

# **Implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" in Afghanistan**

- Analysis of Finland's Activities during the Period of the National  
1325 Action Plan 2008–2011

For the 1325 NETWORK FINLAND

Dr. Pirjo Jukarainen  
October 2012

Disclaimer:

The author's views expressed in this research report do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations that belong to the 1325 Network Finland.

© The 1325 Network Finland ([www.1325.fi](http://www.1325.fi)), 2012

## Foreword

This evaluation research for the 1325 Network Finland is a continuation to the comparative desk study of Mäki-Rahkola (2011) of the Nordic engagement in Afghanistan. Mäki-Rahkola conducted a comparative research on how the Nordic countries have integrated the objectives of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 into their policies and activities regarding Afghanistan. She examined how gender and women's rights are taken into account in the fields of development cooperation, military and crisis management, and by the Nordic NGOs involved in Afghanistan.

This report focuses on Finland's practical contribution in civilian and military crisis management and development cooperation. It draws on research conducted by Oili Alm and Pirjo Jukarainen in 2011-2012. Material gathering and project design for this evaluation research was done in two phases. The first phase comprised of interviews of Finland's (A) development and security political stakeholders, i.e. organizations responsible of gender sensitive peace-building projects, and (B) individual gender experts (former and working Finnish gender focal points and advisers) and area focal points. This part of the research was funded by the 1325 Network Finland from its research grants for the year 2011.

The second phase and a group of interviews were done in Afghanistan in May 2012 with the travel grant of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. During this one week field trip, we talked with some of the Finnish organizations' partners in relation to the practical implementation of UNSCR 1325 in their daily work and projects. Because of the restricted budget and challenges regarding safe traveling, we were unfortunately limited to stay in Kabul and visit only some stakeholders. In addition we discussed with a few NGO representatives in Kabul that have an extensive working experience in Afghanistan in the field of human rights and gender but had not received funding from the Finnish government. With them we had a more general discussion about the security situation of women in Afghanistan, women's role in peace process and their future. We made altogether 25 (23 recorded) semi-structured interviews in this project, each lasting approximately one or two hours. As a study was recently conducted on the operational effectiveness of NATO PRTs in Afghanistan – also from the Finnish military personnel's perspective, we focused here only on interviewing civilian crisis management staff and the representatives of civil society.

Finland issued its first National Action Plan (abbreviated later as NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325), for the years 2008-2011. Before that time, only eight out of 193 UN Member States had their own NAP – now, in 2012, already 37 countries do.<sup>1</sup> Finland also has a twinning project with Afghanistan to support their work on NAP. The aim was then as it is also now during the second, updated NAP period (2012-2016) to focus on three interrelated "Ps": **Prevention, Participation and Protection**. UNSCR 1325 demands that all conflict parties fully respect international humanitarian law applicable to the rights and **protection** of women and girls (as civilians) from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence like sexual exploitation and abuse. In relation to the latter, the Resolution "family" has been extended by three resolutions on sexual violence at conflicts: UN Security Council Resolutions 1820 (June 2008), 1888 (Sep 2009) and 1960 (Dec 2010).

**Participation** refers to the aim of increasing the number of women in decision making positions related to peace and security issues. In practice this means increasing the number of women in peace-building (in peace negotiations) and in peace operations, as soldiers, police, and civilians; and as Special Representatives of the U.N. Secretary-General. Women's contribution to conflict **prevention** should also be better recognized, for instance by supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes. This means implementing the provisions of a much

---

<sup>1</sup> The first country to have its Government Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 was Denmark (2005). The next year (2006) Norway and the UK, and in 2007 Austria, Cote D'Ivoire, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland issued their NAPs, and in 2008 – along Finland – Iceland and Uganda.

earlier UN policy paper: CEDAW, UN General Assembly's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (from 1979). Both Afghanistan (Mar 2003) and Finland (Sep 1986) have ratified CEDAW, which means that they are legally bound to put its provisions into practice.

The analysis of this report focuses on the years 2008-2011, when the first 1325 NAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 was in effect. This report has three aims. With information "from the field" and practical suggestions, derived from the Afghan context, it aims to contribute to the second National Action Plan period for the years 2012-2016. In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter, it provides a list of concrete suggestions and lessons on how to work well – or even better – with the theme Women, Peace and Security in Afghanistan. These recommendations – although subjective – arise from the interviews and other current gender sensitive research reports.

Secondly, as a similar kind of evaluation is currently done by the Swedish Operation 1325, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan and Kvinna till Kvinna, aim is to bring comparative results from Finland in order to discuss the future security needs of post-2014 Afghanistan in the Nordic context. This study is urgent in light of the transition phase now taking place in Afghanistan in which foreign military troops are to withdraw from the country by 2014.

The third aim is to support the twinning process of drafting Afghanistan's national action plan on women, peace and security. Ministries for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and Finland signed a cooperation document in 2011, in order to strengthen the Afghan Ministry's coordinating role in implementing the UN Security Council Resolutions on the theme "Women, Peace and Security".

The report deals with the following research themes and questions:

**Theme 1: Development project/crisis management mission mandates and assignments.**

Is it possible to promote equality and women's rights within their framework, and how?

**Theme 2: Development project and crisis management mission duration and personnel rotation cycles.** Do they match with the UNSCR 1325 related objectives and challenges in Afghanistan?

**Theme 3: Women in Focus?** What or to which group does "women" refer to in the project/mission? With which kind of groups of women there has been cooperation in Afghanistan?

**Theme 4: Gender expertise.** What kind of training and/or working experience related to gender issues the interviewed experts/focal points have? How well is their knowledge transferred to the other colleagues at the end of their assignment or within their working unit?

**Theme 5: Cultural sensitivity and gender mainstreaming.**

What does cultural sensitivity mean when working in Afghanistan? What is it like to be a female expert in Afghanistan?

After scrutinizing these themes, a list of recommendations is given. The opinions and thoughts from the interviews are mirrored and put together with the data from recent reports of Afghanistan.

- 1. Project Assignments and Mission Mandates Setting the Scene ..... 6
- 2. Mission and Project Duration and the Personnel Rotation Cycles ..... 7
- 3. Which Women’s Peace and Security? Which Women’s Rights? ..... 8
- 4. Gender Expertise..... 10
- 5. Cultural Sensitivity and Gender Mainstreaming ..... 11
- 6. Summary of the Main Findings – 10 Recommendations ..... 13
- 7. Final Words ..... 19
- 8. Projects and Funding Programs with Relevance to the National Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security ..... 20
- 9. REFERENCES ..... 24

## 1. Project Assignments and Mission Mandates Setting the Scene

**Our first research question was, is it possible to promote gender equality and women's rights within the framework of the operation mandate or the project assignments.**

To be a specialist in gender issues, to work as a Gender Adviser in civilian crisis management, is not an easy task. Somewhat ironically it seemed that the hardest challenge is sometimes to win the “hearts and minds” inside the mission. This is difficult, especially if you are working alone, and as often the case is, double-hatted, meaning that you have to promote simultaneously two thematic objectives, the other one often being human rights. **The gender advisers should focus on positive advocacy of gender sensitive approach, not for instance, contrary to presupposition, being an internal “superintendent” of discrimination and harassment.**

In the early phase of the European Union Police Mission, EUPOL, before there was a specific Gender and Human Rights Unit, individual gender advisers seemed to be sidetracked within the organization and did not have a solid operational role. After the establishment of this Unit in summer 2009, work on gender issues and the implementation of UNSCR 1325 within the EUPOL mission was properly funded and staffed. On the other hand, also the political climate change within the EU can affect the operational level: when Sweden – strong speaker for the UNSCR 1325 – took the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2009, the work of the Gender and Human Rights Unit was taken even more seriously and it had a more concerned partnership to the Head of Mission (HoM). Finland has been able to second several gender experts to this Unit, and thus, transfer some working knowledge to the EUPOL.

