

# **Research Report on Implementation of APRP's Gender Policy**

**May 2016**

**Acknowledgements:**

AWN is grateful to the High Peace Council, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, all members of the Provincial Peace Committees, Provincial Councils, Community Development Councils and the women and men in the rural communities across Afghanistan, for informing and enabling this study. Special thanks are owed to AWN's partner organizations Tolo Services and Cultural Organization, ASLO and PAA, for conducting the field research.

**About AWN:**

The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) is a non-partisan, non-profit network of women that serves as an umbrella organization for 123 NGO members, and 5,000 individual members who are committed to supporting the women of Afghanistan. AWN has offices in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Qandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Bamyán, Kunduz and Paktia. Primary concerns for AWN are issues related to: gender-based violence, youth empowerment and girl's education. The network also represents and promotes the views of Afghan women in political and social arenas through advocacy and by challenging Afghanistan's leaders to enforce legislative reforms for the protection of women's rights.

For more information, see: [www.awn-af.net](http://www.awn-af.net)

Contact: [director@awn-af.net](mailto:director@awn-af.net) - [research1@awn-af.net](mailto:research1@awn-af.net)

## List of Abbreviations

APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program
ASLO	Afghanistan Society and Legal Organization
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
CDC	Community Development Councils
DOWA	Department of Women's Affairs
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HPC	High Peace Council
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
KII	Key Informant Interviews
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MRU	Monitoring and Research Unit
PAA	Paywand Afghanan Association
PC	Provincial Councils
PPC	Provincial Peace Committees
SPO	Strategic Policy Objective
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

*Table of Contents*

**Executive Summary.....5**

**Introduction .....6**

    Objectives ..... 6

**Methodology .....7**

    Sample and Geographic Coverage ..... 7

    Research Instruments..... 8

    Data Collection Process ..... 9

**Contextual Background .....10**

**Establishment of Gender Responsive Institutional Structures .....11**

    Gender Awareness Among Provincial Peace Committee Members ..... 11

    Women’s Increased Participation in the Provincial Peace Committees ..... 11

**Integration of Gender Focused Components Into APRP Programs and Activities .....14**

    Community Needs Assessment ..... 14

    Gender Responsive Programs and Budgeting ..... 16

**Development of an Effective and Efficient Monitoring System .....18**

**Community Perceptions of the APRP and Its Achievements.....19**

    North ..... 19

    West..... 19

    South ..... 20

    East ..... 21

**Conclusions .....23**

**Recommendations .....24**

## *Executive Summary*

Afghan Women's Network (AWN) undertook this monitoring initiative along with its partner organizations to assess the extent to which the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration (APRP) Gender Policy has been implemented since 2011 at the sub-national level. More specifically, the research examines the degree to which the representation of women has increased in the institutional structures of the APRP and if gender responsive programming and budgeting has been implemented adequately to include women in the peace process at the community level. The report also includes a section of community perceptions regarding the APRP and its impact.

The findings of this monitoring study are based on a total of 249 qualitative interviews with key informants and 40 focus group discussions with community elders and women, primarily living in rural Afghanistan. Key informants include, Provincial Peace Committee (PPC) members, Provincial Council (PC) members and Community Development Council (CDC) members. Additionally, eleven key informants were interviewed in Kabul, including respondents from HPC and numerous relevant line ministries involved in the implementation of the APRP.

### **Key Findings:**

- More than 70 percent of all PPC members confirmed having participated in one or more voluntary gender awareness trainings during the years of 2014 and 2015, which suggests gender awareness is common among APRP officials at the sub-national level.
- Women's meaningful participation within the structures of the APRP at the decision-making level remains limited with an average of 2.7 women per PPC.
- Six out of 19 PPC chairpersons confirmed having a Gender Steering Committee. This finding reveals that the APRP Gender Policy objective to establish Gender Steering Committees in all PPCs has not been accomplished. Further, among the six confirmed Gender Steering Committees, only one had the required 5 to 7 female members, indicating that the representatives of women-led organizations are currently not participating in such committees, as was specified in the gender policy.
- Although community needs assessments have been conducted by some PPCs, to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of APRP community development and recovery programming, it is not an activity that has been established as standard procedure across all provinces.
- Five out of 21 visited PPCs were able to confirm that they had implemented gender sensitive programming during the years 2014 and 2015. Lack of funding and gender budgeting are two key impediments that hinder the implementation of such projects and programs.
- All of the visited communities across Afghanistan confirmed being aware of the APRP program. Afghan men and women expressed a general desire for more longer-term community recovery programs with focus on livelihood opportunities.

## Introduction

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration (APRP) was established in 2010, with the High Peace Council (HPC) appointed the same year to oversee the implementation of the program that was meant to build peace and national healing between all Afghans after decades of civil war. More than five years on, peace in Afghanistan is still not in sights. In 2015, Afghanistan experienced security deterioration as a consequence of an intensified offensive by the armed opposition groups against the government of Afghanistan. The armed opposition groups have made territorial gains by expanding their presence.<sup>1</sup> The number of civilian casualties reached a record number of over 11.000 during 2015 alone.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, there have been numerous futile attempts to negotiate a peace deal between the armed opposition groups and the government of Afghanistan. However, women have continuously been excluded from such attempts. Civil society actors have repeatedly called on the government to ensure women's inclusion in any peace negotiation, as peace cannot be built sustainably without the representation of the other half of the population, i.e. the women.<sup>3</sup>

Since APRP is a key framework, through which the Afghan peace process has been managed, women's meaningful participation in the implementation of the APRP is crucial. To this end, the Joint Secretariat of the APRP, to ensure women's inclusion in the peace process, drafted a gender policy in September 2011. This policy aims to mainstream a gender sensitive approach within the APRP as a whole. Specifically, the APRP Gender Policy has three Strategic Policy Objectives, which include the establishment of gender responsive institutions with an increased representation of qualified women in decision-making positions within APRP's institutional infrastructure, the integration of gender focused components in all activities of APRP and the development of an effective M&E system.

