



Badam Bagh women's prison ©Lalage Snow, 2011.

WOMEN AND THE AFGHAN POLICE

Why a law enforcement agency that respects and protects females is crucial for progress

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 GMT TUE 10 SEPTEMBER 2013

Only 1 per cent of the Afghan National Police is female. Although female police are vital for Afghan women to be able to report crimes and access desperately-needed justice, few women in Afghanistan will ever encounter one.

Further action is urgently needed to recruit, train, retain and protect Afghan female police officers. This is critical for upholding the rights of Afghan women and girls and can contribute to sustainable peace and development efforts in Afghanistan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Afghanistan's first policewoman took up her duties in 1967 – three years after Afghan women gained the right to vote. Yet, as with many aspects of the country's development, subsequent decades of political upheaval and conflict took their toll and when the Taliban swept to power in 1996, women were banned from serving in the police.

Over the past decade, the Afghan Government and international donors have worked hard to rebuild the country's basic institutions, including the Afghan National Police (ANP). The Government has launched several initiatives to recruit women into the ANP, resulting in a gradual rise in their numbers. In 2005, the ANP employed just 180 women out of 53,400 personnel. In July 2013, 1,551 policewomen were serving out of 157,000.

All Afghans stand to benefit from more effective and responsive law enforcement in which policewomen play their part – but none more so than women and girls in a country where domestic violence, forced marriage, sexual assault, and honour killings are shockingly common.

Official figures are distorted by underreporting but in reality as many as 87 per cent of Afghan women suffer at least one form of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, according to a credible 2008 survey, with more than half experiencing multiple kinds of violence and abuse.¹

Significant underreporting – which contributes to the lack of prosecutions and a culture of impunity – occurs partly because social norms prevent most Afghan women from approaching male police officers. Despite the gradual progress in female staffing, policewomen still only represent 1 per cent of ANP personnel, with very few deployed in rural areas. Consequently, few Afghans ever see a policewoman, leaving most women and girls unable to report crimes and threats against them.

Compounding this, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found that many honour killings and sexual assaults against women have been committed by the police themselves. Such crimes undermine public trust in the ANP and, by association, the legitimacy of the Afghan state. Effective, independent oversight of the ANP is required to improve accountability, police behaviour and public trust.

SERIOUS CHALLENGES

Accelerating the recruitment of policewomen is a key part of the solution. However, numerous challenges exist and efforts to reach the target of 5,000 policewomen by the end of 2014 are set to fail. These challenges, therefore, must be better addressed not only to recruit more women, but to ensure they stay in their jobs and serve their communities effectively.

One such challenge is sexual harassment and assault by male colleagues. A 2012 investigation by US-based National Public Radio found allegations of widespread sexual abuse and rape of policewomen

in Mazar-e-Sharif, capital of Balkh Province, which has the third largest number of policewomen in the country. NPR said it found evidence that senior policemen demanded sexual favours in exchange for promotions.

Although the *tashkeel* (organizational structure) of the ANP reserves 3,249 jobs for female civil servants and police officers, women fill fewer than half these jobs. This is partly because many provincial chiefs of police are reluctant to accept female recruits. However, there is very little pressure on police chiefs to recruit more women, nor on the Afghan Ministry of the Interior (MoI), which oversees the ANP, to initiate reforms.

Negative attitudes and practices persist after women have been recruited. Policewomen often lack basic items, such as uniforms, which male colleagues receive. Many find themselves performing menial tasks (such as making tea) and receive little or no training. Opportunities to develop their careers are extremely limited, leaving intelligent and ambitious policewomen unmotivated and unfulfilled.

Meanwhile, some policewomen lack the basic skills and motivation to serve their communities but are still promoted to jobs reserved for women. Such problems undermine confidence in policewomen and fuel negative male attitudes towards them. To an extent, this is part of a wider social problem: an estimated 70–80 per cent of the ANP are illiterate, with illiteracy rates among policewomen even higher.

Discriminatory attitudes and lack of awareness also need to be tackled on a wider public level. Many policewomen and potential recruits face opposition from their own communities, who often see policing as a disreputable job for an Afghan woman. Effective information campaigns and even the promotion of fictional role models (e.g. in television dramas) can make a positive difference.

PRIORITISING SOLUTIONS

To address these challenges, the Afghan Government, with donor support, should prioritise and implement a coordinated, adequately resourced strategy to recruit more policewomen and provide them with essential training. They also need to improve retention rates by ensuring they are safe from abuse, respected and provided with the necessary facilities to perform their duties.

This should include efforts to recruit and retain better educated women, particularly university graduates, by ensuring merit-based promotion and offering fast-track schemes. Once trained, policewomen should be assigned to professional policing roles, particularly within Family Response Units and in community policing. At the same time, male police should receive effective gender training and better understand relevant laws, especially those designed to protect women from abuse.

'We are too ashamed to tell men our problems. But a woman is like us: she feels as we do.'

Mariam,¹ an 18-year old, female victim of violence from Logar Province.²

'Half of our society is female so just having male police is not enough. It is impossible to carry out searches of women or houses, or to solve cases, particularly involving violence against women, without female police.'

Colonel Samsoor, a police commander in Kabul.³

¹ Where appropriate, names have been changed for security reasons.

Understanding the nature of any problem, implementing solutions and measuring progress is virtually impossible without adequate information. The UN in particular has an important role to play in improving the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data. This would also make it easier for donors to monitor the issue and the impact of their aid.

There are significant opportunities to help achieve these goals. For example, the Afghan Government and international donors have launched an initiative to transform the paramilitary ANP into a civilian law enforcement agency: the first large-scale police reform in the country. The Ten Year Vision includes the target of a 10 per cent female workforce in the ANP and MoI by 2024 – a realistic and appropriate step towards the long-term objective of an effective and responsive ANP.

Strengthening women's participation in the police also helps Afghanistan meet its responsibilities to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This seeks to improve women's role and influence in post-conflict contexts and strengthen measures that enforce their human rights – all of which contributes to building a just and lasting peace. Afghanistan's first National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 provides an opportunity to ensure that actions designed to promote women's roles and enforce their rights complement each other, thereby maximising their impact.

Ministries aiming to implement the Afghan National Action Plan (NAP) and related initiatives will require UN support. International missions such as NATO can set positive examples, for instance, by maintaining NATO gender advisers to help implement the organisation's own NAP and by ensuring that training and mentoring programs are gender-sensitive.

WHO BENEFITS?

Why does this matter in a country facing a multitude of social, economic and political challenges? Afghanistan's people, its institutions, its stability and security, as well as donors seeking to maximise the impact of their aid, all potentially benefit from more effective policewomen as part of a more responsive and accountable ANP.

The likely impact on women and girls is clear. Although Afghanistan has a constitution and laws designed to protect and uphold women's rights, they are not consistently enforced. A more female-friendly ANP would increase women's access to the formal justice system and assist the implementation of, for example, the historic 2009 Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, which criminalises child marriage, forced marriage, rape and other violent acts against women and girls.

Successfully tackling this issue has potentially wider positive impacts. As the UN noted in its EVAW report in 2012: 'Ultimately, improvements in EVAW law implementation and reduced incidents of violence against women can lead to improved protection of Afghan women's rights, in turn strengthening their active and crucial role in society and in efforts to achieve durable peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan.'

The ANP, which is widely mistrusted, would benefit as an institution. A UN-backed survey in 2012 found growing popular acceptance of the role of female police, contributing to improvements in public perceptions of the ANP generally.⁴

Female police can also contribute to Afghan security. Some are already deployed to search women at checkpoints and entrances to Government buildings, as well as to participate in house searches. In 2012, there were at least 13 incidents in which men disguised themselves as women to smuggle goods, or to gain entry into areas from where they carried out attacks. Deploying more policewomen could help prevent such incidents.

In relation to presidential elections expected in 2014, for which the MoI will oversee security, policewomen will be needed to monitor female-only polling stations to help women exercise their right to vote – again helping to strengthen the state’s popular support.

Although institutional reforms and other necessary changes will take time, the time to act is now. The transfer of responsibility for security across the country to Afghanistan’s national security forces is due to be completed in 2014. This, together with the withdrawal of combat troops by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) brings new challenges and risks for Afghanistan’s security and development.

It is therefore crucial that Afghan authorities, donors, as well as Governments and international missions involved in developing Afghan National Security Forces, intensify their efforts to improve the ANP’s responsiveness to the female half of the population and enhance policewomen’s roles. Failure to do so risks eroding more than a decade of hard-earned development gains and undermines Afghanistan’s progress towards stability, prosperity and self-reliance.

