

# EQUALITY For Peace and Democracy

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

The third quarter of 2017 was an eventful and fruitful period for EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) as it successfully facilitated the second round of peace exchange between Afghan and Pakistani women in Pakistan, commemorated peace day within all 15 provincial networks, and created documentaries covering the real stories of women whose lives were impacted by radicalization and violent extremism, and how they overcame such adversities.

EPD continues to conduct its trainings, In Her Shoes entitled, and its workshop entitled "Engaging with Men on Women's Rights", which aims to raise awareness and involve influential figures in the efforts to put an end to violence against women. Additionally, massive trainings were conducted in Kapisa and Kabul to raise awareness on EVAW laws and women's rights from an Islamic perspective.

EPD also worked with its PWNs to conduct better advocacies based on systematic and organized strategies to empower women at the grass-root level, addressing gender issues and safeguarding women's peace and security. EPD invited the provincial coordinators and members to Kabul to partake in the quarterly meeting and central exchange, providing the occasion to meet face-to-face and share experiences.

Moreover, through the public's commitment to monitoring police performance and efforts to minimize the gap between the public and the police, seven eligible police officers were awarded in Nangarhar. During last quarter, EPD also struggled to enhance quality of legal services provided by the justice sector through CSO networking. The following stories elaborate on EPD's major activities and achievements during the third quarter of 2017.

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On August 23, 2017 Board of Directors met at EPD's central office to discuss EPD's activities and suggest recommendations for better implementation of the projects. EPD's Board of Directors consists of eight prominent members with qualifications in directing organizations and experience in top management levels. The board meetings are held regularly to supervise the organization's operation and decide on its major issues.

The meeting covered presentations on the operational and financial status of the organization delivered by the management team. EPD's Executive Director, Mr. Wajid Khan, briefed the floor on the total funds available, expenses incurred and liabilities for year 2016 and 2017. He also explained the current financial position and financial performance of EPD to the Board of Directors.

EPD's research expert, Ms. Ruqaiya Tabasum, provided information on EPD's accomplishments during the past two years. She also discussed the current projects EPD is implementing on different issues. She mentioned the expansion of EPD's coverage area from 9 to 17 provinces and the strengthened relationship with local and national stakeholders.

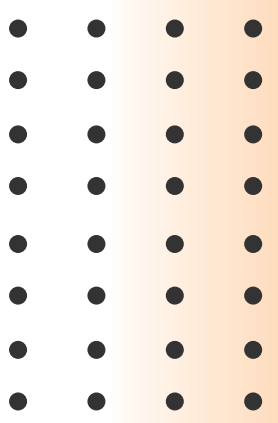
The meeting covered the structure of the Board itself as well as discussed the possibility of recruiting new Board members. Accordingly, Mr. Masood Karokheil; the Director and co-founder of The Liaison Office (TLO) was elected as a new member. EPD welcomes him on board and is delighted to have his advice and support in future.

They acknowledged and congratulated the organization on its efforts and progress.

## Women Peace Exchange Program in Islamabad, Pakistan



## Digital Story Development



## Board of Director's Meeting



Following the first round of "Peace Exchange: Pak-Afghan Women's Bridge for Peace", EPD along with Aware Girls conducted its second round of the exchange in Islamabad, Pakistan. The event enabled women peace activists from Pakistan and Afghanistan to build a bond strengthen by similar experiences, thus, encouraging women-women exchange of learning and strategizing together to counter radicalization and peacebuilding.

The event invited Afghan and Pakistani peace activists as well as Academia, CSOs and politicians to discuss the impacts of radicalization and violent extremisms on women, women's role in peace building and approaches to promote it

and make the peace process more inclusive. The event covered several panel sessions to discuss the detrimental impacts of violent extremism on women, their responses to radicalization, as well as the opportunities and challenges in front of women participation in the peace building process in Afghanistan and Pakistan. A roundtable discussion was facilitated to empower Afghan and Pakistani peace activists as well as CSO representatives to share their views on the importance of women's participation in peacebuilding processes. Furthermore, the event provided the occasion to approach both academia and politicians to include women in conflict resolution and sustainable peace activities.

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) together with Aware Girls (the partner from Pakistan) conducted a five-day workshop on "Digital Story Development" in Islamabad, Pakistan. This workshop facilitated one to one connections between Afghanistan and Pakistan peace activists to share their real experiences and hardships pertaining to violent extremism and radicalization and how to overcome such adversities. The participants were trained to prepare scripts and create videos capturing the women's experience of radicalization and women's conflict resolution. They reflected on the peace activists' stories of how radicalization affected their lives and how they counter it. The stories will be available online

to raise more awareness about the impact of radicalization on women, role women of Afghanistan and Pakistan play in defying radicalization and the importance of including women in the peacebuilding processes.

After the workshop, on September 22, 2017, a press conference was organized to launch the research report and the strategy paper in Pakistan. The event covered the research report, strategy paper, panel session and screened the videos created by the peace activists during the aforementioned workshops

The panel session discussed the strategy paper and proposed recommendations for an inclusive peace process and maintaining peace through mutual understanding.

