

3PHD-FLAW

Post-Pandemic Peace, Humanitarian, and Development Fund for Local Afghan Women

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations present an opportunity for Canada to strengthen women's participation in the peace process. The meaningful inclusion of women in the peace process is essential for successful negotiations. Moreover, taking such initiative can strengthen Canada's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The Post-Pandemic Peace, Humanitarian, and Development Fund for Local Afghan Women (3PHD-FLAW) ensures the meaningful participation of women and girls in the upcoming intra-Afghan peace process. Over a four-year plan, this initiative will extend the mandate of an existing Canadian-funded Afghan Women's Empowerment Program led by the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC), a humanitarian-development hybrid organization.

The program would be funded by a joint initiative from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Department of National Defense (DND), and the AKFC. A total of \$22 million will be devoted to 3PHD-FLAW. The program has two objectives:

1. To enhance the inclusion of women as decision-makers in the peace process.
2. To increase confidence in building gender inclusion in Afghanistan.

RATIONALE

The upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations present an opportunity for Canada to strengthen women's participation in the peace process. Canada taking a leading role during these negotiations would strengthen its bid for a seat on the UNSC, while simultaneously leveraging an existing Canadian-funded program (set to end in December 2020) on gender equality and capacity building in Afghanistan. The organization implementing this program, the AKFC, has existing local relationships and a unique institutional history of combining development and humanitarian dimensions in their programs. This partnership can be mobilized for the peace process, providing a tangible example of a triple nexus approach to peace, which ensures that the humanitarian and development needs of women in local communities are voiced at the negotiating table. With women already left out of the original phase of the negotiations between the United States (US) and the Taliban, there are anxieties that eighteen years of bolstering women's rights will be washed away. Nevertheless, with the US taking a step out, Canada can take a step in.

EXISTING PROGRAMS

On July 9, 2016, the Government of Canada announced a comprehensive package of \$465 million for security and development support to Afghanistan. The package aimed to assist the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), support the empowerment of women and girls, and to help meet the basic needs of Afghans.¹ In October 2018, Canada committed \$8.4 million over the next five years for the "Women's Voice and Leadership" project, designed to support the empowerment of Afghan women's rights, gender equality, conflict resolution and peacekeeping. These proposals take on a "Women's and Girls' Rights First" approach, as mandated by Canada's Feminist International

Assistance Policy (FIAP), Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), and National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).²

This approach was implemented because the Government of Canada in partnership with the UN, found that increasing women's meaningful participation in peace operations raises the possibility of long-term sustainable peace. Consequently, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has worked with the AKFC to develop the Afghanistan Women's Empowerment Program (AWEP). This program is designed to enhance women's empowerment by increasing the social and economic participation of women in thirty-six districts of Takhar, Baghlan and Bamiyan provinces of Afghanistan.³ Currently, there are 234,094 beneficiaries of the initiatives, including rural women, the staff of the Afghan Government's Departments of Women Affairs (DoWA) and District Governor Offices (DGOs), as well as, religious leaders.⁴ AWEP's main functions are to train women in market-driven vocational skills, business management, and entrepreneurship, to launch community-based savings groups, and to oversee gender-sensitive governance coaching.⁵ The program also aspires to facilitate literacy classes for women in conjunction with Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan).

CW4WAfghan, a not-for-profit organization registered in Canada, maintains that a "literate population with access to viable education and economic opportunities will be Afghanistan's greatest stabilizing force and its best hope for lasting peace."⁶ These provisions are critical in empowering women as they give women increased access to employment opportunities and training in specialized fields like medicine. For instance, the number of trained midwives present at birth has more than tripled in Afghanistan; consequently, maternal mortality rates have decreased from 1,600 deaths for every 100,000 in 2002 to 396 in 2015.⁷ Such skills are of high value in conflict situations and can be used as tools to achieve long-term sustainable peace.

STAKEHOLDERS/PARTNERS

Aga Khan Foundation (AKFC)

- The AKFC aims to increase the social and economic participation of women across the country. This objective aligns with the 3PHD-FLAW program. Since the organization has been running for a long time, there is potential for a partnership.⁸

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

- The UNOCHA established a four-year Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). The program has different arrays of focus, including aid to vulnerable people.⁹

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan)

- This not-for-profit organization has an interest in partnering with 3PHD-FLAW since its objective is to improve Afghan human rights conditions, opportunities to Afghan women, and end women's oppression.¹⁰

United States

- The current administration has committed to reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to under 8,600 in the next 135 days as per its deal with the Taliban. The February 29, 2020 deal

saw the reduction of US troops based on “the Taliban living up to commitments to reduce violence, cut ties with al-Qaida and to fight ISIS.”¹¹ Therefore, to maintain peace and upkeep American interests and safety, it is in the US’s best interest to participate in peace talks with both the Taliban and the Afghan government. As the 3PHD-FLAW program focuses on peacebuilding, the US would be willing to participate in peace talks.

