



Looking for Leadership

Women's empowerment and Canada's new role in Afghanistan



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A report by CARE Canada
prepared by Jennifer Rowell and edited by Kieran Green

Design and layout by
Kieran Green and Morgan Gray

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**I am a believer in women, in their ability to do things
and in their influence and power. Women set the
standards for the world, and it is for us, women in
Canada, to set the standards high.**

*Nellie McClung (1873-1951), 1910
Early Canadian feminist and member of the 'Famous Five'*

A Call to Canada

In less than one year's time Canada will withdraw its military forces from Afghanistan, ending its almost nine-year security mission. But Canada's role in Afghanistan long predates its military presence. Years before the fall of the Taliban, Canada was funding development to fight the crushing poverty that has resulted from years of conflict. The people of Afghanistan still need Canada, and Canada has an obligation to see through its commitments.

The questions, then, are these: What are the greatest non-military needs in Afghanistan today? Which of these needs is Canada, with its experience and resources, best equipped to address? CARE has studied this issue and consulted widely with stakeholders ranging from governmental sources to ordinary Afghans. Based on those consultations, and based on its own extensive 50-year experience working in Afghanistan, CARE recommends:

CANADA SHOULD BECOME THE INTERNATIONAL LEADER IN ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS, EMPOWERMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN.

Why women?

With the Reconciliation and Reintegration process underway, and donor nations in addition to Canada planning for the end of their own military missions in Afghanistan, the situation for Afghan women has reached a critical crossroads. Major gains have been made over the last decade which stand precariously close to being lost. And yet, no champion within the international community is currently focusing their full efforts on ensuring this doesn't happen. Indeed, little international attention is currently being placed on the issue of women's rights and empowerment – surprisingly little, given the rhetorical commitment to Afghan women since the 2001 invasion.

But just as importantly, Canada's new policy priority is needed because life for women in Afghanistan is still the most difficult around the globe. An examination of the global Human Development and Gender-Related Development Indices reveals, not only does Afghanistan suffer from a critical shortage of essential services, but the access that Afghan women have to the few services that *do* exist, relative to their male counterparts, is proportionately less than any other population of women in the world.¹

Although there have been many important improvements over the last ten years, Afghan women and girls still have vastly disproportionate access to education, justice, and health services. Afghanistan is in competition with Niger and Sierra Leone for the worst maternal and newborn health situation in the world, with complications related to pregnancy and child birth being the number one cause of death across the country. Afghan women still have little power over their own economic security, and have very little say in matters of politics and peace-building. In addition to the harmful impacts these facts have on the quality of life of women, they also stunt the country's progress on the broader goals of reducing poverty and increasing both domestic and national security.

¹ For more detail on the Human Development and Gender-Related Development Indexes in the context of Afghanistan, see Chapter 2.

CARE has more than 65 years of experience in development around the world. In 2009 CARE worked in over 70 countries, reaching over 59 million people. One of our key lessons from that wealth of experience has been that, when women are empowered both socially and economically, it directly and effectively addresses the broader underlying causes of poverty. A woman who is healthy is more likely to have healthy children. A woman who is educated is more likely to send her children to school. A woman who is earning an income is more likely to spend financial resources on ensuring her family is properly fed, educated, and getting proper health care. Further, when a woman is contributing equally to the economic security of her family, CARE has seen evidence that it reduces domestic gender-based violence.

But CARE has also learned that the presence and voice of women are critical in processes of governance and peace-building. Real peace is not possible if it ignores the interests of half the population; the concept of security is a misnomer if the rule of law excludes the rights of women.

In order for women to be empowered socially and economically, and in order for them to take their rightful place in the governance of their community and country, work must happen on three distinct levels: the personal, the social, and the political. While it is critical for women to develop a knowledge of her own rights, her confidence, and her personal skill sets, it is equally important that the interactions she has with male family members and other influential people in her community become more equitable. This requires working not just with women, but with men as well. And finally, the legal, political, or broader cultural framework in which she lives has to back her demands for equal treatment through equitable laws and policies, and a strong governance system that enforces them. To empower a woman requires work on all three parts of this triangle in tandem, and to work on all three at once requires foresight, exceptional coordination, and a real commitment to tackle some difficult, and often sensitive, issues.

At this time, however, initiatives focusing on the advancement of Afghan women are happening in a haphazard fashion and with no central leadership or coordination. What's more, gender funding has been so focused on helping the women themselves, that redressing social imbalances and integrating equity into broader legislation and public service delivery have been largely minimized across the foreign aid portfolio, as this document shall describe. This is severely hampering the overall effectiveness and sustainability of efforts. Canada has been one of the cornerstone nations in both military security and development work in Afghanistan since 2002. Further, Canada has already shown itself to be one of the strongest donor nations in addressing and recognizing the importance of gender in its work. CARE therefore believes that Canada has both the authority and the capacity to provide the leadership on women's empowerment that the international aid community has been lacking.

Promisingly, CARE has found that women's empowerment **can** take place within the cultural and religious context of Afghanistan. Done properly, with community engagement, respect for tradition, and a strong focus on establishing local governance, it is entirely possible to advance women's rights and engage women in economic activity. Most importantly, we know for a fact **it is possible to do so with the full acceptance and support of Afghan communities, community leaders, and Afghan men.**

Despite its strong performance to date supporting Afghan women, significant shifts in Canadian policy and practice will be necessary to become the champion of women's rights. Canada must also enter into this leadership role recognizing it still has more learning to do on a complex range of issues. A significant investment must be made in listening to women and learning from successful program models. The Government of Canada must be prepared to consult with, learn from and heed the advice

of civil society that already has significant experience in this area, and most importantly, the women themselves.

It is important to recognize, however, that the call to lead to is not a call for Canada to be the hero for women, but rather be their staunch supporters by promoting women's own leadership, listening to their demands, and reinforcing those demands in the spaces where women's voices are largely absent, such as senior-level policy dialogue and donor coordination. At the end of the day, it is Afghan women themselves who must take charge of their own destiny. Canada's role is to lead the world in supporting and reinforcing the changes the women of Afghanistan strive for, using all available means.

A consultative effort

In the preparation of this report CARE conducted significant consultations with domestic and international stakeholders. Some of those stakeholders include: ACBAR, members of the Afghan Women's Network, Human Rights Watch, Medica Mondiale, the Afghanistan Ministry of the Interior, the Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health, Aga Khan Foundation, Afghan Development Association (ADA), Ariana Construction & Rehabilitation Unit (ACRU), Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit, members of the Human Rights Research & Advocacy Consortium, and CARE's own beneficiaries.

Based on those consultations and CARE's own experience, CARE has formulated a broad-based and comprehensive list of recommendations regarding the needs, opportunities, methodologies and specific activities Canada can and should undertake in order to play a leadership role in advancing Afghan women's rights, empowerment and development.

The recommendations were also informed by and developed to respect and integrate with the Government of Afghanistan's own National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA). NAPWA is a 10-year plan, prepared by the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2007. The chapters this report has been structured building on the broad categories of issues identified in that plan: security, governance and rule of law, and social and economic development. CARE has added a further chapter on aid effectiveness – recommendations for **how** Canada should proceed on the other recommendations in order to assure the most effective and sustainable use of Canadian taxpayer dollars to produce the greatest possible result for the people of Afghanistan.

What follows are a selection of key recommendations from each of the main chapters of this report.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Security

There is little doubt that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot end through combat alone. Efforts are now underway to end the conflict through reconciliation and reintegration. While the path of non-violence and peace-building is welcome and indeed vital, there are strong concerns that, as negotiations progress, the voices of women are not being included, and there is a real risk that women's rights will be given away in the pursuit of peace.

Canada can become a leader in ensuring women's rights are protected in Afghanistan's peace-building processes by observing the following recommendations:

- Lead the international community's call for women's rights to be guaranteed without qualification throughout all Reconciliation & Reintegration negotiations.
- Advocate that, before any reconciliation, all parties must make an explicit commitment to these guarantees, and accept the articles on gender equality laid out in the constitution.
- Predicate Canada's support for these processes on full adherence to those guarantees.
- Prevail on the Afghan Government to guarantee a meaningful presence and role for women within the decision-making and implementation bodies of both reconciliation and reintegration processes, at national and local levels.
- Predicate all funding for reintegration or reconciliation programs upon demonstrated commitment to women's participation in those bodies.
- Publicly assert that peace is not possible if past war crimes and rights violations against women are not surfaced and grievances remain unacknowledged.
- Call for Transitional Justice to precede, or be included as an inherent part of, the Reconciliation & Reintegration process.
- Call for the Transitional Justice process to include the international military forces on the same terms as all other parties to the conflict. Set the international standard by endorsing the participation of the Canadian military.
- Restate Canada's concern that the Amnesty Law contravenes constitutional guarantees, international protocols, and the Afghan government's own Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.
- Publicly assert that security cannot exist in the absence of Rule of Law, and that the Rule of Law is irreconcilable with impunity for violations against human rights.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Social and Economic Development

Less than half of all Afghan women of employable age are in fact employed or otherwise earning an income. Those who are employed by others are routinely exploited. Afghanistan competes with Niger and Sierra Leone for the position of most dangerous place on earth for a woman to be pregnant. There have been great leaps forward in education for Afghan girls, however boys are still twice as likely as girls to complete primary school. At the secondary level the numbers are far worse. These are issues that must be addressed.

The key word in empowering Afghan women economically and socially is “access”. Donors can continue to build hospitals and schools, and provide programs for vocational and business skills training. However, for Afghan women, these resources remain well out of reach if donors do not also address the underlying social and infrastructural barriers that are limiting women’s ability to access them.

Key recommendations for how Canada can become a leader in removing the access barriers to social and economic opportunities include:

- Lead education stakeholder discussions to identify and tackle the barriers girls face in accessing education at all levels, including the ‘invisible’ barriers such as community acceptance.
- Ensure that all classroom facilities established through direct Canadian support are fully gender-sensitive according to local culture.
- Lead the charge in opening up secondary school opportunities for girls across the country. As a priority, sponsor an investigation of successful secondary level education models for girls, and the innovation of new ones.
- Support policies designed to protect nascent Afghan producer groups, especially women’s groups. Encourage the exploration of means for protecting vulnerable markets that are essential to the livelihoods of emerging Afghan women producers.
- Lobby major institutional buyers such as humanitarian relief organizations (UNHCR, WFP, NGOs), as well as goods-procuring Afghan ministries, to commit to “buying local” where that option exists to stimulate local economic development and support the growth of women’s producer groups.
- Pioneer a multi-stakeholder effort to develop a social security net for the most vulnerable women in Afghan society.
- Make Afghanistan a priority country for funding under the Muskoka Initiative on maternal and child health announced at the G8 Summit in June, 2010.
- Support community-based emergency loan mechanisms for expectant mothers and mothers with young children, to be managed by neighbourhood maternal health groups.
- Undertake a risk review of Canadian and Afghan Government education policy with a view to reducing attacks on schools. Identify and fix any Canadian policies that may be putting children, teachers or schools in harm’s way; lobby the MoE and its principal donors to do the same.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights

Neither security, nor women's rights, nor sustainable development is possible without the rule of law. Women's rights will not be respected while laws are stacked against them, or while laws that do support women are not enforced. In Afghanistan today there is widespread impunity for crimes against women, rampant threats to women leaders, and a lack of political will to either protect those leaders or investigate and prosecute crimes against them.

Rule of law services (e.g. police and judiciary) must become far more attuned to the rights of women and be made accountable for upholding and protecting those rights. Currently, new police recruits are trained in counter-insurgency policing, not community protection. Justice officials either have limited understanding of women's rights or choose to ignore them. So women are often punished instead of supported when they seek out services that should be there to help them. Because there can be no peace without rule of law, Canada can still contribute to security without a combat presence by supporting Afghanistan in strengthening rule of law, especially as it applies to women and their rights.

Local governance must also ensure women's voices resonate in decision-making. Significant strides have been made in the last few years, but there is a long way to go before women leaders can participate adequately and fairly, and decisions are made with women's specific needs in mind.

Key recommendations for how Canada can become a leader in strengthening rule of law and empowering women in Afghan local governance include:

- Foster women's leadership. Afghan women leaders must be set up for success, and this means building their space and capacity to make strong, independent decisions and maintain a consistent presence in the public sphere over the long-term.
- Protect women leaders. If women are to be encouraged to occupy public spaces, they must be offered the protection they require to occupy it safely.
- Push the Afghan government to strengthen a legal system currently stacked against women.
- Scale-up Canada's success with community-based policing.
- Advocate strenuously for substantive changes to be made regarding the treatment of human rights in the regular training of new police recruits.
- Increase support to programs which train justice officials on women's rights.
- Spearhead learning and action on preventative and responsive measures to violence against women, the application of ERAW, and ending impunity for perpetrators of SGBV.
- Broaden Canada's vision beyond criminal injustices. As important as the focus on criminal violations is, there are many rights that must be protected through civil mechanisms as well.
- Sponsor the development of formal judicial monitoring mechanisms in order to track judicial performance on the basis of gender.
- Support the development of consistent gender equity monitoring mechanisms to be engaged by local governance structures, to track changes over time.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Aid Effectiveness

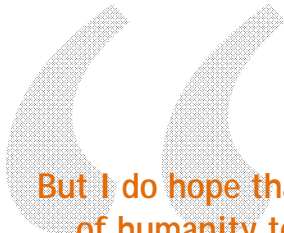
Over the past decade Canada and the international donor community have invested billions in development efforts in Afghanistan. The success of this investment has been limited, not because it was insufficient, but rather because the activities undertaken were too often not done the right way. There has been a decided lack of coordination, of consideration for cultural realities, of community-level engagement, and of a host of other factors. This has severely impeded effectiveness. Therefore, in assuming a leadership role, Canada must look not only at what it does, but how it does it.

