



WOMEN IN THE AFGHAN CIVIL SERVICE: UNDERVALUED & UNDERUSED?

*Ministerial perspectives on women and
employment*

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Ancil Adrian-Paul now works on the Women's Rights and Political Lobby program. She has been responsible for editing the report.

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Executive Summary

Afghanistan has seen over 20 years of conflict. During this period, women have suffered massively – most appallingly during the period of the infamous Taliban regime when women were prohibited from accessing learning, experienced restricted mobility and were prevented from working. The effects of these years have resulted in women whose skills are underused and undervalued, who despite strong paper qualifications and learned resourcefulness are unable to access the higher echelons of power.

The Bonn Agreement obliged the Afghan government to consider the needs of women as a means of contributing to sustainable peace and reconciliation. Following the Bonn Agreement, President Karzai issued a Presidential statement in support and the Ministry of Women's Affairs was established in 2003. *Article 22* of the Afghan Constitution (2004) formalized Afghanistan's commitment to the advancement of women and to gender equality as a whole. Moreover, Afghanistan has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against women (CEDAW) which necessitates an end to gender inequality – a goal echoed by the seminal United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

The issue of gender and specifically women is also clearly addressed in the National Development Framework (NDF) where it highlights gender as a critical issue and clearly states that specific programs must be developed for women and girls – programs that enhance their capabilities – programs that integrally consider the needs of women and girls and that do not include it as an after thought. Gender is also a priority in the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) that is currently being finalized.

Additionally, the NDF highlights the role of women in the Afghan Civil Service – referring to the key role that women must play in rebuilding the civil service. It states *the total exclusion of women for the past several years also means that the concerns of women are less likely to be promoted or protected [thus] the presence of women in the civil service, at all levels – including the top – will be a critical influence in making progress towards the international human rights standards to which we have made a commitment.*¹

In order to make this commitment a practical and concrete reality – the Afghan government needs to develop policies and programs that specifically include women. The government needs a strategy that allows for the effective recruitment, training and retention of women in jobs that allow them to develop and expand their talents and skills and that allows for promotion – in line with their male counterparts. Thus, while the Bonn Agreement obliges the Afghan government to establish a transformed and modernized regime with an independent civil service commission, the reforms must be conducted with sensitivity and care for women and their employment needs. It should not negatively impact on women, many of whom have had schooling to 12th Class or less.

This research paper was commissioned to ascertain how ministries view women in the civil service and to raise awareness of the effects of the current reform of the civil service

¹ National Development Framework, pg.11

on women. Among the recommendations made by this research paper is that the Afghan government demonstrate that gender is a priority by ensuring that:

- The Independent Administration Reform and Civil service Commission (IARCSC) include women in all its departments – Appointment and Appeals, Civil Service Management Department and the Administrative Reform Department.
- All Ministries should allocate at least 30 percent of their forthcoming budget for the recruitment, training and retention of female staff
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs discharge its responsibility by ensuring that female staff members being considered for redundancy, are offered a support package including further training, help in finding a suitable job in the civil service and that if retrenched, these women will receive 6 months or more of severance pay.

The paper will be disseminated to all ministries as well as to donors, non-governmental organizations and to other relevant actors.

Gender Mainstreaming

Box 1 – Definitions

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.

United Nations Economic and Social Council - July 1977

Gender mainstreaming – How it works

Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

Mainstreaming is not about adding a *woman's component* or even a *gender equality component* into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation - it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda. It may entail identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes.

The goal of mainstreaming gender equality is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and

women.

Basic Principles of Gender Mainstreaming

- ❖ Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide and rests at the highest levels within government agencies.
 - ❖ Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.
 - ❖ The initial identification of issues and problems across all area(s) of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed.
 - ❖ Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made.
 - ❖ Gender analysis should always be conducted before developing and implementing programs.
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Gender Mainstreaming project – An Introduction *German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)*

GTZ - Gender Mainstreaming project was established after extensive consultation between the Afghan and German Governments. Its key purpose is to help ensure that women's needs and concerns are taken into account in all areas of Government – including policies, budgets and programs. A crucial area of our concern is female staff in ministries, who represent a largely untapped resource, that struggle on largely unnoticed, and that are often unappreciated both at work and at home. Without their active participation in Government, the needs of women - half of the population cannot be adequately addressed.

