Gender and Economic Choice: What's Old and What's New for Women in Afghanistan

Results from a Rapid Qualitative Assessment in Kabul and Parwan Provinces

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Glossary

jirga	community council; normally an ad-hoc body convened to discuss a specific issue
mahram	male chaperone
shura	community council; more often a standing body with a fixed membership
walwar	bride price

Acronyms

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	The Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CQ	community questionnaire
FGD	focus group discussion
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
LOPF	ladder of power and freedom
MISFA	Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan
NGO	nongovernmental organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OSDR	Organisation for Sustainable Development Research
RQA	rapid qualitative assessment

1. Introduction

The status of women in Afghanistan is one of the lowest in the world in areas ranging from health, deprivation of rights, protection against violence, economic productivity, education and literacy.[1] Currently challenged by severe depletion of intellectual resources due to decades of exclusion and constraints, exposure to violence, and disadvantages across multiple aspects of their lives, their participation in the country's public life is also minimal.[2] If education is one of the keys that can help solve the problems Afghan women currently face, the 2007 Afghanistan Human Development Report[3] paints a bleak picture:

> *Enrollment rates for women at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels are almost half that of men—41.8% for females and 73.7% for males... Afghanistan's adult literacy rate sadly ranks among the lowest in the world... Only 23.5% of the population, 15 and older can read and write. More shocking, only an estimated 12.6% of women are literate, compared to 32.4% of men. The female to male literacy ratio is 0.4 for the entire population, far lower than in neighboring countries such as Iran (0.8) and Pakistan (0.6).*

Afghan women's health status is also considered among the worst in the world, with maternal mortality at 1,800 per 100,000[4] live birth, a fertility rate of 7.3,[5] and female life expectancy at birth at only 43.5 years.[6] These are but a few examples of the challenges Afghan women face—challenges that are to a significant degree rooted in family, culture, tradition and religion. For example, both women and men regularly cite tradition when not allowing women to go to school or to work outside the home, and women's access to economic opportunities is constrained by discriminatory attitudes that restrict their mobility, limit their economic choice and hinder control over assets. However, the harsh realities that women face in Afghanistan should not be viewed in isolation from the country's experience of wars that have shaped women's current position within their homes, their communities and society as a whole.

The Human Development Report[7] noted that despite decades of war and suffering, Afghanistan continues to make progress in achieving its development goals. The Government of Afghanistan (GoA) has made commitments and crafted legislation and policy to uphold and promote gender equality. These include the following: The Constitution of Afghanistan (particularly Articles 22, 44 and 54); acceding to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and drafting and implementing the Afghanistan Compact, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan. However, despite these measures and commitments, notions of women's second class status remain entrenched and can continue to pose a barrier to change. Developments such as parliament's passage of the highly regressive Shia Personal Status Law in 2009 also suggest that even these fragile gains are reversible.

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1 MOWA and UNIFEM, "Women and Men in Afghanistan: Baseline Statistics on Gender" (Kabul: Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008).

2 Government of Afghanistan, "National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan 2008-18" (Kabul: Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2008).

3 Center for Policy and Human Development/United Nations Development Programme, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007" (Islamabad: Army Press, 2007), 24.

4 UNDP, *Power, Voices and Rights; A Turning Point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific 2000-2005 figure from Table 6: Inequalities* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2010), 211.

5 *Power, Voices and Rights,* 207.

6 *Power, Voices and Rights,* 210.

7 "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007," 3.

One of the themes that emerged in a conference that tried to understand the gender dynamics in Afghanistan and Afghan women's role in their society was that gender policies have always been part of a larger debate between traditionalist and modernist forces in Afghanistan.[8] The same conference noted that recent Afghan history recorded this pattern:

> *...beginning with King Amanullah (1919-1929), continuing with the reign of King Zahir Shah (1933-1973); Daoud's presidency after the coup d'état (1973-1978); the Marxist regime (1978-1989); the Mujahideen resistance movement (1979-1994); and the Taliban regime (1994-2001).*