Canada must adhere to key principles for aid effectiveness in Afghanistan, including: see the problem holistically, engaging Afghan men, focusing on access, build on existing strengths and scaling up what works, taking adequate time, going to where the need is, supporting Afghan civil society as a key agent of change through the provision of long-term core funding, and incorporating a 'Do No Harm Approach' into Canada's analysis and planning.

Key recommendations for developing leadership in the donor community, creating coherence, and supporting the work here at home include:

- Plan, implement, and measure Canada's overall engagement in Afghanistan through the lens of its contribution to improved human rights – and women's rights in particular.
- Consult civil society, and Afghan women in particular, in the development of Canada's engagement policies.
- Facilitate the inclusion of women's voices in policy debate.
- Employ Canada's diplomatic leverage to promote women's rights at every possible occasion.
- Focus on accountability, supporting the development of better performance monitoring on gender, and building the capacity of Afghan civil society to act as a watchdog.
- Align Canada's procurement policies for goods and services in Afghanistan to its women's empowerment objectives, looking first and foremost to procure from local women's producer groups and service providers.
- Become an industry leader on aid effectiveness and women's empowerment.
- Report Canada's contributions on women's empowerment to the Canadian public.
- Treasury board should hold individual programs to account on their gender budgeting and performance.
- Cabinet Committee should request 6-monthly progress reports on the roll-out of the corporate policy on gender equity in Afghanistan.

Security



But I do hope that [the women's war effort] will in some measure open the eyes of humanity to the truth that the women who bear and train the nation's sons should have some voice in the political issues that may send those sons to die on the battlefields.

Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874 – 1942), Novelist

There is little doubt that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot end through combat alone.

This certainty has been established several times over by the experiences of pacifists and soldiers, politicians, civil society activists and victims of war from Bosnia to Rwanda, South Africa, and Burundi. It has been corroborated through the written testament of countless observers. The absence of violence, on its own accord, does not bring peace.

In this sense, the current upswing in momentum on the part of the Government of Afghanistan and many of its international supporters in pursuit of a peaceful reconciliation between the government and insurgent groups is laudable. A nation as badly wounded as Afghanistan requires a calm, holistic approach to establish genuine security, foster a sense of national unity, and restore good governance. But dangers lurk.

Peace & Reconciliation

Many Afghan women and civil society groups, including CARE, are convinced that a process of reconciliation and reintegration that takes place without the incorporation of women's voices, and in the absence of in-built guarantees to protect women's rights (including the credible mechanisms required to enforce them), would provoke a return to much more perilous times.

The most palpable danger is that the hard-fought gains made over the last nine years in advancing women's freedoms to work, go to school, seek medical care, and be active members of public life – gains which are still tenuous for many, and far from universal across the country – would be consciously sacrificed in order to secure a broader political compromise at the national and local levels. There is good reason to be concerned, as there is no overt champion of women's rights amongst those set to approach the negotiating table.

The repression of women is an inherent and proven tenet of several of the insurgent factions who might be invited to participate in peace talks. Beyond that, it is one of the most universally recognized symbols of their potency and identity. It is unlikely that many would easily forfeit this tenet in their pursuit of power-sharing or other form of political, economic or social gain. Pre-talks with various representatives of insurgent groups – including during the Consultative Peace Jirga² – have already demonstrated their unwavering stance on this issue.

² As related to CARE by women who participated in the Jirga

The government, for its part, would come to the negotiating table holding cards including endorsements of a national constitution and several international protocols which attest to the sanctity of women's rights and guarantee full gender equality in all matters. But the government has, at best, an inconsistent track record in upholding them.

The Amnesty law, passed by the Afghan parliament in January of this year, provides immunity from prosecution to all perpetrators of war crimes during the civil war, including crimes against women. This contradicts Afghanistan's own Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice, which states, "...that considering the clear Koranic verses and the international law, no amnesty should be provided for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights"³. It further contradicts the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan. The quiet passing of the Shia Personal Status law outside of parliamentary session in March, 2009, which limits various rights and freedoms of women belonging to the Shia sect, further revealed how easily constitutional guarantees may be compromised in the name of political expediency. The President's office itself has been implicated by a number of organizations, including Human Rights Watch, in providing presidential pardons for crimes perpetrated against women⁴.

Afghan women, for their part, have yet to receive the necessary guarantees that their meaningful participation will be sought during reconciliation and reintegration. Their involvement should be unquestionable – not only to ensure that basic standards for the protection of women's rights are agreed to by all parties before the inception of talks and to make certain these standards are fully adhered to in the settlement, but importantly, to negotiate their own legitimate position as victims of abuse and agents of peace-building.

The inclusion of women is already guaranteed on paper. From the constitution on through to NAPWA, UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice, the participation of women in peace-building is sanctified. Yet the London and Kabul Conferences in January and July of this year, respectively, were a sorry testament to those assertions. Only one woman was allowed to speak at each of these events, and both seats were hard-won. In the run-up to the Kabul Conference negotiations persisted until the night before the event, and resulted in a seat being split between Afghan women and Civil Society – a generally supportive, but certainly distinct, interest group.

Similarly, it was only after months of lobbying that women were granted 20% of the seats in the June 2010 Consultative Peace Jirga. This was an undisputed success in comparison to previous events, but victory was tempered by the language of the final resolution, which gave no guarantees for women's continued participation at all necessary levels of peace process implementing bodies, such as the High Level Peace Council or the Joint Secretariat for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration Programs.

These are unambiguous precedents. Unless significant strides are taken in the run-up to reconciliation and reintegration, the rights of women and girls will be very precarious when those talks begin.

³ Peace, Reconciliation and Justice in Afghanistan: Action Plan of the Government of Afghanistan (2005); pg. 10. Find the full plan at:

http://www.aihrc.org.af/2010_eng/Eng_pages/Reports/Thematic/Action_Pln_Gov_Af.pdf

⁴ Human Rights Watch: "We Have the Promises of the World: Women's Rights in Afghanistan". Find the full report at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/12/03/we-have-promises-world-0>

Transitional Justice

"At the international level and discussions about basic violations of legal norms during the war, the term transitional justice is used to indicate a full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to address past abuses, ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation. These may include a combination of both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (or none at all), individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals."

– Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice in Afghanistan

Transitional Justice, on the whole, is slipping from the national agenda. The passing of the Amnesty Law drops the motivation and political will for such actions to a (perhaps unsalvageable) minimum. As currently conceived, neither the reconciliation nor reintegration plans in Afghanistan include a built-in process of transitional justice. Indeed, for many pursuing this path, the reconciliation & reintegration agenda is seen as a *precursor* to both justice and rule of law. This assumption is a false friend.

To welcome into society individuals – be they insurgents or parliamentarians – who inflicted great harm, with no acknowledgement of that harm, can be a devastating outcome for those individuals, often women, who have lost husbands, brothers, sons, daughters, their own health and dignity, and often the sole source of income and means of survival during so many years of war. Reconciliation and reintegration without justice sends an unequivocal signal to women about the degree to which their rights are valued in comparison to the men who have wrought havoc on their lives and instilled incalculable physical and/or psychological harm. It sends a further signal to those being reintegrated that harm is ok, that the crimes they perpetrated can be swept under the carpet, or may even have been justified, which can only encourage their sense of impunity and right regarding those deeds. Reintegration without justice will result in a loss of faith and trust, damage women's slender gains in empowerment and sense of equality, and directly contribute to the high level of impunity that currently characterizes national life in Afghanistan. Reconciliation without justice is inimical to genuine peace, and as such, defeats the purpose of the exercise.

Transitional Justice is the harder road, to be sure. It is less expedient, it opens up whole new opportunities for the reconciliation process to be derailed, and it will take more time. However CARE believes that it is the only genuine road to peace.

The Role of the International Community

Of late, the international community has been eerily silent on the question of reconciliation and women's rights; indeed, on the questions of women's rights and national legislation on the whole. Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon was one of the few Foreign Ministers to publicly raise concerns about the Amnesty Law, unlike his peers in western governments including the US, the EU and the UK. Minister Cannon, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verwee, have been amongst the few diplomats at their level to stress their concern that women's rights not fall off the national agenda. But these declarations have not yet translated into action through incentives, conditional aid, or the threat of diplomatic sanctions. CARE believes that intervening governments could be far more forceful on these matters than they have so far chosen to be.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

I. CARE urges the Government of Canada to lead the call for women's rights to be guaranteed without qualification throughout all Reconciliation & Reintegration processes, and make Canada's support for these processes conditional on full adherence to those guarantees.

1. **Follow the will of Afghan women leaders.** Review and adopt the recommendations set out in the communiqué released by Afghan women civil society leaders on January 29th, 2010, entitled "*Reactions to the Final Outcome Communiqué of the London Conference*⁵".
2. **Speak out publicly about the need for reintegration and reconciliation efforts to ensure protection of women's rights.**
3. **Make peace bodies work for women.** Prevail on the President and the leaders of High Level Peace Council and Joint Secretariat for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration Programs to utilize the mechanisms they govern as a means to advance the human rights of women and girls. CARE believes that in the face of staunch opposition to gender equality, if peace and reconciliation is not *actively pursued as an opportunity towards this end*, it will by default become a threat to it. Urge President Karzai to confer upon the High Level Peace Council and the Joint Secretariat for Peace, Reintegration and Reconciliation Programs the mandate to oversee and report upon the preservation of women's rights as part of their leadership responsibilities.
4. **Give women a voice in setting minimum standards.** Invite Afghan women from the grassroots, leadership, and activist levels to voice their opinion on the minimum guarantees to women's rights required during reconciliation and reintegration, what monitoring mechanisms of those guarantees might be developed, and what the sanctions should be in the instance of non-compliance by any party. The government of Afghanistan should then be petitioned to introduce these standards as a prerequisite to any negotiations. If the standards are not met, sanctions must be enforced and/or the negotiation process must be reconsidered.
5. **Ensure the constitution is respected.** Advocate that before the inception of any reconciliation, all negotiating parties must make explicit their commitment to these guarantees, and to respecting the articles pertaining to gender equality laid out in the constitution.
6. **Monitor the peace process.** Support the United Nations in their responsibility to monitor the peace process as it unfolds, and specifically, to adopt as part of their monitoring instruments the recommendations made through the Afghan women's consultation.
7. **Insist that UN resolutions be upheld.** Urge the presiding members of the UN Security Council present in Afghanistan – notably the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan and Austria – to monitor and report any contraventions to UNSC Resolution 1325, which recognizes the vital role of women in achieving peace and security, Resolutions 1820 and 1888 on the prevention and prosecution of sexual violence in armed conflict, and Resolution 1889 which seeks to promote the involvement of women during the post-conflict and reconstruction periods.

⁵ Reaction from Afghan Women Civil Society Leaders to the Communiqué of the London Conference on Afghanistan. Find the full publication at: http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=1019

8. **Press for mandatory rights education.** Advocate for the inclusion of obligatory training on civil liberties and women's rights as part of the package presented to all individuals invited to reintegrate into mainstream society or reconcile on a political level.
9. **Petition for reintegration to be community-led.** Call on the leaders and supporters of the reintegration process to ensure it is sufficiently guided by local opinion and tailored to locally-driven risk assessments, including the possible impacts on women and girls. An analysis of the village-by-village consultative model adopted during the development of the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) or the AIHRC consultative process on Transitional Justice may offer some insight in this regard.
10. **Protect women's spaces in local governance.** As a donor to the National Solidarity Program (NSP), lobby the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to publicly specify how the inclusion of women in local governance mechanisms and decision-making processes will be preserved in the process of reintegration, and insist that this be closely monitored.
11. **Encourage patience.** Draw the attention of reconciliation and reintegration leaders and their supporters to the fact that neither process can be rushed as a short-term endeavour, or seen as a quick-fix measure. The timeline set out for these processes must not in any way be bound to the desired withdrawal date of NATO troops or the anticipated decreased intervention of any foreign country. The risks associated with undertaking these processes against such a timeline must be made explicit, and firm commitments must be sought in this regard.
12. **Don't overlook women from insurgent-led families.** Encourage all participants of the peace process to remember the women and girls who are members of insurgent-headed families. Their needs, rights and voice are as vital as for all other women. Mechanisms should be sought to hear them.
13. **Predicate funding on guaranteed rights.** Make any financial contribution from Canada to support the process of reintegration conditional on the full adherence to the guarantees set out regarding women's and girls' rights within the reconciliation and reintegration processes, and urge other donors to undertake the same commitment. Ensure that reintegration funds benefit families and communities, including women, rather than individual ex-combatants.