We are therefore, very happy to support the research and ensuing report - initiated and undertaken by medica mondiale. We are also very happy that the Ministries gave it their full support, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs. All Ministries claimed to support female staff. It is interesting to see the omissions as well as the inclusions: few if any senior Government officials interviewed refer to the restructuring process currently taking place, several informants left out crucial information regarding programs. No informants referred to the Gender Focal points in their Ministries. GTZ hopes, that as a result of this research, Ministries will take into consideration more their work place environments and undertake specific planning in order to make them more *women friendly*.²

² . International Labour Organisation. Pg.1

About medica mondiale – Afghanistan

medica mondiale, is an international non-governmental organization working on the medical, psychosocial and legal aspects of violence against women in Afghanistan since 2002. medica has 5 components to its work that provides direct services including training to women at risk and those that are traumatized. We have a legal aid department, a qualified personnel program, support to women and girls at risk in shelters, a doctors assistance program to Afghan hospitals, and a women’s rights and lobby program. These components and the services that are provided are further elaborated in the table below:

Table 1 – Services provided by medica mondiale in Afghanistan

1. Legal Aid Fund Department (Kabul, Herat and Kandahar)	Training to defense lawyers; legal assessment and representation of women, mediation for women released from prisons and follow-up for such women and girls
2. Qualification Project (Kabul – Herat)	Counseling to traumatized women in individual as well as group sessions, counseling to women and girls in prisons, target districts and in the women’s garden. Capacity-building to psychologists, other social workers and health professionals on trauma work and how to utilize a trauma and gender sensitive approach
3. Support to shelters housing women and girls at risk (Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat and Kabul)	Capacity-building of representatives of key institutions that provide direct services to women and girls at risk (Ministry of Women Affairs – MOWA, DOWA), the police, community and grassroots structures among others.
4. Doctorane Omid (Kabul, Herat)	German exiled Afghan doctors provide a service to medical personnel in Afghan hospitals using a gender based and trauma sensitive approach. Doctors spend between 1-3 months in selected hospitals
5. Women’s Rights and Lobby Program	Cross-cuts all other components identifying and highlighting issues emerging from medica’s other projects. Raises awareness on key issues relating to violence against women through qualitative and quantitative research, advocacy and lobbying and the provision of training on international human rights legislation for the protection of women and girls to selected government structures, district and community structures (including mullahs) family structures and local NGOs when requested.

Research justification

medica mondiale is concerned with women's rights. In all its programs in Afghanistan – whether legal, psycho-social or advocacy related, female clients stress how important work and income is to them and their families. Therefore in late 2004 when medica was informed that the Afghan government - the major employer of women (it employs at least 38,000 women country wide) was being restructured and reorganized, medica was concerned. Many of the most educated women are quickly snapped up by the international organizations and the United Nations (UN) but there are still many women who choose to - or whose families' demand that they stay in Government service.

medica mondiale decided to investigate to find out what kind of employment these women have, to see how Ministries support them and to evaluate what the Government has been able to do - not just for its staff - but also for its clients. Without well qualified, supported and motivated female staff, what are the chances of government services that effectively serve women? Afghanistan is after all, a country where, due to culture most women cannot be seen by a male doctor, many women are not allowed to work with men and where girls and boys are largely taught separately.

Research methodology

medica mondiale decided that, rather than conduct secondary desk research and analysis of available texts in English conducted by the World Bank, UN agencies or international NGOs, it would be more effective to directly interview those responsible for these Ministries. Would the respondents be able to talk to medica mondiale about the ministerial restructuring and what it really means for women? Could they outline the policies and priorities outlined by the Afghan National Development Strategy website?

The methodology employed included bi-lateral interviews with 15 Ministers, their Deputies, Heads of Departments or their designated spokespersons. The research is a representative sampling of all Ministries in Afghanistan. Three of the Ministries were unable to respond in a face to face meeting but sent us information by letter.

A questionnaire was developed with questions on policy, programs, staffing, and number of women in high level decision making positions and on training for female staff. During a period of four months - from April to July 2005 – medica mondiale's local coordinator (Women's Rights and Political Lobby program), spent hours in discussion with these Government representatives. After elaborating the context of the questions, the interviewer elicited from the respondents, the information required in the questionnaire. It is hoped that through this methodology, medica mondiale's interviewer was able to engender some reflection on the impact of reforms and policy development - including Priority Reform and Restructuring ((PRR) set up to reform the Afghan Civil Service, the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) that will encompass government policies and priorities on women and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that will outline for the World Bank a survey of actions to ensure pro-poor growth.

A draft report was developed and was then discussed with key informants from the Ministries and from the Civil Service Commission.

Our findings indicate that most Ministers or their representatives do not have easily available data regarding the recruitment, training and retention of female staff and that their analysis is brief. The exceptions to this are the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism - all of which provided detailed gender disaggregated statistics.

Most Ministries highlighted the problems they face in recruiting and retaining female staff. These difficulties include - low salary levels and incomplete education for a variety of reasons - others centre on women's lack of confidence in the workplace - due to years spent at home during the Taliban era.

