

Helmand Peace Table

As part of the global campaign for peace (world-wide Women's Peace Tables), Women for Peace and Participation (WPP) recently held a number of peace tables with women in London, Kabul and Helmand – the later proving to be the most successful in terms of interest, participation and outcome. Helmand is one of WPP's target areas for intervention, concerning women and youth peacebuilding projects. Additionally, WPP has helped Helmand's youth in organizing a Youth Peace Shura (council) and women in their struggle to organize themselves through a Women-Peace-Group.



Due the fact that Taliban control most of Helmand province, opportunities for women in the province are ever more squeezing. Saying this, with the help of our volunteers, women continue to organize in groups and utilize this platform for awareness raising about their basic human rights and ways and means to their realization. Women in the group organize meetings and informal gatherings aimed at discussing the challenges they face due to continuous insecurity and lack of opportunities.

The said peace table was organized on the 13th of November 2016 between 10-12 am. 25 women from various backgrounds participated in the event - women who stay at home while others included teachers, nurses and social workers. Our volunteers work in the area engaging with women on individual basis and in smaller groups to discuss individual- specific issues as well as general issues such as girls' education and insecurity. A number of these women could attend the peace table, others could not due to their individual problems on the day as well as due to pressure from their families. Women and peace building is a challenging issue to discuss in war affected communities, where insurgency is still at its peak. Women in the event were told about the many peace tables taking place around the world which made them feel more encouraged and part of an international efforts.



Women raised a number of issues and concerns that not only affect their individual lives but they also see them as a threat for social development of women in general. Women attendees who stay at home and take care of their families raised concern of domestic violence, not only against women but also against children. They also talked about the social and moral rights issue such as access to basic services, which is mostly inaccessible due to lack of these services, insecurity, the conservative nature of Afghan society and lack of financial

means. Early marriages and lack of educational opportunities according to all participants were some of the key factor in hindering women's development in the area. Participants who work as teachers and

medical staff mentioned that they find it very difficult to come out of their homes to go to work. They are being asked by the families to remain absent for a number of days each week in order to lower the risk of being killed, they apply some of their personal tactics to avoid incidents. They also emphasized that the sole reason behind their male members of the family allowing them to work is because they earn livelihood for their respective families.

They recommended to establish a permanent center for women where they can regularly come and meet. Women from the house hold also requested for sessions, such as, life skills and literacy for themselves and their daughters who are not allowed to attend mainstream schools.

Follow-up Actions,

Alongside small group meetings, WPP will continue comprehensive events of the kind. Women find these events and meetings helpful in supporting each other. WPP plans to also connect these women from the grassroots to like-minded women around the world in a safer and cautious manner. The stories of courageous women that emerge during these discussions can be a considerable source of motivation for other women and communities. We plan to document the stories of everyday life of women we engage with and their efforts in pacifying the society; it is therefore vital for women around the globe who face similar challenges in their struggle, to understand and acknowledge the importance of becoming equal part of the society. Depending on the geographic and culture-specific contexts, the form and shape of these challenges might differ but there are major commonalities that we can all build on. We would like to extend our humble request for generating new and continue existing support to Afghan women, especially those whose rights and needs are being ignored and sometimes rejected by the international efforts.