

EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy

Annual Report 2017



EPD | EQUALITY
for Peace and
Democracy

Message from the Executive Director



As the Director of EPD, I am pleased to present to you our 2017 Annual Report. For this annual report we have looked, with great pride, at our humble beginnings, expansions, numerous challenges along the way, our collective drive and perseverance, and the great sacrifices by our professional and service staff over an eight-year period to make EPD the leading-edge non-profit organization that it is today. Through our research and monitoring projects, evaluations, program implementations, and various exchange programs on such key development issues as gender mainstreaming, inclusion of women in peace building and local governance EPD has firmly established itself as an independent organization that strives for women empowerment.

This report highlights many notable achievements and I am proud to celebrate these achievements and continued progress in the pursuit of improved programs, research, and knowledge for Afghans especially women who live with insecurity, injustice, and violent extremism.

2017 marked an incredibly active year for EPD. In addition to the many accomplishments featured in this report, I would like to highlight additional activities for which we are proud:

Expansion: During 2017, EPD expanded its operations to eighteen provinces across Afghanistan and established its Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) network, consisting of 30 volunteer members, in three additional provinces namely, Khost, Panjshir and Kapisa. We are very much thankful to our Provincial Women Network (PWN) and ACTA who always supported EPD's mission through amplifying the voices of Afghan citizens, empowering women and youth to become future leaders and overseeing the state institutions for accountable service delivery.

Good Governance: EPD established Government and Civil Society Coordination Forums (GCCF) in ten provinces wherein, ten CSOs and representatives of ten government departments will join hands to facilitate the ongoing cooperation and collaboration on programmes at the provincial level and will identify areas that need support for improved and accountable service in the provincial level.

EPD got the pride again to present its review of the draft national budget 1397 wherein the budget was presented in meaningful and coherent manner to make it easier to understand for the general public and how it can affect their lives.

Peace: In 2017, EPD along with its Pakistani partner, Aware Girls, established a network of 40 women peace activists from both of the nations to strengthen the bond between the two nations

Message from the Executive Director

and discuss, through exchanges conducted in each country, how women of these nations are affected by radicalization and violent extremism in equal fashion. A research was also conducted to understand the impact of radicalization and violent extremism and womens' responses to it.

Human Rights: EPD also provided training on eighteen booklets pertaining to womens' rights from an Islamic perspective and EVAW Law to a wide range of beneficiaries including Khateebes, teachers, university student and justice sector employees to make them equipped with the knowledge of womens' social rights, Mahr, divorce, marriage and access to formal and informal justice.

As you read the report, I hope you will gain insight into the breadth and depth of our activities. As the

director of EPD, I pledge to continue the quest for greater knowledge, better programs, and enhanced security and justice on behalf of every Afghan citizen impacted by insecurity, extremism or any obstacle keeping them from optimal growth and development. They deserve to see the promises of tomorrow become today's reality. The accomplishments over the past year and the work ahead depends on the support and contributions of our partners and dedicated staff. I am immensely grateful to those individuals, partners and donors whose energy and support sustain us.

Thank you and I look forward to another amazing year at EPD.

Wajid Khan

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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. 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

EPD envisions Afghanistan as 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 2017

In 2017, EPD has been involved in a lot of activities on different issues ranging from countering violent extremism, education in emergencies, involving public in monitoring justice sector and establishing community watch committees to monitoring governmental service delivery at the provincial and district level.

EPD expanded its coverage area to 18 provinces and now it is active in Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Helmand, Herat, Laghman, Paktia, Bamyán, Daikundi, Parwan, Badakhshan, Balkh, Kunduz, Faryab, Uruzgan, Panjshir, Khostand Kapisa. EPD's

PWNS are functioning in 15 provinces and ACTA networks in eight provinces.

During past year, EPD held 12 rounds of "In Her Shoes" workshops as an effort to involve men in advocacy for removing VAW and protection of the victims. For eradication of violence against women, EPD undertook a cultural sensitive approach. Accordingly, extensive training sessions were conducted on women's rights from an Islamic perspective targeting a wide range of audience in Kabul, Parwan, Panjshir and Kapisa. It has also hired legal management experts to follow up VAW cases in coordination with



DoWA.

Peace building was the other strategic area where EPD focused on. In this regard EPD conducted a research on "Impact of Radicalization on Women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan". Furthermore, two rounds of peace exchanges were held in Afghanistan and Pakistan to eliminate violent extremism (VE) and radicalization.

ensuring women's local peace and security and enhancing transparency in public service delivery.

