



Research Report

Peace from Women Perspective

Implemented By: Medica Afghanistan

Author: Abdul Hamid “Razaq”

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Peace from Women Perspective



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Executive Summary:

Medica Afghanistan is a women support organization which is non partisan, non political and non partial organization. MA is actively working in Afghanistan for past 16 years and currently we are physically present in five provinces (Kabul, Mazar, Herat, Baghlan and Samangan) with the provision of free legal aid and psychosocial counselling for the vulnerable girls and women. We also provide unique mediation services for the families which is one of the most impactful activity. We reach out around 3000 girls and women who are direct victims of GBV and SGBV. We have been actively engaged in advocacy activities not only on national but also on international level.

Medica Afghanistan since 2019 the peace talks have been going on between USA and Taliban which has brought hopes and concerns for the people of Afghanistan especially women. Afghan women are concerned that this political deal may wash off their 18 years of achievements and gains. Medica Afghanistan have been engaged in the peace process on behalf of women in civil society. Medica Afghanistan struggle to be engaged in the peace process on behalf of a large majority of those women who have no voice and no connection with politicians and policy makers. Therefore, we initiated a survey to understand what peace means for the very common people especially women. We have conducted this survey from 1178 women (direct beneficiaries) the very direct victims of violence and conflict. We found that people of Afghanistan especially women are concerned for their future and for the future of their children. They believe that without women meaningful participation the sustainability of peace is under question.

Overall, in this survey we found that 35% of the interviewees understand that peace means absence of war and conflict. 40% believe that peace means “peaceful coexistence” 15% says access to economical and health care is peace for them, 10% of the interview says having basic means of life means peace for them. This shows a bitter picture of our society that the Taliban is not the only problem of this country, although they are one of the major problems. The biggest percentage of answer 40% shows that “coexistence” is “peace” for them. It shows that diversity in this country has widened the distance between people such as slow and bureaucratic legal system. Corruption, lack of economical resources, lack of employment, drug addiction by male member of the families, and discrimination in equal distribution of resources and opportunities based on ethnic, language and political values.

The conclusion of the survey in Kabul shows that respondents are concerned because of the general insecurity, but also because of lack of social protection of life and dignity of all citizens 48% of the respondents are concerned for their safety and protection and for them peace is to bring them safety of life and protection of their dignity. In Herat 24% of the respondents mentioned that peace means to have equal access to economic and political resources. 14% of the respondents do not consider the importance of women participation in all levels of the peace process.

In summation one can see that the major triangle of problem in this country is (1. insecurity, 2. corruption 3. unequal access to opportunities and resources). I hope the politicians and policy makers consider this triangle of Afghan problems while developing peace indicators.

In conclusion I may say that Taliban is not the only problem and not the only solution for this country especially for women. Many other issues are to be considered such as equality in distribution of economic resources and opportunities, improvement of employment opportunities, and access to legal system without corruption and discrimination can lead the society towards peace.

In the hope of that government of Afghanistan, Taliban, and International community take strong and solid steps towards a peaceful society. And I hope that Afghan women have access to basic need of their life within a peaceful society without conflict and violence.

Jamila Afghani
Executive director
Medica Afghanistan

Preface:

The horrible implications of armed conflicts unequally face both men and women. Majority of the victims of these conflicts are women and children who make the largest refugees and asylum seekers and homeless people in the world. Women and girls experience various types of violence and cruelty in the armed conflicts. As men, they are killed, displaced and exposed to destructive weapons. But far beyond that, they are suffered by armed conflicts. Women face all forms of violence, especially violence and Sexual exploitation, including torture, rape, forced pregnancy, forced labor and sexual slavery, forced prostitution and trafficking. Sometimes women are harassed and abused as weapons to attack the culture and dignity of a nation and their hauteur.

The loss of husbands and sons who are killed in the armed conflicts put the heavy burden of life and family safeguarding on women's shoulders. Husbands who get disabled and injured in armed conflicts also involve women to nurse and medically take care of them for a long period of time. Inadequate access to resources and lack of social support in these areas exposes women to a variety of problems, difficulties, aberrations and illegal activities.

Therefore, women are more likely to get suffered than men, they suffer not only from conflicts but also from domestic violence in their daily lives. with this regard, Medica Afghanistan decided to launch a research on what women think about peace. This research helps to identify the views and comments of women on peace in the three provinces and provides necessary recommendations to the related institutions

Chapter One

Research Methodology

The methodology used to finalize this research is as below:

Data collection methodology:

The purpose of data collection to launch this research, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative method used. The data collected for this study were through questionnaires from several women, most of them were as the clients of Medica Afghanistan office and some men. The research department managed and arranged the question and answer, and 1176 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted group. There was only one open question included in the questionnaires and the interviewees provided different answers to that.

In addition, a library-based research methodology was also used in this report.