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) has always been instrumental in commemorating International Peace Day on September 21. EPD held conferences in 15 provinces of Afghanistan inviting representatives of provincial councils, justice department, the governor office, women's affair department, civil society, community member, media and many other governmental and non-governmental institution to mark this event and demonstrate their commitment to support peace at the grassroots and policy level. EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy has also designed posters to broadcast the international theme for this year and encourage the public to promote and join peace process.

The events in all of the provinces were notable and

inspiring, particularly in the provinces of Helmand and Paktia. In Helmand, the PWN along with the prominent figures in the province celebrated this occasion, and the representatives of the provincial peace committee stressed their mission of women inclusion in peace process and achieving sustainable peace.

The PWN in Paktia, gathered more than 70 participants, and prominent personalities, such as the Deputy Governor, Head of Provincial Council, Headquarter and many other well-known representatives of governmental and non-governmental entities delivered speeches to commemorate this occasion and stress on their commitment to peace building.

## Commemorating International Peace Day



On the 29th, 30th and 31st July 2017, EPD invited 75 members of its 15 Provincial Women Networks to Kabul to exchange ideas, share experience and discuss the advocacies that they conducted this year. The program included presentations, group work and panel discussion.

The program arranged panel sessions with participation of prominent figures, such as Ms. Fawzia Kufi (Afghan Parliamentary Member), Ms. Safia Siddiqi (Gender Consultant at MoLSAMD), Maira Kupper (Political Affairs Officer at UNAMA), Ms. Shakila Nazari (Head of Information and Public Relation of MoWA) and representatives of other governmental and non-governmental institutions. The panels aimed to respond and

address women's challenges at the local level to adhere to the NAP and UNSCR 1325.

Over the course of the three days, the participants interacted with each other and shared their experience regarding advocacies and outreaches executed to prevent violence against women and ensure their peace and security at the grass-root level. The PWN's notable achievements during the last quarter included the increase in women recruitment, advocacies to protect police women and promote a better work environment for them, reaching out to women amongst internally displaced people residing in volatile areas, reaching out to women in prisons, widespread awareness raising sessions for men and women, and many more.

## PWN Quarterly Meeting



## Strengthening Access to Justice for Women Affected by Violence

Fortunately majority of the men do not engage in violence against women. Unfortunately, the violence that does occur is mostly perpetrated by men. Hence, it is highly crucial to work with men and make them understand that violence hurts women, and that men can have an important influence on reducing violence by challenging their own attitudes and behavior, and intervening to prevent other men's violence.

Throughout the previous quarter, EPD conducted training workshops on "Engaging with men on Women's Rights" on a monthly basis in 15 provinces. This training was conducting using the In Her Shoes toolkit reflecting information on the day-to-day violence women confront. The toolkit aims to personally connect participants with experiences of violence faced by women. EPD believes

that these community leaders can subsequently have a positive influence on the negative perceptions of individuals in their respective communities concerning women's rights.

PWN in 15 provinces also screened six days films for over 1,000 participants. A documentary film was dubbed and translated under title of "Six Days", which presents the struggles of women in Liberia, Abkhazia, and the Kurdistan region of Iraq. It shows women's rights defenders working to improve the lives of women dealing with issues related to VAW, poverty and economic disempowerment, and forced marriage in the context of post-conflict societies. The film raises awareness about the struggles women around the suffer daily as well as the struggles of women's rights defenders and advocates on behalf of women's issues.

## Central Exchange



From the 1st – 3rd August 2017, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy hosted a three-day quarterly meeting in Kabul with the PWN coordinators and their assistants from 15 provinces. Utilizing this opportunity, the participants exchanged ideas, shared experiences and discussed best practices and challenges in organizing their monthly meetings and advocacy activities.

The program included a workshop on "Advocacy" conducted by Mr. Maseehullah Farahmand, EPD's Program Officer, during which the coordinators learned how to develop advocacy strategies to address problems that women are facing at the grass-root level. Grassroots advocacy is crucial because public support

is necessary to advocate for change at the policy-making level. In order to have public support, it is necessary that local communities themselves raise awareness about the issues, challenges and opportunities, and mobilize people to demand change. During this program, the coordinators practiced developing advocacy strategies to prepare systematic plans to remove the problems confronted by women. The strategies were adopted to deal with the following issues: VAW, workplace harassment, police women harassment, low level of women representation in the governmental entities, internally displaced women's problem and self-immolation.

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

The trainings targeted a wide range of male and female recipients, including the community Dialogue Groups (CDG) and FRC (Family Resolution Committee), police, judges and prosecutors in Kabul and Kapisa, and used culturally sensitive approaches to ensure that the topics were understood as being compatible with Islam. Moreover, the schoolteachers who participated in the trainings spread the related knowledge amongst their students. In order to

encourage awareness raising on EAW Law and women's rights, EPD organized a school competition among these students, and top students in the Parwan province received awards.