According to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, just under 25% of Government employees country wide are female (38,735) compared to 180,565 males. Women are employed as advisors, deputies and heads of department. There are three female ministers and one female Governor. While men are in Ministerial and other decision-making positions and are enabled to access promotion, women in decision making positions are still less than men and still encounter difficulties in accessing promotion. Among state employees for example, most women are in the medical, educational and legal professions. Interviews resulted in statements of aspiration such as - *we would like to have a female advisor*- but there were very few clear indications that any planning has been done to ensure that these aspirations become reality.

Additional details on the research are provided in the body of the report but one clear recommendation emerging from the research is that there is a need for much more solid planning to ensure that females attain both positions and promotion inside the Afghan Civil Service.

Research findings

1. Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

“To increase and build their capacity, women can easily participate in meetings, conferences and some professional and vocational training both inside and outside the country”.

Policy: To promote additional participation for women in social, political, cultural and other fields. The MoA subscribes to the policy of appointing everyone to the job he or she deserves.

Existing programs: To improve women's abilities and increase their professional capacity, the MoA provides for them computer, English and other professional courses, according to the needs of different departments. For example in the agricultural department, courses would include agricultural research, caring for plants, forests, cooperatives, veterinary and other courses. The MoA has professional, experienced and

knowledgeable trainers and consultants – some of which are provided by local NGOs. Currently, the MoA has no female consultants.

Staff: The number of the female employees of the central departments of the Ministry totals 251 people including normal and professional staff and servants.

Women in decision-making positions: Currently there are none.

Training for female staff: Women participate in meetings, workshops and conferences internally and outside of Afghanistan to increase and build their capacity. Some professional and vocational training is also provided.

Other comments: Based on the new Constitution, an association has been created within the Ministry which appoints women to available vacancies according to their abilities, choices and professions. During the process of the association, the first level of employees chosen are women.

Source: Information received by letter. **Hobidullah Ramin Minster**

2. Ministry of Economy (MoE)

“There are no differences between men and women workers. Particularly in the MoE, women work the same as men do and they have equal salaries. If we are talking about the violence against women and [their] rights - women’s rights have been violated. Women have suffered a lot...and so have men.”

Policy: The MoE - composed of the Ministries of Planning and Reconstruction and the Census Department - develops general economic policy for the Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For example, the Development Budget. They have no specific policy for women, but at ministerial level, they have tried to initiate equal rights for women. The Ministry’s role is as a general policy maker - not an implementer. They say *what we can do is to draft a good plan for the improvement of women’s life [lives] and have others implement it.*

Existing programs: The main activities are the national census; developing the legal framework for NGOs – including registration and evaluation and policy development relating to the economy, agriculture, education and other social affairs. During the past six months the Ministry has drafted general strategies, but there is no particular plan for women as *the strategies belong to all the people of Afghanistan, and if they are implemented properly all men and women will benefit from them.* This ministry is seeking a female advisor and says that *we cannot immediately promote women to directorship or chairmanship of the ministry because of the recent fighting years and the fact that women were kept away from education which led to loss of working confidence and as a result, today we have very few women who can work in higher positions.*

Staff: No data provided

Women in decision making positions: There is no discrimination on government level. We give priority to women and if there are two candidates, one male, one female, then we give priority to the female. Women themselves should find their place in society and should try and upgrade their knowledge and build confidence. We have examples of ladies who were very talented and intelligent as students but as soon as they start working they cannot find a good position for themselves. It is a confidence and courage problem. Another reason for this is that society exerts a lot of social and mental pressures on women.

Training for female staff: Training consists of courses in computer, English and management and there are some seminars and scholarships provided. However, as the MoE is a general policy maker, it has difficulties to implement these training programs.

Other comments: The main problem for women is the lack of education and the lack of legal awareness. The MoE is thus considering creating jobs in the provinces for Kuchi women - including literacy courses and training centers for midwives - according to regional requirements.

Source: Deputy Minister of Economy – **Pr.Nazeer Ahamad Shaiedi**

3. Ministry of Education (MoEd)

“Increasing the enrolment of girls is one of the Ministries priorities. It prioritizes the creation of security, establishment of schools for girls and the training of female teachers”

Policy: The MoEd provides a balanced development of education and fair distribution of educational facilities all over the country without any tribal, religious or language discriminations. It seeks to increase the rate of girls attending schools. Education policy is based on the Constitution and draws on Afghan and international expertise. The MoEd prioritizes increased enrolment of girls in collaboration with UNICEF. They will establish schools for girls where needed and also train female teachers.

Existing programs: Coordination of educational programs with strong monitoring and evaluation and strengthening of policy making and planning. The Ministry seeks to increase parent and community involvement in education and in the construction of and equipping of schools. They also focus on the printing and distribution of schools books.

Staff: Statistics from 2004 imply that there were 88,802 male teachers in general education and 34,108 females – a total of 122, 910. Figures are not yet available for 2005.

Women in decision making positions: No information provided

Training for female staff: The MoEd intends to train female teachers but provides no other information.