In this trend, efforts to support and emancipate women have often been led by male political leaders as a component of the state's modernisation policy and have been challenged and at times reversed by the conservative beliefs of religious leaders, the rural population, and more recently by organised religious movements which have gained control of the apparatus of state.[9] In recent years, women's role in the public sphere has thus been both strengthened and barred through legislative reforms. The past 30 years of war and political upheavals have also been particularly harsh on women and girls. The societal changes resulting from both prolonged exposure to conflict and instability and the emergence of radical religious ideologies as a political force have significantly impacted on religious and cultural practices and attitudes in a way that disproportionately affects women.[10]

As Afghanistan enters what is supposed to be a post-conflict transition period, the need to understand the kinds of changes women and men of all ages have experienced in recent decades is thus imperative. As the country's economy changes and as connectivity rises, it is especially important to look into the gender dimensions that surround economic decision-making. Are they changing, and if so, how? In asking this question, it is also important to take into account certain factors that can contribute to change, such as access to markets and areas of production, schools at all levels, and long-term development initiatives like the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) that involve women's participation.

In response to these questions, AREU conducted a rapid qualitative assessment (RQA) in cooperation with the World Bank, which eventually formed part of the basis for the latter's 2012 World Development Report.[11] Covering two rural and urban communities in Kabul (Shirabad Ulya and Boyina Bagh) and Parwan (Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da) and using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, it examined: 1) women's and men's subjective views of and experiences in making key economic decisions, such as how to make a living and how to build and protect major assets; and 2) whether and how the gender norms surrounding these choices are shifting as educational opportunities expand.[12] In the process of delving into these research objectives, this study has also

8 "Transition Within Tradition: Restoring Women's Participation in Afghanistan" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Kennedy School Women and Public Policy Programme, 2001).

9 It is also important to note that in addition to the dynamics of tradition and modernity, efforts at extending women's rights have also tied into conflicts over the balance between the reach of the central state, and the autonomy of its rural periphery. See Deniz Kandiyoti, "Old Dilemmas or New Challenges? The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan," *Development and Change* 38, no. 2 (2007): 169-99.

10 Kandiyoti, "Old Dilemmas or New Challenges?"

11 *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011) http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1315936222006/Complete-Report.pdf (accessed 19 January 2012).

12 The RQA dovetails with AREU's study funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

grappled with concepts of gender power relations and social norms as manifested in the Afghan case. Is there an evidence of shifting gender norms and how may those shifts be affecting the economic options and decisions of women and men in different roles as individuals, members of households, workers, and citizens?

A main tool for analysis in this study has been the fictional "ladder of power of freedom" (LOPF) which participants in each study community were asked to construct. In line with parallel World Bank studies in other countries, women and men in all study areas were asked to place a set number of representative women and men in their communities on different steps of the LOPF, with the most powerful at the top and the least at the bottom.[13]

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows: Section 2 outlines the study's methodology and the socio-economic context of each study community. Section 3 explores the dynamics of the LOPF in each community, looking at women's place relative to men as well as how people move up—and down—the ladder. In light of these findings, Section 4 examines questions of marriage and family formation, Section 5 focuses on access to and desires for education, and Section 6 explores perceptions of women's and men's economic roles, and the kinds of economic opportunities available to each. Section 7 outlines the study's key findings, and the Annex contains the study's data in table format.

on women's participation in development initiatives. This project explores women's participation in the NSP and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), examining the effects these forms of participation are having on gender roles and relations within the family and the local community. For more information, see Chona Echavez, "Does Women's Participation in the National Solidarity Programme Make a Difference in their Lives? A Case Study in Balkh Province" (Kabul: AREU, 2012); Sogol Zand, "The Impact of Microfinance Programmes on Women's Lives: A Case Study in Parwan Province" (Kabul: AREU, 2010); Chona Echavez, "Does Women's Participation in the National Solidarity Programme Make a Difference in their Lives? A Case Study in Parwan Province" (Kabul: AREU, 2010); and Sogol Zand, "The Impact of Microfinance Programmes on Women's Lives: A Case Study in Kabul Province" (Kabul: AREU, 2011).

13 For more information, see "Women's pathways to empowerment: Do all roads lead to Rome?" in *World Development Report 2012*, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2012/Resources/7778105-1299699968583/7786210-1316090663409/Spread-1.pdf (accessed 19 January 2012).

