

# **Taking Stock: Afghan Women and Girls Six Months On**



**WOMANKIND Worldwide**  
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## Introduction to Taking Stock: Afghan Women and Girls Six Month On

WOMANKIND Worldwide in collaboration with members of the Working Group on the Rights of Afghan Women, 3 July 2002

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*This balance sheet has been created to assess progress for Afghan women and girls over the months since the Taliban was removed from power. Independent news coverage has tailed off as the world's attention has moved on and sources of information are contradictory and often difficult to verify. The expense and difficulty of getting to Afghanistan, the violence still endemic around the country and fast-rising prices in Kabul have militated against continuous coverage of how the international community's promises to Afghan women are shaping up.*

This balance sheet looks at the areas which Afghan women have prioritised as key to their being treated and regarded as equal citizens in their own country: security, participation in public life, legal reform, access to employment and education and a change in the culture of repression and subordination of women from the top down. Sources include international governmental organisations, non-governmental bodies, newspaper reports and, of course, Afghan women themselves. The bottom line is that gains for women have been small but significant, particularly when compared to the terrible repression women were suffering this time last year. But the future is uncertain.

The balance sheet is divided into the situation on the ground and the international community's response, and shows clearly that initially the international community responded enthusiastically to meeting the needs of Afghan women – albeit mainly verbally. Barely half a year on, there is a too-rapid disengagement both in terms of political pressure on Afghan leaders to 'do right by women' and in delivery of promised funds. Where is the the international conference to support the fledgling Afghan administration as it plots the next stages? The possibility of US disengagement from peacekeeping and certain types of development funding contributes to insecurity and puts another spoke in the wheel of effective post-conflict planning.

There is no shortage of lessons learned on how the international community should deal with post-conflict situations. This is particularly true when it comes to the participation of women, and their role has even been enshrined in documents such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – on women's involvement in peace-keeping and post-conflict reconstruction. However, implementation is another matter entirely. 1325 lies dormant at the time when Afghanistan provides an opportunity for textbook implementation. The alternative is yet another situation where military intervention is followed by endless chaos and sidelining of the crucial contribution of 50 percent (actually nearer 60 percent in Afghanistan) of the population.

The numbers of Afghan women who came forward to participate in the Loya Jirga in June exceeded the disappointingly low target of 11 percent. They showed that Afghan women are absolutely ready to participate in politics. But now there are no guaranteed targets for women's inclusion in Afghan political or social life and therefore no framework for monitoring and evaluation.

Our recommendations are therefore mainly focused on the international community's continuing responsibility to support the process of rebuilding Afghanistan. Visible progress for a few women must not be allowed to substitute for real gains for all Afghan women, verified by proper monitoring and reporting.

## **We therefore call for:**

### **1. The International Community**

#### **a) to support the Afghan Transitional Government by:**

- Holding another international conference to follow up on the Bonn Agreement to agree a framework for progress over the period until national elections are held.
- Establishing a monitoring process which reviews progress on government- and state-building, ensuring that there is compliance with international standards on human rights, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Engaging to effectively secure and monitor human rights and, particularly, women's rights.

b) to ensure that it is meeting international standards itself and providing the best possible framework for the reconstruction of Afghanistan by:

- Reporting clearly and regularly (via the publicity departments of donor governments and the UN) on how Afghan women are benefiting from disbursement of international funds.
- Collecting accurate data on which to base needs assessments, eg numbers of widows; women's health needs outside the reproductive sphere, women in education and employment.
- Involving women in missions and forces at all levels.
- Guaranteeing substantive representation of women in peace- and security-building measures.

c) to provide support to President Hamid Karzai to prioritise:

- Inclusion of women in local security structures.
- Disarmament on the agenda of the Transitional Government.
- Representation of Afghan women from political and civil society in peace- and security-building exercises.
- Guaranteed women's representation (target level 30%) in the Transitional Government and structures associated with it, including the Constitutional Commission and the Human Rights Commission.
- Judicial reform, including women's participation and representation, compliance with highest international standards, and being informed by good practice from Islamic countries
- Securing written and public commitment to women's rights from all members of the Afghan Transitional Government.

