

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Afghanistan Coordinating Body Agency for Relief
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ALAAN	Afghanistan Legal Aid Agencies Network
ALBA	Afghanistan Legal Bar Association
CPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CRLWG	Criminal Law Reform Working Group
EVAW Law	Elimination of Violence against Women Law
GBV	Gender-based violence
LAP	Legal Aid Support Programme
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
NAP	National Action Plan
PSHP	Psychosocial and Health Programme
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
VAW	Violence against women

MA staff participated in the demonstration concerning Farkhunda case
© Medica Afghanistan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Medica Afghanistan (MA) provided high quality legal and psychosocial services to women and girls survivors of sexual and gender – based violence (SGBV). We specialize in the provision of trauma sensitive psychosocial and legal services that focus on trauma and stress relief. In addition, MA always combines direct services with advocacy and has vast experience and expertise in the field of legal aid and psychosocial services. MA has significantly contributed to the development of many policies and strategies to better support survivors of SGBV in Afghanistan.

Medica continued to advocate for the protection and the implementation of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law in 2016. Our advocates organized and participated in all-day working group meetings, released a position paper, posters, and reports to inform the public and stakeholders on the importance of the EVAW law. In addition, our lawyers recorded the EVAW Law implementation by the justice system and kept track of the challenges and obstacles. As part of Afghan civil society, Medica also held a number of joint advocacy meetings to prevent the EVAW Law from being incorporated into the parliamentary agenda for its revision as it would likely have some negative consequences for the law that might lead to the decriminalization of child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, reignite unproductive debate and draw unwanted attention to the EVAW Decree.

It was also decided that the preventive and punitive parts of the EVAW Decree would be separated and only the latter would be incorporated into the Penal Code. Medica took a stand against this decision. We demanded that EVAW Law should be protected as a standalone law but should be read in conjunction with the Penal Code. We advocated with governmental judicial institutions such as the Criminal Law Reform Working Group (CRLWG) of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to include a provision into the Penal Code, which makes reference to the standalone EVAW Law. Our position paper caught the attention of actors in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. As a result of

our position paper and other civil society allies' efforts, the EVAW Law was dropped from the parliament debate agenda and became part of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) agenda for discussion.

As an active member of the CRLWG, Medica also contributed to the reform process of the criminal penal code (CPC). We suggested gender sensitive amendments to the CPC. Additionally, we undertook an analysis of the EVAW Law punitive articles that have been integrated into the CPC. The amendments stem from best practices in legislation and reflect ground realities that Medica's lawyers confront in courts on a daily basis. We have experienced that the rather broad nature of some legislation gives judges the rein and discretion to introduce discriminatory interpretations. As such, in our amendments, we tried to limit judicial discretion by providing clear interpretive directions for the courts to follow. For each article we amended, we were guided by our need to better serve our clients and ensure justice for survivors of violence.

Medica along other women's rights organizations was also the key advocate for pushing the Family Law ratification in the meetings with the President and the First Lady, which resulted in the inclusion of the Family Law into the Brussels Conference agenda. As result of Medica's advocacy efforts on the Family law, the President and the First Lady finally agreed on a separate Family Law. In this regard, UN Women approached MA to become a member of the technical working group to shape the work plan. MA participated in several consultation meetings including one-on-one meetings to share MA's significant experience, feedback, and comments to further enrich the plan.

MA also conducted trainings on the importance of marriage registration with staff from the Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs, mullahs, and members of the Scholars' Council. The trainers encouraged religious leaders and representatives from the Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs from Samangan, Herat, and Balkh to combat child marriage in their communities. The goal of the training was

Medica's Legal Aid Program (LAP) had

1614 clients of whom
211 were girls.

psychosocial counselors and
psychologists met with

1413

clients in individual and group
settings

Educational services
are also an integral part of
Medica's work with

220 students,
who graduated.

social workers were able to attend
the needs of

438 women

to change religious leaders' and Department of Hajj representatives' ideas on the role and importance of women in the Afghan society. The latter also paved the ground for coordination between the court and the Department of Hajj for facilitating the acquirement of marriage certificates.

Medica was also successful in increasing access to justice for women in 2016. Medica's Legal Aid Program (LAP) had 1614 clients of whom 211 were girls. MA supported women through legal aid services including criminal defense, representation in civil proceedings, mediation, raising legal awareness, and providing legal advice. As of December 2016, 858 cases were ongoing and 756 were closed. MA had 1351 clients, who benefitted from legal advice, 331 criminal cases, 437 civil cases, 388 mediation cases. 458 women availed of MA legal advice only.

Additionally, during 2016 MA's social workers were able to attend the needs of 438 women by establishing a link between women and their families, by creating safe re-integration, by resolving the problems of family non-compliance, and winning the release on bail of the clients who were in prison, detention centers, or juvenile centers. In order to ensure the effectiveness of re-integration, the social workers made follow-up visits to clients' homes or contacted them over the phone.

In 2016, MA's psychosocial counselors and psychologists met with 1413 clients in individual and group settings in all three provinces. Psychosocial counseling helped clients to better cope with trauma and to resume their normal lives. Among these, 1041 clients were released after their symptoms had improved.

Educational services are also an integral part of Medica's work with 220 students, who graduated. Aside regular lectures, once a month our classes were regularly visited by one of our lawyers and one of our counsellors.

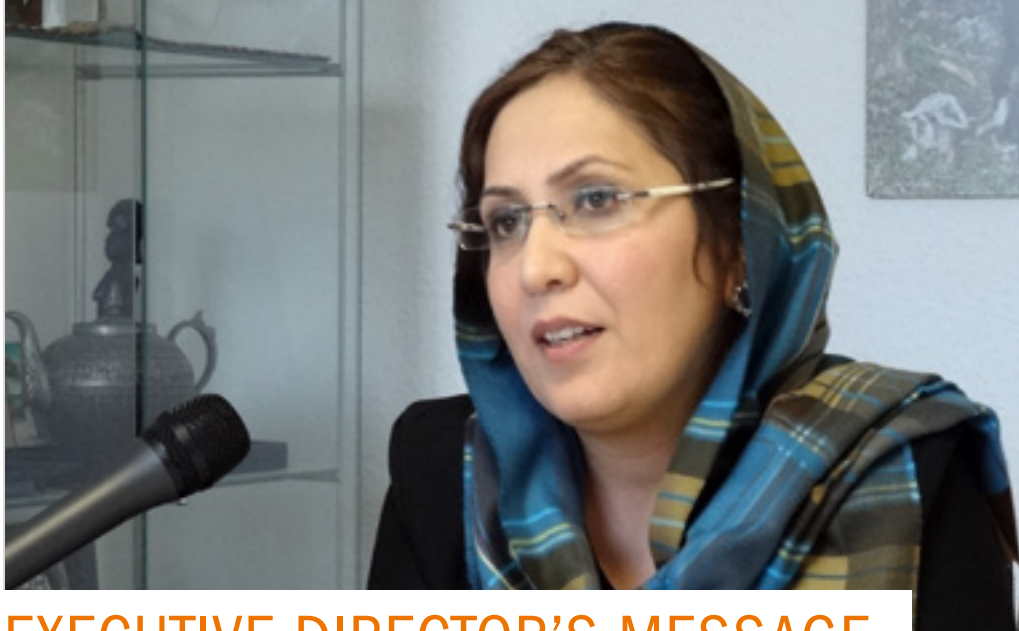
The most promising primary prevention interventions to address GBV include awareness raising training for men and women, mass media campaigns, awareness-raising activities to reach a larger percentage of the population, and the creation of role models for families. Medica's lawyers provided legal awareness to 192 clients from prison, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Center (JRC), peer support group of PSHP and literacy program students. Sessions included topics such as the right to education, different types of separation, right to select a life partner, child custody, right to health, divorce, breaking the engagement, inheritance, and the EVAW Law. Legal awareness prevents women from committing illegal acts, it boosts their self-esteem, and self-confidence, which is a crucial element for solving their case.

In 2016, MA conducted a variety of trainings for police, workers at shelters, university students, psychology lecturers, medical and health staff, prosecutors, the ALAAN Network members, among others and provided internships for students of psychology. Medica also maintained a healthy media presence by appearing in various news outlets.

Medica provides internships for students of psychology and law.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE	6
WHO ARE WE	7
OUR MISSION	7
OUR VALUES	7
OUR TEAM	7
OUR PROGRAMS	8
PROJECTS 2016	9
A) LOBBYING FOR EVAW LAW IMPLEMENTATION	9
Progress EVAW LAW Implementation Report.	9
Establishment of EVAW Special Courts	10
Advocacy for Preventing EVAW Law Debate in the Parliament	10
Position Paper EVAW as Stand-Alone Law	10
Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code	11
Panel Talk on EVAW and Penal Code at Informal Gender Working Group and Meetings with Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Working Group	12
B) FAMILY LAW.	12
C) PROMOTION MARRIAGE REGISTRATION	13
National Action Plan on Elimination of Early and Child Marriage	13
Sensitization Workshop for Religious and Locals Leaders on Marriage Registration	14
D) INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES	14
Civil and Criminal Cases	14
Mediation	16
E) ENHANCING THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE AND WOMEN AT RISK	17
F) EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELING AND SUPPORT ..	17
G) EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	19
H) COMMUNITY AWARENESS, MOBILIZATION, AND PARTICIPATION	20
I) VAW AWARENESS RAISING AND CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS	21
J) ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING	22
Recommendations Afghanistan's National Development Framework	23
Kabul Symposium on Afghan Women's Empowerment.	23
APPRECIATION LETTERS IN 2016	24
FINANCIAL REPORT	25
CLIENT DATABASE	27



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The four decades of prolonged armed conflict in Afghanistan have contributed to considerable levels of instability, insecurity, violence, a weak rule of law, poverty, and underdevelopment. These factors have obstructed the effective realization and enjoyment of human rights for the people of Afghanistan, especially women and children, who have suffered disproportionately and continue to face severe challenges for realizing their basic rights.

