



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

Since its establishment in early 2010, Equality for Peace and Democracy (EPD) has strived for social development with particular focus on peace building, human rights and good governance. Similar to other quarters, the first quarter of 2019 was a period of struggle to fulfill its mission to empower and strengthen women and youth at the community and build a better Afghanistan.

As Afghanistan is in a stage of peace talks at different levels, EPD advocated for inclusiveness and transparency of the peace process. Extensive media campaigns were conducted in 15 provinces of Afghanistan and a massive demonstration in Kabul was organized to advocate for considering youth and women's role in all stages of the peace process as well as to support Afghan values and achievements towards development gained during past 17 years. EPD also accomplished grass-root peace building initiatives in Laghman and Kunduz to resolve social conflicts and facilitate coordination between formal and

informal peace structures for joint peace initiatives.

During the first quarter of 2019, EPD was engaged in a number of activities to enhance good governance at subnational levels. EPD extended its Government and Civil Society Coordination Forums (GCSCF) to 17 provinces to monitor public service delivery and hold the authorities accountable where the services' quality needed improvement. EPD further raised awareness on the Access to Information Law to encourage citizen through extensive community awareness sessions, radio round-table discussion and networking.

EPD attempted to train 220 women in Bamyan on vocational trainings to financially empower them. Lastly, EPD's 15 Provincial Women Networks (PWN) were registered as separate associations to independently, continue their advocacies for women's local peace and security. The following paragraphs elaborate more on the EPD's activities during the first quarter of 2019.

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EPD in Laghman and Kunduz provinces undertook a series of peace building activities with involvement of formal and informal peace structures as ex-Provincial Peace Committees, religious and community elders and peace and civil society activists. EPD provided capacity building workshops for around 120 PWN members and influential figures of the informal peace structures to enable them to participate in the grass-root level conflict resolution.

During the past few months, EPD established six committees in order to bridge the gap and facilitate coordination for joint activities between formal and informal peace structures in Laghman and Kunduz provinces. The committee members were supported to conduct coordination meetings, 25 community outreach session

(attended by 840 individuals) and preach during the Friday sermons in mosques to spread peace building messages in their communities. Overall, 120 key representatives of the communities from the Centers and districts were mobilized within two provincial dialogues in two provinces to pave the way for interactions of different peace building key stakeholders.

In order to share the lesson learned, link the district and provincial committees with the High peace council at Kabul, EPD hosted a national event on 14th March with participation of 87 attendees and presence of distinguished key speakers and panelists. EPD could involve high ranking official in the program to provide clarification and technical information regarding the current peace process.

Youth Peace Movement



Peace building in Laghman and Kunar

While women and young generations' contribution to development, human right and economic growth in Afghanistan cannot be neglected, their inclusion in peace process raises hopes for meaningful conflict resolution and sustainable peace too. On 3rd March 2019, EPD organized a peaceful demonstration in Shahr-e-Naw Park, emphasizing on role of youth in peace process. This gathering was attended by over 200 youth group and CSO representatives.

youth statement urged that no peace can be sustainable and no process is successful without involving youth into it. This statement included seven recommendations pertaining to availability of youth representatives in peace talks, preserving the gains achieved during the past 17 years, fair selection of youth representatives for the peace process, women inclusion and rejecting provisional government as solution of the conflict. Check EPD's website page to access this statement in English, Dari and Pashtu via the following link:

<http://www.epd-afg.org/research/>

The participants emphasized that women and youth exclusion from the peace process can lead to violation of democratic rights and losing achievements in gender equality and human rights in Afghan communities. At the end of the event, the demonstrators issued a





Media Campaigns for Women Participation in Peace Talks

With five rounds of intra-Afghan peace talks, peace process during past few months encountered critical changes. The talks in Moscow and Douha were concluded while concerns raised regarding women representation and transparency and openness of the process. On the other hand, such marginalization increases threats of losing democratic values such as women's access to education, employment, political participation, freedom of speech and other achievements towards social developments.