In 2008, the Nordic Foreign Ministers adopted a Plan of Action for Nordic Cooperation in Afghanistan to enable them to be a more concerned partner for the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the international community. In this document, the Nordic countries identified respect for human rights, with a particular focus on women’s rights, as one of the key sectors as possible fields of increased cooperation. In practice, however, this intergovernmental political will of Nordic cooperation is not always strategic and programmatic reality among the Nordic NGOs. For instance Finn Church Aid (Kirkon Ulkomaanapu) will stop funding its long-time partner, Norwegian Church Aid, NCA, in Afghanistan. This is a pity, as the renewed strategy for the years 2011-2015 of NCA is in line with Finland’s NAP 2012-2015 by having Women, Peace and Security as one of its key focus areas. But the decision of FCA is likewise organization strategies in Finland; the aim of the Finn Church Aid is now to focus on a more limited number of program areas and countries, and Afghanistan is no longer among these countries.<sup>2</sup>

The otherwise successful police-prosecutor coordination training program of CMC Finland (2009-2012) lacked first a proper gender element. Considering the fact that CMC Finland has been successfully mainstreaming gender into its work, it was strange to note that the gender aspect was so “thin” in the early phase of the program. The written and illustrated 400-page police-prosecutor coordination training manual was launched May 2012. Awareness of diversity and discrimination issues, that is paying attention to the differing needs of different people, is mentioned as one of the training objectives, as soft skills. This objective is left as a rather general statement for the most part of the manual. In its 5th chapter it, however, contains elements in reference to female victims’ protection and violence against women<sup>3</sup>. Work against gender based violence in Afghanistan, however, relates to much more than recognition of women’s rights and need of protection. Women victims of crime may themselves be placed in prison

---

<sup>2</sup> See: Kirkon Ulkomaanavun strategia 2013-2016. [http://www.kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/filebank/5375-Strategia\\_2013-2016\\_suomi.pdf](http://www.kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/filebank/5375-Strategia_2013-2016_suomi.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The cooperation training manual can be found here: <http://www.eupol-afg.eu/?q=node/178>

or forced back into their homes, because the woman culturally bears the honor of her extended family. There are cases where women who seek help from the police are themselves arrested, because they have left their homes and thus have been immoral, even if the reason is domestic violence, forced marriage or sexual abuse. **Deeper and more problematized case studies of how to investigate domestic violence, gender based violence and/or human trafficking could therefore be added either to the updated manual, or later police-prosecutor coordination training.** On the other hand, women are not only victims but can also be violent themselves. For instance, in one interview we heard of severe violence against women by other women in a maternal hospital. Female nurses and midwives may sometimes calculate their ability to be paid by their (successful) birth attendance and postnatal care, and either leave pregnant women without help or violently speed up the labor. It is also important to recognize this kind of hidden and structural violence between the more powerful and the more vulnerable women.

## 2. Mission and Project Duration and the Personnel Rotation Cycles

**The second theme was, how well does the project or mission duration and rotation cycle match with the UNSCR 1325 related objectives and challenges in Afghanistan?**

The interviewed Finnish Gender Advisers had worked, or were supposed to work in Afghanistan for two or three years. It seemed as their rotation cycle enabled them to concentrate on their work. However, in relation to civilian crisis management in general, organizational learning could be better. The Crisis Management Centre CMC Finland should collect personnel experiences from operations more systematically – both during and after the mission. This could be very valuable for Finnish pre-deployment gender training. Some kind of mechanism of bridging the knowledge should also be established during personnel rotation. Now gender expertise is suffering from being tied to the recruiting nation and the individual; when he or she is in-between-jobs, knowledge is not necessarily even shared with any national institution.

The case of organizational learning is quite different in development cooperation. Especially many faith based development aid agencies have been working in Afghanistan for decades, following a principle of social sustainability. Finnish organizations have various longstanding partners in Afghanistan: Operation Mobilisation (Operaatio Mobilisaatio ry) works with the Christian Charitable Trust SERVE; both Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission FLOM (Evankelis-luterilainen Lähetisyhdistys Kylväjä) and Finnish Lutheran Mission (Suomen Evankelisluterilainen Kansanlähetys) work with the International Assistance Mission IAM. Finn Church Aid has channeled funding through the Norwegian Church Aid and its local partners. FLOM and Finnish Lutheran Mission are, however, now having continuation problems as their own main donors and financial supporters (the Evangelical Lutheran congregations of Vantaa and Helsinki and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland) are now critical towards their conservative interpretation of gender equality and human rights of sexual and gender minorities. One of the key issues is their denial to accept female priests and bishops and same-gender marriage. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland issued in April 2012 ethical codes with its renewed project guidelines for development cooperation of civil society organizations; there it says that all NGOs receiving government support “need to act in a way that - - complies with Finnish legislation, human rights policy - - - and concept of non-discrimination”<sup>4</sup>.

At the moment from the Afghan side, there is a general fear of larger donor withdrawal after 2014 when the ISAF military operation will end. One representative of an International NGO was afraid of their Afghan community partners losing their optimism and trust if they have to end their longstanding development cooperation, in the case

---

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.formin.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=34673&contentlan=2&culture=en-US>

of their national donors deciding to channel most funding directly to the Afghan Government. The latter is of course also a matter of trust building at the intergovernmental level. On a local level, for example in villages, it is, however, probably affecting the opposite way. Enabling dialogue requires time – especially if you work with the most sensitive issues like women, peace and security.

A recent gender-survey by the Crisis Management Centre CMC Finland (Mäki-Rahkola 2012) for the working and former civilian crisis management professionals provides relevant information and assists in developing the pedagogy of gender training. Fresh operational experience and contextual knowledge, however, is continuously needed in order to tailor vocational examples of how gender matters in each type of mission, be it police, border, rule of law etc.

### 3. Which Women's Peace and Security? Which Women's Rights?

**The third research theme was women in focus – which group does women refer to in the project or mission?**

#### Women's Situation in Provinces is Not Known Well Enough

According to both Afghan and Finnish interviewees, there is a huge need of reliable contextual and longitudinal research data on the human security of women in the provinces. There is for instance no reliable data of how many women there are in the Provincial Peace Councils. PPC's are responsible for engaging in local level outreach and reintegration activities in support of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP), launched in 2010. Women's participation in these instances is essential from the perspective of transitional justice. For instance in May 2012, in the NATO Summit, Afghan Women's Network called for: "a more transparent vetting process for the recruitment of Afghan Local Police and other security forces so that those guilty of previous human rights violations do not automatically become part of the security forces, including a community-based vetting process that allows women to report on the background of those being recruited."

There is also need of comparative, gender-sensitive research data from various provinces in order to measure more reliably the project impact and progress. Especially Kabul has been in the past and is today a separate entity different from the rest of the country. (Bauck et al. 2011, 15; Larson 2008, 23.) We heard in an interview for instance that just 2,5 hours from Kabul there is a village where girls are not formally going to school. On the other hand, the working environment for the women journalists is rather different in Kabul and in the Northern Provinces. Working in Kabul means inevitably working closer to the government. I suspect that this might be the reason why the journalist women's training group in Mazar-e-Sharif was more eager to do Women, Peace and Security themed advocacy work than the group of training participants from the capital.

In addition, according to one Afghan civil society representative there is just not enough outreach in provinces. Thus, government level politics, however well intended in the name of UNSCR 1325, do not always go in line with the women's everyday security challenges at the village or community level.

