



*Afghan Women's Position Paper on the Occasion of the July 8, 2012 Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan in Tokyo, Japan
June 2012*

Afghan Women's Network, its member organizations, and individual members welcome the efforts of Afghanistan and international interlocutors to renew their commitment to the stability and self-reliance of the Afghan nation at the upcoming Tokyo conference on July 8, 2012.

We call on the Afghan government and the International Community to ensure that the benchmarks of a successful transition and decade of transformation are defined using a gender lens. While new commitments and benchmarks will be set internationally in Tokyo, we should not ignore that there are many unfulfilled commitments at the domestic level where women are concerned which still require attention.

We stress that for strengthened democracy and accountability—both central themes of the upcoming conference—Afghanistan needs an independent civil society, most importantly strong women groups that can survive the patriarchy embedded in the ruling institutions and be change agents for an inclusive and just society. To maintain the integrity and independence of civil society, allocation of resources for building the capacity, transparency and operations of non-governmental institutions must be allocated and managed more independently outside the government controlled fund. Further, we believe the commitments contained in the 22 national priority programs require a holistic gender budgeting approach if they are to directly benefit women and have an impact on women's political participation.

Afghan women want to see a clearly planned initiative designed to engage them in discussions on the future of Afghanistan and life beyond 2014. They also stress the importance of their participation in the ongoing peace and reconstruction processes.

This Position Paper reflects the concerns and recommendations of over 200 Afghan women leaders who participated in a series of consultations in eight regional zones, as well as a two-day forum held in Kabul on June 11-12, 2012.

The Consultation Meetings and the Kabul Forum were conducted for the purpose of gathering information for and preparation of this Position Paper to reflect women's voices and needs, with the intention of integrating them into the documents which will be finalized at the Tokyo Conference, including the Tokyo Declaration/ Communiqué and the Mutual Accountability Framework annexed to the Tokyo outcome document.

The following are the priorities and key recommendations of Afghan women in the five outlined areas of concern for consideration at the Tokyo Conference.

Good Governance:

- Draft and approve a special law for a quota system to ensure women's participation in different government processes and levels in order to ensure their active and productive participation in decision makings and leading equally.

- Monitor the implementation of existing gender strategies such as those included in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), and upcoming National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- Establish consultative and easily manageable mechanisms to address economic, social, cultural and political needs of women.
- Ensure political, administrative, and judicial oversight for the implementation of activities related to the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), Convention on Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW), and UN Security Resolution 1325 plus all related resolutions.
- Employ a joint civil society-government working group to conduct a gendered review of key laws and policies that impact women's political and social participation.
- Resource long-term training for the security forces and judicial sector on human rights, especially women rights and gender.

Mutual Accountability:

- Increase donor accountability to deliver on stated goals and objectives related to support for women and improved livelihoods.
- Establish an independent monitoring and review committee, primarily led by civil society, tasked with overseeing implementation of development projects and programs.
- Provide long-term support for the strengthening of civil society organizations, particularly women-focused organizations; funds allocated by the international community should be implemented in coordination with relevant Afghan government bodies, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan should develop a plan to maintain this support post-2014.
- Establish a Women's Organizations Support Monitoring mechanism in order to: identify the specific aid dedicated to supporting women that is channeled through GIRoA and the international community; monitor how much of this assistance reaches women and supports sustainable development; and ensure gender is mainstreamed within government-administered programming. This monitoring should be coordinated with the Parliament with direct inclusion of civil society and women-led organizations, and should work to ensure aid effectively supports the sustainability and growth of women-led organizations.
- Develop an information sharing mechanism to increase transparency and public awareness of donor priorities, funding mechanisms, and existing women-focused programs.

Peace and Reintegration:

The peace process should be based on justice, transparency and accountability. The peace process should not victimize women in the process of reintegrating fighters

- Increase the presence of women on Provincial Peace Councils with the inclusion of three women from civil society on each council.
- Increase the number of women on the High Peace Council from 9 to 15 to better balance women's presence in this platform.
- Leverage the large number of women available and interested in participating in various stages of the APRP—from planning to implementation and negotiations.
- Plan and implement strategic awareness and information sharing through the print and electronic media is needed to cover the achievements of women members of the High Peace Council and

Provincial Peace Councils to bring a prospective of change in people's mindset on why it is important for women to participate in the peace process and negotiations.