- Benefactors:

- Participating in a process that ensures long-term peace could be advantageous for President Trump in the upcoming presidential elections.

Taliban

- The US and Afghan governments have been skeptical of the Taliban’s trustworthiness in the negotiation process and in maintaining the agreed-upon conclusions of the negotiations.¹² However, by participating in peace talks, the Taliban could gain international legitimacy by conducting itself as a responsible power-sharing partner in a post-settlement Afghanistan. This commitment could also assuage the Afghan government to release the Taliban prisoners, as prescribed by the US-Taliban deal.

- Benefactors:

- According to Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s chief spokesperson, a peace process facilitating the withdrawal of US forces could be framed as a victory against the “arrogant” West.¹³ This perspective is echoed by the Taliban’s political leaders' aims to acquire more legitimacy in power-sharing.¹⁴

- Detractors:

- The Taliban’s senior military commanders do not expect a settlement to arise from negotiations but rather, assume that their campaign will continue until the government collapses and Kabul is occupied.¹⁵

Afghan government

- It would be beneficial for Afghanistan to participate in 3PHD-FLAW as it would likely increase its domestic and international leverage. Hence, reshaping its branding as a state that upkeeps the current international world order. 3PHD-FLAW would likely support the advancement of the nation’s economy and labour sector as more women would be contributing to the economic well-being of the nation. Likewise, if long-term peace was attained and Afghanistan established deeper ties with powerful international actors, additional businesses and firms would likely move to the region.

- Benefactors:

- President Ashraf Ghani could frame participating in 3PHD-FLAW as a political win as it would bring the end of violence and increased political stability. Consequently, also encouraging investment and development in Afghanistan.

- Detractors:
Dr. Abdullah Abdullah's contestation of the electoral results and of Ghani's government could undermine the legitimacy of the ongoing peace process and negatively impact the amount of foreign aid heavily relied upon by the Afghan government.¹⁶

Canada

- Increased partnership with Afghanistan would strengthen Canada's international leverage and diplomatic power, especially with the withdrawal of the US. 3PHD-FLAW would be an opportunity for Canada to take on a more prominent role in the region while simultaneously reinforcing Canada's branding as a human rights champion and leader in peace and security, women's rights, and gender equality. Stable peace in Afghanistan could also help protect Canada's security interests against terrorist threats and encourage Canadian business investments.
 - Benefactors:
Conservative MP Alex Ruff insists Canada can provide the conditions that allow Afghans to solve their own internal security challenges and support a legitimate Afghan government.¹⁷ This indicates potential bi-partisan support for a Canada-supported, gender-inclusive peace process.

Afghan people/women

- Besides contributing to an immediate end to violence, 3PHD-FLAW would bring a gender-sensitive perspective to the peacebuilding process. Therefore, better meeting the needs of local communities and likely easing difficult socio-economic conditions. 3PHD-FLAW is in line with Afghans' willingness for a multi-stakeholder process leading to reconciliation between the Taliban, the Afghan government, and civil society.
 - Benefactors:
Habiba Sarabi, governor of the Bamyán province, Shalah Farid, a lawyer and member of the Afghan Women's Network, Fawzia Kofi, a member of Parliament and women's rights advocate, Fatima Gailani, president of the Afghan Red Crescent Society, and Sharifa Zurmati, advisor to the Minister of Women Affairs.¹⁸

PRE-PROJECT RISK ASSESSMENT

The most significant risks to effective engagement are the lack of process and distrust between the Afghan government, the Afghan people and the relevant stakeholders. These factors mostly related to poor governance, which the 2020 Conflict Diagnostic indicated as a high-risk factor. The worst-case scenario would be an open border with Iran and the ongoing return of Afghan refugees due to COVID-19, therefore, posing significant health and economic risks to the country. How Afghanistan responds to the looming health and economic crisis, the divided political leadership between Ghani and Abdullah, and the upcoming peace process with the Taliban has significant implications for the lack of trust and lack of process.

