

# Profile

## EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy



Promoting Culture of Coexistence, Accountability, and peace for All

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# Our History



EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) is a non-profit non-governmental organization dedicated to empower women and youth at the community and policy levels in Afghanistan. Our aim is to increase capacity of CSO's at the village and district level in order for them to be the front face of their needs in development, peace building and democratic process in the country.

EPD was founded in 2010 to progress the rights of women and youth and address their absence as beneficiaries of, and decision makers in, development. Our purpose was to prioritise partnership and respect for women's capacity, agency and human rights in all areas of development –priorities which remain at the core of our work today.

Over our 9-year history, EPD has worked with various program partners on gender mainstreaming, inclusion of women in peace processes, local governance, women's access to justice, and IDP's children education across 18 provinces in Afghanistan.

Today we focus our partnership work and collaborate on research, advocacy and policy through national and regional platforms, and coalitions. It seeks to promote changes in policy and practice towards gender equality and the full realisation of women's rights, and to empower women and youth as agents of this change.

EPD continues to respect and acknowledge the life cycle experiences of diverse women and girls. EPD has always understood that women are not a homogenous group and that gender-based discrimination intersects with other sources of discrimination including race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion and sociocultural background, which can further limit access and deepen inequalities.



## Our Vision

“EPD envisions Afghanistan to be a peaceful, prosperous and democratic state, where all Afghans enjoy equal rights without any form of discrimination.”

## Our Mission

“EPD’s mission is to empower and strengthen women and youth at the community and policy levels to build coalitions and networks and promote human rights, peace and good governance.”

## Our Goals for 2019 – 2023

1. Peace building
2. Promote women’s leadership and participation, Strengthen their safety and security and accelerate their economic empowerment
3. Strengthen access to quality education, health and hygiene facilities
4. Serve Internally Displace Persons (IDPs) and Returnees
5. Promote good governance and make government accountable for service delivery

# Our Values



## Gender equality

We respect women's diverse experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths and strive to empower women to realise their full and equal rights.

## Accountable

We are honest and transparent and are committed to evaluating and communicating the outcomes of our work with integrity. We are accountable to our partners, our supporters and, most of all the diverse women we work with.

## Collaborative

We build trusting relationships and strong partnerships as we believe that advancing together with other organisations and networks is crucial for achieving progressive change.

## Transformative

We are determined to make real, lasting improvements in women's lives by working to transform the root causes of gender inequality and holding governments and decision makers accountable.

## Strategic Areas

### Peace Building

EPD works to encourage and influence the people of Afghanistan, men and women alike, to participate and engage in peace building and conflict prevention, mediation, and resolution.

### Good Governance

In contributing towards improvement of governance, EPD aims to increase transparency and accountability of public institutions for the use of public resources and policies. EPD strengthens communities by engaging them in the process of budget planning, implementation and monitoring and reporting of development programs.

### Human Rights

Peace and good governance are critical to ensuring respect for human rights. EPD takes a rights-based approach to development by implementing programming that aims to empower all people of Afghanistan to know and exercise their rights as Afghan citizens regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or other factors.

# Approaches

In support of these objectives, EPD uses the following approaches:

## Research and Assessment

Identifying the roots of a problem or issue is the most important step towards addressing it. EPD carries out research and assessments in the areas of peace, human rights, gender and governance to identify and address the root causes of the problems at hand. EPD uses its research arm as a foundation and reference for all program development and advocacy activities.

## Training and Capacity Building

EPD focuses on training and capacity building as a means to provide the people of Afghanistan with the tools to take active roles as agents of change in their respective communities. EPD develops and implements capacity building trainings on a range of issues related to peace, human rights, gender, good governance, accountability, advocacy and leadership at the local, sub-national and national level. These activities are meant to enable people to identify issues and challenges affecting their lives and communities, to build alliances with other groups, and to address the issues themselves or advocate for solutions.

## Advocacy and Awareness

Public support is necessary to advocate for change. In order to have public support, it is necessary to raise awareness about the issues, challenges and opportunities and mobilize people for demanding change. EPD carries out advocacy activities at the provincial, national and international levels.

## Mobilization

EPD believes in building partnerships and inclusive approaches. This entails developing partnerships and platforms at the local, national, and international level to encourage support for and foster wide-reaching involvement in EPD's projects and initiatives.

