

# EQUALITY For Peace and Democracy

*Promoting a Culture of Coexistence, Accountability, and peace for All*

During second quarter of 2017, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) was engaged in conducting activities such as holding provincial dialogues, awareness raising trainings (also on UNSCR 1325) and conducting documentary screening in order to enhance women's participation in peace process. From April to June 2017, PWNs in all 15 provinces conducted workshops titled "engaging with men on women's rights" on a monthly basis with participation of prominent male community members intended to engage men in discussion on gender equality and connect them with experiences of violence that women suffer. EPD continued conducting trainings on EWAV Law and reducing violence against women, increasing awareness and supporting DoWA in Parwan and Panjshir, Kapisa and Kabul. Furthermore, it has held school competition on

EVAW Law and women's right to raise awareness among students. EPD also facilitated a peace exchange between Pakistan and Afghanistan peace activists to eliminate violent extremism (VE) and radicalization. EPD also shared main findings of the research report on "Impact of Radicalization on Women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan" carried out by EPD and Aware Girls reflecting women's response to radicalization. EPD also attempted to conduct a rapid assessment on challenges female entrepreneurs face in Afghan markets. For this aim, EPD held two conferences in Kabul and Herat and invited businesswomen and CSO representative to discuss main challenges and recommendations to address them.



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Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan are faced with endemic radicalization and violent extremism that affects individuals, institutions, communities and infrastructure. There is a need to bring together responses of women, to radicalization and violent extremism to have a better understanding of the problem in local and regional context, and to have better synergy. From 21st to 24th May, 2017, EPD with financial support of Open Society Afghanistan held an event on "Peace Exchange: Pak-Afghan Women's Bridge for Peace" to facilitate interaction among Pakistan and Afghanistan peace activist and take steps to eliminate violent extremism (VE) and radicalization. The event was attended by around 70 participants, including peace activists from Afghanistan and Pakistan, civil society organizations, High Peace Council and Provincial Council members and representatives from national and international institutions. Over the course of three days, the participants actively took part in panel sessions, group discussions and round tables to bring up views and ideas and give opportunity to the women from both of the countries to interact and share experience. The main findings of the research on "Impact of Radicalization on Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan" carried out jointly by EPD and Aware Girls, was also presented during the event. A similar event will be arranged in Pakistan and collected inputs of these two events will be incorporated into a strategy paper to advocate for countering violent extremism and inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes.



## Screening



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## Training on EVAW LAW and School competition

While economic prospects for women and Afghan society as a whole have improved considerably since 2002, significant challenges remain. Although, there has been progress with the support of the international community but women status in Afghanistan still remains worrisome. Afghan government has stepped up to improve the overall living conditions of women in Afghanistan, among other policies and laws enacted, the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (2008 – 2018) focuses on women economic empowerment. On 13th April 2017, a conference on "Women Economic Empowerment" was held in EPD's main office with participation of women entrepreneurs from Kabul. The sole aim of this meeting was to discuss the problems and challenges the women entrepreneurs are facing in Afghanistan and also to come up with solid recommendations to overcome them. Later on 22nd May 2017, similar conference was held in Herat bring together around 35 women entrepreneurs to discuss about challenges that women are facing in markets. Incorporating inputs of these two events EPD came up with a rapid assessment of women entrepreneurs' conditions in Kabul and Herat. The findings revealed that gender discrimination, corruption and lack of support from government, lack of access to market, financial problems and lack of capacity are among the most crucial challenges restricting women entrepreneurship in the mentioned provinces.

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## Peace Exchange

Women's exclusion and their weak representation in peace process has been one of the main challenges in achieving gender equality and ensuring women's peace and security. EPD attempted to raise awareness and encourage women's inclusion through film screening. EPD has screened documentaries for different levels of the society; male and female, governmental and non-governmental institutions and for different age groups in different provinces to increase public awareness and motivate people to take steps for addressing problems in community. During past quarter, a documentary (Pray the Devil Back to Hell) about women's peace movement in Liberia was screened for the participants. It shows how the Liberian women collectively stand and start advocating and finally force the government to negotiate and bring peace to the country. The documentary focuses on the achievements and successful involvement of women in the peace process in another context and inspired the participants (both men and women) into practical and meaningful discussions on direct action and women's potential to contribute to peace building. Over the past quarter alone, the events have been held for over 1000 participants in 15 provinces of Afghanistan. The film was welcomed by a lot of participants and could change people's perceptions on women's role in peace building.