For this report, Oxfam consulted Afghan police officers, civil servants, human rights and women’s organisations and local communities, noting women’s perspectives particularly. International donors and security training officers were also interviewed. The recommendations below draw upon the various views that emerged, with some additional details at the end of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Afghan Government and the international community should:

- Develop and implement a national strategy to recruit and retain female police. Coordinating national and international efforts, this strategy should be accompanied by clear action plans and backed by adequate donor funding to be successful.
- Prioritise policewomen within overall police reform efforts. Backed by adequate, ring-fenced donor funding, the MoI-International Police Coordination Board Working Groups should develop specific

plans within mainstream police reforms to recruit women and enhance their roles. The Working Groups should include, or meaningfully consult, gender experts from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, gender-sensitive policing specialists, senior Afghan policewomen and civil society.

- Ensure equal access to professional training and opportunities for women, and expand improved gender and rights training for all personnel. The Afghan Government and international missions should increase professional courses and opportunities for policewomen (including specialist training such as driving and forensics), prioritise female literacy classes, and ensure all ANP understand the gender curriculum and women's national and international legal rights (including EVAW).
- Ensure the development of a strong and effective Afghanistan National Action Plan to implement UNSCR1325. The Afghan Government should include clear, relevant indicators in an adequately donor-resourced NAP that relate to women's participation in the police and wider security sector, particularly at decision-making levels.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior should:

- **Develop and implement large-scale recruitment and information campaigns.** Recruitment drives should offer training and education opportunities to uneducated women and higher-ranking jobs to educated recruits, complemented by public information campaigns on the benefits to communities of having policewomen.
- **Provide a safe working environment for female police.** The Mol should take urgent steps to provide necessary facilities (e.g. locking toilets and female changing rooms), ensure women are aware of, and have access to, a safe effective complaints mechanism, consider providing personal guards for senior policewomen, and ensure that all staff in district and provincial police stations are made aware of relevant policies (e.g. the 2013 Directive on Sexual Harassment).
- **Ensure national policies are implemented at the local level.** Overseen by the Steering Committee, the Mol should ensure its policies are in line with national and international standards for gender sensitivity, and increase efforts to implement national policies supporting policewomen at the local level, including by issuing ministerial directives to provincial police chiefs.
- **Reform the *tashkeel* (organisational structure).** Reforms should include developing clear recruitment policies and specific job descriptions, reserving more positions (including senior roles) for women, and identifying more departments and units where they can work – including in FRUs, recruitment, intelligence, the Passport Department, Criminal Investigation Division and Counter Narcotics. Independent appointment and review boards, including men, women and civil society representatives, should be created.
- **Ensure women have fair access to career development opportunities.** The Mol should set provincial police chiefs targets to promote women to officer and NCO levels – ensuring promotion is

merit-based while allowing for the specific challenges that women face (such as lower literacy rates) – and establish fast-track promotion schemes alongside leadership training and mentoring by experienced foreign policewomen.

- **Rapidly increase the numbers of female police at the provincial level.** The MoI should assign educated and trained policewomen to provincial positions with incentives for them to stay, prioritising the allocation of such staff to specialised units such as the FRUs and community policing as well as increasing training for illiterate members of these units.

Provincial Chiefs of Police should:

- **Provide active support to female police.** Provincial police chiefs should clearly instruct all their personnel that sexual abuse and harassment will not be tolerated, ensure that complaints are transparently investigated and perpetrators of abuse and harassment are appropriately disciplined, and also ensure policewomen have access to appropriate equipment, private transport, female-only spaces and childcare facilities.
- **Increase efforts to deploy female police into communities.** Women should be assigned to police stations in groups no smaller than five staff, both to protect them from harassment and enable them to reach out more effectively to communities. Police chiefs should also ensure policewomen actively conduct core professional duties, particularly in FRUs and communities.
- **Strengthen Family Response Units.** Police chiefs can do this by ensuring FRUs always include trained and literate policewomen, recruiting graduates of Sharia law to serve as legal advisors, and placing units under female leadership where possible. FRUs must use office space provided by donors for that purpose, or be given specific areas of police stations (with separate entrances), with access to transport to help FRU staff serve local communities.

All states supporting the Afghan National Police should:

- **Allocate specific funding to recruit, retain and promote female policing.** Priorities include support for improved literacy, community policing, innovative incentives (such as bonuses, family health care plans and housing), essential infrastructure such as female-only facilities, policewomen's associations, and training and mentoring for senior male and female officers, especially provincial police chiefs.
- **Make security funding conditions-based.** Donors should link long-term support to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) – especially after they assume full responsibility for security in all of Afghanistan in 2014 – to indicators of success on female police recruitment and professional progress. Donors should also ring-fence funding for policewomen's posts in the *tashkeel* and safeguard these against proposed cuts after 2015.

- **Provide substantial long-term funding for civil society initiatives.** Funding should be prioritised for groups working to support female police, including efforts that increase community acceptance, promote male champions and female role models and link Afghan policewomen associations and councils with international counterparts (including the International Association of Women Police and with similar groups in Muslim countries).
- **Support independent oversight of the Afghan National Police.** Donors should adequately fund the Police Ombudsman's Office to ensure women can access an independent and effective complaints mechanism. This should be rolled out nationwide as a matter of priority to ensure access at the provincial level.
- **Ensure all international police training and mentoring programmes are gender-sensitive.** Troop contributing states should maintain gender advisers in the post-2014 ISAF mission's Operation Resolute Support to enable the implementation of NATO's own 1325 NAP, while donors should ensure the new phase of LOTFA beginning in 2014 includes civil society representatives on the Steering Committee.

International police missions should:

- **Maintain mentoring programmes.** Bodies such as EUPOL and the UNAMA Police Advisory Unit should continue to provide qualified civilian mentors for senior male and female police officers, particularly provincial chiefs of police. Mentoring programmes should be expanded where possible (or at least maintained at current levels beyond 2014), and create links between police chiefs in different regions and with neighbouring countries.
- **Prioritise support to the Ministry of Interior Gender and Human Rights Units.** International police missions should ensure that capacity building of the Gender and Human Rights Units is a priority within police reform efforts, both at the MoI in Kabul and at the provincial level. This should include strengthening their information collection systems, including the disaggregation of data by sex and age.

The United Nations should:

- **Improve the collection and use of data.** The UN mission in Afghanistan should improve the collection and use of sex disaggregated data when reporting against benchmarks in quarterly Secretary General Reports on Afghanistan, including comprehensive reporting on women's participation in the ANP.
- **Step up support to ministries.** The UN should increase targeted support to relevant ministries to assist the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the forthcoming Afghanistan National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

1. INTRODUCTION

Backed by international donors and police training missions, the Afghan Government has overseen gradual progress in the recruitment and role of women in the Afghan National Police (ANP). Progress has been limited, however: today less than 1 per cent of the ANP is female.⁵

Most policewomen work in the capital and provincial centres, with very few in rural areas.⁶ Most Afghan women will therefore never come across a policewoman. As social norms make it difficult for females to approach male police officers, abuses against women are widely underreported.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) reported 6,000 registered cases of violence against women in 2012: a 25 per cent increase on 2011. This figure, however, represents the tip of the iceberg. In reality, research indicates that as many as 87 per cent of Afghan women suffer some form of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, including forced marriage, with 62 per cent experiencing multiple forms of violence and abuse.⁷

When women do report abuses, their cases are often not properly registered and offenders are rarely prosecuted. A 2012 UN report on the implementation of Afghanistan's Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law concluded that the lack of 'empowered female police' to investigate cases, as well as a lack of awareness of the law among the police, were key factors in the ANP's failure to tackle VAW effectively.⁸

Moreover, the AIHRC has accused the ANP itself of abusing women. Its June 2013 report found that policemen committed nearly 15 per cent of the honour killings and sexual assaults recorded between 2011 and 2013. This makes women even less inclined to seek help from police.⁹

The lack of female police also has an impact on peace and development efforts in Afghanistan. The UN report on EVAW concluded:

'Ultimately improvements in EVAW law implementation and reduced incidents of violence against women can lead to improved protection of Afghan women's rights, in turn strengthening their active and crucial role in society and in efforts to achieve durable peace, security and prosperity in Afghanistan.'¹⁰

A UN-backed survey published in 2012 found growing public acceptance of female police, arguing that this contributed to improvements in public perceptions of the ANP as a whole.¹¹ Policewomen were more trusted to resolve a crime fairly than their male counterparts, the survey found.

