

**Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police**

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# **Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police**

Gender dynamics of Kabul women and police

By Samuel Hall Consulting

Commissioned by Heinrich Böll Stiftung – Afghanistan







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The security needs of Afghan men and women differ. Whereas men bear the brunt of the direct impacts of conflict, women disproportionately suffer from the indirect effects such as increased levels of domestic violence, decreased access to health care and poverty. Due to this difference in security needs, gender must be taken into account when evaluating the relationship between citizens and the Afghan National Police (ANP).

*Heinrich Böll Stiftung* commissioned this study to examine the perceptions active women in Kabul hold of the police. Active, urban women were targeted specifically as they are more likely to interact regularly with police than women that spend a majority of their time at home. The report seeks to *i)* establish a gender-focused baseline for the evaluation of community trust building and police capacity building programs; *ii)* identify major trends and evolutions in public perceptions of the ANP in Kabul, notably amongst women; and *iii)* propose pragmatic recommendations for improving the relationship between Afghan women and the police.

Given its focus on active, urban women, this study is not representative of all Afghan women. It should be used as an entry point for exploration of gender dynamics in the security sector and a tool for advocating a more gender-balanced approach to supporting the Afghan National Police.

## KEY FINDINGS

**Positive police approval ratings by both women and men should not be interpreted as a sign of satisfaction with the police, but rather low expectations.** The survey revealed a strong correlation between satisfaction with security and satisfaction with police, demonstrating that security is likely the primary factor considered when Kabul residents of both genders evaluate police performance. Corruption appears to be accepted as a fact of life, and does not detract from high approval of police performance (80% amongst women). Expectations of civilian policing are extremely low. The police are not viewed as a resource for handling Sexual or Gender-Based Violence, the most prevalent safety issue for Afghan women.

**The police sector appears to be advancing more quickly than Afghan society in terms of its recognition of women's risks, needs and rights.** In instances where it fails women, the ANP is simply reflecting the restrictions Afghan society imposes on itself. In addition to establishing departments, units and initiatives that specifically target the needs of women, the ANP appears to be mainstreaming women's issues into broader policies, such as the ANP Code of Conduct.

**Much of the gender-related progress in the ANP is the result of pressure from the international community.** The implementation of progressive policies faces considerable resistance from individuals of all ranks within the ANP and Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI). The effectiveness of programs on gender or human rights within the ANP often hinges on the credibility of the interlocutor. Even more than religious beliefs, shared cultural, ethnic or tribal ties are the keys to this credibility, and are thus essential elements for initiatives intended to promote women's rights within the police force.

**Although half of Kabul women are victims of domestic violence, most women would never turn to the police for assistance.** Focus groups unanimously stated that family problems should be handled at home or with elders. Women who do seek outside aid are often shunned by their own families. As a result, victims of violence who successfully make it through the justice system often lack a support system to rebuild their lives afterwards. Given that Kabul women are considered to be the most modern and open-minded in Afghanistan, their compliance with this cultural belief and the lack of social services available to women raises serious doubts about the feasibility of addressing domestic violence via the police on a national scale in the short- or even medium-term.

**The necessity of women police is accepted by the ANP and Afghan society, albeit with restricted roles.** For Islamic reasons, policewomen are required to conduct security checks of women. There is a growing acceptance of women investigators in Family Response Units (FRUs), which are designed to handle family-related problems. However, even with training, policewomen are often expected to fetch tea, work in the kitchen, and clean, rather than perform police duties.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of the transition in Afghanistan will depend largely on the capacity of the police to maintain law and order and build trust with communities, thereby maintaining confidence in the state. Sustainability and value for money must be constant factors for any initiatives implemented between now and the 2014 deadline.

### COMMUNITY LEVEL

1. Focus on community trust building, a cost-effective way to improve state-society relations

Meetings between women police and civilians should be held, by the ANP and/or civil society, to improve the visibility of policewomen and the services they provide (within a safe space), to address women's issues, and to inform women of their rights and rule of law procedures. Community meetings foster dialogue and establish trust. They also provide a forum for police and community members to: *i)* define their own relationship based on their needs and expectations; *ii)* ask questions and share concerns; and *iii)* feel recognised and heard.

2. Implement an identification system, a practical step for increased accountability

Visible police identification would provide an inexpensive means of holding police accountable for their actions (e.g. bribery, street harassment). While there is no foolproof means of holding police accountable, the anonymity currently enjoyed by police only contributes to the culture of corruption.

3. Raise awareness of women's rights with regards to security and related police services

Public awareness campaigns should be used to better inform women and their families of women's rights and how to defend through the formal justice system. Without knowledge of their rights, women do not have the tools to assess their security needs and interest. Campaigns should be tailored to local contexts in order to be perceived as credible.

### INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

4. Support literacy programs as a primary tool for capacity building

Literacy, the key tool for fighting ignorance, renders training more effective and enables self-learning down the road. It also provides police with the ability to do actual police work, which requires reading and writing skills for documenting evidence, recording testimonies, and preparing reports.

5. Train the trainers to enable future training on gender, human rights, and children's rights

Given the ANP's high turnover rate, train the trainer programs are essential for ensuring the ANP's capacity to train recruits later. For optimum impact, train the trainer programs should select individuals that are respected and seen as credible in the province(s) in which they work.

6. Legitimise Family Response Units (FRUs) with equipment, training, and a broader mandate

FRUs, which serve women's needs, must first be perceived as legitimate and professional within the ANP before they can be perceived as such by the public. This will require a broader mandate from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID), equipment for documenting evidence, and training.

### STATE LEVEL

7. Strengthen coordination between police and justice sector for improved rule of law

NGOs that assist women with legal issues should be utilised as a resource for bridging the police and justice sectors. Partnerships between Family Response Units and NGOs have the potential to render the formal justice system more accessible to women and increase awareness of police services designed to handle family problems.

Regulations within the justice and police sectors also need to be changed so that police and prosecutors can better cooperate on cases. Police in Afghanistan are discouraged and even forbidden in some instances from following up on a case once it has moved on into the justice sector. This removes incentives for police to perform their jobs well when collecting evidence and reporting cases.

### INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

8. Support civilian policing as a key to maintaining political and social unity in Afghanistan

The international community needs to take a unified stance on the importance of civilian policing. The ANP will play a crucial role (distinct from that of the ANA) in the political and social unity of Afghanistan by ensuring law at the community level and representing the

#### MALE AND FEMALE PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE IN KABUL

##### Women are less willing to report crimes

- 99% percent of men and 73% of women reported that they would definitely or likely report a crime on their own.
- If accompanied by a family member, 81% of women said they would definitely or likely report a crime.

##### Women are more likely than men to turn to the informal justice system

- Whereas 70% of men would report a crime to the police, only 54% of women would turn to police.
- *Wakils* (community leaders), *shuras* and elders were the first choice for a combined 43% of women.

##### Women demonstrated greater support for relatives joining the ANP than men

- 52% of women would encourage a female relative to join the police, compared with only 16% of men.
- 74% of women and 65% of men would encourage a male relative interested in joining the police force.
- One third of women and nearly half of men that claim to support women in the ANP would still forbid women in their own families from enlisting.

national government in a way that is visible on a daily basis.

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## PREFACE

Despite Kabul being a rather secure and comparably progressive environment, women do not feel safe on the streets and try to limit their movements to a minimum. That indicates that especially in the security sector it is important to ensure a fair treatment of men and women. Both are in a different way exposed to security threats – and in Afghan society, words directed against women have a strong potential to limit their freedom. The worse women are treated on the street the less likely they are to leave the house and the less acceptance it will have among their male relatives if they do so.

While police should protect public order and create a safe environment for all citizens, they so far have not managed to win the trust of the population. In private conversations many women complain about disrespectful behaviour of police officers in public. Therefore, HBS commissioned this study on women's perceptions of the Afghan National Police to cast more light on expectations and experience of Kabul's citizens with the police. The focus here has been on women who by being active outside their own homes experience police behaviour regularly.

While the study demonstrates that a majority of Kabul residents would welcome a higher number of women inside the police, two key questions are: How to recruit them? And how can it be ensured that women in the police don't become "ghost officers" who either exist on the paper only or whose male colleagues have them serve tea rather than doing police work at the level of their qualification?

This study gives interesting insights and hands-on policy recommendations to improve relations between society and the police. It also shows ways for further in-depth studies to address some of the specific needs in recruitment and training of police officers.

Surveys in Afghanistan are tricky and face many obstacles. The situation makes large parts of the country inaccessible and a random selection of interviewees is desirable but difficult. Experience shows that respondents often have concerns that their answers might be used against them – or their politeness makes it difficult for them to express what they want in the brief, pre-formulated multiple-choice questionnaire. Regardless of these inherent obstacles, it is important, to ask people's opinion to have an idea of whether things are going in the right direction.

Samuel Hall Consulting has masterfully dealt with the above, described challenges in design, implementation and analysis of this survey with national and international staff. Research on this would not have been possible without the endorsement of Kabul's police chief General Ayub Salang. Furthermore HBS colleagues Mr. Musarat Hussain and Ms. Neelab Hakim have given valuable constructive input in the process. I am also grateful to the author, Ms Sarah Cramer, and to Ms Marion Regina Müller who as my successor as country director of the HBS Kabul office accompanied the project in its important final phase.

Dr. Bente Aika Scheller  
Heinrich Böll Stiftung  
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## ACRONYMS

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
CID	Criminal Investigation Division of the ANP
COIN	Counter-insurgency
EUPOL	European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan
FRU	Family Response Unit, ANP (established to address family-related matters)
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GIZ	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> (German Society for International Cooperation)
GPPT	German Police Project Team
INL	US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
JSSP	Afghanistan Justice Sector Support Program
LOTFA	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
MoI	Afghan Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission Afghanistan
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SSR	Security System Reform
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

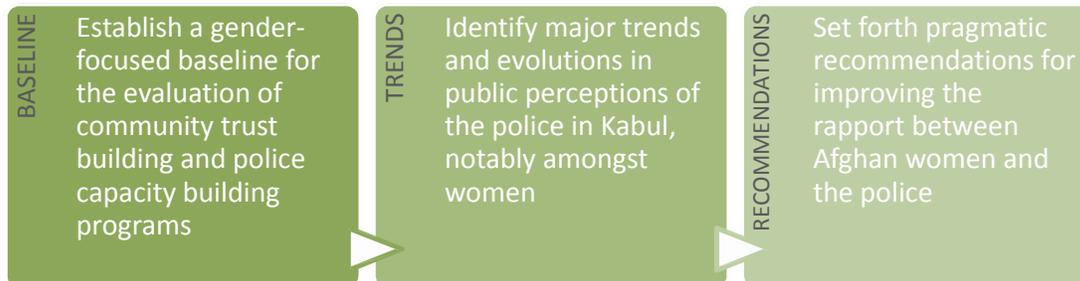
Gender issues have attracted increasing attention in Security System Reform (SSR)<sup>1</sup> processes in Afghanistan in recent years, and rightly so. While men absorb a majority of the direct impacts of conflict, women suffer disproportionately from the indirect effects (e.g. health problems, increased levels of domestic violence).<sup>2</sup> Often overlooked, the cost of these indirect effects was made strikingly apparent in July 2011 when Afghanistan was ranked the world's most dangerous country for women by TrustLaw, due to dismal levels of violence, poverty, and health care.<sup>3</sup>

The security needs of women and men in Afghanistan clearly differ. A failure to understand gender dynamics in the context of SSR can result in the inadequate provision of security and justice and the perpetuation of human rights violations, discrimination, and harassment.<sup>4</sup>

Afghanistan was ranked the world's most dangerous country for women for 2011, due to dismal levels of violence, poverty, and health care.

To better understand these gender dynamics, *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* commissioned the present study on the perceptions active, urban women in Kabul hold of the Afghan National Police (ANP). This report seeks to fulfil three objectives: *i)* establish a gender-focused baseline for the evaluation of community trust building and police capacity building programs; *ii)* identify major trends and evolutions in public perceptions of the ANP in Kabul, notably amongst women; and *iii)* set forth pragmatic recommendations for improving the rapport between women and the ANP.

FIGURE 1.1. STUDY OBJECTIVES



### 1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To better understand gender dynamics at play in the police sector, this study incorporates both a top-down and bottom-up approach, connecting policy with people. It does so by

<sup>1</sup> SSR implicates a broad range of actors within the security system: core security actors (e.g. armed forces, police), security management and oversight bodies, justice and law enforcement institutions and non-statutory security forces (e.g. private militia). (Adapted from SSR description in the *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform*).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2011), *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, World Bank, p. 60-61.

<sup>3</sup> TrustLaw, a Thomson Reuters Foundation service, based its results on surveys from 213 gender experts from five continents who were asked to rank countries by overall perceptions of danger and by six risks: health threats, sexual violence, non-sexual violence, cultural or religious factors, lack of access to resources and trafficking.

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2008), *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice*, Section 9: Integrating Gender Awareness and Equality, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris.

drawing from the individual perceptions of Kabul residents and police as well as key informant interviews with individuals active in organisational, programmatic and strategic levels of the national government and international community. It furthermore builds upon a desk review of pertinent literature, which, until now, has not examined the specific needs, expectations, and perceptions of Afghan women with regards to the police.

A research team of one international consultant and two national consultants collected quantitative and qualitative data with the help of eight national interviewers (five women, three men) for the quantitative survey.