2. Methodology and Study Contexts

This study focused on a total of four communities—one rural and one urban—in both Kabul (Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya) and Parwan (Naw Da and Kart-i-Bakheter) provinces. For selection criteria in each case see Table 1 below.

Table 1. Provinces and communities covered in the RQA study and selection criteria

Province	*Rural (is located quite a distance from schools, market and areas of production, e.g. factories), residents have a relatively low level of education.*	*Urban (is located near schools , market and areas of production, e.g. factory), residents have a relatively higher level of education (especially Kart-i-Bakheter)*
Parwan	Naw Da (NSP implemented just recently)	Kart-i-Bakheter (NSP implemented in 2006)
Kabul	Boyina Bagh (NSP implemented in 2006)	Shirabad Ulya (NSP implemented just recently)

The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, with focus group discussions (FGDs) involving male and female adults and young people as the main qualitative tool. For the quantitative method, a community questionnaire was employed, as well as supplementary data gleaned from the FGDs. Fieldwork for this study lasted for a month and involved two teams, one working in each province. Debriefing sessions were conducted after the completion of fieldwork in each area, followed by a series of exchanges and meetings with the teams to clarify points reflected in the transcripts as well as the contextual underpinnings of answers given.

Wherever possible, team members attempted to cover all parts of the questionnaires and interview guides with participants. However, people were reluctant to answer questions regarding family issues, specifically about living arrangements, decisions about how many children to have, use of family planning, causes of disagreements, and divorce. A summary of activities conducted with study participants in all four areas is presented in Annex Table 1.

Characteristics of informants and participants

A total of 162 females and males participated in the study, comprising 91 adults over 25 and 71 youths aged 18-25 (see Annex Table 2). Forty-eight percent (77 people) of participants were female. Overall, the number of participants from the two rural communities was slightly greater than that from the urban communities.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the adult participants are shown in Annex Table 3. The majority were in their early 30s and late 40s. All of them were married with 4-6 children. Although as a group, the majority of these participants had not been able to go to school, this was disproportionately the case with female adults, 86 percent of which had no formal education. By contrast, 30 percent of the male adults had reached 10-12th grade level.

The profile of the younger participants is presented in Annex Table 4. The majority were between 18 and 21, and were single. As with the adult participants, a greater number of female than male youths had not gone to school—around 76 percent compared to 29 percent (several male youths had by contrast reached 10-12th grade level). In addition,

the majority of this group were childless, although several young women already had between four and six children.

2.1 The study context

Kabul Province

Boyina Bagh

Boyina Bagh is a community in Kalakan District, Kabul Province. The area is four kilometers away from the district centre where most government offices are located. At present, the village has approximately 600 residents, the majority of whom are Tajiks. Comparing the situation ten years ago, the community questionnaire (CQ) informants reported that the community had become more prosperous, with a ten percent decrease in the number of poor people.

Struggling with the legacies of prolonged conflict, the area around Boyina Bagh still has a weak local market. The upheavals prior to 2001 had made it impossible for people there to produce beyond subsistence levels. Although the situation has improved over the past ten years, people there still have to go to other villages or to the district centre to purchase goods.

The availability of work for both men and women in both private and public arenas remains virtually nil. However, women and men can now find some work in private companies as long as they have friends and relatives to assist their entry. The CQ informants claimed that there were now women in their community who were engaged in income-generating activities. In the past, women did not or were not allowed to work outside the home due to security fears as well the lack of job opportunities. For women, access to the public sector is now limited not so much by security or cultural constraints—both of which have lessened in significance—as it is by of their low education levels and the lack of available jobs.

Box 1: Without peace, there can never be development

Malik Sahib [the village head] led a group of villagers here in Boyina Bagh to participate in a Jihad. The Jihad cost the lives of 76 people from a neighboring community. Enmity surged between the families in the two communities. This caused mobility problems for all residents in the area. In 2007, a member of parliament from Kalakan District, Mohammad Dawood Kalakani, mediated for the feuding villages. He called for a shura [council] among the villagers in order to solve the existing violent conflict. When the villagers convened, they agreed to bury the past and live together as brothers, sisters and friends, accepting that the casualties of the conflict are with Allah in Heaven. In addition, those who were directly involved in the conflict were asked to forget what they did at that time.