Target group

Basically, both from a legal and psychological point of view the target group in this research are mostly Medica Office clients. It was then decided to conduct the research in three provinces such as Kabul, Herat and Balkh, with this regard that Medica has field offices in those provinces, and data collection problems are less common. The necessary materials for this research were also prepared such as: questionnaire and interview form for collecting information, and question guide was arranged to collect data and cases on a quantitative based.

Researchers were also present with the interviewers in the field to necessarily assist the interviewers in case of facing difficulties or in providing clarifications.

Data Validation

Qualitative data were validated by accepted theories. And an excel research program was used to validate quantitative data and evaluate the link between appurtenant and non- appurtenant variables.

Limitations of the research

The research team has faced some challenges and difficulties while launching this research. For example, most of interviewees were less willing to tell the truth due to the sensitivity of the issue, and they only revealed some truths after persistent efforts of the interviewers. The other major problem facing this research is the statistical population, since almost all the interviewees were the people who in a way or the other had a legal or psychological problem which effected while providing their comments or opinions.

But still the research team was able to successfully perform their obligation by reaching the 95% of required criteria as result of their efforts.

Key Findings

The key findings of this research have been discussed under specific titles. In general, the exponential statistics about women's perspectives on peace are followed by a discussion in three provinces. In public information part the issues like age,

literacy, and gender has been reflected. At the end, there are necessary suggestions along with the conclusion.

Research Statistical Population (Target Group) and Sampling:

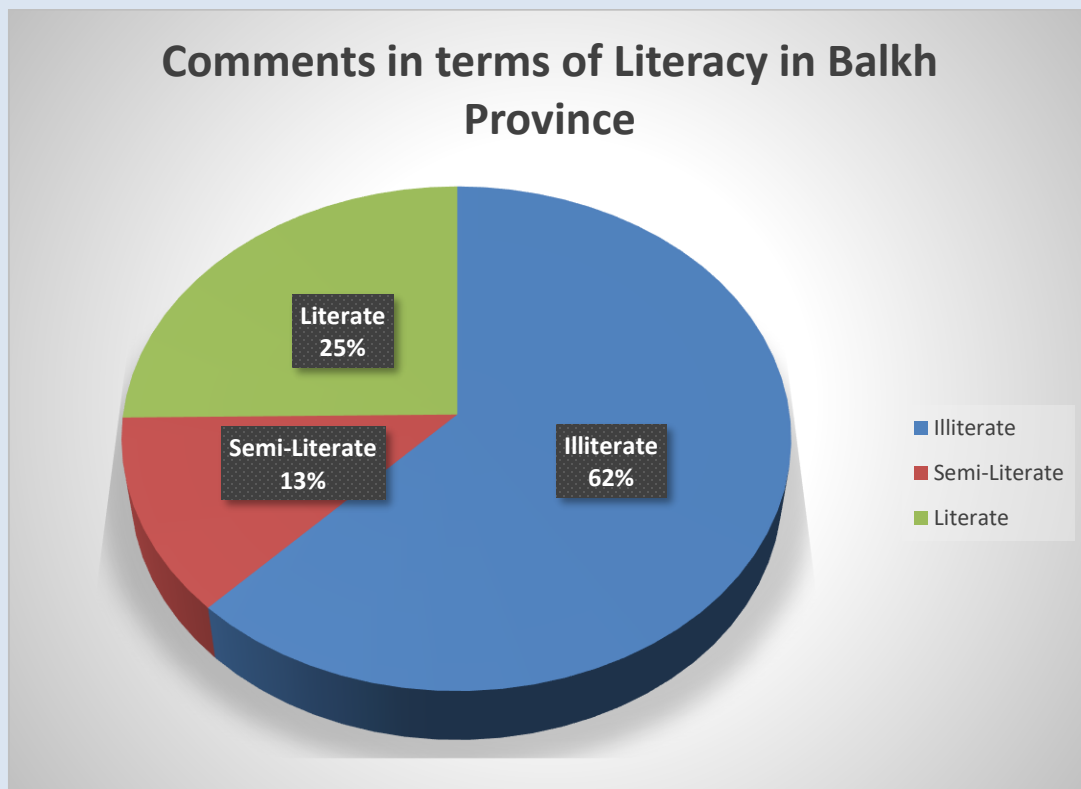
The research statistical population is 1176 in total which have been respectively selected from three provinces. Clients interviewed are 372 in Kabul, 692 in Balkh and 112 in Herat whose comments are explained and clarified in the report.