As a part of its contribution to eliminate and prevent gender based violence in Afghanistan, EPD with the support of The Asia Foundation (TAF), has conducted wide range of trainings related to EVAW Law and FAQ, Marriage and Engagement and Marriage and Birth Registration for Khateeb, Justice sector, university students and CDG facilitator and CDG members. EPD believes that awareness raising on women rights more effectively is possible through the groups who have high influence over the community and on the other hand the risk of sensitivity of cultural norms are taken in to account. EPD conducted the same activities in Kabul, Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa aimed to contribute to a sustained reduction in violence against women (VAW) 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. During this quarter, apart from the trainings, EPDs legal management experts have also contributed to solving a number of VAW cases in their communities. Furthermore, EPD has distributed related booklets on women's right and EVAWL among some school students in Parwan and Panjshir. A competition among the interested students was held and the top students were rewarded. The initiative encouraged knowledge spread and would change conservative views toward women.

## Women Economic Empowerment at a Local Level



EPDs provincial advisory committees have been established to provide guidance and support in conducting PWN activities. The committee is consisted of six to seven members including Ulema council, provincial council, human right commission, academia, CSOs, youth affairs directorate, DoWA and influential. During June 2017, advisory committee meetings in 15 provinces have been facilitated to consult about enhancing impact of the PWNs activities and conducting advocacies with more effective outcomes. The members of the advisory committees are influential and have authority in governmental offices. The members are selected on merit base and are supposed to

facilitated advocacy meetings in districts and provincial levels. They also support the network in meetings with local and national authorities and participate in service delivery monitoring for countering corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability. During the meeting the members of the committees in all of the provinces expressed their support and appreciated the networks' activities. Many of them have participated in advocacies initiated by the PWNs and provided support where it was needed.

## Provincial Dialogue and Advocacy for women inclusion



## In Hers Shoes

The monitoring of service delivery is the job of every citizen. Each of us has the responsibility to make sure that public funds are spent correctly and transparently, intervening where necessary without the use of violence. On 16th April 2017, EPD invited its provincial coordinators from 15 provinces of the country for Training of Trainers (ToT) on "Community-based Monitoring Mechanism" in Kabul. The program lasted for four days during which information about monitoring service delivery with specific focus on gender responsive monitoring was presented. The participants learnt how to design a gender sensitive monitoring system to ascertain the social dimensions of a project. It is an organized way of collecting information at the local level for use of local government units, national government agencies, non-government organizations, and civil society for planning, program implementation and monitoring. The provincial coordinators subsequently shared the received information with the members in their respective provinces aimed to increase PWNs capacity in monitoring services provided by the governmental sectors in their respective provinces. The initiative hopes to improve governance and greater transparency and accountability in resource allocation.

## PWN Advisory Board Meetings



EPDs Provincial Women's Networks in 15 provinces gathered different stakeholders such as employees of DoWA, DoJ, DoPH, HPC, DoHRA, DoRRD, AWN, DoE, Community Elders, CSOs, local development councils to interact with the members. During the event, the stakeholders shared the main challenges women faced. The coordinators also presented main activities and achievements of the network concerning women's challenges in their provinces and to ensure their peace and security. The event provided opportunity of direct interaction among the network at grassroots level with policy-making authorities. PWNs in all provinces under the EPD's coverage, advocated for increased women's representation in governmental offices. They held separate

advocacy meetings with the head and other authorities in DoWA, Education department, human right commission and independent administrative reform and civil service commission and asked for transparency and increasing women representation in governmental offices. The PWNs in all targeted provinces advocated for women's access to health services. It was observed that mother and child mortality in hospital in spite of public health sector's effort is still quite high. Health services were not provided properly in many hospital and the patients suffered from lack of doctors and medicine. The issue was shared with the related authorities and health service delivery was promoted to some extend in some of the provinces.

With the continuing abuse and violation of women's rights in the hands of their male counterparts, it is evidently clear that any attempt to deal with violence against women would fail without adequate support by men. Prevention of further violence against women entails educating and working with men and engaging them in efforts to prevent and end VAW. For this reason, EPD has developed an advocacy toolkit on "Engaging with men on Women's Rights" to raise awareness and involve men in finding approaches for removing violence. During past quarter, EPD has conducted three rounds of training workshop on this toolkit for a total of 900 male community leaders (20 in

each province) in 15 provinces of the country. The workshops presented information on the day-to-day violence confronting women and aims to personally connect participants with experiences of violence faced by women. These workshops also aimed to persuade male participants to engage in critical reflection on their own behaviors and social practices that lead to gender discrimination. EPD believes that these community leaders can subsequently have a positive influence on the negative perceptions of individuals in their respective communities towards women's rights.