*2. The UK Government to:*

- Support calls for a follow-up to the Bonn conference as soon as possible to maintain momentum and support for the rebuilding of Afghanistan with women's participation.
- Express public commitment to and work within the UN Security Council for ISAF engagement for a stated period of longer than six months at the end of 2003, to allow for stabilisation of the security situation and planning.
- Seek solutions to rapidly increasing security for women beyond Kabul.
- Press the UN for disaggregated figures on spending on women in Afghanistan and report back regularly to Parliament on this.
- Proactively publicise the work which is being done with UK money on behalf of Afghan women.
- Create as conducive conditions as possible for women employees in the field and seek proactively to employ women at all levels in operations, both as expatriate and locally engaged staff.
- Adopt specific gender strategies and policy for their work (eg FCO and DfID) in Afghanistan.

- Take into account the particular dangers of the security situation for Afghan women in Afghanistan when making decisions on cases involving Afghan refugees and asylum seekers.
- Use its Presidency of the UN Security Council (July to December 2002) to move forward the agenda on women's involvement in peace building through Security Council Resolution 1325.

**3. The international media to:**

- Continue to report on the situation of Afghanistan's women in order that it remains on the priority list for politicians.

**4. International non-governmental organisations to:**

- Create as conducive conditions as possible for women employees in the field and seek proactively to employ women at all levels of their organisations, both as expatriate and locally engaged staff.
- Report regularly and transparently on how budgets are being spent for the benefit of women.

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WOMANKIND Worldwide, the international women's rights and development charity, coordinates the Working Group on the Rights of Afghan Women, a lobbying and information-sharing forum which brings together humanitarian and development organisations, human rights groups and individuals. It was established in November 2001 to monitor and evaluate progress on implementing rights for Afghan women in light of the international community's involvement in removing the Taliban from power and commitment to rebuilding an inclusive and equal Afghanistan.

## Afghan Women and Girls, Six Months On The Balance Sheet: December 2001 – June 2002 <sup>1</sup>

### I WOMEN'S SECURITY

*“Afghan women of all ethnicities have been compelled to restrict their participation in public life to avoid being targets of violence by armed factions and by those seeking to enforce repressive Taliban-era edicts.” <sup>2</sup>*

*It doesn't matter that the Taliban are no longer here, because the Mujahidin are here.” <sup>3</sup>*

#### a) Women and security

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandate for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been extended until the end of 2002.</li> <li>• The May 5 UN-brokered deal between two Mazar warlords has provided for the establishment of a new local police force of 600 men and women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anxiety about personal security has been overwhelmingly cited as the major concern for women by women and women's groups since January.</li> <li>• Security outside Kabul – and even in parts of Kabul – is poor. Military conflict and Taliban brutality has been replaced by the banditry and lawlessness. Most women continue to fear physical violence and threats to their personal security from other civilians or armed men belonging to various political factions.</li> <li>• The ISAF mandate does not extend beyond Kabul, and despite a clear need and desire from the Afghan people for its expansion until domestic infrastructure is created to ensure security, there is no international political will to find creative solutions to the problem. The result is a violent environment where warlords and factions dominate and women are particularly vulnerable, giving rise to a vicious cycle where, because of insecurity, women are unable to participate in reconstruction and public life and their rights are further eroded.</li> <li>• The lack of physical security affects women in gender-specific ways: in particular, they are more vulnerable to rape and other sexual abuse. There have been many cases of gang rape and acid attacks on women which appear to be being tolerated and even condoned by regional authorities.</li> <li>• In some regions of the country, women continue to suffer under the imposition of Taliban-like restrictions by regional warlords. Women continue to be assaulted or abused for not adhering to former Taliban edicts that strictly controlled women's behaviour, dress, expression and movement.</li> <li>• Human Rights Watch reports that the Taliban's special Police for the Protection of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice are still patrolling some remote districts of southern Afghanistan and, for example, beating women with metal rods.</li> <li>• There are reports that the Northern Alliance are warning women to wear burquas, and that women who do not have been</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No extension of ISAF mandate beyond Kabul and therefore lack of security in the rest of the country.</li> <li>• No extension of ISAF mandate beyond the end of 2002, therefore uncertainty about future security.</li> <li>• Virtually no involvement of women and civil society in peace building.</li> <li>• No structure for human/women's rights monitoring and reporting.</li> <li>• Little recognition of the particular needs of women when assessing security – for example in connection with the return of refugees to Afghanistan.</li> <li>• No indigenous capacity to maintain law and order.</li> <li>• Widespread and uncontrolled ownership of small arms and huge problem of landmines.</li> </ul>