II. Canada must advocate for women to be meaningfully included at all levels of Peace and Reconciliation leadership and dialogue, and make any contribution to that effort conditional on their full participation.

14. **Defend women's right to be present in peace processes.** Publicly assert the need for reintegration and reconciliation efforts to fully include the voice and decision-making power of women as important agents of peace-building, in recognition of the loss they suffered over the years of the conflict, and as legitimate members and stakeholders of Afghan society.
15. **Call for seats for women.** Advocate for an appropriate quota of women's seats to be reserved at all decision-making levels in all national and regional discussions, decisions and bodies focusing on reintegration, negotiation and reconciliation, including the High Level Peace Council and the Joint Secretariat for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration Programs. Ensure that women are able to play an effective role in any negotiation by the government with insurgent groups, as well as follow-up monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

16. **Advocate for transparent and inclusive committee membership.** Defend the need for decision-making on who sits on the committees at national and regional levels to be transparent and inclusive, and that their representation is acceptable to women activists and politicians.
17. **Ensure that women are meaningfully represented on the village and district councils that will play a key role in reintegration plans.**
18. **Predicate funding on women's participation.** Make any funding offered to reintegration or reconciliation programs conditional upon the demonstrated commitment to women's meaningful participation in relevant decision-making and implementation bodies.

III. Canada must call for Transitional Justice to precede, or be included as an inherent part of, Reconciliation & Reintegration.

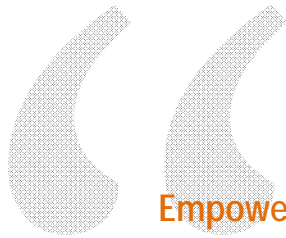
19. **Demand that war crimes and rights violations be addressed.** Assert in diplomatic, donor, and public fora that peace is not possible if past war crimes and rights violations are not surfaced and grievances remain unacknowledged. This is particularly important when accused individuals or groups are openly courted with offers of financial and material support, are formally welcomed back into the communities where those abuses originally occurred, or have the endorsement of the President to take up senior positions in government.
20. **Renew discussion on the Action Plan for Peace.** Insist on a timeline for advancing the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice, reaffirming the natural steps laid out therein: acknowledgement of the suffering of the Afghan People; ensuring credible and accountable state institutions; truth seeking and documentation; and finally, reconciliation. Recognize and promote the first three as necessary pre-conditions to the successful and meaningful attainment of the fourth.
21. **Continue to push against the Amnesty Law.** Reaffirm Canada's public concern that the Amnesty Law contravenes constitutional guarantees, endorsed international protocols, and the government's own Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice. Call upon President Karzai to recognize the harm this inconsistency poses for the prospect of peace, and request that Parliament review their decision. Support Afghan civil society groups who call for this law to be repealed.
22. **Support the Afghan Human Rights Commission.** Significantly augment Canada's contribution to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Offer the greatest possible diplomatic, financial, material, and technical support in furtherance of the responsibilities conferred upon them in leading the country towards peace. Fully support the AIHRC's commitment to seek justice with, and on behalf of, the women of Afghanistan.
23. **Support the Transitional Justice report.** Call for a reconfirmation of the President's endorsement of the AIHRC report, "*A Call for Justice*"⁶. This report – based on consultations with more than 6000 Afghans, and indicating a widespread public desire for transitional justice and the rejection of amnesty – was originally accepted by the President in January 2005, but now enjoys an uncertain status in light of recently passed legislation.

⁶ AIHRC: "A Call for Justice." Find the full report at:
http://www.aihrc.org.af/Rep_29_Eng/rep29_1_05call4justice.pdf

24. **Endorse an inclusive Transitional Justice.** Call for the Transitional Justice process to include the international military forces on the same terms as all other parties to the conflict. Set the international standard by endorsing the participation of the Canadian military as part of that endeavour.
25. **Advocate for a grassroots approach to Transitional Justice.** While much damage has been caused to the national psyche by more than thirty years of conflict, this was wrought by an accumulated harm imparted on individuals, families and villages. According to the AIHRC report, "*A Call for Justice*", 69% of respondents identified themselves or their families as direct victims of human rights violations in the previous two decades⁷. Transitional Justice behind closed doors, or part of an exclusive process of negotiation and settlement, will not heal deep wounds, and could possibly inflame them. It must be at once a national and a personal exercise.
26. **Champion the Rule of Law.** Publicly assert that security cannot exist in the absence of Rule of Law, and that the Rule of Law is irreconcilable with impunity for violations against human rights. Put the full force of Canada's diplomatic influence into advocating the Afghan Government and donor and UN communities for an unreserved commitment to the improvement of governance and justice mechanisms within the country, with particular attention paid to their treatment and empowerment of women and girls. (Specific recommendations on improving the Rule of Law can be found in Chapter Four of this document: Governance, Rule of Law, Human Rights.)

⁷ *Ibid.*, pg. 9.

Economic & Social Development



Empower women and you will see a decrease in poverty, illiteracy, disease and violence.

*Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada 2006-2010
on the occasion of International Women's Day; Kabul, Afghanistan, Thursday March 8, 2007*

HDI, or the Human Development Index, is a rudimentary but valuable instrument for gauging not only the status of wellbeing in a country in comparison to other countries, but also the progress made by each country year on year. Few policy leaders engaged in Afghanistan are unaware that the HDI for this country remains decidedly low, with a current standing of 181 out of the 182 countries analyzed through that method⁸. Interpreted through the lens of development assistance and service provision, the rating suggests that current income-generation capacity and reliance on basic facilities such as education and health remain at critically low levels for the majority of the population.

Perhaps more disconcerting than its HDI, however, is Afghanistan's GDI, or Gender-Related Development Index score. The GDI, introduced by the Human Development Report in 1995, is an equally crude but undeniably powerful reflection of the basic differentials in wellbeing according to gender. The greater the disparity between men and women in basic human development, the lower a country's GDI will be. At 88% of its HDI value, Afghanistan currently has the lowest recorded GDI rating in the world, ranking 155th out of 155 countries⁹.

The combined statistics reveal a lucid double blow. **Not only does Afghanistan suffer from a critical shortage of essential services, but the access that Afghan women have to the few services that *do* exist, relative to their male counterparts, is proportionately less than any other population of women in the world.** So long as there are differences in access to all basic opportunities and services between women and men, the development community must pay focused and resourced attention to the genuine barriers hindering the economic and social empowerment of women and girls.

Economic Development

Almost universally, the stakeholders CARE has consulted have identified economic opportunity as one of, if not the top, entry points to addressing other development issues and in particular the status and rights of women in Afghanistan. Based on significant experiential evidence both in Afghanistan and around the world, CARE knows that increasing the economic contribution of women within the

⁸ Human Development Report 2009: Afghanistan. Find the full country fact sheet at: http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_AFG.html

⁹ *Ibid.*

household generates a proportional change in other key development factors: a reduction in gender-based violence, improved female access to education and health care, and strengthened roles in community decision-making, for example¹⁰.

Yet economic empowerment for Afghan women remains largely stifled. Less than half of all women of employable age are engaged in remunerated activities; of those who are, many are home-based workers paid by piece rather than receiving a daily wage. Many of those who are not employed cite a lack of permission from their family to seek their own income, and those who are employed by others are routinely exploited. According to UNIFEM, Afghan women earn 54 cents on each dollar men earn in the agricultural sector; in non-farming activities they earn an average of 49 cents to the dollar¹¹. In some studies, women have been reported to earn less than what children make for the same work. According to the Afghanistan NHDR 2004, per capita GDP (PPP adjusted) was US\$1,182 for males and US\$402 for females – less than a third.

To a large degree, economic development assistance has allowed women to fall through the cracks by failing to address certain basic socio-cultural norms; first, the widely-held belief that women should not make an income. Vocational training and income generation programs – favoured activities of economic development promoters – are routinely available only to those women who already enjoy permission to participate in them, but little resolute effort has been put into reaching the large percentage of women who are barred from those opportunities.

Development assistance has also not adequately addressed the other cultural or social nuances that hinder women's ability to succeed even when they *do* receive the required permission. Projects have provided business start-up money to women who can't leave their homes to take their products to market, and have then failed to address the problems associated with contracting often exploitative middlemen to sell on their behalf. In yet other instances, women are offered vocational training but the revenue they generate is controlled by other family members who use her as an indentured worker, allowing her no power over her own income.

The very strong focus on urban-based vocational training across the donor community is also incongruous with the realities of Afghanistan. The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) for 2007-2008 indicates that agriculture and livestock represent the dominant economic means in Afghanistan, at 59% across the country. Agriculture is one area where women are often allowed to participate, yet most of the agricultural-based economic support is directed towards men, and very few alternative forms of income generation support for either men or women is provided in rural areas.

Finally, the bias towards vocational training and income generation projects, while laudable, tends to overlook that percentage of the population who are simply beyond the reach of any economic opportunity. This includes the elderly, the sick or disabled, and those female heads of households (including a large number of widows) who cannot leave their dependents behind to seek out work or training opportunities. Until now these individuals have been reliant on foreign humanitarian interventions for survival because there is no domestic social safety net to support them. Little effort has gone in to finding sustainable economic security options to meet their long-term needs.

¹⁰ CARE Whitepapers: "Women's Empowerment". Find the full report at:
http://www.care.org/newsroom/publications/whitepapers/woman_and_empowerment.pdf

¹¹ UNIFEM Afghanistan Factsheet. Find the full sheet at:
<http://www.unifem.org/afghanistan/media/pubs/factsheet/10/index.html>

Maternal Health

Complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are currently the number one cause of death in Afghanistan¹². At 1,800 deaths per 100,000 live births by UNICEF's most recent estimate, Afghanistan's maternal mortality rate (MMR) is tied with Sierra Leone's as the second highest in the world¹³. Regional variations are noteworthy, however: a 2005 World Bank report indicated regional contrasts as great as 400 deaths per 100,000 births in Kabul, compared with 6,500 deaths per 100,000 in Badakshan province – the highest MMR ever reported globally¹⁴. Yet both figures still startle when compared to Canada's own maternal mortality rate of 7 per 100,000.

A complex and challenging range of factors contribute to this situation. Child marriage, early pregnancy, unsafe spacing between children, anemia, malnourishment, and violence against women are key factors. A lack of adequate food, shelter, and clean water complicate matters further.

While the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and other medical support programs have made important strides in covering the country with a minimum level of services, this does not mean that all women have direct access to them. Indeed, few women get proper care and treatment during pregnancy and childbirth. Only 14.3% of births are attended by a trained doctor, nurse or midwife. Here again the problem is often related to tradition and culture: in many areas, male medical professionals may not touch or treat women, yet only 24% of doctors and 21% of nurses are female across the country. Just 21% of basic health facilities have a midwife on staff, and about 40% do not have a female health care provider. Simply put, clinics can be built all over the country but without female staffing, many men and many women alike will feel it is not appropriate to consult them.

A lack of basic information is a second pivotal factor explaining high maternal mortality and morbidity rates. Many women simply do not know about spacing pregnancies, how to spot danger signs during pregnancy, or how proper hygiene and nutrition affect pregnancy and newborns. Tradition and cultural prohibitions against discussing women's health issues with outsiders play a key role here. However CARE has found these societal attitudes can be changed with culturally appropriate community engagement. In fact, our experiences in Kabul alone have indicated that **increasing basic information levels on safe pregnancies for women of reproductive age, mothers in law, and husbands, has dramatically improved maternal and child health across a range of key indicators.**

Of this myriad of causes, some are dealt with more readily than others by the development community. There has been a huge – and understandable – push since 2002 to improve the availability of healthcare services. Relatively less effort has gone into the more social problems and their attendant social solutions, such as information dissemination. Community Health Workers – arguably the most critical link between BPHS and the population, who play possibly the most effective role in disseminating information about health – are volunteers, not remunerated as the professionals that they are. Reason: lack of budget. Until recently, the Health Promotion Department (HPD) at the Ministry of Public Health had a single Reproductive Health communications officer to catalyze public information campaigns on RH-related topics across the country, but that position was retrenched for lack of funds. The department proper has no implementing budget for information dissemination, a fact which limits its role to advisory only. Yet only last year, the construction of a new tertiary hospital complex was finished in Kabul at a published cost of \$22,500,000¹⁵. Clearly, despite all

¹² National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/08 (NRVA)

¹³ UNICEF "State of the World's Children" Report 2009.