Other comments: The MoEd will provide awareness training about drugs and terrorism, to students. They also intend to construct private schools.

Source: Ms Ajmal Fahiz- Head, Education Department, Ministry of Education

4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)

“The Minister is a strong advocate of women’s rights. He personally established the position of Director of Women’s Affairs with a mandate to work on women’s issues at the country level and to look at the position of women in the ministry. He has prioritized the issue of women’s involvement within the Ministry.”

Policy: The MoFA has no written policy – but the female director of the Women’s Affairs department works to build the capacity of female staff and to increase the number of women diplomats. The Women’s Affairs department has assessed the situation regarding sexual harassment and exploitation – and reports a fairly favorable environment but says that *sexism interferes with the work of the Ministry*. For example, as a result, separate toilets were established for women and men, but during a period when the head of the Department of Women’s Affairs was absent, women’s toilets were closed and had to be reopened upon her return.

Existing programs: The MoFA works with and for Afghan women in the diaspora - including those with family problems, those that are trafficked and those that are held in prisons and detention centers. The Director of Women’s Affairs trains ambassadors in such issues and also responds to requests and enquiries from the international community regarding women and women’s rights.

Staff: MoFA has a total of 700-1000 staff working in embassies, consulates and missions worldwide. There are 40 women employed at the mid and low levels.

Women in decision making positions: There were two women in high level decision-making positions but one recently left to join the Loya Jirga and Electoral Commission. There is currently 1 female director (Women’s Affairs) and 6 women secretaries in missions (Brussels, Geneva and Tehran). The first female Afghan Ambassador has recently been appointed to work in Bulgaria. The MoFA seeks to recruit a female economic advisor to the minister who says *“we cannot afford women who make mistakes”*.

Training for female staff: There are no specific capacity building programs within the Ministry. Instead, efforts are being made to recruit women from outside.

<p>The Ministry hasn’t changed much in the last three years. There are a few new women in the Ministry but current female staff appears to remain in the same jobs without advancing.</p>

Other comments: There are no specific written policies in regard to women, no apparent efforts to institutionalize pro-women's rights policies, and no specific programs for building the capacity of female staff members or advancing them up the ladder. This is believed to be partly due to women's own lack of initiative (killed by the Taliban), family responsibilities and traditional travel restrictions. There are also high levels of sexist hostility and sabotage of women's work on a daily basis – including to the Director herself.

Source: Dr Zohra Rasekh - Director, Office of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5. Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MoICT)

``I believe in positive and effective discrimination in society, particularly as women have suffered a lot in the past and should be compensated.``

Policy: Priority employment and promotion of females. The Ministry believes in positive and effective discrimination in society. Women should be given opportunities to improve themselves to compensate them for past suffering.

Existing programs: None currently in place

Staff: MoICT was the only Ministry aside from the Ministry of Education that provided a full list of employee data segregated by sex and position. There are 21 male heads of departments and 2 female heads; 142 male heads of offices and 22 female heads of offices; 347 male officials and 147 female officials; 117 male workers and 47 female workers including typists, cooks, tailors, painters and others.

Women in decision making positions: This is the first Ministry to appoint a female Deputy Minister, and was the first Ministry in the history of Afghanistan to appoint two female deputies. Female heads of departments include those of the Department for Afghan Advertisement and the International Press Center. The Ministry indicates that it would accept female advisors if they are competent and have held prior positions as Heads of Departments.

The Ministry has sought female heads for other departments including for Radio and TV, National Gallery and Archaeology but could not find eligible women in Afghanistan. It is possible to employ Afghans from the diaspora in these positions but they require too high salaries.

Training for female staff: Women are prioritized to attend English and computer courses. Women are offered medium and long term scholarships abroad but are unable to accept them - as often – women will not receive permission to travel alone abroad. As a result, the MoICT has tried to organize training for women inside the Ministry. The Ministry expressed a desire to encourage training for women in media and journalism and as TV and radio presenters.

Other comments: The Ministry recommended that men

should be trained so that they can accept women's rights.

Source: His Excellency, Mr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen - Minister, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism

6. Ministry of Interior (Mol)

“The Constitution guarantees equal rights, so in the Mol women benefit from the same rights and privileges as men.”

Policy: The Constitution of Afghanistan guarantees equal rights for men and women, thus, in the Mol, employment is based on *professionalism, specialization and equal rights of employment for male and female.*

Existing programs: None recorded

Staff: The Mol employs more than 700 females including junior officials. Of these policewomen make up between 160-180. There is also one Governor. There are also female police within police districts, at the police academy, the airport and other security departments as well as in the police hospital. However, it should be noted that most policewomen work in the Mol, rather than in the Afghan National Police (ANP). There are 400 female staff working in the tailoring department of the Mol. One female international gender advisor on policing issues has been provided by Canada and sits within the Mol.

