

**WOMEN’S CAMPAIGN INTERNATIONAL  
PRELIMINARY PROGRAM IDEAS REPORT  
AFGHANISTAN**

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## **Summary**

Women's Campaign International (WCI), funded by USAID, will be implementing a program in Afghanistan as it meets WCI's country selection criteria. WCI made this determination by conducting desk research and two assessments, one in Washington, DC, and the other in Afghanistan.

Based on the desk research and the information received during the assessments, WCI has developed 7 programming ideas: 1) Women in Parliament, 2) Connecting Women Leaders 3) Strengthening Skills of Women Provincial Councilors, 4) Engendering Provincial Councilors, 5) Human Rights Training, 6) National Agenda Workshop and 7) Outreach to Women in Villages.

## **Background**

In 2002, WCI was awarded a grant from USAID to increase women's participation in democratic and political processes so they are a part of the decision-making processes that impact their lives. Under this grant, WCI has implemented programs in Tanzania and Namibia and has ongoing programs in Malawi and Ethiopia. The criteria that WCI uses in selecting countries for new programs are:

1. Scheduled elections within 12 months of assessment visit;
2. Articulated governmental interest in women's involvement in political participation;
3. Political parties have shown understanding and commitment to women's participation;
4. Local network of existing, effective NGOs, women's organizations, etc; organizations are present to cooperate in implementing and complement WCI programs;
5. USAID presence in country; and
6. Expressed support for a WCI program by government agencies.

After conducting initial desk research in spring 2005, WCI had narrowed its selection to Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, and Afghanistan. WCI eliminated Lebanon and Egypt primarily due to lack of evidence under criteria number 3, demonstration of political party commitment to women's participation. After an assessment in Washington, DC, and consultations with USAID Afghanistan, WCI strongly considered a pre-election program in Afghanistan that would have the goal of promoting women candidates. However, WCI and USAID determined that a pre-election program would be too risky for women candidates as raising their profile as candidates could have a backlash effect. Therefore, WCI eliminated Afghanistan as a consideration for pre-election program activities; however, WCI will now conduct post-election activities.

## **Methodology**

WCI began its assessment of a potential program in Afghanistan by conducting desk research. Following the desk research, WCI conducted telephonic and email interviews with representatives from international organizations implementing programs in Afghanistan. WCI then conducted an assessment in Washington, DC, in June 2005. Finally, WCI conducted an in-country assessment from April 6 to May 14, 2006. These assessment visits took place in the

capital city of Kabul as well as 4 select provinces of Nangahar, Wardak, Bamiyan and Ghor. The purpose of WCI's assessment was to:

1. Determine current program coverage and gaps in increasing women's participation in political decision making and supporting women candidates;
2. Identify potential program needs in supporting women's participation in political decision making;
3. Obtain an overview of issues/themes of importance to women and women's groups;
4. If training is a need, identify specific and relevant training needs;
5. Identify potential in-country partners, resources persons, consultants and/or hires;
6. Obtain logistics and security advice.

In Afghanistan, WCI met with representatives from organizations working on political infrastructure, civil society, capacity building and gender issues in both Kabul and four select provinces. Government representatives including Governors, Provincial Councilors and provincial administration department staff were met in the provinces. Please see the attached list for the individuals with whom WCI met and Afghanistan Assessment Notes for full details of all these meetings.

## **Findings**

WCI's findings with regard to selection criteria and assessment purposes are as follows.

### ***Selection Criteria***

#### *1. Scheduled elections within 12 months of assessment visit;*

In September 2005 Afghanistan held nationwide elections. Members were elected to the lower house of the Parliament, the Wolesi Jirga as well as to the Provincial Councils in 36 provinces. Sub-provincial district elections were not held because the boundaries of 300 of the 360 districts are in dispute. Members in the upper house of Parliament, the Meshrano Jirga were selected by a combination of appointment by the President and representatives from Provincial and District Councils. Since district council elections were not held, the provincial councils chose 2 members to serve in the Meshrano Jirga, one permanent and one temporary.