Chapter Two

General Information About Interviewees

In this part, we discuss only on three variables such as the level of literacy, gender, and the age of the interviewees as below:

1. Interviewees Literacy:



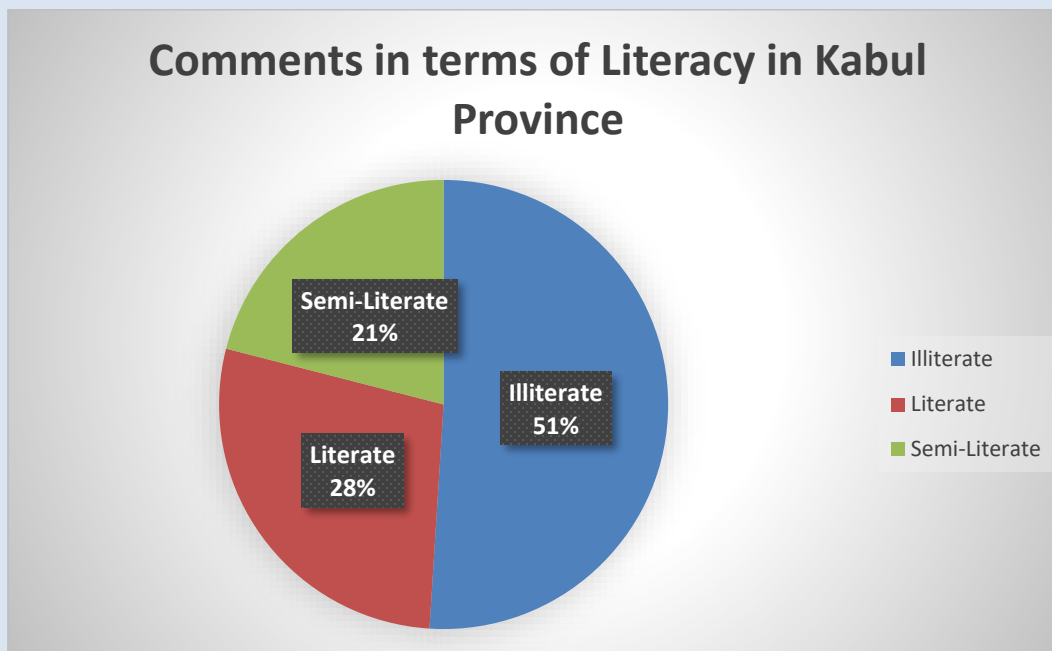
The literacy in the whole province has divided into three types as below:

1. Literate
2. Semi-Literate
3. Illiterate¹

¹ In this study, the word literate refers to the one who can read and write. Illiterate who has difficulty in reading and writing, and illiterate refers to someone who neither reads nor writes

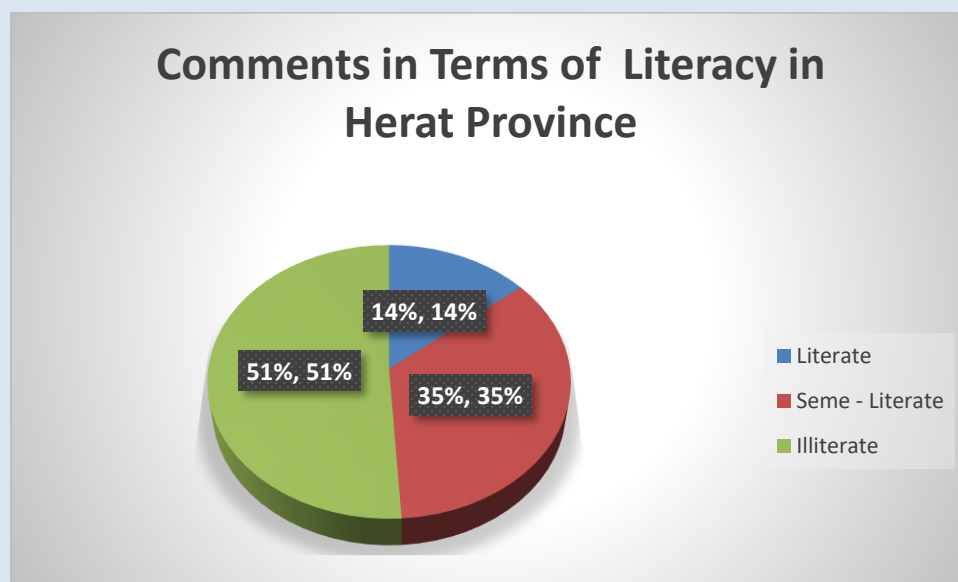
Based on the number provided, 62 % of respondents has been illiterate, 25 % literate and another 13 % were semi-literate.

2. Comments on literacy in Kabul province



In Kabul city there were 28 % literate, 21 % semi-literate and 51 % illiterate. The number of literate target people in Kabul is higher than that of Balkh province, which indicates that the clients attending Kabul office are more literate than in other provinces.