It could be that governmental statistics do not provide sufficient information. For instance Afghan based NGO's with a long time trust building experience in provinces have good outreach in villages, and thus better access to gender-sensitive knowledge. There are several reliable partner institutes available for Finland to cooperate with in the field of research: the Afghan Analysts Network (AAN) and the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) have already received Finnish support. There is also a new promising research cooperation partner, Kabul-based Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security (RIWPS-Afghanistan). In 2012, Wazma Frogh – 2009 recipient of the US

Department of State's International Women of Courage award – is a co-founder and executive director of the RIWPS-Afghanistan. Besides doing research, it focuses also on advocacy of the UNSCR 1325, plus training and empowering women on a grassroots and community level for peace process.<sup>5</sup>

### Women = Gender in Afghanistan?

It is unclear, what gender as a concept should mean in Afghanistan. As the agenda of promoting women's rights and empowerment has been so central for the international donors and agencies, it is not surprising that gender and women have been used interchangeably. According to Larson's (2008) study, this is the case among ministerial staff and international community.

*"Gender is not only about women, it is about equality between men and women. When we have international trainings, always they are talking about women's rights, so does this mean that gender is women?"* (Male respondent from the Ministry of Finance; Larson 2008, 22)

On the other hand, the term gender equality is likewise unclear in Afghanistan. Larson claims it to be merely a learnt phrase, without practical implementation. Even inside Afghan ministries there is no clear consensus of what women's rights, or equality between men and women stand for.

An additional problem arises from the fact, that gender (in English: the socially constructed identity of sex) has no direct equivalent in Dari or Pashto. It is translated in multiple ways in the Afghan policy documents. In the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and in the strategy document of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, it refers in Dari either to a **fixed, biological sex (*jensiyat*)**, or to **equal rights or equality between men and women**. The Dari language word *jens*, from which the term *jensiyat* is derived, means also the same as "category". (Larson 2008, 21-22). The same translation problem applies to other languages, including Finnish. In Finland as well the English term gender is often used instead of the Finnish word *sukupuoli* marking socially, not biologically defined sex. And yet, within the Finnish peacekeeping, civilian crisis management and development politics in Afghanistan the use of word gender has become a norm even in cases, when it is a matter of women's issues alone.

According to one of our Afghan interviewees, UNSCR 1325 is considered as a Western policy paper. Afghan women's organizations refer to it when talking to international donors and NATO, but it is hardly a political key document on a national level. This somewhat distorted conception is a pity, as the birth of the resolution 1325 owes to African and Asian women's movements. This conception should, however, be a warning sign for the Afghans and Finns working with the Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325. If it remains as a government level policy paper, it probably will not have much of a practical impact in villages and provinces – however good it will be. Encouraging larger participation of different women's advocacy groups and Afghan development aid NGOs, especially outside Kabul could significantly help the implementation of the Afghanistan's NAP. Searching synergies between different projects and programs could assist in "finding" these groups. There is great potential for instance in the dialogue process building project of Crisis Management Initiative CMI in Mazar-e-Sharif and the vocational training project of Women Journalists.

### Women and Peace Process

UNSCR 1325 emphasizes women's participation in peace processes and peace building. In the new NAP for the years 2012-2016, Finland aims to: *"work proactively to promote mediation and to improve its quality, inter alia, by attaching attention to women having their role at all levels and stages of peace processes in accordance with the UN*

---

<sup>5</sup> More information on the research institutes can be found from their web-sites; AAN: <http://aan-afghanistan.com/>; AREU: <http://www.areu.org.af/>; RIWPS-Afghanistan: <http://www.rwps-afghanistan.org/>

*General Assembly Resolution 65/283 on mediation*". According to several of our interviewees, women's participation in the peace process should come first, when we talk about the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in the Afghanistan context. The question is, however, who are the women we are then talking about? We heard critique towards the Afghan NAP process of forgetting powerful women in provinces, women sitting in Provincial Peace Councils and Provincial Councils. Even though these women may be illiterate and not necessary active in civil society organizations, they are powerful and know their communities and the security challenges of women.

Crisis Management Initiative CMI has a very promising and important provincial level dialogue building project that aims at combining women's and men's groups together in Mazar-e-Zarif. Local NGO's in the northern, less culturally conservative part of Afghanistan have made it possible. The aim is to empower different kinds of people with various needs and thoughts together, especially the local community leaders and activists. This project is in its inception phase, so there was no possibility to evaluate its impact for the women. In addition to CMI, the Norwegian Church Aid and the Marie Stopes International are – along with their projects – facilitating good dialogue processes with the provincial and village level actors in issues related to men's and women's differing security needs. (More of the work of Marie Stopes International on page 13.)

In addition, the second NAP of Finland mentions special themes which may create preconditions for the strengthening of women's participation and rights in peace processes. These themes are health, education as well as the environmental sustainability. Women should be part of the multi-track peace process at all levels. High level peace negotiation tables and provincial level peace-building are of equal importance. Even the smallest NGO's do important work when increasing women's networking; Meetings between women of different tribes, villages and regions is an important step, before they can define their interests. Because of the long time instability and insecurity, Afghan women have learned too much to only rely on themselves and need support and encouragement to network with other women, especially with women of other tribes and ethnicities. Finland should put more emphasis on these kinds of activities.

#### 4. Gender Expertise

The second theme of interest in our research was the educational and professional background of the Finnish development or crisis management experts in Afghanistan. We asked, if they have any training on gender issues. The case was that only a few had received gender training prior to their first assignment to work in Afghanistan. And even then it was not always qualitatively good. Quality of the training varies a lot; different organizations and countries have their own training curricula and schemes. In-operation, **gender training should be implemented by the local, Afghan trainers, whenever possible**. This would help to fit the more general and profession-specific training to the Afghanistan context.

One thing that was mentioned by many interviewees was that the **gender training has to be tied to occupational skills training**. It has to be less abstract and theoretical, and train people to work with gender issues in their daily profession. One woman, who herself went to work as a gender expert in mission, saw the Integrated Crisis Management training course by CMC Finland as fruitful. It assisted people like her with solely civilian working experience to network with the military personnel, and lessened the polarity between them. Nominating a Gender Expert can sometimes be equated with "managing gender issues" in crisis management operations. The mainstreaming process should thus be better operationalized, and the more extensive network the gender expert/focal point has, the easier this operationalization is.

There can also be cultural differences between the Afghans and Finns considering the “appropriate gender” of the gender expert – that is whether a man can also work with gender equality issues. This, I believe, has much to do with the fact that the political concept of gender is strongly equated with women and women’s issues; not only in Afghanistan, but also in the framework of UNSCR 1325! To include men in the work is, however, extremely important. Examples from other countries and also from Finland show that **male gender expertise can have a tremendously positive effect in certain contexts. This is true especially in the male dominated professions, like the military and police forces.**

On the other hand, **gender training** – both in military and civilian crisis management – **should avoid negative not-to-do lists** and educate people instead in **how to mind women’s and men’s and boy’s and girl’s differing rights and security needs, and how to empower women and girls in peace building and increase their participation.** In this respect NATO has taken promising steps. It has provided exemplary real life cases from the ground to back up its training of UNSCR 1325. The following (shortened) quote gives a good example:

*“Swedish PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif. During the summer of 2009, an all-male rifle patrol within the Swedish PRT approached the PRT’s gender field adviser to learn why the patrol never saw Afghan women in public. - - - Upon reviewing a map of their typical routes, the gender field adviser identified that the soldiers were only travelling on large streets frequented by men. She suggested that they venture into smaller, less busy streets to find more women. - - - In one instance, several women approached the patrol and, after a brief conversation, invited them to meet their male family members at home. - - - The women explained that they were looking forward to a large wedding that was going to take place in the town in two days. Several hundred family members and relatives were going to descend on the town for the celebration. None of the men had shared this information. - - - The information from the women - - - allowed the PRT time to create a plan for monitoring the flow of people and helped redirect mission assets and personnel. The details about the wedding also prevented a potential escalation of tensions when the international military presence was met with an unexpected wave of movement into the town. The information helped the force avoid circumstances in which military personnel would be surprised and overwhelmed by hundreds of people arriving in the area. Without a benign explanation, personnel could interpret the movement as an insurgent tactic and violence could ensue which could lead to immediate security risks as well as longer term risks to the force from a resentful community.”<sup>6</sup>*

**It is also possible and fruitful too, to work with the religious leaders when implementing UNSCR 1325.** Mullah’s are trusted, and they interpret Islam rather independently, and thus, cannot be easily affected by the insurgents. If sidelined they could easily spoil the project or operation. In contrast, when appropriately involved, they can have a very positive role in the implementation. Their outreach is significant. It is therefore operationally efficient to employ people who have a good working relationship with the local religious leaders.