Da'wud, 45, CQ Informant, Boyina Bagh

The coming together of the villagers, celebrated with a ceremony of peace, was considered a historic event. People in the area found it a significant contributor to the present and possibly future peace conditions in the community. The outcomes of the *shura* were described as follows: 1) people no longer live in fear and live more happily; 2) everyone can move freely outside the community and visit other villages, including those that they were once in conflict with, women can visit their relatives and parents who are living in another community; 3) there are intermarriages of people from the two areas; and 4) girls and young women are now allowed to go to school.

The village is largely bereft of services, lacking a clinic, electricity, piped water, a public standpipe, a public sewage system and a bus service. The only school in the community is the newly-opened girl's school, which runs up to grade 4. Although most school-age children now attend primary school, the number of enrolees in secondary schools is less than half of the number based on their age and at what educational level they should be. Boys and girls go to separate schools. Ten years ago, the village's only source of information was the national radio station. At present, the community has access to a local newspaper and national television stations. The CQ informants were able to enumerate three associations present in the community.

As stated earlier, the community has been torn by violent conflicts. Box 1 presents one episode that was resolved through mediation. At present, there is no conflict of any kind within Boyina Bagh or with other places. Within the community, meetings to mediate and resolve disputes do take place, but are only attended by a small proportion of the community and involve no women For the past ten years, Boyina Bagh has had an elected leader, and currently has a *shura* (community council) charged with looking after the area's welfare. However, the community has never had a female leader, and all members of the *shura* are men. They do have a separate *shura* for women, which has been active during the NSP implementation. However, it was noted that the women's CDC and the projects it implemented had led to some changes in women's lives (see Box 2).

Box 2: The women's shura and NSP beneficiaries: Spaces and avenues for women to share and learn

Under the women's *shura*, tailoring and literacy courses were organised for women in the village. Informants raised some issues regarding transparency and accountability with project money, while some pointed out that they had gained little from the tailoring course it organised since the teacher was not good. However, in spite of these misgivings, they also noted some changes that had happened in the lives of those who attended the courses as well as those women who were elected as members of the women's *shura*.

In an FGD conducted with NSP course beneficiaries, Razeya, a 17-year-old Tajik housewife, reflected on the skills she had learned as well as her interaction with other women in the community after attending the tailoring course:

> *It may not have had an impact on the others but it was good for me because now I can sew my clothes in my house...Now, we can share our experience with other women. Like, yesterday, someone came to our house and told me that she cut a dress and was asking for guidance on how to proceed. Now, I also go to my neighbour's house and we exchange information about our day-to-day lives. Before, we never had this interaction.*

Razeya's view was shared by older women who were either project beneficiaries or members of the women's *shura*. This view is summed up in a quote from Gul Nissa, a 35-year-old illiterate Tajik housewife, in an FGD for beneficiaries.

> *It did not bring big changes but we have made some contacts that we did not have before. I found more courage to talk with people from inside and outside of our community. It is courage and confidence that we gained.*

Although little change was observed in their income-earning ability, the courage and confidence they gained in meeting women from outside the community and the fellowship they felt with women within it could lead to an increased sense of solidarity to do things together as a group for the good of the wider community.

Shirabad Ulya

Until four years ago, there was some confusion over which district Shirabad Ulya actually belonged to, which may account for why its needs had received scant attention in previous years. The community is composed of 60 percent Tajiks, 35 percent Pashtuns, and five percent of other ethnic groups. The CQ informants reported a ten percent increase in the number of poor people compared to ten years ago. At present, 60 percent of its population of 2,500 remain in poverty. The same informant explained that despite the presence of better amenities in their area, such as the installation of water pipes in 2007, supply has been unable to keep up with the speed of population growth and resources remain scarce.

Unlike its rural counterpart Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya has its own local market located about 1.5 kilometres from the centre of the community. Although the economic situation in the area remains poor, the local market has become more active over the past decade.

The CQ informants were confident in saying that, at present, both women and men can work in private and public companies if assisted by friends, relatives or professional employment agencies. This was not the case ten years ago. The informants noted that ten years ago, men from the community were never hired by private institutions because of their lack of skills and the preference of private company owners to hire their own relatives, and could not enter the public sector because the government was unstable. As for women, working outside the house was not an option since the Taliban regime prohibited them from engaging in paid work.