## Objectives

The purpose of this report is to assess the following:

- To evaluate the extent to which the APRP Gender Policy has been implemented to date, with particular focus on the implementation of the three Strategic Policy Objectives;
- To contribute to an improved understanding about community perceptions of the APRP;
- To provide specific and practical recommendations to enable women's meaningful participation in the future national peace and reintegration undertakings.

---

<sup>1</sup>Al Jazeera (December 27, 2015), *Analysis: The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan*, available at:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/analysis-taliban-resurgence-afghanistan-isil-151227065817409.html>

<sup>2</sup> UN News Centre (February 14, 2016), *Afghan casualties hit record high 11,000 in 2015 – UN Report*, available at: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53229#.VxwuMuZcSko>

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Oxfam (November 24, 2014), *Behind Closed Doors*, available at:

[https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/bp200-behind-doors-afghan-women-rights-241114-en.pdf](https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp200-behind-doors-afghan-women-rights-241114-en.pdf) and AWN (August 2014), *Afghan Women Recommendations to NATO summit 2014*, available at:

<http://www.iawp.org/campaigns/Afghanistan/Afghan-Women-Recommendations-to-NATO-Summit-2014.pdf>

## Methodology

### Sample and Geographic Coverage

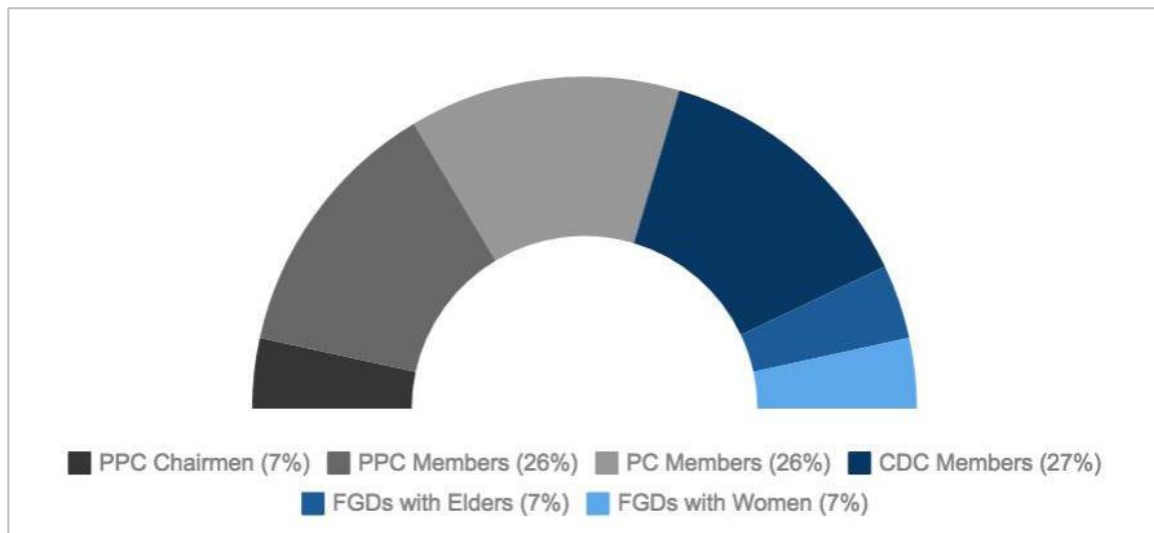
The findings of this monitoring study are based on a total of 249 qualitative interviews with key informants and 40 focus group discussions with community elders and women, primarily living in rural Afghanistan. At the sub-national level, key informants include, Provincial Peace Committee (PPC) members, Provincial Council (PC) members and Community Development Council (CDC) members. Additionally, eleven key informants were interviewed in Kabul (See Tables 1-2 and Map 1).

All nineteen PPC chairpersons that were interviewed are men. However, the sample includes a considerable number of female key informants at the provincial level. Out of 72 interviewed PPC members 31 are women. Among the PC representatives, 29 out of 73 are women. Similarly, 28 out of 74 CDC members are also women. This brings the total number of female key informants at the sub-national level to 88 out of 238 (37%). The PC and CDC members were interviewed primarily for triangulation and verification purposes, to confirm the findings that were obtained through the PPC interviews.

**Table 1: Sample at the Sub-national (Provincial) Level**

PPC Chairpersons	PPC Members	PC Members	CDC Members	FGDs with Elders	FGDs with Women	Total
19	72	73	74	20	19	<b>277</b>