2017 was full of progress and fruitful year for EPD and we are proud of the activities we could successfully conduct to serve Afghanistan. EPDs activities are elaborated in the following lines. For more details about this organization please refer to our website and Facebook pages.

Moreover, EPD monitored police and Justice Sector in Nangarhar to enhance their performance by inserting civic pressure, CSO networking and involving media. EPD contributed towards



EPD works in three major areas of Good Governance, Human Rights and Peace and Security. Accordingly, in this report EPD activities in 2017 are divided into 3 sections:



**Good
Governance**

**Human
Rights**

**Peace and
Security**

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Annual Budget Review

EPD annually, conducts a review of the national draft budget, which started in 1391, to provide further details to Parliament to review the national budget. The process gives insight to the national budget from a civil society perspective on national budget planning, execution, monitoring and reporting with special emphasis on the role of civil society and citizens in the entire process. EPD aims to present a simple and coherent review of the budget so that people can understand the budget and what it means for their daily lives and review the quality of services via allocated resources.

For year 1397, EPD has provided its seventh research report which will be launched in January 2018. According to the budget draft, the aim of the 1397 budget is regulating public financial management. The draft has been prepared based on international standards of Government Financial



Statistic (GFS) and Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG).

GFS system provides a picture of the fund trend and expenditure. The expenditures for FY 1397 have been categorized into 100 sections including salary and fuel. On the other hand, COFOG System classifies the government functions in public welfare areas such as health, education and social protection. This initiative has considered the expenditure allocation based on the government function which facilitated governmental service delivery in the most essential areas in the society. MoF hopes such changes can solve the ministry's challenges pertaining to low budget expenditures and wide spread corruption particularly in provinces.



GOOD GOVERNANCE

Community Based Monitoring Mechanism

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.



GOOD GOVERNANCE

Access to Justice

Salah consortium comprised of five Afghan civil society organizations including Cooperation for Peace and Unity, Equality for Peace and Democracy, Peace Training and Research Organization, Sanayee Development Organization and The Liaison Office is working together to narrow the gap between state structures and the people they are meant to serve, particularly in the justice sector. This is being carried out by increasing the capacity of CSOs to lobby for change and influence policies, as well as that of both formal and informal justice actors while also encouraging citizens to make use of state justice



mechanisms.

This project's primary goal is to strengthen the engagement of CSOs and their networks to lobby and advocate for improved access to and quality of justice provision, especially of women, to both the formal and the informal justice systems.

EPD in Nangarhar has struggled to enhance services provided by the justice sector by raising awareness and increasing the capacity of staff in this sector. EPD along with the local institutions as AWJA, AIBA, AWJA, DoWA and Appellate Prosecution Office has lobbied for behavioral change, record and publicize deviations, improve court oversight, need and evidence-based planning and ensure local judges respect human rights. Numerous rounds of capacity building and awareness raising sessions including media campaign have been conducted to meet the objectives.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Community Watch

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 to decrease the gap between public and police and promote cooperation. EPD in Nangarhar has established a community watch committee consisting of 8 members of CSO activists for raising awareness and monitoring.



During the past year, the committee regularly held meeting with authorities in police headquarters to monitor police performance and promote culture of community cooperation with police. This 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.

EPD has also held two rounds of police award ceremony during which a number of eligible male and female police employees were appreciated. The candidates were selected based on result of the monitoring carried out by CW members in different areas in Nangarhar.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Engaging Civil Society for Accountable Local Service Delivery



Weak governance mechanisms and lack of transparency in government institutions are some of the major problems that Afghanistan is facing today. Lack of capacity in the government institutions is compounded by rampant corruption, which sours

the relationship between the government and its citizens. In reference to International support laid out at the Brussels' conference, local government should be held accountable for delivering the basic services to the public. This could be made possible through a robust social monitoring program that will enable local committees to identify problems, work with local government to find solutions, and ensure that proposed measures are undertaken in a responsible and conscientious manner.