Women in decision-making positions: There are two Generals (General Aziza and General Sharifa). Bamyán is the only province with a female Governor and General Aziza is also the Deputy Head of the Human Rights' Department.

Training for female staff: Women are trained and appointed as counter narcotics police. Other training includes courses on tailoring, vocational training, administration and literacy. Women are given priority to seek education in police training centers in order to gain admission to the Police Academy. The Norwegian and German police mentors also provide an In-Service course for all policewomen. The Afghan National Police Academy, Kabul, provides basic training for all professional police – including women.

Other comments: Women have been given seats in all National Police Educational Centers and a public campaign is planned to encourage women to join the Police Force and to play a part in ensuring security in the country.

Source: General Aziza Nazeri – Deputy, Human Rights Department and Mr Mashal-Spokesperson, Ministry of Interior

7. Ministry of Justice: MoJ

“Women are actually limited to a presence in social and cultural activities, and these things are decided by department heads rather than by rules and policies from above.”

Policy: The MoJ’s general policy is to encourage women and try to upgrade their knowledge and skills. However, implementation is slow and the work of department heads is not evident as the policies given are not fully implemented.

Existing programs: On average 200-400 females are incarcerated in prisons countrywide with the majority imprisoned in Herat and Kabul. Literacy courses and other trainings for them take place on a sporadic basis, but more training - including literacy - is planned in cooperation with the Industrial Department. It is interesting to note that kindergartens are also planned for the children of inmates. *“This department is planning to allot a good percentage of employment to ladies, so that after finishing their education, they can join the department and work as employees and guards in the prisons of the center and provinces”*.

Staff: The MoJ has 599 staff - including 111 women - of which 72 are officials and 39 sub-officials. Of the 499 male staff, 209 are officials and 79 are sub-officials. Prison staff is not included in this figure. Statistics for prison staff includes 15 female staff in Kabul – out of a total of 104 women working in offices of the Prison department – including in the central and provincial prison administration.

Women in decision making positions: The majority of women are employed in lower level positions. There is one woman Head of Department, one woman Deputy Head of department and 15 women professionals with the rank 3. One woman is employed as head of a sub-department.

Training of female staff: Female prison staff in Kabul have received legal education and awareness training from medica mondiale’s legal project for over 2 years. Twenty-seven (27) female employees have participated in workshops and seminars conducted by medica and partners - including in courses run by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and other NGOs. The Department of prisons aspires to provide scholarships to female employees.

Other comments: The Minister inaugurated the female staff association on 21 June 2005. It is a registered association and covers all female staff in the Ministry. The Ministry is trying to register all its female workers in Afghanistan as a first step towards defending their rights and coordinating their activities.

Source: His Excellency, *Professor Sarwar Danish – Minister, Ministry of Justice; Anisa - Head, Women’s Council and Major General Bakshi - Head, Department of Prisons, Ministry of Justice.*

8. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA)

“Courses are in place to upgrade female kindergarten staff in Kabul, Kandahar, Nangahar, Herat and Balkh. Eight (8) women from Kabul attended a course organized by the International Labour Organisation in Italy on trade and handicrafts and six (6) women from the kindergarten department attended management trainings in Sri Lanka, Sweden and Switzerland”.

Policy: The Ministry has a specific policy for women. It considers gender issues as the basis on which other policies related to improving women’s economic status are made.

Existing programs: The legal framework for the work environment including for civil servants, skills training for demobilized soldiers and uneducated youths, market surveys, employment services, social security and pensions for retrenched civil servants, support to vulnerable and poor women, kindergartens and orphanages and counter-trafficking of drugs and children activities. A national program is planned to include 20,000 females trained for work and 1,000 work places for women in traditional fields and 6,500 women trained for small scale production. There are 7,316 girls in kindergarten and 1,384 girls in orphanages. There are also 617 women plus 137 female returnees employed.

Staff: The Ministry employs 228 female staff.

Women in decision making positions: Three women are in senior posts – as Deputy Minister of Social Affairs, Head of the Department of Kindergartens and Head - Department of Orphanages.

Training for female staff: Courses are in place to upgrade the skills of female kindergarten staff in Kabul, Kandahar, Nangahar, Herat and Balkh. Eight (8) women from Kabul attended a course organized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Italy, on trade and handicrafts and six (6) women from the kindergarten department attended management trainings in Sri Lanka, Sweden and Switzerland.

Source: Mr. Mohammad Ghaus Bashiri - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

9. Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)

“Women in Afghanistan have a large number of health problems which require serious attention. Therefore the Ministry has prioritized these issues.”

Policy: The MoPH’s policy is rights based and focused on the access to health, the right to live and the right to choice about timing and spacing of pregnancies. The MoPH’s priority is to reduce maternal and child mortality rates, through safe delivery, family planning and training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) for rural areas. The MoPH seeks to raise women’s awareness about their rights to make choices about motherhood

frequency and spacing. MoPH also tries to coordinate donor support for the health sector.