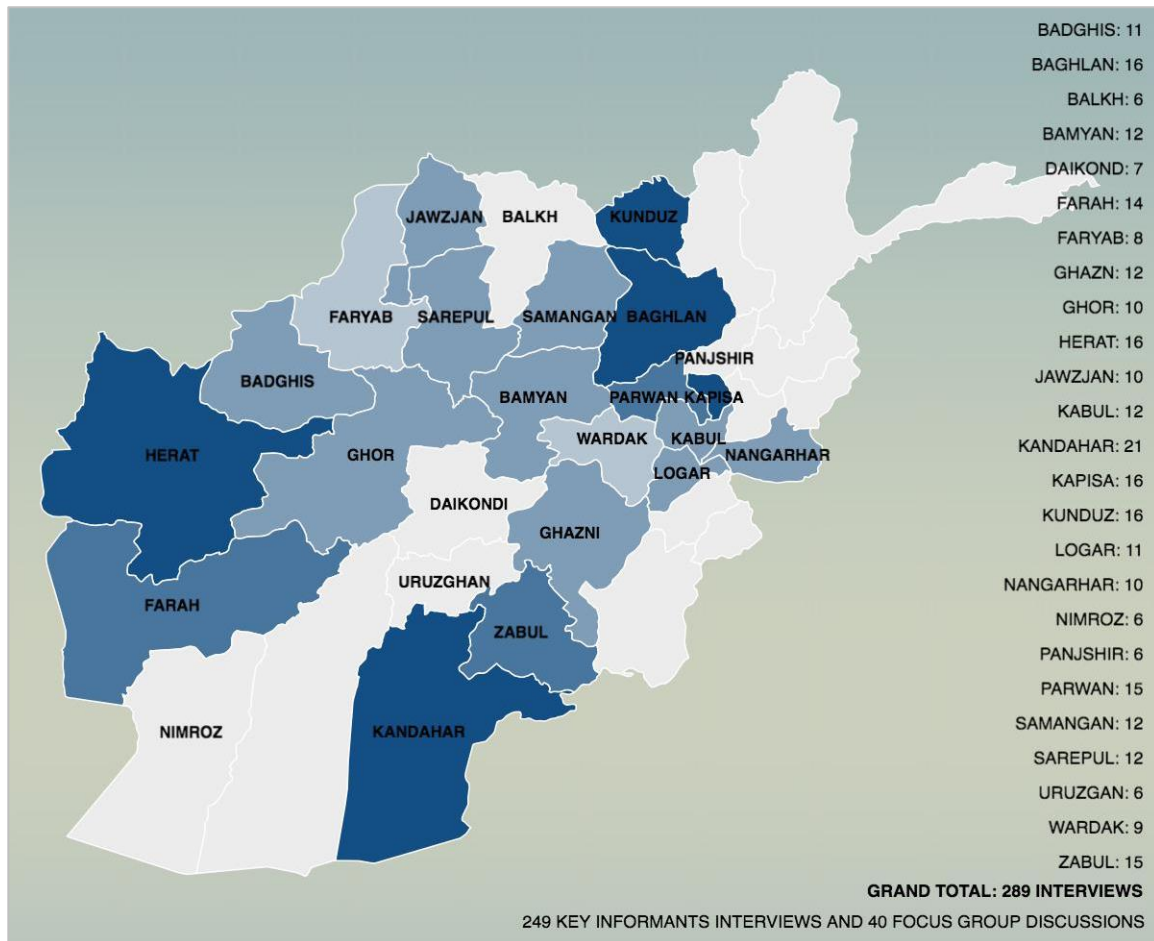
**Figure 1: Type of Key Informants and Focus Group Discussions in the Provinces**



**Table 2: Sample in Kabul**

HPC	MRRD	MOLSAMD	MOJ	IDLG	FGDs with Elders	Total
2	5	2	1	1	1	<b>12</b>

**Map 1: Geographic Scope and Sample of Study**



Twenty-five out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces were included in the geographic scope of the study. The sample size varies depending on the province. Several provinces such as Herat, Kandahar, Baghlan, Kapisa and Kunuz are somewhat more represented in the sample. The inconsistencies in the representation of provinces in the sample are due to the following reasons: the unavailability and the unwillingness of PPC, PC and CDC members to participate in the research, insecurity and bad weather conditions, which limited the mobility of the field researchers in some provinces.

### Research Instruments

The research instruments, which consist of several key informant interview (KII) guides and focus groups discussion (FGD) guides, were designed to obtain information to assess progress



against the implementation of the APRP Gender Policy, which was published by the Joint Secretariat in September 2011. The KII and FGD guides contain three sections including questions that address the three key objectives of the APRP Gender Policy of 2011:

- The establishment of gender responsive institutional structures at the national and sub-national levels;
- The integration of gender focused components into all programs / activities of the three pillars of APRP;
- The development of an effective monitoring system for a sustained mainstreaming of gender issues into APRP's organizational and operational activities.

### Data Collection Process

At the national level, the Monitoring and Research Unit (MRU) of AWN was responsible for the data collection. In the remaining 24 provinces, AWN was supported by three of its member organizations, which together conducted the majority of the data collection at the sub-national level. These partner organizations include: Tolo Services and Cultural Organization, Afghanistan Society and Legal Organization (ASLO) and Paywand Afghanan Association (PAA).

Before starting fieldwork, MRU invited the three partner organizations to assist with the data collection process. The three partner organizations were selected based on their prior research experience and availability. Once the partners were selected, a one-day data collection orientation was facilitated by AWN's MRU team, during which the data collection tools were reviewed and discussed.

Data collection was undertaken, across all 25 provinces, during December 2015, followed by data transcription and translation during the early months of 2016. The analysis and write up of the report was carried out in April 2016.

## *Contextual Background*

The framework of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) was established as a result of the three-day National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ), which was held in June 2010. Around 1600 delegates across Afghanistan, including government officials, civil society representatives, tribal leaders, businessmen, legislators and religious leaders participated in the NCPJ, in a national effort to build a lasting peace between the government and the armed opposition groups in Afghanistan. Out of 1600 delegates, roughly 300 were women.