3. Literacy in Herat Province

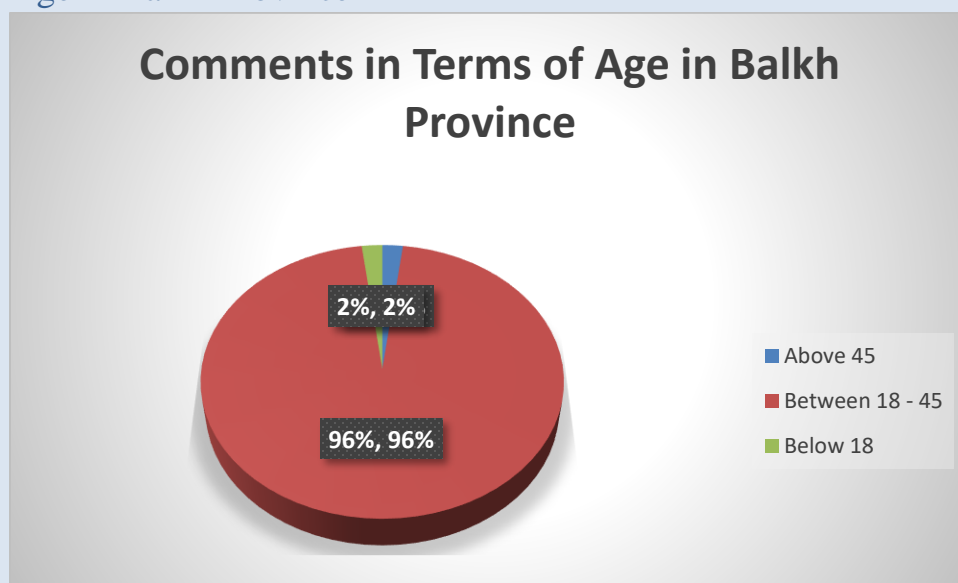


The illiteracy rate in Herat province is different from the other two provinces. The major difference between Herat and Balkh is in little reading and writing. In other words, people who are semi-literate are higher in Herat.

In addition, this indicates the women's lack of access to education than men. Based on the Ministry of Education report, 42 % of the country's population are literate, one third of which are women². Therefore, it is necessary to mention that majority of Medica clients were illiterate who despite their illiteracy had the understanding to refer to Medica office for their legal or mental health issues.

² Ministry of Education Report, Mizan 1398

1. Age in Balkh Province



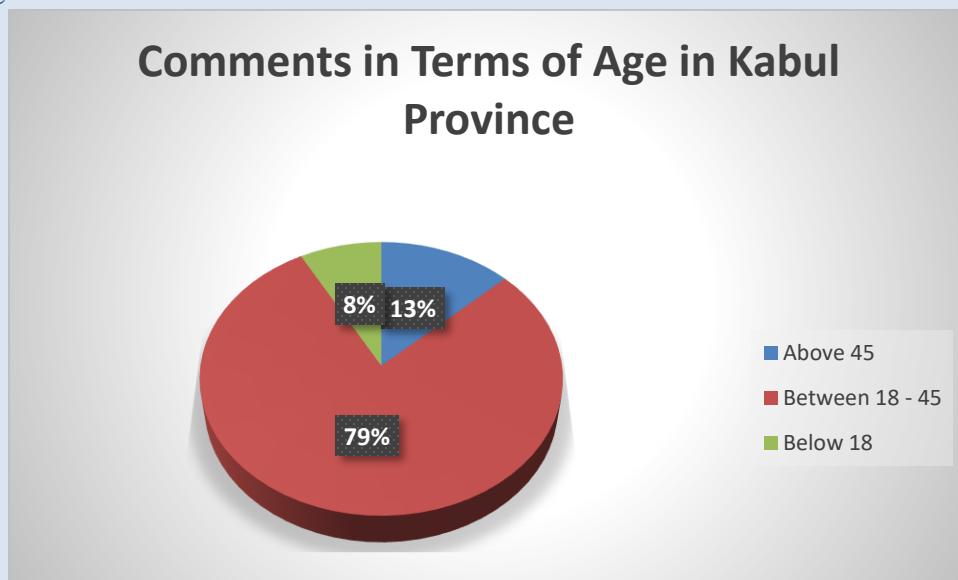
The age of the interviewees has clearly indicated in the above chart. Based on the statistics, most interviewees were between the ages of 18 and 45, which are considered as the active ages for work and getting experience.

It is clear that we call people under the age 18 as child due to their incomplete legal status and the people higher than 45 are gradually moving to senility. As life expectancy in our country is lower than other countries in the world based on the available statistics standards³. In addition, it indicates that some of our clients in Balkh province were between the ages of 18 and 45, the people below the age of 18 and higher than 45 had fewer legal and psychological problems.

There is a similar number with little difference in Kabul city. The same as Balkh, most population in Kabul are between the ages of 18 to 45. Since the ages between 18 and 45 were reported to be 79 %, 8 % below 18 and 13 % above 45.