## 5. Cultural Sensitivity and Gender Mainstreaming

The third theme of interest was cultural sensitivity in Afghanistan. What does it mean to be culturally sensitive in Afghanistan? How do the development workers and crisis managers frame their cultural working environment?

---

<sup>6</sup> NATO (2011) Gender Training & Education. How Can Gender Make a Difference in Operations – Indicators. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_topics/20120308\\_1869-11\\_Gender\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_topics/20120308_1869-11_Gender_Brochure.pdf)

It seems that more so than the cultural differences, it is **operational security that has become a severe “cultural” barrier for many international organizations in Kabul. Even the formerly relatively safe Kabul has become a place where the Afghans and internationals live in completely separate worlds.** This security-fencing concerned not only Finns in civilian crisis management (EUSR Human Rights and Gender Adviser, EUPOL personnel) as, to our surprise, even the development and humanitarian aid agencies like the Red Cross had limited the movement and social interaction of their personnel to a minimum. These safety regulations naturally affect the ability to work and interact with the local women and men.

Concerns for safety are also related to project monitoring. **As the security services (armored vehicles, skilled fixers) cost a lot of money, it is practically impossible for a less wealthy NGO to send its personnel for a monitoring mission, especially single-traveling female personnel.** It is a serious problem if the majority of the donor funding ends up in project management and providing the staff safety. For instance in the case of former UNIFEM, within its “The Women as Peace Builders Programme”, as much as 70% of the total budget went to project support, coordination and security costs.

And yet, sometimes there is a need for better cultural awareness and sensitivity. The EUPOL in particular is working within a very challenging social and cultural context with the Afghan police women. Paradoxically, we found that **focusing simply on increasing the number of police women by any means, can actually do more harm than good, if – at the same time – their social and cultural context is not properly understood by the European donors.** There are approximately 1000 women out of 140 000 employees in the National police; the target has been set to 5000. Women working as police officers continue to bear a negative stigma and thus pose a security risk for their villages and families.<sup>7</sup> Whereas being a parliamentarian can be honorable, being police officer is shameful – work of an immoral person, a prostitute. It is also an economic problem, as the government does not provide uniforms for the women, who are often poor and have many children. We heard that sexual harassment and abuse is common and the daily tasks of police women can be serving tea and other low-level auxiliary duties (the latter fact makes it also difficult to count the number of female staff). Career progress may even sometimes require sexual favors. We heard that just recently in Mazar-e-Sharif 200 police women threatened to resign, if the Ministry of Interior does not address this abusive culture.

The EUPOL Gender and Human Rights Unit – where Finland has been fortunate to second two experts – has, however, done good work for the women. It has established a **help line** for the harassed police women and organized their monthly network meetings. EUPOL is mentoring so called **Family Response Units**, victim friendly, mostly women staffed units for investigating domestic violence. **It would be better, if these Family Response Units were all-women staffed, including their management, and be able to comprehensively help the victims, have connections to shelters and so on.** Unfortunately this is not the case yet.

One option would also be that the **women could work in their own units, perhaps with a different name than that of police.** Now at best they are only doing body checks or investigating domestic violence crimes without a mandate to lead their cases further. Negative connotations and the military-like image of the Afghan National Police are so strong that the full potential of female police units is lost.

On a personal level, **Finnish women experts have different levels of being culturally sensitive. It seemed that wearing or not wearing a scarf was a major symbol on this level.** Some always wear a light scarf in order to mingle with the other women and to avoid provocation or facing harassment. Others have stopped wearing a scarf as they see it either unnecessary (they are hardly outside the compound), uncomfortable (too hot), related to being Muslim,

---

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Hopkins (2012) Undercover Security: the Afghan women taking on the Taliban. The Guardian 27 Sept 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/27/afghan-women-taking-on-taliban>

or just wanted to increase tolerance, “desensitize” people towards their difference and way of dressing professionally. Wearing burkha, however, was seen as inappropriate. “They would always recognize any way that you are not Afghan”, was an answer.

**It is a myth that gender issues would be too sensitive to talk about in Afghanistan.** The fact is, however, that the term itself is “imported”, it has no direct translation in the Dari or Pashto languages. And still, according to the experiences of our interviewees, it is still possible to discuss about men’s and women’s different security needs and everyday challenges. Finland is a long time donor to Marie Stopes International, which has created advocacy methods that work even in the most conservative Taliban dominated areas. They have for instance following culturally sensitive and yet effective outreach models:

- Trained women go door-to-door sharing information about the all-women-staffed clinics and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- Spouses of religious leaders receive short training and later incentives if they allow their houses to be locales for other women’s training.
- Pregnant, unmarried school-girls get information cards of a help line (e.g. safe abortion).
- Couples are trained so that the men and women share first in separate groups their perceptions of family planning issues and then their views are exchanged. This preserves their anonymity.
- Social marketing method is used to expand access to reliable contraceptive products through pharmacies, stores and beauty parlors. Products are procured, packaged and delivered by existing commercial distribution networks at low prices.
- Local monitoring committees, consisting of Taliban men and their female relatives, follow the work of community health workers and clinics.

**Another myth is that the international workers should all the time avoid provocation and compromise women’s human rights – even the human rights of their own personnel. Gender mainstreaming is often negative lists of “do not do” regulations instead of positive creativity.** For instance a Finnish woman working for an international aid organization was denied to drive a car, even though she would have seen herself as an important role-model in Afghanistan.

**Sometimes the biggest barriers and prejudices seemed to be within the compound rather than outside.** Larson (2008) claims that transformative gender mainstreaming is more of an ideal than anything else. International donors are rather reluctant to push transformative gender agendas in Afghanistan. For instance, the World Bank, whose mandate is technical and economic as opposed to political or social, justifies its approach with efficiency arguments.

## 6. Summary of the Main Findings – 10 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Continue Investing in Economic Women’s Empowerment and Educate Men of its Benefits

**Many NGO’s receiving Finnish funding, and also some of the officials in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, see the economic empowerment of women as the most important way of improving their security in Afghanistan.** This has in practice been vocational training (carpet weaving, embroidery, animal husbandry), and providing micro loans for women. A major part of the funding has been channeled through the World Bank programs, but there have been

promising smaller scale projects as well. The Finnish embassy in Kabul for instance has funded a literacy and vocational capacity training program for the 80 most vulnerable and poor women in the Samangan province. These women have learned to weave gabion cages/baskets. These baskets are later filled with stones and used in flooding and erosion protection. In another project in the Herat province, vulnerable women have been provided with milky cows.