Although the CQ informants explained that women can now find work outside the home, details about the types of work available still demonstrated the disadvantaged position of women compared to men. The CQ informants said that women did not work in factories because the tasks are physically laborious, and most factories prefer other nationalities such as Indians and Pakistanis for higher-paying positions because of their technical knowledge. Other factors raised by informants that hindered women's participation in the labour force compared to men included women's low educational attainment, the distance of government and other offices from their community, and the lack of relatives to vouch for women seeking employment.

In terms of social services, Shirabad Ulya is better off than Boyina Bagh. While it is about the same distance from the district centre, it has much better access to reliable transport services. The whole community has access to electricity, while pipe-borne water is available to about half of the residents and there are communal water sources for those who do not have faucets in their homes. That said, there are very few reliable sources of clean drinking water. People in the community now have access to national television stations as well as radio broadcasts and newspapers.

However, the community is similar to Boyina Bagh in its lack of schools, health centres, and a public sewage system. Noteworthy though is that even with schools 6.5 kilometers away, this distance seems negligible; most school-age children attend school, and half of their number are in secondary school. Boys and girls go to separate schools. Shirabad Ulya is now reportedly peaceful, with no friction between the community's ethnic groups or disputes or disagreements with other areas.

Currently, there are three associations present in the community. Like those in Boyina Bagh, none of these organisations are relevant to women, but unlike those in Boyina Bagh, these organisations do not interact on a regular basis with organisations outside the community.

Box 3: Getting an education: The negative result as perceived by families

At the beginning of the Karzai administration, Shirabad Ulya experienced what could be called a backlash against sending girls and young women to school. An educated, young woman got married to a man without asking her family's permission. Disgusted, the woman's father wrote to the government about what his daughter did. He insisted that the family members would not accept the marriage.

A *jirga* (ad-hoc council) was called together with the woman and the man's parents. They discussed and agreed that the boy should provide the girl 300,000 Afs and a payment of gold for the marriage to be accepted.

This event had an impact on women's access to education, discouraging families from sending their daughters to school. The villagers thought that women who got educated would decide to marry on their own without consulting the parents and the rest of their families. Furthermore, it remains established practice that parents are the one who decide when and whom to marry. For a long time, girls were not allowed to go to school.

In the past year, the elders of the community have been gathering and conducting organised meetings to resolve conflicts in the community. None of this would have happened ten years ago. While attendance was higher than in Boyina Bagh, the gatherings remained exclusively male affairs. Shirabad Ulya now has an elected leader and a *shura*. Like Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya has a separate *shura* for women, but has never had elected female leaders.

Parwan Province

Kart-i-Bakheter

The land of Kart-i-Bakheter used to be government estate. In 1979, it was turned into a residential area to house government employees. The village, at present, has a population of 660 people, predominantly Tajiks. Kart-i-Bakheter is relatively near schools, markets and areas of production such as factories, and residents have relatively high levels of education compared to neighbouring communities. It has a good road network and is close to the district centre and the main highway to Kabul. The population of Parwan Province as a whole has access to good education facilities and benefits from Kabul's growing network of higher education institutions.

The CQ informants of Kart-i-Bakheter confirmed that there had been progress in their community over the past ten years, with the estimated number of poorer inhabitants falling from 30 percent to ten percent. This was attributed to better governance, the collapse of the Taliban regime, and the return of people who migrated to other places to escape it. Returnees reportedly brought with them new skills, ideas and knowledge, making a major contribution to Kart-i-Bakheter's recovery and prosperity.

Like the Kabul communities, development in the area was slow compared to other communities in Parwan. However, it appears that apart from being more active compared to the situation ten years ago, the community's local market has improved more than that in either Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya. This is largely due to a stable security situation and population growth following the return of migrants. Open daily, it has the goods to meet households' daily needs.

Box 4: A return to tomorrow

Returning migrants brought different ideas about women's rights and value of education back to Kart-i-Bakheter, reportedly contributing to an increase in the mobility and decision-making capacities of women. People who migrated were exposed to more liberal and progressive ideas compared with those who stayed behind. Younger couples are now more open to practicing equality in their relationships; women now are no longer confined to household work and men are now helping with the household chores as well.