	<p>kidnapped and raped. The vast majority of women continue to wear the burqua, although some do so through positive choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The gang-rape of a female foreign aid worker in Northern Afghanistan in June brought attention to the fragility of women's safety even for those with extra security and back-up.</li> </ul>	
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**b) Women as refugees and internally displaced people**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 1 million refugees have returned to Afghanistan, far exceeding expectations. (NB women and children constitute three quarters of the refugee population).</li> <li>• Enormous enthusiasm about returning to Afghanistan on part of large numbers of women and commitment to contributing to reconstruction efforts.</li> <li>• Many returnees are well qualified. Databases have been established where people can register their skills and hence contribute appropriately and usefully to reconstruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the beginning of 2002, there were nearly a million displaced people in 883 camps in Afghanistan, of whom around two thirds were women. No figures exist for the current situation.</li> <li>• Reports of militarisation of and sexual violence within refugee camps and camps for internally displaced people.</li> <li>• Huge numbers of returnees are putting extreme pressure on resources, including housing, sanitation, water. Hundreds of thousands of Afghans are already reliant on donor aid for food and the returnees are swelling these numbers.</li> <li>• At the end of May, the International Organisation for Migration, (IOM) ran out of money for repatriation of refugees and transport home for people in displacement camps in Afghanistan.</li> <li>• In early June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned that the agency could run out of money for its Afghan programme by the end of the month and several other aid agencies have reported similar problems. The head of the UNHCR called on EU governments to provide an extra \$100m for the agency on top of money already pledged.</li> <li>• Repatriation is not always consistent with international standards on refugee protection, which include “the right of women to make their own repatriation decisions”. Returnee women interviewed in Afghanistan indicated that they had little say in the decision to repatriate.</li> <li>• Women refugees do not have good access to information and may not be fully informed by UNHCR of the security issues women face in Afghanistan when being invited to make repatriation decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official Data Lacking: Absence of data and assessments of needs of refugee and internally displaced women.</li> <li>• Inadequate resourcing of security and other needs of women within the camps.</li> <li>• No guarantees of women's security in refugee camps and camps for internally displaced people.</li> </ul>

**c) Trafficking of women and girls**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trafficking in women and girls has increased. Girls are purchased in Afghanistan, trafficked through Pakistan and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No guarantees of women's security.</li> <li>• Absence of data relating to</li> </ul>

	sold into prostitution or marriage in the Persian Gulf countries.	scale of the problem. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic regeneration is needed so women's bodies are not used as commodities.</li><li>• Absence of NGO coordinated approach to tackling trafficking human/women's rights monitoring and reporting.</li></ul>
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## II WOMEN'S CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

*Very few of the men in the interim administration believe there should be a Women's Ministry. These are not for the most part liberal, progressive men; many of them have similar attitudes to the Taliban.<sup>4</sup>*

### a) Afghan women in political life

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process up to the end of the Loya Jirga has been guided by the international community and has been positive for women, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 women were ministers in Afghan Interim Authority out of 30 members.</li> <li>- A woman stood for presidency at the Loya Jirga in June 2002. Finished second, but ahead of two men</li> <li>- 3 members of the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga were women.</li> <li>- 11% of Loya Jirga seats were guaranteed to women.</li> <li>- 200 women were elected to the Loya Jirga (14%).</li> <li>- All Loya Jirga delegates had a 3-hour training session on gender sensitivity.</li> <li>- Female delegates at the Loya Jirga have spoken out about other delegates who had been heavily involved in the conflict and destruction of the country.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• For the first time in history, Afghanistan has a Women's Ministry, which will be key to promoting and achieving Afghan women's rights.</li> <li>• The Women's Ministry has a payroll of 200 civil servants and a building to work in.</li> <li>• A woman heads up the new Human Rights Commission.</li> <li>• As of June 2002, 2 women are cabinet ministers (Public Health and Women's Affairs). There are also women in positions of Deputy Minister for Education and junior minister for Women's Affairs.</li> <li>• Positive involvement of women's groups and activists internationally in getting issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 2 of 26 cabinet ministers are women.</li> <li>• There is no democratic process for the women elected to the Loya Jirga to move into the Transitional Government (TG) – all members of the TG are hand-picked by the President.</li> <li>• There is no minimum quota to ensure that women will be represented in the TG, or on any bodies which are set up by the TG, such as the Constitutional Commission.</li> <li>• Negatives for women associated with the political process so far have been:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In many rural areas, local authorities and commanders tried to intimidate potential female candidates and many women were openly threatened during the process. UN envoy to Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi said: "Voting for the Loya Jirga has been plagued by violence and vote-buying... There were attempts at manipulation, violence, unfortunately. Money was used, threats were used."</li> <li>- The Ministry of Women's Affairs had called for 25% women's representation on the Loya Jirga. 11% was disappointing as a target, and the 4% who came through other channels showed that a more ambitious target could and should have been set.</li> <li>- Known human rights violators were involved in the Loya Jirga process.</li> <li>- Most women delegates felt they had been sidelined in the Loya Jirga process and were expected to rubber stamp decisions made behind closed doors.</li> <li>- Fundamentalist leaders branded critics of the warlords who participated in the Loya Jirga as traitors to Islam.</li> <li>- A petition was circulated at the Loya Jirga denouncing Women's Affairs Minister Simar Samar and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No legal guarantees for women's inclusion in political life.</li> <li>• No training and support for women to encourage and underpin their involvement in political and civil representation.</li> <li>• No guaranteed continued involvement by international community in structuring political process to ensure women's participation.</li> <li>• No planned gender awareness training for members of planned Transitional Government.</li> </ul>

