



**Civil Society input into the Brussels Conference
on Afghanistan
Summary Report**



Abbreviations

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development
ACSFo	Afghan Civil Society Forum-organisation
AICS	Afghan Institute for Civil Society
AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
AHDS	Afghan Health & Development Services
ANAF AE	Afghan National Association for Adult Education
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau
AOAD	Accessibility Organization for Afghan Disabled
AOGs	Armed Opposition Groups
APRP	Afghanistan Peace & Reintegration Programme
AWEC	Afghan Women's Educational Centre
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
AWSDC	Afghan Women Skills Development Center
BAAG	British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group
BCA	Brussels Conference on Afghanistan
CCD	Community Centre for the Disabled
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace & Unity
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSCC	Civil Society Coordination Centre
CSHRN	Civil Society and Human Rights Network
CSJWG	Civil Society Joint Working Group
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DQG	Da Qanoon Ghoshtonky
EPD	Equality for Peace & Democracy
ESCR	Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
EVAW	Elimination of Violence against Women
HPC	High Peace Council
HREVO	Human Rights & Eradication of Violence Organisation
IC	International Community
IWA	Integrity Watch Afghanistan
NGOs	Non-government Organisations
NPP	National Priority Programmes
NUG	National Unity Government of Afghanistan
OSA	Open Society Afghanistan
PTRO	Peace Training & Research Organisation
SDO	Sanayee Development Foundation
SMAF	Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework
SMART	Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant and Time-bound
SWABAC	South Western Afghanistan & Balochistan Association for Coordination
TACC	Transparency Accountability and Counter-corruption
TEFA	Transparent Elections Foundation of Afghanistan
TEO	Tashbos Educational Organisation
TLO	The Liaison Office
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCAC	UN Convention against Corruption
WADAN	Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan
WCLRF	Women & Children Legal Research Foundation

“We should all remember that the ultimate accountability is not between government and donors: it is to the Afghan people.” Afghan civil society’s statement in the BCA.

1. Acknowledgements

Civil society input in the BCA process was the result of the collaboration of many partners and stakeholders. BAAG would like to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of the Afghan Civil Society Working Committee on the BCA, whose members voluntarily led the various phases of provincial consultations and the development of the civil society position paper. We would also like to thank the independent Selection Committee for selecting the ten-member Afghan civil society delegation.

In turn, thanks go to the Afghan civil society and international civil society delegations who attended the various events during the BCA week and raised the voices of civil society. Moreover, our thanks go to the facilitators, moderators, speakers, presenters, participants and members of the Afghan & International Civil Society Workshop.

We’d like to acknowledge the generous financial support of our donors, namely the European Commission, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). Thanks also go to Open Society Foundations for their in-kind support.

Lastly, we would like to thank the hundreds of participants of the provincial civil society survey and regional focus group discussions and the 131 who attended the National Civil Society Conference in Kabul. Without their voluntary input, the BCA process would not have benefited from these wide-ranging civil society views and voices.

2. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to share the key documents, statements and messages, delivered on behalf of the wider civil society community primarily by the ten Afghan civil society delegates to the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (BCA) on the 4th and 5th October 2016.

The report presents the civil society activities leading up to, during and after the BCA. It includes the position papers prepared for the BCA, the consultation processes that informed the Afghan civil society position paper, the statements delivered during the BCA and the discussions which took place within and alongside the official BCA agenda. It also presents civil society’s initial reflections on the BCA and follow-up plans as discussed on the 6th October.



3. The Afghan civil society position paper

In July and August 2016, Afghan civil society networks organised a series of country-wide consultations and focus-group discussions (see section 12). These aimed to elicit the views of Afghan citizens and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) about their priorities for the next phase of the transformation decade, and their recommendations for the BCA. The findings and recommendations, which were endorsed by the Afghan Civil Society Working Committee on the BCA¹, were published in September 2016 as the Afghan civil society position paper, entitled *Collaborating for Transformation: The Civil Society of Afghanistan Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan*.

For the full Afghan civil society Position Paper, please see Annex one.

4. Synthesis paper

Ahead of the BCA, BAAG drafted a Synthesis Paper which compiled the views and recommendations of civil society position papers (both Afghan and international) published for the BCA. It took into account 19 papers and was circulated to policymakers, donors, media outlets, and Afghan and international civil society.

For the full Synthesis Paper, please see Annex two.

¹ Working Committee members were: Aziz Rafiee (ACSFO), Baryalai Omarzai (ANCB), Fiona Gall (ACBAR), Hasina Safi (AWN), Abdullah Ahmadi & then Khalil Raufi (CSJWG Secretariat), Jan Mohammad Hamdard (SWABAC), Khan Zaman Amarkhail (CSCC), Masood Karokhail (TLO and Salah Consortium), Naeem Ayubzada (TEFA and Afghan Civil Society Elections Network), Raz Mohammad Dalili (SDO), Hassan Ali Faiz (CSHRN) and Saiffudin Nizami (CCD and Advocacy Committee for People with Disability)

5. Afghan and International Civil Society event and AICS Statement

BAAG hosted an Afghan and International Civil Society Workshop on 3rd October 2016 at the Marriott Hotel in Brussels. Bringing together 72 representatives of Afghan and international civil society organisations, it provided a chance to share knowledge, strengthen relations and hone key messages ahead of the BCA. The day consisted of two panel discussions, the presentation of the BAAG Synthesis Paper (see section 4), discussions and presentations from six thematic working groups, as well as a closing session attended by donors and international organisations.

The opening panel reflected on the current role and environment for national and international civil society in Afghanistan. Presentations and reflections on this topic were made by Aziz Rafiee and Maiwand Rahyab - two of the Afghan civil society representatives - and Fiona Gall, Director of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR). The subsequent Q&A with workshop participants involved discussion on how Afghan and international civil society can continue to develop capacities, collaborate effectively, and advocate for a more systematic, mutually beneficial working relationship with the National Unity Government (NUG).

The closing session was attended by an additional 33 donor and international delegation representatives. This session consisted of the following panel, moderated by Belgian journalist Gie Goris: Samira Hamidi and Shirin Persson representing civil society, DEVCO Deputy Director-General Marjeta Jager, USAID Assistant to the Administrator, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) Donald 'Larry' Sampler, and Special Adviser to CEO Dr Abdullah Abdullah, Mustafa Mansoor. It opened with the delivery of the AICS Statement by the two civil society representatives, which was drafted during the workshop based on comments raised in the working groups. The government panellists then made their statements and reflections. The ensuing panel discussion and Q&A involved frank and open discussion on issues ranging from the civil society environment, donor priorities, implementation of laws, the Joint Way Forward agreement and the Hizb-e-Islami peace deal.

For the full AICS Statement, please see Annex three.

6. Afghan civil society statement at the BCA

Afghan civil society representatives, Palwasha Hassan and Aziz Rafiee, presented the Afghan civil society statement at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan on 5th October 2016. Drafts of the statement were prepared for discussion with other delegates and then finalised for presentation.

For the full Afghan Civil Society Statement, please see Annex four.



7. Engagement with policy-makers and other stakeholders during the BCA week

Meeting with CEO Dr Abdullah Abdullah

On 5th October, Abdullah Abdullah, and Stefano Manservigi, Director General of the EC Directorate for International Co-operation and Development co-hosted a roundtable with the Afghan and international civil society delegations (see section 11 for names). Referring to the civil society position paper and statements, both chairs acknowledged the critical role of civil society in Afghan development. Mr. Manservigi said the complex situation in Afghanistan could not be tackled as a humanitarian situation alone because development and security had to be addressed and therefore the role of civil society was all the more important. Dr. Abdullah said civil society could count on the government in the same way that the government counts on civil society. Within the 75 minute meeting Naeem Ayubzada and Nooria Sultani presented on behalf of civil society. Other contributors included Rory Stewart of UK Government, Ikram Afzali, Maiwand Rahyab, Jawed Nader, Palwasha Hassan, Samira Hamidi, Rachel Reid, and Heather Barr.

Meeting with DFID Minister Rory Stewart

On 4th October during a break in the *Empowered Women, Prosperous Afghanistan* side event, Palwasha Hassan, Aziz Rafiee and Jawed Nader met Rory Stewart, Head of the British delegation to the BCA. They expressed their gratitude for the continued commitment and £750 million pledge of the British government to Afghanistan. Mr. Rafiee asked for the British government's on-going support to improve coordination between donors, the Afghan government and civil society, as well as continued financial and technical support to civil society. Ms Hassan commended DFID-led programmes

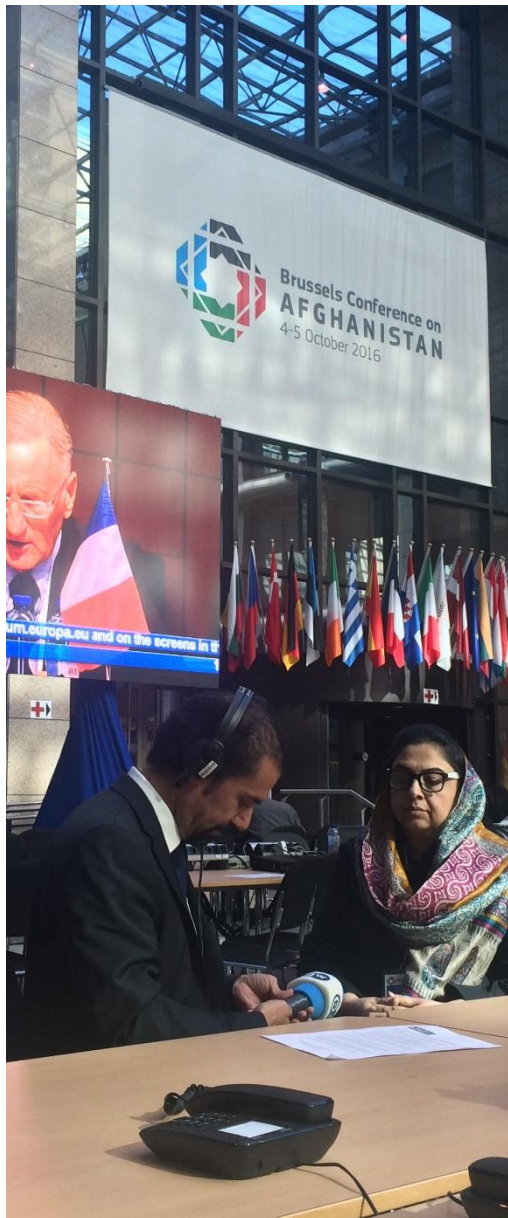


including Tawanmandi that have 'made a difference' in empowering civil society. Mr. Nader raised the matter of aid effectiveness and called for an increased role of civil society in development planning and delivery, explaining that civil society has shown they can access communities and deliver services more effectively. Minister Stewart promised to raise these points in his statement and engagements. Also present were senior staff members of the Department for International Development (DFID).

BAAG/Open Society Foundations event

On 4th October, Open Society Foundations and BAAG jointly hosted a morning round table for development and rights practitioners, researchers and European policy-makers. 'Supporting Afghanistan's Development: Expert Opinions of Afghan Civil Society' included introductory

presentations by Samira Hamidi (Afghan Women's Network), Zarqa Yaftali (Women & Children Legal Research Foundation) and Jan Mohammad Hamdard (South Western Afghanistan & Balochistan Association). Discussions with participants included effective civil society coordination, threats to civil society and its space to operate, Western versus Afghan perceptions of traditional or fundamentalist views, the challenges of reporting, compliance and monitoring of donor funds and the current migration crisis and EU-Afghanistan deportation deal.



