

The role of women in economic development of Afghanistan



Dr Madina Junussova, Research Fellow,
Institute of Public Policy and Administration/
University of Central Asia

Naveen Hashim, Advisor to Deputy Minister
for Policy, Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan

Muhammad Ajmal Khan, Head of Monitoring
National Policies,
Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan

Pakiza Kakar, Head of Reporting and Analysis,
Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan

Freshta Wardak, Aid Management Specialist,
Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan

Shukria Rajabi, Regional Senior
Officer/Economic Inclusion,
Aga Khan Foundation

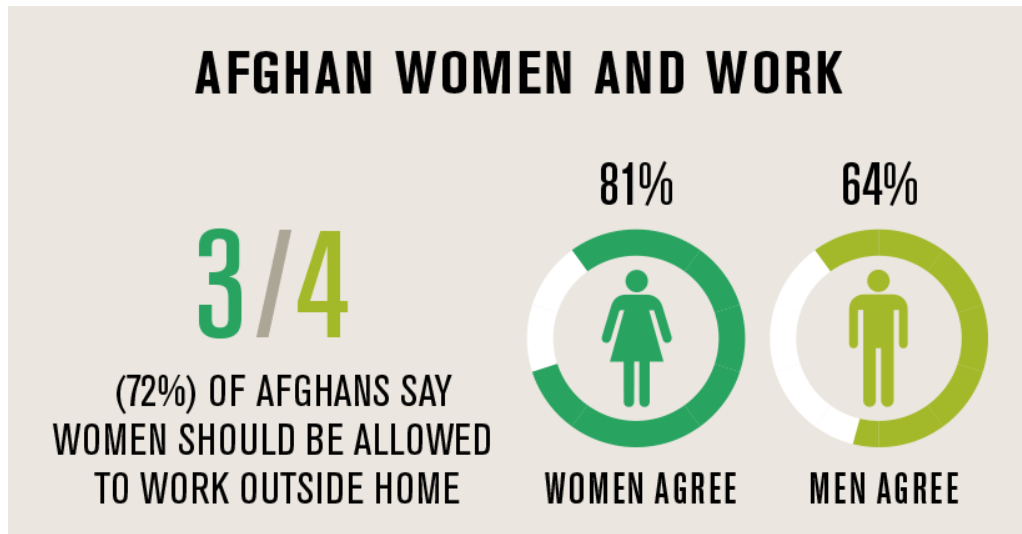
Women economic empowerment

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

“We are committed to ensuring the full political, social, and economic participation of Afghan women in national development. ... we will invest as much as USD 250 million in the women’s economic empowerment program.”

Source: Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework 2017-2021

PUBLIC OPINION:



Source: The Asia Foundation (2017) Survey of the Afghan People

Women economic empowerment

KEY POLICIES:

Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS 2008-2013)

National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA 2007-2017)

The Women's SME Action Plan (2014-2017)

Women, Peace and Security (2015-2022)

National Strategy on Women in Agriculture (2015-2020)

Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF 2017-2021)

KEY FINDING:

The lack of evidence on “how **policy opportunities** created by the government impact on **women access to benefit from economic development?**”

Women economic empowerment

DEFINITION: *“Women’s empowerment ... is a condition where women*

- ▶ *take control and determine the direction of their lives,*
- ▶ *develop their full potential,*
- ▶ *make enlightened decisions, and*
- ▶ *exert positive influence over processes, mechanisms, and decisions that affect their well-being.”*

Source: National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan 2007-2017

RESEARCH AREA: *Role of women in economic development:*

- ▶ *legal and security conditions facilitating women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*
- ▶ *business and working environment enabling women to “affect their well-being”, focusing on SMEs, business networks, and employment in agriculture.*

Women economic empowerment

RESEARCH APPROACH:

- ▶ We argue that women economic empowerment requires evidence-based policymaking that can increase the level of the policy implementation in different parts of the country.
- ▶ We assess key government policies with attention to institutional conditions impacting on women's legal status, security, business and employment.
- ▶ We propose the case-study based approach to collect local evidence from Kabul, Nangarhar and Badakhshan Provinces of Afghanistan.