In Afghanistan men, boys, women, and girls are victims of GBV (gender-based violence). However, women and girls are disproportionately affected. Violence against women (VAW) remains a pervasive problem in Afghanistan, including the harshest forms of physical violence that are practiced unabatedly still today. In 2016, a man cut off the nose of his 22-year-old wife in Faryab and only a couple of months later, a 14-year-old pregnant girl was set on fire by her husband and her parents-in-law to punish her father for eloping with a cousin of the girl's husband.¹ In Kabul, at least three separate acid attacks against women were reported in the summer 2016, according to local and international news reports.² The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in the first six months of 1,394 (2015/16) registered 2,579 cases of violence against women. The latter represents a 7% increase compared to the previous reporting period.³ These figures are telling on the immense challenges that women face and the need of changes in terms of policies, service provision, and community understanding in Afghanistan.

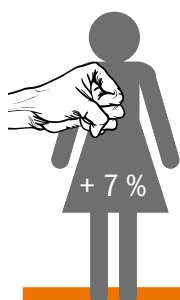
Despite all the challenges, our team continues to work with passion, commitment, and perseverance. Our colleagues – in Kabul, Herat and Balkh provinces – have managed

to provide legal, psychosocial and educational service to more than 3000 survivors of SGBV and trained hundreds of professionals from the social, legal, educational, and health fields on multiple issues related to the ramification of violence against women (VAW). Besides providing direct services to women, Medica also advocated for better protection of women's rights. We lobbied at the political level for gender sensitive laws, incorporated women-friendly articles into the Family Law, commented on the draft of the Criminal Code, modified marriage certificates, and campaigned for marriage registration to prevent child and forced marriages.

We hope you take inspiration from the testimonials and stories shared by our beneficiaries and staff. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and generosity of our distinguished supporters and extraordinary staff and partners, and most importantly, not without the courage and unshakable belief in positive change demonstrated every day by our clients and beneficiaries.

I am grateful to Medica's staff, volunteers, and consultants for their persistence and excellence in implementation of programs and activities. I am also thankful for the confidence that our clients and beneficiaries have placed on us. To gain the trust of a client is an incredible accomplishment. To deliver on that trust is even more significant, and we operate every day with the understanding of this powerful responsibility.

For the foreseeable future, survivors of violence and terror seeking help from our staff will have to rely on international goodwill and private donors. If you are interested in learning more about ways to get involved in this endeavor, we invite you to visit our website: www.medicaafghanistan.org



... registered 2,579
cases of violence
against women
(in 6 month).

- 1 Amnesty International, "Afghanistan 2016/17," <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/afghanistan/report-afghanistan/>
- 2 Fariba Nawa, "Kabul's women seek refuge indoor after a series of acid attacks", <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2016/08/10/kabuls-women-look-for-safety-indoors-after-a-series-of-acid-attacks/>
- 3 AIHRC, "Elimination of violence against women – 1394", 2016, http://www.aihrc.org.af/home/research_report/5170

WHO ARE WE

OUR MISSION

MA is a non-profit, non-governmental Afghan women's organization working towards the elimination VAW with the provision of legal aid, psychosocial support, capacity building and advocacy. Medica seeks to improve the quality of women's lives through direct psychosocial and legal services and by raising awareness and building capacity in the field of health, education, and law. Medica is headquartered in Kabul with sub offices in the provinces of Balkh and Herat.

We aim to end VAW by:

- » Providing the highest quality, inter-disciplinary legal and psychosocial services for women
- » Increasing women's knowledge of their rights
- » Increasing women's confidence and self-esteem
- » Advocating for implementation of laws to improve women's lives
- » Changing discriminatory attitudes towards women

Working with governmental and non-governmental agencies to address VAW

OUR VALUES

- » We are women working for women
- » We believe in unconditional solidarity with women
- » We work inclusively with all women irrespective of ethnic, class, religious beliefs, age or other differences
- » We promote nondiscriminatory attitude between men and women
- » We take an active approach to women's rights
- » We work in a culturally sensitive manner
- » We believe women affected by a decision must be involved in the decision-making process
- » We believe in the importance of strengthening women's self-esteem
- » In all our work we are guided by integrity, honesty, transparency, and a holistic approach to women's rights.

OUR TEAM

A motivated team of multilingual professionals carries out MA's mission. Our team in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif includes medical doctors, psychologists, lawyers, and project managers. The psychosocial team has received intensive, highly specialized training in psychosocial counseling and trauma counseling. MA's lawyers are registered with the Afghan Bar Association and are fully licensed. They are specialized and trained in women's human rights. They receive in-house and external training on Afghan Laws, Sharia Law, International Human Rights Law (including women's rights and children's rights), and training in legal defense.

Our social workers are recruited based on experience in social work, especially with women and children. Working closely with our psychosocial counselors and legal aid lawyers, they receive advanced training in trauma work and human rights. In addition, our social workers have received further training in governmental standards of social care from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled. The ministry certified three of our staff members as master trainers, who received advanced training.

MA team in sixteen days
of activism campaign
© Medica Afghanistan





OUR PROGRAMS



Psychosocial Counseling and Health Program: Ten psychologists and psychosocial counselors offer support to Afghan women affected by violence at easily accessible locations such as our counseling centers across the cities, women's shelters, governmental hospitals where we have counseling rooms, and prisons. MA's psychologists also provide case supervision to psychosocial organizations and offer short-term counseling to bedridden patients during their hospitalization, especially those enrolled in the major surgical units and burn units in Kabul and Herat. We also offer crisis intervention to clients and medical professionals as needed.



Legal Aid Services: Focuses on addressing Afghan women's access to justice. We offer support with criminal defense, representation in civil proceedings, mediation, legal awareness, legal advice, social work, and safe family reintegration for to all women who are in need of legal services and are victims of violence.



Advocacy: Our advocacy work aims at pairing direct services with political lobbying with the government and awareness raising within society. Our advocacy program is designed to promote human rights and the rule of law through: a) exposure of human rights violations, b) community mobilization around human rights themes, and c) advocacy for law and policy reform at the national and regional levels in favor of women. Furthermore, networking efforts are executed with multiple stakeholders including governmental, national, and international civil society organizations.



Specialized Training Services: We offer a wide range of advanced professional training programs on Gender and Violence, Gender and Trauma-Sensitive Approach, Communications and Case Management, Basic Psychosocial Counseling Skills, Mediation Techniques, Legal Rights,

Women's Rights, Violence against Women, Prisoner's Rights, Registration of Marriage, and Peace-building. Our trainees come from variety of backgrounds, including lawyers, police, judges, doctors, nurses, midwives, social workers, religious leaders, teachers, community elders, students, and staff of women-led organizations.

Public Information: In order to reflect on our work and show the impact that we make in the lives of women in Afghanistan, we publish quarterly newsletters, annual reports, evaluation reports, and books. Our staff members attend media interviews to discuss our work and women's issues in Afghanistan. We have recently started to maintain an active social media presence.



Networking on National and International Level: MA focuses on women, peace, and security. We link our work domestically to international campaigns and advocacy efforts, helping to connect Afghanistan with global networks. From our grassroots work – by serving our clients – we bring the voices of vulnerable women to policy discussions and push for gender equity. Either as organizers or participants we attend forums, conferences, round tables and discussions around the rights of survivors or by addressing inequalities in the application of national laws in regards to women's legal rights. For instance, in 2015 we advocated for developing a law against torture and provided input for a national action plan on 1325 and to the UN Special Rapporteur on sexual violence against women in Afghanistan. In this sense, MA has provided concrete examples and recommendations for improving the situation of survivors of sexual and other forms of GBV and the impact of war related issues.





PROJECTS 2016

A) LOBBYING FOR EVAW LAW IMPLEMENTATION

Medica advocates for the protection and the implementation of the EVAW Law. Our advocates organized and participated in all-day working group meetings, and released a position paper, posters and reports to inform about the importance of the law. In addition, our lawyers recorded the EVAW Law implementation by the justice system and kept track of the challenges and obstacles. We analyze our data and release reports on an annual basis.

Progress EVAW LAW Implementation Report

At 25th November 2016 MA released its third annual analysis report on the progress and setbacks in the implementation of the EVAW law that exposed how some clients were treated with contempt, ridiculed, insulted or told to “go home” by police, prosecution, and courts. Some Medica’s clients shared stories of sexual harassment and physical assault by authorities. Most of Medica’s clients faced pressure from their families and authorities to withdraw their complaint and settle their case on unfair terms. Many victims were also at risk of violence by their families or the perpetrators for having approached the justice system. Even when cases were successfully prosecuted and perpetrators were convicted; it was found that clients, who were already suffering from high levels of post traumatic stress disorder as a result of violence, experienced secondary traumatization because of the justice process itself. Furthermore, on many occasions Medica found that if not for its persistent intervention at the prosecutor’s office to investigate and follow up on medical reports, the clients’ cases would have been easily dismissed for lack of evidence.