Transparency International event

On 4th October, 10.30-13.00, Transparency International hosted an event to launch their report *From promises to action: Assessing Afghanistan's progress on anti-corruption*. The report collects and reviews the National Unity Governments' (NUG) commitments on anti-corruption and puts forward a set of recommendations for both the NUG and international donors for meaningful progress in tackling corruption.

Media engagement

Public perceptions of the situation in Afghanistan, and their understanding of why ongoing international support is needed, can influence the commitments of international donors. It was therefore important to ensure that Afghan civil society voices be included in media coverage of the BCA. BAAG hired an experienced Brussels-based media consultant and worked with her to promote the profiles and messages of the ten Afghan civil society delegates. Through a press release, online press pack and engagement with the media during i) the AICS workshop, ii) the Empowered Women, Prosperous Afghanistan event, iii) the main conference itself and iv) a civil society press conference at the main conference, the civil society delegates were enabled to share their views, opinions and recommendations with international media.

Across the week and following it, 39 separate articles featuring interviews with or statements by the delegates were published or broadcast on television or radio. Media

outlets included The New York Times, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 4's The World Tonight, Al Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, Radio France Internationale and the New Zealand Herald. Afghan media coverage came from 1TV News and 8 Sobh, whilst Dari and Pashto coverage was also included by the Deutsche Welle team.

Numerous themes were discussed during these interviews, including anti-corruption recommendations, the situation for Afghan migrants and returnees, the continuing need for international aid, women's rights and the civil society speech at the conference.

9. Immediate impressions and next steps

The ten Afghan delegates, some international delegates and other INGOs, EC DEVCO and BAAG staff met for two hours on 6th October to discuss immediate feedback on the BCA and possible follow up and next steps.

Immediate impressions of the BCA were mixed. Positive reflections included that donor pledges exceeded expectations, there were many mentions of the valuable role of civil society by donors and co-hosts and the importance of civil society involvement was mentioned in the Communiqué, access to media in Brussels had been impressive and resulted in good international coverage, and the synthesis paper was found to be useful.

However concerns and negatives included that civil society had little influence over the BCA agenda, indicating that advocacy work should have begun much earlier. Most donors failed to mention civil society during their pledges (the UK being one of very few exceptions), and from an advocacy perspective, discourse at the conference sounded as though the international community sees Afghanistan as a post-conflict country when it clearly is not. Further advocacy concerns included lack of anti-corruption benchmarks, the Joint Way Forward repatriation deal, impunity in recent peace agreements being cited as a future model, the lack of female political decision-makers, and protection of civil society staff.

All agreed that follow-up was necessary to maintain momentum and develop mechanisms which will facilitate an effective role for civil society in representing the views of citizens and in holding the government and donors to account. Participants commented that they would welcome assistance from BAAG in these plans and activities.

An immediate activity will be the formulation of an Action Plan which the ten Afghan delegates agreed to discuss in dedicated meetings in Kabul. The action plan should include advocacy and monitoring activities. Whilst resource constraints (human and financial) will be considered, so will fundraising from donors for a specific follow-up project.

Another key activity agreed was communicating to wider civil society in Kabul and the provinces the experiences and outcomes of the BCA. Continued collaboration with international NGOs was also suggested as a key outcome of the BCA experience. Opportunities should be explored to utilise various complementary skills, expertise and policymaker access in a strategic and systematic way.

Regarding future systematic engagement with the NUG, it was noted that whilst platforms to do so already exist, civil society should consider how best to shape and use such platforms in order to

inform and influence. A regular working meeting between civil society groups and government ministers were suggested.

Since this meeting, the ten Afghan delegates have met in Kabul where they are preparing a written report of the BCA to share with civil society, and work continues on the Action Plan. BAAG staff are travelling to Kabul in mid-November to discuss and support these plans and activities.

10. Afghan civil society and international NGO delegation selection and lists of delegates

The European Commission (EC) offered to support ten Afghan civil society delegates to travel to Brussels and participate in the BCA. Within that group two spokespeople would deliver the civil society statement at the main conference. The EC and NUG also agreed that these ten delegates would participate in a dedicated civil society discussion with senior representatives of the EC, the NUG and other international donor representatives.

At a later date, the EC agreed that ten international NGO representatives would also be invited to attend the main conference and the joint EC and NUG civil society discussion.

BAAG supported the BCA Working Committee in Kabul to select the ten Afghan delegates. The latter formed an independent Selection Committee to manage the process. An open application process, based on key criteria agreed by the Selection Committee, was promoted in August.

The Selection Committee received approximately 200 applications, and 176 of these met the initial application criteria. 115 eligible applications were from men, and 61 from women. Whilst a significant number of applications came from Kabul-based individuals, 76 were received from 24 provinces across the country.

The Selection Committee reviewed the eligible applicants against the agreed criteria to create a long-list of 51 applicants, and then a short-list of 28. Of the 51 longlist applicants, 14 were female. In the 28-person short-list there were 14 female and 14 male applicants. These 28 were invited to interviews with the Selection Committee and observers on the 27th and 28th August. The interviews were conducted in local languages as well as English, since one of the agreed criteria was for effective communications skills with international delegates and policy makers in Brussels. They were also audio recorded for transparency purposes.

Based on scoring against the criteria, ten individuals were selected for the delegation – five men and five women. A further twelve were selected as reserves, based on their scores. The reserves would only be called upon if any of the delegates are unable, for whatever reason, to travel to Brussels. Since the ten were successful in their visa application, the reserves were not required.

The ten Afghan civil society delegates were:

1. Mr Aziz Rafiee – Afghan Civil Society Forum-organisation (spokesperson)
2. Ms Palwasha Hassan - Afghan Women's Educational Centre (spokesperson)
3. Mr Naeem Ayubzada - Transparent Elections Foundation of Afghanistan

4. Ms Nooria Sultani - Equality for Peace and Democracy
5. Mr Sayed Ikram Afzali - Integrity Watch Afghanistan
6. Ms Samira Hamidi - Afghan Women's Network
7. Mr Maiwand Rahyab - Afghan Institute for Civil Society
8. Ms Zarqa Yaftali - Women & Children Legal Research Foundation
9. Mr Jan Mohammad - South Western Afghanistan & Balochistan Association
10. Ms Freshta Karimi - Da Qanoon Ghoshtonky

BAAG undertook consultations with international NGOs in Kabul and Europe to consider how the international civil society delegates might be selected and on which criteria. It was agreed that BAAG should request nominations based on a set criteria, and from those nominations choose the representatives. The international NGOs suggested that the tenth INGO be BAAG, as a network of multiple NGOs and as an organisation closely linked with the Afghan civil society delegates and their BCA preparations. 26 organisations nominated a delegate. Aiming for a good balance of thematic expertise, an equal gender balance and experience across a wide range of Afghan provinces, the following were selected:

1. Marie-Pierre Caley - ACTED
2. Charles Davy - Afghanaid
3. Peter Simms - Children in Crisis
4. Gerard Garvey - Danish Refugee Council (later replaced by Claus Larsen)
5. Luca Radaelli - Emergency ONG
6. Heather Barr - Human Rights Watch
7. Rachel Reid - Open Society Foundations
8. Shirin Persson - Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
9. Shoshana Stewart - Turquoise Mountain
10. Jawed Nader - BAAG

11. Provincial Consultations

All civil society and government stakeholders in the BCA agreed on the importance of involving civil society groups and actors outside Kabul in the development of positions and in selecting delegates to the BCA. All acknowledged that these entities would have important local knowledge and insight.

The BCA Working Committee agreed on a two-part regional consultation process: a provincial-level survey, and eight regional focus group discussions (FGDs). The aim was to gather local evidence of improvements or failures since the 2014



London Conference on Afghanistan and recommendations to the NUG, international donors and civil society regarding development priorities. These would be reported in a national conference and inform development of the civil society position paper.

i: The Survey

A research specialist was involved in refining a series of questions for the survey. Working Committee members agreed that supporting organisations completing the survey through either telephone or face to face discussions would result in a higher quality and quantity of completed surveys, though some online completion was also required.

The Working Committee members disseminated the surveys to civil society across the country and conducted calls and meetings in mid-August. In total, 478 surveys were completed across 29 provinces, with the following key findings:

- Building electricity dams, constructing roads and having better relations with foreign countries were cited most frequently by respondents as positive actions from the Afghan government in recent years.
- Insecurity, increased unemployment and corruption were the government's main failings
- Respondents stated that the best way to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan is to put international pressure on countries that support insurgencies
- Building factories to create jobs was the preferred means of reducing poverty
- The most popular means to fight corruption is to ensure the rule of law on all citizens
- Only 44% of respondents definitely plan to vote in the next parliamentary elections, with past electoral fraud being the main deterrent
- The leading means to improve women's role in society is to provide more education to girls and women
- 78% think civil society and NGOs have a role in development, and their main role should be to advocate for the rights of citizens

For a short visual summary of key results, please see Annex five. A full report is expected January 2017.

ii: Focus Group Discussions

Whilst conducting the survey, Working Committee member staff in each of eight regions were responsible for organising a half-day regional focus group discussions (FGD). These each brought together 25-30 civil society representatives from each local province to discuss development needs in more detail, agree regional recommendations, and elect attendees for the National Civil Society conference planned in early September.

Since the findings from the FGDs could provide valuable insight and evidence, these were completed in early August to enable short reports of this process and their findings to be compiled and presented in the National Conference in September.

At least 206 civil society actors took part in the eight FGDs, at least 57 of whom were female (two FGD reports did not disaggregate their attendee figures, one didn't report on their attendee numbers).

iii: National Civil Society Conference

The National Civil Society Conference was proposed as an opportunity to bring together findings from the regional consultations, discuss and propose national-level recommendations for the position paper, and engage directly with the Afghan government and donors in a closing session.

With the aim to bring together 100 civil society actors, including 25 provincial representatives selected through the regional consultation process, the Serena Hotel in Kabul was selected for a two day event on 6th and 7th September.

At least 131 people attended the National Civil Society Conference. This included 66 provincial attendees. Though invited, the majority of representatives from the European Commission and other international donors were unable to attend due to security restrictions following complex attacks in Kabul. UNAMA was present and Deputy Minister of Finance Ameen Habibi spoke, providing an update on challenges and achievements of the NUG, the Citizens Charter and other National Priority Programmes and NUG plans for the BCA. He answered questions from the audience about security, development progress, anti-corruption measures and privatization.



Annexes

Annex one: Collaborating for Transformation: The Civil Society of Afghanistan Position Paper for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan

Introduction

Afghan civil society is grateful to both the National Unity Government of Afghanistan (NUG) for the progress it has made so far and to the international community (IC) for its generous support during the last 15 years. The Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (BCA) provides an important opportunity for the declaration of further adherence to mutual cooperation and support for development in Afghanistan, in which members of Afghan civil society are committed to play their part.

The commitments set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) were confirmed at the London Conference on Afghanistan, the Senior Officials Meeting and the Joint Coordination & Monitoring Board. Meeting these commitments requires political will, international assistance and the collaboration of civil society. The initial steps taken by the NUG and the IC to that end, though commendable, have been insufficient.