Legal conditions *facilitating women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

KEY CHALLENGE:

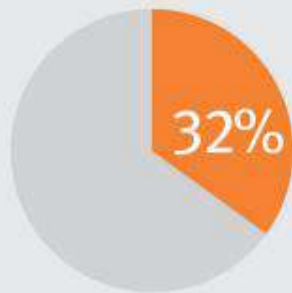
Women remain to be vulnerable to forced marriage:

According to Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), 60-80% of all marriages are forced and occurring in early years (before 16 ages).

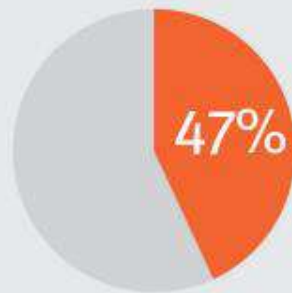
EARLY CHILDBEARING AND MATERNAL DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN



of Afghan girls in the 15-19 age group started **childbearing**.



of all **deaths** of girls in the 15-19 age group were **pregnancy-related**.



of all **deaths** of women in the 20-24 age group were **pregnancy-related**.

Source: Afghanistan Mortality Survey, 2010.

Legal conditions *facilitating women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

UNDERDEVELOPED LEGISLATION:

The laws continue to contain articles enforcing customary practices allowing the violation against women Constitutional rights.

Afghan Civil Code (1977):

- There is a different minimum age of marriage: 16 for girls and 18 for boys (Article 70);
- In the case of the obtained consent from a father or a court, **girls can marry starting from 15 ages** (Article 71).

Afghan Penal Code (2017):

- There is a short-term imprisonment of a person for marrying a **woman of 18 years or older** without her consent (Article 517).
- The short-term imprisonment can be decreased up to 2 years in case when forced marriage is the “**compensation for a wrongdoing**” (baad).

Legal conditions *facilitating women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

DUAL LEGAL SYSTEM:

When the statutory law is silent, legislators apply religious and customary laws.

According to the estimates of Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan, 90% of land issues resolved according to customary laws (Lemmon, 2017).

The Article 130 of the Constitution allow judges to use Islamic laws if they cannot find a suitable solution by referring to the government approved laws.

Following Islamic law (Sharia), a land is usually registered in the name of men, as a result, less than 2 % of women own land and most of those women are widows.

Legal conditions *facilitating women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

LAW IMPLEMENTATION GAP:

The mechanisms of the law enforcement are not developed well.

- *About 80 % of households have no formal documentation to acquire or prove their rights of owning a land (USAID, 2017).*

Females do not have a direct access to dispute resolution institution, dominated by males.

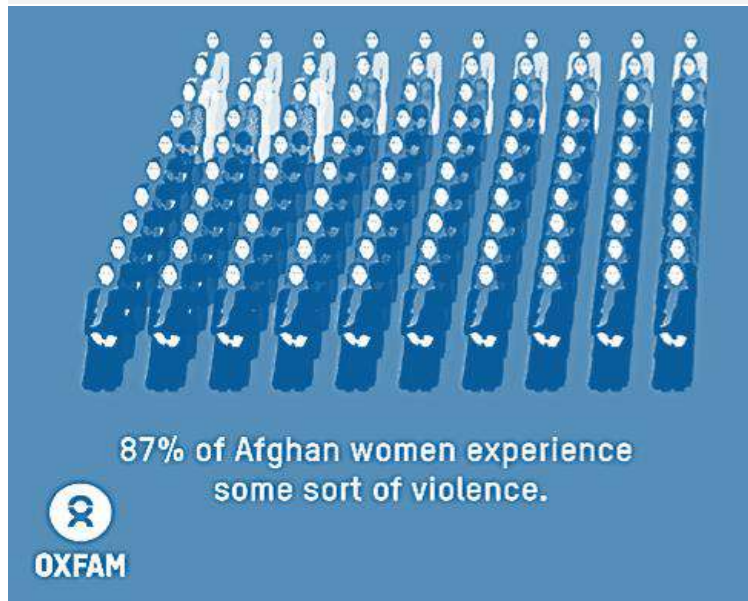
- *According to the Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015-2016, only 17 % of Afghan women independently own a house, compared to approximately 50 % of Afghan men.*

Security conditions *allowing women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

KEY CHALLENGE:

Women remain to be vulnerable to intimidation and violence:

Only during the first eight months of 2016, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission documented 2,621 cases of domestic violence against women.