#### *2. Articulated governmental interest in women's involvement in political participation;*

Both Parliamentary and Provincial elections had quotas for women's participation. The Wolesi Jirga must be composed of at least 20% women and the Provincial Councils must be at least 30% women. Women took 68 of the 249 seats in the Wolesi Jirga with 19 women winning seats outright above the quota. Women took 121 of 420 seats on the Provincial Councils. Three seats were left open as no women registered to run for the seats.

#### *3. Political parties have shown understanding and commitment to women's participation;*

Political parties are still in the formative stage in Afghanistan. There are many parties tied to influential figures, ethnic groups, geographic location and other factors. Nearly a third of Parliament ran as declared independent candidates. Where political parties are active and viable, women are sought out for participation because of the strong number of seats reserved for them in both Parliament and Provincial Councils.

4. *Local network of existing, effective NGOs, women's organizations, etc; organizations are present to cooperate in implementing and complement WCI programs;*

There is an extensive network of INGOs, and NGOs working on political infrastructure, civic society, and gender mainstreaming at both the national and provincial levels. Please refer to the Afghanistan Assessment Notes for complete details on all of the organizations that were met with. WCI anticipates partnering with organizations in both complementing and implementing its Afghanistan program.

5. *USAID presence in country; and*

USAID is a key international donor in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Their strategic objectives for 2005-2010 are: a thriving economy led by the private sector, a democratic government with broad citizen participation and a better educated and healthier population. WCI programs fit directly with the second strategic objective. While the WCI grant is from Washington-based funding, during the assessment process WCI met several times with local USAID staff at the Kabul Embassy who expressed support for the program.

6. *Expressed support for a WCI program by government agencies.*

WCI met with government representatives at both the national and provincial levels. HE Dr. Masounda Jalal, Minister of Women's Affairs was enthusiastic about a WCI program. Provincial-level officials including Governors, Provincial Councilors, provincial department directors and other government staff offered their support and assistance to the program.

### **Assessment Purpose**

As stated above, the purpose for conducting the assessment was as follows:

1. *Determine current program coverage and gaps in increasing women's participation in political decision making and supporting women candidates*

During the assessment visits in Kabul and provinces, great effort was made to try to determine past programs, programs currently being conducted or to be conducted over the summer and programs planned over the next year. In considering program ideas however, past or future programming should not necessarily preclude WCI from similar areas. While it would certainly not be effective to conduct a duplicate training for example, in many instances it has been reported that training on a topic has been substandard or did not include any gender component. In the case of trainings that organizations say they have scheduled for the future, in many instances organizations put forward long lists of announced programs, never to have most of them occur. An additional complication is that some organizations, such as NDI, currently have much of their provincial programming on hold under pressure from the central government so there is no way to know what and/or when they will conduct their previously announced programming.

While it became immediately obvious that there is a surfeit of players working with women in Parliament, there is still an almost limitless range of needs at the provincial and community levels. Those needs are addressed below under Program Ideas.

2. *Identify potential program needs in supporting women's participation in political decision making*

Program needs are discussed below under Program Ideas.

3. *Obtain an overview of issues/themes of importance to women and women's groups*

In meetings throughout the 4 provinces visited, one issue was a nearly universal theme: girls' education. Both men and women Provincial Councilors, Governors, women leaders, a member of Parliament and religious leaders all raised the lack of access and facilities for education, especially girls' education whenever we posed the general question of needs of women and the community at large in their area. Other issues frequently raised included logistical and resource shortages that prevented effective outreach to constituents in the districts and lack of access and facilities for health care. When interviewees were presented with the question regarding obstacles to more women taking part in decision-making, they responded that, after education, attitudes of family members were the biggest hindrance/help. In one meeting in which approximately 10 women from various ministries were participating, when asked what enabled them to be in the positions that they are, most responded the support of their families.

4. *If training is a need, identify specific and relevant training needs*

Training was often mentioned as a need and is discussed in detail under Program Ideas.

5. *Identify potential in-country partners, resources persons, consultants and/or hires*

A special emphasis was made to identify organizations doing complementary programs as well as local resources for implementation. These are discussed in more detail under Program Ideas.