In July and August 2016, Afghan civil society networks organised a series of country-wide consultations and focus-group discussions to elicit the views of Afghan citizens and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) about their priorities for the next phase of the transformation decade, and their recommendations for the BCA². The findings and recommendations, which have been endorsed by the Afghan Civil Society Working Committee on the BCA and the civil society delegates in the BCA³, are as follows (the order does not represent the importance):

Peace, Reconciliation and Security

The current violence causing alarming numbers of civilian casualties is rooted in the last four decades of conflict within the country and the broader region. It has become clear that failure to address injustices from these years has had a direct impact on peace and stability in the present context. Only through a comprehensive peace process will it be possible to address the current conflict.

After a decade of growing insecurity, the peace process in Afghanistan is at a crucial juncture. The political outreach of the High Peace Council has produced few tangible results in the past, with few successes at a local level⁴. However the recent peace deal negotiated between Hezb-e Islami and the NUG, in which it is specified that the Afghan constitution will be respected and protected by the reconciled groups, is cautiously welcomed and will hopefully pave the way for reconciliation with other Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) such as the Taliban, or related factions, in future.

² A survey of 416 civil society actors including NGOs, social organisations and grassroots organisations in 34 provinces of Afghanistan was conducted in July – August; 8 regional focus-group discussions were held in the eight regional centres in August; and a national civil society conference was held in Kabul on 6-7 September 2016.

³ The Afghan Civil Society Working Committee on the BCA and the civil society delegates in the BCA includes (in alphabetical order): ACBAR, ACSFo, AICS, ANCB, AWEC, AWN, BARAN, CCD, CCCC, CSHRN, CSJWG, DQG, EPD, IWA, SDO, SWABAC, TEFA, TLO/Salah Consortium, and WCLRF. Support organisations included AIHRC, BAAG and UNAMA.

⁴ A Roadmap to Peace – Civil Society and the Peace processes in Afghanistan; OSF, HREVO, CAPU, PTRO, TLO and EPD, May 2016.

One thing is clear: in order to forgo lasting peace in Afghanistan it is necessary to address past injustices and implement transitional justice whilst taking into account the realities and complexities of the Afghan conflict. It remains a concern that victims of war have not been involved in the peace deal brokered with Hizb-e Islami.

Political inclusion of AOGs within the Afghan government can only be productive if the NUG is able to fulfill its core functions. Studies have shown that the inability of the NUG to deliver basic services has a negative impact on state legitimacy and can thus become a driver of conflict. The NUG allocates nearly half (44%) of the core national budget for security costs⁵, whereas spending some of that on good governance for the benefit of the vulnerable populations could provide more security in the long term.

Recommendations

1. Initiate and sustain inclusive peace processes at local, regional, national and international levels, which include victims of war, CSOs, women, and youth, and enforces the Afghan National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security;
2. Design and implement a national dialogue leading to a comprehensive and responsive framework for peace;
3. Undertake the disarmament and demobilisation of illegal armed groups and establish a monitoring mechanism for implementation; prioritise the removal of personal influence over Afghan National Security Forces by individuals and/or factions; and
4. Create and provide alternative opportunities to prevent youths from joining the armed opposition or violent extremist groups; include peace education in school and university curricula to promote a culture of peace among the youth of Afghanistan.

Good Governance and Anti-Corruption

We appreciate the priority the NUG has given to fighting corruption, improving transparency, and bolstering accountability in the Afghan National Peace & Development Framework (ANPDF), the BCA benchmarks, and the inauguration of Anti-

Corruption Justice Centre for High-ranking Officials. However, given the enormous damage corruption is causing to stability, to economic malaise, and government legitimacy, we believe much more will need to be done if Afghanistan is going to turn the corner.

Afghanistan is perceived to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world⁶. Around 90% of citizens face corruption in their day-to-day interaction with the NUG⁷. Corrupt individuals and groups have enjoyed impunity, political interference has weakened state institutions in the delivery of quality services, and a lack of integrity among NUG officials has weakened public trust in the state.⁸ Important progress has been made in the last two years but a lot more remains to be done.

The ANPDF promises a Citizens Charter which will be a pact between the NUG and the people, and yet missing from the various BCA documents is an independent oversight role for Afghan civil society. Only the Afghan people themselves can ensure the accountability of their government, so it is essential that relevant

⁵The Cost of Violent Extremism in Afghanistan – An Estimation of the Economic and Financial Costs of Ongoing Conflict and Violent Extremism; EPD; August 2015; <http://www.epd-afg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Costs-of-Violent-Extremism.pdf> (Accessed on 17 September 2016).

⁶Corruption Perception Index 2015; Transparency International; 2015; <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015#results-table> (Accessed on 23 September 2016).

⁷Afghanistan in 2015: A Survey of the Afghan People; Asia Foundation; 2015

⁸National Integrity System Assessment Afghanistan 2015; Integrity Watch Afghanistan and Transparency International; 2015; <https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Afghanistan-National-Integrity-System-Assessment-2015.pdf> (Accessed on 23 September 2016).

CSOs should have a consultative role in the formulation of various Transparency, Accountability and Counter-corruption (TACC) strategies, policies, and national priority plans, as well as oversight throughout their implementation.

Concrete benchmarks, by which Afghan citizens can evaluate reform over time and international donors can frame their aid and technical assistance, are missing. A consortium of civil society groups has developed specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) benchmarks to assess TACC efforts, which should be adopted by the NUG and international donors in the BCA⁹. This is particularly important given that the NUG and donors have specifically asked that the BCA deliverables should be SMART.

Adopting certain international standards and implementing them would give confidence to the Afghan people and donors that the NUG is truly committed to reform. These standards are enshrined in international TACC institutions, such as the Open Government Partnership, the Open Contracting Principles (and its associated data standards), the Arusha Declaration of the World Customs Organization, the Addis Tax Initiative, and UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

Recommendations

1. Ensure that the anti-corruption remedies recommended by CSOs are incorporated into the anti-corruption strategies and regulations of key Ministries and institutions
2. Make monitoring by citizens a key requirement in all NUG plans, for example in mining and local infrastructure projects and services, strengthened by access to information and laws protecting whistle-blowers;
3. Involve, consult and give an oversight role to relevant Afghan CSOs in counter-corruption strategies, policies, and national priority plans; and
4. The NUG should commit itself to joining, and abiding by the principles of, key international TACC institutions and UNCAC.

Human & Civil Rights

Women's inclusion

We acknowledge the progress made by the NUG in terms of women's empowerment. We especially appreciate the appointment of women to significant leadership and decision making roles, the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (1325) and the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Programmes (NPP), the increase in the number of women in the High Peace Council and diplomatic posts, women's inclusion in the justice sector through the establishment of a special division in the office of the Attorney General and the office for prevention of discrimination and violence against women. These are all key advances.

We are however concerned about the NUG's inability to meet the benchmark of 30% of women in civil service posts (as the NUG had committed to in the Afghan National Development Strategy¹⁰). Likewise, we remain concerned about the increase in the number of cases of violence against women registered by the Afghan

⁹ These recommendations can be found at <https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSO-AC-Policy-Recommendations.pdf>

¹⁰ The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS);

Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)¹¹ and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the small number of prosecutions of perpetrators of these violent acts, the low illiteracy rate (11%) among women, the low number of women employed in the security sector, the existing discrimination against and harassment of women in workplace, education institutions and in public space, and the lack of political will to implement women related laws and policies. These are some of the major obstacles to the meaningful inclusion and participation of women in the development of Afghanistan.

We urge the NUG and IC to build on the successes achieved by women through the 'empowerment agenda in Afghanistan'. We recommend that measurable steps are taken that ensure women's meaningful participation at all levels of NPPs and in the reforms planned with the intention of creating an inclusive and self-reliant Afghanistan.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that women's appointments are merit based and are not influenced by ethnic affiliation, political relationships or nepotism;
2. Retain the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) law, a significant achievement made by women, in its current form, extend the Special EVAW Attorney Units to all provinces and establish EVAW courts;
3. Apply the Anti- Sexual Harassment regulation at work and in education institutions to ensure and enable safe environments for women; and
4. Provide the necessary budget for the Afghanistan National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and put in place the appropriate integrated ministerial plans.

Children and Youth

Children and young people are a vital component in Afghanistan's long term economic development. According to the World Bank Afghanistan's youth bulge is the third largest in the world. An estimated 70% of population¹² is under 25 years of age and face many difficulties. Afghanistan has a high number of working street children, 600,000 who are highly exposed to the risk of violence¹³. The lack of sufficient preventative measures and laws is one of the reasons for the high number of sexual violence cases perpetrated against children

The unemployment rate in Afghanistan is estimated to have risen to 40%, up from 25% in 2014¹⁴. This badly affects the young, especially the educated youth who are left with no means to support their and their families' lives. Evidence shows that the primary recruits to the insurgency are young people. We acknowledge the NUG plans for offering skills and employment as set out in the ANPDF. We urge that these programmes are based on the subsequent employability of the young generation of Afghans in order to reduce the likelihood of migration and exposing refugees to exploitation.

Recommendations

1. Integrate the employment of young women and men in all development policies as a priority;

¹¹ Summary of Finding Report on Violence against Women; AIHRC, March 2015; http://www.aihrc.org.af/home/daily_report/4172 (Accessed on 20 September 2016).

¹² Afghanistan Beyond the Headlines: Women, Youth, and War; Wilson Centre; June 2013; <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/afghanistan-beyond-the-headlines-women-youth-and-war> (Accessed on 17 September 2016).

¹³ Feed the Children of Afghanistan; WFP; December 2010; <http://www.wfp.org/content/feed-hungry-street-children-afghanistan> (Accessed on 23 September 2016).

¹⁴ Afghanistan Unemployment Rate; Trading Economics; 2016; <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/unemployment-rate> (Accessed on 25 September 2016).

2. Ensure the implementation of the Child Act and the Convention of Rights of Child;
3. Prevent the sexual exploitation of young women and men in detention centres, security forces and in other public spaces; and
4. Stop the spread of violent extremism among youth, especially in religious schools and universities by improving government and community oversight.

People with Special ability

Almost four decades of war has resulted in around 1.2 million¹⁵ people having some sort of disability. The NUG has a constitutional duty to support people with a disability, however, lack of resources and political will are cited as common obstacles to meet this obligation. An estimated 90% of children with disabilities in Afghanistan do not attend schools due to inaccessible environments. The level of literacy and employment for adults with disabilities remain alarmingly low too¹⁶.

Recommendations

1. Implement the National Law of Rights and Benefits of People with Disabilities;
2. Implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as its Optional Protocol; and
3. Implement the Sustainable Development Goals with attention to people with disabilities.

Basic Needs and Humanitarian Issues

In the past decade, significant progress has been made in Afghanistan in the provision of services to the population. We acknowledge the promising work of the Citizens Charter NPP that uses Community Development Councils to design and oversee the delivery of basic services. We also welcome the partnership between civil society and the NUG in implementing this programme. The increase in school enrolment, the increased access to public health facilities and safe drinking water cannot be denied, but neither can the critical needs of the population.

Overall, 8.1 million people in Afghanistan are in need of humanitarian assistance¹⁷, distributed over a conflict-ravaged territory prone to natural disasters. Afghanistan still has one of the highest rates of under-five mortality and maternal mortality in the world. Women are risking their lives during delivery and thousands of children are dying every year.