Commenting on the findings, the deputy head of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) stressed the link between the numbers of policewomen and improving popular support for the state.

‘Recruiting more women in the ANP can become an effective means of reducing excessive use of force and citizen complaints. Within the context of community policing, having female police in the ANP will result in a better relationship with the local population. This in turn helps fighting crime and raises the acceptance of the police, and thus state authority.’¹²

Despite these significant conclusions, however, the recruitment of female police has not been a high priority in police reform efforts.¹³

This paper draws on interviews with key stakeholders, male and female police, Oxfam’s programme experience and existing research to argue that it should be made an urgent priority, both to tackle issues such as VAW more effectively, as well as to assist the ANP’s transition from a counter-insurgency force into a civilian police service.

The paper outlines steps by the Afghan Government and donors to recruit female police and improve their conditions as serving members of the ANP. It details the barriers that deter women from joining and remaining in the ANP and discusses how to build public support for policewomen. The paper includes recommendations for all stakeholders.

Box 1: Why Afghan women urgently need female police

The story of Captain Raheema, a 47-year-old Family Response Unit police officer in Mazar-e-Sharif, is a clear example of how female police can make the difference between life and death for Afghan women and girls.

In May 2012, Captain Raheema was contacted by a hospital in Mazar-e-Sharif, when Nessima, a 16-year-old, who was seven months pregnant, was brought in after being violently beaten by her 25-year-old husband. Nessima had her tongue almost completely severed and was beaten so badly that her unborn child died.

The police in her home village initially refused to investigate, insisting that Nessima had to report to the local police station in person. This is one of the requirements of the EVAW law, which can discriminate against victims who are not able, or willing, to report a crime locally.

Raheema asked her commander to contact the local police station to convince them to investigate. The police there initially claimed the husband denied the charges of homicide and aggravated assault and reported that they would not hold him without evidence.

Raheema refused to give up: she obtained the hospital medical report and helped Nessima and her father to return to their community together with the report and her child’s body. Even then, officials intended to release the husband, until Raheema – with the permission of her station commander – went to the media. Subsequent media pressure led the police to charge the husband, who has now been sentenced to three years in jail.

Box 2: Who's who

The Afghan National Police (ANP)

There are 157,000 members of the ANP, which is split into four branches: the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP), the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP – the lead police organization in counter-insurgency operations), the Afghan Border Police (ABP) and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). The Afghan Local Police (ALP) is a sub-branch of the ANP. It acts as an armed community-level defence force but lacks formal policing powers.

The ANP is increasingly taking the lead on recruiting and training police, through the ANP General Recruiting Command and the ANP Training Command.

Ministry of Interior (Mol)

The Ministry of Interior, under the leadership of General Mujtaba Patang, is responsible for overseeing the ANP.

In April 2013, General Patang revealed the *Ten Year Vision*, designed to reform the ANP into a 'unified, capable and trustworthy civilian police service' to 'enforce the rule of law' and protect human rights.

The plan also calls for at least 10 per cent of all ANP and Mol staff to be female by 2024, with the Mol pledging to develop a strategy to coordinate 'recruitment, training, capacity development and other affairs of women' including measures to deal with sexual harassment and violence.

International bodies and missions

The *NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan (NTM-A)*, under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and mandated by the UN Security Council, carries out most training of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including the ANP. The NTM-A is supported by member state training missions, including the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as non-NATO members, such as Australia.

The *Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA)*, established in 2002 and managed by the UN, is the main mechanism for donors – including the USA, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and Italy – to fund the ANP. Since 2002, the international community has contributed approximately \$2.9bn to LOTFA, with the USA as the largest donor.

The *European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL)*, established in 2007, focuses on training and mentoring the ANP, Mol and prosecutors, with one of its core objectives being to integrate gender and human rights into the Mol and ANP. The 350 international and 200 local staff are drawn from 24 EU member states and Canada. In May 2013, its mission was extended until the end of 2014 with a budget of €108m.

The *International Police Coordination Board (IPCB)*, set up in 2007, is helping the Mol develop two-year implementation plans for the *Ten Year Vision*. However, it does not have a specific strategy, or focus on women.

Family Response Units

Family Response Units (FRUs) were established in 2006 as specialized three-person units to tackle domestic violence. They were intended to support victims of violence more effectively and also help raise the status of female police by giving them a specialised professional role.

2. PROGRESS

Women began serving in the Afghan police force in 1967 during the reign of Mohammed Zahir Shah, Afghanistan's last king. When the Taliban took power in 1996, women were banned from the police force.¹⁴

The Afghan Government has launched several initiatives to attract women into the ANP, resulting in a slow but steady increase in the numbers of female police. In 2005, of a police force of 53,400, only 180 were women (0.3 per cent).¹⁵ In 2010, of 112,000, 929 were women (0.8 per cent) and in 2011, of 130,000, 1,300 were women (1.0 per cent).¹⁶ As of July 2013, there were 1,551 female police out of a force of 157,000.

The current *tashkeel* (organizational structure) of the ANP contains 3,249 positions reserved exclusively for women civil servants and police officers, including 821 police officers, 787 Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), 1,370 patrol officers, 101 administrative personnel, and 170 contractors. As of mid-2013, women occupied only 1,506 of these positions – less than half.¹⁷

Many female police are working in key areas, with some in senior positions, including in the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and Counter-Narcotics (CN). Colonel Hekmat Shahi is the second female Head of the Mol's Gender and Human Rights Unit (GHRU), which in July 2013 had 463 staff working across all 34 provinces, 112 of whom were female police.¹⁸ In the ANP leadership, there are 11 female Colonels and two female Generals (albeit compared with over 160 male generals).¹⁹ Attempts have been made to empower female police in a specialized role with Family Response Units (FRU) (see Box 9).

A recent report that studied five key provinces – Herat, Kunduz, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kabul – found that female police were becoming more accepted in society, particularly among local elders who recognise the benefits to their communities. It also concluded that policewomen had improved the effectiveness and acceptance of the ANP overall.²⁰

Box 3: Female police at work

Pari Gul, a 28-year-old mother of three, has been a patrolwoman for five years, working in Police District 9 in Kabul's east.

She spends most of her time searching women at entrances to public buildings but wants to prove herself by doing other duties. She says: 'I am proud of what I do but I want to help women who are victims of violence'.

Pari Gul considers herself lucky to have the support of her male boss – Colonel Samsoor – as well as her husband. She feels safe going to work, despite the male-dominated environment, since Colonel Samsoor gave his personal phone number to the seven female police under his command, telling them to report any problems with their male colleagues.

Colonel Samsoor, a Station Commander, has been a policeman for 31 years and is currently studying for his masters degree in Human Rights. He says it is impossible to do his job effectively without more female police.

'It's a big challenge to increase the numbers,' he says. 'One of the most important steps is to make women feel safe in the police station. If a female police officer tells other women that "the station is secure, I'm happy, and they respect me and my work" then she will encourage others to join'.

He believes Afghan women should be given incentives to join the ANP: 'We have to make exceptions for women's position in Afghan society. Female police should not have to do night shifts because their families do not like it – they are seen as bad women if they stay away from home overnight.

'I don't ask my policewomen to wear their uniform outside the station as they are afraid of what people will say and think. And if a male and a female apply for the same job and have the same level of literacy, then the woman should get preference.

'So far men have not come to me to complain about this. If they did then I would say that they should be patient. Women have many problems in our society and we need female police to look after our women. It will benefit them too in the end.'

However, Pari Gul still faces problems. 'My uncles stopped talking to me after I joined the police. We are Pashtun and they do not think I should be mixing with men who are not relatives. If there were more female police working with me, then perhaps they would change their minds.

'We also still have many problems at the station. There are no toilets just for women, or somewhere to sleep, or rest, separately from men. This is a problem for us in Afghan culture. Some women worry that they will be attacked by male colleagues when they go to the bathroom. I would scream and fight back, but not everyone can do this.'