The High Peace Council, which is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the APRP, is an advisory organization founded in October 2010. The former president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, appointed its 70 members, out of which 9 are women.<sup>4</sup>

The APRP is considered an Afghan lead and owned program, which strives to convince and encourage armed opposition group members to give up their arms and reintegrate into their communities. To enable this, the APRP was designed to include a three-step approach, involving *Social Outreach, Demobilization and the Consolidation of Peace and Community Recovery*. Between October 2010 and the summer of 2015, more than 10,000 ex-combatants joined the peace process, out of which 965 are commanders of the armed opposition group.<sup>5</sup>

At the subnational level, the HPC operates through its Provincial Peace Committees (PPCs), consisting of roughly 25-35 members in each province, out of which 2 to 4 are women. The HPC and PPCs are provided technical support by the Joint Secretariat and its provincial teams, which are also responsible for the administration and monitoring of the program implementation.<sup>6</sup> The APRP was originally designed as a five-year plan, which ended 2015. However, the program is likely to be extended for another three years, with support from the Afghan government and international donors.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Lackenbauer, H and David Harriman (April 2013), *Women at the Peace Table: Rhetoric or Reality? Women's participation and influence in the peace and reintegration process of Afghanistan*, available at: <http://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/Women%20at%20the%20Peace%20Table%20April%202013.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Inclusive Security (June 22, 2015), *Infographic: Building a Better Peace Process in Afghanistan*, available at: [https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/APRP\\_Infographic.jpg](https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/APRP_Infographic.jpg)

<sup>7</sup> UNDP (2015), *Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program, 2015 Second Quarter Project Progress Report*, available at: <http://www.af.undp.org/content/dam/afghanistan/docs/crisisprev/APRP/APRP-2QPR-2015.pdf>

## *Establishment of Gender Responsive Institutional Structures*

**Strategic Policy Objective 1:** *Establishment of gender responsive institutional structures at the national and sub-national levels*

### Gender Awareness Among Provincial Peace Committee Members

To achieve Strategic Policy Objective (SPO) 1, the APRP Gender Policy proposes to engage in a number of activities. One such activity is the introduction of mandatory staff induction trainings on gender awareness at regular intervals.

Fifty-three out of 72 (73.6%) interviewed PPC members confirmed having participated in one or more gender awareness raising trainings during the years of 2014 and 2015. Out of 53 members that had participated in gender awareness trainings in the past couple of years, 24 were female and 29 were male. However, all members who have participated in this type of trainings stated that it was voluntary as opposed to mandatory. Similarly, two interviewed HPC members in Kabul, one male and one female, also confirmed participating in voluntary awareness raising trainings about gender issues during the same years.

### Women's Increased Participation in the Provincial Peace Committees

A second activity involves the launching of affirmative action to increase the participation of women at the decision-making levels. The figures in Table 3 show that the ratio of females to males in the PPCs remains considerably low. Roughly 10 percent of all PPC members are women, and all of the interviewed chairpersons are men. On average, each PPC has 2.7 female members. Likewise, at the national level, only 9 out of 70 HPC members are women. At the APRP Coordination Unit of MOLSAMD one out of 12 staff members is female, while the APRP Coordination Unit of IDLG have nine male staff members. These figures reveal how limited women's meaningful participation and representation in the national peace process really is.

**Table 3: Provincial Peace Committee Members by Gender**

Province	Total PPC Members	Number of Female PPC Members	Percentage of Female PPC Members
Badghis	20	2	10
Baghlan	25	2	8
Balkh	30	4	13.3
Bamyan	27	4	14.8
Daikondi	19	4	21.1
Farah	26	3	11.5
Ghazni	30	2	6.7
Ghor	24	2	8.3
Herat	24	3	12.5

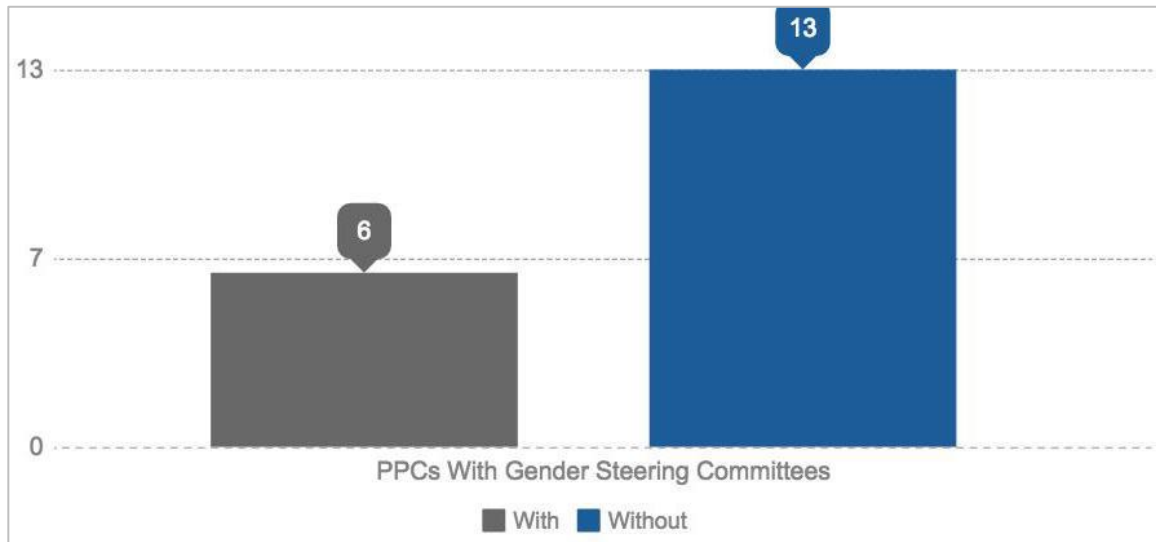
<b>Jawzjan</b>	27	5	18.5
<b>Kandahar</b>	34	4	11.8
<b>Kapisa</b>	25	2	8
<b>Kunduz</b>	25	2	8
<b>Logar</b>	27	3	11.1
<b>Nangarhar</b>	40	2	5
<b>Parwan</b>	25	2	8
<b>Samangan</b>	25	2	8
<b>Sar-e-Pul</b>	31	2	6.5
<b>Uruzgan</b>	20	2	10
<b>Wardak</b>	25	3	12
<b>Zabul</b>	20	3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>10.6</b>

Among all 21 PPCs that were examined at the sub-national level, 19 PPC chairpersons were interviewed. Out of 19 chairpersons, six confirmed that their Provincial Peace Committee has a Gender Steering Committee. According to APRP's Gender Policy, the purpose of having a Gender Steering Committee is, amongst other, to promote the recruitment of qualified women.