When children reach school age, access to school is compromised. Today, about 3.5 million of 14 million children do not attend school¹⁸, while another 1 million children are enrolled but considered permanently absent¹⁹. The majority of these are girls, children in remote and insecure areas, children with disabilities and learning difficulties, and Kuchi nomad children. By the end of 2016, over one million people are expected to be “on the move”: this includes the newly displaced and newly returning Afghans, many of whom will require humanitarian assistance. Sustainable development solutions are needed for protracted internal displacement and for returnees, who have been forced to live in camps and informal settlements for years.

¹⁵ Disability Rights in Afghanistan; Sida; September 2014; <http://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/human-rights-based-approach/disability/rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-afghanistan.pdf> (Accessed on 14 September 2016).

¹⁶ Disability and Education; AOAD; 2016, <http://www.aoad-af.org/> (Accessed on 13 September 2016).

¹⁷ Afghanistan Flash Appeal - One Million People on the Move - Covering Sep-Dec 2016; UNOCHA; 2016. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/system/files/documents/files/afg_2016_flash_appeal_0.pdf (Accessed on 24 September 2016).

¹⁸ Three Million Children at Risk in Afghanistan; Samayil-al-Washula of UNICEF; June 2015, in Tolo News; <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/20053-three-million-children-at-risk-in-afghanistan> (Accessed 25 September 2016).

¹⁹ Development Gains in Education - the Stakes are High for Afghan Children; The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan; 2016.

While the migration of Afghans to Europe has refocused the IC's attention on Afghanistan, the vast majority of displaced and vulnerable Afghans remain in Afghanistan and in the sub-region. Afghans need to have hope as citizens in their own country, or many may try to find their future further afield.

Afghan civil society remains concerned about the double standard of some European countries in dealing with the cases of Afghan asylum-seekers. Branded as 'economic migrants' they are deprived of humanitarian protection. This approach turns a blind eye to alarming levels of civilian casualties caused by the protracted conflict in Afghanistan.

Addressing immediate and basic needs provoked by humanitarian shocks or protracted crisis is a key factor in reducing poverty.

Recommendations

1. Focus the Health NPP on extending public health coverage to remote areas, while reinforcing the quality and inclusivity of care. The Ministry of Public Health should prioritize maternal health by strategically increasing the number of female health workers in remote areas;
2. Prioritise community-based education to increase enrolment and the retention rate of students in the Human Capital NPP. In order to increase the number of female teachers the Ministry of Education must lower the grade 12 requirement for teachers in these schools. Proper education mapping, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, geography, poverty and vulnerability should inform the policies which will mainstream vulnerable groups;
3. Invest considerably in literacy programmes, especially for women in rural areas and displaced youth, and in the reform of the vocational education system by updating the curriculum, improving teacher competence and creating real linkages with the labour market;
4. Implement the existing Internally Displaced People (IDP) policy, and Comprehensive Voluntary Repatriation and Re-integration Strategy. Support to IDPs and returnees should be needs-based rather than according to status, and particular attention should be given to vulnerable women, children and people with disability to the settlement and integration of IDPs and returnees across the country; and
5. Improve the nation's preparedness and resilience in dealing with disasters and climate change by means of a cross-ministerial NPP, which will integrate international commitments, national planning, and local actions.

Enabling Environment for Civil Society

Only in a conducive environment can Afghan civil society be an effective partner in the peace and development of Afghanistan. We acknowledge the NUG's signing of an agreement of cooperation with the Civil Society Joint Working Group and a number of meetings between the NUG leaders and civil society members during various national processes.

Nonetheless, evidence shows that the current environment for civil society is 'still marred by challenges', and is 'only somewhat supportive of their activities'²⁰. The main obstacles include corruption, a lack of technical expertise among both the CSOs and the government, as well as poor interaction between the two, deficiencies in the rule of law, reduced access to funding, and international donor-driven policy priorities²¹. Despite the

²⁰ The state of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan; Altai Consulting for the Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society; September 2016.

²¹ Ibid.

enactment of the Access to Information law, CSOs and independent media are still deprived of reliable and accurate data.

Whilst we acknowledge the increasing capacity of the Afghan civil service in policy design and implementation, we are concerned about an insufficient execution of the national budget and the impact this will have on service beneficiaries. We believe the sectoral expertise of CSOs and Non-government Organisations (NGOs) in service delivery, our flexible administrative systems, and our access to far-flung communities are valuable assets. The NUG should acknowledge and draw upon them. Likewise the NUG and IC should embrace the diversity of civil society voices rather than look for a unified voice. They should not expect to be given simple solutions for the complex issues such as those outlined in the ANPDF and NPPs. To facilitate consultations, the civil society needs to be supported both financially and technically to establish effective coordination mechanisms that allow smooth exchange of information and expertise.

The existence of civic space and the continuation of effective CSO initiatives mainly depend on security and the continuation of funding. Attacks on civil society and human rights activists as well as media personnel and service providers by Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs), criminals and pro-government elements have cost many lives and has reduced effectiveness. Regretfully, such cases are continually ignored by law enforcement agencies and we have seen no perpetrators of such violence being held accountable. Meanwhile, international financial support to CSOs has seen a sharp decline; aid budgets have been shrinking and more commitments are made to on-budget support. We are concerned that international civil society funded initiatives do not necessarily reach the grassroots CSOs and NGOs and some organizations are unable to meet the over-rigorous bureaucratic standards.

Recommendations

1. Safeguard the civic space by providing technical and financial support to independent CSOs whilst easing the onerous reporting and administrative requirements and instead enhancing the internal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within CSOs;
2. Ensure that civil society actors are protected from interference in their legitimate work, both through the understanding and observance of International Humanitarian Law and national laws, and in the open declaration of any conflicts of interest, by political actors, government officials and armed opposition groups (AOGs).
3. Enforce the law of Access to Information and prosecute the perpetrators of violence against civil society and human rights and media activists especially female members;
4. Provide timely and reliable information and financial support so that civil society can follow up on and oversee the commitments made in the BCA and whether and how they are implemented; and
5. Ensure a systematic flow of information and expertise between the NUG and CSOs, particularly at the provincial level.

Inclusive & Sustainable Development

According to the Afghan Ministry of Finance and The World Bank, Afghanistan has been experiencing a much lower growth rate than expected in 2014. Economic forecasts predict 1.9% - 3.6% per cent growth in 2016 -

2019²². This rate of growth is incompatible with the increasing number of young people joining the labour market each year and will have negligible impact on income and living standards. The NUG should present clear long term plans and commitments that will create more jobs. This will be impossible without the facilitation of increased investment opportunities in the private sector.

A lack of sufficient infrastructure, an inadequate approach towards the extraction of natural resources and a dearth of legal support are the main challenges to sustainable economic growth. Delay in the implementation of regional trade pacts causes transit problems, which are obstacles to mid and long term economic developments.

Recommendations

1. Establish a water management system that can help manage trans-boundary and domestic water systems. The domestic water system should manage the water resources to strengthen irrigation and to produce electricity;
2. Investment in agriculture, including in the establishment of an irrigation system that can optimise the production from the agricultural lands across all seasons of the year. Establish more cold houses where farmers can store their short-life produce; and
3. Ensure that farmers have access to modern techniques and market linked supply chains.



²² Afghanistan Development Update: Afghanistan Riding into the Headwinds of Lower Aid; World Bank; <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/04/20/afghanistan-development-update-afghanistan-riding-into-the-headwinds-of-lower-aid> (Accessed 25 September 2016).

Annex two: Synthesis of Afghan and International Civil Society Papers for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan

Summary

Given that the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), the International Community and Civil Society all face the daunting challenges of developing Afghanistan and improving the welfare of its citizens, Afghan and international civil society recommend:

- That this should be done in a partnership of mutual respect, co-operation and support
- That the GoA should abide by commitments given and conventions, laws and treaties entered into
- That long term international support, conditional on implementation of reforms, continues with long term programmes
- That the importance of the role of civil society, national and international, is acknowledged and facilitated

Purpose

This paper summarizes the key views and recommendations made by Afghan and international civil society organizations in papers prepared for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (BCA) in October 2016 (see Annex for the list of papers reviewed). This is an international conference co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoA) and the European Union, (EU), at which the Afghan Government will outline the progress made in implementing reforms since the last conference in London in 2014, and donors will pledge financial and other support to the country.

The purpose of this synthesis paper is to inform discussions during and after the conference.

Context

The BCA is taking place two years into the Transformation Decade, 2014 to 2024, after the majority of combat troops have left, and with a Government of National Unity in place. Afghan civil society has been invited to select two representatives, one man and one woman, from their 10 delegates, to speak at the main conference. There will be a side event, 'Empowered Women - Prosperous Afghanistan', in which the delegates will participate. They will also have the opportunity to meet key international decision makers from the Afghan and donor governments and international institutions.

In preparation for the BCA the GoA has been drafting the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF). This is a 'strategic plan, 2017 to 2021, for achieving self-reliance' and copies were circulated for comment and consultation, including from civil society. The document outlines the impact of the transition on Afghanistan's security, politics and economy and the fragmentation of security and development, after decades of war and an increase in population, including 2.5 million people with a disability, and hundreds of refugees a day returning from Pakistan as of July 2016. It describes the challenges of conflict, corruption, criminality and unemployment together with the vulnerability Afghanistan has to natural disasters, widespread multi-dimensional poverty, fracture lines both ethnic and tribal, and rural versus urban, varying beliefs in the changing role of women, and inconsistencies in the quality of education and health care as factors in 'rising citizen dissatisfaction'.

The document stresses that the GoA is 'deeply invested in the peace process' and to finding political solutions to the conflict, that it is committed to an increase in the accountability of the state and, since 'relevant indicators for women are significantly worse than those for men', to ensuring that 'the fruits of our economic strategy are shared equitably by Afghanistan's men and women'.

Consultations

Consultations have taken place with Afghan civil society actors in the cities and the provinces of Afghanistan, through the means of survey and focus group discussions in preparation for the BCA and despite security constraints. A Working Committee of Afghan civil society networks organized these during August and then convened an early September national conference in Kabul for two days to debate the findings and prepare key messages and recommendations for presentation at the BCA.

Afghan and international civil society members held discussions and organized national and provincial consultations on a variety of themes in order to collaborate on the papers prepared for the BCA. The concentration on obtaining the views of Afghans, the joint production and endorsement of papers and the consistency of the findings and recommendations expressed has meant that this synthesis paper outlines the views of national and international civil society as a whole.

The Papers

Developments since the London Conference on Afghanistan in 2014

Civil society welcomes the positive achievements that have been made, by the GoA, the international community and civil society. While it would be justified to add the word ‘however...’ to most of them it would also be unfair not to recognise the developments that have taken place as a result of the endeavours of three partners, singly and together and with the Afghan people.

Examples of achievements mentioned in the papers include:

- Progress made to reduce the impact of natural hazards and an enhanced resilience
- Commitment to a range of anti-corruption reforms and an increase in transparency and accountability
- The costing and budgeting of a plan for NAP 1325
- The vibrant media of Afghanistan
- The existence of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and GoA plans to create a policy on the handling of gross violations of human rights
- Some improvement in the operating environment for CSOs in Afghanistan
- Increased co-ordination between civil society organizations and the formation of networks.