<p>such as women’s political participation onto the political agenda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are UN plans to set up a network of women in the regions to act as “local leaders”.</li> <li>• The UN Secretary General has recommended that the Afghan Transitional Government ensures the full participation of women in the assessment of short, medium and longterm priorities in all sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>accusing her of blasphemy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An estimated \$67million is needed to establish the Women’s Ministry’s programmes (including legal advocacy, educational, vocational training and health programs) in all 30 provinces. There is fierce competition for the reconstruction funds coming through.</li> <li>• Negative statements from key Afghan players cast doubt on sustaining momentum on women’s rights as the international community disengages.</li> </ul>	
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**b) Women and the law**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment within Afghan Transitional government and international community to an inclusive Constitution entrenching women’s rights.</li> <li>• Afghanistan has ratified virtually every human rights treaty, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which prohibits discrimination against women and establishes the equal right of women to participation in public life.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Afghan Women Lawyers and Professionals Association emerged in January after four years underground. Planned activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting up a training centre in Kabul and information offices around Afghanistan.</li> <li>- Working on securing women’s rights in the new Constitution.</li> <li>- Training 40 women in basic human rights practices.</li> <li>- Establishing a resource centre for comparative Islamic, national and international law.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Afghanistan’s Constitution of 1964 exists as a positive model which can be developed.</li> <li>• A Human Rights Commission has been established, headed by a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taliban decrees and laws discriminating against women remain in force.</li> <li>• Existing legal structures are poor and women’s rights are rarely recognised or upheld. In some parts of the country there is no functioning legal system.</li> <li>• The Minister of Justice is reported to be a hardliner on justice issues and to have a negative attitude towards equality before the law for women.</li> <li>• Women continue to serve and receive extreme sentences for “crimes” such as seeking to marry a man of their choice, attempting to leave partners, and criticizing their husbands.</li> <li>• There is a possibility that, unless international pressure remains strong, conservatives will win the argument on continued implementation of strict Sharia law. A strict following would include death by stoning for a married woman guilty of committing adultery and 100 lashes for a single woman.<sup>6</sup> The new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was quoted in press interviews in January as saying that Sharia punishments including stoning and amputation would be retained, albeit with stricter due process guarantees than under the Taliban.</li> <li>• There is no national consultation process on the Constitution committed to taking on board the views of women, and no obligation for women to be represented on the Constitutional Commission.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No obligation to include women in representative numbers in the Constitution-making process.</li> <li>• No plan for a national consultation process on the Constitution which will consult with women or guarantee that the constitution will be informed by best practice from Islamic countries.</li> <li>• CEDAW still not ratified; CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.</li> <li>• Absence of guarantee for appointment of female judges.</li> <li>• No guarantee of adequate resourcing and established political status of Human Rights Commission, nor of security for its members.</li> </ul>