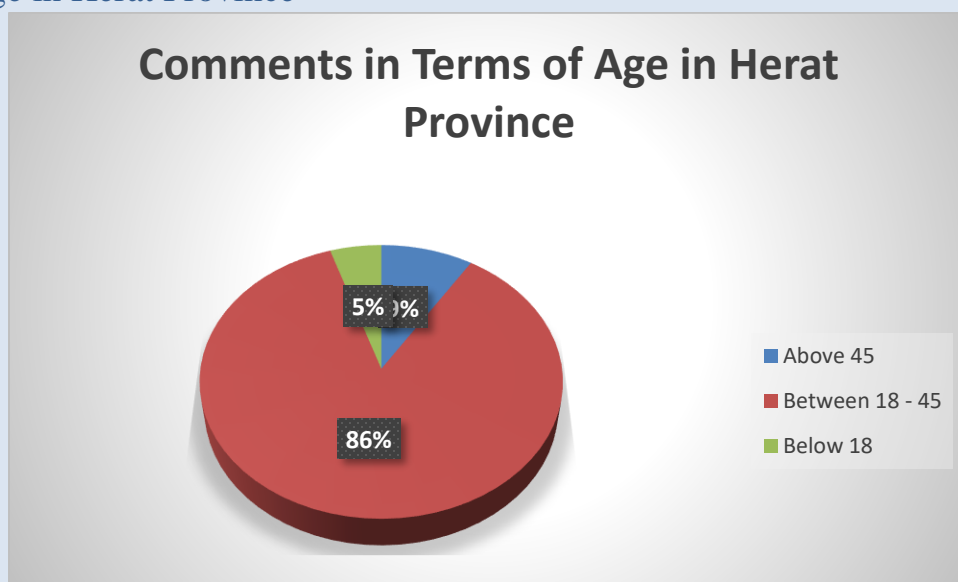
³ In Afghanistan life Expectancy for women is 61 and 62 for men, According to Ministry Public Health - 1993

2. Age in Kabul Province



Though Kabul statistics indicate an 8% below the age of 18, which is because of early marriages, psychological problems or other violence that they face. Statistics in Herat province show the same level with slight difference of 5 % below 18 and 9 % above 45, the rest show an 86 % of ages between 18 and 45.

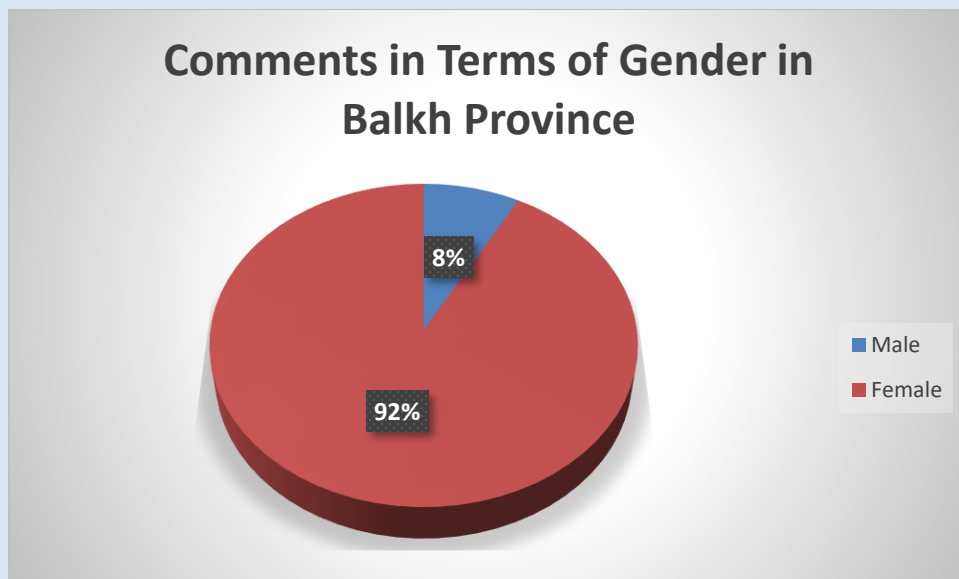
3. Age in Herat Province



So, with regard to the above points, Medica has conducted most of its interviews between the ages of 18 to 45. In Herat the same as Kabul, the clients were under the age of 18, although their numbers were low at the rate of 5%. But unfortunately, the major social problem reveals the early age marriages (Child Marriage) problem in the province.