In relation to women defendants, Medica found that some of the clients, who were perceived to be “immoral” were

particularly vulnerable to violations by the state. Disoriented, confused, and possibly traumatized, they are vulnerable to arbitrary arrest. A vast majority of our clients were forced to confess or self-incriminate. And regardless of our persistent attempts to be present at investigations, we were deliberately excluded by the prosecution. The fundamental procedural rights of female defendants are therefore routinely violated. Forced confessions are routinely admitted as evidence despite objections from the MA lawyers. Many of our clients routinely experienced insult and contempt by the police, prosecution, and courts.

Nonetheless, in comparison to our two previous reporting years and the challenges women and we as protectors of women face, we found notable improvements in the implementation of the EVAW Law in 2016. By the end of 2011, of the 10 cases MA took up pursuant to the EVAW Law only 5 cases were convicted. In 2012 and 2013, MA represented 8 clients who were victims of violence, of which 6 cases were prosecuted and there was a slight improvement in the prosecution’s willingness to indict perpetrators of violence based on the EVAW Law. Prosecutions remained low partly due to the fact that clients did not want to initiate criminal action against their abusers (family members) or withdrew from the action before judgment. There was a small improvement in the attitude of judges towards crimes committed against women and clients, who were routinely advised to undergo mediation to avoid trial. In 2014 and 2015 there was surprising improvement in the implementation of the EVAW law as the lawyers provided counselling to approximately 93 victims in Kabul, Herat, and Balkh. On average, 54% of the cases were prosecuted.

MA team adopted a variety of techniques for succeeding in representing its clients. MA lawyers frequently object to investigating prosecutors when they put pressure or encourage their clients to withdraw their criminal action without due cause. On some occasions, lawyers even took up the



Humaira Rasuli, Executive Director of MA talks about Afghanistan 1325 action plan © Medica Afghanistan



Meeting of MA with German Parliamentarians © Medica Afghanistan Stefanie Loos

issue with the Chief Prosecutor of the ERAW Department. In some cases, lawyers were successful in overcoming corruption when they combined litigation with high-level advocacy outside the court. However, when people in power are involved in a case, it was almost impossible to overcome corruption and successes are usually few.

Establishment of ERAW Special Courts

As a result of our advocacy – which began prior to our national conference on the ERAW Law in November 2014 – the Supreme Court established the ERAW Special Court in Kabul. Our advocacy and lobbying efforts mainly contributed to considering the establishment the ERAW Courts as a pilot project in four areas of Afghanistan. These recommendations were implemented in provinces where Medica's advocacy role contributed to the establishment of the ERAW Special Courts: in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif. This was a positive step towards establishing justice for women, who are survivors of violence, as these cases are dealt only through the ERAW Special Court.

Advocacy for Preventing ERAW Law Debate in the Parliament

As an active member of the Afghan civil society Medica held a number of joint advocacy meetings to prevent the ERAW Law from being incorporated into the parliamentary agenda for review and debate as it would likely lead to the decriminalization of child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, reignite unproductive debate, and draw unwanted attention to the ERAW Decree. Our first meeting with Mr. Ibrahim, the chair of the Lower House was not helpful, as he did not support MA position. In July 2016 the Civil Society Joint Advocacy Committee had a lobby meeting with the First Lady Rula Ghani. She stressed that the law must not become political and should not be presented to the parliament. During the meeting, we requested the First Lady to discuss the issue with the President so he could influence the minister of Parliamentary Affairs to intervene

and request the administrative board to exclude the law from their agenda. She agreed to take this action.

We also held a meeting with Dr. Abdullah, the Executive Officer of the government and in July we met with Fawzia Kofi, the chair of the Women and Civil Society Committee of the Parliament. She said that according to the internal regulation of the Lower House each committee has only 20 days to provide input on any concerning issue. After that, it has to pass it to other committees. She added that the Women and Civil Society has already used its given time and that there was pressure from the administrative board to pass around the ERAW Law. The Legislative Committee has already showed interest in reviewing the law. However, she stressed that she was supportive of the ERAW Law and advised the group of lobbyists to send their demands to the Lower House and continue lobbying with other committees as well. We were successful as at present the ERAW Law debate in the parliament has been delayed.

Position Paper ERAW as Stand-Alone Law

Medica launched its position paper on the importance of the ERAW Law as a stand-alone law on the 13 July 2016 and shared it widely with the Afghan Women Network (AWN), donor agencies, and other key influential bodies of Afghanistan. It was decided that the preventive and punitive parts of the ERAW Decree would be separated and only the latter would be incorporated into the Penal Code. Medica took a firm stand against this decision. In order to encompass preventive and punitive provisions and effectively address women's multifaceted needs the ERAW Law should be passed as a standalone legislation. Our position underscored that in order to eliminate violence; legislation beyond punishment is needed as punishment happens after the damage is already done. There is a need to legislate for prevention, punishment, and positive action, and make the State legally responsible and accountable for it. Medica insisted on the importance of the standalone ERAW law because it allows lawyers to hold institutions, agencies, and ministries accountable to live up to their obligations. Standalone ERAW laws around the world are drafted to address wom-



Head of Mazar regional office speaks about role of female police in legal cases
© Medica Afghanistan

en's specific and multi-faceted needs. This has included the recognition of the criminal courts' competence to order civil remedies which are survivor - centered and prioritize women's immediate and longer term needs.

We demanded that the ERAW Law should be read in conjunction with the Penal Code. We advocated with governmental judicial institutions such as the Criminal Law Reform Working Group (CRLWG) of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to include a provision into the Penal Code, which makes reference to the standalone ERAW Law. Our position paper caught the attention of actors in the governmental and non-governmental sectors. In a joint meeting between civil society, MPs, senators and other senior government officials such as the Minister of Women's Affairs and a representative of the First Lady's Office these reinstated their commitment to the standalone law.

Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code

The Afghanistan Penal Code is undergoing reform. All penal related decrees, laws, and regulations are being consolidated into a single Penal Code to simplify and streamline the laws so that police, prosecutors, and judges can refer to a single source. While in many respects the new Penal Code represents an improvement – including the prohibition of prosecution of rape victims for zina, an improved definition of rape, an outlining of forced zina, criminalization of unwanted sexual touching, a chapter on bacha bazi among the most salient – MA

firmly pushes for a standalone law. Nonetheless, as a member of the CRLWG, Medica also contributed to the reform process of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). We suggested gender sensitive amendments to the CPC. Additionally, we undertook an analysis of the ERAW Law punitive articles that have been integrated into the CPC. The amendments - clearly outlined and marked with the original law, the suggested amendment, and the justifications for such amendments - stem from best practices in legislation and reflect ground realities that Medica's lawyers confront in courts on a daily basis. We have experienced that the rather broad nature of some legislation gives judges the rein and discretion to introduce discriminatory interpretations. As such, in our amendments, we tried to limit judicial discretion by providing clear interpretive directions for the courts to follow. These amendments are a response to where the law has failed in the last five years, what should be changed about it, and the reasons for such change. For each article we amended we were guided by our need to better serve our clients and ensure justice for survivors of violence.

Overall, the amendments included survivor-centered remedies such as (1) restraining orders [to stop the offender from doing something or prevent the offender from a place], (2) expulsion orders [to expel the offender from an institution] and (3) compensation orders [to compensate the victim], in order to, prioritize women's real immediate and longer term needs. Provisions also hold the state accountable and/or liable when it fails to take reasonable action to prevent violence. We have also improved the definition of crimes of violence against women and redefined "consent" in sexual-related offences in order to improve the interpretation of the law and ensure certainty and consistency in its application. The amendments address 1) ERAW articles, 2) general articles, and 3) sexual violence - related articles.

MA presented the amendments to the CRLWG, donors, UNAMA, AIBA and civil society. Mr. Ashraf Rasouli, the head the CLRWG, agreed to consider all the comments and amendments to the CPC by September 2016. Our amendments were forwarded to all stakeholders on the 30 September 2016. This was a small yet valuable step towards protection of Afghan women from violence coming from years of experience in legal representation of women.



© Medica Afghanistan

We have received positive responses and appreciation for the in-depth and thorough revision of the Penal Code from UNAMA, the second Vice President Sarwar Danish, and the European Union. While we relied on the goodwill of the CRLWG, donors, UN agencies, and civil society to consider and adopt our amendments, advocacy activities pushing for the revision of the CPC were also ongoing.

Panel Talk on ERAW and Penal Code at Informal Gender Working Group and Meetings with Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Working Group

As part of our advocacy activities on the ERAW Law, Humaira Ameer Rasouli, the Executive Director of MA attended a panel at the Informal Gender Working Group of donor agencies on the 24 November 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to understand the Afghan government and donors' position regarding the ERAW law. Medica's position in this respect remained firm: the ERAW Law should be passed as a standalone legislation so Medica's commitment to the Penal Code is to ensure that the DPC comprehensively covers all offences against women and

adequately addresses the material, mental, and punitive elements of each offence. In the spirit of taking the conversation on the Penal Code forward, Medica was always willing to work with the government and involve civil society to finalize the ERAW Chapter of the Penal Code.