EPD along with the rest of prominent CSOs such as AWN organized extensive media campaigns to raise women's voice and advocate for women's role in peace process. EPD's Provincial Women Networks (PWN) conducted 15 media conferences throughout the

country in different provinces of Afghanistan. The conferences covered panel discussions were representatives of governmental entities, academia, Civil Society and women right activists stressed on importance of inclusiveness of the peace talks, determined their redlines and provided recommendations for the involved key stakeholders.

It is worth mentioning that the panel also shared the statement of Afghan women six point agenda for Moscow peace talks. This document had been prepared by AWN based on the views of Afghan women from different walks of life from both the Central and subnational levels. Please refer to the following links to access this statement in Dari and English languages:

http://awn-af.net/index.php/cms/press_detail/1500/12

During this reporting period, EPD registered its Provincial Women Networks (PWN) as independent Associations to ensure sustainability of these platforms. Being trained on important topics such as "Women's Peace and Security" and "UNSCR 1325", the associations' members could acquire adequate information on women related issues. Additionally, took active part in Barometer data collection and developing advocacy strategies for the identified challenges. Accordingly, the associations are experienced enough to independently, work for ensuring women's local peace and security in their communities.

With the support of EPD, the provincial coordinators of each association prepared a new separate charter determining

their aims, objectives and articles for their work area and the structure of the associations. Similar to the previous quarters, Provincial Women Associations continued data collection on women's concern regarding their local peace and security in light of UNSCR 1325 utilizing the Barometer research. Barometer is an innovative approach that engages women in identifying and communicating their needs, and empowers them to engage with relevant stakeholders to design and implement solution.

Lastly, In each province, 30 members were involved in data collection and overall 1800 barometer interviewees were conducted. After a simple analysis, the Barometer findings will be incorporated to prepare advocacy strategies and address the identified challenges.

Provincial Women Associations



EPD in Bamyan has initiated women entrepreneurship aimed to promote women economic empowerment. Pertaining to this, EPD has conducted a Rapid Market Assessment (RMA) in Bamyan to study barriers of women's access to market, available opportunities and viable sectors for women entrepreneurship. You can access this report by checking the following link:

<http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Opportunities-Barriers-for-Women-Entrepreneurs%E2%80%99-Access-to-Bamyan-Markets.pdf>

During this quarter, EPD compiled a list of 220 women with dire economic situation and women with prospect to develop a thriving entrepreneurship who will participate in the vocational

trainings. It should be mentioned that in preparing the final beneficiary list, EPD received support of Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyr and disabled (DoLSAMD), Department of Women Affairs (DoWA), Bamyan PWN and the Rural Industries. Furthermore for ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, a monitoring committee with active presence of DoWA and prominent CSOs has been established for oversight of the activities.

As per the findings of the rapid market assessment and this survey (which serves as training need assessment), EPD will offer courses on basic and advanced tailoring, beauty parlor and hair dressing and Barak weaving. Furthermore, the beneficiaries will receive toolkits to support them start an entrepreneurship or develop their businesses.

Celebration of the International Women's Day



Women economic empowerment in Bamyan



Similar to the previous years, EPD and Provincial Women Associations marked the international women's day by conducting events and awareness programs in both the Center and provinces under their coverage area. EPD collected Afghan men and women's voices that strongly supported gender equality and women's rights. It was emphasized that women do not want symbolic presence instead their meaningful inclusion should be promoted in society.

Rasooli (Deputy Director of EPD) and Moqadasa Attalwala (Civil Society Activist) shared their congratulation messages, admired the gains women have made and encourage further coordination in women related initiatives and their active participation in key areas as peace building, development, politics and closing gender gaps. The recorded videos have been broadcasted through EPD's Facebook page on a daily basis for one week started from 8th of March.

The Provincial Women Distinguished figures as Ms. Liah Jawad (Director of Feminine Solidarity for Justice), Ms. Najiba Ayobi (Director of the Killid Radio), Mr. Raz Mohammad Dalili (Director for Sanaee Development organization), Ms. Forozan

Associations as independent entities in some of the provinces conducted celebration events with participation of prominent CSO and women right activists and key representative of the governmental directorates.