Further, the diagnostic outlines militarization as a very high-risk factor with a worsening trend, as military aid from the US to Afghanistan has dropped significantly from \$4.8 billion in 2014 to \$0.33 billion in 2019¹⁹. US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, has also recently threatened a \$2 billion slash in funds if President Ghani does not comply with the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners as per the US-Taliban peace agreement.²⁰ The cut to resources may force the Afghan government to concede on pre-concessions for intra-Afghan talks and presents an opportunity for a third party to mitigate concerns regarding inclusive local participation.

Hence, the entry point for intervention is Canada's human development capacity in Afghanistan, since it is the only low-risk factor with a positive trendline in the 2020 diagnostic.²¹ This intervention is vital for realizing the best-case scenario, namely a peace process that gains traction and includes a ceasefire provision. The inclusion of women can strengthen local and international support for the government, offering much-needed legitimacy and a renewed sense of unity to a divided Kabul. A strong voice for women can increase leverage against the Taliban and protect progress made in gender equality. 3PHD-FLAW would also help prevent the worst-case scenario, whereby a fragmented, non-representative government is left to face a united Taliban front.

OPERATIONAL DECISIONS AND MONITORING

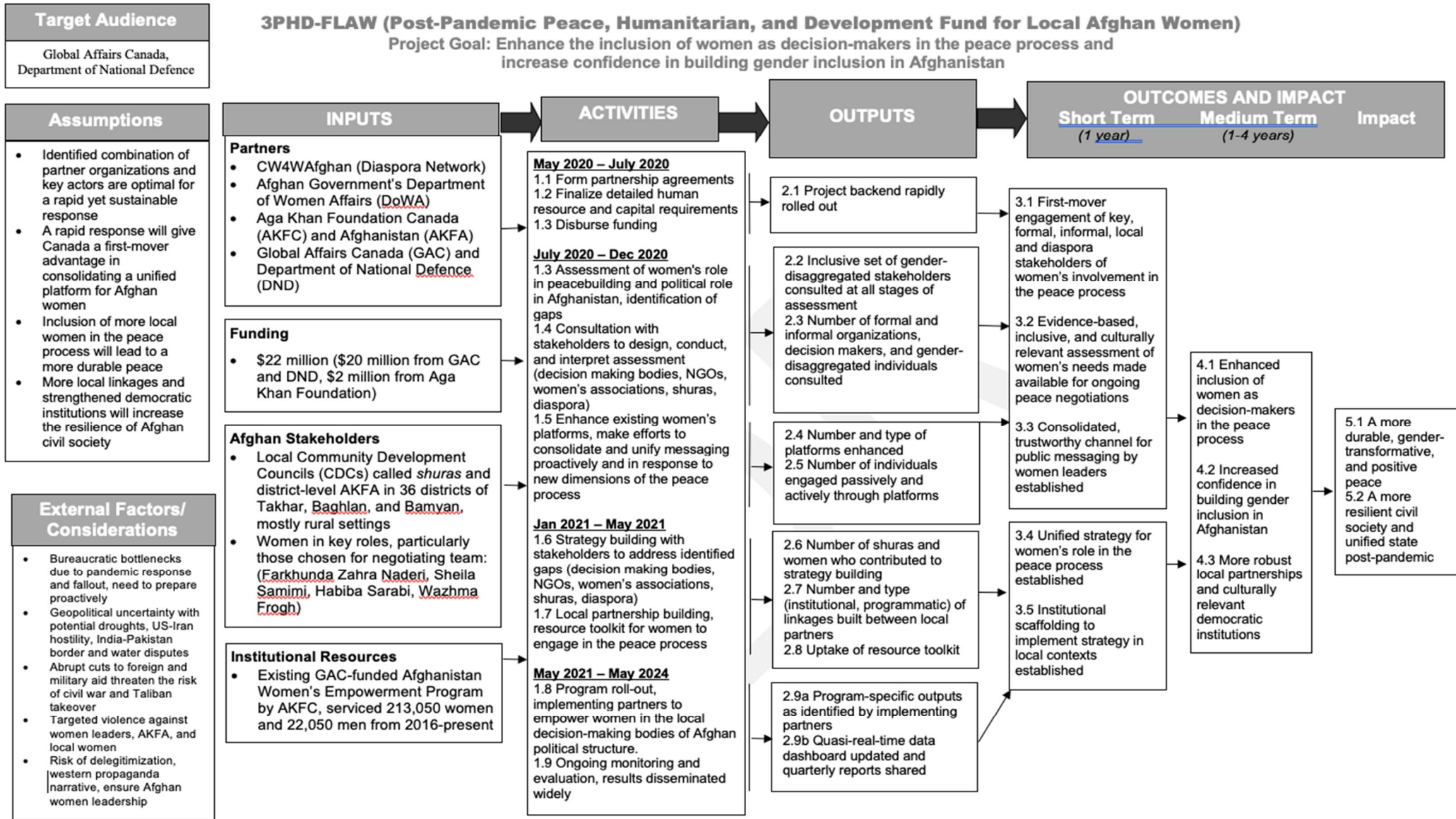
Afghanistan should consider the partnerships required to establish an efficient and sustainable peacekeeping strategy. Partnering with international organizations like the UN would be advantageous. The UN has the international capacity, resources, and leverage to promote such projects and has experience in peacekeeping initiatives regarding women. One possibility could be for Afghanistan to work with UN Women and UN member states like Canada in implementing the Elsie Initiative in the region. The Elsie Initiative is an UN-created project that aims to increase women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping operations.²² Through this project, the UN discovered that the higher the number of women peacekeepers, the easier it is to meet the needs of all members of local communities.