¹⁴ "National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future." Find the full report at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTANEXTN/Resources/AfghanistanGenderReport.pdf>

¹⁵ Afghanistan Online. Jumhuriat Hospital Inaugurated. 16 Aug 2009. http://www.afghan-web.com/health/jumhuriat_hospital.html

available evidence that the provision of basic information can decrease maternal mortality rates by increasing access to and utilization of health care services, this essential component of the MCH equation is routinely undervalued in development planning and assistance.

Addressing issues such as violence against women and child marriage – root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity – are similarly under-regarded in development and humanitarian assistance. The UN-coordinated Food Security cluster raised hundreds of millions of dollars in 2009 through the HAP, accounting for over three quarters of all funds requested through that mechanism.¹⁶ This is due in part to the fact that entire UN agencies exist to tackle the problems of food insecurity in humanitarian situations around the globe, given its centrality to human wellbeing, and who can therefore promote and raise funds for this cause. Yet the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) sub-cluster, at the time of writing, had yet to develop its first strategy, and had not yet mapped out existing services. This is assuredly due to the lack of dedicated staff and resources across the country to tackle this issue, despite the fact that an overwhelming 87.2% of Afghan women have been abused at some point in their lifetime¹⁷.

Clearly, if the development community wishes to have a dramatic impact on maternal health, it needs to expand out of its relatively closed maternal healthcare provision remit, and address with far greater energy the root causes and social barriers that make those services so necessary.

Access to Education for Girls

Improving access to education is one of Afghanistan's great success stories. From a country-wide enrolment of little more than 100,000 children in 2001, of which almost none were girls, enrolment has leapt to over 7 million in 2010, about a third of which are girls. Although there is still far to go before universal education is assured, these are statistics that the government of Afghanistan and education stakeholders can be proud of.

Currently, boys are twice as likely as girls to complete primary school. This difference widens at the secondary school level, and widens further still in higher education.¹⁸ Only 11% of girls within the grade 7-9 age bracket are enrolled in school, and only are only 4% are within the grade 10-12 bracket¹⁹. The fact that the enrolment, retention, and graduation rates have all improved much more quickly for boys than they have for girls – and indeed, that over-aged males are seeking remedial primary education at a far higher rate than over-aged girls²⁰ – means that dedicated measures remain necessary to close the gender gap in education.

Much has been learnt over the last ten years about the barriers to girls' education in Afghanistan, and many of these lessons have been built into education development plans. For example, there is a strong push to increase the number of female teachers across the country, as the lack of female teachers is one of the biggest reasons why many girls are not allowed to attend. (In Zabul province in 2009, for instance, only 1% of all teachers were female.²¹) Some programs have also put notable emphasis on fostering community acceptance of education for girls through work with local *Shuras*, Village Education Committees (VECs), and religious leaders. Certainly CARE's experience has been that

¹⁶ For details, please refer to the UN OCHA Financial Tracking System, at <http://fts.unocha.org>

¹⁷ Global Rights, "Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan". Find the full report at: http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf?docID=9803

¹⁸ UNDP: "Millennium Development Goals, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report". 2005.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch: "We Have the Promises of the World: Women's Rights in Afghanistan". Find the full report at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/12/03/we-have-promises-world-0>

²⁰ Central Statistics Organization, as cited in NRVA 07/08

²¹ Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan. Find the full report at: http://www.care.org/newsroom/articles/2009/11/Knowledge_on_Fire_Report.pdf

negative attitudes can very often be changed with community engagement and an emphasis on true Islamic values. But there are other things that have not been sufficiently addressed.

One of the key reasons an Afghan family will choose not to send their child to school is security. A school that is too distant, that is located in a volatile area, or that lacks proper sanitation facilities or a proper boundary wall – these will discourage attendance. And yet schools are routinely built outside of an established minimum radius of each other (sometimes called the 5 kilometre rule) that does not factor in the customary distances girl children are allowed to travel, which often does not exceed 1-2 kilometres from their home. The minimum radius policy may be logical in light of the tremendous challenge of restoring education facilities across vast expanses of under-serviced areas, but it overlooks the fact that thousands of girls will be excluded from those services as a result. Similarly, schools constructed in conflict areas are often showcased as visible successes of stabilization and government or international presence, instead of following more discrete (i.e. less ostensible) education planning models which often make families of girl children more comfortable and reduces the risk that the schools will be attacked. Again, these policies do not place sufficient emphasis on the barriers that keep girls out of school, despite the overwhelming evidence that girl's education has the furthest to come to catch up.

Finally, years of focus has been placed on primary education, to a great degree (and laudably so) in an attempt to cover the great gap at that level and respond to the MDGs. But this laser-like attention to primary has meant that a large and growing cohort of young students is emerging from grade six with dramatically reduced options for continuing their education. Secondary school facilities are few and very far apart; almost invariably, the schools that do exist have been established in cities. For rural children, passing into secondary school thus requires travel, and sometimes residency away from home: a fact which equates to the end of formal education for the vast majority of girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

1. Invest in understanding and addressing the barriers to economic participation by Afghan women.

27. **Adopt a value chain approach to economic development.** Many donors emphasize skill development to such a degree that the other required elements for making a business successful – the availability of appropriate materials, market linkages, packaging, transport, and so forth – are forgotten. Consider how Canada can support economic development for women across the breadth of the value chain.
28. **Protect markets for women producers.** Support the development of policies designed to protect nascent Afghan producer groups, especially women's groups. Encourage the exploration of means for protecting vulnerable markets that are essential to the livelihoods of emerging Afghan women producers, such as blanket and Patu making, food processing, school bag-making, and demand-driven items such as tents for emergency relief.
29. **Help create market linkages.** Sponsor the establishment of an information clearinghouse on small Afghan producer groups to improve market linkages between those groups and potential buyers. Use Afghanistan's extensive network of vocational training institutions, micro-finance programs and women's solidarity associations to make the initial contact with these groups.
30. **Buy local.** Lobby major institutional buyers such as humanitarian relief organizations (UNHCR, WFP, major implementing NGOs), as well as the ANA, ISAF, embassies, and the Ministries of Education, Public Health and other goods-procuring ministries, to commit to

“buying local” where that option exists as part of their overall objective to stimulate local economic development and women producers.

31. **Stimulate women’s businesses.** Support the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and other government bodies to explore how economic or material incentives might be made available for the establishment of women’s producer groups or other forms of business. Local municipalities may be able to assign physical space for women to work together close to their homes. In addition to being a welcome source of necessary capital, for many families the provision of economic incentives could make the difference between women receiving permission to attempt a business start-up or not.
32. **Encourage microfinance models that respect Islamic principles.** Study successful micro-credit and loan rotation models that adhere to Islamic principles (which prohibit the charging of interest), paying specific attention to the current ability of Afghan women to access them. Support the extension of such models, or the innovation of new ones based on the same premise, targeting women as a primary client group. Wherever possible, engage women’s solidarity or support associations in these mechanisms – this form of outreach would be more harmonious to local culture than individual marketing, increase the likelihood of client group success, and reach a number of vulnerable women who would otherwise not have information or access to such services.
33. **Regularize core literacy and numeracy in all programming.** Ensure that basic literacy and mathematics classes are included in all vocational training programs that Canada supports. Illiteracy is one of the primary drivers of poverty, poor health and marginalization in Afghanistan – use every possible opportunity to combat this.
34. **Support vocational training for female health professionals.** Offer generous technical and financial support for programs that train women in health care provision. Many families otherwise unwilling to let the females of their household earn an independent income will allow them to study midwifery or basic maternal & child health care, as the need for such services is felt in every village, and developing these skill sets is a culturally acceptable vocation for women. Put extensive effort into decentralizing these training opportunities to the district level to maximize student enrolment and retention levels. This focus on health care training would enable Canada to address several key priorities in economic and social development at once.
35. **Study barriers to economic participation by women.** Dedicate time and attention to understanding the grounds on which women have been excluded from participation in the market and other forms of direct income generation, and what breakthroughs have been made in this regard. The research of HRRAC and AREU in these areas will be a rich resource of information, as will the direct experiences of NGOs such as ACRU, ADA, Afghanaid, and AKF: organizations which have had significant success in dismantling the barriers to women’s economic participation through neighbourhood dialogue and other means. Ensure all economic development activities sponsored by the Canadian government incorporate both the time and resources required to address these barriers.
36. **Sponsor a study on women’s access to capital.** In direct collaboration with the Central Statistics Organization (CSO), sponsor a gender-disaggregated study on access to productive capital such as land, machinery, micro-finance or loans, information technology, etc. What kinds of capital do men and women customarily have at their disposal (e.g., through traditional inheritance rights), how much individual control do they have over it, and how do they use it? How does this differ between men and women? What external forms of

productive capital are available, and what differences exist between men and women in accessing those?

37. **Sponsor a study of *maher* & *miros*.** Finance research on women's access to, control over, and use of *maher* (bridal price) and *miros* (inheritance rights) – widely cited as the most important economic assets for the majority of Afghan women. For those women who have secured either of these rights, how have they used it? What form of economic benefit has it brought, and has this led to gains in any other sphere of life? In cases of investment, have they been able to maintain control over the profits? For those women who have not successfully acquired *meher* or *miros*, what would they anticipate doing if they did have those resources? Finally, is there a verifiable trend between securing *maher* or *miros*, and the economic stability of vulnerable women?
38. **Learn from successful economic empowerment projects.** Finance a study of how various institutions have encouraged economic empowerment for women in the most conflict-prone areas of Afghanistan, and what the successes and lessons have been.
39. **Lead the development of a social security net for women.** Pioneer a multi-stakeholder effort to develop a social security net for the most vulnerable women in Afghan society. Recall that, as in every nation, there are some women who live in, or on the verge of, destitution, and who, for various reasons including age, health, and full-time care-giving responsibilities, are not able to participate in vocational training or productive income generation. Support mechanisms must be established to ensure their survival and wellbeing.

II. *Make Afghanistan a priority country for funding under the Muskoka Initiative on maternal and child health (MCH) announced at the G8 Summit in June, 2010.*

40. **Target root causes of poor maternal health.** Develop a 'root causes' understanding of poor maternal health and high maternal mortality in Afghanistan, and direct Canada's support to areas the donor community is not addressing sufficiently, such as Violence against Women. Turn these issues into priority policy areas for Canada.
41. **Address barriers to health care access.** Undertake a rigorous analysis of current barriers to women's access to maternal and child healthcare across Canada's four MCH priorities: preventing disease, improving newborn and child health, reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, and improving food security and nutrition. The analysis should be based on extensive consultation at the local level and seek to reveal regional variances. Place the weight of Canada's support in Afghanistan into addressing these barriers.
42. **Incorporate community mobilization on MCH.** Ensure that a robust community mobilization component is built into every maternal and child health program Canada implements. CARE's own efforts to improve maternal and child health in Kabul have produced powerful results when BBC (Behaviour Change Communications) strategies, the promotion of women's solidarity groups, the involvement of men and community leaders and family-to-family dialogue have been engaged in tandem. CARE believes that full-throttle community mobilization is the most effective way of closing the gap between the demand and supply sides of the health service delivery chain. A lessons-learned analysis of Canada's strong experiences in polio and TB programming, where community mobilization was extensively used, will be a valuable asset in planning this.
43. **Fund community health workers.** At the heart of its community mobilization efforts, Canada should support the Ministry of Public Health to recruit and remunerate a legion of community

health workers and mobilizers to reach the most remote, vulnerable women and children throughout the country. These mobilizers would undertake extensive work with individual families, *Shuras*, women's groups, *Mullahs*, Community Development Councils, and NGOs. Community Mobilizers are professionals, and should be paid as such.

44. **Replicate successful neighbourhood health support group projects.** Appreciate that within the confines of Afghanistan's conservative society, neighbourhood support groups for expectant mothers, mothers with young children, and mothers-in-law are an exceptional way for Afghan women to exchange information, ensure high-risk pregnancies are identified, and make appropriate referrals. Groups such as those established through CARE's 'Opportunities for Maternal and Infant Development' (OMID) project provide a solid model for learning and replication. Canada could support the establishment of such groups through its implementing partners – especially national NGOs – in regions where those partners operate.
45. **Community-based loans for mothers.** Support community-based emergency loan mechanisms for expectant mothers and mothers with young children, to be managed by neighbourhood MCH groups. The inability to pay for services is a common reason why many women do not receive adequate care, and the provision of emergency loans could make a significant difference in accessing services in time to save the lives of mothers and newborns. Additionally, the availability of financial support in times of medical emergency could act as a membership draw, enabling more women to benefit from the group's activities than might otherwise have been allowed to attend. CARE and other NGOs have programs all over the world that can offer successful models of emergency savings funding mechanisms to learn from.
46. **Engage men in maternal and child health.** Put specific and sufficient resources towards engaging men in maternal and child health issues, including family planning (a critical issue in Afghanistan given the high fertility rate and corresponding risk to women and babies). The knowledge, endorsement and support of fathers-in-law and husbands lies at the heart of improving access to MCH services and support for the majority of Afghan women of reproductive age. Several NGOs, including CARE, have excellent experiences engaging men on women's health and rights issues; these lessons should be collected and built upon.
47. **Consult on MCH information campaigns.** Undertake a consultative review with national NGOs and other outreach organizations to determine the most effective means of conducting Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns in urban and rural Afghanistan. Use the opportunity to gather ideas on the most effective ways to communicate MCH messages.
48. **Support development of MCH public information materials.** Negotiate with the MoPH to finance a package of IEC material development on maternal and child health through the coordination and technical services of the Health Promotion Department. The HPD is responsible for assisting all MoPH departments in putting together TV spots, radio programs, and other forms of IEC material on health related themes. Despite the centrality of their role, the HPD currently has no implementing budget of its own, and other departments rarely have sufficient funds to divert from services towards the production of public campaign materials. These funds would be an excellent way of assisting the HPD and related departments to generate priority public awareness capacity.
49. **Reach out to Afghan NGOs on MCH messaging and mobilization.** Offer complementary training on MCH messaging and mobilization to national NGOs with whom Canada does not have active partnerships, or make Dari and Pashto language resource packages widely available for those groups. These resources could be disseminated through Afghanistan's

various civil society networks such as ACSF, AWW, ACBAR and ANCB. This form of outreach could extend the scope of MCH messaging considerably, and importantly, into some of Afghanistan's most inaccessible districts where there is limited external presence. Many national NGOs offer door-to-door support on various themes; many work with women of reproductive age every day. Use this opportunity.

