities and bi-weekly meetings were held to provide opportunity for the participants to continue to share their experiences, lessons learned and best practices with each other. These new networks then functioned as community-based mechanisms that monitored, represented and addressed localized experiences with public service



delivery, acknowledging and advancing their importance within the wider peace development processes. Furthermore, EPD screened a movie called “It’s My Money and Where Has It Gone” with cooperation of ACTA networks to facilitate community interactions through film screening. The film displays the powerful story of a Civil Society Organization (CSO) in Kenya that helps an impoverished local community to hold Members of parliament accountable for their spending on development projects, in the absence of an

effective oversight mechanism. The idea behind screening this film was to raise awareness among community members on how they can use expertise of other countries to monitor public service delivery in a nonviolent and constructive manner. Overall, the film was screened to 400 people during several sessions in Herat and Faryab provinces.



by ACTA Training
e/A/7/2015
ue/Herat Estiglal Hotel

Mobilizing Community CSOs and Youth Groups



EPD conducted trainings for youth on community-based monitoring mechanisms in Herat, Nangarhar, Bamyan and Kabul in coordination with Tawanmandi. The participants developed their action plans for monitoring public service delivery in their communities. At the same time, ACTA members held monthly meetings to discuss the action they took to address problems they confronted as well as

plan for their upcoming civil service monitoring. ACTA members have monitored different sectors and services in their communities such as schools, access to electricity and water, construction of schools and delivery of other public services.

In addition to launching initiatives to encourage anti-corruption activities, EPD has screened an Afghan film titled “Erada” to its male and female participants, including school and university students, and community groups throughout mentioned provinces. The documentary contained an important message for the people: transparency is ensured when they monitor public services and corruption can be

eliminated when authorities are held responsible. Each screening was followed by an open discussion about the film to discover what the participants have learned by watching it and how this new knowledge and insight could be applied to their daily lives.



Gendered Aspects of Political Corruption

EPD conducted a comprehensive research on gendered aspects of political corruption, with support of Cordaid. In the first phase, a desk review was done which focused on women’s political participation, especially their involvement in parliament, typologies of MPs, socio-cultural context, inscribed gender roles, and the institutional effects of liberal democracy and social institutions in Afghanistan. Corruption is a serious barrier to effective governance and its prevalence among politi-

cians and government leaders in Afghanistan has created a trust deficit between people and their representatives. The main objective of this research was to understand gendered aspects of corrupt behaviors between male and female members of parliament and the institutional and socio-cultural factors impeding women’s effective participation in political decision-making. This understanding can help inform advocacy and training activities to improve the effectiveness of female politicians. The ultimate

goal is to foster the support and involvement of women in policy-making in Afghanistan.

The data for this research was collected with cooperation of EPD research department and 105 members of lower chamber of parliament (Wolesi Jirga) participated in the survey process. Following the collection of data, the research department analyzed the data and finalized a research report based on which a curriculum will be developed for upcoming trainings and public outreaches.

Utilizing Social Media and Filmmaking



In 2015, EPD established media stations in seven provinces of Afghanistan (Kabul, Nangarhar, Bamyan, Herat, Kunduz, Faryab, and Kandahar) with support of Internews to encourage youth to be active in areas of politics and governance

by using social media and promoting a culture of “netizenship” among them. Under supervision of a professional social media consultant, curriculum and social media guides and rules were developed to train 200 youth members of PWN and ACTA networks. EPD delivered a three-day Social Media and Civic Engagement ToT for its eight provincial coordinators/trainers in Kabul. The training covered issues such as basic Internet proficiency, facilitating youth participation in the electoral process, role of social media in precipitating social change, and a technical overview of Twitter, Facebook and



Google as tools for advocacy. Moreover, EPD successfully conducted trainings on social media and civic engagement. Upon completion of each training session, Provincial Coordinators worked with participants to form Youth Social Media teams that would spearhead the advocacy campaign, using the social media skills they have learned during the trainings. EPD also finalized its Toolkit that provides a set of #hashtags which training participants, and subsequently, the provincial youth social media teams used to promote their social media campaigns and sustain youth engagement in the electoral process.