EPD also provided technical support to the staff at Women Affairs Department and Women Protection Centers by enhancing their capacity on advocacy management, conflict resolution, and professional skills on EAW Law. Furthermore, during the last quarter, EPD's legal management experts in Kapisa and Kabul have provided legal assistance to VAW victims, followed up with their cases, and successfully solved some of them.



## In Her Shoes and Screening

## M&E and Advocacy Strategy



Advocacy is a major part of EPD's activities throughout Afghanistan. In light of this, and as a part of the organization's general capacity-building agenda, EPD held a training and workshop on advocacy and advocacy strategy. The purpose of this workshop has been to improve the quality of EPD's current advocacy strategy and contribute to EPD's ongoing advocacy campaign on the realization of UNSCR 1325, which is currently implemented in 15 provinces of Afghanistan. EPD's Program and Research Teams worked with the provincial coordinators to develop advocacy strategies to address women's problems within their communities. The PWNs collected data for a research conducted by Cordaid, using Barometer tools to understand the barriers and challenges threatening women's peace and security at the grass-root level. According to the analyzed data, violence against women, women harassment in the police sector, sexual violence in the workplace, vulnerability of women amongst IDPs, and the lack of women representation in governmental offices are among the main adversities women face in the provinces. The advocacy strategies have been designed to address such difficulties, and the provincial coordinators will ensure the successful implementation of the strategies in the coming quarter.

## Access to Justice

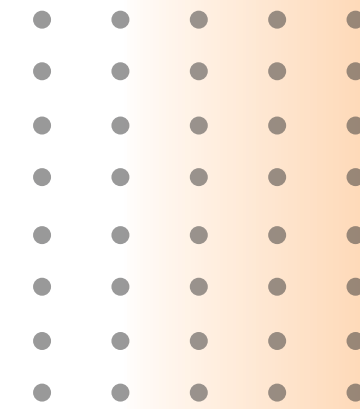


EPD in Nangarhar is struggling to enhance services provided by the justice sector by raising awareness and increasing the capacity of staff in this sector. EPD has contacted the local NGOs in this province to provide legal aid aimed at engaging CSOs and their networks to lobby and advocate for improved access to justice and quality of justice delivered, specifically for women, in both the formal and informal justice systems. EPD conducts regular meetings with the Department of Justice (DoJ), Provincial Attorney General Office, Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), Department of Women Affairs and the local media to discuss the opportunities and challenges in abating the gap between the State's justice sector and the people who receive their services. During a recent meeting on August 16, 2017, regarding this matter, the participants discussed the human right deviation, its impact on the locals and ways to counter it.

## Community Watch



Public-police engagement can be a good approach in promoting rule of law and accountability. What's more, introducing a community reward for good police and report on it will improve police performance. EPD in Nangarhar is monitoring police performance to involve community and civic groups in law enforcement and to enhance transparency. During the last six months, EPD's Community Watch Committee engaged with the police in Nangarhar, and the collaboration led to prominent achievements such as conducting dialogues for interaction among authorities in the police headquarter and public, awareness raising on the need for cooperation between police and community, addressing drug and addiction problems, as well as taking measures to control crimes committed because of them. In order to encourage good policing and build trust between the police force and the public, EPD has identified seven eligible police officers and awarded them in an event, with the participation of police headquarter, justice sector, representatives of the governmental and non-governmental organizations, CSOs, community members and media.



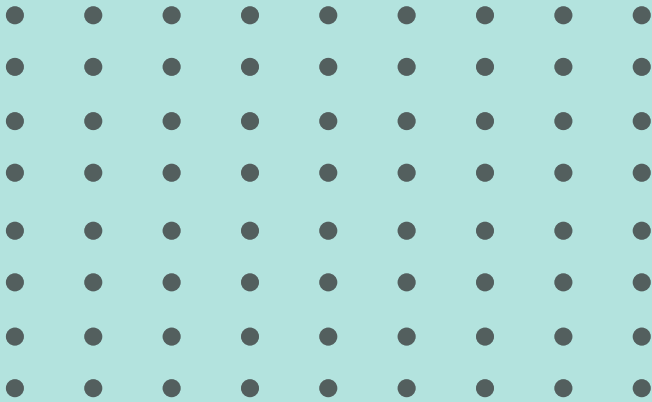
## New Staff at EPD



Ms. Sheima Zikria

### Program and Advocacy Manager

EPD is pleased to introduce Ms. Sheima Zikria who joined EPD as the Program and Advocacy Manager. She received her first Masters degree from the University of San Francisco in International Studies, and second Masters degree in Human Rights Law from the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). Her graduate studies have enabled her to do extensive research and work with complex issues concerning international human rights law and global justice. Shiema's two dissertations focused on the democratic and transitional justice efforts in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Her background consists of nonprofit management, communication, and development.



## Donors and Supporters

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## Where we work



## How to Get Involved

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>