



صداهای زنان برای صلح همه‌شمول و پایدار
د ټول شموله او تلپاتې سرولي لپاره د بشپړو غبرونه
Women's Voices for an Inclusive and Sustainable Peace

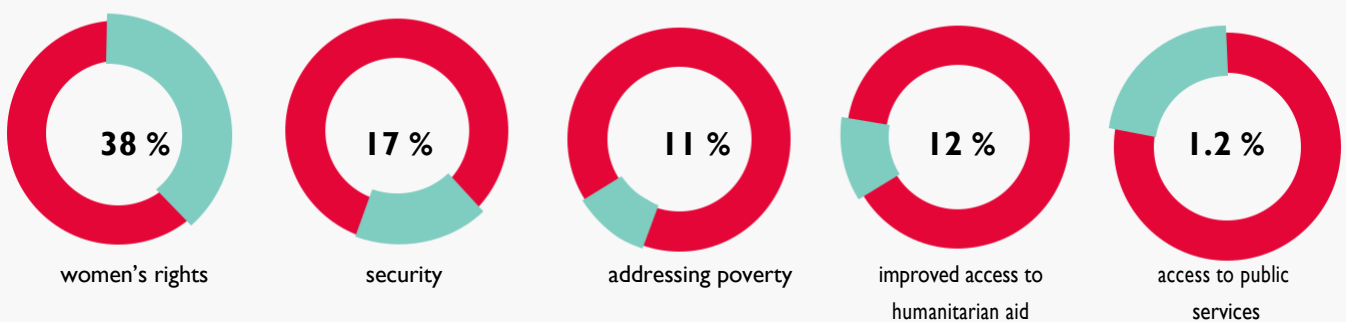
WOMEN'S PEACE BRIEF – August 2022

Afghan Women's Opinions regarding Political Priorities and Expectations

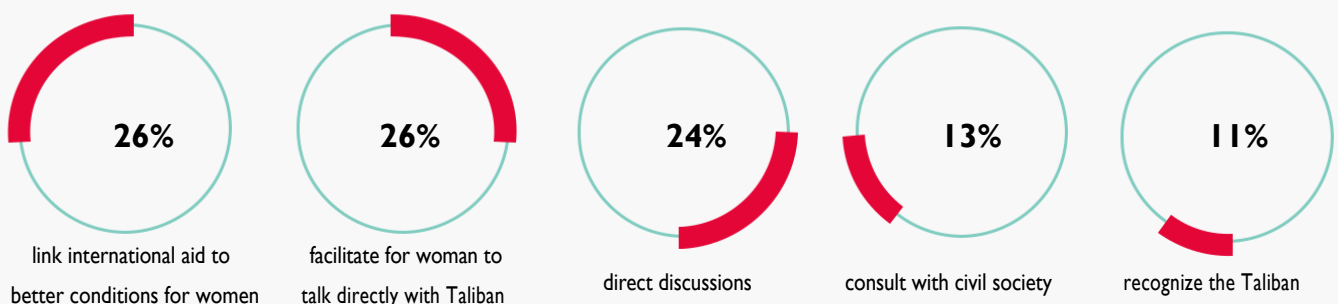
Summary:

- **2,572** women from the provinces of Herat, Nangarhar, Balkh, Helmand, Takhar, Bamyan, Kabul, Daikundi, Panjshir, Jawzjan, Farah, Faryab, Badghis, Baghlan, Kunar, and Paktia were polled about their top political priorities and what they expect from the international community and civil society organizations.
- A large plurality of respondents (**38%**) chose “women’s rights” as the key priority for women and girls, with the next most popular option being “access to public services” (**22%**).
- When deciding what the international community could do to improve conditions for women during its engagement with the Taliban, more than half of women were evenly split (**26%**) between “link international aid to better conditions for women” and “facilitate for women to talk directly with the Taliban.” The next most popular option was “direct discussions” (**24%**).
- **41%** of respondents said ensuring women’s full mobility was required from international actors to better support Afghan women’s organizations. This was far ahead of the next most popular option: “ensure safe spaces for civic participation” (**21%**).
- **48.73%** said the other 3 principles- demands of the Afghan people for sustainable peace, commitment of the negotiating parties to a sustainable peace, and demands of the UN to ensure a durable peace- were not sufficient to safeguard women’s rights.