50. **Fund the Basic Package of Health Services.** Consider contributing funds to the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) program, to strengthen its maternal and child health components. BPHS is routinely regarded as one of the most successful public service programs currently being rolled out across the country, and would be an excellent vehicle for optimizing Canada's support.
 51. **Improve Afghanistan's maternal health statistics.** Support the MoPH to carry out a multi-year national maternal health survey. The statistics currently in circulation are out-dated and do not reflect some of the important achievements that have been made in the last few years. In direct partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), support the Ministry of Public Health to monitor these changes every five years.
 52. **Increase the number of female health care workers.** Strengthen Canada's commitment to increasing the number and scope of female health care workers, including midwives, across the country. Pilot innovative remote training systems on MCH and public health, as long-distance travel is often a prohibitive factor for those aspiring to join the health care profession, and, paradoxically, the women with the greatest travel restrictions are likely to be from the districts most in need of improved MCH services. Lobby the Ministry of Education (MoE) to include basic and maternal & child health in the standard curriculum of secondary school education for girls and NGO-run community-based secondary education packages, including a basic certification option in those subject areas for those who wish it, such as what CARE provides through its Lower Secondary Community-Based Education project.
 53. **Lead donor coordination on an MCH strategy.** Work with other institutional donors on a comprehensive MCH strategy that builds on the strengths and long-term funding commitment of each country and seeks to fill any gaps in a coordinated manner. Ensure this work is driven by the goals set out in NAPWA, and report results as direct contributions to those goals.
 54. **Support multi-year health programs.** Invest in multi-year health programs, which will provide a greater return on investment in terms of sustainable improvements. Meaningful changes cannot be achieved with funding of one year or less.
- III. *Canada should champion girls' education in Afghanistan, leading innovation and policy dialogue focused on ensuring that barriers currently restricting access to schools for the majority of Afghan girls are directly addressed.***
55. **Close the secondary school gap for girls.** Catalyze donor-wide analysis, innovation, policy dialogue, and funding towards the closure of the secondary school gap for girls. As a matter of priority, Canada should sponsor an investigation into the most effective means of providing lower and higher secondary school education for girls through both state-driven and NGO-supported systems, and be the first to offer its support to the expansion or improvement of those mechanisms. The donor community requires a strong leader to close this gap; CARE believes that Canada can play that role.
 56. **Identify and address the barriers to girls' education.** Pioneer in-depth education stakeholder discussions to specifically identify and tackle the barriers girls face in accessing

education at all levels, including the more 'invisible' barriers such as community acceptance. Oxfam's recent research on access to girls' education (due to be published in December), should prove to be a major contribution to this work. Lobby the Ministry of Education to integrate these access-oriented recommendations into their development plans – as central and worthy of funds as the construction of new classrooms. Some recommendations may require the Ministry to revise certain elements of its current education development policy, and create partnerships with other ministries who may be able to provide a key role in breaking some of the barriers down. MoWA should be a primary partner in this analysis, and in building bridges with other Ministries.

57. **Adapt to cultural realities on safe travel distances for girls.** Seek to understand and adapt to local perceptions of what constitutes safe and dangerous travel distances for girls, recognizing that this will vary from locality to locality. Develop a flexible distance policy to new school establishment that balances the need to provide education facilities across as great a breadth of the country as possible, and the reality that many girls won't be able to avail themselves of those facilities if they are spread too far apart. Encourage the MoE and other donors to do the same.
58. **Link funding to access.** Lobby the international donor community to make future education funding conditional on the inclusion of an 'increasing access' component in all proposed plans. Consider the adoption of a minimum percentage earmark in each new education budget for addressing social or other invisible barriers to access, retention and completion.
59. **Build culturally gender-sensitive education facilities.** Ensure that all classroom facilities constructed through direct Canadian support are fully gender-sensitive according to local culture, as identified through extensive local community consultation. As a basic standard there should be proper – and separate – sanitary facilities for girls in a discrete and protected space. Separate classrooms should be built for girls and boys to avoid the reduction of instruction hours available to each group due to classroom sharing. Communities should always be consulted in the location and construction of schools. Lobby the Ministry of Education and the World Bank to ensure that all schools constructed through multi-lateral funding mechanisms, such as the EQUIP Program, follow these same rigorous guidelines.
60. **Expand teacher training for rural women.** Teacher training for women must be scaled-up and decentralized as much as possible to absorb rural women who do not have the ability to travel. A few small but highly innovative teacher training methods for women in remote regions already exist, such as CARE's own Lower Secondary Community Based Education (LSCBE) project for girls which builds teacher training directly into the lower secondary CBE curriculum for those who want it, and enables pupils to begin teaching lower grades immediately upon graduation. These experiences must be learned from, built upon, and replicated at scale as a matter of priority.
61. **Include women in education governance.** Support the involvement of women in school management committees and local governance structures (such as Community Development Councils or separate women's sub-committees) to promote girls' education and provide girls with mentors and role models.
62. **Talk to mothers. About everything.**
63. **Expand Canada's two-pronged approach to education.** Continue and bolster Canada's two-pronged approach to education delivery: support to the Ministry of Education's efforts to increase and improve education services across the country (with an emphasis on improving

girls' access), and complementary support to non-governmental organizations providing community-based education (CBE) in those areas where the state does not have a strong presence. This might be required in remote areas where the government has little physical access, or in provinces where there is limited state-led service delivery as a result of the conflict. Areas in need of NGO action may also include provinces where the Ministry of Education has an active presence, but their services are too far away from certain villages for girls to travel safely and comfortably.

64. **Scale up Canadian INEE training.** CBE has proven to be an effective means of continuing education for girls and boys alike in conflict areas. Given the increasing number of conflict-affected displacements and the country's deteriorating security situation, consider scaling up Canada's INEE training efforts. The INEE Minimum Standards is an effective framework for response, preparedness and contingency planning throughout Afghanistan, ensuring that stakeholders can more effectively meet the education requirements of the country's most vulnerable youth affected by conflict or other disasters.
65. **Study community support for girls' education.** Finance a multi-stakeholder study on factors that influence families' and communities' support of girls' education in rural and urban areas. What works, what has proven less successful? What are the mechanisms of community support or community-based school management that have proven most fruitful in fostering attitude change?
66. **Engage communities in education.** Prioritize working with communities – consulting them, engaging them, building up ownership of education in their villages with them. Experience and research has proven that community ownership of education is critical to ensuring strong enrolment, retention and completion rates, and to protecting schools from attack. It has also been proven that with the right dialogue and engagement, it is possible to successfully encourage a conservative community towards acceptance of education.
67. **Address risk factors in education policy.** Undertake a risk review of Canadian and MoE education policy in Afghanistan with respect to existing knowledge on the phenomenon of attacks on schools. Identify and rectify any Canadian policy directions that may inadvertently be putting children, their teachers, or their local facilities in harm's way; lobby the Ministry of Education and its principal donors to do the same.
68. **Prioritize safety over visibility in education.** Recognize that a commonly acknowledged reason for attacks against education is that schools are seen as a symbol of the government, and are sometimes the only visible sign of state presence in a community²². Schools in conflict zones – particularly girls' schools – should be as unobtrusive as possible in order to minimize the risk of attack. Lobby the Ministry of Education to review its policy on the standard external appearance of new school-houses, making it as flexible as possible to respond to local culture and risk analyses (understanding that low-cost CBE classes held in existing community structures may be the most effective solution in conflict areas). Petition the international donor community and the government of Afghanistan to prioritize the right to education above the desire to demonstrate an effective state presence when supporting new school establishment, as in Afghanistan today these two goals are not necessarily mutually compatible.

²² Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan. Find the full report at: http://www.care.org/newsroom/articles/2009/11/Knowledge_on_Fire_Report.pdf

Governance, Rule of Law, Human Rights



Peace is not the absence of war. It is the presence of justice and the absence of fear.

Dr. Ursula Franklin, metallurgist, research physicist, peace advocate, and first woman named 'University Professor' at the University of Toronto

Neither security, nor women's rights, nor sustainable development is possible without the rule of law. Women's rights will not be fulfilled while laws are still stacked against their interests, or while legislation that supports women is not enforced. Women will feel neither safe in their own society nor able to participate fully in it if the systems meant to support and protect them – such as the police, the judiciary, and medical services – abuse them instead. In Afghanistan today there is widespread impunity for crimes against women, rampant threats to women leaders, and a lack of political will to either protect those leaders or investigate and prosecute the crimes perpetrated against them.

The idea that peace and stability must be established before a sound rule of law can emerge is counter-intuitive, and in many ways, counterproductive. Without rule of law practices in place right down to the community level the current culture of impunity and corruption will supersede agreements reached in any negotiation. Many stakeholders would assuredly agree with this, and yet the emphasis in rule of law is still very much dominated by defence objectives. New police recruits, for example, receive 8 weeks of formal training – virtually all of which is focused on a counter-insurgency syllabus. Only 1 day of training is dedicated to community policing and a mere half hour is dedicated to gender and human rights.

This absence of genuine rule of law "practice-building" can only serve to reinforce current socio-cultural norms, in which impunity and all forms of abuse and discrimination against women thrive. No guarantees to protect the rights of women throughout reconciliation and reintegration – indeed, none of the expectations agreed to by parties to the conflict through those processes – can be maintained in such an atmosphere. Further, women cannot be encouraged to take up positions of public leadership if equal effort is not put into ensuring the environment they step into is receptive to them. Yet peace is not possible without women at the heart of it.

The most important possible contribution that Canada can make to Afghanistan and Afghan women is enabling the strengthening Rule of Law across the country. But of all the roads to travel in Afghanistan, this is possibly the longest, and the most complex.

Political will and accountability

“The establishment of equality under the law is critical to women’s struggle for equal rights. The extent to which women have been able to exercise their rights is dependent on the ability of the state to acknowledge, uphold and enforce these rights.”

- NAPWA, pg. 38

Changes must take place at multiple levels for a strong rule of law to be established in Afghan society. First, Afghanistan’s leaders must demonstrate their commitment to both a rule of law and women’s rights through concerted, action backed by stringent monitoring. Afghanistan has in fact already endorsed the importance of a gender-equitable rule of law, through their endorsement of the following protocols:

- The Constitution of Afghanistan, and particularly Articles 22, 44 and 54;
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- The Afghanistan Compact;
- The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS);
- The National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA)

To date, the broad consensus is that these protocols receive minimal attention and effort on the part of political leaders.

In a highly promising act, in 2001 the interim government established the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) to be the primary facilitator for integrating these promises practically throughout all government activity. But MoWA still struggles greatly, having never been granted the necessary resources or the authority required to hold ministries to account. Support to MoWA to date has been piece-meal and uncoordinated, and their development budget is just a fraction of the development budgets of other Ministries: a testament to the degree of importance placed on its work by those holding the public purse.

But criticizing MoWA for the difficulties experienced in integrating gender equity and non-discrimination across the government machine would be incorrect. Cabinet must make it their personal duty to ensure that gender thinking, planning and monitoring is made inherent to the workings of their ministries, and that a zero tolerance policy for rights violations against women is adopted. MoWA can facilitate, but cannot direct. Bureaucratic mainstreaming is no substitute for political will in making change happen.

The country’s leaders must also personally denounce the culture of impunity that allows warlords and other strongmen, including senior members of government, to get away with abuses against women, but very few currently do. Their reluctance sends a strong message regarding the value, correct or presumed, they place on women’s rights. Members of broader society cannot be expected to push back against socio-cultural norms harming women if their leaders are not inclined to do so themselves. Human Rights Watch and other organizations have done significant research into this matter, and have revealed disturbing trends in political acceptance of crimes against women and women leaders, including a number of presidential pardons.