6. *Obtain logistics and security advice*

General logistics and security information was obtained during provincial assessment visits. More information will be gathered as part of the program design and continue through implementation. Logistics are dependent on location and security is a function of both location and timing. WCI chose four provinces which are considered to be relatively secure at this time: Ghor, Wardak, Bamiyan, and Nangahar. Since the security situation changes on a nearly daily basis in Afghanistan, close attention will be paid to current developments before traveling to provinces.

## **Program Ideas**

As a result of this assessment, WCI has developed 7 programming ideas: 1) Women in Parliament, 2) Connecting Women Leaders 3) Strengthening Skills of Women Provincial Councilors, 4) Engendering Provincial Councilors, 5) Human Rights Training, 6) National Agenda Workshop and 7) Outreach to Women in Villages.

For all programming ideas, the current funding deadline is end of November 2006. However, Ramadan is scheduled to begin approximately 23 September for one month, with Eid al-Fitr observances for approximately a week after that. Most business and government activities are seriously limited during this time. In several of the target provinces, especially Ghor and Bamiyan, winter weather limits mobility by the end of October so the effective period for any program activities there would take place between June and late September 2006. Because of the mild climate, activities in Nangahar would be possible during November if needed.

## ***Women in Parliament***

An early program idea was to work with the women who had been elected to the Afghan Parliament, especially those serving in the lower house, the Wolesi Jirga. Very early in the assessment process it became apparent that a large number of international players were providing training and caucus-building opportunities both in-country and abroad. International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, State University of New York, United Nation Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the United Nations Development Program and others are all involved in various projects with women in Parliament and so this area will not be pursued as a potential program idea.

## ***Connecting Women Leaders to Promote Change***

For many women in positions of leadership in Afghanistan it is a new experience. One important skill that needs to be developed is the strategy of interacting and networking with women at various levels of leadership and identifying an advocacy agenda to promote change. A potential program would involve working vertically with women at various levels of leadership within particular regions from Members of Parliament, Provincial Councilors, down to women's Shuras at the village level. An issue that has been identified as impacting women in a particular province, such as girls' education, can be used as a focal point to convene gatherings and train the women on pertinent skills. These skills could include convening meetings, constituent outreach, lobbying, public speaking and agenda development.

A few limiting factors to this program may be the short time frame available. More significantly, the women Members of Parliament are overwhelmed with requests to participate in trainings both in country and abroad. While this idea may not be possible as a discreet program, the various aspects of connecting different levels of women leaders can be incorporated into other program activities on a more informal basis.

## ***Strengthening the Skills of Women Provincial Councilors***

In speaking with women Provincial Councilors, they often expressed a desire improve their basic governing skills. It was also observed that many of these women would benefit from confidence-building skills such as public speaking and communication skills. In an effort to improve women's participation in political decision-making by developing these skills a training program could include the following topics:

1. Identifying and overcoming barriers to women's leadership and political participation
2. Qualities of an effective leader
3. Identifying and mobilizing potential leaders
4. Public speaking
5. Confidence building
6. Grassroots organizing

While skills' training is vital, such programs can be a bit generic and may be difficult for a person newly in a position of leadership to see immediate application. One strategy can be to use an issue identified as important to women in the province, such as girls' education, as a topic to use as a teaching tool. The topic can be used as the focal legislative/outreach issue. Councilors can be trained on how to articulate their concerns about girls' education, how to reach out to communities to discuss impediments to girls' education, and how to lobby the governor and Members of Parliament for resources to improve girls' access to education in their area.

Training with some of the above topics was observed being conducted in Nangahar province coordinated by Afghan Independent Human Rights Center with trainers from the Afghan Center in Karte Char Kabul. Third country trainers used previously by WCI could also be brought in. The Asia Foundation is scheduled to do an extensive project with women in the provincial Department of Womens Affairs and these women could be included in the program to help develop working relationships between women provincial councilors and women in provincial administration.

