



Joint Action Plan

Meaningful Participation of Women in Afghanistan Peace Process

16 & 17 December 2020

Following the training of women leaders, activists and religious leaders in Kabul and four (Paktya, Kunduz, Kandahar and Uruzgan) provinces about “**Women’s Rights in Light of Islam**”, EQUALITY for Peace and Democracy (EPD) held two days National Conference to provide platform for 150 women and religious leaders from center and provinces to exchange views on engagement of women in peace process.

While in first day of the event, the participants had their internal discussions and developed the Join Action Plan, in the second day, they interacted with Policymakers, Women Leaders, Islamic Scholars, Deputy Minister of Women’s Affairs, Chairman of Women’s Rights Commission of Parliament, Member of Negotiating Team and Chairman of High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR).

The participants highlighted the obstacles that are preventing women’s meaningful participation in the peace process and discussed holistic interventions as below for addressing them:

1. Women’s participation in the peace process especially at the political level is still insignificant and largely symbolic. *At least 30% of the Negotiating Team and HCNR should be women with track record of working for women’s rights. (HE President and HE Chairman of HCNR)*
2. Although women are included in public meetings and events, but in the backdoor negotiations and shuttle diplomacies where all the important matters are discussed and decided, women are missing. *Women should be consulted and included in all such meetings in order to present their views and to be vigilant of the situation. (HE President, HE Chairman of HCNR and International Community)*
3. Women are mostly invited by policymakers, politicians and international community only to discuss issues related to women. *As equal citizens of this country, women’s views should be taken into consideration about all affairs of the country including economy, good governance, military, security, education, health and so on. (HE President, HE Chairman of HCNR and International Community)*
4. While Taliban say, that their views about women have changed, there is not a single woman in their negotiating team. *For building trust with women, Taliban should prove their words to be true by having some women in their negotiating team (Taliban, Pakistan and Qatar)*
5. Due to the lack of awareness, people often conflate traditions, cultural practices and social norms with Islamic practices especially when it comes to women’s rights. *We need to raise awareness amongst men and women about the rights of women granted in Islam religion. (Ministries of Hajj and Religious Affairs, Women’s Affairs, Education, Civil Society and Religious Leaders)*
6. The source of the limited knowledge of community Mullahs about everything, including the women are the *Madrassas* teaching the most conservative interpretations of Islam. *We need to organize trainings for community Mullahs about progressive interpretation of Islam by renowned scholars. (Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and Civil Society)*

7. Most of influential religious leaders and Islamic scholars who are educated in conservative Islamic countries are trying to adopt the same model in Afghanistan. *We need to establish modern Madrasses and Centers of Excellence in Afghanistan to prevent import of conservative ideologies and produce our own scholars to support an open and progressive model of Islam for Afghanistan. (Ministry of Education)*
8. Despite being a Muslim country, unfortunately Afghanistan lacks the institutions and capacity to conduct researches on different issues including women's rights from Islamic perspective. *We need to conduct studies and provide evidence based information to the society on women's rights from Islamic perspective. (Ministry of Higher Education, Civil Society and Islamic Scholars)*
9. There are more than 120,000 mosques in Afghanistan in which Mullahs deliver weekly Friday sermons and routinely speak against women's rights that reflects the deep rooted misogyny. *Guidelines should be developed for the Friday sermons and the sermons should be monitored on regular basis. (Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs, Civil Society)*
10. In Islamic countries, DAR-AL-IFTAA is the only authorized and legitimate source and address for issuing Fatwas on different issues based on verses of holy Quran and Hadiths. *In Afghanistan we have to establish a credible DAR-AL-IFTAA where qualified scholars with progressive ideology and knowledge of other Islamic countries with moderate rights for women to review contradictory issues and provide final verdict. (Supreme Court and Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs)*
11. Most of the peace building initiatives and the events related to Intra-Afghan dialogue are taking place in Kabul while the war and extremism is in the villages and provinces of Afghanistan. Peace process should be not simply be confined to the national level, rather there should be multiple levels of it, each supporting and feeding the other. We need to foster community dialogues between women, religious leaders and community elders to stimulate discussions in communities and raise awareness of communities on women's rights and the peace process. **(Civil Society Organizations)**.
12. Interaction of women activists and religious scholars with their counterparts in other Muslim countries to build transnational ties that serve in multiple domains. To explore and study laws related to women's employment, participation in politics, violence against women, family, inheritance and health in those countries. *Dialogues should be arranged between these groups as it will create a platform for them to share their experiences and learn from them. (Civil Society Organizations)*.
13. Collaboration of the government with other Muslim countries: *There is a lot for Afghanistan to learn from other Muslims countries in terms of how they manage to strike a balance between Islam and democracy. (Ministries of Haj and Religious Affairs and Peace Affairs and Civil Society)*
14. To attain peace at the community level and to successfully break the vicious circle of repeated conflict social reconciliation mechanism has to be established at the community level—provide support to women activists, religious leaders, CSOs at the provincial level in social reconciliation efforts in order to reduce deep-seated anger, prejudices, and misunderstandings among different groups. *Social reconciliation interventions specifically designed to foster intergroup understanding and strengthen nonviolent conflict resolution mechanism at the community level should take place. (Civil Society Organizations)*
15. For peace to be sustainable a national healing process is vital. We need to support and facilitate professionalization of community efforts and increase knowledge on social healing methods, amnesty and reparations processes, and truth and reconciliation among the community people. **(Civil Society Organizations)**

16. While on one hand the Taliban speak about their evolved view about women's rights, their ground fighters are still stoning women to death in communities, women rights activists are assassinated and girls schools are burnt. *We need to create an effective community level monitoring mechanism for monitoring situation of women post peace deal and publicly expose those groups who are violating women's rights or assassinating women (Civil Society Organizations and Afghan Human Rights Commission)*

For any political deal to be successful, social peace is very important. Afghan women working at the policy and grassroots level and religious leaders as two important forces of the society who both have suffered due to war, insecurity, injustice and corruption, need to joint their efforts and collaborate in building social peace and brining harmony in their communities.

The training that was provided by EPD to women and Mullahs proved to be very effective in not only raising awareness on women's rights in light of Islam but also providing the platform for women and religious leaders to have dialogues, exchange views, build confidence and develop a Joint Action Plan for strengthening women's engagement in the peace process and raise joint voice for women's rights and sustainable and just peace in Afghanistan.

Women Rights Training in Light of Islam and the National Conference on Engagement of Women in Peace Process was supported by EU – Afghanistan Peace Support Mechanism.