

newsletter

Issue 2 | October 2020



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Life-saving services for
women and girls

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Bringing new business
ideas to life

GOOD GOVERNANCE & WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Women leading
the COVID-19 response
in their communities

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

20 years since UNSCR1325

The first issue of our newsletter (April – June) covered our pioneering work during one of the most difficult times for us and the Afghan women we serve. While COVID-19 still heavily impacts our work, we now have a better understanding of this pandemic and the needs of communities in Afghanistan. This second edition of the newsletter, covering August – October, reflects our transit from an immediate rapid response to COVID-19, to a longer-term programmatic focus operating in the peace-development-humanitarian nexus. At this critical time, we worked with the Ministry of Public Health to ensure all COVID-19 hospitals and quarantine centers now have a separate room for women survivors of violence. We listened to our women's rights activists on the ground and our call for ideas supporting community-based women-led COVID-19 related interventions reached 30 out of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. On UNSCR1325, in partnership with UNAMA, we convened a high-level dialogue amongst leading Afghan women, Member States and the United Nations examining what the next 20 years of women, peace, and security in Afghanistan can achieve and how to get there. Our commitment to Afghan women is unwavering and our vision for building a post-COVID-19 peaceful Afghanistan founded on equality and inclusion is stronger than ever.

In solidarity

Aleta Miller

UN Women Representative in Afghanistan





The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the provision of essential services for survivors of violence as resources were diverted to dealing with the health crisis. In this context, we partnered with the Ministry of Public Health to issue a directive instructing all COVID-19 hospitals and quarantine centers to allocate a separate room for survivors referred by women's protection centers. Due to COVID-19, survivors of violence have even more limited opportunities to find safety from violence and seek help from their friends, family and service providers. Our life-saving services in 16 women's protection centers and family guidance centers across Afghanistan reached over 560 women survivors of violence and over 150 children from August to October. Additionally, we partnered with civil society to reach 2598 women and 2136 men with information about women's rights, violence against women and girls and COVID-19.

Ending violence against women and girls

LIFE-SAVING SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NEED

[Read Khatera Akhgar's story - psychologist at a UN Women-supported Women Protection Center that provides life-saving support to survivors of violence.](#)



Young women entrepreneurs at the "Powering Change" Innovation Bootcamp Challenge workshop in Herat

Afghan young women have great ideas for creating change, but they are struggling to find funds, and to access information and networks to get their ideas off the ground. With "Powering Change" we are doing just that while putting Afghanistan on the global map of feminist innovation. Our "Powering Change" network of young Afghan women entrepreneurs and business mentors reached Bamyan, Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat. Here, the entrepreneurs had the chance to learn and expand their skills in business development including how to access finance and fundraise as well as preparing their own business plans. 23 big business ideas, many piloted for the first time, like a driving learning center for women-only in Kabul, a national digital platform connecting women freelancers working on graphic design and coding, one of the first business in the region where handmade leather football balls are made, the first coffee shop in Samangan were selected to receive financial assistance and expert-support to thrive and push women from poverty to power across the country.

[Find out what "Powering Change" means for young women entrepreneurs](#)

Women Economic Empowerment

BRINGING
NEW BUSINESS IDEAS
TO LIFE AND
ENSURING THEY LAST



Good Governance and Women's Political Participation

WOMEN LEADING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

In a nation-wide initiative, UN Women and civil society partners positioned women at the center of the COVID-19 response be it in their homes, in their community, or in their provinces. Covering 30 out of the 34 provinces, UN Women supported community-led initiatives run by women for women to respond to the COVID-19 health crisis. The women-led actions included multiple community level interventions from awareness raising on COVID-19 or distribution of sanitary products to opening digital connection hubs, women-led trainings on how to use technology, or digital platforms where women-run businesses could sell their products online. UN Women Afghanistan also launched a social media campaign - #30DaysofActivism - to further advance women as key responders in the COVID-19 crisis.