In order to engage civil society in monitoring public service delivery, EPD has established CSO networks in 10 provinces across the country. Their capacity has been assessed and based on the findings of this assessment, a series of training will be imparted to them to increase their capacity in monitoring and advocacy to hold the governmental institution accountable for the provided services.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Reaching out to IDP Children

The recent instability and volatile security situation, in some provinces of Afghanistan, has led to the displacement of a high number of households. Children in these families are at high risk of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuses. Furthermore, war and conflict are among the main barriers impeding children's education, especially girls. Currently, in Laghman and Kunduz where a lot of displaced families are seeking shelter, factors such as insecurity, economic problems, loss of documentation, language barrier, discrimination and



VAW are limiting girls' education. If the necessary measures for promoting education are not taken, the growing number of the IDP children will lead to an uneducated generation.

To address this issue, EPD in the aforementioned provinces attempted to reach out to internally displaced girl students. It contributed to restoring normalcy in the lives of children and providing children with age-appropriate learning opportunities, such as Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) and Accelerated Education (AE) classes, community based learning, language and catch-up classes, as well as recreational activities.



EPD trained a team of male and female teachers on pedagogy and hygiene and supported them to hold community based classes where a high number of IDP children pursued knowledge. EPD will continue its support to empower the children to join back the formal school and can continue their normal life.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's Day



Similar to the previous year, EPD honored the international women's day on 8th March 2017 by holding conferences in 14 provinces across Afghanistan. In each province the provincial coordinators invited distinguished representatives of Departments of Women Affairs, Haj and Religious Affairs, Justice, Education, Youth Parliaments and CSOs and congratulated all the women on women's day. Women's day is celebrated to mobilize women's right activists to protest against inequality, oppression and violence faced by women. During the event, all the network members discussed about their achievements and advocacy plans for enhancing women's rights at the grass root level.

During the event, all the network members discussed about their achievements and advocacy plans for enhancing women's rights at their communities. To mark this event, EPD in Badakhshan, held a female demonstration asking for justice for victims of violence and put an end on VAW. The network prepared a press release and asked the government and women defenders to enforce anti-harassment and EVAW law and punish the perpetrators of violence. Furthermore, EPD has set up billboards in different areas in Helmand province to raise awareness on women rights and elimination of violence.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Campaign for Eradication of Illiteracy

More than three decades of war and conflict has negatively impacted the literacy rate in Afghanistan. In spite of efforts, adult literacy rate is still low (31.7%). The disparity among male and female literacy is even more crucial. According to the World Bank, in 2016 only 17.6% of Afghan females were literate while this percentage for males was 45.4%.

EPD, along with SALAH members is working to decrease the level of illiteracy, spread the culture of volunteer work and enhancing the ability of Afghans' to bring change by themselves.

As an inauguration for this campaign, EPD and its partner CSOs participated in an event held at KLID Radio group's main office. A panel discussion was



organized and the event was attended by many participants from the civil society and the ministries of Education and Media. The panelists emphasized the urgency of efforts to be made in order to eradicate illiteracy from Afghanistan. During the event a statement was issued publically, asking all Afghans to cooperate to eliminate illiteracy in the country. All participants committed to educating at least one illiterate Afghan. At the end, some participants committed to their vows by starting to help others in their efforts to combat illiteracy.



As an effort to put its commitments to practice, EPD started a campaign to eliminate illiteracy in Kunduz, Parwan and Panjsher awareness raising events. The provincial governor, representatives of subnational ministry branches, civil society organizations and community members were invited and encouraged to work voluntarily to decrease level of illiteracy. Video clips for raising awareness were broadcasted asking for support of the campaign. As an extra awareness-raising effort, glasses with logos of the campaign were distributed to the people aiming at spreading the message.

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In Her Shoes

As engaging boys and men in VAW elimination is one of the main objectives mentioned in NAP 1325, EPD has initiated “In Her Shoes” workshops. Violence against women is mostly perpetrated by men. Hence, it is highly crucial to work with men and make them understand that violence against women is illegal. Men can have an important influence in reducing violence by challenging their own attitudes and behavior and by intervening to prevent VAW.

“In Her Shoes” workshops invite male members of the community to be involved in ensuring women’s right and suggest solutions for eradication of violence



against women. The tool used in these workshops is a manual entitled “Engaging with Men on Women’s rights” including exercises to supports the participant to understand the situations that VAW victims suffer for a life time to encounter violence. It is expected that the workshops can finally change the gender-based discrimination toward women and encourage men to take part in preventing VAW and protecting the affected ones.