### ***Engendering Provincial Councils***

One theme that was consistently emphasized during the assessment visits was that improving women's participation in political decision making involved working with men as well as women. It is crucial that the men and women on the Provincial Councils work together effectively and are cognizant of women's issues and effective participation.

While ARD is scheduled to be doing extensive training for Provincial Councilors in a variety of governance areas (please see Assessment Notes for full details) their program currently has no specific gender component. WCI could complement ARD's work by adding such gender components as gender awareness and gender budgeting to each of their program areas. Excellent programs on such topics have been conducted at both the Ministry and Parliamentary level by such organizations as medica mondiale and GTZ so that curricula and potentially trainers could be sources for this as well.

During a workshop of budgeting skills, WCI could include the skills needed to consider gender issues. This would be effective since it would be incorporated into an existing training on a critical topic and not seen to be a special "women's" training. Gender awareness topics such as domestic violence, forced marriage, child marriage and girls' education and women's rights under Islam could be incorporated into general trainings on constituent outreach and agenda workplans. Again, it would be presented as central to the topic, not a specialized issue.

### ***Human Rights Training***

An area of information that was frequently requested by Provincial Councilors and expressed as a need by others was information on human and women's rights under the Constitution and Islam. WCI is the technical advisor for USAID-grantee Equal Access' program on Human Rights in the Contexts of Islam and Afghanistan. This program will include a grassroots training program on human rights in Islam and community mobilization and will be targeted in the provinces of Bamiyan, Ghor, Nangarhar and Wardak, the same as WCI's target provinces. Men and women Provincial Councilors, provincial administrators, Governors and religious leaders can be invited to participate to increase their knowledge on these topics as well as have an opportunity to continue developing their working relationships during the program.

### ***National Agenda Workshop***

US Congressional-funding recipient IRI will be conducting national agenda workshops with women Members of Parliament in their provinces this summer. This program will involve

women MPs traveling to their provinces and holding workshops to gather constituent input on issues that should be part of women's national agenda. IRI has issued an invitation for women provincial councilors in WCI's four target provinces to participate. WCI could precede this with training on articulating issues, informal networking and lobbying. This would allow women provincial councilors the ability to develop their constituent outreach skills, advance their knowledge of issues on the national level, and provide an opportunity to build their relationships with the women MPs from their area.

### ***Outreach to Women in Villages***

An area that was often a source of frustration for women provincial councilors was their limited access to their constituents in remote districts and villages in their province. Many programs such as NSP and MOWA have created women's groups such as CDCs and Shuras in many villages. Other organizations such as AfghanAid and Aga Khan Development Network are working directly with these women's groups on various community issues. Working together with these organizations, WCI could finance and organize trips by women provincial councilors to visit women's groups in select districts and hold a public meeting on an issue of importance, such as girls' education. I think this should be part of the section on women councilors or on Engendering PC if it will be both men and women.

## Conclusion

I think we need to be a bit more conclusive about what we will be doing. I know that most of it will be fleshed out in the Program Design document but it would be good to put some of it here. Of the 7 proposed program ideas, the first one involving training women in Parliament is not currently being considered due to the large number of organizations already programming in this area. The idea of connecting women leaders can be incorporated into various aspects of the other program ideas. The remaining 5 are all viable and potentially effective programs for increasing women's political decision-making.

While a full development of the program ideas is forthcoming in a program design document, an initial plan is to incorporate key aspects of these program ideas to the extent time, logistics and funding permit. Using as our focal point women Provincial Councilors, we will seek to develop their political decision-making capacity in the holistic context of their present environment. Using the legislative issue of girls' education, which was articulated as a primary concern in all provinces, women councilors will be guided to increased levels of political effectiveness. Through their participation in the National Agenda Project, they will be able to bring the issue of girls' education to policy makers at the national level. Through participation in human rights training at the provincial level they will be able to articulate arguments in favor of girls' education and continue to build relationships with participating provincial leaders. Through an engendering process with their male colleagues on the Council they can build their confidence in working as a legislative team on advancing girls' education, rather than working simply as individual women. And finally, through facilitated visits with women leaders in villages, they can build connections with their constituents and work at the grassroots level to build support for girls' educational access and facilities.