<p>woman, which will look at transitional justice and begin working this month on a 2-year programme. The HRC will have a formal secretariat, including 34 staff in Kabul plus regional satellite offices, entirely financed by external donor support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UN Secretary General has recommended that women are well represented as members of the Judicial Commission, the Civil Service Commission and the Human Rights Commission; that a gender perspective is taken into consideration when developing the mandates of these commissions and that that urgent measures be taken to repeal all edicts and orders that discriminate against women.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are concerns that the Human Rights Commission may not be independent and free to advocate for justice, particularly for women, as well as reconciliation.</li> <li>• Although the Human Rights Commission is not looking at granting immunity for war crimes, there is widespread fear that warlords will not be brought to justice, and that violence will carry on as ever.</li> <li>• It is procedurally unclear where the Human Rights Commission fits into Afghanistan's present or future legal structure.</li> <li>• Action on "human rights" may be seen as taking care of women's rights.</li> <li>• The HRC does not have great capacity and it will bear the brunt of much hostility, yet the international community is not taking responsibility for monitoring violations of human rights or women's rights until it is functional – and it is clear that there are many violations taking place.</li> <li>• Although Afghanistan has ratified most human rights conventions, it has yet to commit to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This is an important symbol of commitment to lasting and positive change for women.</li> <li>• Only 1-2% of women in Afghanistan have identity cards and 98% have no formal papers, citizenship or identity.</li> </ul>	
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**c) Women's freedom of expression and participation in civil society**

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive civil society activity has begun, with Afghan women coming together in their thousands and producing coherent and consolidated policy demands. These are being taken seriously by the international political community and used by international civil society to advocate for Afghan women. Eg. Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy, Brussels, 4-5 Dec, 2001 and 1000 Women conference in Kabul, 7-9 Jun 2002.</li> <li>• Women teachers and lawyers who have worked undercover for years are now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In most parts of the country, women are still unable to move around freely and express themselves freely. Those who do draw attention to themselves (eg Sima Samar, former Minister for Women now head of the Human Rights Commission) and become targets for abuse and threatened or actual violence.</li> <li>• Fragmentation and factionalisation of Afghan society also applies to Afghan women, where there is an urgent need for resources to build bridges in order to, for example, resolve tension between returnees and women who have remained in Afghanistan over the years.</li> <li>• Although women's rights workers are returning to Afghanistan from</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate freedom for women to speak out and no action taken when their freedom of expression is denied.</li> <li>• Absence of training and support to women's organisations to assist development of local and regional networks.</li> <li>• Absence of leadership training for women.</li> </ul>

<p>openly practising their profession.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In January 2002, Hamid Karzai signed "The Declaration of the Essential Rights of Afghan Women" (NB the document does not have any legal force)</li> <li>• In March 2002 celebrations were held in Kabul for International Women's Day. Women issued a plan of action and demands to the Interim Authority and international community to include women in reconstruction.</li> <li>• 80% of a survey of more than 1,000 Afghan men and women living in Afghanistan living under the Taliban agreed that women should be able to move about freely and that the teachings of Islam do not restrict women's human rights.</li> </ul>	<p>exile, they mostly continue to keep a very low profile – there is no confidence that things have changed for good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women and girls are being denied the right to move around freely and to seek out education and work.</li> <li>• Attitudes and behaviour of men towards women developed over years of conflict and condoned and strictly enforced by the Taliban remain ingrained.</li> </ul>	
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### III WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS

*Everybody has complimented the Interim Administration, but now I want to say that I was a teacher – but they won't let me teach the more senior students. They said only men should teach the more senior students. I say, 'why are we having this discrimination again?'*<sup>7</sup>

*Small boys as young as 6 or 7 are treating women like dogs... There's incredible arrogance and lack of respect in boys so young. They refuse to let their mothers speak, and speak for them.*<sup>8</sup>

#### a) Education

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huge enthusiasm for education, repeatedly highlighted in reports and media and sense that women want to be trained in professional skills and English.</li> <li>• For the first time in five years, in Feb 2002 Afghan women took university entrance examinations. 1,000 women took part.</li> <li>• In March 2002 girls began to re-enrol in primary schools. In the Kabul area around 50% of those newly enrolled were girls.</li> <li>• 1.6 million more children are being educated since the fall of the Taliban out of a possible 4.4 million.</li> <li>• Women can now teach in public schools again.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opportunity for primary education is currently about 39% for boys and 3% for girls.</li> <li>• Only about 16% of women over 15 years old are literate.</li> <li>• Education remains extremely under funded. Estimated shortage of teachers is 100,000 and conditions for teaching are exceptionally poor.</li> <li>• The rural-urban divide in terms of education is huge.</li> <li>• Outside cities, there are reports that a majority of men are still very reluctant to allow education of women and are forbidding girls to go to school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of official data on education of women and girls.</li> <li>• International community has not delivered on aid pledges.</li> <li>• Inadequate provision of training and education programmes for women.</li> <li>• Women and girls are often not genuinely free to attend courses and schools.</li> </ul>