During 2017, EPD conducted 12 rounds of this workshop in 15 provinces of Afghanistan through which over 3600 influential men were trained. Since, the participants were mostly influential and elders, it is believed that they can subsequently have a positive influence on the negative perceptions of individuals in their respective communities towards women’s rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Quarterly Meeting with PWN coordinators

Each quarter, EPD invites its PWN coordinators from fifteen provinces to participate in a meeting in Kabul to exchange ideas, share experiences and discuss best practices and challenges in organizing their awareness raising and advocacy activities. Throughout 2017, four quarterly meetings were held on January, March, August and October. Besides sharing main activities during past quarter, the opportunity was utilized to train the coordinators and enhance their capacity.

During each quarterly meeting, the coordinators presented their main achievements of the previous



quarter. PWNs put efforts to mobilize women, raise their awareness, sensitize them and enhance their capacity to take care of their own peace and security at community. In this regard, numerous rounds of workshops were held such as “In Her Shoes” and “UNSCR 1325” to support prevention and protection pillars of UNSCR 1325. The networks also collected data and learned to analyze it to understand women’s shared concerns at the local levels. PWNs further attempted to solve the identified problems.

The last quarterly meetings were allocated to enhance PWNs skills in M&E and prepare advocacy strategies. The provincial coordinators were supported to assess and prioritize the problems that women confront at their respective provinces and work on professional systematic strategy to tackle them.

EPD was honored with presence of Cordaid representatives. Their feedback and support were monumental in proper implementation of the activity and sustainability of the networks.

HUMAN RIGHTS

PWN Monitoring and Evaluation

EPD evaluates the performance of PWNs in 15 provinces biannually to assess the change among the PWN members and other concerned stakeholders, regarding their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors towards UNSCR 1325 goals. This monitoring and evaluation (M&E) also measures the networks progress in addressing women's problems concerning their local peace and security. During 2017, two rounds of PWN assessment were conducted. The first one aimed to measure the networks' capacity in fund raising and ensuring sustainability of the networks. The latter one was



undertaken to assess PWNs' contribution to three pillars of Participation, Prevention and Protection mentioned in UNSCR 1325. This report talks about women's participation in negotiations for peace, politics, and decision-making at all levels and also calls for mechanisms to prevent violence against women and protect women from being subjected to violence. It also has identified opportunities for strategic and operational improvements through recommendations proposed by the networks and stakeholders to enhance the condition of women's peace and security at the grassroots level.



EPD is getting ready for data collection for the last round of the monitoring and evaluation in order to understand the networks' activities regarding women's peace and security, advocacies, their impact on the community as well as their recommendations for betterment of the activities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Central Exchange

On 29th of July 2017, around 75 members of EPDs Provincial Women Network (PWN) from 15 provinces gathered together in Kabul to exchange ideas and experience. During the exchange program, representative of each Provincial Women Network (PWN) got a chance to present information on achievements of their respective networks, challenges they face during their advocacies and lessons learned. Over the course of three days, the members interacted with each other to compare and learn about the approaches each network follows to address women's problems constraining women's peace and security. The PWN's notable achievements during past six months, 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. The participant also mentioned that VAW, low level



of women participation and financial dependency remain problematic for majority of women in most of the provinces. Furthermore, the volatile situation in Kunduz, Faryab and some other provinces was a significant challenge in conducting effective programs. The PWN members from different provinces worked in groups to prepare action plans to address women's problems in their respective provinces. The program also 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 Affair 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. The PWN members from different provinces worked in groups to prepare action plans to address women's problems in their respective provinces.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Strengthening Women's Access to Justice

Throughout 2017, EPD in Parwan, Panjshir, Kapisa and Kabul provinces provided extensive trainings on women's right from an Islamic perspective and EAW law for a wide spectrum of beneficiaries such as representatives of Justice Sector, Community Dialogue Group (CDG) members, Khateebes, religious leaders, Teachers, University professors and students. The topics covered included women's social rights, mediation of family disputes, marriage and engagements, Mahr and Nafaqa, divorce, corruption and many other topics related to women's rights to change social backlashes toward gender equality and provision of quality formal and informal justice for women. The trainings 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. It is worth mentioning that the curriculum used in these trainings is reflected in 18 easy-to-read booklets, given to each participant to facilitate further study. Apart from the trainings, EPDs legal management experts also contributed to solving a number of VAW cases in coordination with DoWA and Attorney General Office. These experts support the Family Resolution Centres (FRC) and male and female Community Development Groups (CDG), to follow up and solve the informal and formal VAW cases in their communities. Furthermore, EPD has distributed related booklets on women's right and EAWL among some school students in Parwan and Panjshir. Subsequently, a competition among the interested students was held and the top students were awarded. The initiative encouraged knowledge spread and would change conservative views toward women.