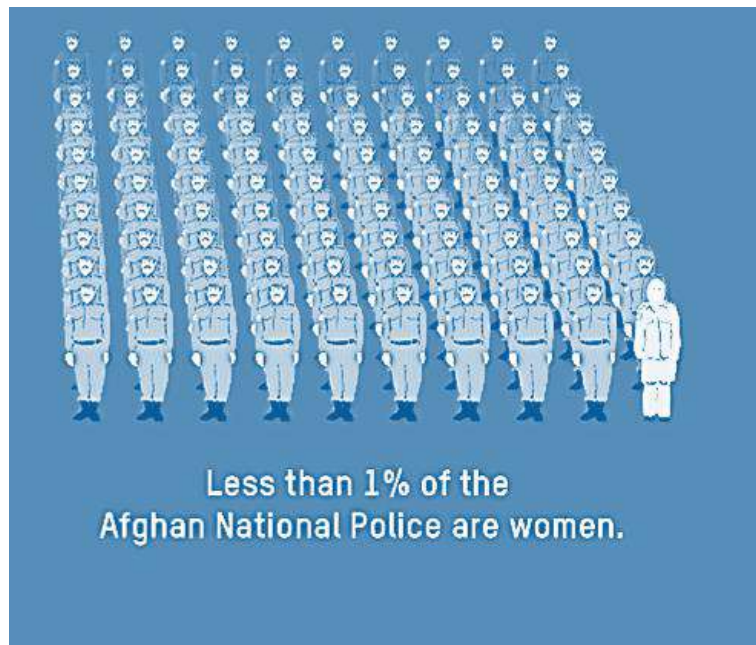


Security conditions *allowing women to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”*

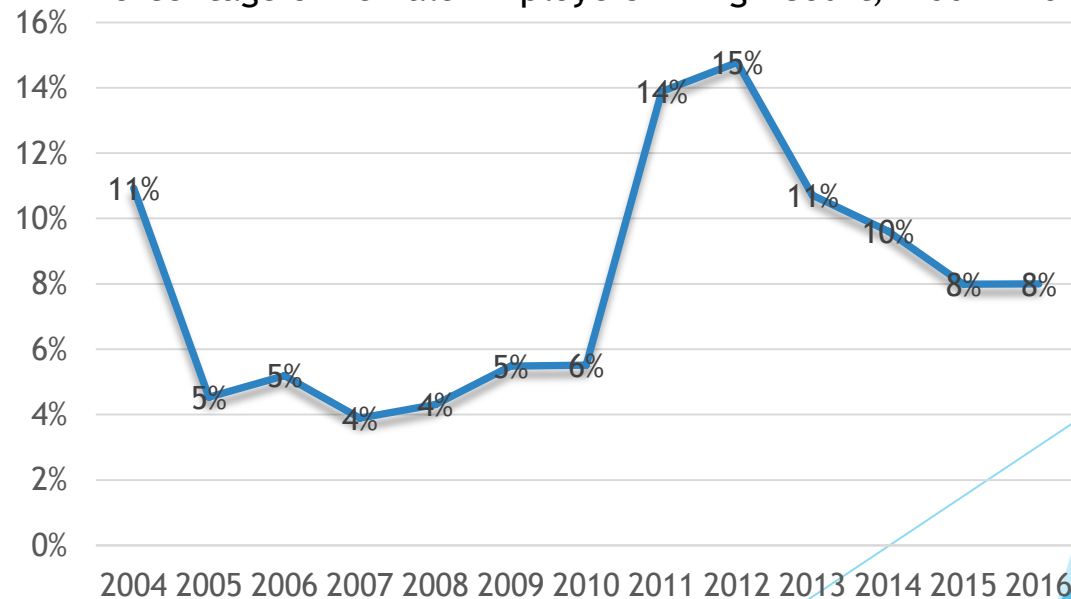
UNDERREPRESENTATION IN SECURITY SECTOR:

Women are underrepresented in justice and law enforcement sector

According to the Afghan Women Network Report (2016), only 2% of security sector workers are women and only 9% of women workers participate in peace-building processes.