The aim of the WPS Working Group is to bring all relevant institutions, organizations, and individuals together to share information, consolidate and coordinate actions aiming to the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960 in Afghanistan. On 30 November 2016 MA's Executive Director also took the opportunity to present MA's amendment suggestions to the Penal Code and updated the participants on the developments of the ERAW Law. She mentioned that the amendments to the Penal Code have made the code more gender sensitive. However, some weak points still exist, such as non-criminalization of polygamy and the definition of sexual harassment reduced to the private sphere. She again stressed that the Penal Code only integrated the punitive measures of the law. She recommended lawyers and prosecutors, who deal with ERAW cases to provide their own suggestions and feedback on the law. She stressed that experiences from other countries could prove helpful in pushing the case forward. She also raised the issue on the importance of civil society's common position in this regard.

B) FAMILY LAW

While adhering to its strong and strategic advocacy initiatives, Medica pays special attention to the ratification of the Family Law and 2016 was another vital year where MA took key advocacy steps. In the past, Medica as a member of the Family Law Committee reviewed the provisions of the Civil Code on Family Law from a gender equality perspective and recommended amendments or new articles in the framework of a separate Family Code. Medica had been pushing for the enactment of a new Family Law respectful of women's rights since 2007.

Medica prepared an action plan for lobbying the Family Law and shared it with the Technical Gender Working Group, the Family Law Reform Committee, the International Development Legal Organization, and other civil society members.

MA committed to review the law on its own along some other local NGOs, who are members of the Afghanistan Legal Bar Association (ALBA) network and shared their compiled comments with the MoJ. Furthermore, the action plan included lobbying with the Legislative Committee of the Parliament to facilitate the passage of the law when presented by MoJ in the parliament agenda.

MA conducted meetings with Sarwar Danish's office and the Legislative department of the MoJ. Danish confirmed the President's will for having a separate Family Law and approving of Family Law's review. During the meeting with the head of the Legislative Department, it was decided that a technical committee of religious scholars should be established, who would provide input from an Islamic perspective. The work-

shop was held for two days in January 2016. Medica was an active and regular participant in the meetings of TGWG led by UN-WOMEN. Our advocacy manager was also selected as part of the visiting experts to Malaysia for an exchange tour in regards to Family Law, facilitated by UN WOMEN.

Medica was also the key advocate for pushing the Family Law ratification in the meetings with the President and the First Lady, which resulted in the inclusion of the Family Law into the Brussels Conference agenda. As a result of Medica's advocacy efforts on the Family law, the President and the First Lady finally agreed on a separate Family Law. In the Family Law campaign or consultation in four zones – an initiative supported by UN Women and UNDP starting in 2017 – MA will participate in the advocacy activities,

facilitate the awareness raising sessions, and incorporate comments from people from provincial to national level into the Family Law draft.

Medica faced numerous challenges as the government showed apathy in terms of the status of the Family Law. MA on its own accessed government related stakeholders through multiple channels, which also did not bear fruit. Additionally, civil society also showed limited interest in the Family Law and treated it as yet another project that likely will not be followed upon as soon as it ends. NGOs still need to be very cautious and need to come to a consensus on what strategic direction to take in terms of lobbying and advocacy.

C) PROMOTION MARRIAGE REGISTRATION

Medica focuses on enforcing mandatory registration of marriage and legal age marriage as a means to reduce child and forced marriages. We work at different levels to prevent and eradicate child marriage in Afghanistan. Medica's LAP and PSHP clients - beside other services - regularly receive awareness on marriage registration during the visits of the MA defense lawyers and social workers. Clients become aware of the importance of marriage registration

as in cases of divorce, legal separation, alimony, or custody of children, courts often insist on seeing the marriage certificate. While 5% of Medica's clients also obtained marriage certificates with the support of Medica's legal team, women are usually reluctant to apply for it as the procedure is long and complex where four witnesses are needed and an administrative fee of 500 Afghani applies.



© Medica Afghanistan

National Action Plan on Elimination of Early and Child Marriage

UNFPA under the leadership of the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA) and the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA) initiated the development of a National Action Plan on the Elimination of Early and Child Marriage. In this regard, UNFPA approached MA to become a member of the technical working group to shape the plan. Humaira Rasouli, on behalf of MA, participated in several consultation meetings including one-on-one meetings to share MA's significant experience, feedback, and comments to further enrich the plan. UNFPA supported the two leading ministries, MoWA and DMoYA to finalize the action plan and obtain the endorsement from the government, which at the end of 2016 was not yet completed. Humaira expressed interest as implementer of projects tackling child marriage due to Medica's long standing expertise in this regard and is currently establishing a network with DMoYA for future activities.



Sensitization Workshop for Religious and Locals Leaders on Marriage Registration

MA conducted trainings on the importance of marriage registration in Samangan, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Herat with staff from the the Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs, religious leaders, and members of the Scholars' Council. A total of 20 individuals from Samangan, 20 from Balkh, and 20 from Herat province were trained. The training covered topics such as the benefits of marriage registration, the harmful effects of non-registration, forced and under-age marriage and its physical impacts. The trainers encouraged religious leaders and representatives from the Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs to combat child marriage in their communities. The goal of the training was to change religious leaders' and Department of Hajj representatives' ideas on the role and importance of women in the Afghan society. The latter also paved the ground for coordination between the court and the Department of Hajj for facilitating the acquirement of marriage certificates for women.

According to the pre and post evaluations, religious leaders and other participants were successfully sensitized on the benefits of marriage registration. Participants learned about marriage conditions and the legal problems that might arise when failing to register a marriage. Participants acknowledged having a key role in protecting the well-being of their communities and committed to help them learning about the importance of marriage registration. Participants came to the conclusion that registration of marriage prevents illegal marriages, VAW, and improves gender equality. Some of the participants admitted that the role of religious leaders in marriage registration is immense since they acknowledged the influence they have on people's way of thinking and acting. Towards the end of the training they promised to talk about the benefits of registration during Friday prayer speeches. According to MA's management team, training of religious leaders is important where - admittedly - it is also important to carefully select participants, who could be considered promising in terms of tendencies towards gender equality that are determined by a questionnaire administered at the pre-test stage.

D) INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In 2016 Medica Afghanistan's Legal Aid Program (LAP) had 1614 clients of whom 211 were girls. MA supported women through legal aid services including criminal defense, representation in civil proceedings, mediation, raising legal awareness, and providing legal advice. As of December 2016, 858 cases were ongoing and 756 were closed. MA had 1351 clients, who benefitted from legal advice, 331 criminal cases, 437 civil cases, 388 mediation cases. 458 women availed of MA legal advice only.

Civil and Criminal Cases

Medica legally represented 437 women in civil cases in Kabul, Mazar, and Herat provinces where as of December 2016, 262 were ongoing and 175 were closed. Civil cases included: separation due to harm (52%), separation due to absence (19%), divorce (6%), and smaller percentages were related to marriage portion, alimony, annulment,

112 clients were victims of serious acts of violence; their cases were resented at ERAW departments but proceeded based on the ERAW Law, which criminalizes VAW and punishes its perpetrators.

335 MA's lawyers represented criminal cases of women and girls

breaking of engagement, deposal, separation, separation due to defect, separation due to non-payment of alimony, child care, separation due to imprisonment, making fate, and other issues. MA lawyers followed the cases from the primary stages up to the court stage. Moreover, in collaboration with the legal department followed sue of opposite parties, collected evidence, met informants, wrote defense statements and participated at court sessions. The vast majority of cases were solved in favor of the client (173 cases) with 35 reaching a conciliation agreement.

MA's lawyers represented 335 criminal cases of women and girls prosecuted in the cities of Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Herat. 164 are ongoing and 171 are closed. Medica Afghanistan lawyers took the criminal cases from detention centers, juvenile rehabilitation, and prisons. MA clients were mostly accused of adultery (175 women), murder (38 women), elopement (25) followed by other crimes including robbery, beating, beating and laceration, kidnapping, smuggling, crimes against security, assault and battery, attempt to adultery, kidnapping, pederasty, threat, rape, substance abuse, beating, and other crimes. Our lawyers were actively engaged during the police investigation, experts' examination, court sessions, visited witnesses, and gathered evidence, which resulted in the release of 37 women from prison, in the reduction of punishment for 44 clients, and finalization of 93 cases within the time specified by law. 27 were released before the trial and 37 were released through court. Lawyers keep their clients well informed about the progress of their cases through visiting clients in prisons, juvenile centers and detention centers, and during each visit by regularly providing the client with legal advice, awareness, and reading of their defense statements.

112 clients were victims of serious acts of violence; their cases were resented at ERAW departments but proceeded based on the ERAW Law, which criminalizes VAW and punishes its perpetrators. Medica's aim is to achieve justice for victims of violence as much as is determined reasonable in a specific case. Lawyers serve as check-and-balance and as watch dog vis a vis the State to ensure justice for the victims. They serve this role by assisting in investigations, following up with the summons for arrest, pushing for indictments, and by providing support to clients who wish to push their case through till judgment. MA lawyers

wrote petitions for clients and followed up the cases at ERAW units. They met prosecutors and judges to advocate for their client's rights and for the adoption of the ERAW law. Besides that, they supported clients in collecting evidence against perpetrators. For instance, they provided advice and guidance about forensic medicine in order to facilitate signs that would prove beatings or to support clients, who were raped. Finally, due to the lawyers' endless efforts, 43 perpetrators were convicted based on the ERAW law provision. However, in 36 cases clients withdrew because of family pressure, family elders' mediation, different expectations, closure of the case, among the most important reasons.

Some improvements were recorded in the justice sector. Setting the date of court session for prisoners and sending copies of official letters to prisons and to the prosecution office from the side of the Appeal Court in Mazar-e-Sharif should be considered a novelty. In the past, the court informed the lawyers without specifications on who were the responsible prosecutors, judges or defense lawyers, and failed to provide the exact time of court sessions. Due to the advocacy efforts of MA lawyers and hiring of a new head of the appeal court this initiative took place that finally allows for sharing of such information.