#### b) Employment

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women are now officially permitted to work outside the home.</li> <li>• Organisations and facilities for women are beginning to operate openly, including newspapers and magazines (e.g. "Roz") radio stations, (e.g. Radio Voice of Peace), beauty salons etc.</li> <li>• Some humanitarian and reconstruction projects are targeting women, e.g. Women's Bakery Project in Kabul run by the World Food Programme, currently 318 staff, plans to expand to employ 500 more women.<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment opportunities overall are limited, and lack of security and attitudes of male family members mean that many women are still confined to their homes. (NB In the 1970's Afghan women made up 50% of government workers, 70% of schoolteachers and 40% of doctors in Kabul)</li> <li>• Three years of drought have led to widespread food shortages.</li> <li>• Women have suffered huge financial losses as a result of the Taliban-imposed ban on work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of official data relating to women's employment.</li> <li>• Challenges for women's employment include cultural social acceptance.</li> </ul>

**c) Forced marriage and early marriage**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghan women are campaigning on this issue. E.g. The 7-9 June 1000 women conference in Kabul, issued a statement including an appeal that forced marriage of women should be condemned as a criminal offence and that women subjected to forced marriages should be granted the status of victims.<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The conflict in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule and the militarization of society led to an increased number of abductions of young girls and women by Taliban fighters. The exact numbers are unknown, as families have been reluctant to come forward and report cases of abductions for fear of reprisals and due to the social stigma attached to a daughter or sister kidnapped or sold for sex.</li> <li>• Girls continue to be forced/sold into marriage – at least in part to provide sustenance for their families. In February it was reported that girls as young as 10 have been sold as “brides” for a 100kg sack of flour.<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• More than 50% of girls in Afghanistan are married by the age of 15.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of official data.</li> <li>• Need enactment and enforcement of a minimum age for marriage.</li> <li>• Little employment or income so that daughters are families’ only commodities.</li> </ul>

**d) Health**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health projects are central to the reconstruction efforts and are a priority for donors and non-governmental humanitarian organisations.</li> <li>• The UNFPA are carrying out a survey of Afghanistan’s health facilities and resources, particularly related to maternal mortality and morbidity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a critical lack of data on health issues for women that do not relate to reproduction. Psychological trauma, for example, is widespread and related to many other health problems.</li> <li>• There will be \$600,000 less in Afghanistan’s health budget if the US withdraws funding from UNFPA</li> <li>• There are 17 maternal deaths per 1,000 live births in Afghanistan (one every 30 minutes), the second highest rate in the world. 12% of women have access to healthcare while internally displaced women have almost no access to health care.</li> <li>• There is a danger of women coming “last in the line for foreign assistance, as needs like children need seem to be drawing the bulk of public health aid.”<sup>12</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International community not delivering on aid pledges.</li> <li>• Absence of official data relating to women’s health and needs.</li> </ul>

**e) Widowed women**

<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Deficit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretically, widows are now able to work.</li> <li>• The NGO community is beginning to recognise the needs of widows and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data on widows is extremely limited, despite the huge proportion of adult women who fall into this category: of Afghanistan’s population of around 24 million, it is estimated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of data relating to widows.</li> <li>• No developed aid/development action plan for the involvement and incorporation of widows in</li> </ul>

<p>acknowledge the crucial role they could play in reconstruction efforts. Advocacy on this is now underway at the national and international level.</p>	<p>36% are widows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Kabul there are around 40,000 widows.</li> <li>• Lack of a male intermediary in the current climate in Afghanistan affects widows' access to services, shelter, food, health care, counselling, training, extension services, income-generating projects and legal representation.</li> <li>• Girl children of widows are, because of family poverty, less likely to be sent to school and more likely to be found working in high-risk informal sector undertakings. They are more vulnerable to prostitution, trafficking and forced marriage.</li> </ul>	<p>reconstruction.</p>
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## IV THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND AFGHAN WOMEN