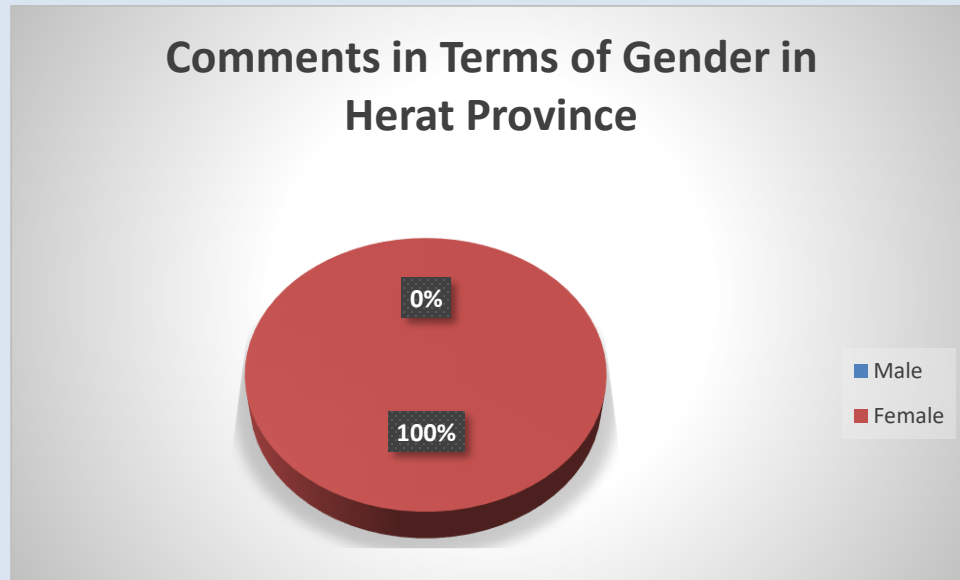
1. Gender in Balkh Province

92 % of women were interviewed compared to 8 % of men in Balkh province. The main reason for this issue can be found in the purpose of the research, where it has clearly provided on what is peace from women perspective?



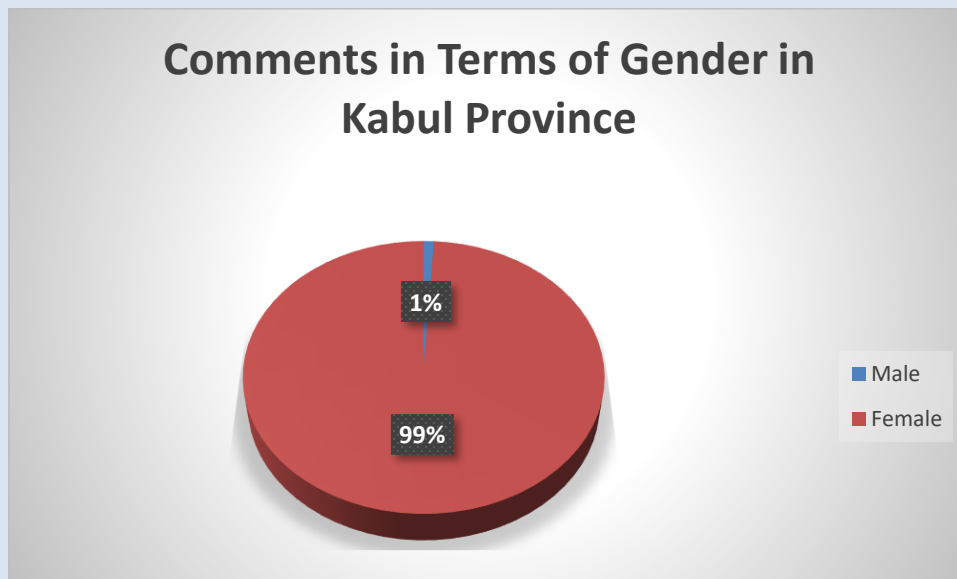
So, based on above, most interviewees were women.

2. Gender in Herat Province



Gender in Herat is zero %. All interviewees were women.

3. Gender in Kabul Province



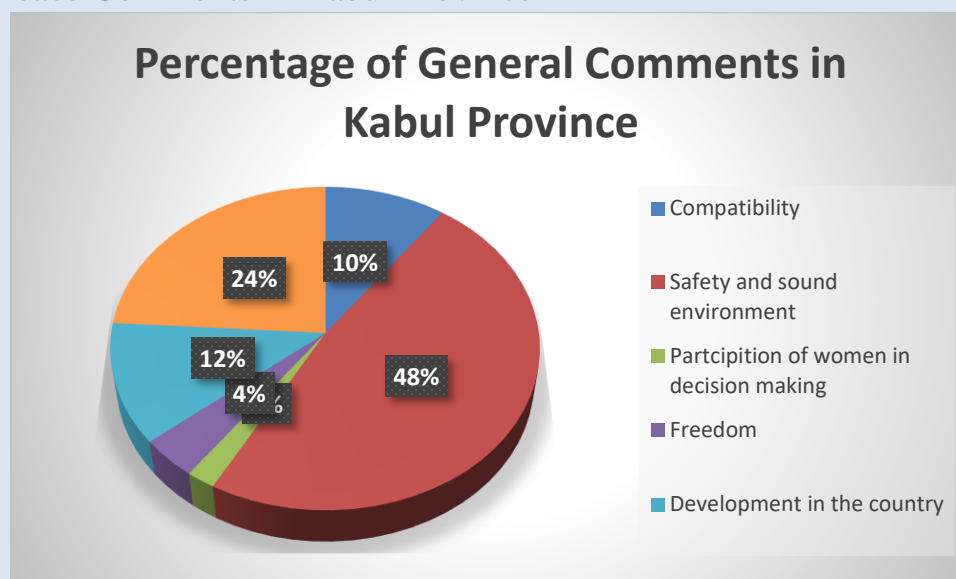
1 % of the interviewees in Kabul were men. While, most of the interviewees in Balkh province were men consisting 8 % of the interviewees.