### 1.3 QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

- Representative survey of 400 active women in Kabul
- Indicative survey of 200 men in Kabul (control group)

#### **Survey sample**

Four hundred women were given a 15-minute questionnaire in July 2011 by female interviewers in select Kabul locations. The sample size was set at 400 in order to be representative of active women in Kabul. Active women, for the purposes of this study, are defined as women who spend a significant portion of their time outside of the home, whether for work, errands or social activities.

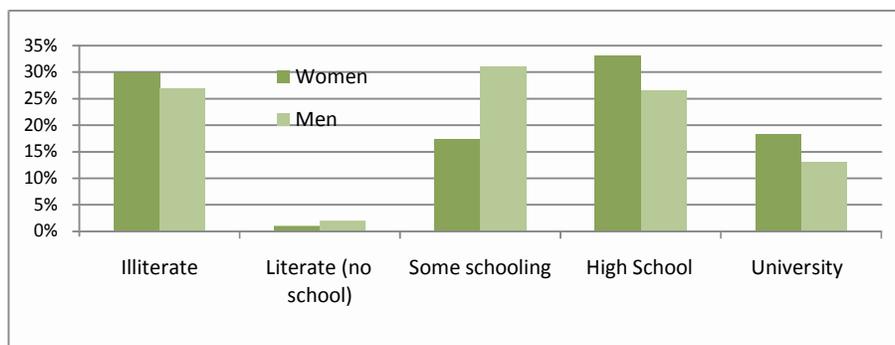
Active women were targeted for this study, as they are more likely to interact regularly with the Afghan National Police (ANP) than women that spend a majority of their time at home. Women that do not leave the home unaccompanied would *de facto* have a different rapport with the police.

A team of male interviewers conducted the survey with the control group of 200 men. This smaller sampling, while indicative of men’s views of the police, is not large enough to be representative. It is intended to serve as a point of comparison for the results of the women’s survey.

#### **Level of education**

The proportion of educated women was higher than that of educated men, as active women were targeted specifically. Uneducated and conservative women still represent a significant portion of the survey sample. Thirty percent of the women surveyed are illiterate and 15% of the female interviewees wear burqas when leaving the home. Men of all education levels have greater freedom of movement in Kabul than women, and thus interact more frequently with the police. For this reason, a specific profile of man was not targeted.

FIGURE 1.2. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF SURVEY SAMPLE



#### **Survey locations**

Survey locations were carefully selected based on three factors (Table 1.1):

- **Accessibility:** The ability of interviewees to feel at ease in a given location when speaking to interviewers was given great consideration.
- **Socio-economic composition:** Locations that attract individuals of varying socio-economic backgrounds were given priority.
- **Geographic distribution:** Locations were selected based on their distribution throughout Kabul and their ability to attract individuals from a variety of districts.

TABLE 1.1. SURVEY LOCATIONS IN KABUL CITY

	Locations	District	Interviewees
1	Bagh-e Wash (zoo)	3	Male & Female
2	Bagh-e Babour (park)	7	Male & Female
3	Shafa Khona Rabia Balkhi (maternity hospital)	2	Female
4	Bagh-e Zanana (women's park)	4	Female
5	Shafa Khona Malalai (maternity hospital)	4	Female
6	Tailoring shops in Makroryan	9	Female
7	Beauty parlours in Khair Khona and Qala-e Najar	11	Female
8	Carpentry bazaar and tailoring shops in Jada	1	Male
9	Shah Shaheed, Sarai-e Shamali & Shah-e do Shamshera (intersections & surrounding shops)	2, 8, 11	Male
10	Gym in Parwan Sewom	4	Male
11	Carpentry bazaar in Qalacha	8	Male
12	Shenzada Clinic	9	Male
13	Dasht-e barche (shopkeepers & school teachers)	13	Male



INTERVIEW IN WOMEN'S WAITING AREA OF MATERNITY HOSPITAL

## 1.4 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

- 13 police station visits and interviews
- 4 focus group discussions
- Key informant interviews with national and international stakeholders

### ***Police station visits and interviews***

The female consultants<sup>5</sup> visited police stations to personally understand how women are treated and to conduct interviews with police about the services available to women and gender dynamics with female civilians as well as women within the ANP. Interviews were conducted with police in twelve police stations.<sup>6</sup> Most interviews were conducted with policewomen working in Family Response Units (FRUs).

### ***Focus group discussions***

Four focus groups were organised to provide qualitative insight into the results of the quantitative survey. Lasting roughly two hours each, these open-ended discussions about the ANP clarified motivations behind certain beliefs and perceptions about the police revealed in the quantitative survey and allowed for greater frankness amongst participants, as statements could be qualified.

Groups were divided based on gender and education level in order to create a safe space for sharing thoughts as well as to compare results between groups. Each group of men and women included one group of educated and one group of illiterate or poorly educated individuals.

### ***Key informant interviews***

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the Departments of Gender, Human Rights and Children's rights of the Ministry of Interior and the Police Academy and international stakeholders supporting the ANP. These interviews served to assess the current gender dynamics of the ANP, identify challenges, and learn about current initiatives to improve the rapport between women and the police.

## 1.5 LIMITATIONS AND CONSTRAINTS

This study only begins to scratch the surface of gender dynamics in Afghanistan's security sector, as it focuses on a specific type of Afghan woman (*i.e.* active and urban). The realities of these women are dramatically different from those of the rural, confined women that make up a majority of the Afghan female population. Thus, this study should not be considered representative for Afghanistan as a whole. Rather, it should be used as an entry point for exploration of gender dynamics in the security sector and a tool for advocating a more gender-balanced approach to supporting the Afghan National Police.

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<sup>5</sup> One international, one national

<sup>6</sup> Two additional district police stations were visited but chose not to participate. Although Kabul has 17 districts, the police station for district 14 falls under the jurisdiction of Parwan province, and thus, was not taken into account for this survey.

## 2 STATE OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE

The role of the police in society is to maintain law and order. Over the past decade, short-term order in Afghanistan has been prioritised to the detriment of rule of law, as is commonly the temptation in situations of conflict or transition.<sup>7</sup> Perceived as “little soldiers,” the Afghan National Police (ANP) are often expected to fulfil military functions, and as a result, suffers three times as many casualties as the Afghan National Army (ANA).<sup>8</sup>

National and international efforts to improve the ANP in preparation for the 2014 transition deadline have concentrated heavily on the numbers, judging a larger police force to be inherently more robust.<sup>9</sup> The Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) claims the ANP has grown to 130,000, including 1,173 policewomen. A recent U.S. government audit of the MoI said the figure could actually be anywhere between 112,000 and 125,000.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond quantity, the quality of police has drawn considerable criticism. High levels of illiteracy within the ANP restrict “the quality of recruits, the effectiveness of police training and even their ability to write reports and record critical information.”<sup>11</sup>

Rampant corruption and drug abuse pose additional threats to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the ANP. “Corruption is such a lucrative growth industry on Afghanistan’s highways that reports suggest police chief posts along major drug transit or transport routes [...] have been auctioned off for as much as \$200,000 to \$300,000.”<sup>12</sup> Sixty percent of Helmand police were estimated to be using drugs by British officials in 2009.<sup>13</sup>

Current literature on the ANP focuses primarily on challenges such as these, drawing on the oft-mentioned 2009 Richard Holbrooke quote characterising the ANP as the “weak link in the security chain.” There are, however, a few positive initiatives that have attracted positive attention: Focused District Development (FDD) is perceived to have made significant strides on the ground by training districts as units and providing follow-up supervision.<sup>14</sup> Progress has also been made in the increased recruitment of women and the creation of Family Response Units (FRUs) to address family-related problems.

“The tendency is to militarise the police in an insurgency situation, but history shows that few countries have had a successful transition to rule of law without a successfully implemented civilian policing program.”

Recommendations posited by these reports often boil down to issues of balance and coordination: First, balance is often prescribed between “negative” and “positive” peacebuilding activities<sup>15</sup> (*i.e.* a militarised approach intended to stop violence balanced with a civilian policing approach intended to reinforce institutions, build community trust, and establish rule of law). As a key informant for this study explained, “The tendency is to militarise the police in an insurgency situation, but history shows that few countries have had

<sup>7</sup> Mani, Rama (2003), “Policing in Post-Conflict Situations,” Concept Paper for Whitehall Policy Seminar, London.

<sup>8</sup> Perito, Robert M. (2009), “Afghanistan’s Police: The Weak Link in Security Sector Reform,” United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Special Report 227.

<sup>9</sup> Wilder, Andrew, (2007), “Cops or Robbers: The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police,” Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Issues Paper Series, Kabul.

<sup>10</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (2011), “SIGAR Audit Shows Afghan National Police Payroll Costs, Force Size Cannot Be Verified,” SIGAR News Room, [www.sigar.mil/PressRelease25April2011.asp](http://www.sigar.mil/PressRelease25April2011.asp).

<sup>11</sup> Legon, Andrew (2009), Ineffective, Unprofessional, and Corrupt: The Afghan National Police Challenge,” Foreign Police Research Institute, [www.fpri.org/enotes/200906.legon.afghannationalpolice.html](http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200906.legon.afghannationalpolice.html).

<sup>12</sup> FPRI-RUSI (2009), “Reforming the Afghan National Police,” The Royal United Services Unit and the Foreign Policy Research Institute, p. 10

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Perito, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Mani, 2003.

a successful transition to rule of law without a successfully implemented civilian policing program.”

Second, greater coordination is advised between Security Sector Reform (SSR) pillars.<sup>16</sup> As explained by key informant Colonel Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, “The function of rendering justice is a shared responsibility between the police and justice sectors.”<sup>17</sup> One cannot operate independently without the other. There is even some pressure to refer to Security and Justice Sector Reform (SJSR), rather than the more commonly used acronym SSR, to drive home this point even further.<sup>18</sup>

“The function of rendering justice is a shared responsibility between the police and justice sectors.”

Despite the many challenges of the ANP, many Afghans claim to be satisfied with the police. Ninety-one percent of Kabul residents reported favourable views of the police in the United Nations Development Programme’s 2010 *Police Perception Survey*.<sup>19</sup> The Asia Foundation’s survey, *Afghanistan in 2010*, depicts a more complex rapport with the police. Whereas 84% of those surveyed agreed that the ANP is honest and fair, 58% also found the police to be unprofessional and poorly trained.<sup>20</sup>

The apparent contradictions between the pessimistic outlook of reform-focused literature and more optimistic perception surveys raise questions about Afghan expectations and assessments of the ANP. This study will touch on some of these broader questions about the ANP while examining women’s perceptions of the police in Kabul.



**POLICE STATION, DISTRICT #10**

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<sup>16</sup> Wilder, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Based on interview with Col. Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, Attaché de Sécurité Intérieure, French Embassy.

<sup>18</sup> Legon, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> UNDP (2010), *Police Perception Survey – 2010: The Afghan Perspective*, UNDP, p. 11

<sup>20</sup> Asia Foundation (2010), *Afghanistan in 2010: A Survey of the Afghan People*, The Asia Foundation, p. 40-41.

## BOX 2.1. FAMILY RESPONSE UNITS

Afghan women interact with the police in two primary locales: the street and the police station. In the latter, women's issues are typically handled in Family Response Units (FRUs), which are designed to be accessible vehicles through which women can access police services. FRUs were created by the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) in 2005 "to address a wide array of criminal and civil family-related matters including: divorce requests, promissory notes, arranged/forced marriages, runaways, sexual assaults, domestic violence, self-immolation, attempted suicides, suicides, forced virginity tests, property disputes involving widows and estates, child custody issues, abandonment, financial and family support issues".<sup>21</sup>

In practice, FRUs are often relegated to the role of counselling service for simple family disputes, as many of the serious cases mentioned above are funnelled to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). Two of the female FRU investigators interviewed for this study described the cases they deal with as follows:<sup>22</sup>

- *"We mainly deal with family problems between wives and husbands. Many problems are rooted in economic problems. For example, sometimes the man is angry because the wife spends a lot of money. We try to provide counselling to these couples. There are also conflicts related to forced marriage or men beating their wives."* – Interviewee #2
- *"Most of the problems we deal with are conflicts between spouses or cases of forced engagement. We also deal with female beggars. The police collect beggars from the street and bring them to a shelter. We try to help the beggars and their families reach an agreement so that the women do not go back to the streets. However, they often return to the streets after 15-20 days in order to earn money."* – Interviewee #3

The number of cases that a typical FRU handles is also quite limited. One interviewed police officer reported that the FRU in his district only handles one or two cases in any given month. At another station, the FRU had dealt with 13 cases in the first seven months of 2011.

Some within the international community are exerting pressure on the MoI to expand the mandate of the FRUs, so that they may handle more serious cases. According to one key informant, the FRUs should handle all family-related cases with the exception of homicide cases.

<sup>21</sup> Nash, Ray and Robert Ward (2011), "Afghan National Police Family Response Units and Women's Police Corps," Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), US Embassy, Kabul, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> For the full transcripts of three interviews conducted with female FRU investigators, see Annex 3.

### 3 WOMEN'S SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES

The different security needs of women and men are visible on any Kabul street. Whereas men utilise the streets as a place for socialising, women walk briskly, keeping their eyes covered or averted from the unabashed gazes of unknown men. For this study, the option of talking to women on the street was ruled out as most women do not feel comfortable lingering on the streets long enough to answer a questionnaire. Safe for some, the streets of Kabul are clearly male-dominated spaces in which many Afghan women do not feel secure.