Existing Programs: MoPH provides training to midwives. To date, 180 individuals have been trained in intensive maternity care and 60 women in the prevention of infectious diseases as well the provision of standard care guidance during and after delivery. MoPH has intensive maternity care centers and 26 basic maternity health care centers.

Staff: Of the MoPH's staff - approximately 20 percent of all doctors and over 80 percent of nurses are female.

Women in decision making positions: These include the Deputy Minister of Health, the Directors of Hospitals in Kabul, Ghazni, Herat and other provinces.

Training for female staff: Courses include management, administration, vocational, computer and English.

Other Comments: A staff association for female staff exists within the Ministry.

Source: Dr Nadera Hayat - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public Health

10. Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pilgrimage (Hajj)

“Through its employees and through mosques we very often talk about men and women’s rights and duties and particularly encourage the discontinuation of violations against women, such as forced marriages.”

Policy: Based on Islamic Sharia and Human Rights Declarations.

Existing Programs: None recorded

Staff: Males are employed as priests, mosque workers, staff in mosques, religious schools and other religious organizations. The majority of staff are religious scholars or orators. There are 72 women working in the Ministry in Kabul. There are plans to hire women to work in the educational departments, particularly for education of children in the provinces.

Women in decision making positions: As deputies and heads of departments in Kabul. An Advisor has recently been appointed to the Minister (Ms Rohafza).

Training for female staff: Short term religious education through the mosques department. Women are permitted to go on the Hajj to Saudi Arabia.

Other comments: Wishes to investigate further the situation of women throughout the country. There has been some major improvement in women’s situations in the Ministry

since last year. This year women have been allowed to attend workshops and conferences.

Source: Mr. Sayed Jawed Qadri - Head, Office of the Minister, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pilgrimage

11. Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, (MRRD)

“Women actively participate in the MRRD policies. Most of this participation is through national solidarity program, participation in the local and tribal councils and through programs for women according to their needs. They share their efforts with their brothers to rebuild the destroyed villages of their country”.

Policy: The policy of the MRRD is to control and evaluate the project to see if it goes according to the plan. The MRRD makes all policies according to the needs of the people living in the rural areas. We prefer to identify the priorities then engage in a preliminary technical survey, accounting and budgeting before contracting the voluntary private sectors. Regarding women, according to the new constitution, we try to provide a better climate for women to grow and have as good condition as is possible. We actively implement gender programs within the Ministry.

Existing programs: MRRD respects women’s rights and tries to implement this culture in the Ministry. Vocational training for women such as management, English language, computer, professional trainings and a gender program are in place. Women are also offered scholarships abroad to develop their abilities. MRRD also tries to inform women about their rights and responsibilities.

Staff: Forty percent (40) of the MRRD’s staff are women.

Women in decision-making positions: Within the MRRD, women are working as general Managers, Managers, and chiefs of departments as well as ordinary employees. Mrs. Humaira Nasserri acts as an Advisor to the Minister. The Gender Advisor, Mrs. Safia Sediqi has recently joined the Parliament. Ms Noorziha is head of the Women’s Council.

Training for female staff: To increase the abilities and capacity building for women the Ministry implements computer, English language, management and other courses related to the requirements of different departments, providing scholarships for women to go abroad and organizes seminars and training workshops according to the needs expressed.

Other comments: Women actively participate in the MRRD policies. Most of this participation is through national solidarity program, participation in the local and tribal councils and through those that choose the programs for the women according to their needs. They share their efforts with their brothers to rebuild the destroyed villages of their country.

Source: His Excellency, Haneef Atmar – Minister, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

12. Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT)

“The reason women cannot make progress is their own problem because capacity building in women is very low. Although there are facilities for them, they don’t try to make good use of them and promote themselves”.

Policy: To take serious steps to promote women. No specific policies exist for women but the MoT always consider the role of women in the ministry and tries to eliminate discrimination. As a practical example of this policy, the MoT is providing a day care center for its female employees.

Existing Programs:

Staff: There are 341 female employees in the MoT working side by side with men in the technical and administrative services.

Women in decision making positions: The MoT is seeking women to be appointed to advisor and other senior positions including in technical areas, but have so far been unsuccessful in finding any. However, UNDP provides support through a woman counselor based within the Ministry.

Training for female staff: There are seven different courses for women - English and computer courses (each with 60 staff), management and literacy among others.

Other comments: The MoT has set up a women’s council to address women’s problems at work and to defend their rights.

Source: Mr. Abdul Hadi Hadi – Chief of Staff and Director of Documentation & Liaison Department, Ministry of Telecommunications

13. Ministry of Tribal and Frontiers Affairs (MoTFA)

“Women have prominent humanitarian rights as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives. According to the new Afghan Constitution, women have social, economic, political and cultural rights and should benefit from all of these.”