Based on a letter released by the President on December 2015 - calling for establishing the rule of law, on taking effective measures to combat corruption in the judiciary system, and on the strengthening of coordination among courts, prosecution offices, and other justice bodies - courts started to require the presence of the defense lawyer and the prosecutor during sessions. During the reporting period, MA lawyers from Kabul and Herat reported that judges insisted on the presence of the defense lawyer and if the defense lawyer was absent they refused to hold the court session.

The Story of N.

N. is 20 and lives in Kabul. In 2016 she was forcibly married to a 60 years old man and had to move with him to a village on the outskirts of Kabul. Her husband started beating her from the first day of marriage. Her mother-in-law also bet and verbally abused her. One day, N. managed to run away from the vil-

lage and made her way back to Kabul to her family. Her family saw the act of running away as shameful and made clear to her she was not welcome there anymore. She found refuge in a women's shelter and stayed there for 6 months until her family agreed with her return back home to only find that they planned to handle her back to her husband from the outset. N. endured more beatings and sexual abuse that led her being hospitalized.

After recovery she asked for divorce at the Family Court. Her husband, outraged by her act, accused N. of adultery. She was imprisoned for two years without trial until she was referred to a Medica lawyer. When our lawyer first met N., she was depressed and thought she would be forced to stay in prison forever. Medica took her case and referred N. to one of MA's counselors to address her poor psychological health. Today N. says: "When I first met the MA lawyer, I was so depressed – I couldn't stop crying and I kept having terrible nightmares. It was comforting to know that someone was trying to help me, because before I felt that I was forgotten by everyone. I wanted to kill myself."

Medica's lawyer J. now visits N. regularly and has started proceedings in the Criminal Court to get N. released. N. added: "I want to get out of this prison, but I know that it might take some time. However, I feel confident that J., the MA lawyer, is doing everything she can to get me released. She has explained my rights to me and now I feel more confident about the law. I am also grateful for the counseling I have received and have recommended it to other women in the prison."

The Story of E.

E. is 30 years old. She got married 8 years ago and her husband suddenly married a second wife. The situation at home became tense and he started to physically abuse her. Domestic violence led her to demanding a divorce. E's case was referred from the Family Court to Medica. After a lengthy follow-up by our legal team, a settlement was finally agreed between E. and her husband. He paid 30,000 Afghanis as marriage portion after divorce. He also agreed to pay her 5,000 Afghanis per month as alimony and 1,500 Afghanis for E's child support as she took custody of the child.

Mediation

In cases when violence is deemed as 'less serious' or when our clients withdraw their case, Medica mediates disputes between the client and the family at the mediation centre. Medica's mediation centers in Kabul, are located in the Governor House (Wolayat Custody) and in Herat and Mazar at the Department of Justice. The centers are open four days a week where our social workers and lawyers provide legal advice to women and girls, who are mostly referred by national and international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. In 2016, over 1300 clients were informed about their legal rights, the proceedings that will take place, the possible procedural alternatives open to them, the legal consequences, the remedies and compensation they are entitled to, among other issues. Medica helps the parties involved in a mediation in recording the settlement that is later deposited at the court where we usually follow up for about 6 months. MA supported 389 women in mediation cases where 328 cases were closed and 61 were ongoing at the end of 2016. In 252 cases an agreement was reached, in 137 an agreement was not reached, and 168 registered their agreement. Clients felt that mediation allowed them to express empathy, develop options, understand interests, and build agreements.



MA lawyer during counseling – Herat regional office, Mediation Center
© Medica Afghanistan

E) ENHANCING THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SOCIAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE AND WOMEN AT RISK

During 2016 MA's social workers were able to attend the needs of 438 women by establishing a link between women and their families, by creating safe re-integration, by resolving the problems of family non-compliance, and winning the release on bail of the clients who were in prison, detention centers, or juvenile centers. In order to ensure the effectiveness of re-integration, the social workers made follow-up visits to clients' homes or contacted them over the phone. During the follow up visits social workers observed remarkable progress in the lives of clients such as improvement of negotiation skills within the family, reduced family tension, access to education, work, and social freedoms that they were previously denied. Our clients found that the follow-up sessions were good protective mechanism while they were re-integrating with their families. The client's family, particularly the husband, felt responsible to act according to the conditions as stipulated in the reintegration agreement. Almost all the clients considered MA services as very good or good, including the referral process.

The Story of L.

In April, 2016 MA mediators in Kabul solved a difficult case of a family conflict that involved separation through mediation. L. was from Paktia, a province in south of Afghanistan, and belonged to a traditional family. When she heard about MA legal team, she was interested in meeting MA mediators and share her problems with them. So she came to MA mediation center. She was very satisfied with MA services and stated that "When I heard about your services, especially when I realized you were all women I convinced my brother to let me visit you once." She added that for women in Paktia it is not very easy to disclose their family issues with outsiders. "My brother was convinced because you are all women and everything will be kept confidential." L. was afterwards successfully re-integrated with her family.

F) EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELING AND SUPPORT

In Afghanistan, VAW – in both private and social life – is endemic and different groups of people, be it rulers or family members, inside or outside of the family sphere have used violence against the weaker. The causes are economic difficulties, social pressure, unawareness, lack of education, misunderstandings of religious texts, or in some cases, a simple exercise of power in a war stricken environment. In-

equality between men and women exist at all levels. Women and children are the ones who have suffered the most and have been the targets of various types of violence. They continue to suffer from mental health problems and trauma as a result of violence.

The Psychosocial and Health Program of Medica Afghanistan (PSHP) provides supportive psychosocial counseling in individual and group sessions once per week for a period of four to eight months for each client in order to empower and mobilize them. For the convenience of clients, PSHP counselors work at key locations throughout Kabul, Herat, and Mazar, such as women's shelters and prisons, the juvenile center, and the Bagh-e-Zanana (Women's Garden). PSHP also maintains a counseling center in the main government hospitals in Kabul and Herat and has set up counseling rooms in 10 districts of the three provinces, which provides a safe environment and access to quality counseling services for all women living in these districts seeking



MA Counselor during counseling © Medica Afghanistan



Training for university lectures- Kabul University © Medica Afghanistan

psychosocial support. In addition, for women and girls who participate in group counseling, PSHP also provides literacy classes to increase their reading and writing skills.

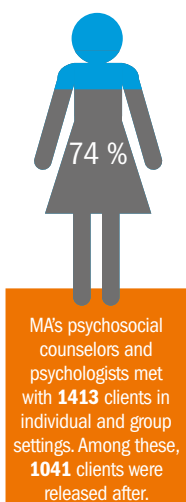
Based on the assessment of counselors the psychosocial problems of clients are hopelessness, fear, anxiety, lack of emotional control, bad memory, feeling of guilt, worthlessness, sleep disturbance (getting more or less sleep), difficulty in concentration, lack of energy and fatigue, nervousness, stress and body pain, feeling down as a consequence of different types of violence, economic problems, and other related social problems. These clients are affected by the situation of violence, loss, changes in the social and living situation, and traumatic events. Conflict situations and violence admittedly have a negative impact on the psychosocial wellbeing of clients. Many individuals exposed to such extreme events may endure negative reactions including nervousness, sadness, anger, fear, anxiety and hopelessness, as well as behavioral and social difficulties

In 2016, MA's psychosocial counselors and psychologists met with 1413 clients in individual and group settings in all three provinces. Among these, 1041 clients were released after their symptoms had improved. Counseling remains ongoing for the rest of the clients. Psychosocial counseling helped clients to better cope with trauma and to resume their normal lives. Some useful coping strategies mentioned by women were praying and reading the Quran, walking and going out, crying, sleeping, visiting friends, and family members. During counseling sessions psychologists and counselors offered professional suggestions by being non-judgmental and by being empathetic with the clients, supported them in identifying their problems, and analyze them to find possible solutions. Counselors also helped the clients to strengthen their ability through finding their resources, increasing the self-confidence, and improving their social relations, among other approaches.

Based on our database, the vast majority of clients expressed satisfaction with our psychosocial services, especially the counseling and referral system. An external evaluation of the PSHP, conducted by Thousand Plateaus Consultancy Services and completed in 2016 revealed that clients who had received PSHP services demonstrated considerable behavioural control and positive affect, and several interviewed noted that participating in MA was a turning point in their life. Referrals between MA and

other institutions worked remarkably well, especially with Rabia-e-Balkhi, Malalai, and Cure hospitals. MA counselors followed the quality assurance standard criteria for successful counseling and monitoring.

Kabul University students also became interested in counseling sessions. Through counseling the strength of the students was enhanced and their abilities were developed to live successfully, learn, and grow in their personal and academic lives. After attending counseling sessions at MA, their self-esteem increased and their fear was gradually reduced. Psycho-education increased the knowledge of students regarding the psychosocial issues and they learned about the different types of psychosocial problems. In total, 2260 clients also received legal awareness trainings in total 160 sessions held. The training included rights of alimony and dowry, the right of respect, right of education and right of marriage.



The Story of S.





S. is 28 years old. She got married at the age of 16. She has two daughters and she lives with her parents in a village in Herat province. She was referred to MA by a former client of MA. Based on the first observation of the counselor, in the first session, S. looked very sad, stressed, unorganized and did not like to talk. She just explained about her condition: "I have pain all over my body, I am not interested to go out of home and meet anyone, I am very tired and I just want to be alone."