This hostile environment forces women to “restrict movement, engage in self-censorship and restrict their participation in public life,” according to a joint 2009 UNAMA/OHCHR report. Women that work for government offices, international organisations or local NGOs promoting humanitarian causes, women's rights or human rights are often the targets of intimidation, threats and attacks due to the type of work in which they engage. This persecution sends a signal to all women and their families that the place for women is at home.<sup>23</sup>

Socially acceptable behaviour and the risks of not conforming vary according to their stage in life. Girls are taught from an early age to behave a certain way in the public sphere. They are expected to exhibit modesty when outside of the home by keeping their eyes cast down, covering their heads, and avoiding eye contact with boys. Boys often tease girls that do not respect such social norms. Unchecked by adults, this harassment reinforces messages about acceptable public behaviour.<sup>24</sup>

Modesty is seen as an essential party of a girl's *tarbia*, which refers to a child's manners and interaction with others. Although the signs of good *tarbia* are often external, they are perceived to be indicative of a child's morality.

Restrictions intensify as girls reach puberty, when family concerns mount regarding a girl's reputation and eligibility for marriage. Girls that were allowed to attend school as young girls are often pulled out of class as they enter puberty, as the walk to school alone can expose them to social stigma. The girls also become targets of kidnapping and sexual harassment.<sup>25</sup>

With marriage, a woman assumes the responsibility of her husband's social reputation. A woman's engagement in public life is limited by the widely held belief that she must, at all times, be accompanied by a *mahram* (male chaperone) when appearing in public. Women are also expected to spend more time at home after marriage and shift their focus to motherhood. As a result, even women who were allowed to work outside of the home as single women are often pressured to give up their jobs and start having children. As mothers and grandmothers, women repeat the cycle as they teach these same values and behaviours to their daughters and granddaughters.

The burqa offers a form of protection for many, when movement in public spaces is a necessity. Rooted in ethnic, rather than religious motivations, the blue burqa associated with Afghanistan was primarily worn by Pashtun women prior to Taliban rule. No longer associated exclusively with Pashtuns, the burqa provides a form of “mobile privacy.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> UNAMA/OHCHR (2009), *Silence is Violence: End of the Abuse of Women in Afghanistan*, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kabul, <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/vaw-english.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Save the Children/UNICEF (2003), “The Children of Kabul: Discussions with Afghan Families,” p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch (2009), *We have the promises of the World: Women's Rights in Afghanistan*.

<sup>26</sup> Lester, Ryan (2011), “Gender in Afghanistan,” The United States in Afghanistan: Choices Institute 2011, The Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, [www.globalconversation.org/2011/07/25/gender-afghanistan](http://www.globalconversation.org/2011/07/25/gender-afghanistan).

Women that venture out without a burqa are exposed to greater risk of harassment, both verbal and physical. A group of roughly 20 women and a few men marched in mid-July 2011 to draw attention to the prevalence of abuse, groping and being followed in the streets of Kabul. Such street harassment, by citizens as well as the police, is a daily occurrence for many women.<sup>27</sup> However, reporting street harassment is rare, as women are often blamed for having incited the behaviour themselves.

Women's safety on the streets, both perceived and real, has a direct impact on women's access to education as well as their participation in the job market, democratic processes and civil society. Working with the police, who are at times complicit in creating an environment hostile toward women, to create a safer space for women when moving about in Kabul is necessary for achieving broader goals toward achieving women's rights in Afghanistan.

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<sup>27</sup> Nichols, Michelle (2011), "In high heels, head scarves, Afghan women protest harassment," Reuters, 14 July 2011.

## 4 SATISFACTION WITH THE AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE

### 4.1 SECURITY AS THE KEY TO SATISFACTION

A majority of survey respondents ranked the Afghan National Police (ANP) performance in their given districts as either “excellent” or “good,” with only slight differences between the responses of women and men, 80% and 82% respectively (Figure 4.1)<sup>28</sup>.

As an indicator of satisfaction, this statistic should not be taken at face value. Given the sensitivity of the topic, survey respondents were understandably reticent to reveal negative feelings about the police. Both women and men in focus groups exhibited more frankness about the police than questionnaire respondents, as the longer discussions allowed the interviewer to develop a rapport with the women and establish trust. The male team of interviewers reported resistance from men to even participate in the questionnaire, openly admitting that they were concerned their answers would somehow be used against them.

FIGURE 4.1. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF POLICE PERFORMANCE IN KABUL



The point of comparison should also be kept in mind when considering this statistic. A 2010 UNDP/MoI study conducted in 8 northern districts of Kabul province found that “While 75% of the public reported being ‘very happy’ with the police, focus group discussions revealed this happiness to be based on comparison to law enforcement during the decades of war, where local militias (Mujahedeen, Taliban and others) were both the lawmakers and law breakers.”<sup>29</sup>

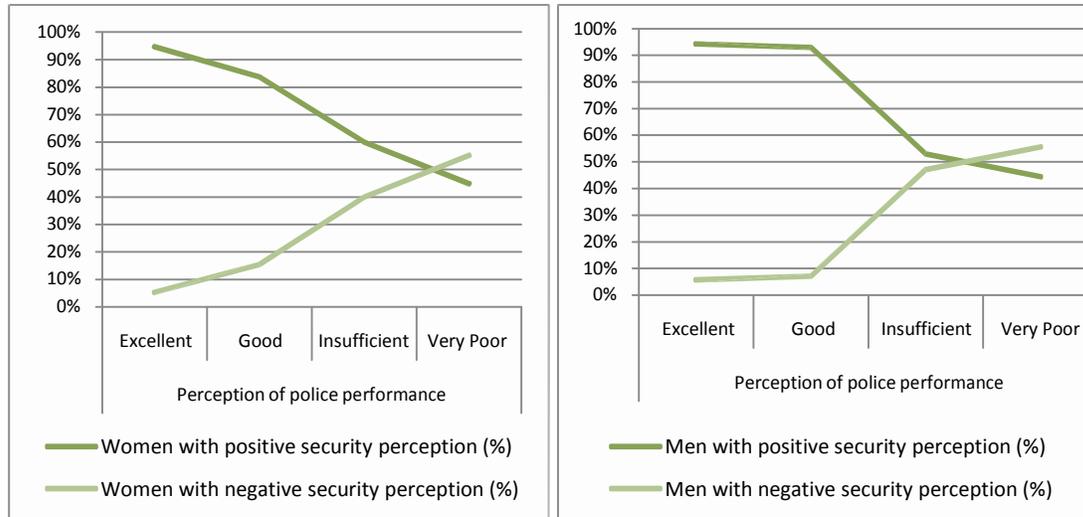
More interestingly, this statistic demonstrates what Kabul residents, and women in particular, expect from the police, when taken in the context of this study as a whole. Focus group respondents unanimously cited maintaining security as the primary responsibility of the police, demonstrating very low expectations for the ANP to fulfil citizen policing responsibilities (e.g. Rule of Law). The survey results reveal a strong correlation between

<sup>28</sup> This figure is consistent with high approval ratings of other police perception surveys: e.g. the UNDP’s *Police Perception Survey – 2010: The Afghan Perceptive* reported that 91% of respondents in Kabul and 79% of national survey respondents viewed the police favourably, compared with 81% and 79% respective approval rating in 2009.

<sup>29</sup> “Baseline Study for Pilot Democratic Policing,” prepared by Afghanistan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) for UNDP and the Afghan Ministry of Interior, Kabul, p. 7.

positive ratings of security situations<sup>30</sup> and positive views of the police. Ninety-five percent of women that rate police performance as excellent also rate their security from violence as “good.” Satisfaction with security decreases proportionally with satisfaction with police (Figure 4.2).

FIGURE 4.2. CORRELATION BETWEEN SATISFACTION WITH SECURITY AND POLICE



The perception of the ANP as a security force is not unique to Afghans and in fact reflects the emphasis of US support<sup>31</sup> for the ANP over the past seven years. Whereas the German or European approach has focused on creating a “civilian law and order force,”<sup>32</sup> the “US vision” of the police has been that of a security force focusing on counter-insurgency (COIN). The NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) defines three horizons for its support to the ANP: first, a focus on COIN is designed to “suppress the insurgency to a ‘manageable level’” and “protect the population”; second, the transition to Afghan National Security Forces<sup>33</sup> will be accompanied by efforts to re-orient efforts to rule of law, police professionalization and community policing, and third, the ANP will take on full-spectrum policing as a “self-generating and sustaining” mechanism.<sup>34</sup> There have been calls for the US to address the “three horizons” simultaneously and not sequentially.

In recent years, there has been greater US recognition of the importance of community policing, literacy training, and addressing gender issue. For example, the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement’s (INL) Family Response Unit (FRU) program coordinates with the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) and the US State Department to provide regular mentoring to FRU investigators, a majority of whom are women.

<sup>30</sup> The survey tested for perceptions of three security parameters: *i*) security from crime, *ii*) security from violence, and *iii*) freedom of movement. Survey results demonstrated insignificant differences in satisfaction between these three parameters (See Annex 1). Satisfaction with security from violence is used in Figure 4.2.

<sup>31</sup> While Germany was assigned the “lead nation” for the police in 2002, the largest program for police training in Afghanistan has been the US-led since 2003. The European Union Police Mission to Afghanistan (EUPOL) replaced Germany as “key partner” in 2007 for police assistance. [Perito, 2009]

<sup>32</sup> Wilder, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) is a term designating both the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army.

<sup>34</sup> NATO/ISAF, “Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI): Advisor Guide”, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Version 1.0, p. 1-12.

## 4.2 POLICE RESPECT AND PROFESSIONALISM

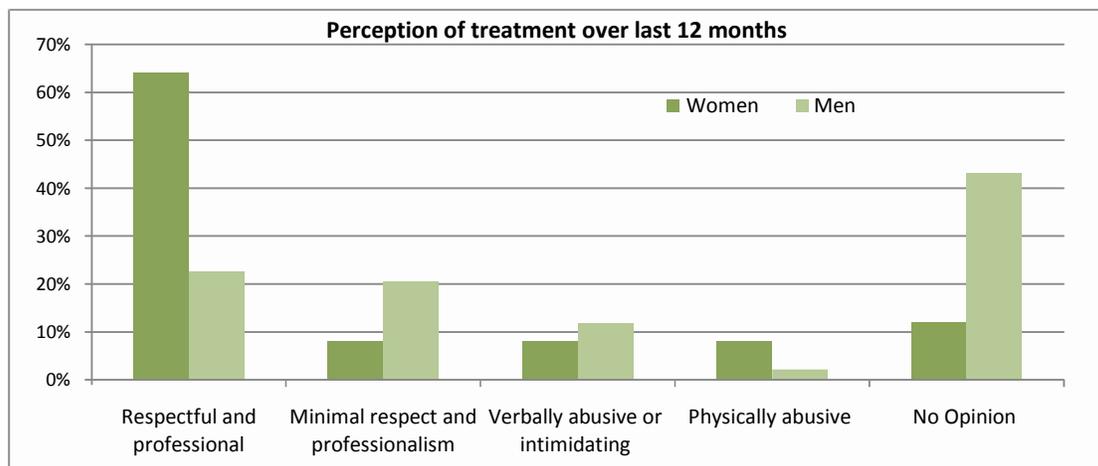
Women survey respondents perceived police treatment of both male and female family members more positively than male counterparts, who largely claimed ambivalence on the matter. Out of 400 women, only 25 reported that male relatives had interacted with the police in the last year. Of those 25, 16 reported that the police treated their relatives with full respect (Figure 4.3).

A much higher proportion of men (91 out of a total 200) reported that male relatives had interacted with the police in the past year. While 40 men claimed their relatives had been treated with full or minimal respect and professionalism, just as many men did not state an opinion on the police treatment.

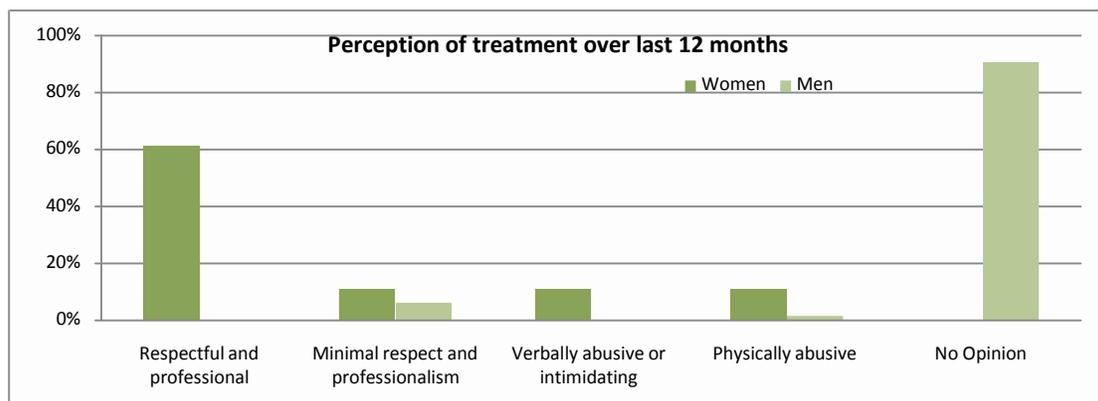
The discrepancy in the proportion of women and men that claim male relatives interacted with the police signifies that either a hesitancy on the part of women to report on this matter or a lack of knowledge of family members dealings with the police.