Table 1 Numbers of female police, their location and rank as of February 2013

Province	Officer	Sergeant (NCO)	Patrolwoman	Total
<i>Kabul</i>	154	298	236	688
<i>Nangarhar</i>	0	12	23	35
<i>Parwan</i>	0	3	5	8
<i>Kapisa</i>	0	0	5	5
<i>Panjshir</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Kunar</i>	0	1	1	2
<i>Laghman</i>	0	1	3	4
<i>Nuristan</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Bamyan</i>	7	10	1	18
<i>Daikundi</i>	9	5	15	29
<i>Balkh</i>	7	54	58	119
<i>Kunduz</i>	3	8	22	33
<i>Badakshan</i>	2	12	10	24
<i>Takhar</i>	3	14	13	30
<i>Jawzjan</i>	2	5	11	18

<i>Faryab</i>	3	15	17	35
<i>Baghlan</i>	4	7	0	11
<i>Samangan</i>	0	5	11	16
<i>Saripul</i>	1	10	21	32
<i>Kandahar</i>	9	9	34	52
<i>Uruzgan</i>	0	9	13	22
<i>Zabul</i>	0	0	6	6
<i>Paktika</i>	0	0	13	13
<i>Ghazni</i>	0	6	12	18
<i>Paktia</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>Khost</i>	0	0	4	4
<i>Logar</i>	0	0	2	2
<i>Wardak</i>	0	5	5	10
<i>Herat</i>	12	83	41	136
<i>Farah</i>	1	6	21	28
<i>Badghis</i>	1	6	7	14
<i>Ghor</i>	1	11	9	21
<i>Helmand</i>	5	6	19	30
<i>Nimroz</i>	1	4	20	25
Totals	226	605	658	1489

Source: MOI document, February 2013

Box 4: Some other countries also struggle to recruit female police

Afghanistan is not the only country that struggles to recruit women into its national police force – although in most other countries, social norms allow women to approach male officers more easily. The Prenzler report offers the following data:

England and Wales	25 per cent (2009)
Ireland	23.1 per cent (2009)
USA	11.8 per cent (2010)
Canada	19.6 per cent (2011)
Australia	24.4 per cent (2011)
South Africa	23.5 per cent (2011)
Ghana	19.7 per cent (2007)
Nigeria	12.4 per cent (2011)
India	5.17 per cent (2010)

The Norwegian Police Organisation provides the following number:

Norway	21 per cent (2010)
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The Swedish Police provides the following figure:

Sweden	29 per cent (year unspecified)
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3. MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN

This chapter lists some recent steps that have been taken which support the position of women in the ANP. The following chapter will assess these efforts and the challenges in more detail.

THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT

The Mol has demonstrated a welcome commitment to increasing the number of female police in the ANP. It created a Steering Committee under the leadership of the Deputy Interior Minister Mirza Mohammad Yarmand, outlined plans to hold a national conference on female police in 2013 and pledged to create working groups to develop plans to recruit and retain more women in the ANP. However, the national conference has been delayed repeatedly, putting the long-term commitment of the Mol into question. Nevertheless, the Mol has taken the following important steps:

Targets

The *National Police Plan (2010)* and *Strategy (2011)* called for 5,000 female police out of approximately 157,000 police by the end of 2014 (3 per cent of the total). The *Ten Year Vision* went further, mandating an appropriately ambitious 10 per cent of both Mol and ANP staff to be female by 2024.²¹

Training

All 30 police training centres are now under Afghan command. These will be consolidated into 13 by the end of 2014. Currently, five centres have training facilities for women – Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz, Nangarhar and Kabul. However, only Kabul has a dormitory for female trainees, making it possible for women who live outside the city to join the force. In other provinces, trainees are taken home by police vehicles each day.²²

To change attitudes among male police towards their female colleagues, the eight-week basic preparation for the Patrolman level includes three days of gender and human rights training, with further sessions at the NCO and Officer levels.

Policies

The Mol has taken positive steps to deal with some problems faced by female police in the ANP, including sexual harassment and abuse, and the lack of female-only facilities, particularly private, locking bathrooms.

These measures include the Directive on Female Recruitment (2009),²³ the Directive on Harassment 018 (16 February 2013)²⁴, a draft national Gender Policy (2013)²⁵ and the Policy on Prevention of Violence against

Women and Children at Ministry of Interior and Society Level (2013).²⁶ They call for the training of all ANP in women's rights under Islamic law to improve police behaviour towards female colleagues and women in communities; female-only changing rooms and bathrooms; childcare facilities; access to education and training opportunities for female police; the dismissal and prosecution of policemen who harass women.

Following the release of the directive on harassment, the MoI established a commission, comprising representatives from the MOI GHRU, the Internal Audit Directorate, CID, HR and Personnel Directorates, to address issues including promotion, recruitment and timely payment of salaries.²⁷ However, these directives appear to be poorly implemented.

Family Response Units

Family Response Units (FRUs) were established in 2006 to address domestic violence and give women police an appropriate specialised role in the ANP. In May 2013, there were 184 FRUs in 33 provinces with 354 police assigned to them, including 24 female police. Despite the low numbers of women, 11 units are under female leadership.²⁸

Recruitment campaigns

In 2010, the MoI and LOTFA launched a drive to recruit more female police, funded by the Dutch, Japanese and Swiss Governments. It focused on multimedia campaigns, as well as providing specialised training for women in leadership, management and IT.²⁹

DONORS

International donors fund, train and equip the Afghan national security forces. In addition, they have funded a number of specific initiatives that have helped to improve the position of female police, including community policing, policewomen associations, promoting role models and the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Community policing

Donors such as the USA, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as LOTFA and EUPOL, have supported various community policing projects in recent years in provinces such as Kandahar, Kabul, Kunduz, Uruzgan, Baghlan, Ghor, Helmand and Paktiya.³⁰ These projects focus on increasing contact between the police and communities to build trust, for instance, through establishing Neighbourhood Watch committees, community consultations, police liaison officers, joint police-community sports teams, and outreach programmes to schools and universities.

Community policing is one of the most effective ways to provide female police with a professional policing role, for instance, by giving safety briefings at schools. This also gives women and children greater access to the police.

Policewomen associations

A number of policewomen associations have been established in Kabul, Baghlan, Takhar, Bamyan, Badakshan, Balkh, Herat and Daikundi. Some are formal (although weak) Police Women Councils, whereas others are informal groups. EUPOL provides some mentoring support to the Kabul Council, while the Afghan Women's Network (funded by the Dutch Government) works with the Bamyan and Mazar-e-Sharif councils.

The associations provide an important forum for women to discuss their problems and concerns, including sexual harassment, the need for separate spaces in police stations and disrespectful behaviour from male police officers. They are also a useful management tool for the provincial Chiefs of Police and station commanders, as priority issues and complaints can be raised collectively by the association.

These groups still need significant support. The Policewomen's Council in Badakshan had been in existence for a year but was largely inactive until the UN arranged for them to meet with their provincial Chiefs of Police. According to Alexandra Keijer, from the UNAMA Police Advisory Unit in northern Afghanistan:

'They went to see him as a group with their problems. In two weeks, they got their own bathroom and office. He also paid for their uniforms out of his own pocket and arranged transport for them. The women say they feel more respected and are taken more seriously. They did it themselves – they just needed help to take that first step.'¹³¹

Box 5: The future face of female police?



Saba Sahar, Afghanistan's first female director, both directed and played the lead role in *Commissar Amanullah*, a 24-part drama on the Afghan police force.

The Guardian newspaper in April 2012 described her character as ‘a bold, incorruptible female cop, fighting terrorism in a man's world’ who is ‘a kind of superhero, doing kung fu high-kicks in traditional dress, carrying victims to safety over her shoulder or riding a motorbike with no hands while firing a gun.’³²

Sahar – who herself trained as a police officer in 1990 and still works for the Kabul police part time – told the UK-based newspaper: ‘I want to show that Afghan women are capable of doing anything men do.’

Promoting role models

Donors have also funded initiatives to promote policewomen through television and radio, including the 2012 German-funded *Commissar Amanullah* series (see Box 5) and *Eagle Four*, a 2010 US-funded drama.³³

Both were unusual in showing women in lead roles as strong, decisive policewomen. *Commissar Amanullah* featured a female head of a crime scene investigation unit, played by director Saba Sahar. *Eagle Four* focused on a love story between two of its lead characters, Ludmilla and Baktash, whilst another female character was a computer genius.³⁴ Although these women are fictional, they represent important role models for Afghan women and girls.

Police Ombudsman's Office

EUPOL and other donors helped to establish a Police Ombudsman's office as an external oversight and complaints body within the AIHRC. In addition to the main office in Kabul, there are now branches in Nangarhar, Balkh and Herat. In 2012, the AIHRC received 105 complaints related to harassment and sexual abuse carried out by police, as well as complaints about unfair promotion practices concerning female police.³⁵ Underreporting of these issues is believed to be extensive.