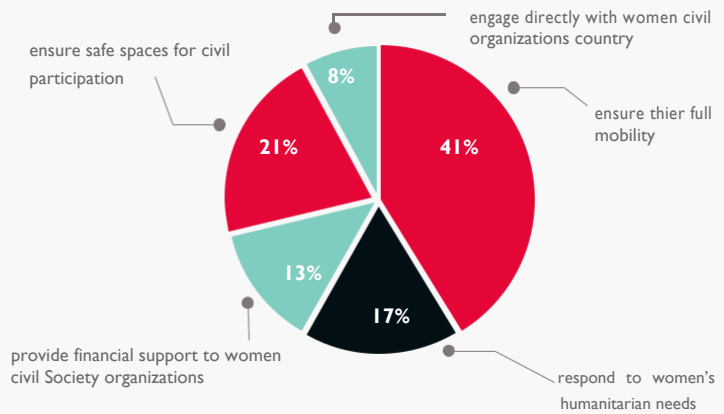
Question 1 What are the key priorities for Afghan women and girls today?



Question 2 What can the international community do in its engagement with the Taliban on improving conditions for women?



Question 3 What is required from international actors to better support Afghan women's organizations in Afghanistan?



Question 4 What can civil society organizations do to improve conditions for women and girls?

- 13% Advise regional neighbors to advocate to the Taliban
- 35% Advocate to the Taliban
- 13% Advise ulema leaders to advocate to the Taliban
- 29% Advise international community to advocate to the Taliban
- 10% Advise community leaders advocate to the Taliban



Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) in 11 Provinces Herat, Baghlan, Balkh, Bamyan, Daikundi, Farah, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Nangarhar, and Paktia

Before getting into specific question responses, it should be said that there was a common theme across all question responses from the FGD participants: a high confidence in what the international community would be able to do if only it had the will combined with a low confidence in the willingness of the Taliban to be a good faith negotiator. These beliefs also often combined with a belief in the powerlessness of local actors to bring about change themselves.

The picture from the FGDs around the question of how the international community can improve conditions for women differs significantly from the survey respondents. While the option of linking aid to better conditions for women and the option of facilitating direct talks between women and the Taliban were only pluralities among survey takers, they were the only responses seriously considered by the crushing majority of FGD participants. These two options could also mix as many participants advocated for linking aid to facilitating direct discussions. One participant from Baghlan who wanted internationally-supported talks between women and the Taliban said: *"The international community has a fundamental role here to put pressure on the Taliban to accept women's demands, allow girls to go to school and let women work."*

FGD respondents were rarely detailed in how they approached the second question on what the international community could specifically do to better support women's organizations. But their responses overwhelmingly reveal the degree to which they believe in the power of the international community versus the powerlessness of local groups to enact change. What is clear across all provinces is that they want the international community to do something to restore what participants considered major rights like education, work, and mobility. Many participants proposed that international actors could bring back workshops and vocational trainings while others proposed literacy courses and other forms of schooling. One detailed example came from a participant in Daikundi, who proposed business support for projects in homemade products often made by women such as "handicrafts, almond purée, and products in the agricultural sector." But ultimately, participants keep coming back to the fact that schools are closed, trainings and support groups of any kind are of diminished strength, and that women are forced to be jobless.