Perhaps the major success story from the perspective of Afghan women has been the Micro-credit program (the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan, MISFA). Quote from the MISFA web-page says that it: “was established as a vehicle through which the Afghan Government and international donors could channel technical assistance and funding to build Afghanistan’s microfinance sector.”<sup>8</sup> MISFA is social credit. Clients are low-income people, household-based entrepreneurs, livestock holders – all those, who do not meet the prerequisites of formal financial institutions, such as banks, and are therefore denied access to financial services. In Afghanistan more than 70% of borrowers are women! MISFA is now running on its own, and does not need donor support – a fact also speaking of its success. Finland, however, used to fund one fourth of the total funding.

MISFA has recently done a gender review of its work to assess the impact of microfinance on the empowerment of women clients.<sup>9</sup> A majority of women have experienced and increase in mobility, self-confidence, and in the power to make decisions in the family. **Although the impact in general has been remarkably positive, there are some constraints.** For example, the report mentions that “**women are pigeonholed in traditional trade assigned to women**, such as sewing, embroidery, carpet weaving, etc. More effort is needed to expand the skills of women clients and create more market linkages for their products”. On the other hand, **there is not enough female staff in microfinance offices**, which could visit the field areas and assist women borrowers.

**Women’s economic empowerment should, however, be backed up by educating men on the benefits of having two breadwinners in households.** Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit AREU research group reported domestic violence in families where the woman earned income but the man did not. (Wakefield 2004, 10) This is because men’s honor is tied to their ability to provide for their families. We also heard in an interview that if the woman’s salary is large enough, her family will allow her to work, irrespective of the higher security risks that follow. AREU’s evaluation research of the impact of microfinance programs on women’s lives in Balkh province states the same. On the local level, acceptance of the idea of women working to earn an income played a key role in determining the success of the microfinance loan program. (Echavez 2012).

## Recommendation 2: Quotas, if applied, should be carefully designed

The National Solidarity Program (NSP) of the World Bank supports the economic development in rural areas. Villages are given a grant, which the elected village council decides to use in local priority areas. NSP has established more than 22 500 Community Development Councils in Afghanistan. In the first phase the operations manual stated that a minimum of 10% of the block grants should be allocated to Women’s Community Development Councils; they are often sub-committees of male CDC’s. **The requirement of a 10% allotment for women, however, turned out to be a ceiling (maximum) for grants to women’s Councils, and it was therefore removed.** A recent study of gender equity through the NSP’s Community Development Councils suggests instead that **additional money could be used**

---

<sup>8</sup> MISFA, <http://www.misfa.org.af/?page=home&lang=en>

<sup>9</sup> MISFA, Gender Mainstreaming in Afghanistan’s Microfinance Sector: An Impact Assessment. <http://www.misfa.org.af/?page=publication>

**for leverage;** for instance Council leaders, who enable women's groups to participate, could be rewarded with extra funding.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, women parliamentarians of Afghanistan and Pakistan recommended in their joint meeting in 2011 that a quota system should be initiated in all branches of government, including the judiciary and executive. Even if the women filling quota seats may be seen as token players or quotas may turn to be ceilings on the amount of women, the women MPs saw it necessary to have them. (EastWest Institute 2011.) The Afghan Women's Network is, however, more critical in its evaluation report, and considers this merely a formal visibility of women and superficial power (Hamid 2011).

### Recommendation 3: Girls need education, but also much more

According to a recent, joint briefing paper by 16 international and Afghan agencies (Afghan Civil Society Forum et al. 2011), efforts to improve girls' education in Afghanistan have begun to slow down since 2006. Although the enrollment figures increased dramatically after the fall of the Taliban from 5000 to 2,4 million girls (current estimate), there are large regional differences and many challenges left to be solved. Organizing girls' education is naturally more than constructing school buildings, and thus benefits of inter-organizational cooperation, which will more efficiently guarantee a holistic approach. When promoting of girls' education, especially their **physical security needs** (safe walk to schools, protection from violent attacks, sanitation facilities) and **cultural constraints** (should have a female teacher, being married at young age or the education of girls is not valued in the family) should be taken into consideration. The drop out level among teenagers is very high; it has been estimated that only about 11% of girls attend grades 7 to 9 and 4% grades 10-12.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Afghanistan Women's Network, the key to improving women's security landscape in Afghanistan is the inclusion of a gender perspective and peace education into the *curriculum*. How to resolve personal conflicts, the values of peace, the ill effects of violence, equality between men and women, and the rights of men and women as Afghan and human citizens. So far, peace education is provided at some schools but gender education is not a part of the government run school curriculum. (Hamid 2011, 38)

Finland has funded a three year Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project since 2010 in partnership with the UNICEF in the northern region of NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Team PRT (Balkh, Samangan, Sar-e-Pol, and Jowzjan provinces), in about 200 schools. This has been very successful in increasing the girls' attendance to school. According to UNICEF statistics, already during the first year of the project Finnish funding enabled UNICEF to extend improvements in water supply and sanitation facilities to nearly 77,000 children in 94 schools in northern Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> And yet, monitoring and advising must follow. We heard in an interview that during a one monitoring tour, the discovery was made that one school had locked the newly built latrines from girl pupils. Teachers had taken these facilities only for their personal use, as they did not trust the girls and thought that they would behave irresponsibly.

---

<sup>10</sup> Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Sippi (2010). If Anyone Listens I Have a Lot of Plans. A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils. Danish Committee to Afghan Refugees, DACAAR.

<http://www.nspafghanistan.org/files/NSP%20Gender%20Study%20Report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education (MoE). 2007. 1386 (2007) School Survey Summary Report. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, <http://www.moe.gov.af/>

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF Afghanistan, [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_58616.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_58616.html)

#### Recommendation 4: Increase women's social ties and networking

**Having networks helps women to participate in social events outside the household (weddings, funerals, birthing ceremonies and religious ceremonies), and to develop trust and solidarity needed for mobilization around local developmental issues.** On the other hand, large social networks give women authority to mediate conflicts and arbitrate – both on the domestic and village levels. Marriage in particular can give women more legislative power. (Wakefield 2004)

NATO Provincial Reconstruction Teams, PRTs have been criticized of doing too short-sighted development work. Their small-scale Quick Impact Projects can, however, sometimes be quite effective, if well focused, planned and monitored. Finnish peacekeepers in Mazar-e-Sharif for example assisted in reopening a special women's park, where women can move freely without a burkha and meet each other. The park was no longer secure enough, because of the poor infrastructure and lightning. Although small in scale, this project has probably had larger effect when enabling women to meet and discuss.

In June 2011 a delegation of Afghan women parliamentarians met their colleagues in Pakistan. This meeting was facilitated by the EastWest Institute<sup>13</sup>. Women lawmakers agreed on the need to establish a joint body, *Afghan Women's Parliamentary Caucus*, similar to one of Pakistani women. One representative of a Finnish NGO thought it would be a good idea to network Afghan and Pakistani women, as the conflict is also regional.

Afghan MPs are divided along tribal lines and have tense relations, and this naturally also affects cooperating capability of women MP's. There are also power struggles with charismatic, leading women and a lack of practical support from the Speaker of the House for inter-ethnic coalition meetings of women. (EastWest Institute 2011) On the other hand, AWN claims in its evaluation report: "the voices heard in activist circles, national and international conferences are the voices of mostly urban, educated or semi-educated women" (Hamid 2011). Better organized and financed networking could also help this problem .