Finally, EPD continued working with its youth social media teams to develop short videos as visual aides to accompany advocacy campaigns. These videos are focused on youth challenges and includes issues such as unemployment, education and drug addiction. The Internews ACME team worked with EPD to edit its video clips into a short video and the video was uploaded to the online campaign.





EPD has been reviewing Afghanistan's national budget since 1391 (2012) and pioneered the utilization of national budget as a monitoring tool for promoting transparency and holding government accountable for its commitments as outlined in policy documents, treaties and laws. The budget review aims to enable people to understand the budget and what it means for their daily lives and reviews the quality of service delivery. Similarly, it assists civil society and MPs to better comprehend the draft budget's priorities, shortcomings and improvements.

EPD launched the Independent Review of Afghanistan 1395 National Budget Draft on 16th December, 2015 in a ceremony which was attended by representatives of civil society, media and government officials. It was the fifth annual report published in English, Dari and Pashto that provided a snapshot of resources, allocations, and Public Finance Management Performance (PFMP).

In the first week of January 2015, a 4-day training workshop under the title "GRB for Pilot Ministries" was conducted by EPD at Park Star hotel in Kabul. The workshop was attended by a total of 25 representatives from 6 ministries such as Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA).

The training sessions covered basic concepts of gender, gender-based violence, gender mainstreaming, government budget processes and reforms, gender and the national budget process, Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) tools, applying GRB in the budget process, design of gender sensitive indicators, as well as international case studies. The aim was to develop the understanding of GRB among the participants, 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 stated that proper coordination should be maintained between departments for mainstreaming of gender concerns into budgets, policies, programs, projects, and day to day operations of ministries.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Monitoring Women's Peace and Security



EPD successfully expanded its PWN networks from 7 to 15 provinces in 2015 and currently PWNs are active in Herat, Faryab, Kandahar, Bamyan, Kabul, Nangarhar, Parwan, Daikundi, Helmand, Uruzgan, Paktya, Laghman, Badakhshan, Balkh and Kunduz provinces. In order to establish new networks, EPD program officers travelled to provinces and recruited new provincial coordinators. The provincial coordinators are responsible to create networks and facilitate recruitment of new members. EPD program officers also arranged meetings with Governors' Office and Women Affairs Directorates in relevant provinces to ensure they support PWNs. Furthermore, EPD pro-

vided equipment and other necessary items to newly established office. The aim of the project is to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for women in support of Afghanistan's commitments to the UNSCR 1325 agenda as a means to reduce violence against women, foster women's political participation in peace processes, and improve gender-sensitivity in the security sector through mobilization, monitoring, research, and advocacy. PWN networks held meetings on monthly basis and during these meetings they discussed PWN activities and addressed problems they confronted in their communities.

Advocacy Activity

Regular monthly meetings of seven PWNs (in provinces of Kabul, Bamyan, Herat, Kunduz, Kandahar, Faryab and Nangarhar) and ACTA (in provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat and Bamyan) were held to monitor activities in their communities and advocate for resolution of problems. These meetings yielded positive results and members were actively involved in family dispute resolutions, holding meetings with officials to address social issues, encouraging girls' education and monitoring of schools in different provinces. Moreover, they managed to convince some private universities in Nangarhar to offer youth scholarships, participated in the process of collecting

expired medicines from pharmacies in Faryab, conducted vocational and literacy trainings in Kandahar, and advocated for the reconstruction of Bagرامي road in Kabul.



Documentary Screening

A documentary film titled "Six days", which depicts struggles of women in Liberia, Abkhazia and Kurdistan region of Iraq, was dubbed and translated. It shows how women rights activists work for the improvement of those women's lives who are dealing with violence, poverty and economic disempowerment as well as and forced marriage in the context of post-conflict societies. The film raises awareness about daily struggles of women around the world and how women rights activists advocate on their behalf. The documentary was screened along with a 1-day workshop on UNSCR 1325 in Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, Bamyan, Kandahar, Faryab and Kunduz provinces with support of Cordaid. The target group of this program was Departments of Women Affairs, Family Response Units, male and female police

officers, formal justice actors and Provincial Council members.



Strengthening Women's Access to Justice

In 2015, EPD worked towards reducing violence against women by launching trainings and awareness raising campaigns on the rights of women from an Islamic perspective and supporting women through strengthening formal and informal justice sectors in Parwan and Panjshir.