Policy: The policy is based on the Constitution - to respect women and ensure equal rights between men and women. Women have social, economic, political and cultural rights.

Existing Programs: The MoTFA works to promote tribal unity and prevent narcotics trafficking. It also focuses on the provision of employment to nomadic (Kuchi) women in the provinces.

Staff: MoTFA has 1,626 employees country-wide - including 579 male employees and 75 female employees in Kabul.

Women in decision making positions: None currently in place but the MoTFA will appoint an advisor on women's issues in the imminent future. However, they do have a Women's Council.

Training for female staff: English and computer courses. Female staff attend courses and seminars at the MoWA and the AIHRC.

Other comments: MoTFA's future plans focus on Kuchis in the provinces. MoTFA intends to provide literacy courses, establish midwife training centers, provide child education and economic development projects for border areas including for women.

Source: *Mr. Omar Babrakzai - Head, Administrative Department; and Ms Rahima - Head, Women's Section, Ministry of tribal and Frontiers Affairs`.*

14. Ministry of Vocational and Higher Education (MoVHE)

``The Government should start a positive discrimination policy and should introduce women's rights to the public, and announce that in another two year's time they will recruit staff on the basis of 50 percent of each sex.``

Policy: No specific policy on women's issues but the MoVHE considers the active role and participation of women in departments. The MoVHE desires to have 50% men and 50% women staff in two year's time to have a higher percentage of women in decision making positions. As a practical example of its policy, the MoVHE provides child care services for its employees.

Existing programs: Reconstruction of a girls' hostel for Kabul females and program of affirmative action to admit 6,000 girls with low grades to university. Women have priority for scholarship and fellowship programs in the Ministry but access to training abroad is limited, as strict families do not usually allow their daughters to travel unaccompanied.

Staff: There are 297 employees in Kabul - 68 male and 229 female.

Women in decision making positions: Most women are not working in higher positions despite large numbers of female staff. Higher positions occupied by women

include: Deputy Minister, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages, Rector of Alberoni University, Rector of Baghlan University. Dr Maliha Zulfiqar was formerly first deputy Minister of Vocational and Higher Education within the ministry but she has recently left.

Training for female staff: Capacity building programs for women to enable them to take up higher positions. Training courses for women include computer and English courses as well as seminars on law, health and other issues.

Other comments: A women's staff association has been created and a kindergarten established to provide crèche facilities for working mothers. Despite different initiatives and programs for women, due to the structure of Afghan culture (rule of man), women cannot promote themselves and obtain their rights. *As much as the government or the international community discuss this issue – they cannot change women's situation – and thus- this will remain a very symbolic and political issue.*

Source: Dr. Mosavi – Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of Vocational and Higher Education

15. Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)

“Although the changes (in terms of numbers of women in Government) are encouraging this is not means enough or the final change. We look forward to half of all Government employees being female”.

Policy: Gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's rights. The Ministry has specific policies on women's rights, the eradication of illiteracy, poverty reduction, health services for women and women's political, economic and cultural participation. Policy is based on the new Afghan Constitution, Islamic tenets and international treaty obligations including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Existing programs: These are focused on legal reform – especially with regard to the elimination of violence against women, gender mainstreaming within other Ministries and awareness raising on women's rights for other ministries.

Staff: The MoWA has a total of 619 staff across Afghanistan with 231 staff in Kabul and a total of 388 staff in the remaining provinces. The MoWA currently has one advisor to the Minister (Professor Abdulrasaq Atmar) and plans to recruit two more in the near future. The ministry also has a number of non Afghan gender advisors including from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and GTZ. There are no Afghan gender advisers.

Women in decision making positions: There are two female deputy Ministers – within the government - Mrs Mazari Safa Deputy, Policy and Professional; and Mrs Maliha Sahaq, Finance and Administration. There are also directors of departments and heads of sections.

Training for female staff: Focus on female staff within the MoWA and for female staff from other ministries. Training includes workshops, seminars and conferences, awareness raising through brochures and other literature and the provision of short and long term international scholarships. A number of donors – including several United Nations agencies and JICA.

Source: Her Excellency, Dr Masuda Jalal – Minister, Ministry of Women’s Affairs and Mr Jayedi - Head, Office of the Minister, Ministry of Women’s Affairs.

Conclusion and suggestions

The research with the Ministers, Deputies, Heads of Department and/or Spokespersons of the 15 ministries has revealed that many of them are aware of the need to prioritize gender. However, to a large extent, it remains theory in practice and largely aspirational. Few of the answers given mentioned the gender advisors in place in some Ministries and it was only when pressed that this information was forthcoming. Additionally, many of the comments centered on the lack of skilled women who could be employed although some answers extended this to link it with the prohibitions against women during the Taliban and to highlight that the Afghan culture is male dominated. medica mondiale would like to make a number of suggestions and recommendations focusing on prioritizing the needs of women in the Afghan civil service in order to recruit, train, promote and retain female staff. These recommendations focus primarily on policy and training.