## Community Based Monitoring Mechanism

## Access to Justice



## Community Watch



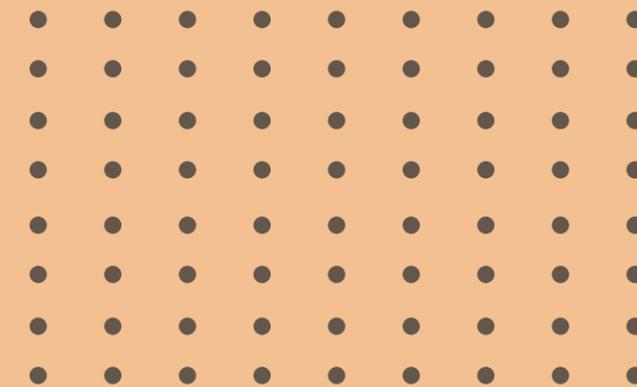
Mr. Wajid Khan



Mr. Khalid Siddiqi



## How to Get Involved



EPD, along with the members of Salah, have undertaken an initiative towards the enhancement of access to justice in Kunduz, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Balkh and Khost. The aim of this initiative is to strengthen the engagement of CSOs and their networks and to lobby and advocate for improved access to the formal and informal justice system. EPD in Nangarhar is conducting quarterly dialogues inviting community representatives, tribal elders, head of local councils, CSOs and Media to discuss about services provided by the justice sector. During the most recent dialogue in April, challenges in access to justice and validity of Jirgas held by community people were discussed. It was argued that due to lack of awareness and

influence of powerful actors, sometimes the verdicts issued by the Jirgas are biased and violates human rights. On 11th of June 2017, the first quarterly coordination meeting was held with participation of representatives from Department of Justice (DoJ), provincial Attorney General's Office (AGO), General Director of EAW prosecutor, Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), Department of Women's Affairs, journalists, provincial TVs and CSOs. The meeting aimed to discuss the existing mechanism for recording and publishing the Human Rights deviations of the local courts and finally enhancing access to justice.

Public-police engagement can be a good approach in promoting rule of law and accountability. On the other hand, introducing community reward for good policing will enhance police effective performance. Keeping this issue in mind, EPD along with The Liaison Office (TLO) and SDO (Sanayee Development Organization) have undertaken some activities in some provinces to decrease the gap between public and police and promote cooperation. EPD has established a community watch committee consisting of 8 members of CSO activists for raising awareness and start monitoring. Over the past quarter, the committee regularly held meeting with authorities

in police headquarters to monitor police performance and promote culture of community cooperation with police. As a result of their efforts, 15 women were recruited as police officers in Nangarhar. Furthermore, by support of community people, drug smugglers who used teenagers for distributing illegal drugs in Angur-Bagh, Jalalabad were apprehended. The addicted victims were also sent to rehabilitation centers for treatment. Such a success could not be achieved without mutual cooperation between public and police. On April 22nd, as a part of the performance encouragement program, around seven male police officers, were awarded as an acknowledgement for their service to the society.

### Mr. Wajid Khan, Executive Director

During this quarter, EPD brought some changes in its management team's structure. Currently, Mr. Wajid Khan has been appointed as executive director. Having around one decade of professional experience and expertise in leadership, financial management and corporate affairs, he has managed to operate the organization efficiently and inspire teamwork among the staff. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) from the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Pakistan (ICPAP) and pursuing Chartered Accountancy (CA Finalist) from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP). Mr. Khan also holds a Bachelors' degree in Economics and Sociology.

### Mr. Khalid Siddiqi, technical advisor

EPD also welcomes Mr. Khalid Siddiqi, technical advisor, who supports research department and is responsible for the organization's fundraising. His talent and innovative ideas has brought improvement in the activities and develop the staff's capacity. Khalid Siddiqi has a Masters' degree in Comparative and European Politics from the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He is specialized in emerging democracies and democratic and electoral systems in transition. Mr. Siddiqi has multiple publications and years of experience in research on gender in/and conflict, engaging with CSOs, doing fieldwork research and managing teams of researchers in conflict situations. He has in-depth knowledge of, and publications on, legal frameworks and policy process, especially on issues concerning migration and IDPs, aid effectiveness, gender in conflict and international humanitarian response as well as teaching experience in methods and techniques of social research in conflict situations.

To learn more about our work and organization, email us at [admin@epd-afg.org](mailto:admin@epd-afg.org) or visit our website at [www.epd-afg.org](http://www.epd-afg.org).

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

in different positions and be a part of the dynamic EPD team and gain on the ground experience of project management, event management, and operations.

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

## Where we work