Local Rule of Law

The rule of law is a culture as well as a practice, a “habit” formed by those accountable and those held to account, and permeates deep into local communities.

Local governance mechanisms must be made accountable for both upholding women’s rights and ensuring women’s voices resonate in local decision-making. Significant strides have been made in the last few years with the establishment of local Community Development Councils across the country, in which increasing numbers of women are participating. The development of women-only sub-councils in some areas is an important, positive move. But much work remains before all local governance structures include women’s participation adequately and fairly and decisions are made with women’s specific needs in mind. Mechanisms for monitoring gender equity changes should also be part of the local governance machinery.

Local rule of law services (such as police and judiciary) must become far more attuned to the rights of women, and made accountable to upholding and protecting those rights. Currently, new police recruits are trained in counter-insurgency policing, not community protection. The fact that women’s rights are equal to men’s, or the fact that many socio-cultural beliefs (such as that women aren’t allowed to leave their husbands) are not in fact enshrined in law, does not figure into their knowledge base when they take up their duties. Women are accordingly often punished instead of supported when they seek out the services that should be there to help them.

Women are often not aware that they can seek redress through justice mechanisms in Afghanistan, and justice officials, similarly, either have limited understanding of women’s rights or choose to ignore them, delaying their cases or finding in favour of their husbands or the perpetrators of violence against them. Traditional practices which egregiously violate women’s human rights include the exchange of women for settlement of inter-familial conflict or economic gain, and denial of women’s inheritance and bridal price rights. Women’s detention centers in Afghanistan are home to many women accused by spouses or male relatives of acts that do not constitute crimes according to Afghan law, such as running away from home or elopement. Women have very little recourse to legal services in the face of these abuses. Those responsible for forcing illegal marriages or withholding economic rights are not being prosecuted. When they are, court rulings are often influenced by bribes or patronage (neither of which are at the disposal of the majority of women), and sanctioned through silence by the culture of impunity. Equal, fair, and transparent access to justice is far from being realized in Afghanistan.

A renewed opportunity for redressing these serious problems and holding both government and service providers to account opened up in July of this year, at the international Kabul conference. The government of Afghanistan asserted its commitment to fully implement the National Priority Programs on good governance, rule of law, and human rights over the course of the next three years, which sets a high priority on expanding access to fair, equitable justice and ending impunity. These promises must be strenuously monitored by civil society and donors, and Afghanistan’s leaders must be held accountable to their promises.

As has been stated throughout this report, empowering Afghan women and addressing the many challenges they face absolutely requires those women having a voice in all aspects of planning, coordinating and decision making. In order for women to have a voice, there must be women leaders sitting at an equal level with men in all councils, ministries, procedural bodies and other organisms where planning, coordination and decision-making are taking place. In order for there to be those women leaders, women need to be provided with the support, training, resources and protection necessary for them to have the confidence to play their role and speak out on behalf of all women.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

I. *Foster – and then follow – the leadership of Afghan women*

69. **Foster women's leadership.** There are many women leaders across Afghanistan. The will is there, the courage is there, the natural capability is there. Many donors – but not as many as one might think – want to support these women leaders. Yet across the international community there seems to be an over-emphasis on leadership workshops for women, and an under-emphasis on ensuring they have the resources required to generate evidence, establish firm positions, and disseminate their messages. Today's leaders need financial backing to fund the core costs of their organizations, consult widely with the grassroots, and carry out their projects. They need training, but based on the needs they identify, which are often different from the needs international experts come prepared to meet. In short - Afghan women leaders must be set up for success, and this means building the space to make strong, independent decisions and maintain a consistent presence in the public sphere over the long-term.
70. **Foster the growth of leadership in rural areas.** Fostering leadership also means enabling women leaders in rural areas to emerge (the vast majority of today's leaders being city dwellers who are connected, in large measure, with other city women). National networks such as AWN are in place and work hard on this goal, but more is required to support the rural emergence. In areas where open, public leadership is still many years away from being possible, a strategy is needed to ensure that those women are routinely consulted in the decision-making processes of the women who seek to represent them. High levels of insecurity, or deep levels of conservatism, are the *reasons* to engage, not the reasons to defer engagement for better days. Innovation in outreach into these spaces is key, and it is in this regard that many NGOs, national and international alike, can play a significant role.
71. **Continue supporting the emergence of grassroots solidarity and advocacy groups.** This will be a critical task for many years ahead. While today's women leaders are at the fore, tomorrow's leaders must be found and nurtured, and many, many others must increase their awareness and capability to stand behind them, inform them, counsel them and direct them. Supporting the creation of solidarity groups is a fundamental way to do this. Solidarity groups are the space that grassroots women have to learn from each other, seek out resolution to group and individual problems, and create clarity on the societal issues they share that matter most to them, and how they feel most comfortable engaging in those issues. Support to solidarity groups must include training in basic literacy and numeracy (a fundamental part of empowerment), as well as awareness-raising on human rights, the rule of law, and the role of civil society.
72. **Base Canada's policy in Afghanistan on consultation with women.** If Canada truly wants to do well by Afghan women, they'll do what they say. This means two things. First, ensuring that Canadian policy regarding women's empowerment and protection in Afghanistan is intimately informed by the insights and goals of Afghan women themselves. This can only happen through extensive consultation, in concert with leadership support to enable women to determine and express their positions. Second, it means backing the voice of the women in policy dialogue and aid negotiations, and carrying that message into spaces where the women themselves do not have a presence, such as donor coordination meetings or the [national priority program clusters]. If Canada wishes to work for the betterment of Afghan women, they should hold themselves accountable to Afghan women.

73. **Protect women leaders.** Listen to women in positions of public leadership about what kind of risks they face and how they feel they might best be protected. Work with other donors and the Afghan government to create appropriate protection options for those women who choose to avail themselves of that. If women are to be encouraged to occupy public spaces, they must be offered the protection they require to occupy it safely.

II. Use all means to hold the Government of Afghanistan to their obligations regarding the rule of law and respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of women.

74. **Prevail upon the Afghan government to modify or strengthen laws currently stacked against women.** The confusions and inconsistencies which exist with regards to certain laws such as child and forced marriage and divorce must be clarified, as these confusions give rise to abusive interpretations. Other laws, such as those related to honour killing, must be repealed and re-written. Yet other acts of gender-based violence, such as rape, must be recognized as such and criminalized.

75. **Foster the development of social safety net legislation for vulnerable women.** As elaborated in Chapter 3, work with civil society and government to develop models for social security net legislation for widows and vulnerable female headed households. Other forms of legislation which *proactively* support women should also be considered.

76. **Be a critical friend.** The Amnesty Law is incompatible with UNSC Resolution 1325, the Afghan constitution, NAPWA, CEDAW, and the Action Plan for Peace, Reconciliation and Justice. Canada should not be shy in reminding the Afghan government of their commitments to these protocols and promote the repeal of the Amnesty Law, and all other laws that contravene them, on that basis. Canadian officials hesitant to speak out against national laws of a sovereign state should recall that these broader protocols are commitments that *the Afghans themselves have chosen to endorse*. Canada's role is to simply support the Afghan government to get back on its own track.

77. **Encourage the development of government employee incentive programs based on gender-integration criteria across all ministries.** Improving an individual's knowledge of women's rights within the justice, policing, or any other sector is insufficient to ensure real change takes place. Using the monitoring mechanisms referred to above, there should be performance assessments based on gender equity criteria, substantiated by rewards for good performance and penalties in those cases where performance indicators within each individual's control do not improve at the projected rate. Government officials from any sector accused of abusing women must be prosecuted swiftly and with the full weight of the law; pardons for convicted abusers should be made unlawful. Backing up the Afghan government's rhetorical commitment to gender integration with such incentive/sanction mechanisms across all ministries would demonstrate a real political commitment to gender equity, and would furthermore stimulate an environment of individual interest to integrate gender across the *Tashkil*.

78. **Lead the donor community in monitoring executive branch performance on mainstreaming women's rights within their own departments.** The executive branch must be held accountable to its own efforts to ensure those improvements happen. Canada should spearhead joint action with other donors and civil society to track how senior politicians push these issues to the forefront of their own ministries and departments and accept personal responsibility for performance indicators.

79. **Consistently denounce all attacks against women in public life.** Many women will hesitate to take up positions of leadership or other public roles if they feel that no effort is being made to protect them. Canada must strenuously denounce all attacks perpetrated against women on the basis of their activism or leadership, and maintain essential pressure on the Government of Afghanistan to investigate and prosecute these crimes. Setting precedents of public denunciation may also deter potential perpetrators who, until now, have acted within the relative security of a culture of impunity. Violence against women perpetrated by members of the police, justice, education and medical services must also be brought to swift and full justice.
80. **Advocate for the establishment of a public tracking system to monitor crimes against women leaders.** Evidence – most of which is anecdotal – suggests that crimes against women in public life are rarely brought to court and those which are result in acquittal or light sentences for the perpetrators. These cases must be rigorously monitored and the prosecution, conviction, and sentence completion records should be published.
81. **Demand a full legal review of the cases of women in Afghan prisons.** Priority action must be taken by senior officials at the Ministries of Justice and Interior, and facilitated by MOWA, to review the current legal caseload involving women prisoners. A determination should be made of the women whose cases have not been brought to trial whether their incarceration has legal justification; if not, they should be immediately released with all available support services put at their disposal. Those who have been formally accused or convicted according to the letter of the law should be given a case review by an independent arbiter to ensure their case was fairly heard, and to identify possible instances of corruption or patronage influencing their conviction.

III. Dedicate extensive resources to the improvement of rule of law services.

Local Governance

82. **Encourage greater gender accountability in the NSP.** Assist the Afghan government to develop support mechanisms for CDCs and Facilitating Partners to integrate gender equity more systematically in their work. A movement towards establishing accountability across all CDCs for upholding women's rights and representing women's priorities in community development planning should also be fostered. This process must be flexible and adaptive, and respond sensitively to the considerable variation of challenges found from region to region. Greater accountability is not achieved through the broad application of a heavy-handed approach. Encourage the MRRD to recruit professionals who can help with this process.
83. **Encourage the development of gender equity monitoring mechanisms.** Currently there is no consistent way of analysing the integration of gender sensitivity in local governance processes or the changes those efforts induce in the local area. Simple, practical mechanisms to capture both trends and anecdotal evidence, developed in conjunction with FPs and representative CDCs, would enable the NSP and its stakeholders to monitor the evolution of gender relations at the grassroots level with greater ease.
84. **Encourage men to take up public championship of women's rights.** In recognition of the vital role men must play in establishing gender equity, identify male champions to be part of local and nation-wide campaigns to raise awareness of women's constitutional rights and the importance of their participation in governance and peace-building. The inclusion of credible

and respected senior members of government could be an asset in this regard, and would enable the country's leaders to demonstrate their commitments to this cause.

85. **Encourage stronger communication between CDCs, women's sub-committees, and other local *Shuras*.** In some communities a plethora of governance structures engaging different members of the community or focusing on different issues has blossomed. These structures do not always communicate well, and sometimes work at cross-purposes to each other. Encourage NSP management to promote greater dialogue and joint decision-making within these groups, using simple, practical methods. Similarly, efforts should go into linking up some of the more established CDCs and women's sub-committees to broader movements that engender human rights, such as violence against women campaigns.
86. **Lobby the MRRD and NSP leadership to review and adopt the recommendations set out in the Canada-sponsored report, "A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils"²³.**

Policing

87. **Scale-up Canada's success with community-based policing.** Canada's model police project in Kandahar is based on the premise of "learning by doing". Through this initiative, Canada's own officers teach Afghan police about community safety, rule of law, victim services and public protection by accompanying them on foot patrol and providing 'real-time' training. Such practical support is a crucial way of instilling a genuine sense of the civilian policing function in a country where practical role models do not exist, and where in-class police training is far from adequate. By scaling up this model to other provinces, the RCMP can develop a vital niche in the counter-insurgency dominated focus of police sector reform in Afghanistan.
88. **Prioritize support to the scaling-up of Family Response Units.** FRUs – small, female-run divisions embedded in local police stations dedicated to supporting women and their families in a culturally-appropriate, private fashion – are a crucial part of the protection equation, particularly for women who have been abused. These units have been successful in trial runs around the country and now must be scaled-up and staffed adequately with trained officers. Information about this resource must be disseminated widely, as studies have suggested that many women living in the vicinity of these specialized centers are unaware of their existence. For most women, this would be the first, and perhaps most critical, port of call for finding help from formal support services.
89. **Pioneer Violence Against Women prevention programs.** In Canada, domestic abusers are referred to anger management counselling and other forms of support that help them to understand and address their violent behaviour. In Afghanistan, formal services that deal with domestic violence are responsive and punitive, but never preventative. Canada could serve the advancement of VAW reduction by spearheading thinking and pilot programs focused on prevention. The involvement of local community police forces in these initiatives would also help to establish a public understanding of their role in the maintenance of law and order.