Box 6: How some major donors compare

The USA takes the lead on funding, training and equipping the ANSF. The US Government has senior civilian advisers who work on gender issues within the ANSF and led on establishing the FSU. However, although the USA has Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams supporting the ANP, these have suffered from a shortage of female mentors, reducing their ability to work with policewomen. Until recently, the USA has not ring-fenced funding for female policing within the annual multi-billion dollar Afghan Security Forces Fund. However, in 2012, the National Defense Authorisation Act for the first time highlighted women in the ANSF within the US military's strategic priorities. In June 2013, the proposed Moran amendment to the 2014 Defense Appropriations Bill directed that \$47.3m out of the \$7.8bn fund should be allocated to the recruitment and retention of women in the ANP and Afghan National Army.

The UK provides approximately \$8m a year to LOTFA. However, in keeping with the UK's global approach, it does not earmark any of this specifically for female police. It also seconded around 16 police officers to EUPOL and has a dedicated Gender Officer based with the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand Province. The UK also funds the four-year \$11m Strategic Support to the Ministry of Interior programme to strengthen the administrative and policy capacity of the Mol, including the Police-e-Mardumi (Democratic Policing) Secretariat.

The Netherlands is a leading donor on this issue, earmarking \$1m for female police within its \$11m annual contribution to LOTFA – one of the few donors to do so. The Dutch Government also funded the €22m Dutch Rule of Law Mission based in Kunduz Province. It continues to fund the three-year \$4.5m Afghanistan Democratic Policing Project (ADPP), which includes support to policewomen councils, a pilot project to deliver literacy classes to women via mobile phones and \$2.6m to a EUPOL-run programme jointly training police (including women) and prosecutors to improve links between the investigation and prosecution of crimes against women.

Australia currently has 28 Police Officers in Afghanistan, including police trainers with gender expertise seconded to EUPOL. The Australian Government supports reform of the ANP, contributing nearly \$18m in 2012-2013, but has no particular focus on gender-sensitive police reform, nor does it currently fund or run specific female policing projects. However, in June 2013, Australia launched the Elimination of Violence Against Women Program in Afghanistan, a \$17.7m initiative that includes training and mentoring support for police and other legal actors on the implementation of the EVAW law. In addition, Australia will fund training of female police officers at the National Police Academy and within the CI departments, FRU and Gender Units in targeted provinces.

Germany was originally the lead nation on ANP reconstruction and reform before handing over to EUPOL in 2007. It continues to provide €30m a year to LOTFA and seconded around 15 Police Officers to EUPOL. The German Police Project Team, with approximately 200 Police Officers, has established Police Training Centres in Balkh, Badakshan and Kunduz, as well as at the Afghan National Police Academy in Kabul, which are equipped with separate accommodation and dining areas for female police. Women are taught separately in Kunduz, but in mixed classes in Badakshan and Balkh. The Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif training centres also have childcare facilities.

Box 7: Oxfam - investing in support and awareness

Oxfam is working with Afghan partner organisations to change attitudes towards VAW, both within communities and the police force.

Selay Ghaffar, the Director of Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), explains that: 'It is important that women are aware of their own rights, especially around gender-based violence. Women come to see us and we can see that violence has happened to them, but they don't see it as violence now – it is normal and routine.' However, says Selay, just educating women about their rights is

not enough to improve their access to justice. Success depends on engaging with traditional male community and religious leaders, as well as the ANP. Selay says: 'We have a shelter to help women. But they need more than a shelter. They need police, including female police, who know the law and know they have a responsibility to act.'

The FLOW project (Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women), which is being implemented in Balkh and Kabul, involves training both male and female community leaders about how to access the formal justice system.

In addition, HAWCA, and two other partners – Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and the Afghan Women's Education Centre (AWEC) – promote support for female police in communities by explaining to local leaders how the police should protect and serve them, and the role that policewomen can play, including more effective support for female victims of violence. HAWCA also has extensive experience training local religious leaders on women's rights in Islam, especially economic, health and property rights.

Oxfam has also carried out national- and international-level advocacy to encourage vital reforms. To support this, Oxfam's in-country work includes some police training, developed by HAWCA in partnership with Mol, Ministry of Justice, MoWA (Ministry of Women's Affairs), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the National Police Academy.

4. CHALLENGES IN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Despite positive efforts by the Afghan Government and donors, there are still far too few capable female police. Educated women in particular do not want to join the police, or face opposition from their families and communities if they try. Many female applicants are widows or illiterate women, often attracted by recruitment campaigns that highlight the financial benefits of the job. When they do join, women often struggle to be taken seriously as professional police officers. Attracting more qualified and motivated women to join and remain in the police in greater numbers will require urgently addressing several structural issues.

'A million-dollar recruitment campaign looks good on paper but you need to ensure you recruit the right women and keep these women in the police.'

UN official.³⁶

IN THE AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE

Sexual assault and harassment

Sexual assault and harassment of female police officers by male colleagues is thought to be widespread in the ANP and deters many women from joining or remaining in the police force.

A US National Public Radio report (March 2012)³⁷ found 'disturbing allegations of systematic sexual coercion and even rape of female police officers by their male colleagues' in Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of Balkh Province, which has the third largest number of female police in the country. The report also claimed that in some cases sexual favours were demanded in exchange for promotion.

'A policewoman in Mazar wanted to go to Kabul for five days. She asked for permission. The male officer told her to sleep with him first. She refused and left her job.'

Afghan female activist.

Policies and directives developed to deal with these issues, such as the 2013 Directive on Sexual Harassment, are not being enforced at the local level, nor are they monitored and followed up effectively by the MoI.³⁸ There appears to be little or no police awareness of the contents of these policies, and a lack of detailed knowledge of relevant laws such as the EVAW law and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan.

'Many victims say they don't want to go to the police because women don't trust them. They blame the women. Sometimes the police demand money or sex from women to proceed with the case.'

Leeda Yaqoobi, Afghan Women's Network.

The lack of female-friendly facilities makes policewomen feel even more vulnerable. There are few female-only or locking bathrooms, or separate sleeping, changing and eating facilities in police stations, although LOTFA plans to install these in Kabul, provincial headquarters and district stations.³⁹

Women who have been harassed or victimised by male colleagues struggle to be heard. With the support of EUPOL, a helpline for Afghan policewomen was established in 2010 by the Mol within the GHRU in Kabul. However, interviews with policewomen showed that most are not aware of the helpline, while others regard it as ineffective.

The GHRU is supposed to refer complaints made via the hotline to the relevant department and then follow up after 15 days. If the complaint involves injury or death, it should refer the case to CID for investigation. If there is an allegation of rape, then the case is referred to the Inspector General's office, which may in turn refer it to CID.

As these complaints cannot typically be made anonymously, many victims are intimidated into retracting their complaints, which leads investigations to be cancelled.⁴⁰ Reliable data about the use of the hotline is also difficult to obtain. The GHRU is reported to have received 59 complaints by mid-2013. However, the unit lacks the capacity to oversee, monitor and follow-up on complaints effectively and struggles to obtain data from other departments.⁴¹

Box 8: Turning promises into reality

The Mol policies and directives designed to tackle major problems such as abuse and harassment are not being implemented, particularly at the provincial and district level.

A pilot scheme in Kabul could however, represent one solution.

The Kabul City Police Commander Decree (13 July 2013), developed by Kabul City Police Chief General Salangi with EUPOL, is a 10-point document aimed at preventing the 'mistreatment of female police officers' and providing 'better working conditions' for female police in Kabul.

The decree orders that policewomen should not be subjected to intimidation or assault, should actively participate in police activities and should be provided with all necessary facilities to work safely.

Every police commander in Kabul is required to report monthly to General Salangi's office on their implementation of these standards. If successful, this process could be rolled out nationwide and used to hold local commanders accountable for progress on recruitment of female police.

This would require sustained commitment by the Mol and substantial international support to ensure a robust reporting system and follow-up mechanisms. International advisers could also play a role by carrying out regular spot checks and contacting individual policewomen to ensure their commanding officers have complied with these standards.

'The signing of this document is an important step for the gender mainstreaming within the Kabul Police. Our job is now to support, guide and advise the Police District commanders to implement these principles in police stations around Kabul,' says EUPOL Adviser Valeria Elefterie.

'I believe that this will be both challenging and a rewarding task, but I am confident that with joint forces we will succeed,'

The structure of the Afghan National Police

As noted earlier, many provincial Chiefs of Police are reluctant to fill reserved places with women. Up to half of these positions are therefore currently occupied by men, particularly at higher levels, with chiefs often blaming this on the lack of qualified females.⁴² At the same time, they sometimes use women who are only trained to patrolwoman level to fill *tashkeel* places reserved for females at the NCO and Officer levels.⁴³ Promoting women to roles that they lack the ability to perform further undermines confidence in female police. This reinforces reluctance to recruit women and increases resentment among male police.