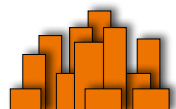
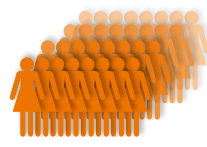
She had complained about having a heart problem and she brought the results of her medical report to the next session, which showed no signs of illness. Her main complaint was about a conflict with her in-laws. She continued coming to her counselor for four months once a week and after each session she became more confident about her healing. The counselor offered her psycho education about her psychological problems in relation to her life situation. With the support of the counselor the psychosocial state of the client dramatically improved over time.

G) EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Education is one of the most significant means for empowering women and girls because it represents an entry point to other opportunities. Education is one of the most effective ways for increasing women's self-confidence and help them understand their rights. Literacy remains abysmally low for women in Afghanistan with some provinces recording a 90% illiteracy for women. The purpose of the establishment of literacy classes is to increase the level of basic education for the target group and help them increase employment opportunities. In addition, women who have suffered mental health problems need to be involved in a meaningful activity and have a tool for building their self-esteem. The literacy project started on the 1st of February 2016, and ended on the 31st of December 2016. The target were 240 students where 220 graduated. Aside regular lectures, once a month our classes were regularly visited by one of our lawyers and one of our counsellors. Raising awareness of our students on their rights from an Islamic and national constitution perspective as well as help those, who are survivors of violence, to overcome their trauma through counseling was also an important aspect of our literacy classes.

At the end of the year:

- »  **90%** of participants improved their writing and reading skills
- »  **80%** of women received awareness about their basic rights
- »  **100%** of women received complete knowledge on how to practice self-care and basic health care
- »  **75%** of the participants were able to read and write
- » Participants were able to deal with smaller financial issues at home
- » Participants practiced new skills and reduced family conflict

- »  **12** new centers were established in 12 districts of 3 provinces with 12 teachers appointed
- »  MA provided education, legal and psychosocial services for **240** women and young girls, who did not believe that one day they could become literate and would be able to read and write.
- » The projects were monitored by the Mental Health Department of the Ministry of Public Health and the Literacy Department of the Ministry of Education.
- » Empowerment of students in reading and writing by distributing story books and assessments that we had in this period.
- » MA referred some groups of students to psychosocial centers in Kabul where these improved their learning abilities and encouraged other women to learn.
- » Students were motivated to continue their lessons, claim their right to become a literate person and acknowledge how literacy grants them more influence in their family and community

Some challenges remain. Most of the families do not allow girls - despite these showing great determination - to continue their studies because literacy schools are located far from their homes. For example, one of our literacy classes students live in District 8 of Khoja Sahib while the closest literacy school to this literacy class are located in District 1.

A client explained:

“ My father did not allow me to study. He used to say that girls are not allowed to study. He prevented my younger sister to pursue education as well. However, through the sessions I joined at MA, I have succeeded in changing my father's mind and heart towards education of girls and now he allows also my younger sister to study. ”

H) COMMUNITY AWARENESS, MOBILIZATION, AND PARTICIPATION

The most promising primary prevention interventions to address GBV include awareness raising training for men and women, mass media campaigns, awareness-raising activities to reach a larger percentage of the population and the creation of role models for families. Medica's lawyers provided legal awareness to 192 clients from prison, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Center (JRC), peer support group of PSHP and literacy program students. Sessions included topics such as the right to education, different types of separation, right to select a life partner, child custody, right to health, divorce, breaking the engagement, inheritance, and the EVAW Law. Legal awareness prevents women from committing illegal acts, it boosts their self-esteem, and self-confidence, which is a crucial element for solving their case. Medica's goal is to give women enough information so they are able to handle their life issues by themselves. According to MA lawyers' evaluations women are not aware of their rights. They think that speaking up is shameful. At the end women were able to:

- » Recognize that they have legal rights and responsibilities. (For example one client said, *"Now I understand my rights that enable me to make better decisions."*)
- » Recognize when a problem or conflict is a legal conflict and when a legal solution is available
- » Know how to take the necessary action to avoid problems and where this is not possible, how to help themselves in a proper way

- » Know how and where to find information about the law and be able to find information that is accessible to them
- » Know when and how to obtain suitable legal assistance
- » Understand the process clearly enough to perceive that justice has been served

Our legal aid team conducted monthly legal awareness sessions for police officers in each district on the EVAW Law and the rights of the suspect. In total, we trained 110 policemen. Informing police about EVAW Law helps them recognize victimized women and refer them to the relevant organizations.

Moreover, once a week Medica's lawyers provided awareness sessions to clients in prisons about the rights of the suspect, the accused, and on the importance of marriage registration. Most of the clients with cases falling under civil law face violations of their rights at courts because they do not have an official marriage certificate.

Medica's team trained 13 facilitators and supervisors of the Peer Support Groups in Kabul, Herat, and Mazar. The training focused on women's rights according to Sharia and statutory laws. Based on facilitators feedback, the training was generally effective as all the facilitators are now almost on the same track and they have become better sensitized about their roles and how to facilitate the groups. Participants understood the meaning of gender and got an opportunity to understand the link between gender and violence. One of the facilitators said: "In my experience my family differentiated between me and my brother, and now I can understand the reasons behind it." Medica established the Peer Support Groups facilitated by former clients with the purpose of extending the outreach of psychosocial services and awareness on women's rights and GBV. By doing so, MA hoped to endorse more autonomy for women instead of creating dependency between our clients and counselors. In 2016, a total of 145 women in 12 groups benefited from the Peer Support Groups in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and Kabul. The women in the PSG learned about stress, self-care, psychosocial education on trauma, solidarity inside the group, SGBV, communication skills (facilitated by an MA counselor), women's rights (facilitated by an MA lawyer). A member from the PSG said: "We learned how to share our feelings and how to ask for help. We understand that we have the right to express our feelings even if it is perceived as bad, in the past we were told by other people to not laugh or cry because this is bad and shameful for a woman but



Awareness session for women at the community level- Peer Support Group
© Medica Afghanistan

in the PSG we feel safe and comfortable to share such feelings.” Among these, 7 women were referred to psychosocial counseling and 3 for legal services.

We trained 8 literacy program instructors and 200 students on women’s rights in Sharia and Afghan laws. Furthermore, we provided the same training to 143 women in prison. MA is also trying to build knowledge and sensitize key players linking human rights with Islamic principles to show that they are aligned with each other. To do so, we partnered with a project by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) in Afghanistan and conducted five sessions – two days each – for the lecturers of Said Jamaluddin Afghan Teacher Training College in Kabul. The topics included GBV, theory of agency and Islamic rights of women. A strong human rights curriculum in schools and universities is the best way to change harmful social norms and principles.

Our trainers also delivered training to 60 staff from 14 women’s shelters across Afghanistan, including Kabul, Herat, and, Mazar-e-Sharif. The topics included GBV,

consequences of violence, mediation techniques, stress management, secondary traumatization, and self-care. The training offered participants knowledge on the methodology of shelter work and increased their information on GBV and related concepts. Danner supported the logistics of the trainings.

Female students from the Psychology Faculty of Kabul University have gained practical counseling skills through an in-depth training during an internship at Medica. The internship helped them to combine theory with practical work experience that helps them develop their professional career. Interns received intensive trainings in counseling skills (individual, group settings, on the bed, and emergency). In addition, they started field visits and learning in practice by accompanying experienced counselors. The program also helped MA in expanding outreach and serving more clients. One of MA interns said “I was so disappointed and I thought that after graduation I would become a school teacher but now I am very happy to learn and work in the field I have studied for four years”.

I) VAW AWARENESS RAISING AND CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS/WORKSHOPS

In order to strengthen the provision of quality and accessible psychosocial support for women and girls who have experienced violence, MA provided Stress and Trauma Sensitive Training to 54 medical professionals from Herat and Kabul where initially it was planned for 80 medical staff, which will be completed in 2018. Based on the baseline study conducted by Thousand Plateaus Consultancy Services in early 2016 at health facilities in Kabul, Balkh, and Herat the survey with health staff reported low levels of training on trauma along worrisome attitudes related to SGBV. The same baseline also revealed that most governmental and non-governmental service providers did not have units responsible for addressing the special needs of survivors of GBV. Other issues highlighted include the capacity, quality and outreach of services provided to survivors, the shortage of trained female professionals, and the lack of specialised knowledge and skills among key staff members. Therefore MA training is designed to improve attitude, knowledge, and practical skills to identify, examine, and provide trauma-sensitive care for women survivors of GBV. The training contains four modules, the first module of the training on understanding SGBV as foundation of the stress and trauma sensitive approach was conducted with medical staff in Kabul - from Rabia Balkhi and Malalai

hospital - and 26 medical professionals from Herat. The rest of the modules will be completed in 2017. The trainings also embed peer group meetings in order to deepen the new knowledge and discuss casework for practicing the trauma and GBV sensitive approach. In total, 1 peer group meeting was conducted.