## Coverage Area

EPD has expanded its coverages area extensively and has reached out to twenty one provinces namely:

1. Kabul
2. Nangarhar
3. Balkh
4. Herat
5. Panjshir
6. Kapisa
7. Bamyan
8. Daikundi
9. Parwan
10. Faryab
11. Kandahar
12. Helmand
13. Uruzgan
14. Paktia
15. Laghman
16. Badakhshan
17. Kunduz
18. Khost
19. Sar-e-Pul
20. Nimruz
21. Paktika

## Strategic Partnerships and Networks

EPD is a member of SALAH Consortium, a consortium of six members including AWEC, CPAU, PTRO, SDO, TLO and EPD working in the field of peace building, governance and development.

EPD is the fiscal agent in Afghanistan for Women's Regional Network.

# Platforms

The organization has established three platforms; Afghan Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA), the Provincial Women’s Network (PWN) and Government and Civil society Coordination Forum (GCCF) to carry out its mission.



## Provincial Women’s Network (PWN)

EPD has established Provincial Women’s Network (PWN) in 2012 as a platform to strengthen the role of women in social, political, development, advocacy and decision-making processes. It also brings women from different walks of life together for training and capacity building and to establish coalitions and alliances amongst themselves and with other groups in their communities. The Provincial Women’s Network currently has 450 members and active in 15 provinces of Afghanistan.

EPD provided numerous rounds of awareness raising and capacity building programs for PWNs on different topics including “1325 UNSCR”, “Women Peace and Security”, “Community-based Monitoring Mechanism” to enable them to advocate for women’s local peace and security. During late 2018 and early 2019, EPD supported PWN to get registered as independent association aimed to ensure their sustainability and long-term functioning.

The PWNs utilized an evidence-based research called Barometer to identify women challenges in communities and accordingly design advocacy strategies to address them. Since their establishment, PWNs could address many community issues such as reaching out to detained women and distributing health kits to them, supporting internally displaced households during conflict and collapse of districts, reducing high bride price rates in Paktia.

## Afghans’ Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA)

Afghans’ Coalition for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) is currently working in seven provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, Herat, Bamyan, Faryab, Kapisa and Panjshir and has 240 active members. In last few years, EPD expanded the Afghans’ Coalition for Accountability and Transparency from a Kabul-based platform to a network involving Afghan men, women, and youth and civil society organizations in five provinces of Afghanistan. Members have been given trainings on peace, transition, conflict resolution, anti-corruption, transparency and accountability, good governance, the national budget, social audit, access to information law and community based monitoring.

# Platforms



Through ACTA, EPD has been reviewing Afghan government National Budget since 1391 (2012). EPD has been the first Afghan civil society organization pioneering utilization of the national budget as an advocacy tool for monitoring government service delivery. Through the ACTA platform, villages and communities have solved drinking water issues, asphalted roads, advocated for schools and education for girls, and many other achievements through non-violent coordination and cooperation with local government. In each ACTA province, ACTA networks held conferences on rule of law and justice to discuss issues of violence against women as well as numerous rounds of awareness raising and dialogues for transparency and accountable service delivery.

## Government and Civil Society Coordination Forum (GCCF)

In order to foster link and to develop a strong partnership between the Government and Civil Society, EPD with the support of UNDP created networks entitled "Government and Civil Society Coordination Forum (GCCF)". These forums identify areas that need support for improved and accountable service in the national and sub-national level and accordingly manage programs such as awareness raising, advocacies and social audits. As a result of GCCF advocacy activities a number of achievements have been gained which brought positive changes in the communities such as collecting expired medicine and food stuff, rehabilitation of a school in Khost, cooperation with the governmental in land acquisition for public hospital construction in Panjshir, encouraging citizens to pay property taxes (Mahsool Safaee), etc.

GCCFs are established and functional in 17 provinces spanning; Bamyan, Daikundi, Herat, Nangarhar, Balkh, Kandahar, Panjshir, Kapisa, Khost, Paktia, Uruzgan, Sar-e-Pul, Nimruz, Kunduz, Kabul, Paktika and Helmand.