Furthermore, the UN noted that women in patrol units are better able to impact both men and women and that female presence at checkpoints tends to result in less tension.²³ It is likely that if such preventive action is not taken in Afghanistan, conflict may escalate further after negotiations with Taliban and after US withdrawal from the region.

Thus, Afghanistan must work with its partners to establish the 3PHD-FLAW and to launch a global fund, political advocacy, and research, monitoring and evaluation body. A global fund and monitoring system will be required to provide specific technical assistance and training, evaluate the effectiveness of the new framework and stipulate the resources and personnel of the project. The Afghan government should also work with the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in establishing the frameworks of the new initiative and the deployment mechanisms.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: PRELIMINARY LOGIC MODEL



APPENDIX B: FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1: Output Progress of the AWEF (March 2019).

OUTPUT PROGRESS								
INDICATOR	DISAGGREGATION	TARGET	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	TOTAL
# OF EVENTS ON GENDER EQUALITY HELD WITH RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS (BY PROVINCE)	Baghlan Prov.	84	7	21	-	-	-	28
	Bamyan Prov.	48	0	16	-	-	-	16
	Takhar Prov.	91	7	21	-	-	-	28
	Total	223	14	58	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	72
# OF WOMEN-LED ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED BY TRAINING AND FELLOWSHIP (BY PROVINCE)	Baghlan Prov.	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
	Bamyan Prov.	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
	Takhar Prov.	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
	Total	6	0	6	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	6
# OF DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS STAFF TRAINED ON GENDER & DEVELOPMENT (BY PROVINCE)	Baghlan Prov.	10	-	10	-	-	-	10
	Bamyan Prov.	10	-	35	-	-	-	35
	Takhar Prov.	10	-	25	-	-	-	25
	Total	30	0	70	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	70
# OF WOMEN WHO ATTEND LITERACY CLASSES IN TAKHAR	Female, <35	-	-	TBC	-	-	-	TBC
	Female, 35+	-	-	TBC	-	-	-	TBC
	Total	1,800	0	893	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	893
# OF LIBRARIES ESTABLISHED IN TAKHAR	Libraries	40	0	20	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	20
# OF COMMUNITY-BASED SAVINGS MEMBERS GRADUATED (BY SEX)	Female	7,930	-	1,339	-	-	-	1,339
	Male	780	-	91	-	-	-	91
	Total	8,710	0	1,430	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	1,430
# OF WOMEN & MEN TRAINED IN MARKET-DRIVEN VOCATIONAL & PROFESSIONAL TRADES (BY SEX)	Female	160	45	79	-	-	-	124
	Male	20	3	21	-	-	-	24
	Total	180	48	100	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	148
# OF YOUTH SUPPORTED BY INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES (BY SEX)	Female	62	10	29	-	-	-	39
	Male	10	7	2	-	-	-	9
	Total	72	17	31	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	48
# OF WOMEN & MEN TRAINED IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES (BY SEX)	Female	4,320	-	2,190	-	-	-	2,190
	Male	480	-	50	-	-	-	50
	Total	4,800	0	2,240	June 2019	June 2020	Dec 2020	2,240

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