#### Recommendation 5: Focus on the mother-in-laws and matriarchs of the family

**Mother-in-laws, and older women in general, have the authority to restrict or to support younger women's mobility** (Wakefield 2004, 35). A representative of the Finnish Red Cross emphasized the role of mother-in-laws in deciding the place of giving birth on behalf of her daughter-in-law. It is therefore useful to organize a visit for the mother-in-law to the clinic so that she can convince herself of the social safety. Mother-in-laws and powerful women have their say also to the vocational choices of girls – for instance whether they can be police woman or journalist. So far there is no public safety net around the girls and young women who act against the will of their families and female relatives: there are practically no security providers for them in Afghanistan. Without the support of the family you are very much on your own. For instance women do not turn to the police, but trust more on themselves. Therefore **affecting family culture is a key to young women's security.**

Among Pashtuns it is often the woman (the matriarch) who finds the suitable wife for the sons or male relatives and thus the suitable member to join her family network. The marriage rite is in particular an enhancement of women's solidarity. This selecting is strategically important for the woman, as she gets more social prestige, honor and access to resources if the bride is well chosen. For instance artisan skills can be useful as an exchange for resources other

---

<sup>13</sup> EastWest Institute(founded in 1980) is a non-partisan, non-profit think-tank organization with offices in New York, Brussels and Moscow. President Ahtisaari is one of the members of board.

families might have. (Kakar 2012, 9-11) Therefore, the work and education of a married woman could be explained to benefit all women (and men) in the family.

#### **Recommendation 6: Innovate “men friendly” solutions.**

According to Andresen and Bauck (2009, 20) the fundamental reasons for women’s disadvantages do not lie in the shortcomings of women, but rather in unequal gender roles and relations determined by traditional culture, norms, values and practices. To change these, men must be involved. **We should innovate such win-win situations, where males retain their faces while women participate in public life.**

*Pashtunwali*, the tribal law codes of honor, are integral to Pashtun identity. Without honor s/he is not considered a Pashtun, and not given the rights, protection and support of the Pashtun community. The protection of woman’s honor (*namus*) is thus tied with community security. On the other hand, this security is restrictive for both genders, bounding men as much as women. Although men may think they are controlling women when defending their honor (*namus*), they are themselves simultaneously controlled by the logic of this code of honor. Men are as restricted from stepping into women’s spaces as women are from men’s spaces. In urban areas, when more and more people are displaced and the war has cut village and family networks, sustaining the *Pashtunwali* codes becomes a challenge for both men and women. (Kakar 2012, 11)

#### **Recommendation 7: Be more pragmatic than theoretical**

**The word gender is considered as “foreign import” among the Afghanistan government officials, and it does not translate into Dari or Pashto.** Talking about gender as women’s and men’s equality remains largely a learned rhetoric (Larson 2008). For the sake of local ownership of the “gender mainstreaming” policy implementation in Afghanistan, it could be useful to focus on women’s rights and women’s and girl’s security problems BUT simultaneously **broaden the agenda to the family, neighborhood and kinship level, to “our problems” and “our rights” and thus link it to the pragmatic benefits for the whole community.** It is especially important for active women to be able to show their value to prove the economic benefits and show the increase in well-being; otherwise they will lose their face in communities. Let people at the provincial level monitor the progress themselves; this will motivate them to continue as they see the progress.

Many interviewees emphasized **the need to be pragmatic** when in dialogue with the Afghan people. Illiteracy does not mean inability to understand new ideas. It is also a good idea to add “stories of real life change” into reports to international donors and stakeholders; this is a good way to show real impact in women’s and girl’s lives and motivate their staff to continue working.

#### **Recommendation 8: Collect more data and secure the transfer of knowledge**

**Finland should support research that provides information for the evaluation of SCR 1325 related programs and projects.** The Afghanistan Women’s Network (AWN) noted during its evaluation research in 2011 that neither the government officials (including the ministries) nor the civil society organizations trusted the mandates and intention of external evaluators. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs, MOWA, for instance was sharing only very descriptive information about the ongoing projects and not about their funding for these projects.

On the other hand, AWN was not able to get reliable numbers of the cases of sexual and gender based violence reported to the police, investigated and handed over to court proceedings. An alarming fact is that (at least according to the numbers given from 2007-2009) about half of the cases of sexual and other violence against women are classified as *zina*, adultery, which means that violated women and girls are themselves punished for moral crimes. (Hamid 2011)

In 2010-2011 UNAMA/OHCHR officers had the same problem concerning the sharing of information when gathering statistics from courts and police and prosecution offices for their EAW Law evaluation report. All of the authorities did not record information systematically. (UNAMA & OHCHR 2011.) AWN has currently a project called Monitoring the Implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law. UNAMA, together with UN Women, AIHRC, the Ministry of Interior and the AWN, support efforts to build up a reliable database on the cases of violence against women.

Bauck et al. (2011) recommend in their Gender Review report that the Nordic embassies could jointly engage an Afghan gender equality expert. He or she could act as a coordinator and information sharing contact person between the embassies and their local partners, like Afghan women activists. This person could also secure institutional memory that can otherwise be lost because of the high turnover of the diplomatic staff. Another way of securing continuity is to make a division of labor between the Nordic countries on who focuses on which issues, who participates where and where one could benefit of having a joint seat.

**Finnish actors could also use the knowledge of the Afghan staff more.** Norad assessment of UNIFEM Afghanistan revealed that the **local contextual and historical knowledge is underused in developing, implementing and evaluating programs.** This has for instance resulted in reporting that is very much focused on describing activities and achievements policy-wise on paper. More comprehensive reporting would enable **measurement of qualitative changes** – like changes in attitudes and behavior. (Andresen and Hauck 2009) This would require research and data collection in which local partners and national staff are of the utmost importance. For example, the former Soviet Legacy is not enough taken into account. According to Larson (2008), many Afghan officials view the Soviet occupation as the time of flourishing civil service in Kabul, or are at least used to the administrative models and social practices of that time. Gender may for instance give connotations to celebrating the Women's Day, women's welfare provisions, or women's *shuras* (informal, female staff's associations within Afghan ministries) instead of more modern approaches.

#### **Recommendation 9: Strengthen the Nordic cooperation in issues related to the theme of Women, Peace and Security.**

**One way to secure continuity is to rely on Nordic cooperation, information sharing and the division of labor.** There is already a white paper on this issue, the *Joint Nordic Gender Action Initiative* (signed 12 Oct 2010). In this document the Nordic countries aim to take a leading role on promoting gender issues in Afghanistan. Four thematic areas of focus are: (1) Women's political empowerment, (2) Women's economic empowerment, (3) sexual and reproductive health and rights, and (4) women and security with a special emphasis on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, and Gender Based Violence.

This initiative, however, is perhaps too ambitious. It needs a more focused action plan, priority lists, and a joint reporting system of the results. Bauck et al (2011) recommend joint half-yearly reporting to the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Also, in Afghanistan it would be needed a joint high-level policy dialogue with the Government of Afghanistan, to safeguard the theme Women, Peace and Security in the agenda of the transition process.

According to Bauck et al. (2011) Nordic embassies could discuss together the following important issues:

- Recruitment strategies; how to attract female staff and how to retain them. Recruiting qualified staff is a challenge. For instance UNIFEM had difficulties in this, not only due to overall insecurity but also because it couldn't offer the same level of salaries compared to other agencies and donors in Afghanistan (Andresen and Bauck 2009, 16).
- Gender training; how is it organized?

### Recommendation 10: Monitor and Take Responsibility Even in Cases when it All Goes Wrong

Perhaps the most notorious example of the case of not being clearly focused early enough is the case of the women's prison in Shebergan.<sup>14</sup> Finland's ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team had decided to build better prisons for female convicts, of which many had children and were suffering in appalling facilities. During the project follow-up it was discovered that the prison's woman manager had organized prostitution: five of the women inmates had been sent outside the prison to prostitute. The Finnish Embassy and the development cooperation adviser in the Finnish PRT asked then the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan UNAMA and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission AIHRC to investigate the issue, and Afghan Ministry of Justice to act further in this case.