At the same time, many trained and capable policewomen are denied advancement and career opportunities within the ANP. A 2013 report found that women are frequently only promoted because of the influence of their relatives. When they are promoted, it is often only a 'paper promotion' with rank and salary increased, but no additional policing responsibilities. This fails to strengthen women's position within the ANP structure and reinforces resentment from male counterparts.⁴⁴

There also appears to be confusion over who is ultimately responsible for increasing female police numbers and fostering their promotion. Some interviewees asserted that the MoI in Kabul was responsible for determining the numbers and ranks of police at each station within the *tashkeel*. They argued that police chiefs or commanders were thus not able to increase numbers at the local level.⁴⁶ Others stated that decisions were taken at the provincial and district levels. This lack of clarity exacerbates the challenge of holding responsible officials accountable.

Lastly, 70–80 per cent of the ANP are illiterate,⁴⁷ with rates among women even higher due to their education being interrupted by conflict and the Taliban ban on girls' education. This makes it more difficult to recruit qualified female candidates for high-ranking positions. Moreover, the majority of educated women who graduate from the National Police Academy are assigned to the ministry in Kabul, further limiting the pool of well-educated women available for provincial- and district-level work.

'We're always under the authority of men'

Policewoman in Herat.⁴⁵

Box 9: Tackling violence against women: why are Family Response Units failing?

A number of innovative approaches have been applied in other countries to increase the numbers of female police, improve their status and to respond more effectively to violence against women (VAW).

These include women-only police stations – largely in Latin America but also Bangladesh and Pakistan – and domestic violence units or desks, which have been established in a number of countries, including India, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa and the UK.

Family Response Units are an Afghan solution. Although the FRUs have had some success – see, for instance, Captain Raheema's story in Box 1 – they are generally weak, under-used, largely confined to police stations and include too few and poorly-trained women police. In addition, many units do not have dedicated space or specialist facilities.

'We only have one room', according to Masima, Deputy Head of the main FRU unit at the Mol in Kabul, 'If a woman comes here who's been beaten by her husband, she can't talk about it in front of him and other people.'

Some stations have added separate annexes for FRUs, with their own entrances. However, these are sometimes reallocated by commanders.

Those staffing FRUs also lack specialised training, such as psycho-social training, which would enable them to deal with victims of violence better. They rarely have access to vehicles, limiting their ability to reach out to communities; this is a major problem in Afghanistan where women are often unable to move around freely.

Leeda Yaqoob from AWN points out: 'The FRUs could play a positive role in supporting female victims if they were properly set up with properly trained staff. But they just put a name on it and give them staff with no knowledge. At first, it was a good sign for women that at least there is a place for them to go. But when victims go and find they don't help them, then it puts the police's credibility at risk.'⁴⁸

Some efforts are now being made to address these weaknesses. In March 2013, EUPOL signed an agreement with the Mol and LOTFA to provide more training for FRUs, and in particular to build stronger links between FRUs and prosecutors to improve implementation of the EAW law.

The Dutch Government is also funding a project to strengthen the relationship between FRUs and health-care providers – often the first place women turn to for help – so that doctors understand they should treat female victims of violence and help police to investigate such crimes.

Until police commanders are encouraged to give the FRUs more authority, to staff them with literate, well-trained, and preferably female officers and provide the necessary support, FRUs will not be able to support victims of domestic violence effectively.

Policewomen are not treated as equals

Many policewomen end up performing menial tasks or administrative work. With the exception of female body searches, women are rarely able to engage in core police functions such as investigating crimes or carrying out arrests. A Herat policewoman complained: 'We're not treated the same as the men. Even when we're at the same rank as the men, it is us that the commander asks to make tea or do typing.'⁴⁹

The women frequently lack basic police equipment or proper uniforms, with some women having to provide their own clothing and footwear despite a budget allocated for female uniforms. Another Herat policewoman said: 'We often don't even have boots, handcuffs, or batons. Even when we are out on operations, we don't have a gun for protection. They say we don't need guns as the men will protect us.'⁵⁰

Many male police continue to believe women do not belong in the organisation, with others complaining that women arrive late to work, leave early and have lower literacy levels, yet receive an equivalent salary. However, in addition to their policing work, female police usually have domestic duties or childcare responsibilities, for which they receive little support from the ANP.

Gender training is vital to change the attitudes and behaviour of male police. Aziz Rafee, from the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF), which runs community policing projects, explained: 'The more you focus on increasing the capacity of women, the greater the danger that you make men jealous. You need to work with the men and make them understand that the women are their equal.'

One issue however, has been the quality and delivery of this training; several of the international experts interviewed for this report said they were unaware of the content of women's training courses and questioned the effectiveness of the curriculum.

In March 2013, the Mol approved a textbook for this training, *Human Rights, Gender and Child Rights*, developed by EUPOL and the National Police Academy.⁵¹ This is a welcome step to improving the quality and coordination of training. However, as the international forces move to a 'training of trainers' approach and adopt advisory roles, it is likely that gender training could be de-prioritised.

Box 9: The Afghan National Action Plan 1325

In 2011, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with officials from other key ministries, began developing Afghanistan's first National Action Plan 1325 (NAP) for implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325. The NAP is due to be finalized by the end of 2014.

UNSCR 1325 calls on member states to increase female participation in decision-making at all levels in countries recovering from conflict, as well as to take measures to protect women and girls from violence. All member states have a legal obligation to comply with the resolution under international law.

An Mol representative sits on the Technical Working Group that is drafting the NAP and the Mol is preparing a Mol-specific action matrix that will be part of the NAP.

The Afghan Government and donors should therefore ensure the NAP 1325 includes specific indicators for female participation in the security sector, including recruitment, professionalisation, and decision-making.

They should also establish strong monitoring mechanisms to ensure these indicators are being met, and develop a funding plan to enable the Afghan Government to effectively and fully implement the NAP.

DONORS NEED TO STEP UP TOO

Despite welcome action by some, there appears to be little strategic planning among donors on how to promote the recruitment of more women. Coordination on training, mentoring, and funding is lacking. Better recording of sex disaggregated data would facilitate monitoring.

Lack of coordination

There is a lack of coordination between donors in general on policing, despite significant efforts by some actors, including the UNAMA Police Advisory Unit. Current reform efforts, jointly led by the International Police Coordination Board and the Mol, should improve this in the future.

Data collection

More donor reports on efforts should include sex disaggregated data. The UN mission in particular should include sex disaggregated data on women's participation in the ANP when reporting against benchmarks in the quarterly Secretary General Reports on Afghanistan.

Training

The NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A), which comes under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military mission, focuses on counter-insurgency and delivers approximately 80–90 per cent of training provided by international forces. Both NTM-A and EUPOL lead the police training in Afghanistan,⁵² although they have now largely shifted to 'training of trainers' approaches and advisory roles.

All police training courses should be certified by, and delivered in coordination with, the Mol. In reality however, efforts are poorly coordinated: A US soldier acting as a police mentor said: 'There's so much training going on but no-one has an overview – it's a mess.'⁵³

Mentoring

International forces also provide mentoring to senior police officers. Many interviewees cited mentoring as a key element of gender-sensitive police reform, providing guidance, expertise and access to learning. However, some also felt that the quality of these mentors varied considerably. Some of the staff seconded to EUPOL are military police who lack vital community or civilian policing skills. International military forces have been used both as police mentors and trainers. The same police mentor quoted above said: 'You need professional police officers to do this job. Even some of our guys who are retired law enforcement officers are from small towns and just don't have the necessary experience.'⁵⁴

Funding

Although many donors assert their support for women's rights and female policing, few have allocated specific, or large-scale, funding to the recruitment of female police. This makes it difficult to address the challenges outlined in this paper (see Box 6).

Box 10: Coordination is vital

In 2011, the Dutch Government launched its integrated Police Training Mission in Kunduz Province. The mission drew together activities supporting the security and justice sectors. These included Initial and Advanced Police Training Courses, the creation of a Police Advisory Group to support the ANP leadership, improving police-prosecutor cooperation, and direct support to female police and community policing.

The mission sought to improve coordination between international bodies and missions, including EUPOL, UNAMA Policing and the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team, by funding a Dutch Officer in the local UNAMA Policing Units and including the leadership of EUPOL Kunduz as part of the coordinating management team of the Dutch mission.

Alexandra Keijer of the UNAMA Police Advisory Unit based in Kunduz says: 'Many projects in Afghanistan have the same goals but don't always connect. Everyone is doing their own thing. We tried to bring them together to be more effective.'