²³ "A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils". The full report can be found at: <http://72.32.6.13/files/NSP%20Gender%20Study%20Report.pdf>

90. **Advocate strenuously for substantive changes to be made regarding the treatment of human rights in the regular training of new police recruits.** The approximate one half hour currently dedicated to gender in the regular police training program is not only of little practical use, but may, by virtue of its paucity, serve to *reinforce* the socio-cultural principle that women do not have equal rights before the law. Enormous effort must go into rectifying this grave oversight, and Canada should apply full diplomatic pressure to the government of Afghanistan and major police sector reform donors – in particular, the US – to rectify the situation. Human rights and gender must be built into the permanent policing curricula with special attention placed on violence against women. While these changes are being undertaken, Canada can support complementary programs that provide additional rule of law and human rights training for the police, such as the one provided by UNFPA.
91. **Sponsor the development of policing accountability mechanisms.** A much greater focus on accountability towards human and women's rights is required in the roll-out of police sector reform. Specific performance rating and reward systems must be designed around police treatment of women and how they handle GBV cases. Experience has shown that simply training recruits on their responsibilities is not sufficient to overcome the far more powerful forces of socio-cultural norms, patronage relationships, and the pressure officers might be subjected to by influential individuals in their locality.
92. **Support the Gender, Human Rights and Children Unit in the Ministry of Interior.** This unit faces huge challenges to ensure their priority issues are integrated across the police force. The team still requires extensive support, not simply in their priority themes, but also in research, analysis and strategic planning – essential skills for meeting the challenge before them.
93. **Integrate literacy training into Canada's community policing capacity building work.** Literacy training should be fitted as standard across all police training programs, and continue well past their introductory 8-week session. The MoE has instituted a literacy program for government employees who attend classes over the course of 3 years, and German teams in the north have a literacy training system oriented to policing. The Ministry of Interior also has a program, but it requires much strengthening and support. Canada would do well by both supporting the MoI literacy program and ensuring that literacy is at the core of its community policing capacity building programs.

Judiciary

94. **Increase support to programs which train justice officials on women's rights.** UNIFEM and a number of civil society organizations have dedicated programs to train lawyers, judges, and leaders of informal justice mechanisms about women's rights and their duties before the law in protecting those rights. It is difficult to expect gender equity indicators to improve within the system, or monitor individual performance of justice officials, if a minimum understanding of these rights and duties is not established.
95. **Put significant effort towards increasing public awareness about women's rights.** Public expectation – particularly the expectation of men – has a very strong influence on the justice sector with corruption and patronage still playing an endemic part in the determination of cases, and little to no public pushback on injustices when they occur. Increasing public awareness can foster a change of opinion in the public mindset and is one important part of the large and complicated equation of slowing and eventually reversing the trend of impunity in the courts. Programs that generate public awareness through media campaigns, door-to-door mobilization, and the development of solidarity and support groups have experienced

steady successes in this regard. Establishing relationships with local mullahs who can disseminate knowledge on Islam's inherent respect for women's rights is a strong part of some of these programs, and this model should be furthered.

96. **Sponsor the development of formal judicial monitoring mechanisms.** Tracking improvements in gender equity and respect for human rights is difficult without a rigorous monitoring system of judicial performance on the basis of gender. This should include statistical analyses on the number of women who bring their cases before the court, how long it takes for women's cases to be heard, whether rulings are equitable between men and women across the board, how many incarcerations are recorded each year for actions which are not unlawful, and so forth. Today that function is undertaken by civil society organizations, such as *Medica Mondiale*, who have established their own database. While civil society should continue its own watchdog tracking role, such a system must also be established within the Ministry of Justice itself. Canada should emphasize the importance of this, put resources towards this end, and ensure that civil society play a part in determining the specifications of the mechanisms selected.
97. **Expand focus beyond criminal justice.** As important as the focus on violence against women and other criminal injustices is, there are many rights that must be protected and respected through civil mechanisms as well. A woman's economic rights – such as her access to *maher* and *miros* – are critical to her empowerment and must also be enforced. The protection of civil rights such as a woman's freedom of thought, expression, religion and movement are at a nascent stage in Afghanistan and require nurturing. Canada could make important inroads towards the long-term objective of establishing a culture of women's civil rights by supporting civil society groups who are active in these areas.
98. **Support the 'Afghanization' of international women's rights protocols.** International frameworks such as EAW and CEDAW are sometimes cited by women's lawyers in support of their arguments. The response from judges is often an eschewing of those protocols on the basis that Afghanistan has its own laws and ways of looking at the world, and rules established outside its borders play no part in it. Clearly, work needs to be done to establish these protocols into the national jurisprudence, and "Afghanize" their relevance and applicability to cases in the country. Groups such as the Asia Foundation have significant experience in developing learning tools that harmonize, for example, Islam and the laws of Afghanistan, in a way that target audiences find understandable and agreeable. These sorts of harmonization initiatives could work well in matters of international and national legal frameworks, and should benefit from Canadian support.
99. **Lobby the ARTF to strengthen its gender integration mechanisms within the justice sector reform program.** Currently the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund has weak accountability mechanisms on gender, and has been critiqued for poor performance on gender in the justice sector reform program. As a donor, Canada should take it upon itself to see that these elements are strengthened in coalition with other donors.

Aid Effectiveness



Building equality is lots of mortar and once in a while a brick is put in place with lots more mortar. It is a lot of work and it takes time.

Nancy Ruth, co-founder of CoolWomen.ca and Leaf

The current lack of a clear women's rights champion in the international donor community in Afghanistan is not simply due to the fact that none have selected it as their driving policy priority, but because no donor is currently structured in a way that enables them to fill that role. This is a position Canada could fill naturally by building on its current strengths, reinforcing its dedication to women's empowerment across the breadth of its engagement portfolio, and committing to simple but powerful changes within its internal structure. Such a commitment would require the allocation of a significantly greater proportion of Canada's resources to developing or acquiring the expertise needed to spearhead new, evidence-based, and value-added thinking on the question of women's rights, and ensuring that civil society – and in particular, Afghan women's groups – are supported to the greatest possible extent to act and influence on their own behalf. Shifts both practical and political in nature, and the development of tougher stances, would have to be developed within Canada's diplomatic priority areas, its engagement in multi-lateral donor and sector coordination mechanisms, its individual grant structure, how it monitors its own performance, and even how it procures goods and services. Becoming the industry leader would require a full house effort.

But perhaps most fundamentally, this shift would require Canada to bolster its commitment to fostering changes that are less visible than the construction of schools or dams, in favour of addressing the more subtle barriers that keep women from fulfilling their rights and potential. It is here where we believe Canada can particularly excel. Within the Afghanistan donor community there has been a strong drive towards increasing the *availability* of services such as education and medical facilities, the courts system, and micro-finance or vocational training opportunities. Far less attention has been paid to the barriers that hinder women's ability to avail themselves of those services, such as the permission many require to seek them out, cultural specifications to the physical or social design of the project that make women feel more comfortable in visiting those spaces, or even increasing basic awareness on the importance of seeking them out in the first place. CARE believes this strong inclination to increasing the *availability* of services over the *access* to services to a large degree accounts for the persistent difference between HDI and GDI values as described at the beginning of Chapter 2. While access barriers are often identified by donors and implementing partners, they are often relegated to the "risks and assumptions" columns of logical frameworks and are rarely fully resourced. While Canada has performed better than most donors in this regard (particularly within its NGO grant mechanisms), its performance is still chequered across the breadth of its portfolio. The post-2011 realignment of Canada's commitment in Afghanistan is the perfect opportunity to strengthen its performance across the board.

This chapter offers some initial insights on the kind of actions this commitment would require. Recommendations are divided into the categories of Aid Effectiveness Principles, Developing Leadership in the Donor Community, Creating Portfolio Coherence, and Efforts on the Home Front.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

I. Principles of Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan

100. **See the problem holistically.** CARE's experiences around the world have proven that genuine, sustainable women's empowerment is only possible when barriers in three distinct areas are addressed in tandem: **individual agency** (a women's own understanding of her rights, her personal skill sets, her level of confidence, the assets she has at her disposal, and so forth); **social relations** (how that woman relates to the men of her family and community as well as other power-holders who hold influence over her self-determination); and the **enabling environment** (the political, legislative, or cultural framework which shapes what is accepted and not accepted, possible and not possible, in terms of her ability to act freely, seek employment or divorce, access basic services, and so forth). Efforts dedicated to improving empowerment through only one or two of these three areas in a woman's life will necessarily be curtailed by the limitations of the third. To have a radical impact, Canada must ensure its attention sufficiently analyses and addresses barriers and opportunities in all three of these spheres.
101. **Engage men.** One of the most conspicuous gaps in donor support to women's empowerment across the above three areas of focus in Afghanistan is the engagement of men. The vast majority of the funding made available specifically for women's empowerment programming has focused on the women themselves, with relatively less attention paid to the ways (both direct and indirect, overt and subtle) in which men can be made a central and powerful part of the change process. For many donors this is due to a fear to venture into "culture change"; unfortunately, this fear has resulted in many donors steering altogether clear of more sensitive questions – such as the permission women often require from male members of their family to seek services such as basic health care – without undertaking a full exploration of what part of those equations might be cultural, and what might be, for example, due to a lack of information. Canada would add significant value to the overall empowerment effort if it developed expertise in this area.
102. **Focus on access.** In an aid environment focused predominantly on increasing the availability of services and support to the people of Afghanistan, Canada can champion the more difficult questions of *access*: addressing the barriers hindering women from either connecting with, or fully benefiting from, the services provided. Through ensuring full resources are made available within Canada's own portfolio to both clearly identify, and strategically address, barriers women face in accessing services, and by lobbying other donors and government ministries to do the same, Canada can occupy a critical niche in the Afghanistan aid environment. Canada's own successes to date have proven that valuing the critical importance of community mobilization, and properly financing professional community mobilizers to work street by street, family by family – is often the lynchpin to success, and should be a major (and fully financed) component of Canada's work.
103. **Build on your strengths; scale up what works.** Although small in size and in proportion to Canada's overall portfolio, CIDA's experiments supporting a few NGOs to undertake flexible, multi-year, multi-focus programming as part of an area-comprehensive

approach make Canada one of the strongest donors in Afghanistan at the level of NGO grants. Those NGOs who have benefited from this balance of flexibility and continuity have reported strong results in their operating areas, and their programs are arguably amongst the most successful interventions that Canada has supported. Scale this model up. This works.

104. **Take your time.** Development in Afghanistan is neither overnight nor linear. Often it takes years of working with men and local leaders before implementing agencies are granted the desired level of access to work with women; other times, it is the trust generated over a decade of relationship-building around tangible issues such as income generation that enables new conversations about rights or gender to take place. Quick impact projects which try to incorporate sensitive topics are far more likely to fail. To maximize effectiveness, Canada should minimize the short-term, “project” mentality in favour of longer-term, more iterative programming that builds success upon success.
105. **Increase Canada’s focus on rural women.** Promoting economic stability is one of the most effective ways of empowering women in Afghanistan, and in recognition of this, many donors invest heavily in technical and vocational training, micro-finance, and other forms of income generation. However there is a marked tendency to offer these opportunities only in urban areas, where access to greater numbers of women is easier and where a greater proportion of women already enjoy some form of freedom to engage in those programs. The challenge of promoting economic stability for women in rural areas is much harder, and Canada could add significant value to the overall effort of the aid community if it focused more attention on this area.
106. **Go to where the need is.** Kandahar has been Canada’s principal focus for the past 4 to 5 years. The current shift in Canada’s engagement presents an excellent opportunity to broaden that focus to include other areas of the country on a more equitable basis. All of Afghanistan has been impacted by the conflict, and some provinces are badly under-supported in comparison to the funds and attention placed on provinces such as Kandahar and Helmand where the kinetic activity has been the greatest. With troop-contributing nations by and large expected to continue restricting their non-multilateral aid portfolios to the areas where their forces are, CARE encourages Canada to take a more needs-based approach to its geographic positioning, and help to service some of the critical gaps in support where they exist.
107. **Go local.** Canada already has a strong capacity for flexible planning and decision-making, and this approach should be continued as a key to future programming success. Sometimes the barriers hindering women’s empowerment are directly conflict-related, other times there is a lack of local awareness on certain topics that requires rectifying, and yet other times the conservative nature of the community requires focused understanding to understand where the barriers and opportunities are. Programming is only successful if it is based entirely on local realities, and if implementers have the flexibility to actively seek out local responses to local challenges.
108. **Build upon spaces that exist.** Local governance structures such as CDCs, community *Shuras*, and village education committees are excellent entry points for connecting with women and fomenting their participation in the public sphere. Several NGOs attest to the critical part these local bodies have played in their own successful experiences. Encourage implementing partners to build their work wherever possible into the NSP platform and other ongoing local governance mechanisms. At the same time, scale up the “NSP Plus” model in specific areas to incorporate other governance and development issues.