Fewer women and men reported that female family members had interacted with the police in the past year, 18 and 64 respectively. Of these respondents, a majority of women reported satisfaction with police behaviour, while an even larger proportion of men claimed to not have an opinion on the matter (Figure 4.4).

**FIGURE 4.3. PERCEPTION OF POLICE TREATMENT OF MALE FAMILY MEMBERS**  
*Excluding respondents who did not report interaction between the police and male family members*



**FIGURE 4.4. PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE TREATMENT OF FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS**  
*Excluding respondents who did not report interaction between the police and female family members*



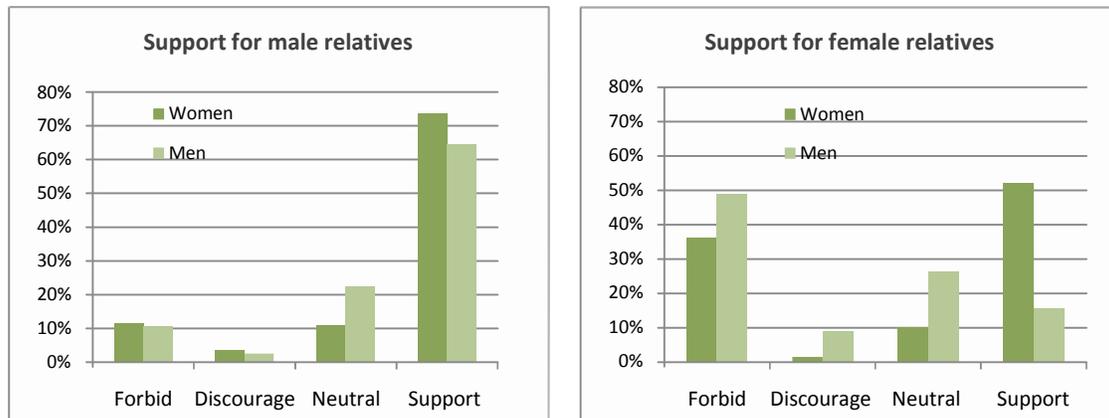
The demographic breakdown of the statistics shown in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4 would suggest that women are not completely forthcoming about their perception of police treatment. Whereas women with high school and university education had varying opinions about police treatment, no woman with less than a high school education reported anything but respectful and professional treatment of male relatives, with the exception of two “no opinions”. The same pattern was visible for their evaluation of police treatment of female relatives, with one woman reporting “minimal respect and professionalism” but no claims of verbal or physical abuse.

A recent pilot study conducted by Young Women for Change, an Afghan NGO, suggests that women in Kabul are hesitant to reveal incidences of police harassment, even to families, as they are often blamed for harassment. It also suggests that police harassment of women is much more common than people care to admit. Out of a small sample of 20 young women, 18 women reported experiencing verbal harassment on a daily basis. Eight of the women had experienced physical harassment such as groping, pinching or slapping.<sup>35</sup>

### 4.3 SUPPORT FOR RELATIVES JOINING THE ANP

Women respondents demonstrated greater support for relatives joining the ANP than men, especially regarding support for female relatives. Seventy-four percent of women would encourage a male relative interested in joining the police force, compared with 65% of men (Figure 4.5). The support for male relatives becoming police can also be interpreted as a sign of respect for the police profession. Due to the complex cultural attitudes surrounding women and their right to work, the statistics on support for female relatives joining the ANP cannot be used as a proxy for general respect for the police profession, although they do give an indication of the discrepancy between public attitudes toward male and female police officers.

FIGURE 4.5. SUPPORT FOR RELATIVES JOINING THE ANP



Fifty-two percent of women would encourage a female relative to join the police, compared with only 16% of men. A significant proportion of women and men would forbid a female relative from joining the ANP, 36% and 49% respectively. The issue women police officers will be addressed further in Section 4.2.

<sup>35</sup> Based on interview with representative of Young Women for Change and the NGO's 2011 report "Advocacy for Dignity: Street Harassment Research in Kabul," available at: <http://ywcarticles.wordpress.com/>.

## 5 ACCESSIBILITY OF POLICE FOR WOMEN

### 5.1 WILLINGNESS TO REPORT A CRIME

Although women report willingness to report crimes to the police, focus group results reveal a stark difference between attitudes toward reporting crimes committed by *inside* versus *outside* of the family. Survey respondents were asked their likelihood of reporting a crime to the police, if a they or members of their family were the victims of some form of crime or violent act. Respondents were given five variables to which they were able to adapt their response: *i*) on your own *ii*) accompanied by a family member, *iii*) reporting to a personal contact *iv*) reporting to a female officer *v*) reporting to a police officer that shares your ethnic/tribal background.

Women were most likely to report a crime if accompanied by a family member: 68% would definitely report a crime, and 13% would be likely to report (Figure 5.1). Their willingness to report on their own was also quite high (62% definitely, 11% likely). Surprisingly, women reported being less likely (34% definitely, 10% likely) to report a crime to a female officer than in other circumstances (e.g. to an officer of the same tribal/ethnic background (47% definitely, 15% likely).



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Men exhibited greater willingness to report crimes in all circumstances than women, 99% and 73% respectively reporting that they would definitely or likely report a crime on their own. While they reported willingness to report to a female officer, there was a significant shift from “definitely” (29%) to “likely” (46%), which did not occur with the other variables.

FIGURE 5.1. WILLINGNESS TO REPORT A CRIME  
Combined responses of “Definitely” and “Likely.”

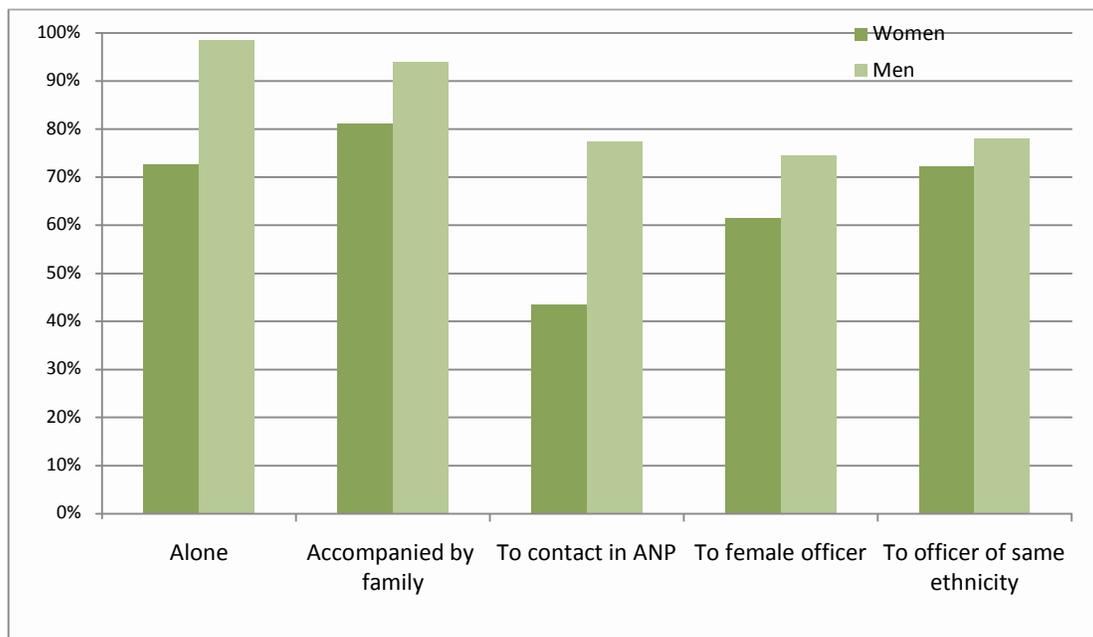
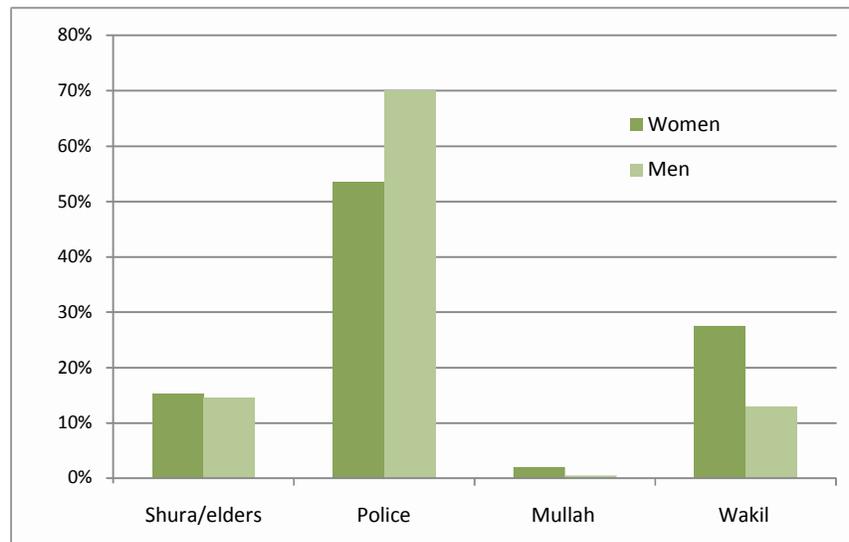


FIGURE 5.2. FIRST CHOICE FOR REPORTING A CRIME



When asked who they would turn to first to report a crime (committed against oneself or family member), a majority of women (54%) and men (70%) said they would turn to the police (Figure 5.2). The *wakil* (community leader) was the second most popular option amongst women at 28%, followed by *shuras* or elders at 15%.

Focus groups revealed unanimous opposition to reporting crimes committed *within* families to the police, contradicting the apparent willingness of both women and men to report crimes indicated in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2. Two main reasons for this opposition were provided by all focus groups.

**First, participants stated that the police will expect bribes.** Therefore, taking family problems to the police is expensive, and justice is determined by the person that pays the most.

*“If police interfere about our family affairs, it will not improve our family situation but only make them worse because they ask for bribes.” – Female participant, 45, illiterate*

*“Right now, I have a private problem, but I do not want to go to the police station. I don’t trust Afghan police officers. If I face any problem, I have to pay for police.” – Male participant, 72, 9<sup>th</sup> grade education*

*“In Afghan society, if you have a problem, you must pay. Otherwise, the problem is not solved. It has become a tradition in Afghanistan.” – Male participant, 30, high school graduate*

Although the women participants were all aware of the prevalence of corruption, none of them had personally been asked for a bribe. In the group of educated men, four out of five men had paid bribes in the past. The 22-year-old male who had not paid admitted, “I know that if I face a problem, I will have to pay.” In the second group of illiterate or poorly educated men, two out of three men had paid bribes in the past.

#### BOX 5.1. EVIDENCE OF ANP CORRUPTION DURING POLICE STATION VISITS

Police at two of the 12 police stations visited openly admitted to corruption in their districts.

**Bribery:** A policeman explained that when he did not receive a paycheck for eight months, he began to accept bribes in order to support himself and his family. Even though he now receives his salary regularly, he admitted that he continues

**Ghost police:** A policewoman complained that several women within her district would only show up once a week to sign a log. They stayed on the roster and collected paychecks, but did not actually work as police. In stations visited for this study, only 63% of women on staff were on-duty at the time of the interview. While the problem of “ghost police” is not exclusive to one gender, the shortage of female police (only 1173 nationwide) is particularly problematic for women seeking police assistance.

**Second, focus groups agreed that family problems should be settled at home.** Multiple respondents said that if a woman is faced with a problem such as abuse, she should first try to solve the problem with her spouse and her family. The next step would be to take the problem to elders, either in the family or the community. Several respondents suggested seeking the advice of a *wakil* or Mullah. The police were consistently cited as a last resort for extreme circumstance.

“We are Afghan. It is our responsibility to solve our family problems at home. It is a disgrace to go to the police with family problems.”

*“If a woman has a problem, first of all, she should try to solve the problem by going to a family member. If this doesn’t work, she should go to the community leader (wakil) or elder relative. If she still can’t solve this problem, as a last resort she should go to the police.” – Female participant, 25, university graduate*

*“We are Afghan. It is our responsibility to solve our family problems at home. It is a disgrace to go to the police with family problems.” – Male participant, 22, high school graduate*

*“First, the husband and wife should try to solve the problem together. If it’s not solved, the wife can go to the police station to calm herself down. Police cannot do anything for women” Female participant, 22, 5<sup>th</sup> grade education*

#### BOX 5.2. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

At least two police stations in Kabul have agreements with *wakils*, local community leaders, in order to better serve female victims. Police stations do not have the means to house women overnight, in large part because the female staff only works during the day. If a female victim arrives at the station or is unable to return to her home at night, certain stations have arrangements with *wakils* to provide safe housing for the women while their cases are being addressed.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Based on police station interviews.

## 5.2 WOMEN IN THE POLICE FORCE

It is widely accepted in Afghanistan that women will not report crimes committed to them personally unless a female police officer is present.<sup>37</sup> While women are more likely to encounter male police in their daily lives, the need for policewomen and services tailored for women in police stations is undeniable given the high rate of domestic abuse in Kabul.