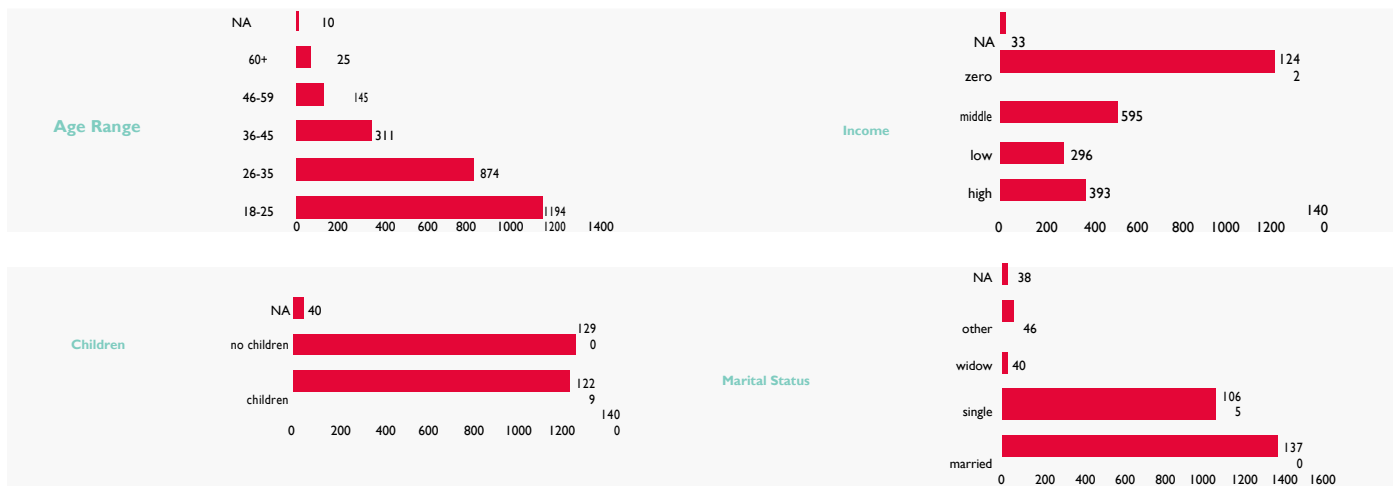
This differs significantly from survey responses where a strong plurality emphasized the need to ensure women's full mobility. Certain FGD participants did bring up mobility but education and labor activities were far more prominently discussed. FGD responses also tended to eschew the options laid out in the survey, rarely separating out or even explicitly mentioning the creation of safe spaces, humanitarian needs, financial aid, or engagement with women's groups.

A belief in local powerlessness bled into responses to the third question around what civil society organizations could do to improve conditions. While a notable number of participants – even pluralities – in provinces like Paktia, Nangarhar, and Kandahar believe working with religious scholars could be particularly useful in dealing with the Taliban, even these participants tend to believe such local work should be in tandem with strong international involvement. This is also true for areas like Herat, Balkh, or Faryab where there is greater confidence in the ability of a whole-of-community effort to persuade the Taliban to back down on taking away women’s rights. And there are notably provinces where confidence in local actors just is not there. Participants in Bamyán and Daikundi overwhelmingly emphasize the danger to or disappearance of local civil society groups. Responses like these exist across all participating provinces. One of the most strikingly detailed examples comes from Bamyán: “Today in Afghanistan, if a civil society activist wants to support the education of girls or to discuss the basic rights of women, then that civil activist is in danger because we have seen that those who advocated have been kidnapped and their heads have been cut off.” The participant then goes on that support to activists must include not only locals but the international community to ensure the safety of their work.

FGD responses to the third question differ from how survey respondents approached the same question but it is possible that the format gave FGD participants the ability feels free to not pick one option over others. In fact, they often picked multiple options, but usually with the caveat that international involvement needed to be there at least in the background.

Methodology:

BISHNAW combines a community-based approach with digital survey tools to capture the experiences and opinions of women at the sub-national level in Afghanistan in ‘real-time.’ It uses three research tools, namely tele-surveys, face-to-face shorthand surveys and focus group discussions, that are triangulated to present a holistic analysis. Its methodology was designed to allow for the inclusion and participation of diverse women representing all demographic and regional backgrounds.



About Bishnaw:

Developed in 2020 by the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS), a think-tank based in Afghanistan with operations in Canada, BISHNAW-WAWRA is a digital platform that captures the voices of women in real-time and on a diversity of issues. Reflected in its name, BISHNAW (means listen in Dari) and WAWRA (listen in Pashto), was developed to ensure that the process of listening to Afghan women is not seen as a one-off event but as an integral part of all national and international discussions on peace, security and development in Afghanistan.