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Screening

In 2017, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) hosted four rounds of a documentary screening entitled “Six Days” in 15 provinces targeting over 4000 participants in the provincial and district levels. The main emphasis during the screening was to allow participants gain a comprehensive understanding of victimization of women outside Afghanistan and the day-to-day struggle of women right activists to improve this situation.

The participants were given the opportunity to share their perspectives on how to combat gender-based violence and to overcome cultural, social and political restrictions that negatively influence women. Participants were left with a sense of appreciation



towards the struggle of women right advocates and expressed their interest and commitment in bringing positive change in the lives of Afghan women. EPD also attempted to encourage civil society and public engagement in social monitoring and fighting corruption through documentary screening.

During the month of December 2017, EPD screened another documentary entitled “It’s our Money, Where’s it gone?”. The film presents the powerful story of a CSO in Kenya that helps a local impoverished community to hold Members of Parliament accountable for their spending on development projects as oversight is lacking. The film was screened in 10 provinces to a total 680 participants to raise awareness of community members on how they can take part in monitoring service delivery and addressing issues in their community through cooperative, nonviolent means.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Rapid Assessment of the Economic Status of Women in Kabul and Herat

Although, with the support of the international community, there has been progress in gender equality but women economic 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 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 bringing together around 35 women entrepreneurs to discuss about challenges that women have faced in markets. Incorporating inputs of these two events EPD provided 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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PWN Advisory Board Meetings

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.

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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 facilitate 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.

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Provincial Dialogue

EPDs PWNs 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. In 2017, two rounds of the provincial dialogues in May and December, were conducted to share the main challenges women face with the relevant stakeholders at the provincial level. During the event in each province the coordinators 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.



The networks asked the relevant authorities to address the identified challenges through the Barometer research and the networks observations. It was emphasized that lack of women representation is the main factor for weak women protection and VAW prevention. The other concern in all of the provinces was women financial dependence which has paved the ways for male dominance and women marginalization. PWNs consider women inclusion especially at policy level can strongly; empower women to take care of their peace and security. It was also brought to notice of the authorities that social backlashes and lack of capacity are the other challenges to be addressed.



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Advocacy Strategies

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. During this program, the coordinators practiced developing advocacy strategies to prepare systematic plans to remove the problems faced by women. Using these advocacy strategies, the PWNs can determine their own issues, identify solutions, and advocate for those solutions with relevant stakeholders and officials. The advocacy strategies have been designed to address difficulties identified by a research conducted by Cordaid, using Barometer tools and the cases studies conducted by APPRO.

In 2017, PWNs in Badakhshan, Kandahar, Helmand and Paktia advocated for reducing improper custom and high expenses of wedding parties through awareness raising and engaging religious leaders. Coordinator of Paktia attempted to prepare resolutions by the help of community elders and religious leaders to ban improper custom. Kabul, Kunduz, Faryab, and Nangarhar PWNs advocated for increasing women's representation in the governmental offices and women recruitment. To address this issue, they approached Independent Administrative Reforms and Civil Service Commission and attempted to raise awareness. Some provinces advocate for violence against women, e.g. Daykundi PWN advocated for domestic violence, Bamyan advocate for decreasing high rate of suicide attempts among women through awareness raising with community elders and engaging religious leaders. Balkh PWN worked for countering women harassment among female staff of the police sector, Laghman and Parwan PWNs advocated for decreasing high rates of physical violence through awareness raising on



women's rights and prohibition of physical violence by involving religious leaders. Herat advocated for IDPs, and they establishing skill training for IDPs women. Urzgan advocated for decreasing high rate of illiteracy among women at grass-root level, so they established courses for illiterate women in the different area of Urzgan provinces.

All of the PWNs advocated for increasing 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. Women's equal access to quality health service was the other main topic in the plan as most of women particularly, in the districts were suffering poor health and lack of access to drinking water. It was also 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 extent in some of the provinces.

Countering Radicalization

In 2017, EPD initiated a women-led program to enhance peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan via linking the nations. EPD along with its Pakistani partner; Aware Girls, created a platform entitled “Pul-e-Naswaan Baraye Aman” consisting of women peace activists from both the countries aimed to counter radicalization and violent extremism. The network members frequently, were in contact to take joint actions for inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes across borders.