Chapter Three

The Target Group's Comments on Peace

This chapter mainly focuses on peace perspectives of interviewees conducted in three provinces. Below are the perspectives of each province clearly described under separate charts.

General Peace Comments in Kabul Province



In Kabul, 48 percent commented on safety and sound environment. A safe and sound environment is one of the natural rights of human beings and all human being has the right to live in a safe and sound environment. Certainly, one of the things that ensures human prosperity and integrity is having a safe and secure environment. Depression and increased psychological disorders caused due to lack of a safe and sound family environment⁴. Peace is a phenomenon emerging in light of social welfare, so whenever we want to have a society free of political, cultural

⁴ The purpose of a safe and sound environment in this research is the family environment free of violence.

and social crises, we must do all the efforts to be integrated and compatible. Compatibility is the other components of peace that 10 % of the respondents agreed upon in the survey.

Access to healthcare and good economy is one of the basic rights of citizens that 24% of respondents agreed upon has a meaningful relationship with peace. The majority of women had mental and health problems which forced them to refer Medica office for legal counseling. The statistic indicates that health issues had crucial importance to these respondents. These types of respondents also agreed on economy which has meaningful relationship with peace. In other words, people with good economic status can better cure and medically treat themselves than others. Development in the country, as stated by 12 % of interviewees are also the definitions that they provided on peace. According to their ideas, the country's development paves the ground for better and safe family environment, people find employment opportunities and are provided with equal health and education grounds, which could be an indirect interpretation of peace.

the most important thing here is the participation of women mentioned by 6% of the interviewees. The fact that women are not involved in social and political affairs is a pernicious impact to the society, as Michel do Montine, a French philosopher in the sixteenth century writes: "whenever women violate abiding the laws related to themselves do not go wrong, because men has provided these laws without consulting them."⁵ One of the ways to understand and strengthen peace is the joint efforts toward re-codification of laws related to government, justice,

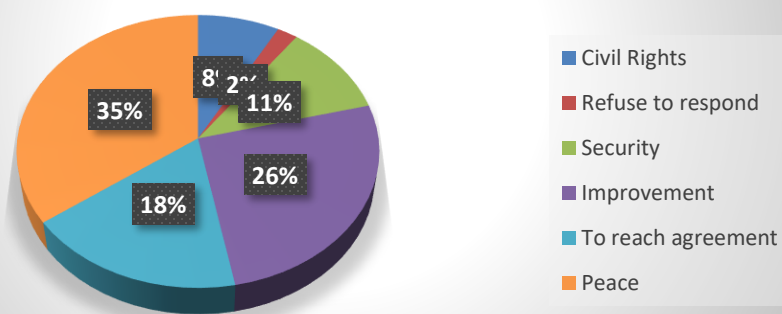
⁵ Razaq, Hamid, The Role of Women in Peacebuilding, AWSDC Institute, p. 8, 1385

security, and economic activities for the purpose of elimination of causes of conflict and mistrust and inequality emersion. Women in all groups and social strata cannot miss the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction of laws which are only possible through substantiation of justice and access to peace.

2. General Peace Comments in Balkh Province

The thing which is different among Balkh, Kabul and Herat provinces are the mention of the word civil rights, to reach an agreement and lack of responsiveness. 2% of the respondents refused to answer in this province. These two percent may not have a clear understanding of peace or somehow refused to answer. But 18% of the respondents which is not a small figure defined peace as to reach an agreement. Such views could be from a family point of view, because when the parties in a family reach an entire agreement, so, there are no reason for family arguments that lead to violence. Another 8% reminisced of civil rights. Civil right could be defined a relationship between the government and citizens, where one abides the state laws and in return the state observes his/her civil rights. thus Citizen: "Equally has the rights and obligations, freedom, restrictions and responsibilities within the political society".

Percentage of General Comments in Balkh Province

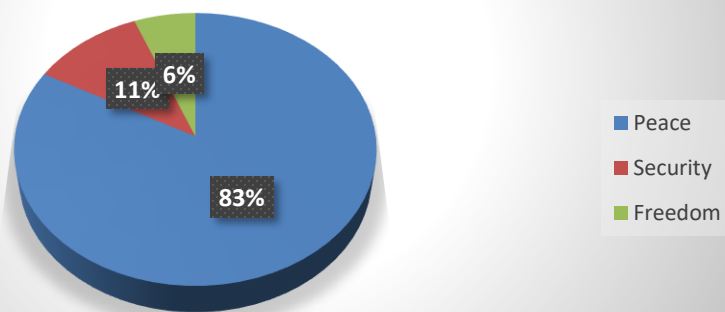


Civil Rights is security, education, health, freedom of movement etc. while, obligations are to obey laws enacted and adopted by the government and its restrictions in addition to obeying laws are the exercise of freedom without harming others. But what do women and whom to refer if their civil rights are violated? are questions that have not been correctly answered so far. For example, if a father avoids his daughter from going to school or forces her to agree an early marriage or ignore her healthcare while she is in severe need of medication or something like that ...