109. **Support Afghan civil society as a key agent of change through the provision of long-term core funding.** Civil society groups have come a long way since 2002, and several women's civil society groups in particular are remarkably powerful. Bolster the growth of representational civil society to research, catalyze, and engage in policy debate and performance monitoring through the provision of long-term core funding. With some structural realignment (particularly, by accepting multi-year proposals), Canada's Gender Fund could be an excellent strategic vehicle for this.
110. **Develop a training and accreditation system for Afghan implementing NGOs.** In the field, Afghan NGOs have a better reach to vulnerable communities than any international implementing organization (UN or NGO), yet they are routinely declared ineligible to act as direct implementing agencies by international donors. In partnership with other major donors, develop training and accreditation platforms to bring Afghan NGOs into the core of international aid architecture. Their inclusion would expand the reach and effectiveness of development and humanitarian aid dramatically.
111. **Start from where you are.** Success in Afghanistan – as in all other countries – must be calibrated on the continuum from where women are now to where they aspire to go. What can be achieved in a few months or years in the justice sector where there is no history of a civic rule of law? What is the reasonable progression of women's engagement in, towards leadership of, CDCs across the country? In many areas, boosting women into a position of business leadership is a pie-in-the-sky goal and not particularly helpful. Enabling them to meet a communal building each day to work on their projects together, on the other hand, might be considered a major success. It's important that Canada balance its need to see visible, quantifiable change, with what's real, and celebrate the genuine successes that are fomented.

II. Establishing Leadership within the International Donor Community

112. **Become the leading flag-bearer of women's rights within multi-lateral donor and coordination mechanisms.** Canada participates in many sector coordination bodies and clusters, as well as donor coordination forums such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the Joint Coordination & Monitoring Board (JCMB)²⁴. CARE calls on Canada to be the consistent – and persistent – defender and promoter of women's rights and empowerment in all bodies where it is active. Where necessary, Canada can take upon itself the introduction of possible improvements, such as earmarking 1% of all funds channelled through the ARTF towards ensuring there exists adequate and authoritative gender expertise on the ground, or demanding that far more strenuous standards on gender integration are incorporated into multi-lateral projects, such as police sector reform. While Canada may not have significant individual influence over the various UN agencies to which it contributes, a toughened stance in negotiations and increased lobbying with other donors should have some impact on the design of UN programs. Canada can furthermore engage its representatives at the UN New York and Geneva offices to push agency HQs, and encourage the other member states to do the same.
113. **Facilitate the inclusion of women's voices in policy debate.** As Canada rightfully insists, development in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led. Here, too, Canada can fill a currently empty niche by ensuring that the voice of civil society is either directly or indirectly heard in policy dialogue. Canada can broker the inclusion of civil society in development

²⁴ Find the terms of reference of the JCMB at: http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/JCMB_TOR_-_English.pdf

planning, budgeting, and monitoring; and where that is not possible, ensure that proper research on civil society views informs dialogue and decision-making.

114. **Focus on accountability.** Much legislation framing Afghanistan's commitment to women's rights has been written since 2002. Holding power-holders accountable to those commitments is still problematic. Part of this difficulty is a still weak policy monitoring and social auditing skill set within civil society. Similarly, international donors have often taken a more delicate approach to their own accountability mechanisms, often holding implementing partners to account for progress in priority areas instead of the government those implementing partners are tasked to support, but who are ultimately accountable for change. Less pressure has been exerted to hold the government of Afghanistan to account to its women's rights commitments through direct performance monitoring – far less, for example, than the pressure exerted to reduce corruption – and linking that performance rating to the negotiation of new allocations of aid. Canada could fulfil a critical niche by developing expertise on gender monitoring in sector reform for its own employment through donor and sector coordination bodies, and building the capacity of civil society to do the same for their employment in the public spaces they engage in or can carve out for themselves with these new tools. By enabling civil society to play the role of watchdog, Canada and other donors can also carry strong civil society messages into policy dialogue arenas to which civilian groups have not yet been granted access.
115. **Fully support MOWA's duties to facilitate women's empowerment across all Afghan ministries.** This should happen on two fronts at the same time. First, dedicate technical support and resources to build MOWA's internal capacity, in close coordination with other donors, and according to MOWA's own priorities. Second, reinforce MOWA's message in donor coordination meetings and dialogue with ministries, by ensuring the requirements for gender mainstreaming stipulated by MOWA towards the achievement of NAPWA are met in a ministerial plans and budgets.
116. **Connect the local to the national.** Stakeholders consulted in the preparation of these recommendations all concur that there is a disabling disconnect between what is happening at the local level in Afghanistan and what is happening at the national level. Lessons of the integration of women in the NSP program do not filter up to impact on how women can be supported in their involvement of national politics. The voice of women at the grassroots level, and their development priorities, are rarely heard during planning and decision-making within ministries and international funding mechanisms.
117. **Become an industry leader on aid effectiveness & women's empowerment.** Canada should fund extensive research on past and existing aid mechanisms to measure their meaningful impact on women's empowerment in Afghanistan. Canada's sponsorship of the report, "*A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils*"²⁵ is an excellent first step towards developing Canada's position at the vanguard of aid effectiveness research on this theme.

III. Developing Portfolio Coherence Around Women's Empowerment

118. **Plan, implement, and measure Canada's overall engagement in Afghanistan through the lens of its contribution to improved human rights – and women's rights in particular.** CIDA, DFAIT, and all government departments engaged in Afghanistan should

²⁵ "A Study of Gender Equity through the National Solidarity Programme's Community Development Councils". The full report can be found at: <http://72.32.6.13/files/NSP%20Gender%20Study%20Report.pdf>

agree rights-based objectives and metrics of success against which Canada's contributions are planned, monitored and reported to Cabinet Committee and the Canadian public. This would calibrate Canada's important direct contributions (such as the construction of schools, the training of health care professionals, the capacity building of civil society, etc.) as key intermediate indicators towards an overall human rights goal, as opposed to being ends in themselves.

119. **Turn every engagement into an opportunity for empowerment.** Avoid pigeon-holing gender into a gender fund, or relaxing expected standards of gender integration in areas which seemingly have little to do with women's empowerment, such as policy development in trade agreements or strengthening the technical capacity of the *Tashkil*. The signature projects are one area, for example, where gender integration has been historically insufficient, despite the excellent practices elsewhere in the portfolio. Women's empowerment should become a policy priority for everything that Canada does, whether or not the projects themselves focus on women or women's rights.
120. **Undertake a 'portfolio coherence' review on women's empowerment.** CARE believes some donors unwittingly undermine their potential impact on women's empowerment due to lack of consistency across the breadth of their engagement portfolio (NGO grants, bi-lateral and multi-lateral support, and technical and diplomatic engagement). For example, a strong focus on increasing women's rights awareness in the small grants portfolio might be undermined by a lack of emphasis on women's rights training in police sector reform, to which the same donor may be contributing through a multi-lateral funding mechanism. A portfolio coherence review would help to identify areas of strength and inconsistency and provide the basis for lobbying for changes where they are needed.
121. **Employ Canada's diplomatic leverage to promote women's rights at every possible occasion.** During the Kabul Conference the Canadian government was recognized and applauded for its intervention on gender; in early October, Minister Cannon committed Canada to the development of a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on women. Canada should build on these precedents, not hesitate to raise the red flag when threats to women's rights emerge, and be a critical friend when necessary. In contexts such as Afghanistan, the emergence of a culture of gender equity doesn't happen by itself, nor does it happen through the more routine measures of gender mainstreaming alone. Pressure must be exerted at the level of the country's most senior decision makers. This is a very difficult task, and many intervening governments avoid it. CARE calls on Canada to maintain and increase pressure on these issues where other intervening governments fail to do so.
122. **Consult civil society.** Civil society consultation in Afghanistan is one of Canada's strengths, but much more could be achieved if this practice were to be extended. Create a civil society consultation plan by outlining all of the areas where a keen local perspective would support Canada's decision making on target changes, strategic entry points, and approaches, and then develop a consultation calendar. Explore various facilitation mechanisms to stimulate dynamic participation and elicit the most helpful results, and make sure those results are recorded and heard by decision-makers in Ottawa. Civil society consultation should also be instituted as a regular practice within Canada.
123. **Align Canada's procurement policies to its women's empowerment objectives.** When procuring goods and services in or for Afghanistan, look first and foremost to procure from local women's producer groups and service providers, accepting that sometimes this option will be more expensive or time-consuming due to their small scale and extensive use of

manual labour. Require implementing partners of Canada's grant agreements to do the same – and request a justification if this option is not selected where women's groups are able to produce or vend.

124. **Develop a due diligence process** to ensure that goods or services not procured through women's groups or other local producer groups are procured from sources with no record of abuse against women or broader human rights abuses.
125. **Monitor Canada's contributions towards the achievement of NAPWA.** The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) is Afghanistan's central strategy for women's empowerment, and Canada should report on its contributions towards this in the same way it reports on its contributions towards the MDGs. Treasury Board should require a description of how plans align with NAPWA as a precursor to budget approval, and CIDA should institute similar requirements in the grant approval process with implementing partners. Importantly, this should not be limited to projects with a women's empowerment objective, but to *all programs* that Canada sponsors.
126. **Improve coordination and information sharing between CIDA and DFAIT.** Both departments have rich experiences in the country and can learn much from each other. The efforts of CIDA to involve women in governance and peace-building at the local level can and should inform the DFAIT strategy on how best to promote the engagement of women on those processes at the national level.
127. **Appoint a gender advisor to DFAIT.** Canada's political section in Afghanistan, and the ways in which Canada uses diplomatic pressure to influence power-holders to respect and protect women's rights, could be greatly enhanced by the appointment of a full-time gender advisor who could also act as liaison to CIDA.
128. **Incorporate a Do No Harm Approach into Canada's analysis and planning.** This will illuminate actions that might produce negative impacts on women through the generation of unproductive community friction, or place undue risk on women and their families through programming that is less sensitive to the nature of the conflict. This will likely mean reducing the use of Canadian insignia in more areas, and revising quite significantly the signature project approach to education provision in the country.

IV. Focus on the home front

129. **Report Canada's contributions on women's empowerment to the Canadian public.** Women's rights in Afghanistan matter to Canadians. Establish an annual report outlining Canada's efforts and progress in support of Afghan women. Explain that results will take time, and trust Canadians to appreciate this. Accountability to tax-payers is not about showing immediate or quick-fix success but genuine success.
130. **Bolster the gender technical team of the new Afghanistan program.** CIDA currently has strong advisory capacity on gender within the ATF, but the scale of the challenge requires the appointment of more than one individual to oversee the entire portfolio. Although the ATF will likely be scaled-down to program status in 2011, the number of gender experts on the team should increase in order to support a greater prioritization on women's empowerment and women's rights.

131. **Treasury board should hold individual programs to account on their gender budgeting and performance.** The Treasury Board has already introduced a gender analysis component to its requirements, but these could be made more operative, and implementers could be held more accountable to gender audits.
132. **Cabinet Committee should request 6-monthly progress reports on the roll-out of the corporate policy on gender equity in Afghanistan.** Canada's leaders must take direct responsibility to ensure that the policy doesn't stay on paper.

Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.

*Rosemary Brown (1930-2003) - Canadian politician,
& first black woman elected to a Canadian
parliamentary body (B.C. Legislature -1973)*



Acronym Table & Glossary

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghanistan Relief
ACSF	Afghan Civil Society Forum
ADA	Afghan Development Association
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau
ANP	Afghan National Police
APRP	Afghanistan Peace & Reintegration Program
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
ATF	Afghanistan Task Force
AWN	Afghan Women's Network
ACRU	Ariana Construction & Rehabilitation Unit
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CBE	Community-Based Education
CDC	Community Development Council
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COIN	Counter-Insurgency (strategy)
CSO	Central Statistics Organization (of Afghanistan)
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAP	Humanitarian Action Plan
HDI	Human Development Index
HPD	Health Promotion Department (Ministry of Public Health)
HRRAC	Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium
I-ANDS	Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
JCMB	Joint Coordination & Monitoring Board
LSCBE	Lower Secondary Community-Based Education
MCH	Maternal & Child Health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
<i>Maher</i>	The property or money that is given from husband to wife as part of a marriage agreement
<i>Miros</i>	Inheritance rights
MoE	Ministry of Education

MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Program
NSP Plus	National Solidarity Program "Plus" – a model of expanded NSP programming undertaken in certain areas
OMID	'Opportunities for Mother and Infant Development' project
PACE-A	Partnership for Advancing Community-Based Education in Afghanistan
<i>Patu</i>	Traditional Afghan blanket worn on the body
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
<i>Shura</i>	Local leadership governing body
SMC	School Management Committee
<i>Tashkil</i>	Afghan civil service roster
UNHCR	(The Office of the) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEC	Village Education Committee
WFP	World Food Program



CARE Canada

9 Gurdwara Road, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario K2E 7X6

Phone: (613) 228-5600
Fax: (613) 226-5777

info@care.ca
www.care.ca