With support of The Asia Foundation (TAF), EPD conducted trainings for a wide range of participants. These included employees of Directorate of Women Affairs, police officers, judges, prosecutors, university professors, school and madrassa teachers, Community Development Groups (CDG) facilitators and religious scholars.

The curriculum used for these trainings covered topics such as EVAW Law and 18 differently-themed training booklets that concentrated on issues of child protection, inheritance rights, hijab, women's role in family and society, relationship between husband and wife, file management, mandates, criminal code, mediation in Islam, divorce, alimony, corruption from Islamic perspective, women's role in family and society and women's social and economic rights.

EPD also has established Family Resolution Centers (FRC) and male and female Community Development Groups (CDG) in Panjshir and Parwan provinces. Each FRC is composed of six members which include traditional and religious leaders, representatives of DoWAs, family court judges and influential male and female Shura/Jirga members. After receiving trainings, they were able to register cases and contribute to solving issues of violence in Parwan and Panjshir. Furthermore, CDG members are influential religious figures and community leaders who can influence decision-making at the provincial-level. The religious scholars who received the trainings raised aforementioned issues in their Friday Sermons.



Economic Independence of Women in Protection Centers

EPD has launched an initiative to support and increase economic independence of those women who live in shelters. As women who live in shelters usually cut their relationship with former social environment, they need support to be reintegrated into society. Therefore, the aim of this project is to provide an enabling environment for these women to return back to the society and continue their normal social life. It will provide financial resources to support economic independence of women in Kabul shelters and will also contribute to sustainability of these shelters.

To achieve these objectives, EPD conducted a Rapid Market Assessment to identify barriers that hinder women entrepreneurs' access to market and provide information about the size

and growth potential of specific trades in the local and regional markets. The data for the assessment was collected by EPD research department and for this purpose 30 Afghan female entrepreneurs who are active in different business sectors were interviewed in Kabul. In addition, the consultant conducted key information interviews with high-ranking employees of government and non-government institutions that are working to promote and support women owned- businesses. The first draft of the research report is ready for internal review. Once approved, the findings will be used to develop an advocacy toolkit that will be used later for community, provincial and national dialogues.

Increasing Women's Participation in Peace Process

In March 2015, EPD facilitated the launch event of 2014 Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card. According to this research, which was supported by the Embassies of the Kingdom and the Netherlands, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has made over 2,300 explicit commitments to the women of Afghanistan on gender equality in laws, treaties and agreements, policies, and strategic documents. This figure does not include innumerable verbal commitments made over the past fourteen years. The research reviews these commitments in a number of key areas such as peace process, security, health, education, access to justice, violence against women, access to resources and services, political participation, economic opportunity and employment, protection of vulnerable groups, and awareness-raising among people. It assesses both progress and shortcomings in each of these areas from

Afghan women perspective. The survey was completed with participation of 154 members of EPD's Provincial Women's Network (PWN) in five provinces of Afghanistan, combined with desk research and stakeholder interviews. The 2014 Gender Equality Report Card has created a foundation for monitoring government's progress annually. EPD expects that the tool will be used by civil society, international community and media in their advocacies for change and holding the GIROA accountable for its commitments on gender equality in Afghanistan. The report is available in English, Dari and Pashto languages and can be downloaded from EPD website.

Trainings on Women Rights and VAW

Following lengthy consultation with PWN network in Kabul, it was realized that most women perceived lack of awareness as a major obstacle ahead of eliminating violence against women in their communities. Therefore, PWN members suggested organizing capacity building trainings for religious scholars as a priority solution to solving the issues of violence against women. As a result, EPD conducted successful pilot trainings including 18 booklets that address women rights and VAW issues from Islamic perspective. These trainings have proven to be useful in increasing awareness of norm-setters at local-level and in a culturally-sensitive manner.