Percentage of Female Employers in High Court, 2004 - 2016



Legal and security conditions *facilitating women* to “take control and determine the direction of their lives”

KEY FINDINGS:

- ▶ Underdevelopment of legislation and mechanisms of its adequate implementation through state institutions does not allow to protect women from violence and discrimination.
- ▶ Unrepresentativeness of women in justice and security sectors decreases the chances of women to feel protected and to be able to achieve objective dispute resolution in the male-dominated institutions.

Business environment *enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”*

KEY CHALLENGE:

Women SMEs remain to be outsiders of the national business community:

- ▶ *Nearly 90% of women businesses do not have partnerships with other businesses or institutions and 75% do not belong to any business association;*
- ▶ *In many cases, women prefer doing business with the international community (47%) and with the local community (40%);*
- ▶ *Only 13 % of women find business opportunities to work with the government of Afghanistan. |*

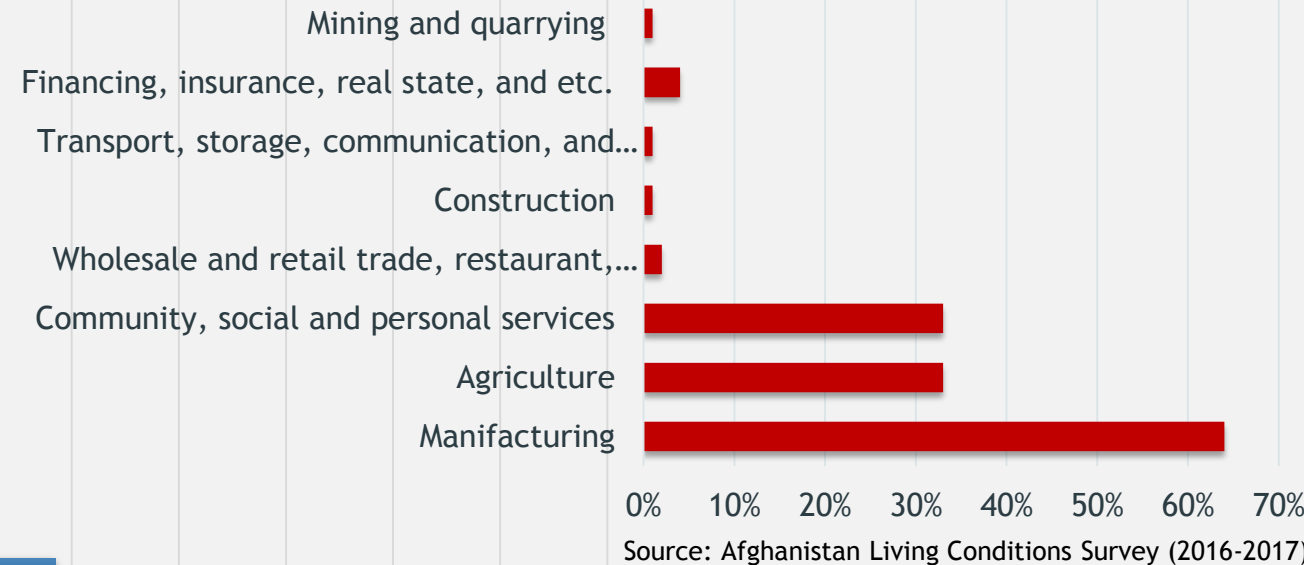
Business environment *enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”*

GENDER BASED MARKET SEGREGATION:

Distribution of women SMEs by sectors in percentage (%) in 2018



Female labour force participation by sectors in percentage (%), 2016-2017



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%
Source: Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (2016-2017)

Source: Women businesses registered at Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), 2018

Employment in agriculture *for enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”*

KEY CHALLENGE:

Women work is not considered as an economic activity but approached as the unpaid household duty.