Based on article 5 of the police law which obliged them to protect the basic rights of citizens. The above are all the basic rights of citizens. But observing such issues in a family environment and is not investigated as a crime is a clear negligence of police from their duties.

3. General Peace Comments in Herat Province

Percentage of General Comments in Herat Province



The basic point that must be taken into consideration is “peace”. In other words, the main question here is that whether the non-existence of war gives the meaning of peace? Does it mean that if a country is not directly involved in the war assumes that its people are at peace?

Absolutely not! Such a peace definition is belonging to past centuries, whereas, the 21st century peace must be defined in a different way.

Peace means tranquility and human beings are at peace when their human rights are not ignored, and their human dignity is preserved. Obviously, a person who cannot get education due to poverty or a person who is jailed and punished for expressing his/her beliefs or ideas, a person who is homeless and lives on the street does not live with tranquility.

In order that peace remains sustainable in the society it must be based on two basic pillars:

1. Democracy

If a society is governed by autarchy, whether social or political one, if the ideas and beliefs of the people of a country is not respected, if the dissenting voices in society is silenced by jail and bullet, the peace of such society will absolutely be impaired.

The other point that must be considered is the revision of the definition of democracy. Democracy in its classical meaning is the rule of majority, but the majority that gets into power through a free election does not have the right to rule any way it wants.

The framework of democracy is the human rights rules. In other words, the majority that got into power can only rule within the framework of human rights rules and standards and has no right to violate it.

2. Social Justice

The other pillar of peace is in social justice. tranquility cannot be achieved in a society with high classic divisions.

Based on the available statistics, more than tens of thousands of people live under the poverty line.

Therefore, peace in its required concept could be defined as: cooperation, partnership and establishment of a society based on human dignity where all people have a glorious life.

Now, as we know the definition of peace and we clearly defined its pillars, we understand women's demands and their views on peace in three provinces. Only 10% among them mentioned security but the majority agreed on tranquility,

compatibility and mutual understanding as their basic needs in the definition of peace.

So, the demand of the whole target group and the definitions that they provided on peace is the definitions mentioned above.

If we review some of the quotes, we can easily achieve this ambition.

A woman in Herat said about peace that: "If her husband is not addicted, she lives in peace". This comment of some of interviewees who acknowledged the same goal in a different way. Based on the views of target group peace is tranquility. She knows that her addicted husband argues at home and he is a burden to the society and people.

A woman resident of Kabul said about peace that: "if she is not beaten, she lives in peace".

Physical violence that its perpetrators not only legally investigated and has been provided in the EVAW law, but most of such violence still committed by men in some places and areas and due to the lack of access to justice or less access to justice they remain concealed and the perpetrators do not legally investigated is the demand of women world free of violence.

Women in Balkh complained the same physical violence as in Kabul and defined the best peaceful life as family tranquility.

In this regard, there is a strong link between peace and tranquility at family level that further justifies the modern concept of peace which not only about war.

Conclusion

What was revealed in this research is that living in a peaceful and non-violent family environment. Interviewees have provided various definitions about peace, most of whom emphasize on peace and non-violence. In addition, this study has indicated that women and peace are synonyms. Whenever women are at peace and the family atmosphere is away from violence, so, such a family lives in peace.

Addiction to drug, beatings, poor economy, different types of mental and physical disorders are among the problems that women have faced and non-existence of those are considered peace.

Civil rights and its acquisition were among other important issues that have been considered as peace and tranquility components.

What should be most considered here is the participation of women in family, society and political environments. As women mostly reminisced about decision-makings and emphasized on the recognition of their rights in decision-making processes in various social and political domains.

Compatibility and creating mutual agreement ground were two interesting definitions that women provided regarding peace.

So, we can conclude that peace in this research does not mean war and ceasefire. But the broad concept of peace in this research is to avoid any kind of violence in a peaceful environment along with justice.

Recommendations

1. To involve women in peace negotiation processes;
2. To support and protect women through applicable laws and to approve and enforce efficient laws as necessary;
3. To empower women leadership in credible and efficient institutions such as judicial and legal centers with gender sensitivities.
4. To participate women in shaping and supporting gender equality movements at the national level and linking them with programs related to peace, security, development and human rights;
5. To support and protect women participation in elections and decision-making processes;
6. To avoid decisions about women in traditional Jirga and meetings that leads to human rights violations;
7. To ensure peace that requires the economic and social security of women.