EPD's in-house trainer adjusted the curriculum in accordance with requirements of the project and taking into consideration the lessons learned from previous project. Additionally, a 10-day training for provincial coordinators of Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar and Balkh was held in the central office in order to familiarize them with curriculum and pedagogical tips for conducting upcoming trainings. Later on, the provincial coordinators conducted an 11-day training for 20 male religious leaders (kha-



teeb), prosecutors and civil society leaders in their respective provinces. The main aim is to change the perceptions of local male norm-setters who can assist eliminate harmful practices and social norms that contribute to violence against women. Afterwards, the religious scholars will be asked to incorporate cultural-sensitive texts in their Friday prayers that help promote women rights and gender equality, whereas, prosecutors and civil society members can use their understanding and awareness to further enforcement of women rights. The participants also received a set of 18 booklets at the end of the training. Beside conducting mentioned trainings throughout the project, EPD screened a documentary film titled "Six Day" in Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar and Balkh. This film presents that how women from Liberia, Abkhazia, and the Kurdistan region of Iraq fought for solving problems such as violence against women, poverty and forced marriage in their community. After the film screening, a discussion was facilitated through which the participants share their ideas about the issues addressed by film.



PEACE and SECURITY



Economic Costs of Violence & Extremism

In 2015, EPD conducted a comprehensive research on the economic and financial costs of violent extremism and insecurity in Afghanistan. According to the findings of the report, USD 9.09 billion (approximately 24.90 million USD per day) was incurred by the government of Afghanistan alone in 2014 on costs such as security, reintegration, compensation, refugees and infrastructure as well as human capital loss.

The research unearths the costs borne by the people and government of Afghanistan, assessing additional costs that will be incurred as long as conflict and instability continues. In Afghanistan, apart from calculating macro-economic implications, the cost of one year of conflict and violent extremism is equivalent to 44% of Afghanistan's GDP or 113% of the total of Afghanistan's 1394 national budget, and amounts to roughly four times the Afghan government's revenue collection target for 1394. What Afghanistan loses to conflict and violent extremism in just one year could feed the entire population for about 1.37 years. Based on the average price of road construction projects in Afghanistan, the cost of violent extremism in

one year could be used to build around 25,973 kilometers of new roads, or finance the construction of over 18 million wells for drinking water. An advocacy toolkit, including a manual, copies of research report and a poster illustrating key findings of the report, was developed and translated into Dari and Pashto, and have been distributed during trainings and other national events.

In August 2015, a 4-day training was organized for provincial coordinators of seven provinces (Kabul, Herat, Faryab, Nangarhar, Bamyán, Kandahar and Kunduz) on advocacy toolkit and how to train PWN members. Followed by TOT (6-16 September), 3-day trainings were conducted on introducing advocacy toolkit to PWN and ACTA members in all provinces (except Kunduz where security was very volatile).

Throughout the training, fourteen facilitators were appointed to conduct community dialogues in all mentioned provinces which started on 27th September. Overall, 32 community dialogues were conducted with participation of employees from directorates of women affairs, Hajj, education, health and economy. In addition, representatives of governor's office, provincial peace council and civil society were also invited to these dialogues.



Panel Discussion and Launch of Report

On 19th October, EPD organized a national launch event in Park Star hotel in which 84 participants from ministries, high peace council, international organizations, civil society, independent human rights commission, media and community members took part. Key findings of the research were shared through a presentation by deputy director of EPD. Later on, a panel that was composed of Country director of USIP, Executive Director of Public Media Group, Deputy Director of EPD and Advocacy and Program manager of EPD began an open discussion. Throughout panel discussion media representatives and participants asked a number of questions that were answered by the panelists. Copies of research report and advocacy toolkit were also distributed among participants. Following national launch event, national stakeholder dialogue along with provincial dialogue was held in Park Star Hotel. After receiving advocacy toolkits, the



participants were divided into three groups to discuss factors, challenges and offer solutions for costs of conflict in Afghanistan. The participants identified lack of Public awareness, absence of good governance, poor economic condition in society, corruption and lack of law enforcement as main reasons behind conflict and violent extremism in Afghanistan and recommended the government to ensure rule of law as a measure to reduce costs of extremism in the country. Empowerment of private sector, reform of educational system and penal policy and putting criminals on trial were other suggestions offered by the participants. Similarly, all participants emphasized on launching public awareness campaigns and encouraging people to support the government, engaging religious leaders in the peace process and holding all ministries and their respective departments accountable for delivery of proper public services as solutions for decreasing costs of extremism.



Afghan Women's Roadmap to Peace



This project represented a significant opportunity to bring together female and male stakeholders from government, civil society, international community and NGOs that are active in Kabul and provinces and engage them in a discussion to determine the position and status of women in Afghanistan.