- Raise awareness of the High Peace Council's strategy toward the reconciliation and reintegration processes through media to encourage inclusiveness, transparency, and a people-owned peace process that could be trusted and supported by all Afghans.
- Ensure transitional and relocation assistance for reintegrated insurgents is not only given in the form of cash; focus should be on providing education, employment, and other relevant opportunities for better living conditions.
- Conduct regular dialogues every three months with the reintegrated insurgents in cooperation with the local councils, influential persons, and women to build trust and interaction among the local communities and the newly joined insurgent.
- Support women's organizations to monitor and evaluate the peace process with attention to issues related to women, peace, and security.
- Ensure adequate security for the men and women serving in the peace process.

International Community Commitment beyond 2014:

- Expand development programs and the construction of infrastructure with a gender lens to open opportunities for equal participation of women.
- Unify the many international donors with a consistent strategy for the reconstruction, stabilization, and development of Afghanistan.
- Condition international aid on good, transparent, and accountable governance.
- Facilitate trilateral monitoring (international community, government of Afghanistan, civil society) of the implementation of commitments made at the Tokyo Conference.
- Identify civil society organizations as a partner.

Gender Budgeting:

All government agencies should be mandated to collect sex-disaggregated data and statistics for the purpose of investigating whether the needs of both women and men are being addressed. This is the first step in planning for effective gender budgeting. Similarly, all government agencies should be required to assess the conditions of both men and women before and after the implementation of policies, programs, and projects to evaluate the impact on the lives of both. The following sectors and issue areas, as per the consultations with women, should be prioritized for gendered budget allocations.

Education Sector:

- Invest in quality education nationwide, taking into consideration minimum standards and provision of safe schooling environments.
- Provide accelerated training for female teachers in remote districts.
- Enhance civ-mil coordination to improve security in areas surrounding girls' schools.
- Monitor the impact of transition on girls' access to education and respond to negative trends.
- Incorporate curriculum on women's rights, gender-based violence, and the value of women's political participation.

Health Sector:

- Increase clinics dedicated to providing health services to mothers and children in villages, in addition to community-based solutions such as expanding opportunities for midwifery trainings.
- Increase the number of professional female health personnel through affirmative action policies, provision of necessary working facilities, creating an enabling environment for women, mentoring female graduates of medical universities, providing intensives to the families of female medical students, and engaging with communities to raise awareness of the value of allowing female family members to join the health sector.

Security Sector:

- Increase the number of women serving in the Afghan National Police by addressing the institutional and environmental barriers to their participation.
- Provide security to female judges, defense lawyers and prosecutors in the criminal justice sector.
- Expand the pool of defense attorneys trained to defend women in gender-based violence cases.
- Allocate funds for awareness raising through print, audio and video media on the Elimination of Violence against Women Law.
- Include qualified women in decision-making levels in the criminal justice sector, with a specific emphasis on the Supreme Court.
- Improve women's access to justice in remote areas through bridging the formal and informal justice sector, and community-based trainings for elders and influential leaders on elimination of violence against women and gender based violence.

Economic Sector:

- Promote women's participation in the commercial sector, including in factories and industrial production.
- Provide long-term, mid- and large-sized loans to women for commercial enterprise development.
- Maintain support for long-term programs for women's economic growth at provincial and district levels.
- Establish agricultural cooperatives for women in the villages for the growth of their activities in the areas of agriculture and increased income generation.
- Support civil society-led monitoring mechanisms tasked with oversight of planned economic development and the balanced allocation of resources to all Afghan citizens.
- Make accommodations for the special needs of working women such as childcare facilities, accelerated training programs, and combating sexual harassment in the workplace.

Political Sector:

- Increase women's political capacities.
- Allocate funds for the establishment of an institute for women's political and leadership training.
- Allocate funds for awareness and change in the public mindset about the value of women's political participation.