> *...Through the experience of migration, they saw different cultures and different ideas with regard to women...Our people saw in Iran and Pakistan that the girls can study in school and in universities and eventually they can also go to offices to work. Now in our district, women can study in schools and in universities. They can go to offices to work. Our people know that the community cannot improve without women's participation.*
>
> Jalil, Deputy District Governor [Parwan Province]

There has also been an improvement in the employment scenario in the community. Both women and men now have better chances of working in private and public institutions compared to ten years ago, as long as they have friends and relatives to facilitate their entry. This change has been accompanied by an increase in the number of women and even young girls working outside the home, with tradition no longer preventing women from getting paid work. Still, only a few people have jobs or are engaged in paid work due to limited work opportunities both in the public and the private sectors.

Kart-i-Bakheter is the only community in this study to have a relatively reliable sewage system. It is also better off than the two Kabul communities in terms of education services and access to information. The community has a government-run primary school and a lower secondary school. All children of primary school age and most of the children of secondary school age are in school. There are separate schools for boys and girls. In terms of access to information, the community now has access to both local and national radio stations, national newspapers, and national television stations, as well as producing its own bulletin.

However, there is still no bus service to the district centre two kilometres away, and only a few houses have access to unreliable grid electricity. The community has no piped water and very few standpipes, and people still rely on the nearby canal as a source of drinking water. In addition, there are no private or public health centres. Community relations are reportedly harmonious, a fact attributed to the high literacy of its residents. The area also apparently has no history or incidents of conflicts with other communities.

The number of organised *shura* meetings in the village has also increased in the past ten years. The CQ informants claimed that 80 percent of the population have attended such meetings. Like Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya, all of those who attend are male residents of the area. Kart-i-Bakheter has always had an elected community leader, although never a female one. Similar to Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya, it now has separate *shuras* for women and men.

Naw Da

Naw Da is a rural community located in a wide stretch of mountain and rocky desert, and quarrying stones in the mountains is the most common work of the people in this community.

CQ informants offered conflicting assessments of Naw Da's prosperity First, they explained that Naw Da is less prosperous than it was ten years ago, yet when asked about how the percentage of poor people in the community had changed in the same period, they said that there had been a slight decrease (from 100 percent to 90 percent). Naw Da is the least prosperous of the four study communities. There are no jobs available for its residents and 85 percent of the population are illiterate. The area was badly damaged during fighting in the Taliban period, and while the change of regime in 2001 has signalled a time of community reconstruction, change and transformation have been neither quick nor easy.

Naw Da does not have its own local market. To obtain household goods, residents have to go to Charikar City, six kilometres away. People complained about the high prices of goods in the city's markets, as well as the cost of actually getting there, which could be as much as 30 Afs (a little under US$1). However, the city at least has a more active market going on than during the Taliban period, when it was reportedly almost empty.

Public and private sector job opportunities remain largely absent, with no improvement over the past decade, a problem CQ informants blamed on both the Taliban authorities and the present government. Without education, it is reportedly impossible for community members to find any kind of government employment. Women in Naw Da do not engage in paid work. Even if cultural perceptions in this regard have changed over the past ten years, there remain no job opportunities that would allow women to do so.

Further aggravating the lack of economic activities in the community is the lack of basic social services. Residents have to go to Charikar to access clinics and other services, and even public transportation there is unreliable. The village has a government-run lower secondary school, but fewer than half of school-age children attend. Naw Da is different from the other study communities in that the school has a mixed intake of both boys and girls. The area has six mosques, but no public or private health centre, and no electricity. The community also has no access to any form of information via the media, and information comes mostly from cellphones owned by around half the population.

Naw Da also has a major water supply problem. With no piping system or any community standpipes for water, people depend on streams, water holes, and ponds for all their water needs, including drinking water. Even these sources are only available three to four months a year. For the rest of the year, they rely on the rain or fetch water from springs located up to one kilometre from the village—a task given to women and children that can occupy almost six hours of their day.

The residents of Naw Da are mostly Sunni Mazhab Tajiks. The CQ informants claimed that there is no distinct division in ethnicity and religion within the community, though tensions do sometimes occur. They also mentioned that Naw Da residents run into sometimes violent disputes over water with people from nearby villages.