The incidence of violence against women in Kabul province, according to a Global Rights report, was a startling 79.3% in 2008, compared with the even higher national average of 87.2% (Table 5.1). Broken down by type of violence, we see that certain types of violence against women even exceed the national average: physical violence (47%), sexual violence (31.3%), and psychological violence (76.2%).<sup>38</sup>

TABLE 5.1. INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN KABUL  
*Compared with nationwide rates*

CATEGORY OF VIOLENCE	KABUL 2008 RATE OF INCIDENCE	NATIONWIDE 2008 RATE OF INCIDENCE
Physical violence	47.7 %	52.4 %
Psychological violence	76.2 %	73.9 %
Sexual violence	31.3 %	17.2 %
Forced marriage	50.2 %	58.8%
Violence against women (all types)	79.3 %	87.2%

Source: Global Rights (2008), "Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan," Global Rights: Partners for Justice, pp. 21-23.

More recent studies, while not as comprehensive as the Global Rights report, suggest that these figures are likely growing. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) found that 1,000 cases of violence against women were registered in 2009, whereas 1,200 cases were registered in the *first six months* of 2010. Only part of this increase is attributed to improved reporting practices and increased trust in the ANP<sup>39</sup>.

Given the startlingly high rates of domestic abuse in Kabul, the perception of women police is of particular interest for this study, as policewomen in Family Response Units (FRUs) are often the main interlocutors victims engage with when reporting incidences of domestic violence.



FRU INVESTIGATOR

<sup>37</sup> Based on interview with representatives of the Mol's Department for Gender Human Rights and Children's Rights and interviews with other key informants.

<sup>38</sup> Global Rights (2008), "Living with Violence: A National Report on Domestic Abuse in Afghanistan," Global Rights: Partners for Justice, pp. 21-23.

<sup>39</sup> Nash and Ward, 2011.

Although a majority of survey respondents claim to support the idea of women in the police (Figure 5.3), a significant portion of this majority would forbid women in their own families from joining the ANP (Figure 5.4). Women appear to be more supportive of this career choice than men for both male and female relatives.

Eighty-seven percent of women and 86% of men support the presence of women in the police force. This support is often rooted in Islamic reasons, namely that only female police are allowed to search women at security checks. Therefore, this support does not necessarily transfer over to women holding positions in the police force other than “body checker”.

Out of the supporters of women in the police, 32% of women and 46% of men would still forbid a woman in their own family from joining the ANP. A majority of women who approve of women in the police would support or encourage a family member joining the police (56%); in contrast, only 18% of men who support the idea of female police would encourage a female relative with an interest in joining the ANP.

FIGURE 5.3. APPROVAL OF WOMEN IN THE POLICE FORCE

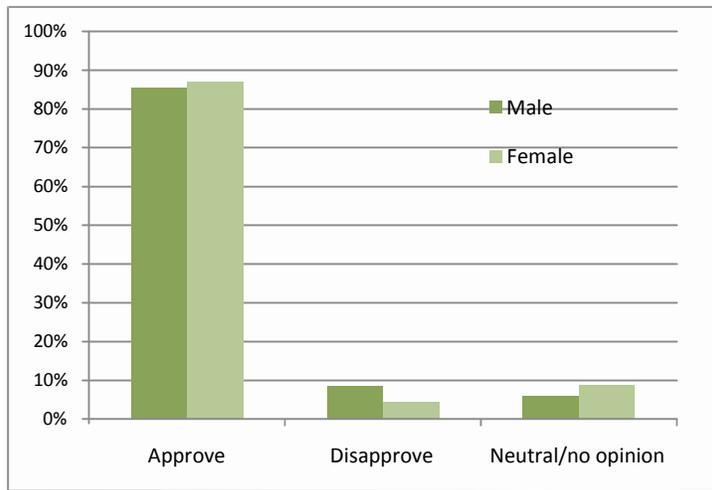
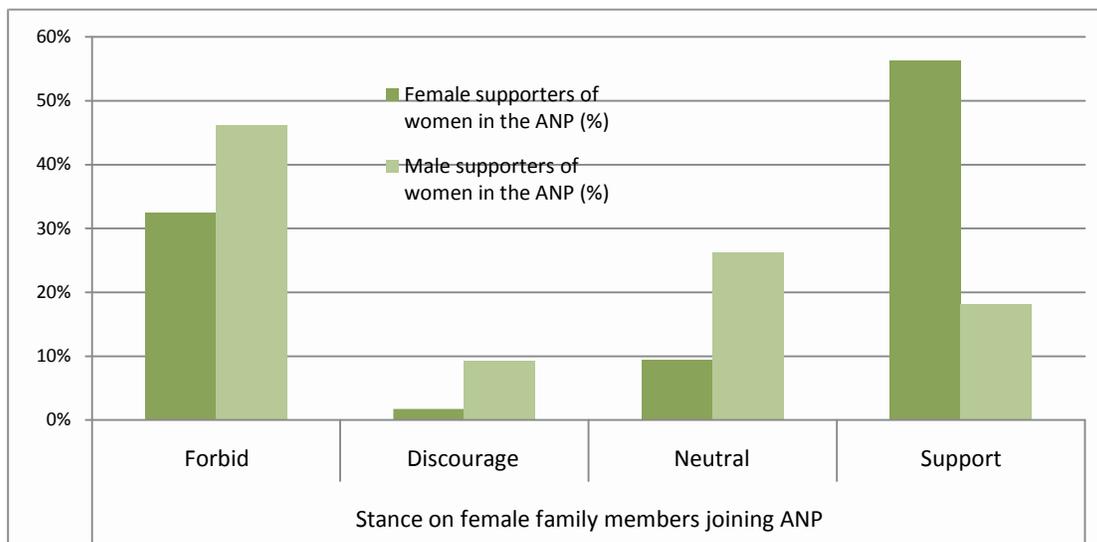


FIGURE 5.4. SUPPORTERS OF WOMEN IN ANP: STANCE ON FAMILY JOINING



Most women in the ANP join for financial reasons (e.g. need to support family if husband unable to work or if widowed).<sup>40</sup> Motivations for female officers, however, appear to derive from a genuine interest in police work and a desire to serve the community. Often these women have a family tradition of serving in the police force, which instils in them a sense of duty and provides them exposure to what police work entails.<sup>41</sup>

Women police receive little respect both from civilians and within the force. Policewomen in Kabul inform a limited number of family members of their profession and never wear their uniforms to work out of fear for their own safety. In fact, many women rarely wear their uniforms at all. Some women are instructed not to wear uniforms by their commanders, perpetuating the perception that women are not “real” police. Others do not have uniforms, feel uncomfortable in uniforms tailored for men that are ill suited for a female form, or just prefer not to wear them.<sup>42</sup>

Policewomen are often relegated to “women’s work” such as fetching tea, working in the kitchen and cleaning. While some women actually volunteer for such tasks, being forced to do menial tasks is incredibly frustrating for those women with a genuine interest in police work.<sup>43</sup>

“Women police have to prove themselves twice: as new recruits and as women.”

Joke Florax, a EUPOL police trainer, summed up the challenges of being a policewomen in Afghanistan and around the globe saying, “Women police have to prove themselves twice: as new recruits and as women”.



**FRU INVESTIGATOR**

<sup>40</sup> Based on interviews with women in police stations and EUPOL female police trainers in the Kabul City Police and Justice Programme.

<sup>41</sup> Based on interview with Captain Madeleine Walther of the German Police Project Team (GPPT), who handles all issues relating to women at the Police Academy in Kabul and serves as advisor to the Academy’s law department.

<sup>42</sup> Based on key informant interviews with international police trainers and mentors.

<sup>43</sup> Nash and Ward, 2011.

### BOX 5.3. PROCESSING CASES WITHIN FAMILY RESPONSE UNITS

The Mol recognises that women victims require female police when reporting a crime, given the religious and cultural context of Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> However, in those police stations visited for this study, women were required to first report to male officers before being referred to Family Response Units. Although her visits were for a different purpose, the female Afghan interviewer visiting police stations for this study, in every visit, had to explain the purpose of her visit to several men before being escorted to the FRU.

When asked to describe how FRUs handle cases brought by women, three female FRU investigators interviewed provided the following answers:<sup>45</sup>

- *“The residents of this district are very conservative, so if a woman has a problem with her spouse, she will first send her mother or father to the police station. We then request the husband and wife to come to the station. We speak to them individually and together in an effort to resolve their problem. We do not want to create problems for families, but if an assault case involves a knife, a gun or severe assault with visible traces, then we forward the case directly to be handled by the justice system. Often, if a woman is very injured, she is first sent to the hospital, and then the procedure for her case is started.” – Interviewee #3*
- *“The head of the police station refers people to the FRU. I invite all of the concerned parties to come in to discuss the issue. I talk to them individually and as a group to try to fix the problem. If it is not a big issue we solve it ourselves, and all interested parties sign an agreement letter. If they do not agree to the terms of the agreement letter, the case is referred on to the court system.” – Interviewee #2*
- *“When people first arrive with a problem, they speak to the head of the police station, who then refers them to the FRU. Here we discuss the problem with all concerned parties and try to reach an agreement to settle the dispute. The terms of the agreement are written in an official letter, which all parties must sign. If they do not sign the letter and agree with the procedure, the case goes to court.” – Interviewee #1*



POLICE STATION, DISTRICT 10

<sup>44</sup> Based on interview with representatives of Department for Gender, Human Rights and Children's Rights, Mol.

<sup>45</sup> For the full transcripts of three interviews conducted with female FRU investigators, see Annex 3.

## 6 TRENDS IN PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE POLICE

### 6.1 PERCEIVED CHANGES IN ANP PERFORMANCE

Nearly half of women respondents feel police performance in their districts has improved in the last few years. Both women and men attribute the improvement to improved security/safety, further reinforcing the claim made in Section 3.1 that Kabul residents expect the ANP to provide security and have low expectations for civilian policing.

Roughly the same proportion of women (48%) and men (51%) thought the ANP had improved its performance in their given districts of Kabul. Forty-two percent of women and 33% of men thought it had remained the same (Figure 6.1).

Of the respondents that considered ANP performance to have improved, a large majority (89% of women and 91% of men) attributed the change to improved security or safety (Figure 6.2).<sup>46</sup> Improved attitude and respectfulness was the second most common explanation (33% for both genders) given for improved performance. A very small minority of both women and men thought corruption had decreased in recent years.

FIGURE 6.1. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CHANGES IN ANP PERFORMANCE

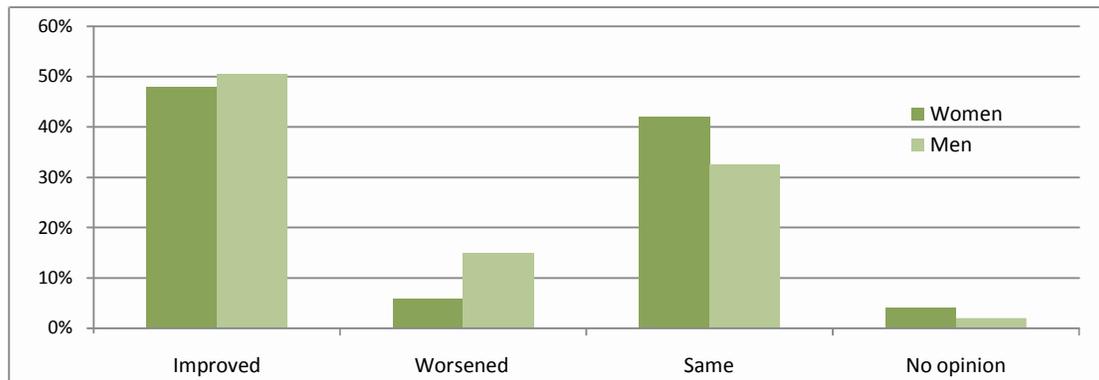
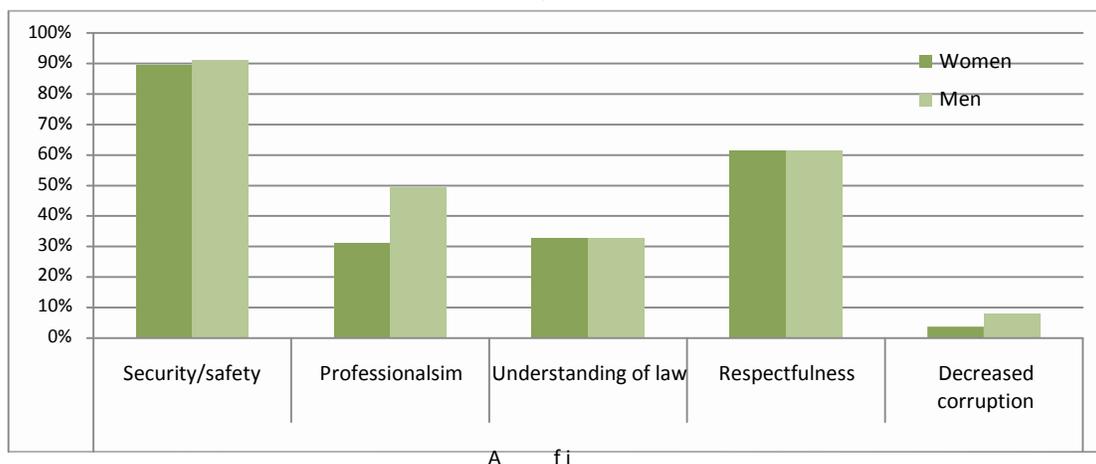