# Strategic Achievements



## Policy

EPD has established itself as one of the lead civil society organizations advocating for gender-based public policy and legislation. For example, the Ministry of Women's Affairs drafted two Policy Actions for increasing girls' enrollment in primary and higher education, which were then shelved. EPD took the initiative to renew discussions on these policies, assisting MoWA in improving them through consultation with civil society, and presented them to the Ministries of Education and Higher Education as well as the Women and Education Commissions of Parliament. Both Policy Actions were subsequently submitted to the Office of the President and were approved as a result of EPD's advocacy efforts. EPD successfully established a civil society corner and resource center for female Parliamentarians, functioning as a bridge to members of the parliament and increasing the access and interaction of female parliamentarians with the Afghan people and civil society. The research center served to assist female parliamentarians with resources and best practices from other countries, providing them with up-to-date facilities including internet, printing, copying, and also resource information.

## Awareness raising

EPD has also managed to successfully engage with religious leaders by effectively promoting its objectives of peacebuilding, human rights, women's empowerment, and good governance through an Islamic perspective. EPD organized Awareness Raising Workshops and Interactive Discussions with more than 5,000 young student and non-student boys emphasizing a culture of tolerance, do-no-harm, and nonviolence. Through religious leaders, EPD also organized workshops and interactive discussions for more than 10,000 community elders, girls, boys and parents raising awareness on educational rights of women from Islamic perspective. This initiative focused on taking religious leaders out of mosques and going to the communities. EPD undertook a project promoting women's political participation through four TV and radio spots in Dari and Pahsto based on specific verses of Holy Quran promoting women's political participation during parliamentary election, which was supported by the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs.

# Strategic Achievements



## Women economic empowerment

The World Bank's 2012 World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development highlights that gender equality can improve economic productivity and improve overall welfare of societies. This thinking portrays gender equity as smart economics – where women can help meet demands of the labor market. In economic terms women participation in the labor force is seen as a factor to overcome shortages in labor supply and help increase overall productivity in the existing markets. Women's participation in labor force in Afghanistan is very low. According to the Central Statistic Organizations in 2016, at national level, men constituted 81% and female constituted 29% of the labor force.

Aimed to support women economic independence, EPD along with AWSDC provided tailoring training for 270 women in Kabul during 2016. The beneficiaries were from vulnerable women including women who faced VAW and those who had to seek shelter in the women protection centers. Besides skill training, they were further trained on leadership and business management to help them learn market skills and be able to start their own small businesses.

At the provincial level, EPD targeted 220 women in Bamyán province to train them on skills based on market demand. EPD started the courses from April 2019 offering basic and advanced tailoring, beauty/hair dressing and weaving courses. EPD will also support the beneficiaries to prepare business for their entrepreneurship. Small grants will be provided to ensure women economic empowerment and sustainable thriving businesses.