The participants of eight regional focus group discussions arranged by the civil society Working Committee also noted some positive developments which include:

- The building and repair of infrastructure and services, dams, roads, provision of water and the development of the port at Char Bahar and air connections to and from Herat
- The strengthening of civil society and the inclusion of more women in the organizations
- An improvement in co-ordination between the government and civil society organizations in at least one zone
- The achievements of the Ministry of Agriculture and the NSP programme in another zone
- Some improvements in the taxation system
- Some reduction in corruption
- An increased awareness of rights, particularly of women and increased participation of women and young people in education, politics, sport and the police force

Peace and Security

There is unanimity in the findings of consultations that security has deteriorated in Afghanistan and that addressing this is an immediate priority to safeguard the future of Afghanistan and its citizens. Insecurity not only endangers men, women and children and the services they are entitled to but it also degrades infrastructure, discourages investment, hinders development, encourages corruption and causes displacement of populations and the outflow of social and fiscal capital. The securing of major highways and borders and the disarming of militias and illegal groups, coupled with the modernization of the armed forces and the police are thought to be essential.

The police and armed forces should be given capacity development and training, including in international humanitarian law and the principles which are upheld by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), of neutrality, impartiality and independence. There should be investigations of attacks on civilians and prosecutions of those responsible.

A comprehensive peace plan should be devised, involving a national dialogue and a recognition that the failure to address past injustices is exacerbating the conflict. Developing a culture of peace with reconciliation and confidence building measures, transitional and restorative justice, which excludes a blanket amnesty for criminal conduct, coupled with a clarification of roles for existing institutions, and ‘de-monetizing’ of the peace process are essential pathways to a lasting peace.

Both men and women feel that the inclusion of women in the peace process is critical to safeguarding the gains made in equality and human rights. The National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan must be implemented. Women must participate in all aspects of the peace process, at national and at provincial and district level and at all levels of seniority. They must have equal access to training and capacity development and take part in problem analysis, dialogue and advocacy.

Civil society organizations have been an underused resource; they have the access to communities and the necessary experience and skills in peace-building to make a significant contribution to a sustainable peace. There should be an action plan for civil society engagement in the peace process.[1]

Citizens’ Rights and Protection

A sustainable peace must include the protection of civilians and a respect for the rights of all citizens. Physical or verbal attacks based on ethnic or religious differences or those intended to silence members of the media have the potential to exacerbate conflict and to undermine the state. Article 22 of the Constitution of Afghanistan requires that *‘Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law’*.

Afghanistan is a signatory to the Geneva Conventions on human right and the subsequent Additional Protocols and treaties (such as those on the rights of the child and people with disabilities, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and on economic, social and cultural rights)[2]. The ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against torture, presentation of the draft law on torture and the implementation of the National Action Plan on torture is still awaited and the harmonization of domestic laws with international treaty obligations are yet to take place. Successive Afghan governments have taken no action to systematically do this although it is required by the conventions.

Since 2006 the UN has reviewed the human rights record of the member states and 377 recommendations resulted from the two reviews[3] of the record of Afghanistan. There is concern that the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, 2017 to 2021(ANPDF) does not accord human rights the importance that it should in the current conditions in Afghanistan. It does say that equality before the law will be realized by ‘taking serious steps to protect human rights and tackle violence against women’ but not how and when.

The people of Afghanistan require the protection, in a multiplicity of ways, which would be afforded by the implementation of these undertakings. There has been “a record number of civilian casualties since counting began in 2009, with 5,166 recorded killed or maimed in the first six months of 2015, of whom almost one third were children”[4] and there was a 37% increase in casualties among women in 2015[5]. Afghanistan has become one of the most dangerous places in the world for an aid worker; since January 2015 49 non-governmental staff have been killed, 38 wounded and 30 kidnapped.[6]

Ethnic and religious minorities and human rights defenders have been subject to attack. Facilities such as health centres have been targeted, sometimes because they have been used as election stations. This affects both those who use them and those who work in them. Schools have also been targeted; threats and intimidation have increased leading to the closure of schools and disrupted education for many pupils. While the media are more vibrant and less censored than others in the region freedom of speech is at risk. Journalists are subject to attack and, fearing retaliation, are reported to increasingly self-censor their reports.

Nearly four decades of conflict in a disaster prone country vulnerable to drought has degraded the natural resource base and compromised resilience. This is predicted to worsen as climate change heralds more extreme weather and mitigating the consequences will require community based disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation and the resources to fund these.

By the end of 2015 there were about 1.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Afghanistan and many of their children will have difficulty surviving the winter. They have been joined by 100,000 refugees who returned from Pakistan from July to September 2016 and hundreds a day continue to arrive. There is an alarming rate of malnutrition, countrywide, in the existing population; Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of stunting in children under five[7] and the second highest mortality rate in the world in children under five[8].

One key organization in Afghanistan mentioned as a vital institution in many of the papers prepared for the BCA, as well as in the focus group discussions, is the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. It has been dedicated to the ‘promotion, protection and maintenance of human rights and the investigation of human rights abuses’[9] since its inception in 2002. But the dismissal of some Commissioners and the appointment of others during the last government and the moving to the current government by some respected commissioners has been thought to be damaging.

Governance and Corruption

The nascent good governance and anti-corruption reform agenda of the GOA is welcome but until it is implemented it is feared that grievances associated with poor governance and corruption will continue to be drivers of the conflict, influence people to join the insurgency and limit the support people are prepared to give to the peace process.

The need to build the state should be in balance with meeting the current needs and fulfilling the rights of the citizens of Afghanistan; civil society has an important part to play in both processes leading to social cohesion. The aims of the Citizens Charter should be realized and there should be equality of provision and social justice for people who are at risk from humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, whether IDPs or returnees, or vulnerable because of a disability or membership of a minority.

The GoA should continue with its efforts to improve governance and to combat corruption. The GoA should sign up to the UN Convention on Corruption, an independent Anti-Corruption Commission should be established, the roles of existing bodies clarified, laws should be strengthened and offenders prosecuted. Transparency should be achieved through the provision of information about government contracts and procurement processes, including in the security sector, tax and customs, the extractives industry and the business environment. Merit based appointments should be introduced as well as improvements in the

capacity of relevant individuals through equality of opportunity in training and in the appointment of women to senior positions. Integral to the success of these measures is the integrity and independence of the judiciary and access to justice.

The views expressed in the papers are consistent with those expressed in the civil society focus group discussions. Good governance, reform and anti-corruption efforts, the equitable application of the rule of law, and prosecutions, consistent with international conventions, transparency and accountability are as important to civil society in the provinces as in Kabul. So too elections and the provision of electronic ID card and increased engagement between central government and local leaders.

Those participating in the discussions wished for effective international development assistance to continue and mentioned support for peace building, civil society and the role of women and young people in particular. There was support for strengthening democratic institutions including the Independent Election Commission and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. Tackling the narcotics problem was important in two regions. The regional recommendations provided in these focus group discussions frequently highlighted the importance of the part that civil society has to play. There was also a plea for support to be given for Afghan culture and society through the restoration and preservation of ancient monuments and the construction of sports facilities and stadiums. These, together with civil society can develop the social cohesion Afghanistan needs.

The Economy

The GoA has set out, in the ANPDF, its five-year strategic plan for achieving self-reliance in a context of a decline in domestic growth in the last 3 years, nearly 40% of the population (with regional differences) living below the poverty line and 400,000 young people, men, women and those with disabilities, in need of jobs and training coming on to the market each year. The GoA aim is to achieve a growth rate of 5% and to increase the development budget by 10-15% and to remove the business disincentives of extortion, kidnapping and illegal seizure.

Without increased revenue generation these aims cannot be met. To improve the business environment it is recommended that the GoA signs and implements the Standard for Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information^[10], (relating to transparency in domestic tax revenue), that the GoA will reform the customs services in line with the principles set out in the Arusha Declaration of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and make these public. The GoA should also fulfil its commitments to the World Trade Organization (WTO) by enacting and implementing the legislation, regulations and practices it is mandated to do under its WTO Accession Package.

The exploitation of natural resources has the potential to be a major source of revenue in Afghanistan but unless managed well it can also be a source of corruption and conflict. The GoA has committed itself to reforms for this sector (at the London Anti-Corruption Summit in May 2016), and the international community is urged to provide material and technical support, but it would be premature to begin large scale extraction by the state until these are in place. The GoA, supported by the international community, should amend laws relating to the extractives industry to require publication of a database of all contracts and information about payment and production and achieve validation under the EITI, ensuring that communities receive a share of the legal revenues or profits from the extraction.

Business oriented development programmes, of which there are many examples run by NGOs, can also increase revenue. Partnering with small farmers and other producers has created employment for men and women. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can make a great difference to people's lives and when coupled with adequate working conditions and social protection (and honouring the employment quota for those with disabilities, not just the war wounded) they can reduce inequality and have an important role in poverty reduction.

The focus group discussions stressed how economic conditions were worsening in some areas, and made specific requests for electricity, roads, factories and dams which could alter the outlook for the economy and provide jobs and in two areas asked for a reduction in the illegal narcotics industry. People were particularly hopeful that jobs would be provided for young people, for women and those with disabilities and to be helped with improved marketing in the traditional industries of agriculture and livestock and handicrafts.

Development in Health, Education, Agriculture and Livelihoods

The basic needs of the population need to be met and members of provincial civil society stressed the importance of having access to basic health care, education and social services. Long-term investment is needed to provide clean water, health services, education, agriculture and livelihoods especially for the young, and in providing assistance to the vulnerable and those in emergency situations, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Education provision, health services and agriculture should all benefit from technical input, staff training, and the employment of women. There should be a transition to services being delivered by the government but until that is possible NGOs and CSOs and humanitarian and development practitioners should continue to receive the resources to provide them and to work towards a smooth transition to government provision. There are gaps in the current services and there should be a comprehensive mapping of people's needs in health, nutrition, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene.

Health

A nation-wide project which aims to strengthen the national health system was approved in February 2013 (SEHAT, the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition). However, funds have been received late and although there has been some improvement in infant mortality the trends are not promising in other health and nutrition indicators. Vaccinations are alarmingly low in some areas and there is a crucial need for preventative services.

The point was made in the provincial focus group discussions that you either needed money to go to Kabul or outside Afghanistan for good medical treatment or you had to go without, so clinics and hospitals must be set up in the provinces.

Education

Education is a fundamental human right but despite the international community's generous support to this sector Afghanistan has the highest illiteracy rate in the region. According to the Ministry of Education the drop-out rate from school is high, particularly among girls and only 3.7% of the national budget is spent on education when UNESCO recommends that it should be at least 6%. There is concern that gains made will be lost with the deteriorating security situation. According to UNAMA there was an 86% increase in attacks on schools, buildings or personnel, in 2015, the infrastructure and equipment are poor, and only half the children in rural areas are attending school. It is estimated that 51% of children who are attending school are also involved in child labour. Some schools work up to four shifts giving children only 2 hours of education a day. Over 95% of children with disabilities and special needs have no access to education.

Only 35% of teachers in Afghanistan are women, and there are far fewer in rural areas. This number could be increased by lowering the requirement for 12th grade education for all teachers and this would increase access for girl pupils, as does working with local education shuras and community representatives. The World Bank suggests that adult literacy should be prioritized as it would help to reduce radicalization, empower women and expand the economy.

The Ministry of Education has developed an inclusive and child friendly policy which needs an action plan followed by implementation. In the provincial focus group discussions they stressed the importance of education and asked for improved provision with modernized methods of teaching and curricula, a supply of up to date textbooks and proper remuneration for teachers, especially for women in rural areas.