FIGURE 6.2. REASONS CITED FOR IMPROVED POLICE PERFORMANCE

*Multiple reasons given by the 48% of women and 51% of men who answered "improved" in Figure 6.1.*

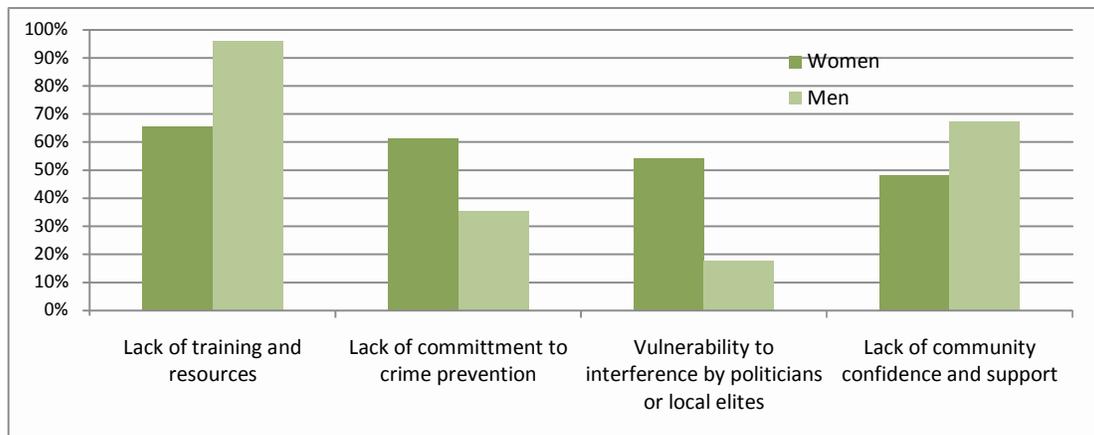


<sup>46</sup> For reasons cited for worsened performance, see Annex 2.

## 6.2 CHALLENGES OF THE ANP

When asked to name the biggest challenges for the police (other than corruption), women’s selections covered the four options fairly evenly: lack of training and resources (66%), lack of commitment to crime prevention (61%), vulnerability to interference by politicians or local elites (54%), and lack of community confidence and support (48%) (Figure 6.3). In contrast, men’s selections clearly favoured “lack of training and resources” (96%), followed by “lack of community confidence and support” (68%).

FIGURE 6.3. PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF THE ANP  
Excluding corruption. Multiple answers possible.



As this study focuses on the perceptions women hold of the police, corruption was intentionally withheld from this question in order to look at other ANP challenges. According to a 2010 UNODC report on corruption, women are less often directly solicited for bribes – 53% for men, 39% for women. The proportion of women paying bribes to the ANP would be even smaller than the overall average, as women pay bribes more frequently to civil servants, particularly in the health and education sector.<sup>47</sup>

### BOX 6.1 IMPROVING POLICE PERCEPTION THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Two interviewed female investigators in FRUs provided insights about how the relationship between the police and women could be improved when asked the following question:

**Is the interaction between the police and women changing today?<sup>48</sup>**

- “When the police solve peoples’ problems effectively, they bring positive changes to families’ lives. As a result, this improves the image of the police.” – Interviewee #1
- “The interaction between police and women is changing because we are following up more with cases. [...] When families and the police stay in contact, it yields positive results for the perception of police in the community.” – Interviewee #3

<sup>47</sup> UNODC (2010) “Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by the Victims,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, p. 9.

<sup>48</sup> For the full transcripts of three interviews conducted with female FRU investigators, see Annex 3.

### 6.3 FACTORS TO CONSIDER

#### *CURRENT GENDER-RELATED INITIATIVES*

While broad initiatives on police professionalism and training have a significant impact on how both women and men perceive the police, the following initiatives only delve into select police initiatives that focus specifically on gender.

The Afghan Ministry of Interior (Mol) has made several bold commitments to gender issues, with regards to both the role of women in the ANP and the treatment of gender issues in the civilian population. A recruitment target of 5,000 female police has been established for 2014. This goal will not likely be met, due to stagnation in recruitment in the past year and only 1173 women currently in the ANP. However, with 2,752 posts for women recently established in the *Tashkil* – the organisational and human resources mechanism for the Mol – recruitment is likely to start picking up again in the coming year.<sup>49</sup>

Departments for gender, human rights and children's rights have been established both within the Mol and the Police Academy. The head of the Mol's department on these issues, General Shafiq – one of two female generals in Afghanistan – has prepared a strategy on gender, human rights and children's rights for her department.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, the department of the same name at the Police Academy is currently finalising curriculum for 96 hours of training on gender, human rights and children's rights, which will be mandatory for all graduating classes of 6-month officer training, beginning with the current class. The department is currently in a "train the trainers" phase, as it prepares to train its first class of officers.<sup>51</sup>

While there are no women in current class of officers in the 3-year training program at the Police Academy, there are five women in the current 6-month officer training class of 1,500. Applicants were required to take a high school equivalency test before admittance, and five of the eight women applicants were accepted. Women in officer training receive an additional \$70 per month additional funding from the United Nations Development Programme's Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (UNDP-LOTFA) over the course of their training. The German Police Project Team (GPPT) and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), in cooperation with the Mol, Police Academy and Ministry of Social Affairs, have created a day care for children of trainees and academy personnel to ensure that women are not prevented from receiving training for lack of child care facilities.<sup>52</sup>

INL provides bi-weekly mentoring to investigators in Family Response Units, which will soon be expanded to weekly mentoring with the addition of a new team of mentors. Literacy remains one of the greatest challenges for this and similar training and mentoring initiatives. FRUs typically have one literate individual out of a staff of three. Not only does illiteracy render training less effective, but it creates challenges for women reporting to FRUs: if the literate investigator is not working, there is no one available to document a claim.<sup>53</sup>

INL's Family Response Unit program is working to procure funds from UNDP-LOTFA for FRUs. Funds will be used to purchase forensic equipment, cameras and other supplies necessary for collecting, testing and documenting evidence. Currently, no FRU in Kabul is equipped with forensics equipment or cameras.<sup>54</sup>

The current mandate of for FRUs remains rather limited under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). As a result, FRUs in many districts are basically limited to playing the role

<sup>49</sup> Based on interviews with representatives of the Mol's Department for Gender, Human Rights and Children's Rights.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Based on interview with Capt. Madeleine Walther, GPPT.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Based on interviews with a number of representatives of INL and DynCorp International.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

of counsellor for family squabbles. Anything more serious is often funnelled to CID investigators. There is pressure by some in the international community to expand this mandate to handle all family issues just short of domestic homicide.

There are a number of stakeholders providing training on women's rights, human rights and children's rights: EUPOL, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Terres des Hommes*. The Swedish International Development Agency funds mediation and human rights training at the Police Academy, which is implemented through Folke Bernadotte Academy, a Swedish government agency.<sup>55</sup> The French are also holding regular conferences with male and female police already in the ANP on the prevention and reduction of domestic violence.<sup>56</sup>

As emphasised by several key informants, there are many stakeholders willing to help in the police sector; however, these efforts would benefit from better coordination. There is currently a database of ANP-related efforts being developed, and UNDP-LOTFA serves as a pooled funding mechanism. The Embassy of Finland also chairs a new working group on Women, Peace and Security (established in 2011), designed to coordinate efforts related to its title issues.<sup>57</sup> This working group is a sub-working group of the Gender Donor Coordination Group.

Several key informants also stated that despite recent MoI efforts on gender issues, the pressure to make changes for both female police and civilians is largely coming from the international community and not the Afghan Ministry of Interior, with the exception of a few advocates (e.g. General Shafiq).

### **BROADER CONTEXT**

With improved ANP performance, increased emphasis on law and order policing, and greater awareness about the gender-specific services and the initiatives (e.g. Family Response Units), the rapport between Kabul women and the police has potential to improve in the coming years.

However, given the enormous societal pressures Afghan women face every day, it is highly unlikely that Kabul women will be willing to step forward to report crimes and seek help for issues such as domestic abuse, rape, or forced marriage in the near future. Even with the perfect police force, Afghan women would still face the threat of societal judgment, exclusion and persecution. Women that are able to successfully utilise the system often do so thanks to the support of a family member that is willing to stand up with them, and even then, at great sacrifice.

Faced with societal judgment, exclusion and persecution, Kabul women are not willing to seek help for issues such as domestic abuse, rape, or forced marriage.

Taking a step even further back, one must keep in mind that efforts to crack down on domestic violence and integrate women into police forces are recent phenomena around the globe. The work being done now has the intention of improving the rapport between civilian women and the police as well as the treatment, recruitment and training of women police within the ANP. We cannot expect results that took decades to foster elsewhere to flourish in a few years in Afghanistan.

<sup>55</sup> Based on interview with Johanna Valenius, Chief of Mentors (Gender and Human Rights), EUPOL.

<sup>56</sup> Based on interview with Col. Jean-Philippe Lecouffe, Attaché de Sécurité Intérieure, French Embassy.

<sup>57</sup> Based on interview with Pia Stjernvall, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Finland.

## 7 CONCLUSION: RE-EXAMINING ASSUMPTIONS

The results of this study challenge several assumptions we made about the police sector at the beginning of this project. We feel these are worth sharing, particularly for those readers approaching this topic with a Western perspective.

**First, we underestimated the engagement of the Afghan National Police on gender issues.** In addition to initiatives and departments that specifically target the needs of women (Box 7.1), it appears that women's issues are also being mainstreamed into broader policies. As of 2011, all ANP officers in the 6-month training program will be required to undergo 96 hours of training on gender, human rights and children's rights at the police academy. Moreover, the newly developed ANP Code of Conduct,<sup>58</sup> which all police will be required to read and sign, clearly states:

In instances where it fails women, the ANP is simply reflecting the restrictions Afghan society imposes on itself.

*"I will respect human dignity and support human rights; I will perform all my duties impartially; without favour or ill-will toward the gender, ethnicity, religion, political belief or economic status of any person. I will treat all citizens, especially vulnerable groups (women & children) and non-citizens in an equal and respectful manner."*

**In fact, the police sector appears to be advancing more quickly than Afghan society** in terms of its recognition of women's risks, needs and rights. The ANP is not imposing Draconian restrictions on society with regards to its treatment of women; rather, in instances where it fails women, the ANP is simply reflecting the restrictions Afghan society imposes on itself.

This reality was illustrated recently when a young couple attempting to elope was attacked by an angry mob in Herat. Rescued by the police, they are now being held in juvenile prison. The families of the two young people are calling for the government to execute them, and have promised to take matters into their own hands if the two teens, both 17, are released.<sup>59</sup>

### BOX 7.1 ANP ENGAGEMENT ON GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

#### **Dedicated departments on gender, human rights and children's rights**

- Gender, Human Rights and Children's Rights Departments within the Mol and Police Academy
- 96 hours of curriculum on gender, human rights and children's rights for officer training

#### **Recruitment of women police<sup>60</sup>**

- Increase in women police from 230 in 2007 to 1173 in 2011
- Recruitment objective set at 5,000 for 2014
- 2,752 posts approved for women officially established in the *Tashkil* in 2011<sup>61</sup>
- Daycares and dormitory facilities available for female trainees at the Police Academy

#### **Services for women**

- Family Response Units: 355 investigators operating in 148 offices nationwide<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Developed by the Mol's Deputy Minister of Policy and Strategy, General Directorate of Research and Policy, July 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Healy, Jack (2011), "In Afghanistan, Rage at Young Lovers," *The New York Times*, 30 July 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Figures provided by the Mol's Department on Gender, Human Rights and Children's Rights

<sup>61</sup> The *Tashkil* handles all staffing issues for the Mol.

<sup>62</sup> Nash and Ward, 2011.

**Second, we overestimated Afghan expectations of the police.** Discussions with focus groups and police revealed that most Kabul residents do not consider the police to be a resource for handling Sexual or Gender-Based Violence (e.g. domestic violence, forced marriage, rape), the most prevalent safety issues for Afghan women. As social pressure mandates that such matters be handled at home, women do not evaluate the police on their capacity to intervene in or resolve family-related problems.

The quantitative survey revealed a strong correlation between satisfaction with security and satisfaction with the police (Figure 4.2), demonstrating that security is likely the primary factor considered when Kabul residents evaluate police performance.

Widely acknowledged weaknesses of the ANP did not appear to detract from high favourability ratings – 80% amongst women (Figure 4.1). Although women are less often solicited for bribes from police, the women in our focus groups were as conscious of ANP corruption issues as their male counterparts.

High favourability ratings should not be interpreted as satisfaction, but rather low expectations and an

Based on a single factor (i.e. security) and ignoring blatant weaknesses, high favourability ratings amongst Kabul men and women should not be interpreted as a sign of satisfaction with the police, but rather low expectations and an acceptance of mediocrity.

**Third, we underestimated the importance of culture** regarding the rapport between the women and the police as well as the implementation of gender initiatives within the ANP. Other police perception surveys demonstrated a willingness to report crimes to police. Our survey indicated a similar willingness amongst respondents, but revealed differences in the willingness of women (73%) and men (99%) to report crimes to the ANP (Figure 5.1). Only 54% of women said they would turn to the police first to report a crime; *wakils* (community leaders), *shuras* or elders were the first choice for a combined 43% of women (Figure 5.2).

