



Afghan Women's Network
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Policy Brief: Afghan Women Empowerment in Security Sector

June 2016

Introduction

Afghanistan¹ has been the center of discussions of global policy makers in the past 15 years. One of venues where Afghanistan's sustainable peace and security, improvement of the security forces and allocation of more financial and technical support has been discussed is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summits². In 2012 Chicago NATO Summit³, the head of states reaffirmed their commitment to support Afghanistan beyond 2014 security transition. In 2014 Wales NATO Summit⁴, the heads of states agreed to provide more technical support to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) through financial and capacity support. The next NATO Summit is scheduled on 8 and 9 July, 2016 in Warsaw Poland⁵. In this summit long term commitment to Afghanistan through enduring partnership will be of immense importance for Afghanistan.

Afghan Women's Network, a leading advocacy platform for women's rights in Afghanistan has been closely watching the progress of women in security sector, providing inputs and publishing research and consultation findings for improving women's situation and contribution in the past 15 years. Similarly AWN has collaborated with ISAF/ NATO in Afghanistan to provide strategic recommendations on improving status of women in security sector. AWN's approach to consult women across the country and bring their perspective is unique and inclusive. For 2016 Warsaw NATO summit, AWN has consulted women ONLY in security sector. The fact that international community will reaffirm their financial commitments towards ANSF, AWN reached out to over 200 women in Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Defense (MoD) and National Directorate of Security in Kabul and 8 regional zones. The purposes of these consultations were to discuss with women in security sector on their progresses, current challenges and their own solutions.

This policy brief is the result of 10 consultations Afghan Women's Network (AWN) held prior to Warsaw 2016 NATO Summit. AWN as per its strategic priority "women, peace and security" aims to present this policy brief to Afghan government and international community including NATO and Resolute Support in Afghanistan prior to the July NATO Summit. Through this paper AWN provides first hand information about the situation of women in the security sector and seek immediate attention and action of all relevant actors to further strengthening women's role, participation and leadership in this sector.

¹ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NATO_summit

³ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en

⁴ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_112517.htm

⁵ http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125409.htm?selectedLocale=en

Progresses Up to date

Ministry of Defense and Women Empowerment:

1. From 195,000 Afghan National Army⁶, 1400⁷ are women. 400 women are current new recruit, studying in National Military Academy. 5000 women are expected to increase within Ministry of Defense.
2. Number of women within ANA is being introduced to attend higher education in universities.
3. Women have also had the chance to attend scholarships outside the country.

Ministry of Interior and Women Empowerment:

1. From 150, 000⁸ Afghan National Police there are 3326⁹ women (2937 police and 389 civilian) currently work within Ministry of Interior (MoI).
2. 82¹⁰ police women associations are established within ANP across the country where policewomen meet regularly and discussion their challenges and find joint solutions.
3. The recruitment processes for policewomen have been smooth and transparent. This has resulted in increasing women's number in ANP.
4. The technical capacity building efforts inside and outside country for police women have been effective.
5. Slow improvements in provisions of facilities such as women toilets, women changing rooms etc.
6. In number of provinces, presence of women within the police headquarters have increased people particularly women trust. Women contact policewomen regularly and seek support.
7. In number of provinces policewomen have been successful in indentifying and arresting insurgents wearing women clothing and identifying security threats, smugglers of narcotics and guns as well as those engaged with robbery and abduction of citizens.

National Directorate of Security and Women Empowerment:

1. 700 women¹¹ are currently working with the National Directorate of Security across Afghanistan.
2. Capacity building initiatives such as courses on improving English language, driving skills and first aid skills for women.
3. Some women have enjoyed their job promotions and numbers of them are waiting for pending promotions to be processed.

⁶ <http://mod.gov.af/fa/page/13921>

⁷ Data provided by Gender Advisor, MoD

⁸ <http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/Project-Summaries/ProjectSum-012016/LOTFA-Project%20Summary%20Dec%202015.pdf>

⁹ Data provided by Department of Gender, Human Rights and Child Rights, Ministry of Interior

¹⁰ Ibid 7

¹¹ Data provided by NDS Gender Focal point

Constraints towards Women's participation and engagement in Security Sector

1. Recruitment:

The major challenge towards recruitment of women in ANSF (MoI, MoD, and NDS) has been weak recruitment campaigns. There has been almost no awareness raising initiatives to target communities at the district and villages on the need and role of women in security sector. This has resulted in continues negative perception of communities on the role of women in ANSF. Women who complete their term as trainees or return from abroad scholarships are hardly appointed in key roles within ANSF structure due to low political will and existing discrimination. Majority within ANSF believe women lack capacity to carry specific roles. Despite of existing positions within ANSF structures for women, these are occupied by men or are vacant with no interest to appoint women who are in waiting lists.

