

IMPROVING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

• KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES SURVEY ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

In partnership with the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic Research (ACSOR), UN Women conducted a mixed methods study to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices when it comes to women's economic rights in Afghanistan and gender-based violence, with a particular emphasis on Afghan men.

Knowledge: There is an evident gap between men's and women's knowledge level of the economic rights and legal protection for women in Afghanistan, especially when it comes to marital and inheritance rights for women. A majority of Afghan men believe married women collect the *haq mehr*, or financial compensation, that is due to the bride at the time of marriage. However, Afghan women were more likely to report that although it is mentioned at the time of marriage, the Sharia tradition of *Mehr* is often not adhered to in practice. Further gaps in knowledge exist regarding a wife's right to inheritance after her spouse dies, which highlights low levels of basic marital rights among both men and women.

Attitudes: Afghan men and women have similar attitudes towards women's economic rights in Afghanistan, demonstrating an inherently patriarchal view on marital, property, and inheritance rights of married women. Approximately half of men and women strongly support a married woman's right to inheritance after her husband's death. Furthermore, a significant majority of respondents mentioned that the first family member entitled to receive this inheritance is the man's son, followed by his wife. Afghan women are not aware of their marital legal rights under current law which continues to conflict with Sharia law.

Practice: Key stakeholders in women's economic empowerment – including business owners, community development council members, and religious leaders – agree that women's economic and legal rights are not practised in Afghanistan for a variety of reasons. Although these stakeholders mention the importance of female participation in the labour force and the

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Location: Office in Kabul, active country-wide

Programme sectors: Normative support; violence prevention and protection; national planning; economic empowerment; leadership and participation.

Key donors: The governments of Australia, Belgium, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Livelihoods, Entrepreneurship & Employment: UN Women activities include supporting women entrepreneurs to have better access to markets, and rural

women to undertake livelihood development activities.

Survivors Empowerment Journey: This programme takes a holistic approach to empowering women survivors of violence through survivor-centric protection services and economic empowerment, while also fostering an enabling environment for community-level prevention and legal reform.

value of marital rights under the law, they highlighted insecurity, political corruption, and patriarchal norms as key barriers preventing the realisation of women's rights in practice.

Gender-Based Violence: Many Afghan men and women do not perceive gender-based violence as one of the top issues facing women in Afghanistan today, despite the fact that 87% of women in Afghanistan experience some kind of violence during their lifetime¹. Both men and women agree that violence within marriage is unacceptable and not allowed under Islam, although more men than women believe a woman should try to resolve problems with her husband even if he is abusive. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of the options for abused women, forcing victims/survivors to

remain in abusive and difficult homes. There is little to no knowledge about women's shelters in Afghanistan among men and women.

Regional Variations: The results of composite measures developed by UN Women and ACSOR show significant variations in attitudes and perceptions across provinces for all five constructs of women's economic rights. Furthermore, attitudes and perceptions are significantly more conservative in southern province of Kandahar.

Data Collection Methods: Fieldwork for the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice survey was conducted in Afghanistan from 8-21 March 2016. The sample included 4,006 Afghans selected at random in seven provinces and 28 districts.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the complex nature of women's economic rights in Afghanistan, the following recommendations will require comprehensive and long-term interventions monitoring outcomes over time.

- Investment in supporting women's basic and higher-level education is needed to increase their income-generating capabilities.
- Create business and entrepreneurship networks for women through organisations, and physical and online forums, in order to promote business-related knowledge.
- Work with community leaders, religious leaders, local officials, and other key stakeholders in women's economic empowerment to advocate for women and to promote inclusion within the economic sector.
- Continue to measure and publicly report progress

related to changing knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of women's economic rights. This will help mainstream gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

- Develop a policy or programme that teaches business owners and managers the importance of adopting Women's Empowerment Principles and gender equality policies. This programme should target leadership and management within the business so that adaptation and implementation of such policies is more likely to occur.
- Increase inclusive and public support for women's economic empowerment, beyond Kabul, through various media outlets, in order to help mainstream women's involvement in the economic sector.
- Increase public support for the inclusion of women's empowerment principles by broadcasting stories of Afghan women in the workforce through different media outlets including television and radio.

¹ Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, Violence against women and girls in Afghanistan, 2013

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