# Strategic Achievements



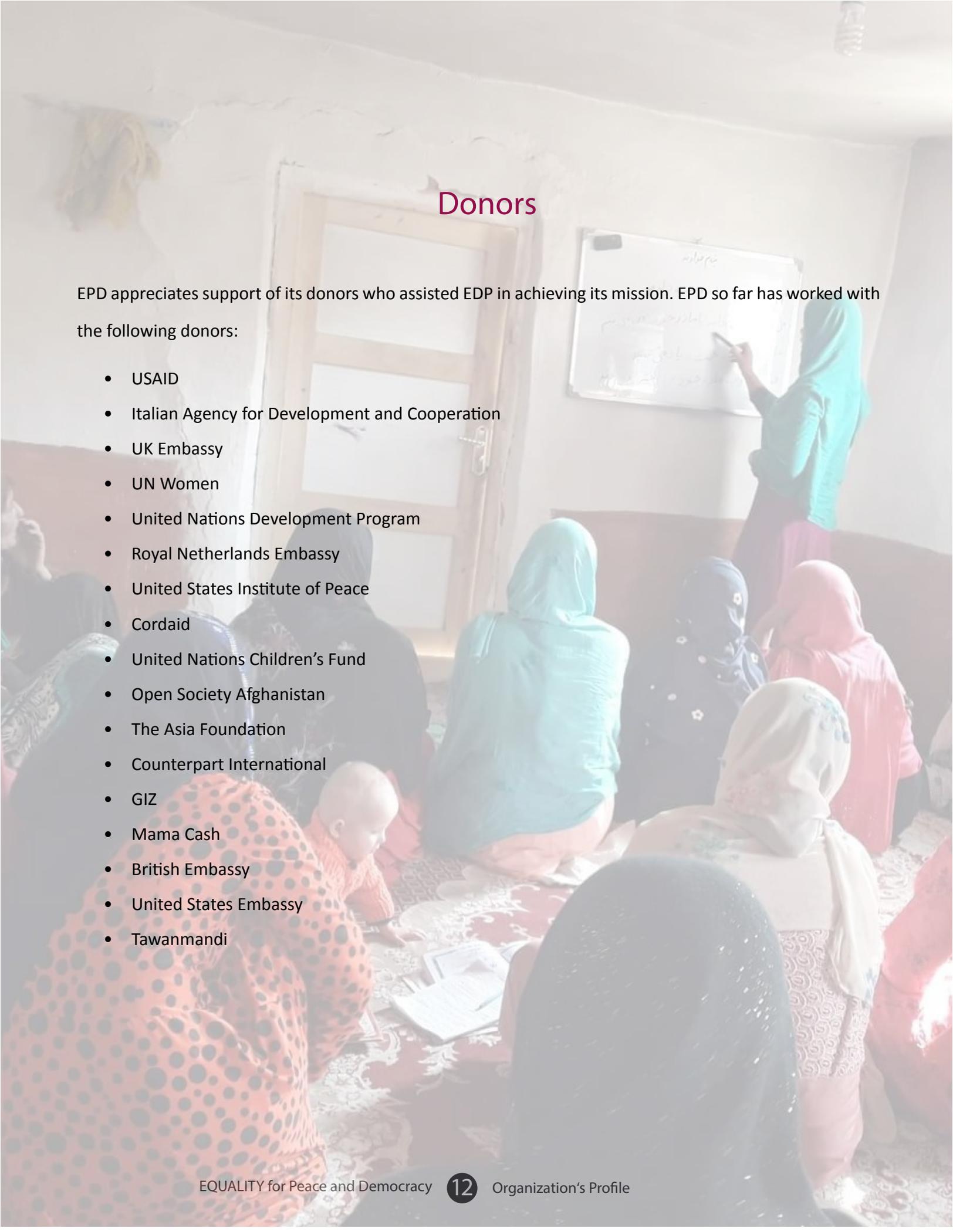
## Social audit

During last 2018, EPD's ACTA network and GCCFs conducted social audits of service delivery projects in 10 provinces of Afghanistan with engagement of civil society and locals. Utilizing access to information law, community people were able to receive information regarding the projects including proposal and budget documents. Additionally, site visits, technical quality check and interviews with the authorities and the clients were conducted to collect data. Finally, citizen with support of civil society were supported to hold their authorities accountable for the quality of the services.

Via this activity, the ACTA network and GCCFs could audit municipal projects and services such as customer service centers, municipal shop renting, tax collection process, garbage collection, vehicle station's road construction and food distribution for malnourished children.

## Advocacy for women participation in Election

In pursuance of NAP 1325's aim towards women political inclusion, EPD's PWNs organized extensive campaign to encourage women's participation as voters during the election for the Afghan parliament on 2019. Accordingly, extensive campaigns for over 1000 locals in different villages regarding women political participation and right to vote were conducted. As a result more than 150 women were introduced during elections to work as Observers. In total EPD reached out to more than 4000 women to sensitize them on their role to vote. These women were later on accompanied by the PWN and Provincial Coordinator on the day of elections to vote and assist them in the process of voting.

The background image shows a woman in a teal hijab standing and writing on a whiteboard. She is in a room with several other women sitting on the floor, facing her. The room has a wooden door and a white wall. The whiteboard has some text written on it in Arabic script. The overall scene appears to be a training or educational session.

## Donors

EPD appreciates support of its donors who assisted EDP in achieving its mission. EPD so far has worked with the following donors:

- USAID
- Italian Agency for Development and Cooperation
- UK Embassy
- UN Women
- United Nations Development Program
- Royal Netherlands Embassy
- United States Institute of Peace
- Cordaid
- United Nations Children's Fund
- Open Society Afghanistan
- The Asia Foundation
- Counterpart International
- GIZ
- Mama Cash
- British Embassy
- United States Embassy
- Tawanmandi