The second approach of the mission was to prioritise the mentoring of the ANP provincial leadership. This was vital in a top-down organisation where local leaders hold the power and also made it more likely that these leaders would support and enforce female-friendly policies.

One result has been a small, but significant, increase in the number of female police in Kunduz. There are now 42 women out of 3,716 ANP staff, including 3 Officers, 8 NCOs and 21 patrolwomen.

A report surveying five provinces concluded that Kunduz was leading in terms of training and opportunities for policewomen. It also found that women were more respected by their male colleagues because training has increased their skills.⁵⁵

Jamila, a female ANP recruiter in Kunduz, says: 'Over the last year we've recruited 15 women. Five or six of them were educated, the rest were illiterate. But they've all had basic training and all are still in the police.'

The Dutch mission closed earlier than expected in July 2013, making it difficult to fully assess its impact or sustainability.

Key recommendations for donors from Kunduz include:

- Improve coordination between international actors in the same area.
- Prioritise the provision of professional mentors to the Provincial Police Chief and other senior figures, as well as training in management, leadership and team building.
- Encourage senior policemen to speak about female police publicly.
- Link Police Chiefs within a region to bring supportive chiefs together and to convince unsupportive chiefs of the benefits of female police.
- Use regional field offices as a base to establish mentoring relationships with police chiefs in that region. Reach out regularly, even if it is on a less intensive basis than one-to-one mentoring within a province.
- Be consistent in messaging from the international community and follow-up, e.g. in creating monitoring actions taken by Police Chiefs.
- Encourage provincial Police Chiefs to open regular organised dialogue with civil society, including women's organisations.

5. ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

Communities appear increasingly more supportive of female police generally, but remain reluctant to permit their own daughters to join the ANP, as policing continues to be seen as low status and dangerous.

Social and cultural barriers

A poor perception of female police

There is significant opposition to women working outside the home across most of Afghanistan. Female police are regarded as having particularly low status, for a number of reasons, including mixing with men in the workplace, having to spend nights away from home, and sharing living and eating quarters with men.

Allegations of prostitution within the ANP – as well as widespread rumours of abuse and harassment – contribute to this perception and make it harder to attract educated women into the police force.

A Department of Women's Affairs representative in Kunduz cited the case of a woman having to move house several times in one month after her neighbours found out she worked for the police: 'A lot of people think policewomen are prostitutes. Also, the community doesn't like a police car coming to pick the women up to go to work – the police normally mean violence to Afghans.'⁵⁸

Female police are at risk

Policewomen, particularly those in leadership positions, face an additional threat of being targeted by insurgents for being members of the ANP. Lieutenant Colonel Malalai Kakar – the country's top policewoman and one of the highest profile women in Afghanistan – was shot dead by the Taliban in Kandahar in 2008.

Prominent women continue to be targeted: Hanifa Safi, the provincial Head of Women's Affairs in Laghman Province was killed in July 2012 by a car bomb. Five months later, her successor Najia Sediqi was shot dead in a drive-by shooting.⁵⁹ Others have received regular threats and intimidation. At least one high profile policewoman has fled the country.

It will remain difficult to persuade families to support women to join the police unless the Afghan Government steps up measures to protect women leaders.

'The neighbours talk behind my back. Many girls want to join the police but their families don't like it. It's very difficult for single girls. People will gossip about them and then they won't be able to marry.'

Policewoman, Herat.⁵⁶

'When you ask little girls in Afghanistan what they want to be when they grow up, they don't say a policewoman. Police are not respected and female police are not respectable.'

Former US police trainer.⁵⁷

'My hope is to change the mindset of Afghan people by showing the daily life of Afghan police men and women. I hope there will be less resistance within traditional families to allow their daughters to join the police.'

Saba Sahar, female star of television police drama *Commissar Amanullah*.

BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Tackling structural issues in the ANP can help counter community opposition to female police. However, the Afghan Government and donors need to do more to build community support for policewomen in order to sustain recruitment, particularly of educated women. Informed communities can then encourage police commanders to employ women and assign them to professional roles.

Focus on community leaders

Gaining the support of community leaders, particularly religious leaders, is vital. As one Afghan policeman said: 'If the mullahs talk positively about female police at Friday prayers, then others will follow their lead.' Donors should increase funding for projects that educate these leaders about women's rights in Islamic law and key national laws such as EVAW. An approach that focuses on responsibilities and rights in Islam would likely be the most effective in Afghanistan's context.⁶⁰

Dr Abdullah Haqyar, professor of Sharia Law at Kabul University, says Islam does not prohibit female police: 'In fact, there is an urgent need for them as it isn't acceptable that women are searched by male police. But there should be certain conditions for female police. A women police officer should not be alone with a male officer, they should have separate rooms, and separate places for changing. Then there is no problem.'⁶¹

Box 11: Talking with the mullahs

At the age of just 16, Zainab Mobariz joined the ANP in Takhar Province in northern Afghanistan in 2007. Her first job was to be the spokesperson for the Provincial Chief of Police between 2007 and 2009; in this role she regularly appeared on local television and radio to talk about female police.

Following demonstrations in the provincial capital Taloqan against female police, she went to speak with local religious leaders. To gain their support, she asked them: 'If your wife has a medical problem do you want a male or female doctor to care for her? In the same way, if we do a house search then do you want a male or female police to go into the women's area?'

These meetings led to mullahs advocating for female police. Joint meetings with mullahs, Zainab and local communities, in which she explained how policewomen could help female community members, led to changes in how communities viewed female police. Takhar now has 27 policewomen, compared to only five in 2008. Zainab is now the head of the provincial Gender and Human Rights Unit for the Mol.

In 2012, Oxfam's partner HAWCA worked with Afghan ministries to train 192 mullahs in the provinces of Kabul, Herat and Nangarhar. The Women's rights from the Islamic point of view project educated mullahs on women's economic, health and property rights in accordance with Islam.

'This is very controversial in Afghanistan,' says Selay Gheffar, the HAWCA Director. 'We have to approach it differently to other trainings. We work closely with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and we use trainers who are themselves mullahs because mullahs are more likely to listen to them.'

The role of women in a civilian police force

In addition to performing body searches and supporting victims of violence, the presence of women can also help to create a more responsive and accountable civilian police force.

Policewomen promote accessibility of the police to women and children, improve knowledge about women's rights among both male and female police, improve the attitude of policemen towards women in general, reduce violence and discrimination against women and help to de-escalate conflict in arrests and house searches.⁶²

Female police can also support women beyond VAW. They can help to ensure that women's rights are respected in family law, for instance in a custody battle, or by assisting widows who don't have a male relative to represent them, with issues such as legal rights, disputes over land or inheritance. They can also have a role in ensuring female detainees are treated fairly and appropriately.

As one Afghan woman activist said: 'It's about outreach and trust. Women are not seen as a threat so they can be more effective in talking to people. They are better able to deal with families and communities.'

Get women out in the community

Community policing is still relatively small-scale and ad hoc in Afghanistan. A recent report found that the concept of community policing is not widely understood, with many believing it to be limited to cooperation between police and the local elders.⁶³

In fact, community policing is a useful way for women to increase their visibility within communities and to prove themselves as professional police officers. According to a UN official: 'It's a foot in the door. It also helps to make allies in communities among teachers, parents, elders, and mullahs if they can see female police being useful to them.'⁶⁴

Placing women in groups within a few police stations or units will be more effective than having only one or two women in a large number of stations. A critical mass will help the women themselves feel more comfortable, protect them against harassment and enable them to be more effective. Groups of policewomen are also more likely to be able to go out into communities. However, social norms and insecurity will likely limit outreach to urban and peri-urban areas for now.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some important steps have been taken to recruit more female police and enable them to perform as professional police officers. However, much more remains to be done.

A critical mass of women in the ANP is needed to meet the security and justice needs of Afghan women and girls, as well as to help change the ANP into an effective, accountable civilian police force.

Without increased numbers, individual policewomen will continue to be marginalised, vulnerable to harassment and relegated to performing menial tasks. They will be unable to demonstrate leadership and set a positive example for the women and girls of Afghanistan.

At the same time, the recruitment of women should not just be a numbers game. Targets set by the Afghan Government are not achievable under current conditions and recruiting large numbers of illiterate and poorly educated women into the police force only sets them up for failure.

An improved recruitment strategy should be matched by education and training opportunities, as well as more serious attempts to tackle the structural issues holding women back, including by giving them the means and authority to carry out their roles properly.

This year represents a unique opportunity for the Afghan Government and donors, with the first major police reform efforts and the development of Afghanistan's first National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 well under way.