Researches were carried out in both countries to understand the impact of radicalization and violent extremism on women and their response to cope. According to this study, women not only suffer direct physical and sexual violence in the form of flogging, stoning and beating to death, forced marriage and rape etc., but also bear most of the brunt of loss of livelihood and displacement; disappearances,



disabilities and killing of family members. This study documents both direct and indirect adverse effects of radicalization and violent extremism on women, in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

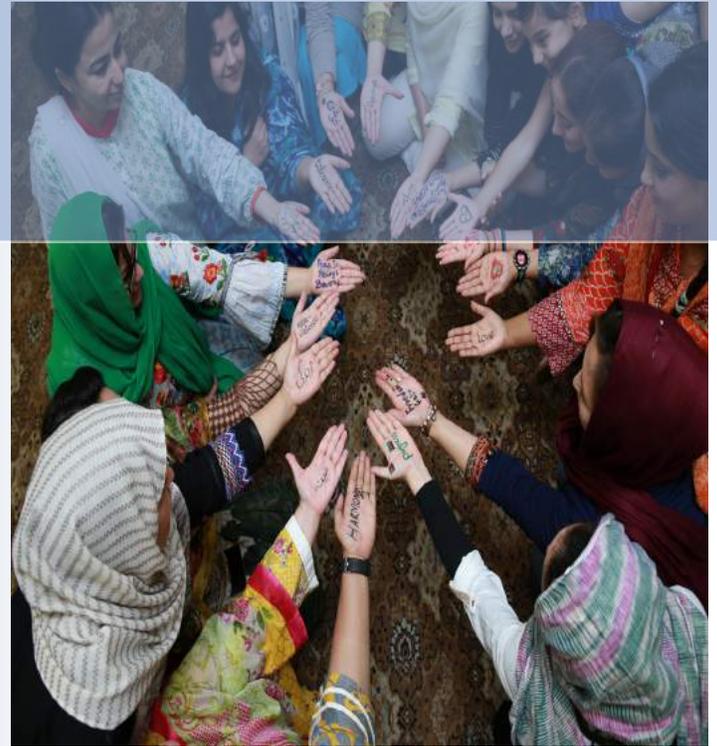
In order to share experience and views and reach a mutual understanding, two peace exchanges were held first in Afghanistan and then, in Pakistan. The events invited the governmental high ranking authorities, CSOs, Peace Activists, academia and media from the Center, provinces and the counterpart country covering a series of panel discussions with participation of distinguished panelists. During both exchanges, the research report was launched publically. Additionally, inputs were collected to develop a strategy paper in order to advocate for countering violent extremism and inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes. Later, the finalized strategy paper was launched during a press conference in Pakistan.



Digital Story Telling

During late September, EPD's peace network members traveled to Pakistan to attend a five-day workshop on "Digital Story Development" to learn skills of creating videos, preparing script, collecting pictures and record sound. As a result, some videos could be made to reflect the real stories of women's struggle in countering radicalization and violent extremisms.

Film screening and storytelling both are excellent



approaches to raise awareness with high impact. Merging these two techniques proved to be even more powerful in emotionally, connecting the audience with the story. EPD will screen the documentaries to mobilize community and call upon women from different levels to stand and take part in peace building.

The stories also will be available online to create more awareness about the impact of radicalization on women, role of women of Afghanistan and Pakistan in countering radicalization and importance of including women in peacebuilding processes.

Commemorating International Peace Day

Each year, EPD celebrates International Peace Day on September 21, to commemorate and honor men and women who lost their lives to end conflict and maintain peace in the country. 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 institutions to mark this event and demonstrate their commitment to support peace. 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.



In terms of social peace building, EPD has been instrumental as it has solved many domestic violence cases in each province. It has also supported reintegration process by encouraging female family members of anti-governmental groups. At the national level, EPD has provided the opportunities for women to share views and ask for policy changes to be more inclusive.

As the theme for this year emphasized on supporting refugees and displaced people, the conferences stressed on precarious situation that Afghan IDPs are suffering due to instability and conflict. Particularly, provinces such as Kunduz, Faryab, Laghman and Helmand which were subjected to collapse asked the authorities for attention for resolving conflict and relief for IDPs.



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Affiliations and Memberships

Salah Consortium

SALAH is a consortium of seven well established Afghan civil society organizations with a combined presence in most of the 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 Women Skill Development Center (AWSDC), Afghsn Women Educational 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.