Agriculture

Modernization of the agriculture sector is also vital; the GoA has set out a comprehensive agricultural development programme, described in the ANPDF, which will require sizeable investment. The GoA estimates that 40% of the population is employed in agriculture and its products form a significant share of exports and has the potential for improving food security despite the deleterious effects of climate change. The GoA analysis of what is needed in the short and medium term is very similar to that of the participants in the provincial discussions, where they stressed the importance of agriculture, and of modernizing methods, and improving the quality of agricultural education. They listed the improvements that they thought would make most impact now: good quality seeds and fertilizer, greenhouses, poly-tunnels, cold storage and packaging facilities, some mechanization, and advances in animal husbandry and irrigation and, most importantly, assistance with the marketing of agricultural and dairy products.

The Tripartite Partnership – The Government of Afghanistan, Donors and Civil Society

The three components in this partnership face tremendous challenges in their common task of contributing to the development of Afghanistan and the improvement in the welfare of its citizens. The international community has funded the current and previous governments, and some of the achievements that have been made are set out earlier in this paper. Civil society organizations and actors have also made valuable contributions and have more to offer.

There is a need for a better understanding of the roles and constraints under which each of these partners performs their functions and the capacity development that would enhance the performance of government and civil society staff alike. International funding will be necessary for some time to come, there is a request for donors to provide longer term funding, to facilitate genuine capacity development, including in monitoring and evaluation and consider easing some of their more onerous administrative and reporting requirements.

NGOs have operated on the basis of the International Humanitarian Principles; Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence and the values of non-discrimination, accountability and transparency. Any NGO operating in Afghanistan and registered with the Ministry of Economy is eligible to sign the Code of Conduct which has existed since 2004. The capacity of NGOs and CSOs varies has improved and so has co-ordination between them, as demonstrated in the collaboration in these papers, the Working Committee and in joint advocacy initiatives. Networks have been shown to facilitate the sharing of resources, improve advocacy efforts and extend outreach to remote areas of the country.

There are now organizations which are capable of being more involved in the traditional role of civil society, in assisting with reviewing progress and obstacles to it, advising on policies and the implications of them, the setting of benchmarks and monitoring their achievement, advising on policies, providing platforms for the expression and dissemination of the views of Afghan citizens, and producing shadow reports.

While the GoA has committed itself to supporting civil society (for example at the London Conference in 2014 and in the paper ‘Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability’ in 2015) obstacles are faced by civil society organizations. They and their staff are vulnerable to attack. There is an Access to Information Law but civil society continues to experience difficulty in obtaining the information which would allow them to operate more effectively.

In 2013 59 civil society organizations, from across Afghanistan, signed a memorandum of understanding^[11] outlining ways in which civil society could actively support the peace process but it is reported^[12] that there had been no significant follow up in the development of an action plan and that areas of co-operation had remained on paper. Since the risk of returning to conflict has been found^[13] to be reduced by 64% when negotiations include representatives from unarmed affected communities, this has caused dismay.

Civil society organizations have responsibilities too, to operate in a principled way, following accepted good practice, monitoring and evaluating their work and building their expertise. Participants in the focus group discussions recommended that they continue to contribute to community development and to improve collaboration and co-ordination in the provinces, with joint strategies and plans, they maintain their neutrality from the government but assist it in the assessment of problems and by recommending solutions. They should improve public perceptions about civil society by ensuring they discover and combat any corruption within the civil society organizations while also reporting corruption and discrimination in government institutions when they find it.

There are examples of good relationships, of mutual accountability, respect and trust between the GoA, donors and civil society however there is room for improvement. Examples are given in the papers of ways in which further understanding can be fostered. It is recommended that challenges articulated by civil society to the government should not be perceived as a threat (indeed the GoA has identified many of the same problems in the ANPDF), but as an opportunity to work together to find solutions and to strengthen both the government and civil society and involve the wider participation of citizens in the development of their country.



Working documents and position papers prepared for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, October 2016:

‘Afghan Civil Society Engagement in Nation Building Efforts’, Afghan Civic Education Programme

‘Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), 2017 to 2021’, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

‘Afghan Media’, Journalists and Members of the Afghan Media, September 2016

‘Afghanistan: Where Humanitarian Concerns Do Not Match International Action’, Action Contre La Faim, 2016

‘Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, Position Paper’, Emergency ONG

‘Civil Society Recommendations’, Integrity Watch Afghanistan

‘Collaborating for Transformation: The Civil Society of Afghanistan Position Paper’

‘Development Gains in Education: Stakes are High for Afghan Children’, Joint Briefing Paper prepared by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, and endorsed by ANAFAB, ACBAR, Islamic Relief, AWEC, AHDS, Save the Children, WADAN, VHS, TEO, Mercy Corps, 20 September 2016

‘Equality and Social Justice’, Friends of Hazara

‘Extractives in Afghanistan: Avoiding the Resource Curse’, Global Witness

‘Human Rights’, Civil Society and Human Rights Network

‘Building Afghanistan’s Resilience: Natural Hazards, Climate Change, and Humanitarian Needs’, Afghanistan Resilience Consortium

‘Peace is Priority No 1’, Cordaid

‘Policy Input’, unpublished paper, Christian Aid

‘Protecting Aid Workers’ ACBAR Briefing Paper to the Government of Afghanistan

‘A Roadmap to Peace, Civil Society and the Peace Process in Afghanistan’, CPAU, EPD, HREVO, OSA, PTRO and TLO, May 2016

‘The State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan’, Altai Consulting for the Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society, September 2016

‘Suggestions’, Women Peace and Security Working Group

Summary of national focus group discussions organized by the civil society working group and BAAG, internal document

‘Synthesis of Afghan and International Civil Society Papers for the London Conference on Afghanistan’, December 2014

[1] For a detailed explanation of this please see A Road Map to Peace, Civil Society and the Peace Process in Afghanistan, OSA, HREVO, CPAU, PTRO, TLO and EPD, May 2016

[2] CRC, CRPD, CEDAW and ESCR

[3] Universal Periodic Reviews took place in 2009 and 2014 and recommendations covered a wide range of issues including Legislative reform, corruption, civilian casualties, people with disabilities, arbitrary and illegal detention and freedom from torture, women and gender, children, education in human rights, health, right to food and food security, freedom for the media and protection of journalists, the MDGs, the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation and the implementation of International Human Rights Treaties. <http://www.upr-info.org/en?gclid=CLSzoe2oos8CFZ1aGwod8aoEEA>

[4] Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Annual Report, UNAMA 2016

[5] Ibid.

[6] <https://aidworkerssecurity.org/incidents/search?start=2015&detail=1&country=AF>

[7] UNICEF, Nutrition, <http://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/nutrition.html>

[8] UNICEF, Health and Nutrition, http://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/health_nutrition.html

[9] www.aihrc.org

[10] Less formally known as the Addis Tax Initiative and Common Reporting Standard

[11] Civil Society Organizations in Support of the Peace Process in Afghanistan: Concept Note to the HPC and Joint Secretariat of the APRP, 2013. [http://www.i4pinternational.org/files/512/civil+society+and+aprp+\(cs+working+group\).pdf](http://www.i4pinternational.org/files/512/civil+society+and+aprp+(cs+working+group).pdf)

[12] In the Road Map to Peace, Civil Society and the Peace Process in Afghanistan, May 2016

[13] ‘Anchoring the Peace: Civil society actors in peace accords and durable peace, an account of a Conciliation Resources study, in International Interactions, Vol 38, No. 2: 243-266, September 2012, Desiree Nilsson

Annex three: Afghan & International Civil Society Statement for the Brussels Conference, 3rd October 2016

(A preliminary version was read by Samira Hamidi and Shirin Persson during the Closing Session of the Afghan & International Civil Society Workshop on 3 October 2016. Further editing was undertaken in October, resulting in the version below.)

1. We the participants at the Afghan and International Civil Society Workshop met on 3rd October 2016 ahead of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan and discussed peace, development and stability in the country. We benefited from the evidence and views discussed in the various position papers during the civil society consultation processes held since July 2016 in Kabul and the provinces. We would like to raise the following points to be considered by the Afghan Government and international community as they decide upon priorities for development and peace over the next four years.
2. Security has deteriorated in Afghanistan and addressing this is an immediate priority. There have been record levels of civilian casualties, the kidnapping of civilians, a rise in criminality and an increased number of attacks on national and international aid agencies, human rights defenders, the media, health facilities and schools. The number of IDPs has risen to 1.4 million. We therefore call on the Afghan Government, the international community and all armed opposition groups to keep the safety and security of civilians at the heart of all their operations, and to respect International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. We also call for protection mechanisms to be introduced for the safety of civilians, the media and human rights defenders, and for the policies on protection of civilians to be made public.
3. We believe that Afghanistan is not in a position to accommodate the current large scale return of Afghans from neighbouring countries. We call for a suspension of deportations from Europe to Afghanistan until the Afghan Government is capable of providing the necessary services to deportees and returnees. It is imperative that EU member states uphold commitments to the human rights of asylum seekers.
4. We emphasise that Afghans need lasting peace and we therefore welcome the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. However, we call on the government to devise a comprehensive peace plan, involving national dialogue and a recognition that the failure to address past injustices is exacerbating the conflict. We are concerned that the Afghan Government is entering into peace deals which will encourage a 'blanket amnesty' for perpetrators of war crimes and that this will undermine a lasting peace. We also call on the government to implement the National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security.
5. We welcome the Afghan Government's vision of self-reliance. However, following the withdrawal of the military-based economy, and in the face of declining economic growth, 40% unemployment and poverty, we believe that an increase in internal revenues will only be feasible if it is supported by sustained long-term international aid at a realistic level. The overwhelming majority of international spending in the last fourteen years has been in the form of military aid. We therefore believe the decision by the international donors to keep their development aid at or near the levels of the last decade is insufficient to help the Afghan economy especially during this transitional period. We also call on the international donors to simplify their funding mechanisms.
6. Afghanistan is in the second year of the 'transformation decade'. Many achievements have been made in the field of development despite the unstable environment. However, Afghanistan will require security, financial and political support from the international community for the foreseeable future to sustain and

protect the development gains made so far. If this support is to be effective donors must abide by the Paris Declaration on national ownership and leadership and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. We stress the importance of a strong and independent civil society, which is fundamental to a well-functioning country, and the need for mechanisms for effective interaction between government and civil society.

7. We agree that the exploitation of natural resources has the potential to be a major source of revenue in Afghanistan, but it can also potentially be an additional source of corruption and conflict unless managed well. We therefore urge that the Afghan Government, supported by the international community and civil society, amends the laws relating to the extractives industry to require publication of all contracts, information about revenues, payment and production, and information about the beneficial ownership of companies bidding for or holding natural resource contracts. We also hope to see success in gaining validation under the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative, and the creation of an official mechanism to ensure that local communities receive a fair share of the legal revenues or profits from the extraction.

8. We ask the Afghan Government to collaborate with civil society to develop benchmarks for time-bound free and fair elections. We call for the strengthening of the gender units in the Independent Electoral Commission and Electoral Complaints Commission to ensure the equal participation of women.

9. We urge the Afghan Government to meet its human rights obligations, especially as the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) does not accord human rights the importance that it should. This will include the harmonisation of national laws with the international obligations signed up to by the Afghan Government, including the Geneva Conventions on Human Rights and the subsequent Additional Protocols and treaties.²³ We ask that the Afghan Government review and reform issues that aggravate ethnic divisions. We urge the Ministry of Justice to develop and enforce the law on torture and present it to Parliament for ratification. The appointment of Commissioners to the valued Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission must be merit-based and non-political.