Access to Justice

Accountable Service Delivery

EPD along with the other members of Salah (consisted of CPAU, PTRO, SDO and TLO) has undertaken an initiative towards the enhancement of access to justice in five provinces of Nangarhar, Kunduz, Kandahar, Balkh and Khost. The aim of this initiative is to strengthen the engagement of CSOs and their networks and also to lobby and advocate for improved access to and quality of justice provision, especially for women in both formal and informal justice system. Pertaining to this, EPD in Nangarhar created a network of the governmental entities and local CSOs which provides legal aids including Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), Afghanistan Prosecutor Association (APA) and Afghanistan Women Judge Association (AWJA) and many

other local CSOs. In the first quarter of 2019, EPD's network continued conducting monthly meetings to coordinate with the Justice sectors, share the identified cases and challenges and find solutions for resolving them. For raising awareness on public access to formal justice and legal process of the cases two radio and TV round table discussions were held. In addition, as a result of a recent advocacy for eradicating human right deviations in judicial system, EPD installed two complaint boxes in the Justice Department and the Attorney Office in this province. It was agreed to check the boxes under supervision of a board consisted of the Salah Consortium and the Justice sector.

With the aim to promote the development of a stronger role for civil society including citizens in local governance, in 2018, EPD established 10 Government & Civil Society Coordination Forums (GCCF). EPD enhanced capacity of these forums to conduct activities such as awareness raising, networking and advocacy to enable CSOs and associations to monitor local government's service delivery. With the financial and technical support of UNDP, this project was implemented in the 10 provinces of Paktia, Panjshir, Khost, Bamyán, Kandahar, Herat, Daikundi, Kapisa, Balkh and Nangarhar.

During the first quarter of 2019, EPD expanded the coverage area for this project from 10 to 17 provinces and included other

provinces of Kabul, Kunduz, Sare-Pul, Paktika, Uruzgan, Helmand and Nimruz. Currently, EPD is in the inception phase and is mapping local CSOs in the new provinces to create new GCCFs. In next step similar to other provinces, EPD will enhance the GCCFs' capacity in monitoring and social audit to enable them to hold the authorities accountable for the quality of services.

Moreover, extensive awareness raising will be conducted in all 17 provinces and the forums will approach municipalities and provincial council for conducting social audits. This will be facilitated through a memorandum of understanding signed between the mentioned entities and the civil society organizations.

Capacity Building Activities in Paktia & Balkh



With the support of USAID, EPD in Paktia and Balkh is building CSOs' capacity to monitor education sector aimed to promote transparent and accountable service delivery. Till now, EPD has established two provincial CSO education oversight committees and identified 588 community-based monitors in these two provinces. After being trained, the committee and the monitors will oversee schools based on a detailed action plan and monitoring tools. Additionally, the monitors will visit schools in villages and districts to check and verify their data hence contribute to quality of education services.

During the past quarter, EPD prepared two case studies and a manual on Methods of Oversight and trained the CSO education oversight committee

members on them. EPD also started imparting similar capacity building workshops for the selected community-based monitors. EPD will continue enhancing capacity on the School Data Verification and Access to Information to enable the mentioned oversight platform to advocate and oversee the subnational education sector.

EPD has signed an agreement with the Department of Education in Paktia for joint activities which highly supports school oversight activities and facilitating a better coordination. Within the future quarters, EPD will further coach and mentor the committee and the monitors to conduct social audits and raise citizen's awareness.

Access to information



In 2014, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) passed the Access to Information Law (ATI) that gives clear entry points to empower citizens to increase accountability of the government. To further improve this law, a Presidential order was issued in October 2016 and an amended Access to Information Law was endorsed through Presidential Decree in March 2018. As a result, both the legal and policy framework supporting access to information is stronger. All these factors work in tandem to bridge rights holders and duty bearers, increase the understanding of the public in their rights, increase the accountability of the government at the national and sub-national level to uphold its service delivery responsibility.

Aimed to increase awareness and support the local governance, during the first quarter of 2019, EPD in Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman conducted capacity building sessions on Access To Information (ATI) Law for almost 90 representatives of civil society and community-based organizations.

EPD facilitated roundtable discussions through local radios with presence of distinguished CSO and governmental organizations' representatives to spread awareness on ATI and thus enhance accountable service delivery. Last but not least, EPD conducted wide awareness raising sessions for over 2000 male and female individuals from across the community spectrum within 42 sessions.