This finding suggests that the APRP Gender Policy objective to have a Gender Steering Committee in the Joint Secretariat and in all PPCs at the sub-national level has been realized in few PPCs only. The PPCs that currently have an active Gender Steering Committee are Badghis, Baghlan, Bamyán, Jawzjan, Uruzgan and Zabul (Figure 2).

Further, according to the APRP Gender Policy, each Gender Steering Committee should have a minimum of 5 to 7 female members, consisting of PPCs members, government representatives and women-led NGO members. Among the existing Gender Steering Committees, only Jawzjan's committee had the required number of women among its members, which shows that the civil society and women-led organizations are not participating in as specified in the APRP Gender Policy. In Badghis, the committee has only male members, although the PPC itself has two female members. Moreover, the number of women active in the PPCs has not increased since 2011 (See Table 3).

**Figure 2: Number of PPC Chairpersons Who Confirmed Having Gender Steering Committees**



## *Integration of Gender Focused Components Into APRP Programs and Activities*

**Strategic Policy Objective 2:** *Integration of gender focused components into all programs / activities of the 3 pillars of APRP*

### Community Needs Assessment

One of the key activities, outlined in the APRP Gender Policy, under Strategic Policy Objective (SPO) 2, is the assessment of community needs before the implementation of any development projects and programs. As such, AWP and its partner organizations examined whether such needs assessments are carried out systematically by the PPCs.

The findings of this study indicate that, while needs assessments are conducted by some PPCs, it is not an activity that has been established as standard procedure across all provinces. In fact, while 16 out of 21 surveyed PPCs confirmed assessing community needs, only eight of these PPCs confirmed assessing needs from a gender perspective, by communicating with women or women's groups directly (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Community Needs Assessments<sup>8</sup>**

Province	Community Needs Assessed	Women's Needs Assessed	Relevant Quotes by PPC Members
<b>Badghis</b>	Yes	Yes	- First, elders are met and asked different questions about the challenges people face and their needs... the PPC categorizes the priorities...also the APRP considers gender.
<b>Baghlan</b>	Yes	Yes	- Committees visit the communities and assess the needs of people...projects are implemented according to needs...women's needs are prioritized.
<b>Balkh</b>	Yes	Yes	- The PPC assesses the needs of communities through surveys and through consultations with elders and women.
<b>Bamyan</b>	No	No	- Since there are no projects implemented, there are no needs assessments
<b>Daikondi</b>	Yes	No	- The M&E team does it, but for women's rights nothing has been done.
<b>Farah</b>	Yes	Yes	- We have very close cooperation with local men and women and the Community Development Council, and do needs assessments through these.
<b>Ghazni</b>	Yes	Yes	- The community needs are assessed through the local community elders...women's needs are assessed through the women's councils and DOWA in the province.

<sup>8</sup> Cells were left blank in Table 4 when the responses did not provide adequate information to determine if the community / women's needs were being assessed.

<b>Ghor</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>	<p>- The PPC consults the local elders about priority needs and the APRP projects are implemented accordingly.</p> <p>- No, the APRP does not assess needs from a gender perspective.</p>
<b>Herat</b>	Yes	--	<p>- Before the start of any project we evaluate the needs of people...this way people are satisfied with the implemented projects.</p>
<b>Jawzjan</b>	Yes	Yes	<p>- The Provincial Peace Committee collects information about peoples challenges through a yearly survey... first the challenges are identified and after that we address women's needs.</p>
<b>Kandahar</b>	Yes	Yes	<p>- Needs are identified through the monitoring committee.</p> <p>- [Needs are assessed] through the female PPC members who identify women's needs during meetings.</p>
<b>Kapisa</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>	<p>- There are no gender issues to be considered but needs are assessed through meetings in the province with the Provincial Council, people and other committee members...everyone present their recommendations.</p>
<b>Kunduz</b>	Yes	--	<p>- The PPC is conducting its projects based on the needs of society. The needs are identified before the designing of programs and projects.</p>
<b>Logar</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>	<p>- The APRP projects are not considering the people's needs fully, they focus on war issues, not working on social issues...</p>
<b>Nangarhar</b>	Yes	--	<p>- The PPC visits people but due to security problems we can't cover the entire province.</p>
<b>Parwan</b>	--	--	--
<b>Samangan</b>	Yes	--	<p>- At the provincial level, we consult people about their needs.</p>
<b>Sar-e-Pul</b>	Yes	<b>No</b>	<p>- Needs are assessed by visiting the people and the community elders...gender is not considered.</p>
<b>Uruzgan</b>	--	--	--
<b>Wardak</b>	Yes	Yes	<p>- The teams are visiting community elders, the Community Development Council and the Provincial Council...they consider gender during their consultations.</p> <p>- The Provincial Peace Committee gets information from women's councils, DOWA and other related organizations.</p>
<b>Zabul</b>	--	--	--

## Gender Responsive Programs and Budgeting

Next to needs assessments, gender sensitive programming and budgeting are two other key activities mentioned in the APRP Gender Policy under SPO 2. It is assumed that such activities will enable an *Improved mainstreaming of gender issues into APRP's different programs.*

This study has found that members from only 5 out of 21 PPCs were able to confirm the implementation of gender sensitive programs. These are the PPCs of Badghis, Ghazni, Kapisa, Uruzgan and Wardak. Gender sensitive programs were identified as awareness raising workshops regarding women's rights and the ERAW law and vocational trainings. The lack of funding and gender budgeting were the most frequently mentioned barriers that limited the ability of PPCs to implement gender sensitive programming. Indeed, none of the PPC members could confirm having a budget for projects that target women beneficiaries directly. Further, none of the PPC members thought that their committee had been able to implement sufficient amount of gender sensitive projects to meet the needs of women in their communities.