10. We welcome the nascent good governance and anti-corruption reform agenda of the Afghan Government and ask that concrete benchmarks are developed, in collaboration with civil society, to monitor progress. We call on civil society organizations to ensure they are also compliant with best and honest practice. We request that all government contracts and procurement processes be fully transparent, including in the security sector (with narrow exceptions where there are genuine security concerns), tax and customs, the extractives industry and the corporate/business sector to enable monitoring. All government procurement and concession contracts should be published as a condition of their validity. We call on the Afghan Government to implement international transparency, accountability and anti-corruption mechanisms, including the UN Convention Against Corruption, and the Open Government Partnership.

11. We recognise that the independent media in Afghanistan are more vibrant and less censored than others in the region, but freedom of speech is threatened by authorities and power holders in Afghanistan. Journalists are subject to attack and, fearing retaliation, are reported to be self-censoring their reports. The Access to Information Law is poorly implemented, particularly at the provincial level. We therefore urge the Afghan Government to support the enforcement of relevant laws and the prosecution of the perpetrators of violence.

²³ For example; the rights of the child and people with disabilities, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and economic, social and cultural rights).

12. We are concerned about the decreased attention to and funding for humanitarian needs, which are conversely on the increase. We urge the international community to follow up on the World Humanitarian Summit commitments by providing sufficient multi-annual and flexible funding to address these needs.

13. The share allotted to health and education in the national budget and from international aid is insufficient. Although there has been some reduction in infant mortality, the trends are not promising in other health and nutrition indicators. Vaccination rates are alarmingly low in some areas and there is a crucial need for preventative services. The needs of those with disabilities must be met. In the education sector, we urge the Afghan Government to prioritise community-based education and adult literacy, especially in insecure regions where schools are at risk of closure and staff are threatened. We call for a more evidence-based education policy that gathers and uses data disaggregated by gender, geography, poverty and vulnerability levels.

14. We acknowledge the growing competence of the Afghan civil service in designing and implementing development policies, and hope that capacity in monitoring and evaluation, merit-based appointments and equality of opportunity in training will follow. CSOs, including NGOs, have a wealth of technical and community-level knowledge which should be utilized. They have also played an essential role in service delivery and should be resourced to continue doing so until the government is able to fully take over these responsibilities.



Annex four: Statement of Afghan civil society at the Brussels Conference, 5th October 2016

PALWASHA HASSAN Good Afternoon, Excellencies,

We are deeply honoured to speak today on behalf of the hundreds of people who participated in extensive consultations in preparation for the Brussels conference, the voices of citizens from across Afghanistan.

Civil society recognises the efforts that the Afghan government and the international community have made and their achievements and sacrifices in the face of many challenges. We warmly welcome the commitment to women shown yesterday at the Women's Economic Empowerment event, and the Afghan Government's vision of self-reliance.

But we must also be clear that, with reduced economic growth and 40% unemployment, following the withdrawal of the military-based economy, realistic levels of international aid are needed for the longer term. We ask that donors keep development aid at least at the levels of the last decade. We also call on donors to improve aid effectiveness, to fight corruption, and to abide by the Paris Declaration.

Addressing the deteriorating security in Afghanistan is an immediate priority. We call on all parties in the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law, which is ignored far too often, and to fulfil their moral and legal duty to protect civilians, including the media and human rights defenders. A measure of the security of a country is that women and children feel safe and that freedom of speech is guaranteed and we ask the government to ensure prosecution of the perpetrators of violence against the media and to support the Oversight Commission on access to information.

We have seen humanitarian needs increase for years, you heard the details from ICRC. We are deeply concerned by the crisis facing Afghanistan in responding to the needs of IDPs, returnees from Pakistan and Iran, and now the prospect of deportations from Europe which we believe should be suspended. There are already over 1 million IDPs who receive little or no help, and nearly 100,000 people pushed back from Pakistan this year alone. They will require considerable assistance. The same donors in the room today have failed to provide even 50% of the funds urgently needed for humanitarian assistance this year. We urge the international community to provide sufficient multi annual and flexible funding to address these needs.

AZIZ RAFIEE

We cautiously welcome the Afghan-led peace process, and the acknowledgement by perpetrators of the suffering that they have caused, but the process should also include transitional and restorative justice, ensuring justice to victims and their families, and should end impunity. The National Action Plan for Peace, UNSCR 1325 must also be implemented and women protected by the retention and implementation of the EVAW law.

We warmly welcome the President's strong commitment to fighting corruption but the measures outlined in the current SMAF are disappointingly weak and none refer to donors. It is necessary that all constituent parts of the Government are equally committed, and that action is taken to end corruption by them and by the donors. We request that civil society participates in the High Council

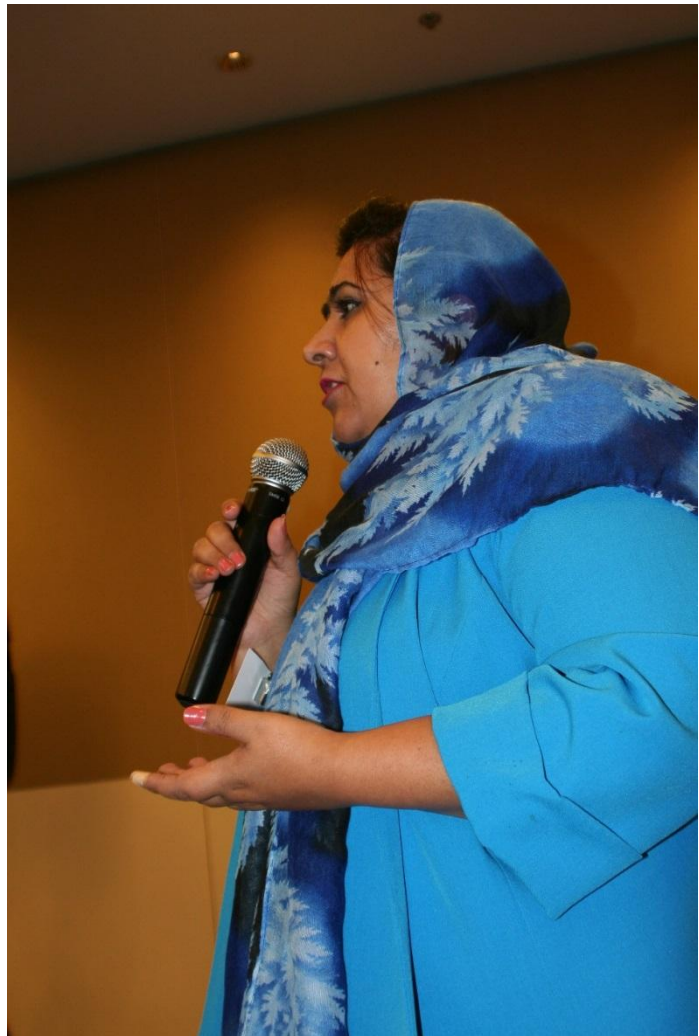
on Governance and other relevant bodies and is included in the development of more concrete benchmarks and actions to end corruption. The implementation of the Access to Information Law, merit based appointments, making procurement and contracts public, especially in the extractives industry, and ensuring timely free and fair elections, are a few examples of how this can be done.

We urge the Afghan Government to meet its human rights obligations, these include harmonising the national laws with the Geneva Conventions on Human Rights. A key test will be prosecutions for the perpetrators of torture and other abuses. The appointments to the AIHRC must be merit based and non-political.

The share allotted to education and health in the national budget and from international aid is insufficient. More attention needs to be given to meeting the needs of those with disabilities, not just those with war injuries, and other groups with special needs. Civil society organizations, including NGOs, played a crucial role in service delivery during the years of conflict, and should be resourced to continue doing so until others can satisfactorily take over. They can then revert to a more traditional civil society role, monitoring with an independent voice. Civil society, in collaboration with the government, can continue to play an effective part in the peace and development of Afghanistan but the civic space has been shrinking because of the actions of state and non-state actors and we call on the government and the donors to provide an enabling environment for civil society.

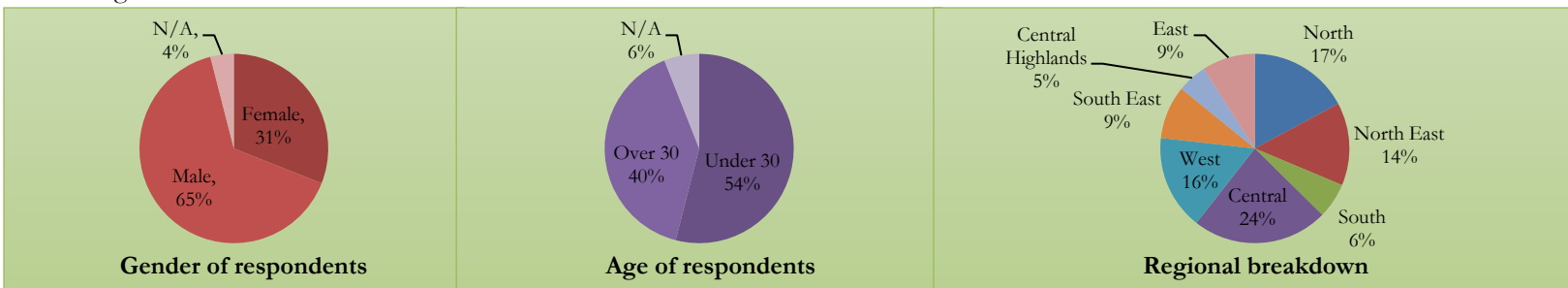
We should all remember that the ultimate accountability is not between government and donors: it is to the Afghan people.