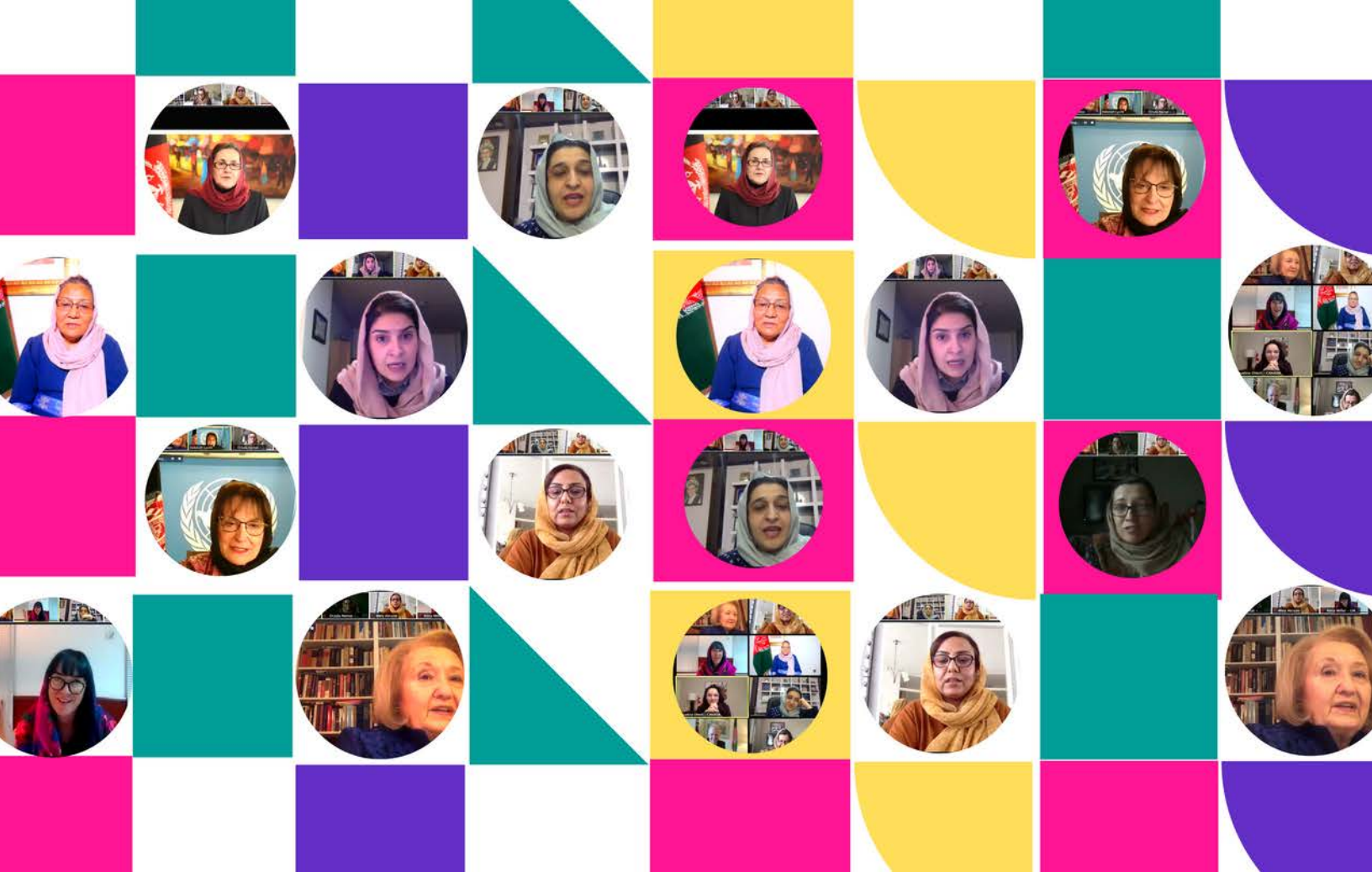
Women, Peace and Security

INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY

21 September marked the International Day of Peace. UN Women partnered with the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) to launch “Women’s Participation in the Afghan Peace Process” - a research-based paper exploring the views of Afghan women on peace, and the limitations that prevent Afghan women’s meaningful participation in peace. The digital event marking the launch of the research paper included interventions from H.E. Rula Ghani - the First Lady of Afghanistan, Dr Orzala Nemat, AREU Director; Dr Habiba Sarabi, member of the Afghan negotiating team; Ingrid Hayden, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and was moderated by Aleta Miller, UN Women Representative in Afghanistan. The event was covered by national and international media including BBC, TOLO news and Etilaat Roz.

[Check out the](#) research paper “Women’s Participation in the Afghan Peace Process”

[Watch](#) the recording of the digital event



2020 marks 20 years since the ground-breaking United Nations Security-Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 resolution was adopted. “Women, Peace and Power”, convened by UNAMA and UN Women on 26 October 2020, saw Afghanistan celebrate the anniversary of this resolution. The event, moderated by Ambassador Melanne Verweir, Director of Georgetown University’s Institute for Women, Peace and Security, featured 13 speakers including H.E. Rula Ghani, the First Lady of Afghanistan; H.E. Hasina Safi Minister of Women’s Affairs; Dr. Habiba Sarabi, Member of the Negotiating Team for Afghanistan; and members of the international community representing Australia, Canada, the Nordic+, and the UK.

Women, Peace and Security

20 YEARS SINCE
UNSCR1325

On 29 October 2020, UN member states commemorated the 20th anniversary of the resolution 1325 during an open debate on women, peace and security. During the open debate, Zarqa Yaftali, Director of Women and Children Legal Research Foundation, briefed the UN Security Council on behalf of civil society in Afghanistan. Her statement left no room for interpretation: “peace cannot come at the cost of women’s rights.” Zahra spoke amongst speakers including the United Nations Secretary-General and the UN Women Executive Director.