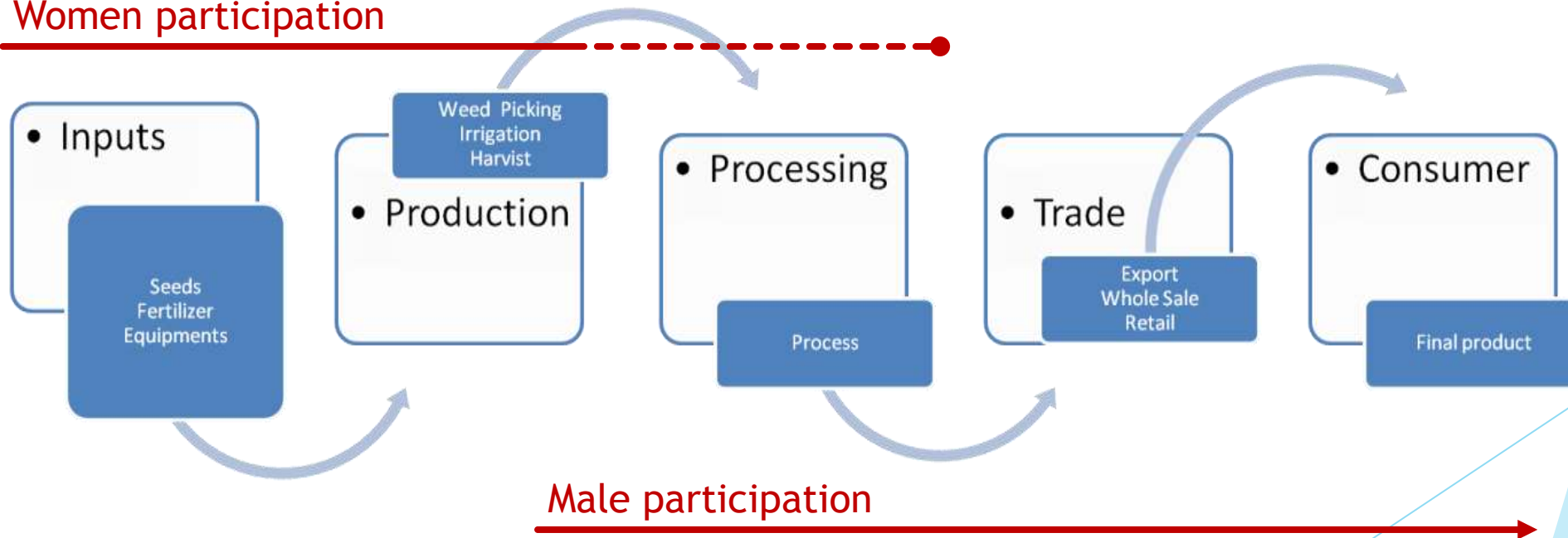


Employment in agriculture *for enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”*

INCOME INEQUALITY AND LOW PARTICIPATION IN VALUE-ADDED ACTIVITIES:

Despite being involved in the hard work of harvesting, a female gets less income than a male involved in the packing of a final product and trading.

Women participation



Women networks

for enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”

KEY CHALLENGE:

In rural areas, women have difficulties related to saving their obtained income, getting access to financial service to accumulate finances, and using them for personal purposes.

KEY PROGRESS:

Women networks allow the female to earn by working in socially accepted income-generating activities as well as to preserve their income for their own use.

According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industries, there are 2000 women involved in 250 registered women networks. A total of 650 networks and enterprises are registered, 250 are lead and run by women in Badakhshan province.

Women networks

for enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”

KEY PROGRESS:

Thanks to the operation of these women networks, women receive their income to assist their family’s daily expenses and their children schooling.

KEY CHALLENGE:

A large number of the women networks operate informally not being registered in Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries, and Ministry of Commerce and Industries in Badakhshan province.

Women SMEs, women networks and women employment

for enabling women to “positively affect their well-being”

KEY FINDINGS:

- ▶ There is a gender-based segregation of local market and women businesses operate in isolation from the national business community;
- ▶ Overall underdevelopment of the private sector in agriculture affects women opportunity to be officially employed and paid for their work;
- ▶ There is an income inequality due to limited access of women to be involved in value-added activities in agriculture;
- ▶ Women networks serve as local level community-based income generation and accumulation centres, but their effectiveness is not yet well-studied.

Learning from key findings

Next steps of the study will include:

- ▶ Legislation review and analysis of the current regulatory mechanisms of law enforcement to identify legal gaps for women to *“take control and determine the direction of their lives”*;
- ▶ Assessment of security sector with the attention of women access to protection and justice;
- ▶ Case-study based assessment of women in doing business, women employed in agriculture and women participation in women networks;
- ▶ Analysis of the key issues hindering proper integration of women business as local market players, women as income generation actors and women networks as wealth accumulation communities that directly *“affect women well-being”*.

Thank you for the attention!

We are ready for answering your questions!