If active, urban women believe domestic violence should be handled at home, we are a long ways off from addressing women's safety issues nationwide.

Qualitative research also revealed that this willingness did not carry over to crimes committed within families (e.g. domestic violence, sexual abuse). Focus groups unanimously stated that family problems should be handled at home, with family elders, or community elders. Only if these options are exhausted or in extreme cases did they think the police should be contacted.<sup>63</sup>

Given that the sample for this survey focused on active, urban women, we were surprised to see such a strong adherence to this cultural taboo. If these women, thought to be the most modern and open-minded in Afghanistan, comply with this cultural belief, it raises serious doubts about the feasibility of addressing domestic violence on a national scale in the short- or even medium-term.

**Culture and clan play a major role in the way attitudes are changed within the ANP.** Although official policies promote gender equality, there are individuals at all levels of the ANP and Mol that do not have such attitudes. A key informant reported that while working with Mol officials, the representatives in question had a problem with the fact that the translator the key informant had employed was an Afghan woman. Others interviewed reported similar problems with specific individuals within the Mol that did not embrace the institution's stated policies on gender.

Often perceived as Western or anti-Islamic, awareness and acceptance of women's rights is a difficult achievement in Afghanistan. Gender training that utilises Islamic foundations is a good start for promoting women's rights; however, key informants revealed that the

<sup>63</sup> Also supported by key informant interviews.

effectiveness of training on gender issues often depends more on the shared culture or heritage of the trainer and trainees rather than on shared religious beliefs.

*“A trainer offering a more progressive view of women’s rights within Islam will not be listened to unless he or she is from the same area and of a certain stature. [...] ‘How’ information is presented has a huge impact.”* - Asiya Sharifi, Gender Justice Advisor, Afghanistan Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP)

**Overcoming assumptions: An evidence-based baseline for future analysis**

Given the prevalence of gender-focused initiatives currently being implemented within the ANP,<sup>64</sup> it is all the more important to establish a baseline for women’s expectations and perceptions of the police, as they are likely to change significantly over the next few years.

By examining the perceptions of modern, active women in Kabul, this study provides a baseline for a particular segment of Afghan society. It is not intended to be representative of all Afghan women; however, it does give some indication of the long road ahead for establishing and improving a rapport built on trust between the ANP and the female population of Afghanistan.



POLICE ACADEMY IN KABUL

<sup>64</sup> By both the MoI and the international community.



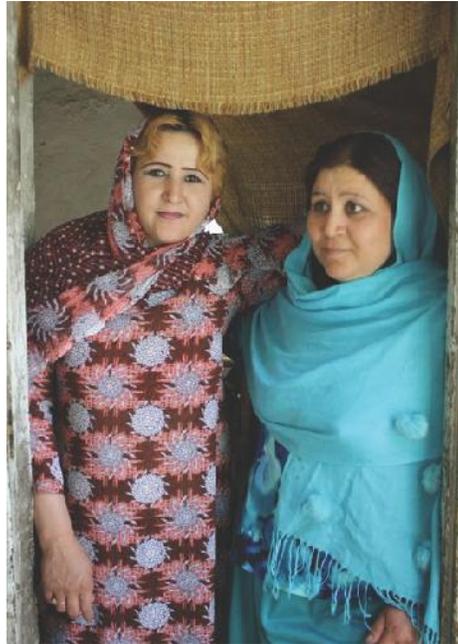
## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS: THE ROAD AHEAD

The implications of police perception extend beyond the Afghan National Police (ANP) to the Afghan government at large. As the most visible sign of the state in daily life, an absent or negative police presence poses a serious threat to state legitimacy. As explained by a former general, “The police are the reflection mirror of the government, in which the general public judges the entire system.”<sup>65</sup>

The success of the transition – the gradual withdrawal of international security forces and financial support culminating in 2014 – will depend largely on the capacity of the police to maintain law and order and build trust with communities, thereby maintaining confidence in the state.

As the clock ticks down, sustainability and value for money must be constant factors for any initiatives implemented between now and the 2014 deadline. Our recommendations for improving the rapport between women and the police focus on pragmatic solutions at the community, institutional, state and international level.

Although the fieldwork was conducted in Kabul, interviews with key informants working on nationwide police issues and our own previous experience working in 25 out of 34 provinces, allow us to draw certain conclusions that apply to the whole of Afghanistan. The recommendations remain general enough to be applied in many Afghan contexts; however, the way in which they are implemented should always be tailored to the local context.



POLICEWOMEN AT SECURITY CHECKPOINT

### *Community level*

The rapport between police and women represents the relationship between the public and private spheres – state and society – in Afghanistan. As the ANP is only perceived as a coercive security force, its relationship with the community and its role in civilian policing has not yet been defined. The diverse socio-cultural contexts that exist within Afghanistan are not conducive to a prefabricated model imported from abroad. In fact, a single model of any sort, even an endogenous one, would not be appropriate for nationwide implementation; as a result, the relationship between the ANP should maintain a certain level of plurality, adapting to the needs of local communities. As the role of the police in society should be determined through a collaborative process with citizens, civil society has an important role to play in proactively working to help define the role of Afghan police in society.

### **Focus on community trust building, a cost-effective way to improve state-society relations**

Community trust building activities produce positive long-term results at minimal cost. Meetings with the community provide the space for police and community members to:

- i)* define their own relationship based on their needs and expectations;
- ii)* ask questions and share concerns; and
- iii)* feel recognised and heard.

<sup>65</sup> International Crisis Group report, “Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy,” *Asia Briefing No. 85*, 2008, p.6.

Specific meetings between women police and civilians should be held in order to improve the visibility of policewomen and the services they provide (within a safe space) and inform women of their rights and rule of law procedures. The exchange facilitated by such meetings is an effective way to strengthen the social dialogue between the ANP and Afghan women. It can also help police better define their role in the community based on the needs and priorities of citizens.

Such meetings can be organised through a top-down (via the ANP) and/or bottom-up approach (via NGOs, civil society, etc.). A Kabul-based NGO improved the treatment of women in their area by meeting with police and encouraging them to think of all women as their mothers and sisters.

### **Implement an identification system, a practical step for more accountability and accessibility**

Visible police identification (e.g. a badge) would provide an inexpensive means of holding police accountable for their actions. A numeric identification system would protect police identities while still enabling citizens to report complaints (e.g. for street harassment or bribery). Identification would also serve to prevent offenses, as police would feel more exposed to the repercussions of their actions. While there is no foolproof means of holding police accountable, the anonymity currently enjoyed by police only contributes to the culture of corruption.

Following the same logic, identification is a symbolic but important step to render the police less anonymous and thereby more relatable and accessible as important figures in the community. For the ANP, such an initiative would: *i)* foster person-to-person dialogue with the community and reduce street harassment *ii)* render police more responsible for their action; and *iii)* encourage greater involvement in the community.

### **Raise awareness of women's rights with regards to security and related police services through a public awareness campaign**

Women and their families need to be better informed of women's rights and how to defend through the formal justice system. Without knowledge of their rights, women do not have the tools to assess their security needs and interests. Campaigns should be tailored to local contexts in order to convey messages that are perceived as credible and legitimate. Communication tools should be designed to access a largely illiterate audience (e.g. mobile theatre, songs, comic books).

## ***Institutional level***

There are many positive initiatives being implemented within the ANP and MoI on gender, human rights and children's rights, but much of the pressure and funding for these initiatives is coming from the international community. When funding dries up, many of these initiatives will likely be the first on the chopping block. Thus, self-sustainable initiatives (e.g. training of trainers) that enhance the ANP's autonomous capacity should be prioritised.

### **Support literacy programs as a primary tool for capacity building**

Literacy, the key tool for fighting ignorance, renders training more effective and enables self-learning down the road. It also provides police with the ability to do actual police work, which requires documenting evidence, recording testimonies, and writing reports.

### **Train the trainers to enable future training on gender, human rights, and children's rights**

Additional support should be given to the train the trainer programs. Given the high turnover rates of the ANP, the implementation of train the trainer programs now is essential for ensuring the ANP's capacity to train recruits later. For optimum impact, train the trainer programs should select individuals that are respected and seen as credible in the province(s) in which they work.

### **Legitimise the Family Response Units with equipment, training, and a broader mandate**

Family Response Units (FRUs) must first be perceived as legitimate and professional within the ANP before they can be perceived as such by the public. This will require a broader mandate from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) to enable FRUs to handle the cases they were created for. The FRUs also need equipment such as cameras and forensics equipment for documenting evidence as well as the training to properly use and care for it.<sup>66</sup> More generally, standard issued uniforms for all policewomen would help improve the image of women police as both legitimate and professional within the ANP and with the public.

### *State level*

The perception of the police is intrinsically linked with the perception of the justice sector. Both are necessary for the application of rule of law. Efforts to improve coordination between these two pillars of Security Sector Reform (SSR) are essential for improving the implementation and perception of rule of law in Afghanistan.

#### **Strengthen coordination between police and justice sector for improved rule of law**

Regulations within the justice and police sectors need to be changed so that police and prosecutors can better cooperate on cases. Police in Afghanistan are discouraged and even forbidden in some instances from following up on a case once it has moved on into the justice sector. Such a procedure removes incentives for police to perform their jobs well when collecting evidence and reporting cases. Strengthening coordination would furthermore change the perception of the police by demonstrating that the ANP is more than a coercive force, but also the arm of the law.

NGOs that assist women with legal issues should be viewed as a potential resource for bridging these two pillars, serving as a mediator amongst women, police and the justice sector. Partnerships between FRUs and NGOs should also be encouraged, so that women that report problems such as domestic abuse to NGOs can be guided into and through the formal justice system. This would increase the accessibility of police services to women. As independent actors, they can also improve the transparency and accountability of legal processes.

To build these partnerships and encourage information sharing amongst stakeholders, workshops should be held with NGOs, the police and the justice sector. By informing NGOs of the processes women go through when reporting to the police, they will be better equipped to help women that turn to them for assistance. Additionally, NGOs can share their experiences with the police and justice sector to help them better serve the needs of women. Workshops should have clearly defined agendas and outcomes for maximum impact.

### *International level*

While international coordination on police issues is a commonly repeated recommendation, it begs reiterating that the international community needs to take a unified stance on civilian policing, recognising its importance and coordinating support. The ANP will play a crucial role in the political and social unity of Afghanistan throughout and following the transition. Distinct from that of the military role of the ANA (*i.e.* fighting insurgents), the police fulfil a social role in ensuring law at the community level and representing the national government in a way that is visible on a daily basis.

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<sup>66</sup> Some international actors are currently working on these issues (e.g. by writing proposals to UNDP-LOTFA for FRU equipment funding). However, coordinated support for such efforts, from within the MoI and from the international community, is needed to ensure that these objectives are accomplished before the end of 2014.



## 9 STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### **Pre-launch meeting on *Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police***

22 November 2011, Kabul

Meeting convened by Heinrich Böll Stiftung - Afghanistan  
Introduction by Marion Regina Müller, HBS  
Moderator: Hervé Nicolle, Director of Samuel Hall Consulting  
Presenter: Sarah Cramer, Samuel Hall Consulting

Participants included representatives of CSOs, NGOs, development agencies, embassies and ministries. Represented organisations: Afghan Civil Society Forum organization (ACSFo), Afghanistan Independent Human Rights commission (AIHRC), All Afghan Women Union (AAWU), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Education and Training Center for Poor Women and Girls of Afghanistan (ECW), Embassy of Finland, European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL), Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS), Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Open Society Afghanistan (OSI), Samuel Hall Consulting, Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF), and Young Women for Change (YWC).

On 22 November 2011, Heinrich Böll Stiftung - Afghanistan convened a pre-launch meeting in Kabul to share the results of the report *Women's Perceptions of the Afghan National Police* and gather feedback from a group of relevant stakeholders.

#### ***Low expectations and fear of police***

Participants confirmed the study's findings that both women and men are dissatisfied with police performance in Kabul. Although quantitative surveys, including the one conducted for this report, demonstrate positive ratings, these results do not indicate actual satisfaction but rather low expectations. The concept of civilian policing – establishing rule of law, reinforcing institutions, building community trust – is underdeveloped; as a result, citizens expect less from their local police in terms of services and judge police performance on primarily on the level of security in their area.

The police are often perceived as a source of problems and not as a resource for resolving them, and Afghan women as well as men often try to avoid them. Participants shared experiences – both personal and related to their work – of police misbehaviour that results in public discontent and distrust of police. The prevalence of street harassment was emphasized, highlighting the fact that the rapport with police is not only problematic for women reporting crimes or seeking help but also more generally for women as they move about daily on the streets.

#### ***Cultural issues of shame and family honour***

The issues of shame and family honour were raised as stumbling blocks for addressing women's security and safety issues. As blame is often placed on female victims in cases of street harassment, abuse and even rape, it is extremely difficult for women to come forward and seek assistance. While these are problems for active women in Kabul, they are likely as problematic if not more so for non-active, women living in remote, rural areas.