The primary limiting factors are fixed funding and a very limited time frame. Nearly all programs involve partnering with another organization, so WCI's funding can be leveraged in conjunction with partner resources. The date of Ramadan, however is a significant factor which effectively takes 6 weeks off the program timeline. Not all program ideas may be able to be pursued simply from a lack of time for organization and participation. These factors will be taken into consideration when choosing from among the program ideas in the program design plan document. Since these program ideas are very modular and scalable, the potential exists for them to be implemented in additional provinces and at a later time should USAID and/or other funders see a benefit.

## Assessment Meetings

The Afghanistan Assessment Notes report contains details of all meetings conducted in Afghanistan. The following is a list of the persons/organizations met with:

- Kate Howard, APAP
- Dr. Roshanak Wardak, Member of Parliament, Wardak Province
- Major Maureen T. Fry, Ghazni PRT CATB-OIC
- David Salazar, Department of State, Ghazni PRT
- Douglas Grube, ARD
- Rachel Wareham, Gender Mainstreaming, GTZ
- Eric Kite, USAID US Embassy, Kabul
- Kimberly Pease, USAID US Embassy, Kabul
- Mahbouba Seraj, UNIFEM
- Marnie Gustavson, UNIFEM
- Alvah Hanrahan, NDI
- Dr. Atifa Kabul, NDI
- Aziz Rafiee, ACSF
- Partaw Naderi, ACSF
- Rob Varsalone, International Republican Institute
- Najia Haneefi, FES
- Najia Ayubi, IEC
- Tilly Reed, Counterpart
- Ancil Adrien-Paul, medica mondiale
- HE Dr. Massouda Jalal, Minister of Women's Affairs
- Jane Williams-Grube, The Asia Foundation
- Susan Reesor, The Asia Foundation
- Christopher Szecsey, Social Impact
- Shukria Kazimi, AWN
- Rahimullah Rahmati, Director Wardak Department of Religious Affairs
- Wali Hashimi, Afghanistan Rule of Law Project
- Abdul Jabar Naeemi, Governor Wardak Province
- Wardak Provincial Councilors
- Humira Haqbal, Director, Wardak Department of Women's Affairs
- Palwasha Shaheed Kakar, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
- Inge Fryklund, USAID Jalalabad PRT
- Captain Corsten, Civil Affairs Jalalabad PRT
- Kaitlin Schilling, ALP-E
- M.Sarwar Saier, AWN
- Dr. Sheila Barbori, Director, Nangahar DOWA
- Nangahar Provincial Councilors
- Jimmy Wong, UNAMA
- Haji Malik Nasir, Administrator Nangahar Governor's Office

- Musa Sultani, AIHRC
- Mohammad Jawad Hakim, NDI
- Shams Rasikh, NDI
- Kamala Janakiram, UNAMA
- Aaron Tarver, Department of State Bamiyan PRT
- Parween Rahimi, AIHRC
- Bamiyan Provincial Councilors
- Joanna Buckley, Aga Khan Foundation
- Alif Khan, Wadan
- Huidat Lali, Wada
- Sayed Ahmad Fazeel, CCA
- Greg Raikes, UNAMA
- Ghor Provincial Councilors
- Ahad Afzaly, Governor Ghor Province
- Zaharah Madat, Chagcharan Girls' School
- Abdul Halek, Ghor Department of Religious Affairs
- Aktar Mohammad, Ghor Department of Religious Affairs
- Masuma Anwari, Deputy Department Head Ghor DOWA
- Alison Rhind, AfghanAid
- Dainius Baublys, Ghor PRT
- Director, Ghor DOWA
- Feroz Kohi, ACSF
- Gul Ahmad Matush, Sultan Alowadeen Ghuri School
- Ghulam Hazrat, World Vision International
- Bill Cook, Department of State Ghor PRT
- Michael Jones, USAID Ghor PRT
- Bilquees Daud, ARD
- Danna Wright, USAID US Embassy