*No, I do not think so. The gender programs that APRP is implementing is not enough, women cannot benefit from these programs. We have observed and seen that in Baghlan women have not progressed at all. They are in the same situation as they were before.*

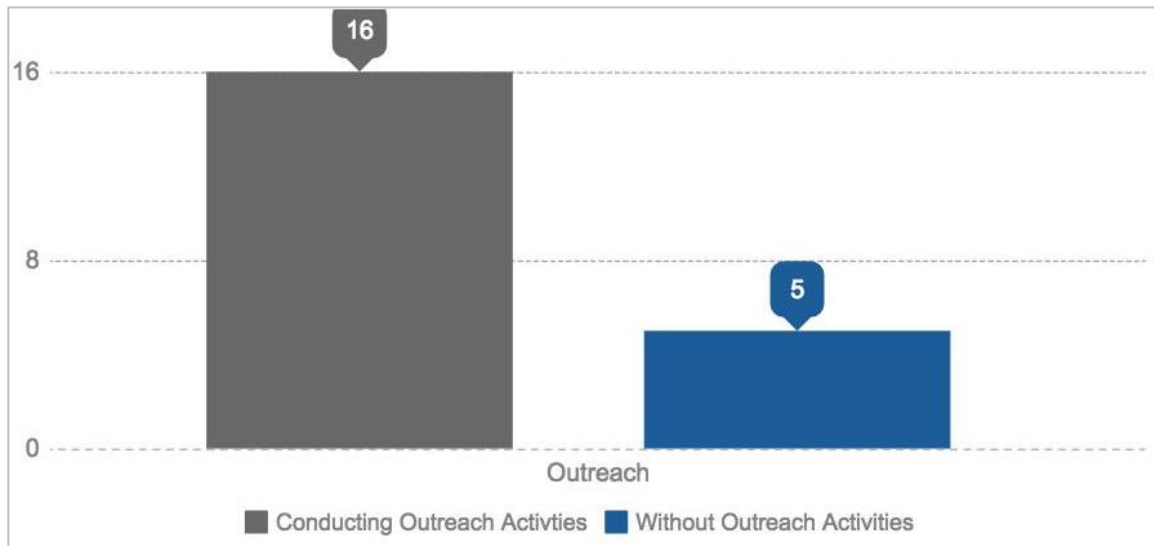
- PPC Member in Baghlan Province

PPC members across all provinces provided various ideas about how gender sensitive programs under APRP should increase. Several PPC members mentioned the importance of implementing projects that create income-generating opportunities for men and women in the communities.

*The APRP can improve the gender responsiveness of its programs and projects through job creation for all local people...women are eager to participate in such programs and projects.*

- PPC Member in Balkh Province

**Figure 3: PPCs Conducting Outreach Activities at the Community Level**





Information confirming community outreach activities was obtained from 16 out of 21 PPCs. Such activities include for example M&E activities to obtain feedback from beneficiaries regarding the quality and relevance of the projects and consultations with community leaders regarding the usefulness of projects in their communities.

PPCs that are able to reach out to women in the communities are few. Those who manage to achieve this task normally do so through their female PPC members who visit the communities and engage with women about the peace process and APRP. Some PPCs reach out to women through PCs, women's councils and DOWAs. PPCs that confirmed being able to reach out to women are located in Badghis, Kandahar, Kunduz, Balkh, and Wardak. The remaining 15 PPCs are unable to achieve this. As some Provincial Peace Committee members stated:

*It is apparent that the participation of women [in the peace process] is very limited and the government is very negligent about encouraging women to have a strong role in the communities.*

**- PPC Member in Bamyan Province**

AND

*The APRP is mostly for men, not women...women's influence is very weak. There are few women in the process – this process is long, but women are not part of it.*

**- PPC Member in Kapisa Province**

## *Development of an Effective and Efficient Monitoring System*

**Strategic Policy Objective 3:** *Development of an effective and efficient monitoring system for a sustained mainstreaming of gender issues into APRP's organizational and operational activities*

For the monitoring and evaluation of small projects, M&E teams and the development committees of PPCs conduct the data collection. The PPCs report to the HPC and UNDP in Kabul, which produce quarterly progress reports, based on the information provided by the PPCs at the sub-national level. For larger programs, M&E teams are sent from Kabul to manage the data collection.

PPC chairpersons mentioned that the information is normally collected from the beneficiaries directly, or from community elders and councils. While the monitoring activities of the PPCs and the HPC seem efficient and standardized, there are few gender sensitive projects and programs to monitor.

The key purpose of Strategic Policy Objective (SPO) 3 is to develop an effective M&E system as a tool to mainstream gender issues into APRP's activities. However, the findings of this study show that this strategy has fallen short. An effective M&E system, as described under SOP 3, can only fulfill its purpose if there is gender sensitive programming, which, according to the comments by PPC members across Afghanistan, APRP seems to have achieved only to a small extent.