*“The donors have responded fairly generously to the crisis in Afghanistan but it's a huge crisis and they need a huge amount of money. But the gap between the pledges and the actual contributions may be quite considerable at this point, possibly because people are waiting to see what will be the political outcome.”<sup>13</sup>*

*There is still a “huge gap between commitment to women’s rights and what is done to make commitment happen.”<sup>14</sup>*

*“Well meaning experts – both Afghan and international – told us that we should not highlight women’s issues, since this would be an unnecessary distraction that would alienate anti-Taliban forces and traditional Afghan leaders whose help we needed in the fight against terrorism.”<sup>15</sup>*

### a) Women, Aid & Transparency

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In January 2002, \$4.5 billion in aid was pledged over 5 years by the international community, including \$1 million through the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). \$2.1 billion of this is from the EU and member states, and includes a commitment to paying “special attention to the inclusion of women in Afghan society at all levels”.</li> <li>• There is some tying of aid to women’s inclusion.</li> <li>• The European Parliament has called for Afghan women to be the direct beneficiaries of between 25% and 30% of the economic aid provided for reconstruction.</li> <li>• Processes are underway to try and create a more consolidated approach to Aid. As of June, UNDP is supporting the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) to take the lead in the tracking and analysis of aid flows.<sup>16</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the \$1.8 billion due in 2002, the UN has received only \$870 million.</li> <li>• By June, the Afghan Interim Administration had received only \$45 million out of the \$460 million pledged to arrive by this time. There is a serious knock-on effect on humanitarian programmes and reconstruction stability.</li> <li>• There is little donor accountability on whether money is being spent on women: the UN channels most money and the vast majority of reporting is not transparent in this respect.</li> <li>• Lack of code of conduct is leading to steep price rises in Kabul as a result of foreign activity, and skewing of the local economy, making it even more difficult for women to make ends meet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of official data.</li> <li>• Non-receipt of money pledged by international community.</li> <li>• Lack of structures for financing of projects to be carried out by non-governmental organisations and civil society in Afghanistan.</li> <li>• Difficulties for local NGOs to receive money or carry out projects.</li> </ul>

### b) Women and decision making

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of women’s role in peace building, post conflict reconstruction and political process is recognised and covered under UN Security Council Resolution 1325.</li> <li>• The UN Secretary General</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGOs and the UN are still not striving for gender balance in planning, implementation and evaluation meetings on reconstruction, development and humanitarian aid.</li> <li>• UN working environments in-country are not gender sensitive –</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor representation of women at senior decision-making levels such as UN management.</li> <li>• No concrete use of UN Security Resolution 1325.</li> <li>• Lack of evidence that any gender mainstreaming is actually being done at UN/NGO level:</li> </ul>



<p>has recommended that temporary special measures be taken, including targets and quotas, targeted at Afghan women to accelerate the <i>de facto</i> equality of women and men in decision making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some acknowledgement that “when women are also at the peace table, better agreements result, reconstruction is more effective and the likelihood of the resumption of violence declines”.<sup>17</sup></li> </ul>	<p>attitudes toward female staff are neither supportive nor equal, and expectations in this regard are usually vague or absent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many UN agencies do not address gender in design, monitoring or evaluation of projects.</li> <li>• The international political commitment to women’s participation has been mainly verbal – legally binding documents such as the Bonn Agreement have very limited concrete commitment to women.</li> <li>• Numerous reports on reconstruction either completely overlook issues around gender or continue to address women’s concerns as part of minority interests</li> <li>• No action has been taken by the UN Security Council to implement Resolution 1325. Without women’s significant engagement Afghan security and stability will remain precarious well into the future.</li> <li>• Representation of women – and particularly women from civil society – in peace negotiations in Afghanistan is virtually non-existent.</li> </ul>	<p>“planning implementation and evaluation meetings are attended primarily by men”.<sup>18</sup></p>
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**c) International organisations leading by example?**

*The issue of women in conflict and post conflict still suffers from “second class citizenship” within our foreign policy establishment ...you still hear that advancement of women’s interests is the “soft side” of foreign policy.... There is nothing “soft” about preventing armed thugs from abusing women in refugee camps, holding warlords and other human rights violators accountable for their actions against women, or insisting that women have a seat at the table in peace negotiations and post-conflict governments.*<sup>19</sup>