According to Mäkinen's report (2010), abusive personnel was dismissed from employment, and the facilities have thereafter been regularly monitored by the AIHRC and female ISAF soldiers. Naturally this was bad publicity for the military, but on the other hand, as Mäkinen states in her report of the women's situation in Afghanistan, it was the first time any foreign actor had intervened in this way.<sup>15</sup> And yet, **better cultural awareness of the women inmates vulnerability and insecurity could have prevented this from happening**. Many women are convicted of "moral crimes": adultery or running away from home (often because of forced marriage or domestic violence). They are therefore stigmatized as bad, immoral women and are more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

## 7. Final Words

The key to a successful national implementation of UNSCR 1325 is **adequate staffing, funding and monitoring**. Staffing of gender issues means also that the **working knowledge is forwarded in the operational organization**. Too much of this **knowledge is lost between rotation and project cycles**, which last – even at best – only a couple of years. Staffing means also that the **Gender Advisers are not left alone**, but able to work as a team with the other personnel. They should never be acting as an internal "police", a watch dog looking for misbehavior and mistakes.

Instead, the whole **gender issue should be freed from negative connotations: not-to-do-lists and so called "cultural sensitivity"**, which actually too often means only being overly cautious. It seemed that the **Finnish women working in civilian crisis management and development aid were rather relaxed in relation to cultural sensitivity**, and not for instance making a fuss of their personal, Finnish way of dressing (wearing or not wearing a scarf) or not being able to shake hands. This had much to do with the fact that most of them live a rather secluded expatriate life in Afghanistan. Because of the safety concerns they are unfortunately not anymore able to meet any other Afghans than the English speaking and educated. **For the smaller NGO projects even monitoring visits poses a challenge**,

---

<sup>14</sup> YLE Uutiset Problems with Afghan Prisons Reported Before Prostitution Scandal

[http://yle.fi/uutiset/problems\\_with\\_afghan\\_prisons\\_reported\\_before\\_prostitution\\_scandal/5251066](http://yle.fi/uutiset/problems_with_afghan_prisons_reported_before_prostitution_scandal/5251066)

<sup>15</sup> Mäkinen, Miia (2010) Selvitys naisten tilanteesta Afganistanissa. Ulkoasiainministeriö, Aasian ja Oseanian yksikkö. 13.6.2010.

<http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentid=196015&nodeid=15316&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI>

because of the expensive security services. And still, many women wanted to be role models for their Afghan sisters and brothers, expecting mutual tolerance towards cultural differences. **The theme of women, peace and security is not too sensitive in Afghanistan.** The fact is, however, that the concept of gender is “imported”, it has no direct translation in the Dari or Pashto languages. And still, according to the experiences of our interviewees, we can still discuss about men’s and women’s different security needs and everyday challenges, and give pragmatic suggestions on how to meet these needs.

Finland has been funding and staffing smaller and larger scale projects and programs which have been improving women’s and girl’s health and economic security, and raising the awareness of women’s and girl’s human rights. There has thus been **a lot of focus on the field of protection.** What is needed now is placing even more emphasis on women’s **participation** in peace-building, and their empowerment. This means supporting different women’s groups voices in peace process, training them on how to network, mobilize and advocate issues important for them. Without the voice of women there is no sustainable peace. Women need to support the agreement. They need to be able to address their security concerns and issues related to reconciliation and transitional justice (like past crimes).<sup>16</sup> Encouraging larger participation of different women’s advocacy groups and Afghan development aid NGOs – especially outside Kabul – could also help the implementation of Afghanistan’s forthcoming NAP on Women, Peace and Security.

What also is **very much needed is longitudinal knowledge of the women’s situation, needs and concerns in different provinces and villages.** Besides the governmental statistics, Finland could use more of the data gathered by independent research institutes in getting a more holistic picture. This knowledge is essential for the development of gender training. According to CMC Finland’s new research, a full majority of Finnish civilian crisis management experts needed information on the daily life and security needs of local women and men to be included in training. Women respondents also valued highly practical exercises of situations where gender matters. (Mäki-Rahkola and Launiala, 2012.)

## 8. Projects and Funding Programs with Relevance to the National Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security<sup>17</sup>

### PEACEBUILDING

#### Dialogue on possibilities for conflict resolution in Afghanistan

- Crisis Management Initiative CMI
- Facilitation of a dialogue process where people from civil society, universities, media, women groups and religious leaders would come together to discuss issues that could be later advocated on a national level
- Finland’s development cooperation funding: 276 000 €/year 2011; 200 000 € year 2012

### HEALTH AND SECURITY

#### Establishment of Reproductive Health Program,

- Marie Stopes International in Afghanistan

---

<sup>16</sup> Holistic analysis of the peace process: Schirch (2011) Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process in Afghanistan. Washington: USIP.

<sup>17</sup> Note: The list is not fully comprehensive, but provides an overview of the major focus areas during the years 2008-2011 and the amount of support from the Finnish government.

- Has 12 clinics for women in different parts of Afghanistan; reproductive and maternal health education for families; building dialogue with the religious leaders and their families in communities
- Finland's development cooperation funding (Finland has been the major donor since 2002): 400 000 €; 2006-2011 total 2,4 million €.

#### **Basic Capacity Building in the Primary Mental Health Project, Afghanistan (NGO project, 2006-2011)**

- The Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission (FLOM) and Finnish Lutheran Mission (FLM) with their partner International Assistance Mission (IAM) in Afghanistan
- Medical training of nurses, doctors and community leaders (mullahs and teachers); two Finnish psychiatric nurses have been working in the project
- IAM founded the project already in 1996 as a response to seeing women's burns and victims of domestic violence; IAM has been the only organization working in the mental health sector in the western region
- Finland's development cooperation funding (since 2006): 140 000€/year on average

#### **SERVE Health Education Ladies project (NGO-project, 2008-2010).**

- Operation Mobilization with the Christian Charitable Trust (SERVE).
- Provided health and nutrition education for young girls, mothers and their children in Nangahar province, Afghanistan
- Finland's development cooperation funding for the years 2008-2010: 300 000€

#### **WASH in Schools**

- UNICEF
- Sanitation and water supply program for 200 schools in Balkh, Sar-e-Pol, Jawzjan and Samangan provinces
- Hygiene education and latrine facilities – including private facilities for girls.
- Has been increasing girls attendance at schools
- Finland's funding: 500 000€

#### **Health and care programme, Afghanistan (NGO project, 2010-2012).**

- Red Cross Finland with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
- Health education and first aid training for local volunteers in the Sar-e-Pol province
- Finland's funding: 548 000 € (2010) and 166 000 € (2011)

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**

#### **Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).**

- World Bank.
- Finland's share in 2011: 7 million €, in total 2002-2011 28,9 million €.
- In 2009 the division of funds have been 50% to the general pool, about 25% to the **National Solidarity Programme, NSP** and 25% to the **Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan, MISFA**<sup>18</sup>
- MISFA has been running on its own and thus has not needed donor support since 2010; that last year the share of Finland's funding was 2,25 million €.