In May 2015, EPD successfully conducted a three-day conference that was attended by 150 participants including national and international panelists, representatives of government, local and national peace councils, youth groups and civil society from 34 provinces.

The objectives of the conference were explained to partici-

pants on the first day and they were encouraged to express their views and expectations. Ms. Fatima Gailani, President of ARCS, encouraged women to unify their voices and specify their role in the peace process. Following presentations by Afghan Women's Network and The Liaison Office, a documentary about women's peace movement in Liberia titled "Pray the Devil Back to Hell", that was dubbed into Dari was screened. Later in the afternoon a group discussion was conducted to consider women's involvement in the peace process and examine effectiveness of the High Peace Council.

The second day was allocated to group dis-

cussions. The morning session debated approaches, roles and perspectives on the peace process and highlighted challenges, achievements, opportunities, lessons learned, and future plans and expectations in relation to peace. The afternoon discussion assigned groups to draft their own roadmaps for peace and special attention was paid to perspectives and roles of women. On the third day, a panel that was comprised of the Minister of Women Affairs, Canadian Ambassador, representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), representative of the office of

the First Lady and the Head of the Secretariat of the High Peace Council conducted an interesting discussion. The conference concluded with the release of a statement in Dari, Pashto and English. Utilizing the opinions and information shared during the conference, a report that outlined ten key areas of concern for Afghan women was subsequently developed and circulated to wider stakeholders for feedback. The final report, titled "Afghan Women's Roadmap for Peace Entering the Transformation Decade" was then designed and presented in both English and Dari.



New Staff at EPD

We would like to express our gratitude for the valuable efforts and contribution of EPD staff who left the organizations in 2015. EPD's progress is the result of expertise and dedication of many people and we are grateful to all of them. EPD would like to express its profound gratitude and deep regards to Ms. Nargis Nehan, the founder of EPD who served as the Executive Director for several years and the organizations may not have maintained its level of excellence without her efforts. Similarly, we would like to appreciate Mr. Maurits Rade and Ms. Pam Green for their patience, support, guidance and contribution to the research department. We also would like to acknowledge the support of Mr. Hayatullah Bayan who worked with EPD as Program Manager and provided essential guidance and supervision. We are highly grateful to Mr. Abdul Wali, who supported us as Finance Officer, for his sincere work and tireless efforts in the finance department. Remembering the impact these colleagues have made to EPD, we wish them all success in their life.

On the other hand, we welcome our talented new colleague; Abdul Halim Achakzai, who has joined EPD as Senior Associate and supports the research department. He holds a master degree in International Human Rights Law from university of Essex and has around a decade of work experience in the fields of governance, research and informal justice in Afghanistan. Mr. Achakzai has remained a member of the Afghan

Bar Association, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Young leaders Forum), Afghan Youth Assembly and Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies. He has authored many research reports, opinion pieces and reports on current affairs, and has represented Afghanistan in several national, regional and international conferences.

Also, it's our pleasure to introduce Dr. Ibrahim Halim who will be responsible for coordination of PWN and ACTA platforms and EPD believes his support will bring fundamental changes and improvements in our provincial networks. He has graduated from Kabul Medical University and has years of work experience in the fields of management, administration, finance, capacity development, project/program implementation and monitoring with different organizations. Mr. Ibrahim is proficient in English, Dari and Pashtu.



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Affiliations and Memberships

Salah Consortium

SALAH is a consortium of eight well established Afghan civil society organizations with a combined presence in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan active in policy and advocacy for promoting peace and security in Afghanistan based on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, and equal participation of all Afghans regardless of their background: Afghan Community Rehabilitation Unit (ACRU), Afghan Public Welfare Organization (APWO), Afghan Women Education Center (AWEC), Coordination for Peace and Unity (CPAU), EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD), Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO), Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), The Liaison Office (TLO) are members of Salah consortium.

Civil Society Joint Working Group

The Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG) is composed of some 30 coordinating bodies representing more or less 1,400 organisations of all sizes. The CSJWG can be credited with being an Afghan-led network that embraces the diversity of Afghan civil society. Its members include Non-government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), social organisations, unions, associations and other registered entities working on broad (civic education to natural resources management) and specialised areas (budget analysis and transparency) throughout the 34 provinces.