PALWASHA HASSAN At the beginning of the war, when I was at school in Pakistan, Afghanistan was known for its lack of corruption, its rule of law and its good roads. Roads are being improved but we have to revive the other two, the values of Afghanistan

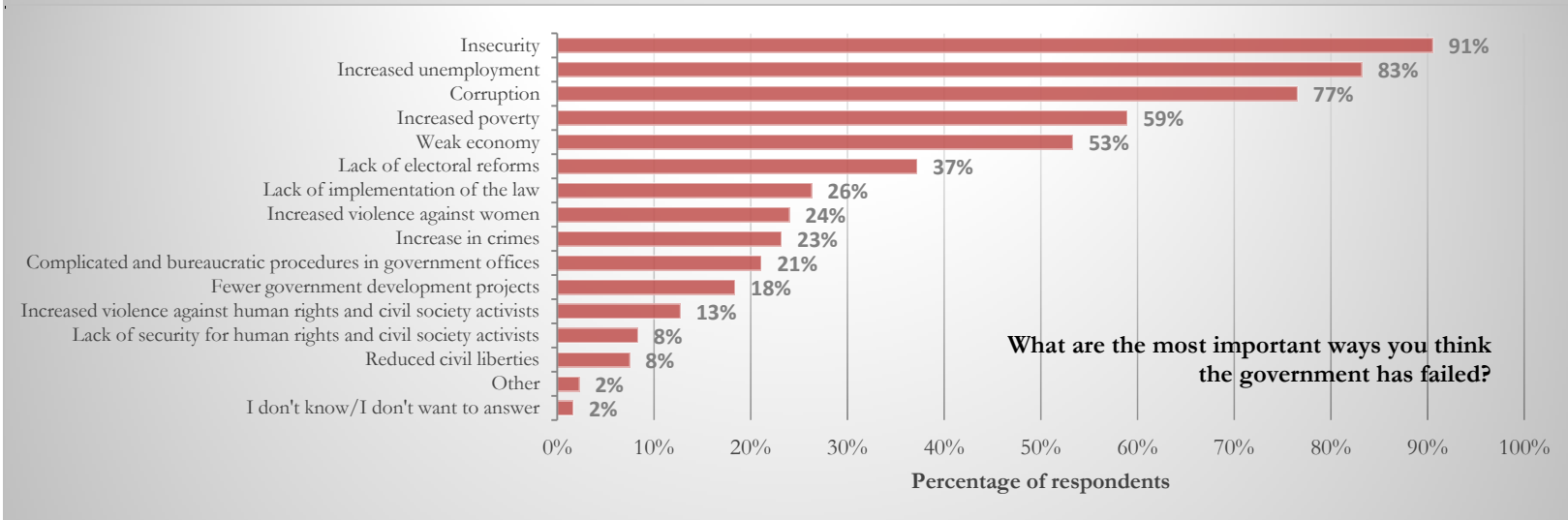
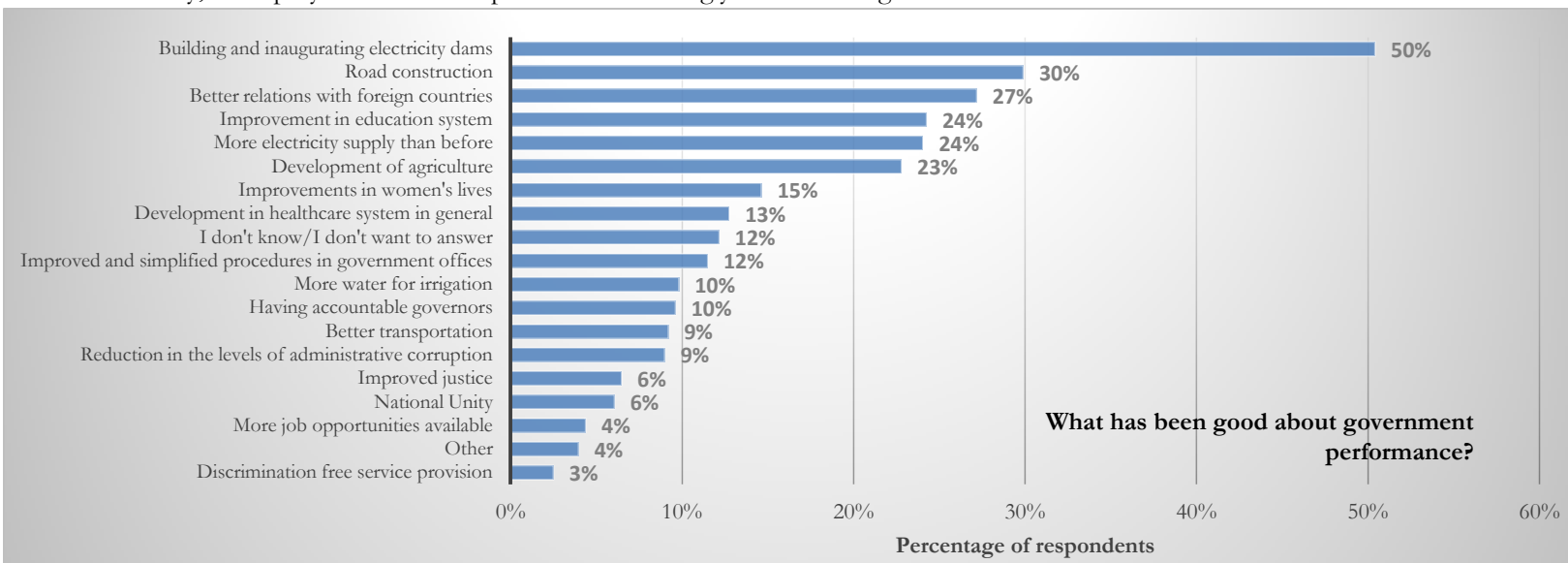


Annex five: Short visual summary of key provincial survey results

The survey was conducted in eight regional centres in August 2016, using phone, email and face-to-face interviews. In total, 478 surveys from 29 provinces were collected and analysed. Out of these 478 respondents, the breakdown by gender, age and region²⁴ was as follows:



Government performance to date: Infrastructure projects (eg. electric dams, road construction) were most popular; insecurity, unemployment and corruption overwhelmingly identified as government failures.



²⁴ Provinces falling under each region: North (Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Samangan, Sar-e Pol); North East (Kunduz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar); South (Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand); Central (Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Parwan, Panjshir, Maidan Wardak, Ghazni); West (Herat, Nimruz, Badghis, Farah, Ghor); South East (Khost, Paktia); Central Highlands (Bamyan, Daikundi); East (Nangarhar). Provinces not analysed: Uruzgan, Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan, Paktika

Priorities and recommendations regarding key challenges: Utilising international leverage, investing in infrastructure, ensuring rule of law and prioritising education.

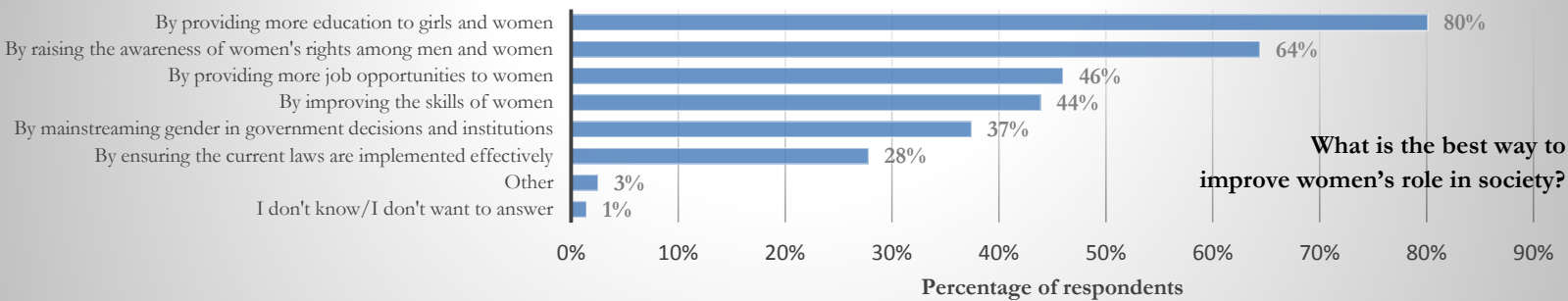
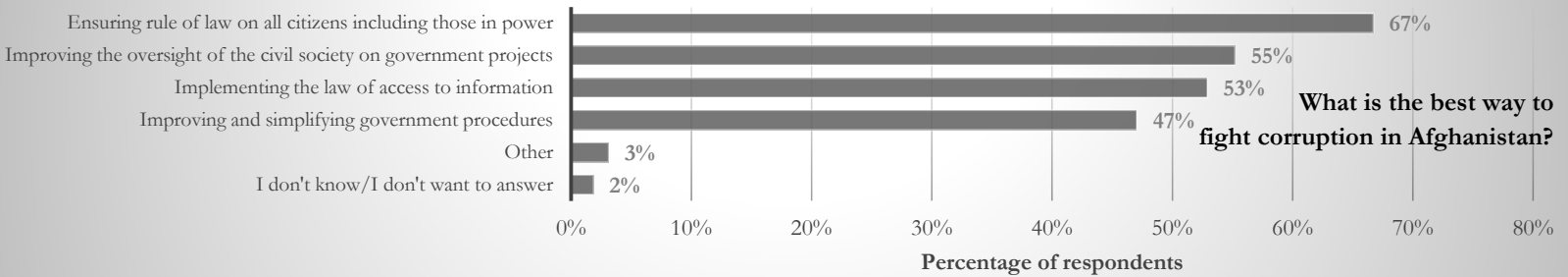
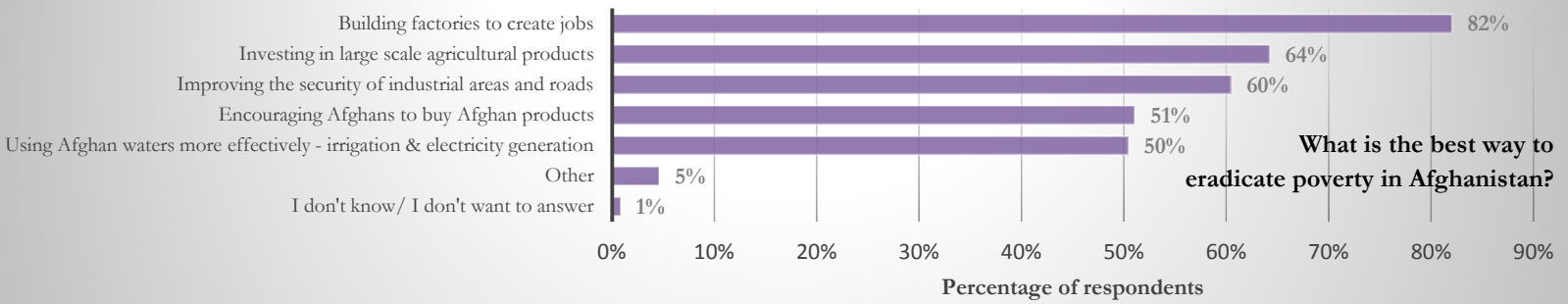
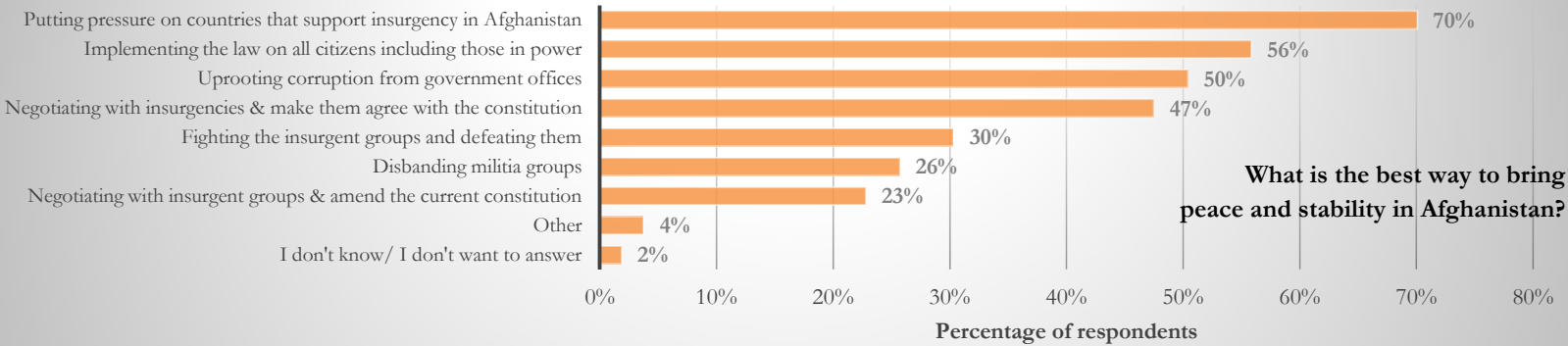


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