2. Promotion and Assignment:

Women believe they have been affected negatively within the ANSF due to male dominance and strong discrimination. Majority of women consulted believe that they have been waiting for over five years to get their promotion according to the policy and procedure within ANSF however there are no concrete steps and plans to put the promotion plans into actions. Majority of promotion is linked to personal or political references and contacts rather than merit based. Women promoted hardly play leadership role. These women are not part of consultations, design and implementation of national strategies and policies linked to security.

3. Equipment and Transportation:

Women have complains for not receiving weapons as men, despite being trained in how to use them. They report never receiving uniforms or being issued uniforms the same way made for men. Further, women officers in key directorates report having rare access to vehicles, limiting their ability to investigate crimes, respond to ongoing incidents, and conduct outreach to communities. Moreover women still lack access to changing rooms and ladies toilets. Women having children are unable to continue their work due to lack of childcare services in police districts.

4. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:

There is an ongoing discrimination and negative perception within ANSF towards women. Majority of women in security sector believe that there is no culture of respect towards women. Women are mostly perceived as second citizens and vulnerable. Women face discrimination for their promotion, appointment to appropriate posts as per their experience and access facilities and training support as men. These all have resulted in women losing confidence and interest in their roles. Complaints of sexual harassment, assault, and coercion within the forces are widespread. Despite of a new policy on fighting against sexual harassment at work place and certain decrees issued by leadership, there has been no complaint and follow up mechanism to support women at risk of discrimination and harassment.

5. Capacity Shortcomings:

Women in ANSF still face literacy, technical and capacity deficiencies. It is believed that the women in security sector still have lower general knowledge as well as technical information about their role. Although, initiatives have been planned for the capacity building of women in security sector however this has not been long term, effective and enough. Women still believe they need to fully understand their role. Women have difficulties in getting study time through higher education or attend seminars and workshops relevant to their job. In most instances, their male supervisors do not give women permission to benefit from such initiatives.

A Path Forward

Despite of the fact that women's contribution have improved in the ANSF, specific plans and strategies to further increase women participation in ANSF, improve their contribution, leadership and decision making role and turn ANSF structures to gender equality and equity models, AWN would like to pose the following recommendations:

Government of Afghanistan- MoI, MoD and NDS

1. We urge for designing and expansion female- targeted recruitment campaigns including TV spots, school seminars, brochures, billboards, postcards detailing the importance of women role in ANSF, available carriers and incentives including monetary, facilities and benefits. The outreach must target districts and villages using local women and men religious scholars, community elders and existing community councils.
2. We call on ANSF specifically MoI, MoD and NDS to prioritize the promotion and assignment of women who are pending for several years. This promotion must be based on merit, years of experience and skills.
3. Women can equally contribute in strategic decisions and policy making processes. We encourage ANSF to increase women leadership and decision making role within MoI, MoD and NDS beside Gender Directorates.
4. We also call for special attention on the appointment of new female recruits. This must be done according to a plan to ensure gender equality within different departments where women are assigned to posts according to their expertise and vacant posts are filled with women technical experts.
5. We also encourage ANSF (MoI, MoD and NDS) to immediately develop ministerial plans for implementation of Afghanistan National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and policy to end sexual harassment at work place.
6. We call on immediate action of ANSF to establish a direct complaint mechanism where women can file complaints on disrespect, discrimination and sexual harassment with confident and trust as well as appoint a trustworthy board to oversee the cases immediately after submission.
7. We offer support to ANSF to expand learning and capacity building opportunities to women as a positive discrimination. This should include on the job coaching with provision of improving technical and skills needs.

International Community

1. We call on policy makers attending Warsaw Summit to reconfirm their commitments for women empowerment in ANSF.
2. We call on international community to support ANSF (MoI, MoD and NDS) and other relevant institutions with technical and financial aid for planning and implementation of Afghanistan NAP 1325.
3. We urge Resolute Support to engage with ANSF from women's rights and human rights prospective, raising awareness of ANA and ANP, ensuring they respect and have willingness to work with women
4. We call on international community to measure progress of women within ANSF through conditions on fund allocation for recruitment and retention of women.
5. We encourage international community to allocate funding for long term capacity building of women within ANSF.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

1. We call on civil society organizations to expand their programs and engagement with women in ANSF through recruitment campaigns, capacity building and awareness raising efforts.
2. We call on CSOs to plan and establish monitoring mechanisms to oversee the progress and challenges of women within ANSF and come up with workable solutions to ANSF leadership and international community.
3. We call on CSOs to regularize their research on women's engagement within ANSF.