[Watch the recording of “Women, Peace, Power in Afghanistan”](#)

[Read Zarqa Yaftali’s statement to the UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, 29 October 2020](#)



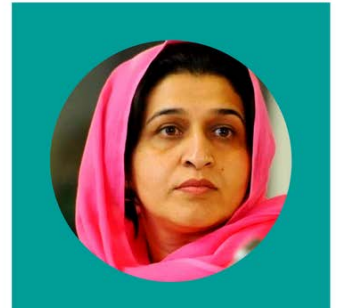
Afghan women are no longer waiting to be included in the peace process. Through their relentless efforts they are now part of the process. They secured their participation in the future of their country. I am so proud of their courage and determination.

H.E. Rula Ghani
First Lady of Afghanistan



We as the women of Afghanistan, we know that we have a say now. We are ready to take the responsibility and we urge the international community to stand with us responsibly, because if we want to keep the gains, we have to be very cautious and we have to be very critical

H.E. Hasina Safi
Acting Minister of Women's Affairs



Women negotiators are not only working on women's issues. We are in every committee, from political, to legal, to minority rights. We are also in the contact group negotiating with the Taliban. This is what we really want - meaningful participation, not just a symbolic presence.

Dr Habiba Sarabi
Member of the negotiating team for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



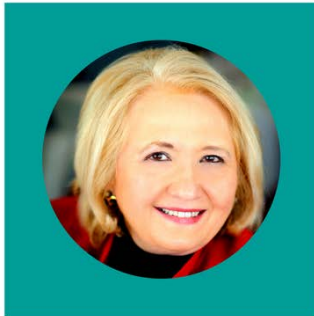
It is vital that women have a voice, a real voice, throughout the peace process and are represented at all levels. We know from experience that when women are part of peace processes, peace agreements are far more durable.

Deborah Lyons
Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan



The well-being of women has everything to say about the well-being of nations. If Afghan women are not in the positions they need to be in, and their rights respected, we can't get where we want to go.

Ambassador Verveer
Director of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace and Security



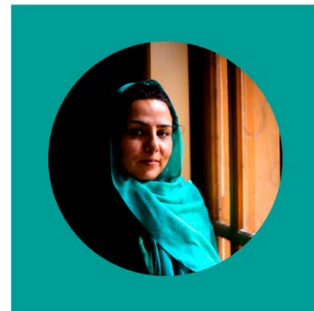
Women are very active leaders and agents for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in their own communities - from Nangarhar to Bamiyan, to Balkh, to Kabul and elsewhere. Women are pioneering in a public role that the Taliban and other forces cannot deny.

Dr Orzala Nemat
Director, Afghan Think Tank Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit



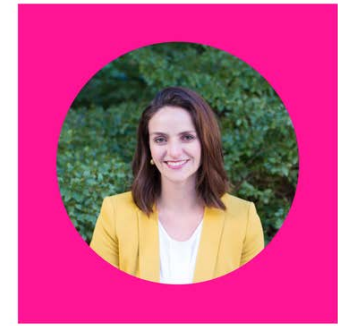
The Taliban should know today's Afghanistan. And the women of Afghanistan want to play their role as responsible citizens for the country. Afghan women do not want to be only the voice of the women of Afghanistan, we want to be the voice of the people of Afghanistan.

Mary Akrami
Director, Afghan Women's Network



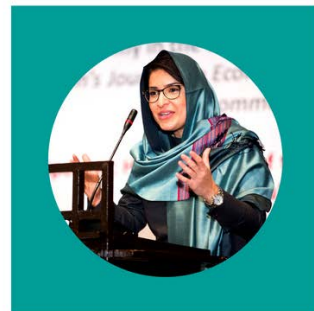
Every place, every issue has its giants. People whose work is so major and has outsized contributions to history and our lineup of speakers is one of giants. Please know that around the world we are so grateful for your perseverance. Canada will continue to stand with you.

Jacqueline O'Neill
Canadian Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security



Placing local communities, particularly women and civil society, at the center of efforts to resolve conflict and build peace requires us to ensure that we promote the participation and prevention pillar of WPS to transform perspectives on women to actors and agents of their own right.

Mariam Safi
Founding Executive Director of the Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies



A peace that excludes half of the country's population will not work or last. The voices of all Afghan women should be involved at all levels and stages of the process to ensure a sustainable peace.

Ian Collard
Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy Kabul



Today, we have the opportunity for peace through the ongoing intra-Afghan peace process [...] If we are so fortunate and insightful to respond to this opportunity, our actions can change trajectories towards peace, our actions can change the future of the nation of Afghanistan.

Aleta Miller
UN Women Representative in Afghanistan



It is vital that more men champion WPS in Afghanistan. It will lead to what we have talked about - engraining in everyday life, in Afghanistan, the principles of WPS to such an extent that no outside force can threaten or take them backwards.

Geoffrey Tooth
Ambassador of Australia to Afghanistan





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