In addition, despite the withdrawal of most international forces, international donors will continue to fund, train and equip the ANP. A substantial proportion of this security sector reform funding should go towards the recruitment and professionalisation of female police to benefit all Afghan women, wider society and the ANP itself.

This will require increased commitment from the MoI, the broader Afghan Government and international donors. Afghan women deserve a police force that protects them and serves their interests. Now is the time to redouble efforts to make that happen.

'We need to change attitudes as well as increase numbers. It will be difficult to recruit 5,000 women into the police force anyway. There is no point in doing this if these women are only going to serve tea or sew uniforms, or if there are no policies in place to address sexual harassment.'

LOTFA official⁶⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Afghan Government and the international community should:

- **Develop and implement a national strategy to recruit and retain female police.** Coordinating national and international efforts, this strategy should be accompanied by clear action plans and backed by adequate donor funding to be successful.
- **Prioritise policewomen within overall police reform efforts.** Backed by adequate, ring-fenced donor funding, the Mol-International Police Coordination Board Working Groups should develop specific plans within mainstream police reforms to recruit women and enhance their roles. The Working Groups should include, or meaningfully consult, gender experts from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, gender-sensitive policing specialists, senior Afghan policewomen and civil society.
- **Ensure equal access to professional training and opportunities for women, and expand improved gender and rights training for all personnel.** The Afghan Government and international missions should increase professional courses and opportunities for policewomen (including specialist training such as driving and forensics), prioritising female literacy classes that take into account domestic commitments and are delivered by female teachers. They should also ensure all ANP personnel understand the gender curriculum and women's national and international legal rights (including EAW).
- **Ensure the development of a strong and effective Afghanistan National Action Plan to implement UNSCR1325.** The Afghan Government should include relevant indicators in an adequately donor-resourced NAP that relate to women's participation in the police and wider security sector, particularly at decision-making levels.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior should:

- **Develop and implement large scale recruitment and information campaigns.** Recruitment drives should offer training and education opportunities to uneducated women and higher-ranking jobs to educated recruits, complemented by public information campaigns on the benefits to communities of having policewomen.
- **Provide a safe working environment for female police.** The Mol should take urgent steps to provide necessary facilities (e.g. locking toilets and female changing rooms), consider providing personal guards for senior policewomen, and ensure that all staff in district and provincial police stations are made aware of relevant policies (e.g. the 2013 Directive on Sexual Harassment).

The Mol should ensure that women are aware of, and have access to, complaints mechanisms at both the local and national level, including the Police Women helpdesk. It should clarify who is responsible for investigating complaints, especially those alleging

sexual abuse and harassment, and introduce measures to ensure cases are effectively registered and transparently investigated, and that offenders are prosecuted.

- **Ensure national policies are implemented at the local level.** Overseen by the Steering Committee, the MoI should ensure its policies are in line with national and international standards for gender sensitivity, and increase efforts to implement national policies supporting policewomen at the local level. These efforts should include issuing ministerial directives to provincial police chiefs to implement the national strategy, enforce MoI policies and directives and publicly to back female police. The MoI should establish monitoring mechanisms and appropriate disciplinary measures to ensure this is done, potentially by requiring monthly progress reports.
- **Reform the *tashkeel* (organisational structure).** Reforms should include developing clear recruitment policies and specific job descriptions, reserving more positions (including senior roles) for women, and identifying more departments and units where they can work – including in FRUs, recruitment, intelligence, the Passport Department, Criminal Investigation Division and Counter Narcotics. Independent appointment and review boards including men, women and civil society representatives should be created.
- **Ensure women have fair access to career development opportunities.** The MoI should set provincial police chiefs targets to promote women to officer and NCO levels – ensuring promotion is merit-based while allowing for the specific challenges that women face (such as lower literacy rates) – and establish fast-track promotion schemes alongside leadership training and mentoring by experienced foreign policewomen.
- **Rapidly increase the numbers of female police at the provincial level.** The MoI should assign educated and trained policewomen to provincial positions with incentives for them to stay, prioritising the allocation of such staff to specialised units such as the FRUs and community policing as well as increasing training for illiterate members of these units.

Provincial Chiefs of Police should:

- **Provide active support to female police.** Provincial police chiefs should clearly instruct all their personnel that sexual abuse and harassment will not be tolerated, ensure that complaints are transparently investigated and perpetrators of abuse and harassment are appropriately disciplined, and also ensure policewomen have access to appropriate equipment, private transport, female-only spaces and childcare facilities.
- Increase efforts to deploy female police into communities. **Women should be assigned to police stations in groups no smaller than five staff, both to protect them from harassment and enable them to reach out more effectively to communities. Police chiefs should also ensure policewomen actively conduct core professional duties, particularly in FRUs and communities.**

- **Strengthen Family Response Units.** Police chiefs can do this by ensuring FRUs always include trained and literate policewomen, recruiting graduates of Sharia law to serve as legal advisors and placing units under female leadership where possible. FRUs must use office space provided by donors for that purpose, or be given specific areas of police stations (with separate entrances), with access to transport to help FRU staff serve local communities.

All states supporting the Afghan National Police should:

- **Allocate specific funding to recruit, retain and promote female policing.** Priorities include support for improved literacy, community policing, innovative incentives (such as bonuses, family healthcare plans, and housing), essential infrastructure such as female-only facilities, policewomen's associations, and training and mentoring for senior male and female officers, especially provincial police chiefs.
- **Make security funding conditions-based.** Donors should link long-term support to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) – especially after they assume full responsibility for security in all of Afghanistan in 2014 – to indicators of success on female police recruitment and professional progress. Donors should also ring-fence funding for policewomen's posts in the *tashkeel* and safeguard these against proposed cuts after 2015.
- **Provide substantial long-term funding for civil society initiatives.** Funding should be prioritised for groups working to support female police, including efforts that increase community acceptance, promote male champions and female role models, and link Afghan policewomen associations and councils with international counterparts (including the International Association of Women Police and with similar groups in Muslim countries).
- **Support independent oversight of the Afghan National Police.** Donors should adequately fund the Police Ombudsman's Office to ensure women can access an independent and effective complaints mechanism. This should be rolled out nationwide as a matter of priority to ensure access at the provincial level.
- Ensure all international police training and mentoring programs are gender-sensitive. Troop contributing states should maintain gender advisers in the post 2014 ISAF mission's Operation Resolute Support to enable the implementation of NATO's own 1325 NAP, while donors should ensure the new phase of LOTFA beginning in 2014 includes civil society representatives on the Steering Committee.

International police missions should:

- **Maintain mentoring programmes.** Bodies such as EUPOL and the UNAMA Police Advisory Unit should continue to provide qualified civilian mentors for senior male and female police officers, particularly provincial chiefs of police. Mentoring programmes should be expanded where possible (or at least maintained at current levels beyond 2014), and create links between police chiefs in different regions and with neighbouring countries.

- **Prioritise support to the Ministry of Interior Gender and Human Rights Units.** International police missions should ensure that capacity building of the Gender and Human Rights Units is a priority within police reform efforts, both at the Mol in Kabul and at the provincial level. This should include strengthening their information collection systems, including the disaggregation of data by sex and age.

The United Nations should:

- **Improve collection and use of data.** The UN mission in Afghanistan should improve the collection and use of sex disaggregated data when reporting against benchmarks in quarterly Secretary General Reports on Afghanistan, including comprehensive reporting on women's participation in the ANP.
- **Step up support to ministries.** The UN should increase targeted support to relevant ministries to assist the implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and the forthcoming Afghanistan National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325.

NOTES

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http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/final_DVR_JUNE_16.pdf?docID=9803
- ⁸ UNAMA report (December 2012) Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan, 'The Afghan National Police (ANP) registered just 740 incidents of violence against women between October 2011 to September 2012 in 22 provinces, with a UN report noting 'low' reporting and registration.' p15 EAW report. 'Instead, women and girls turn to the Department of Women's Affairs or the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, which recorded 4,010 cases of violence between March to October 2012. Out of the 740 incidents registered by the ANP, 54 per cent were sent to prosecutors with 312 withdrawn, sent to traditional dispute resolution or the legal department of the Ministry of Justice, mediated or under process.' p14 of EAW report.
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This paper was written by Louise Hancock. She wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Floortje Klijn, Shaheen Chughtai, Sharif Azizi, Kate Hughes, Roslyn Boatman and Steph Cousins in its production. Oxfam would like to acknowledge the assistance of the Government of the Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Interior and a range of key informants who have participated in interviews for this report. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

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The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78077-394-0 in September 2013.
Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

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