## *Community Perceptions of the APRP and Its Achievements*

### North

#### ***Awareness About APRP and Its Activities***

All FGD participants, both women and community elders were aware of the work of APRP and the PPCs in the northern provinces of Balkh, Baghlan, Faryab, Samangan and Sarepul. The common perception is that the PPC and the APRP are striving to bring the armed opposition to the peace process by providing incentives through the creation of job opportunities and development projects in the communities.

*Yes we have heard about the peace process in Afghanistan, its purpose is to encourage opposition groups to join the peace [process], to bring security and to create opportunities for those who join this process.*

- Women, Focus Group Discussion, Faryab Province

#### ***Needs Assessed by PPCs***

In Balkh, both women and elders participating in the FGDs stated that the PPC has never visited their community to assess their needs. In Baghlan and Faryab, the PPC has been actively assessing the needs of people and discussing their challenges. In Samangan, women FGD participants stated that, although the PPC had visited their community to assess needs, they had never returned to follow up.

#### ***Benefits of APRP in the Communities***

Various development projects, such as vocational trainings, infrastructure rehabilitation and agriculture development have been implemented in the communities in the north, for which both elders and women are grateful. However, communities in Baghlan and Faryab seem to have benefitted from community development projects more than the communities in Balkh, Samangan and Sarepul.

*No, they are not supporting any long term projects that benefit women, [we] only benefited from one project, through which we learned reading and writing...no they [the PPC] are not thinking of women.*

- Women, Focus Group Discussion, Samangan Province

### West

#### ***Awareness About APRP and Its Activities***

The purpose and objectives of the APRP is well known among the population in the western provinces of Herat, Farah and Ghor. Women and elders both stated that the APRP works to bring about peace in their nation, by encouraging the armed opposition to join the peace process. This information is generally known through the media or by word of mouth.

#### ***Needs Assessed by PPCs***

Among the provinces of Herat, Farah and Ghor, the female FGD participants in Herat were the only women who confirmed that the PPC in their province had visited their community to ask

women about their concerns and needs. In Farah and Ghor, the women claimed that the PPC members had never visited them in their communities. The elders in Herat and Ghor mentioned that the representatives of the PPC had visited them to inquire about the needs of their communities in general and to ask for support to build peace. In Farah, the elders claimed the PPC members had never reached out to their community.

#### ***Benefits of APRP in the Communities***

In Herat and Ghor, both women and elders mentioned that the PPCs have implemented some community development projects such as vocational trainings, capacity building and agricultural trainings to support the livelihoods of local people. While such efforts are generally appreciated, they are not considered as sufficient to adequately address the needs of communities in the longer term, mainly because the projects are considered too short to have an actual impact.

In Farah, the elders and women reported that the PPC center had not implemented any projects to support community development and livelihoods. They stated community development projects had all been implemented by the CDCs in the province.

*The APRP has not implemented any projects in our area but CDC implemented many project...the HPC has not done anything for us, but the CDC has implemented many projects for us.*

- Women, Focus Group Discussion, Farah Province

## South

#### ***Awareness About APRP and Its Activities***

In the southern provinces of Nimroz, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul and Daikondi, both women and elders were familiar with the purpose of APRP and what it strives to achieve. However, none of the communities that were interviewed in these five provinces were able to mention any concrete examples about the work of PPCs.

#### ***Needs Assessed by PPCs***

Elders and women in Nimroz, Zabul and Daikondi agreed that the PPCs in their respective provinces had not reached out to their communities to collect information about the challenges and needs of the local populations. In Uruzgan, women and elders reported that the PPC had visited both men and women to talk about their specific needs, however, the talks had not been followed up with any concrete action and no projects had been implemented that could contribute to the development of their community. The FGDs in Uruzgan were facilitated in the provincial center. In Kandahar, while women acknowledged being consulted about their needs, the elders claimed that no PPC member had approached them yet.

#### ***Benefits of APRP in the Communities***

Women and elders in Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan reported that the PPCs have supported their communities through vocational trainings and livelihoods inputs such as tailoring material, poultry and cattle. In Daikondi and Nimroz, the PPCs have, so far, not implemented any community development projects.

*We have heard from people that they are working to bring peace in our area, but it is not a useful program. They haven't had any projects in our area and no assessments [about needs]. We hope that their future programs will include women in all developmental and awareness projects.*

- Women, Focus Group Discussion, Daikondi Province

Overall, the elders are not impressed with the achievements of the APRP in their communities, in terms of development projects. In Uruzgan and Zabul, the elders even suggested that the APRP funds are used for personal gain.

*They had projects, but due to corruption eligible people don't benefit... they use [the funds] for power and try to control the projects in their hands and don't want women to be involved... they think about themselves and not the people.*

- Community elders, Focus Group Discussion, Uruzgan Province

## East

### *Awareness About APRP and Its Activities*

People in all eight eastern provinces of Logar, Panjshir, Kapisa, Wardak, Parwan, Kabul, Ghazini and Bamyan are familiar with the name and purpose of the APRP, through the media and word of mouth, however, few have seen any concrete activities undertaken by the PPCs. Further, elders often consider them as inefficient in fulfilling their purpose, i.e. to build peace.

### *Needs Assessed by PPCs*

Among the eight provinces in the east, community members in Logar, Wardak, Bamyan and Ghazni were the only research participants that reported having contact with the PPC members in their provinces. In the case of Bamyan, both women and elders knew the PPC because one of their elders is a member of the committee. However, in Bamyan, the PPC does not implement any community programs, according to the FGD participants. In Wardak, the women mentioned that the PPC members had visited their community and talked about implementing educational programs to discourage the young from joining the armed opposition. In Ghazni, the PPC team, including female members, had visited the communities to raise awareness about the peace process and the APRP.