Recommendations

General Policy

President Karzai

The President should edit a Decree to all Ministers requiring them to demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and practically implement this in their Ministries and departments across Afghanistan – in keeping with the Afghan Constitution, the ANDS the NDF and other relevant commitments. He should ensure that MoWA is able to perform its functions through the Cabinet approval of a Decree on its role in mainstreaming.

Parliament

Should allocate an adequate budget for the implementation of gender activities nationally.

The Independent Administrative Reform and Civil service Commission (IARCSC)

The IARCSC – established in June 2003 – should include women in all its departments (Appointments and Appeals, Civil Service Management and the Administrative reform Departments). It should ensure that 340 000 civilians employed in government – at least 30 percent are women.

The Appointment and Appeals section of the IARCSC should also include women in order to cater to the needs of women who make complaints.

Specific to Ministries**All Ministries**

All Ministries should conduct a needs assessment and must develop a clear written policy and implementation plan for the recruitment, training and promotion of qualified female staff.

All Ministries should allocate at least 30 percent of their budget for recruitment, training, promotion and retention of female staff.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

The MoLSA should ensure that women being considered for redundancy, are offered a fair support package that would include further training, help in finding a replacement civil service job and that if retrenched, these women will receive 6 months or more severance pay.

Ministry of Women's Affairs

This Ministry has been set up to ensure gender equality. The Ministry should lead the way by developing a gender equality policy and implement it. The MoWA should also monitor the implementation of gender equality policies and action plans of other ministries.

Ministry of Finance

It has been difficult to access reliable data of employees in the civil service disaggregated by gender. The MoF should continue to computerize and record monthly salary payments and disaggregate these into male and female in order to provide a reliable breakdown of male and female employed in the civil service.

Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)

The percentage of female students enrolled in universities is very low. For example in Kabul University, female students constituted 20 percent of total enrolment in 2004. It is imperative that more female students are admitted to the law, Engineering and Economic faculties as a step towards ensuring gender equality and a sufficient pool of qualified women.

Ministry of Interior (Mol)

Family Intervention Units such as that established in District 10 should be replicated in other provinces. This would provide employment for more policewomen.

Training

Ministry of Interior (Mol)

The Mol is responsible for the police. Many highly qualified policewomen serve tea in the Mol. These policewomen should be employed in formal police duties and should receive training to upgrade their skills. For example, they could be trained in counter-trafficking techniques, intelligence and criminal investigation. They should also receive training on how to deal with family violence. Current efforts to increase numbers of female police have floundered and creative wide reaching strategies need to be developed to improve this.

All Ministries should establish training programs for female staff that upgrade their current qualifications and skills. Such training – while including computer and English classes – must go beyond that to management skills and enhanced capacity. Such training as provided by GTZ-GM should be fully supported.

All Ministries should collaborate with other agencies – both national and international – to provide human rights training awareness training to both men and women.

All Ministries should initiate a program of collaboration with schools and universities that focuses on selecting promising candidates for employment while they are still in high school and /or at university for further training in skills that are needed but currently lacking.

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1. *Information received by letter - Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)*

2. *Deputy Minister – Ministry of Economy (MoE)*
3. *Ms Ajmal Fahiz- Head, Education Department – Ministry of Education (MoEd)*
4. *Dr Zohra Rasekh - Director, Office of Women’s Affairs - Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)*
5. *His Excellency, Mr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen – Minister- Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MoICT)*
6. *General Aziza Nazeri – Deputy, Human Rights Department, and Mr Mashal-Spokesperson, Mol - Ministry of Interior (Mol)*
7. *His Excellency, Professor Sarwar Danish – Minister, Ministry of Justice; Anisa - Head, Women’s Council, MoJ; and Major General Bakshi - Head, Department of Prisons - Ministry of Justice: MoJ*
8. *Mr. Mohammad Ghaus Bashiri - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs*
9. *Dr Nadera Hayat - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Public Health - Ministry of Public Health (MoPH)*
10. *Mr. Sayed Jawed Qadri - Head, Office of the Minister - Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pilgrimage (Hajj)*
11. *His Excellency, Haneef Atmar – Minister, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development - Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, (MRRD)*
12. *Mr. Abdul Hadi Hadi – Chief of Staff and Director of Documentation & Liaison Department - Ministry of Telecommunications (MoT)*
13. *Mr. Omar Babrakzai - Head, Administrative Department; and Ms Rahima - Head, Women’s Section -. Ministry of Tribal and Frontiers Affairs (MoTFA)*
14. *Dr. Mosavi – Adviser to the Minister - Ministry of Vocational and Higher Education (MoVHE)*
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