Medica conducted two simultaneous three-day workshops (from 5 to 7 December 2016) for 26 EVAW prosecutors and International Development Law Organization provincial staff from Bamyan, Jalalabad, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kabul at the Attorney General’s Office Professional Development Institute on psychological trauma and re-traumatization, common mental health problems (depression and anxiety), stress, and stress management. A participant explained:

“ We often did not address GBV and VAW, yet many of our clients are victims of GBV. We only provided legal support for them. From the training, I learned what we should do for GBV victims and where we should refer them to receive the necessary care and support. ”



Training for NGOs staff who provides legal Service – Herat Regional Office © Medica Afghanistan

Trainings were also delivered to the lecturers of the Faculty of Psychology from Kabul University to raise awareness on GBV and to contribute to an atmosphere conducive to gender justice, which encourages and motivates female students to perform at the best of their abilities and to 208 students from Kabul University on women's rights in Sharia and national laws, professional communication and the

cycle of violence, violence against women, GBV and SGBV, stress, and stress management. Additionally, Medica trained staff from BBC Medica Action on gender and media and the ALAAN Network to familiarize defense lawyers with the concept of trauma and how these could deal, manage, and behave with traumatized clients along interviewing techniques for traumatized witnesses and victims.

J) ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

In April 2016, Medica's team was invited to the Berlin Center for the Treatment of Victims of Torture (BZFO), a Berlin based organization dedicated to humanitarian assistance and psychosocial counseling to victims of violence. This visit was marked by great advocacy achievements for Afghan women's rights. Humaira Rasouli met with Niels Annen, MP and spokesperson of the Social Democratic Party of the Foreign Affairs Office and with Gab Weber, MP and member of the Social Democratic Party. She also had a meeting with Kathrin Bauch, Desk Officer for the Afghan Domestic Policy and Human Rights Issues at the German Foreign Office (AA) and other members of the parliament and their staff. In these meetings Humaira spoke about the gender specific dimensions of security and the current situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. She asserted that for sustainable peace and security we need an inclusive political solution to the conflict – which also takes into account the interests of women and girls:

“ We need to promote good governance including respect for women ´s rights. We need to create an environment that allows for people to earn a decent living and have access to basic services – such as health, education, and employment. Otherwise even more Afghans are going to leave the country. ”

She appealed to the German government to financially, technically, and publicly support the continued strengthening of Afghan civil society, especially women's rights organizations. Humaira also attended an interview with Sonja Ernst of the Amnesty Journal where she spoke about the political situation and the women's movement in Afghanistan. In 2016, MA's team attended media interviews and spoke to the communication department of *medica mondiale*. They spoke about the situation in Afghanistan, women's state and about working for Afghan women in a challenging political and security situation. Some of the interviews could be accessed below:



© Medica Afghanistan

- » Humaira Rasouli, Director Medica Afghanistan: “Women are not silent anymore.”
- » “Women's rights are part of peace. They simply belong together”, says Vida Faizi, Medica Afghanistan
- » “Women's rights are being used as an alibi during the peace talks,” says Saifora Paktiss from Medica Afghanistan
- » “Women's rights in our country have nothing to do with the presence or absence of the international military forces,” says Saifora Paktiss, Medica Afghanistan

On the same visit, Humaira also traveled to Berlin along with their German counterparts to raise awareness and advocate on behalf of sexualized wartime violence survivors. They met with the Human Rights Commissioner, Bärbel Kofler, the Foreign Office and Germany's members of parliament. The delegation called on the German government to provide long-term support for survivors of violence and protect women's rights defenders. Humaira addressed the lack of determined and sustainable action for protection of women's rights in Afghanistan. She insisted that the German government should maintain a firm tone in consultation and negotiations with the Afghan government and press on respect for women's rights. She also expressed concern over the lack

Medica was interviewed by Hasht e Subh Daily about the underlying causes of suicide in Afghanistan. These include poverty, lack of access to resources, lack of employment, chronic depression, domestic and sexual violence, to name a few. A higher number of women compared to men attempt suicide, however, often men succeed in their attempts while women do not. Read more here: The suicide rate has increased in Afghanistan, Hasht e Subh Daily, 22 August 2016.

Recommendations Afghanistan's National Development Framework

Medica reviewed the draft National Development Framework prepared by the government of Afghanistan for the Brussels Conference planned for October 2016. The feedback was shared with ACBAR. Some of the points and recommendations that ACBAR presented at the Afghan Women's Network meeting on behalf of the Afghan civil society that would be in the future shared with the Ministry of Finance ahead of the Brussels conference included: the strengthening of the monitoring role of civil society; security and fighting against corruption; creating an inclusive and cohesive monitoring mechanism to monitor the aid effectiveness after the Brussels Conference; the adoption of recommendations for CSOs, which were outlined in London and at the SOM conference in the National Development Framework draft; and on the loss of youth and brain drain through emigration.



Opening of counseling Center in Malali Hospital © Medica Afghanistan

of support for women's rights defenders in Afghanistan. *"It is absolutely essential to guarantee protection for women's rights defenders,"* she said.

Humaira also met with German Foreign Office; Mrs. Karin Goebel, Head of Division OR06: Human Rights and Gender Issues; Mrs. Yasemin Pamuk, Desk Officer at Division OR06: Human Rights and Gender Issues; Anja Kersten, Desk Officer in the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy. Read more here: Berlin: medica mondiale calls for protection and support for women's rights defenders, medica mondiale, 04 October 2016.

Medica also appeared in local media. One of MA psychologists spoke to the Associated Press about the psychosocial counseling services MA offers to women, who suffer from mental health issues. In a particular case, a client who was diagnosed by her family to have been possessed by a jin received psychosocial support and her mental health dramatically improved. Read more here: After years of war, Afghans wary to talk of mental health, Associated Press, 18 August 2016.

Kabul Symposium on Afghan Women's Empowerment

The symposium was held in coordination between the First lady, Rula Ghani's office and Afghan Women Network. The symposium recapped the Oslo conference held in 2014 and collected recommendations from civil society for the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, which was held on 8 and 9 July. Medica's Executive Director was a panelist at the symposium and spoke about Afghan women's mental health and access to health services in general. She also contributed to the development of a policy brief on Afghan Women Empowerment in the Security Sector. The symposium acknowledged that the Afghan government is making slow but gradual progress in recognizing its legal obligations to include women's voices in the future country plans. She stressed that despite some positive attempts coming from the government, the barriers to women empowerment and gender equality need to be properly addressed through comprehensive programs.



APPRECIATION LETTERS IN 2016

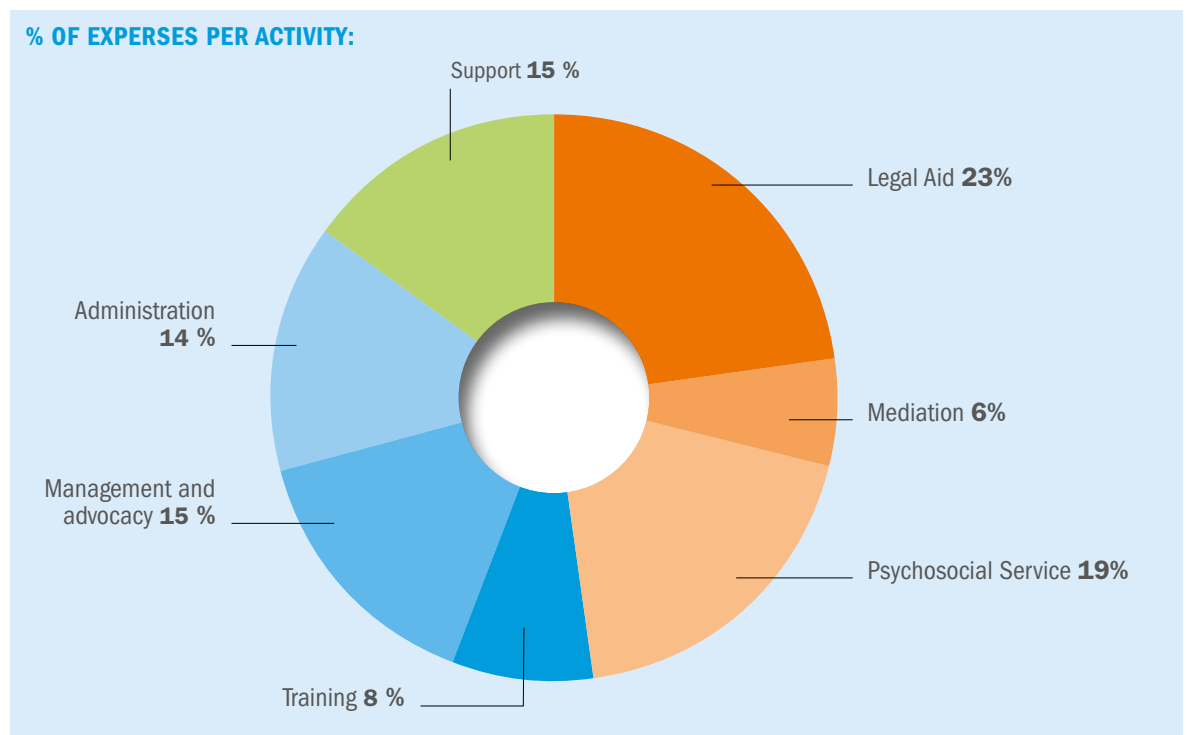
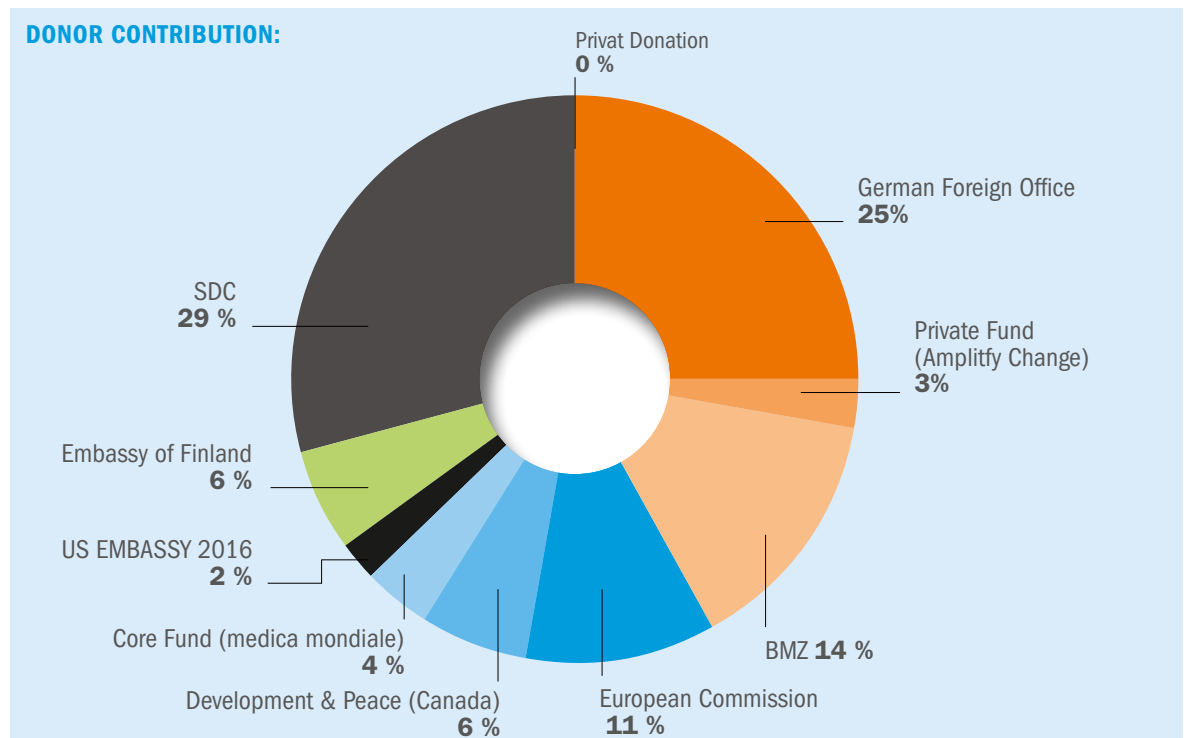
Due to our commitment and restless work in pursuing women's rights we received appreciation letters from various government departments and organizations, including:

- » Herat Prison officials
- » Herat Juvenile Rehabilitation Center for our lawyers
- » Herat Hospital Burn Unit for one of our psychosocial counselors
- » Herat Department of Justice for one of our lawyers
- » Herat Women's Movement for one of our lawyers
- » United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for one of our lawyers in Herat
- » Elimination of Violence Against Women Department for our legal team in Kabul
- » Chief of the Criminal Court for our legal aid team in Mazar-e-Sharif
- » Directorate of Legal Services for our legal aid team in Mazar-e-Sharif
- » Legal Department of the Ministry of Justice for our legal aid team in Kabul
- » The Kabul team received appreciation letter from the Second Vice President Office and appreciation statement by the President for the quality of work we have done in terms of the PC and EVAW analysis

FINANCIAL REPORT

For the year 2016 Medica Afghanistan received a total of 1,007,105 EUR as donor contributions and private donation. Total expenses for the year were 937,597 EUR. We are grateful to all of our donors and private contributors for their generous financial contributions. You make it possible for us to continue to extend much needed support to Afghan women and girls.

Cumulative Income in 2016



Medica Afghanistan - Women's support organization income and expenditure statement

as at December 31, 2016

	Note	2016 Euro	2015 Euro
INCOME			
Restricted Grants	5	930,821	843,138
Unrestricted Grants	6	34,684	205,565
		965,469	1,048,703
EXPENDITURE			
Expenditure – Restricted Grants	5	930,821	843,138
Expenditure – Unrestricted Grants		6,776	2,286
		937,597	845,424
SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR			
Restricted Grants			
Unrestricted Grants		27,872	203,279
Exchange (loss)/gain		(424)	(3,978)
		27,447	199,301

CLIENT DATABASE

Since 2011 Medica uses a cloud or online system as its client database. The database has automatic data entry that reduces chances of human error, has different layers of cyber security, and applies user authentication protocols to prevent unauthorized entry and data modification. All data entries are supported by hard documents, which are stored in a safe closet. The process of data entry encompasses two layers of verification – by the data entry officer and the respective project manager – in order to ensure data are entered accurately and they are supported by hard evidence. We generate regular reports and submit them to our stakeholders to provide updated information on the project progress and the number of beneficiaries. The details of a client's case, progress, outcome, and impact are recorded daily whenever a material event occurs. The tables below provide an overview of the number of beneficiaries in different areas that benefited from Medica's services in 2016.

Table 1:
Medica's clients in 2016 by type of violence experienced

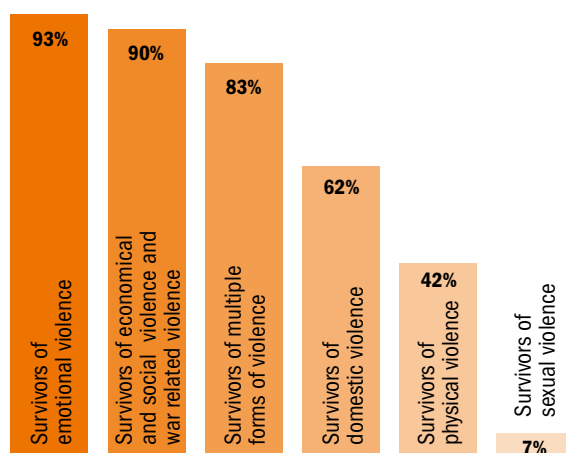


Table 2:
Types of services offered by Medica in 2016 and the respective number of clients

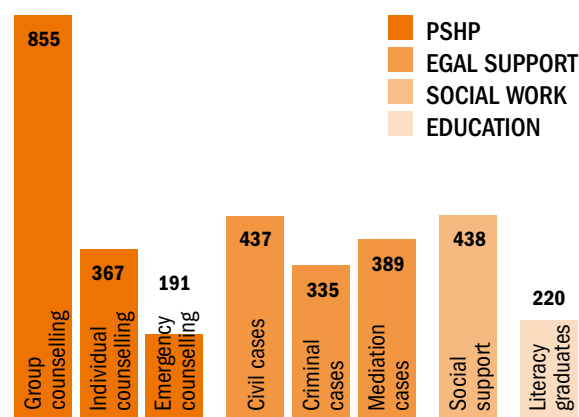
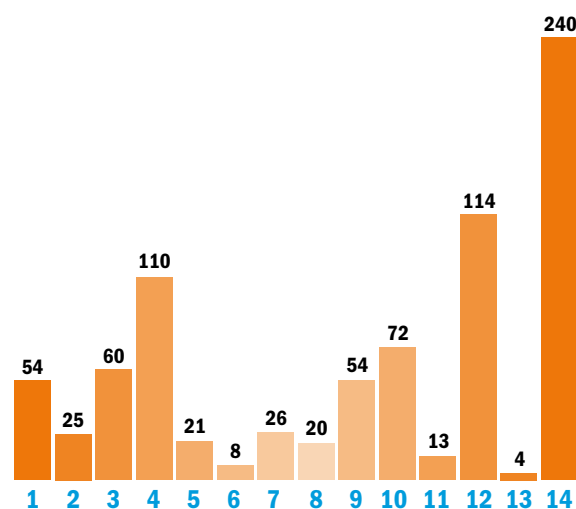


Table 3:
Trainings * offered by Medica in 2016



- 1 Medical staff in Kabul and Herat
- 2 Peer group meeting medical staff
- 3 Religious leaders, Ulema, and the Department of Hajj
- 4 Police officers
- 5 ALAAN Network (prosecutors , lawyers)
- 6 BBC Media Action
- 7 General Attorney Office EAW Unit prosecutors
- 8 Staff Faculty of Psychology Kabul University
- 9 Shelter staff capacity building
- 10 Shelter staff follow up sessions
- 11 Peer Support Groups
- 12 Lecturers Said Jamaluddin Afghan Teacher Training College in Kabul
- 13 Trainings in counselling MA interns
- 14 Literacy students

* The table does not include awareness raising/sensitization work shop participants.



MA director spoke about Women's situation in Afghanistan with German Parliamentarians © Medica Afghanistan Stefanie Loos



MA counselors provide legal awareness to men and women at the community level © Medica Afghanistan



MA director spoke about Women's situation in Afghanistan with German Parliamentarians © Medica Afghanistan Stefanie Loos



Family mediation- MA Regional Office in Mazar © Medica Afghanistan



MA mediators met with family of a case to ensure safe reintegration of client back to community © Medica Afghanistan



March on women political participation © Medica Afghanistan



MA counselor during counseling session © Medica Afghanistan



Legal awareness to clients of PSHp © Medica Afghanistan



Literacy class of MA © Medica Afghanistan

OUR VISION

MEDICA AFGHANISTAN ENVISIONS A PEACEFUL AFGHANISTAN WHERE WOMEN ARE FREE OF VIOLENCE AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION, AND ENJOY EQUAL ACCESS TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE, POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING, HEALTH SERVICES AND EDUCATION.

+93 (0) 20 221 2035
info@medica-afghanistan.org
www.medicaafghanistan.org