None of the respondents in the eight provinces of eastern Afghanistan, except elders in Logar, reported having their needs assessed by the APRP implementers. In Logar, the elders mentioned that it is very difficult for the PPC members to reach their community since the armed opposition has a strong presence in the district and the PPC members would most likely be killed if they entered the area.<sup>9</sup>

*We are in an area, which is under the control of the Taliban and other groups. Peace program staff coming to our area will be killed by the Taliban and other groups...they can't come to our*

---

<sup>9</sup> The FGD with elders in Logar was facilitated in the Mohammad Agha district of the province.

*area...yes they did [assess needs], men have different requests from the program and women different, but still we don't think women are able to benefit from this process.*

**- Community elders, Focus Group Discussion, Logar Province**

### ***Benefits of APRP in the Communities***

In Logar, Kabul, Panjshir and Bamyan, community elders and women both reported that the APRP does not implement any community development projects in their communities. In the case of Logar, APRP is unable to offer community projects due to the strong presence of the armed opposition groups in the communities. In Bamyan, elders, women and even PPC members mentioned on multiple occasions that the PPC in the province does not have a budget to implement community development projects. In Wardak, Parwan, Kapisa and Ghazni, some short-term projects related to vocational training and awareness raising has been implemented, which women have also been able to benefit from. However, communities often describe such projects as too short and unable to meet the community needs adequately.

*Yes, the APRP has benefitted the women through the women's council and DOWA, which provided an awareness program...they have offered us vocational courses like tailoring and built a mosque, now children go to the mosque for education...some women learned and gained an income and our children are studying and learning, but this is not enough for us...we want peace and education for our children*

**- Women, Focus Group Discussion, Ghazni Province**

## *Conclusions*

With regard to the establishment of gender responsive institutions within the APRP, the findings of the study show that this Strategic Policy Objective has not been achieved. The number of women available within the PPCs remains considerably limited with approximately 2 to 4 female members in committees with roughly 30 members.<sup>10</sup> The average representation of women in the PPCs remains 10.6 percent, when a more representative ratio would be 30 percent.<sup>11</sup> Further, out of 19 PPC chairpersons, none are women.

In addition, according to the APRP Gender Policy, a Gender Steering Committee was going to be established in all provinces at the sub-national level. Interviews with PPC chairpersons revealed that such committees exist in few provinces. Moreover, women are not adequately represented in those Gender Steering Committees that have been established. One of the key tasks of such committees is to promote the recruitment of qualified women at the decision-making level within the APRP. However, insufficient numbers of women within the PPCs as well as within the few existing Gender Steering Committees show that this objective has not been achieved.

Despite the significance needs assessments to ensure relevant and effective community development projects, the findings of this study indicate that, while needs assessments are conducted by some PPCs, it is not an activity that has been established as a standard procedure across all provinces. In fact, while 16 out of 21 surveyed PPCs confirmed assessing community needs, only eight of these PPCs confirmed assessing needs from a gender perspective.

Gender sensitive programming and budgeting are two key activities also mentioned in the APRP Gender Policy under SPO 2. Five out of 21 visited PPCs were able to confirm that they had implemented gender sensitive programs during the years 2014 and 2015. Gender sensitive programs were identified as awareness raising workshops regarding women's rights and the EVAW law and vocational trainings. Lack of funding and gender budgeting are two key impediments that hinder the implementation of such projects and programs.

All of the visited communities across Afghanistan confirmed being aware of the APRP program and its purpose. Many of the respondents did, nevertheless, indicate that they were not aware of the specific activities of the APRP and that their communities had never been approached for a needs assessment. In terms of gender sensitive programming, many elders and women in the communities expressed a desire to participate in future APRP community development projects. The communities especially appreciate programs related to longer-term income-generating opportunities.

---

<sup>10</sup> Jawzjan is an exception, where the number of female PPC members was reported as five.

<sup>11</sup> Thirty percent is a widely recognized benchmark for women's participation in leadership and decision-making, see for example: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

## *Recommendations*

### *To the High Peace Council and the Joint Secretariat:*

1. Enforce affirmative action to increase the ratio of women by ensuring that at least 30 percent of the positions in the Tashkeels are filled by qualified women in the PPCs and all other government offices involved in the implementation of the APRP.
2. Allocate a development budget to all provinces, including those who may be less prioritized due to a lesser degree of insurgency, to ensure a national peace and development process, including all provinces of Afghanistan
3. Integrate a gender responsive budgeting into APRP's budget process, by allocating at least 30 percent of all development funds to projects that target women beneficiaries to mainstream a gender responsive approach in all of APRP's community programs.
4. Conduct needs assessments, at the community level, in all provinces and more vigorously, to ensure the relevance, timeliness and appropriateness of future development projects for Afghan men and women.
5. Ensure the establishment of Gender Steering Committees in all PPCs across the provinces of Afghanistan, allocating at least 5 to 7 of the seats in the committees to women, including representatives of women-led civil society organizations.
6. Avoid implementing short-term projects and integrate a sustainability and resilience building approach to the community development programs by focusing on activities that provide livelihoods to the target populations.

### *To International Donors:*

7. Reaffirm commitment to support the Afghan owned and Afghan-lead peace process by taking into account lessons learned between the years 2010 and 2015.
8. Impose gender responsive conditions on future APRP funding, requiring the increased representation of women across the institutional infrastructure of the HPC, PPCs and the APRP as a whole.
9. Earmark at least 30 percent of all funding allocated to the community development programs of APRP to target women beneficiaries directly.