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UN Special Rapporteur’s report to the UN Commission on Human Rights on Afghanistan made repeated and explicit reference to women’s rights.<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is inadequate training for (predominately male) international peacekeeping forces on the needs of women.</li> <li>• Women are still not high profile in decision-making positions and are under-represented in international organisations (both governmental and non-governmental). For example, in April 2002, only 1 out of 7 UK FCO staff was a woman; of the 25 DFID staff in the Kabul the 1 woman was a housekeeper.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little of no gender mainstreaming at UN and NGO levels.</li> <li>• Absence of proactive support to bring expatriate or Afghan women into international organisations and lack of incentives for Afghan women (e.g. assistance with housing in Kabul).</li> <li>• Absence of official data relating to integration of women and gender mainstreaming.</li> </ul>

**d) Afghan women and the international media**

Positive	Negative	Deficit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The media has played a very important role in bringing women’s issues onto the agenda, highlighting the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western media interest in Afghanistan’s problems – and particularly the problems of women – has peaked and is now falling off.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of searching questions from the outset on exactly what form support for Afghan women would take</li> </ul>

concerns of “ordinary Afghan women” and mobilising support.	The result is that political attention is waning and the attendant monetary and other investments are moving on.	• Lack of commitment from editors and proprietors to following through with stories about fulfilment of international promises to Afghan women.
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<sup>1</sup> Useful sources: [www.cooperationcenter.org/library](http://www.cooperationcenter.org/library); [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int); [www.afghannews.net](http://www.afghannews.net); [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, “Taking Cover: Women in Post Taliban Afghanistan”, May 2002, and “Afghanistan: Return of the Warlords”, June 2002. [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

<sup>3</sup> Human Rights Watch interview, N.W., Kabul, Afghanistan, March 10, 2002. In Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper “Taking Cover: Women in Post-Taliban Afghanistan, 2 May, 2002. See [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

<sup>4</sup> Senior UN official, quoted in Jan Goodwin, “An Uneasy Peace”, The Nation, 29 April 2002.

<sup>5</sup> For overview of international legal commitments <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/afghan3/afgwrd1001-04.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Smucker, “Christian Science Monitor, 20 June 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Woman quoted in Thomas O. Melia, “Afghan Perspectives on Democracy: A Report on Focus Groups in the Kabul Area On the Eve of the Emergency Loya Jirga”, May 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Wareham, Planning, Strategy and Policy Adviser to Sima Samar, cited in “An Uneasy Peace”, Op. Cit.

<sup>9</sup> UNAMA update 21 May 2002.

<sup>10</sup> NEGAR – Women on the Road to Afghanistan – Conference Report, p5.

<sup>11</sup> International Federation of the Red Cross has found in “Afghan Girls on Sale”, The News International, 10 February 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Amowitz quoted in Carlotta Gall, “In Afghanistan, Where Pregnancy is Still a Minefield”, New York Times, 25 June 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Lom, of the IOM, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk).

<sup>14</sup> Dr Kamal Hossain, UN Special Rapporteur, during a meeting at WOMANKIND Worldwide, 31 May 2002. Also quoted in Beth Bolitho, “New Afghan Leaders Urged to uphold Women’s Rights”, [www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net), 3 June 2002.

<sup>15</sup> US Ambassador Donald Steinberg, “Women in Conflict and Peace”, remarks to Secretary’s Open Forum, 19 June 2002. See [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

<sup>16</sup> Largest donors, EU, Iran, Japan, ADB, WB, US. See <http://aacadad.undp.org/>.

<sup>17</sup> US Ambassador Donald Steinberg, “Women in Conflict and Peace”, Op. Cit.

<sup>18</sup> Oxfam report, cited in Parliamentary Question “Women and Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan” by Joan Ruddock MP to the Department for International Development, 17 April 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Ambassador Donald Steinberg, “Women in Conflict and Peace”, Op. Cit.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/afghanistan/reports.html#women>.

## ***Taking Stock: Afghan Women and Girls Six Months On***

### **WOMANKIND Worldwide, July 2002**

WOMANKIND Worldwide co-ordinates the **Working Group for the Rights of Afghan Women**, a UK inter-agency network, initially set up by Amnesty International, OXFAM and WOMANKIND Worldwide in November, 2001. Its objective is to ensure that the voices of Afghan women are heard and that their rights and needs are systematically addressed in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. The Working Group includes Afghan women, development organisations, human rights organisations and academics and independent consultants.

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