<sup>18</sup> Figures taken from Norad, 2009. Strengthening Nordic Development Cooperation in and with Afghanistan. Norad Report Discussion 3/2009. Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Norad

### **Economic Security and the Rights of Women (WESR): Opportunities to Build Sustainable Economic Assets (NGO-project, 2011-2013)**

- Finland's UN WOMEN with UN WOMEN Afghanistan Country Office (ACO)
- Brings women producers, entrepreneurs and home-based workers together; builds networks among rural women's economic groups, paralegals and organizations and the decision makers at local, provincial and national levels
- Works in Kabul and in the provinces of Parwan and Panjshir
- Finland's development cooperation funding for the years 2011-2013: 170 000€/year

### **Livelihood Development for Self-Employment and Job Creation, Afghanistan (NGO project, 2009-2011).**

- Finnish UN Women with UNIFEM Afghanistan.
- Finland's development cooperation funding: annually 170 000€

### **Integrated Agricultural Development Project, Shibartu valley, Lado valley in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan (NGO project, 2007-2010).**

- Finn Church Aid (Kirkon Ulkomaanapu) being donor to Norwegian Church Aid NCA, implementing partner Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee (CAWC).
- Trained 120 rural women in hygiene, environment protection and literacy
- Provided 1128 families seeds, fertilizers, micro credit (all 60 lenders women) and capacity training in horticulture and agriculture.
- Funding by the Finnish government: 150 000 €/year

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY**

### **Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission AIHRC (established 2002)**

- Finland's continuous annual support since 2006: 400 000€; In addition 1 million € support in 2004.
- Finland has been one of the main donors (3<sup>rd</sup> largest)
- One of the special concerns is women's rights. Its Women's Rights Unit has a status of being Afghanistan's constitutionally established national human rights institution; it however monitors independently the activities of government agencies and other institutions, like foreign forces in regard to implementation of law and ensuring human rights.

### **European Union Police Mission EUPOL**

- Mainstreaming gender and human rights aspects within the Ministry of Interior and the Afghan National Police is a sixth strategic objective of the Mission
- Training, mentoring and raising awareness of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW, 2009)
- Finland has seconded several civilian crisis management experts to the EUPOL Gender and Human Rights Unit
- About 1/5 of the seconded Finnish civilian management personnel are women (a total being 35-40)

### **European Union Special Representative Office, EUSRA (est. 2001)**

- Finland has seconded a Human Rights adviser in EUSRA, Kabul.

- Monitoring and reporting of gender issues and human rights has been one of the main areas of EUSRA

#### **Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, LOTFA**

- Has trained 300 police trainers in gender and human rights concepts.
- Has helped to recruit nearly 1000 new police women during the last 3 years (their approximate number being 1200 in 2012)<sup>19</sup>
- Has established a Gender Mainstreaming Unit in the Ministry of Interior
- Finland's support (donor since 2003) : 1,5 million € in 2011

#### **Access to Justice and Legal Awareness Programs in the Badakshan Province**

- The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights KIOS with Justice for All Organisation
- "Moral crimes" related legal aid and awareness raising
- 45 500 € in 2012  
Free legal assistance and representation in family and criminal cases to indigent women and children

#### **Human Rights Club (NGO project)**

- The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights, KIOS with the Foundation of Solidarity for Justice (FSFJ).
- Bi-weekly series of discussions and workshops on how to promote and protect women's rights in the Afghan context and what the women's rights can mean in Afghanistan. Transmitted also by radio.
- 45 000 € in 2010 for Kabul, and 35 000 € in 2010 for Herat; 32 800 € in 2009 for Kabul

#### **Women's rights awareness, literacy, and legal assistance programs for women in Waras and Panjab districts of Bamyan province (NGO project)**

- The Finnish NGO Foundation for Human Rights KIOS with the Shuhada Organisation, Afghanistan
- Literacy, legal literacy and women's rights trainings for mainly women of Hazara-ethnicity.
- 29 000 € in 2011; 29 300€ in 2009; 27 200 € in 2008

#### **Paralegal Training in Afghanistan: A Component of the Gender and Justice Programme in Afghanistan (NGO-project, 2007-2010)**

- Finland's UN WOMEN with UN WOMEN Afghanistan Country Office (ACO)
- Trained 210 paralegals (of which 110 were women) in the provinces of Nangahar, Parwan and Helmand to provide legal assistance to Afghan women outside the court system
- Facilitated several training workshops on women's and human rights and provided legal counseling services for 405 women and 22 children through referral centers in Parwan and Nangahar
- Developed a paralegal manual

## **MEDIA**

#### **Learning Together (NGO-project, first phase 2009-2011; second phase: 2012-2014)**

- Finnish Women Journalists with the Afghan Women Journalists' Union and Kabul University
- Vocational training of women journalists in Afghanistan; in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, planning to organize training in Herat in 2013
- First group of Afghan journalist women also visited media houses in Finland
- Finland's development cooperation support: first phase, 160 000€; the second phase, 294 600 €

<sup>19</sup> These figures from LOTFA: [http://www.undp.org.af/undp/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=108&Itemid=57](http://www.undp.org.af/undp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=108&Itemid=57)

## 9. REFERENCES

- Afghan Civil Society Forum et al. (2011). High Stakes. Girls' Education in Afghanistan. Joint Briefing Paper. 24 Feb, 2011. <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/high-stakes-girls-education-afghanistan>
- Andresen, Janne & Bauck, Peter (2009). Assessment of UNIFEM Afghanistan. Oslo: Norwegian Agency of Development Cooperation, Norad.
- Azarbaijani-Moghaddam, Sippi (2010). If Anyone Listens I Have a Lot of Plans. A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils. Danish Committee to Afghan Refugees, DACAAR.  
<http://www.nspafghanistan.org/files/NSP%20Gender%20Study%20Report.pdf>
- Bauck, Petter, Dohmen, Sofia, Andresen, Janne & Lexow, Janne (2011). Gender Review Report. Royal Norwegian Embassy Afghanistan. Oslo: Norwegian Agency of Development Cooperation, Norad & Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA.
- EastWest Institute (2011). Forging New Ties. Report from the First Meeting Between Afghan and Pakistani Women Parliamentarians, Islamabad, June 2011. New York: The EastWest Institute & Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention.
- Echavez, Chona R., Sogol, Zand & Bagaporo, Lyn L. (2012). The Impact of Microfinance Programmes on Women's Lives. Kabul: The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU.  
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/1210E-Womens%20Participation%20MFI%20Balkh%20CS%202012.pdf>
- Hamid, Zarin (2011). UN SCR 1325 Implementation in Afghanistan. Kabul: Afghan Women's Network, AWN.
- Kakar, Palwasha (2012). Afghan Legal History Project. Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School. <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/ilsp/research/alhp.php>
- Larson, Anna (2008). A Mandate to Mainstream: Promoting gender equality in Afghanistan. Kabul: The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU.
- Ministry of Education (2007). 1386 (2007) School Survey Summary Report. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Education, <http://www.moe.gov.af/>
- Mäkinen, Mia (2010). Selvitys naisten tilanteesta Afganistanissa. Helsinki: Ulkoasiainministeriö, Aasian ja Oseanian yksikkö.
- Mäki-Rahkola, Anne (2011). Norden in Afghanistan: The Implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Nordic Engagement in Afghanistan, The Finnish 1325 Network.
- Mäki-Rahkola, Anne and Launiala, Annika (2012). Gender Perspective in Civilian Crisis Management: Experiences of Finnish experts from the field. Research report, Kuopio: CMC Finland (to be published).
- NATO (2011). Gender Training & Education. How Can Gender Make a Difference in Operations – Indicators. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_topics/20120308\\_1869-11\\_Gender\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_topics/20120308_1869-11_Gender_Brochure.pdf)
- Norad (2009). Strengthening Nordic Development Cooperation in and with Afghanistan. Norad Report Discussion 3/2009. Oslo: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.
- Schirch, Lisa (2011). Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process for Afghanistan. Washington: United States Institute of Peace, USIP.
- Wakefield, Shawna (2004). Gender and Local Level Decision Making: Findings from a Case Study in Mazar-e Sharif. Kabul: The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, AREU.