Participants confirmed that most Afghans are strongly opposed to addressing crimes committed within the family (e.g. domestic violence) by turning to external individuals or organizations, notably the police and the formal justice sector. This is due to cultural norms

as well as corruption issues within the police; Afghans do not see the utility of seeking police assistance if justice will be determined by the person that pays the highest bribe.

In addition to being an impediment to accessing police services, shame is also an obstacle for reporting instances of abuse by the police and creating a system of accountability that could improve police behaviour. One participant shared research findings that indicated that women in shelters had often been abused or harassed by police when they sought help; the victims were afraid to report such abuses to the shelter officials, as it might result in their own incarceration (rape victims are often imprisoned in Afghanistan for being “complicit” in extra-marital sexual relations).

Participants agreed that, in addition to initiatives targeting the police, societal issues relating to the traditional, cultural context of Afghanistan would also need to be addressed in order to improve women’s security and access to police services. Along with awareness of women’s rights – amongst both women and men – participants suggested the organisation of awareness campaigns that promote the acceptability of turning to the police and justice sector as well as reporting instances of harassment or abuse.

### ***Cycle of poor perceptions and poor performance***

A negative cycle of negative police performance and negative perceptions of police was revealed by participants working with the ANP. As the misbehaviour of some police creates a negative perception amongst the population, the incentive for those who would perform better diminishes, as they are perceived negatively no matter what they do. As more police give into the temptation of corruption and poor performance, public perception of police worsens and the incentives for those who would perform better shrink further.

Participants also pointed out that many police wished to perform better but simply did not know how. Examples were provided of the positive impact of police training, notably of literacy and adult education. Literacy provides police with the ability to read and write – a necessary skill for many police tasks (writing reports, documenting evidence, collecting testimonies). Even simple tasks such as arresting an individual are more difficult for illiterate police who cannot confirm the name of the individual by reading an identification card. Participants stressed that literacy and education build self-confidence, render other forms of training more effective, and improve understanding of the law and police practices.

Without an education, male police often express their authority through force and aggressive behaviour. After receiving better training, many police officers become less aggressive as they are able to assert their authority through their skills and knowledge of the law. The affect of lack of education amongst women police was unclear, but it was assumed that in the Afghan context, the results would be different than what is manifested in male police.

It was suggested that public awareness activities be initiated to overcome the stigmatized image of the police in order to improve perception and encourage recruitment. Such campaigns should not be propagandized, but should rather recount honest portrayals of those police who are working hard to serve the people of Afghanistan.

### ***Defining the role of the ANP***

The role of the police was discussed at length, and participants agreed that it is not clearly defined in the collective understanding of the public or even within the ANP. Citizens and the police often feel that the objective of the police force is to protect the interests of the state rather than those of its citizens (physical safety and protection of rights). Several participants mentioned that the role of the police should be one of service delivery for citizens, and that there should be an emphasis on the ANP as a police service, rather than a police force. The distinction between the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the police force is not clearly

drawn, and police are often expected to fulfil certain military functions without the training or equipment afforded the ANA.

The difference between the duty and role of police was distinguished in the discussion. Whereas a police officer may understand his duty in terms of his assignment (e.g. working a shift at a checkpoint), he or she may not understand more broadly what his or her role as a police officer is, how it should be performed, what the objective of this duty is, etc. Participants agreed that more training and clearer definitions on the role and responsibilities of police would help improve police professionalism and performance. They also agreed that community meetings would provide a good forum to enable Afghan citizens and police to discuss and define the role they envisage for police in their community. Examples of positive results were drawn at several intervals from GIZ's Community Trust Building Initiative in the North of Afghanistan.

#### ***Linkages between the formal and informal sector***

In addition to the need for strengthening the linkages between the police and justice sector – one of the report's recommendation – participants highlighted the need for a more formalized interaction between the informal and formal justice sectors. Active women in Kabul are more likely than men to turn first to the informal sector as their first recourse when reporting a crime, and it is likely that this trend is as common if not more so in the other provinces. Therefore, efforts to improve women's security should not only focus on the formal sector but also the informal sector. Some linkages already exist, such as the cooperation between police stations and *wakils* (community leaders) in Kabul to provide temporary accommodation for women seeking police assistance. However, this coordination is not formalized, and it is not clear to what degree this type of cooperation is implemented in stations throughout Kabul and across the country.

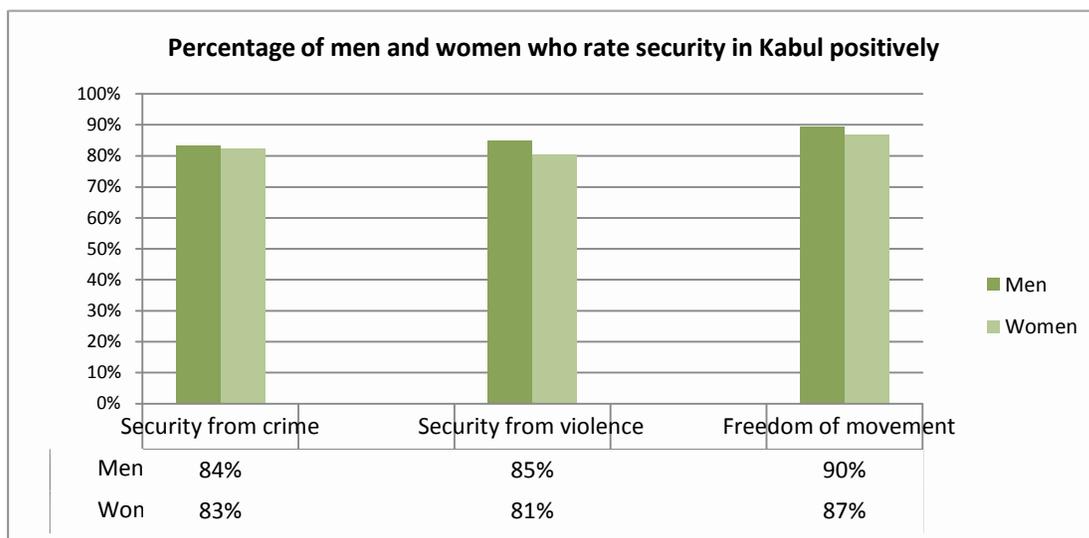
#### ***Need for accountability and coordination***

Accountability was raised as a key issue for improvement. Participants emphasized the need for structural changes within the MoI that hold police at all levels accountable for their actions. The idea of an identification system using badges and id numbers was also welcomed as a way to empower citizens to hold police accountable by reporting incidents of street harassment and corruption. It would also provide a means of prevention, as police would no longer feel protected by the level of anonymity they have currently.

Finally, participants expressed frustration with the lack of coordination by the international community and the multiplicity of coordination bodies on initiatives relating to the police and gender. While there has been some progress in the harmonization of initiatives, there still exists duplication and gaps in police initiatives. Participants also expressed the wish to see more coordination amongst Afghan ministries, notably between the departments that address issues of gender. These newly created entities would benefit greatly by sharing information and lessons learned.

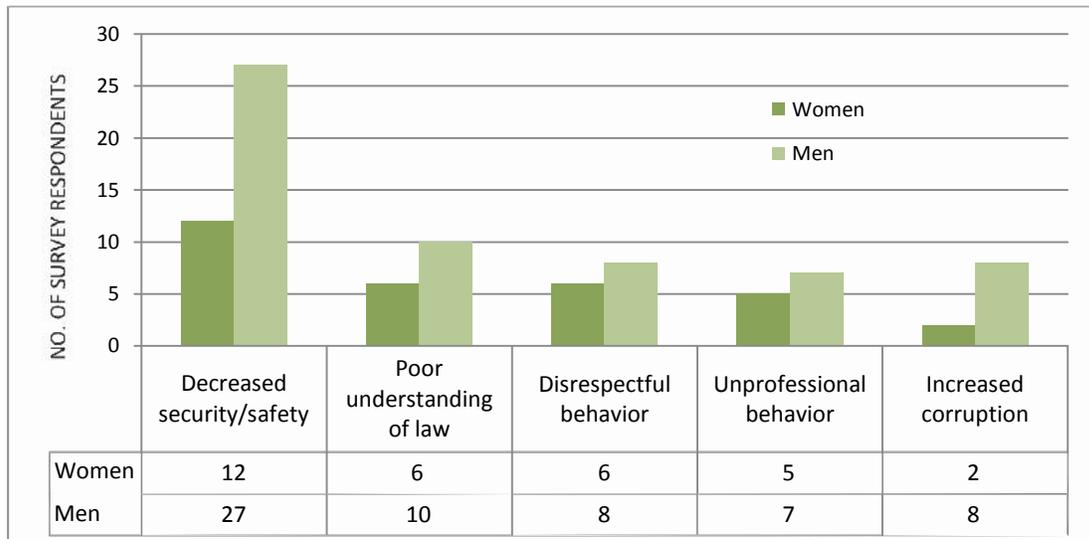
## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: FAVOURABLE PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY IN KABUL



### ANNEX 2: REASONS CITED FOR WORSENE POLICE PERFORMANCE<sup>67</sup>

Multiple reasons given by the 6% of women and 15% of men who answered "worsened" in Figure 6.1.



<sup>67</sup> Due to the small sample size, these figures are not given in percentages, and are instead presented with the number of people that cited each of the reasons for worsened performance.

## ANNEX 3: INTERVIEWS WITH FEMALE FRU INVESTIGATORS

*Information that could reveal the identity of the interviewees has been removed or altered to protect their anonymity.*

## Interview #1

**1. How long have you worked with the ANP?**

I have worked for three years in this station and six years in other stations. In total, I have nine years of experience in the ANP.

**2. Why did you decide to become a police officer?**

When my husband died, I came to get a job at the police station because I have to support my family.

**3. What sort of training have you received for this job?**

I have undergone 10 training sessions, three of which were specifically for my work in the FRU. Other training addressed issues such as criminal investigations and human rights issues.

**4. What do you do when a woman comes to the FRU with a problem?**

When people first arrive with a problem, they speak to the head of the police station, who then refers them to the FRU. Here we discuss the problem with all concerned parties and try to reach an agreement to settle the dispute. The terms of the agreement are written in an official letter, which all parties must sign. If they do not sign the letter and agree with the procedure, the case goes to court.

**5. What types of problems are most common amongst women that come to this district?**

Most people come to the FRU with problems involving their spouses.

**6. Is the interaction between the police and women changing today?**

When the police solve peoples' problems effectively, they bring positive changes to families' lives. As a result, this improves the image of the police.

## Interview #2

**1. How long have you worked with the ANP?**

I was a young girl when I first joined the police. I have worked at this station for 6 years, and I had previously worked for several different police stations and a women's detention centre.

**2. Why did you decide to become a police officer?**

I was professionally interested in police work, and my family encouraged me to join.

**3. What sort of training have you received for this job?**

I attended the police academy for three years of training. I also underwent 13 additional training sessions, many of which were related to her work in the FRU.

**4. What do you do when a woman comes to the FRU with a problem?**

The head of the police station refers people to the FRU. I invite all of the concerned parties to come in to discuss the issue. I talk to them individually and as a group to try to fix the problem. If it is not a big issue we solve it ourselves, and all interested parties sign an agreement letter. If they do not agree to the terms of the agreement letter, the case is referred on to the court system.

**5. What types of problems are most common amongst women that come to this district?**

We mainly deal with family problems between wives and husbands. Many problems are rooted in economic problems. For example, sometimes the man is angry because the wife

spends a lot of money. We try to provide counselling to these couples. There are also conflicts related to forced marriage or men beating their wives.

**6. Have you ever encountered problems with your colleagues or superiors?**

I have not had any problems with my boss, but I have encountered a few problems with colleagues, especially women police because they are impolite. Most of the time, I handle these issues by explaining police procedures to them. There are also some problems between men and women at the station, such as improper relationships.

Interview #3

**1. How long have you worked with the ANP?**

I have worked as a policewoman for four years.

**2. Why did you decide to become a police officer?**

I was working as a civilian in a police station before I joined. That is how I developed an interest in becoming a policewoman.

**3. What sort of training have you received for this job?**

I have had 15 training sessions. Seven were specific to my duties in the FRU. The others dealt with human rights, criminal investigations and general police procedures and methodology.

**4. What do you do when a woman comes to the FRU with a problem?**

The residents of this district are very conservative, so if a woman has a problem with her spouse, she will first send her mother or father to the police station. We then request the husband and wife to come to the station. We speak to them individually and together in an effort to resolve their problem.

We do not want to create problems for families, but if an assault case involves a knife, a gun or severe assault with visible traces, then we forward the case directly to be handled by the justice system. Often, if a woman is very injured, she is first sent to the hospital, and then the procedure for her case is started.

**5. What types of problems are most common amongst women that come to this district?**

Most of the problems we deal with are conflicts between spouses or cases of forced engagement.

We also deal with female beggars. The police collect beggars from the street and bring them to a shelter. We try to reach an agreement between the beggars and their families, so that the women do not go back to the streets. However, they often return to the streets after 15-20 days in order to earn money. They can sometimes earn as much as 1000 afghanis a day (approximately \$21)

**6. Is the interaction between police and women changing today?**

Yes, it is changing because we are following up more with cases. After we have reached an agreement with a family, we take their phone numbers and keep contact with the family. It is our responsibility to make sure these problems are resolved. Often the wives we help keep contact with the police station as well. They thank us for helping to solve their problems. When families and the police stay in contact, it yields positive results for the perception of police in the community.