There were organised meetings in the area in the past year which they did not have ten years ago. Like all the other communities included in this study, all the attendees of these meetings are men. What is distinct in Naw Da is that only members of the different *shuras* of each mosque had joined these meetings. These people were considered as the representatives and the meetings were not intended for all the residents of the entire place. *Shura* meetings in Naw Da are also only held when there is a need for it.

At present, there are no groups or organisations in the village apart from *shuras* in each of the mosques. Nevertheless, the area now has an elected leader, which they did not have ten years ago. As in the other study communities, there are no women leaders in Naw Da, a fact CQ informants attributed to women's lack of education.

3. Power and Freedom

This section tackles the following: how free time is spent, description of the steps of the ladder of power and freedom (LOPF) and the factors leading to and impacts of domestic violence.

3.1 How free time is spent: Young and adult men and women

Evidence across all study communities suggests that women and men spend their free time differently; in all instances, women were limited in how they spent their leisure time. The female adults and youths from the two Kabul communities (Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya) stated that women were limited in terms of both mobility and money. The only places they went to spend their free time were their neighbours' or relatives' houses, and the only thing they did there was exchange stories with each other. Meanwhile, the male adults and youths from these two communities explained that they either do nothing or go somewhere else during their free time. The male adults from Shirabad Ulya reported spending their free time assisting their children with schoolwork or helping their sons attend to their shops. Ultimately, all male participants from these two communities claimed never to spend money during their free time, and male adults from Boyina Bagh even pointed out that leisure time is not a major part of life in their community.

The female participants from the two Parwan communities (Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da) were even more limited, devoting what little free time they had to completing household chores. The account of a 28-year-old female adult from Kart-i-Bakheter encapsulates the sentiments of other women in her community:

> *I am disappointed about having no free time because I am busy with my household chores and also have no money. If I had money then I would not have to look in my husband's pocket for it and I could solve my problems. And if I were educated, I could have got a job.*
>
> Aabirah, female adult, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *In our free time, we arrange the kitchen and keep busy with household chores.*
>
> All female youth, Naw Da

Male adults and youths in these communities had relatively greater independence on how to spend their free time, but in most instances, they did nothing with it.

3.2 Steps on the ladder of power and freedom

As mentioned in Section 2, participants in all four study communities were asked to place both men and women in their respective communities on differing steps of a LOPF. In doing so, different communities ended up constructing slightly different LOPFs: participants from Boyina Bagh created a three-step LOPF, while the two urban communities of Shirabad Ulya and Kart-i-Bakheter created a four-step LOPF. By contrast, Naw Da came up with only a two-step ladder.

Given the differences in the number of steps of each LOPF, analysis was done in three stages. First, the attributes of the individuals at the bottom and the top levels in all areas were compared and contrasted. Second, since the two urban communities of each province created a four-step LOPF, the steps in between the bottom and the top steps were compared. Finally, the middle step on Boyina Bagh's LOPF was addressed in its own right.

Top step: Mobile, decision-makers, and income earners

The women and men composing the top levels of the LOPF created by each community had similar characteristics: 1) they were not restricted in their mobility; 2) they were decision-makers; 3) they were earning an income; and 4) they came from wealthy families. Of all these characteristics, mobility—the ability to move around both inside and outside their areas—was the ultimate indicator of their placement on this rung of the ladder.

The value given to mobility is understandable, especially among women. Most female adult participants in all of the communities recalled their experiences during the Taliban regime, when they were prohibited from leaving their houses. Local traditions maintained in each community mean that many women are still largely confined to their homes. For men, mobility is highly valued since it affords them the opportunity to find work and build networks. As in any patriarchal society, men in the study communities were generally still attached to the notion that men have the greatest, if not the sole, responsibility of providing for the family's needs. In addition, men were also socialised to build networks with other community members, demonstrated by the numerous friends possessed by men at the top of the LOPF in both Kabul study communities.

Given that mobility allows men to look for jobs and socialise with other community members, mobility for women might appear to make them almost equal with men. However, this is not to say that mobility allows women to do and attain the same things that men can.

Whether women at the top of the LOPF were engaged in paid work or not differed in each of the four areas. Female adults in Boyina Bagh said that only widowed women had work, while the male adults said that the only women they knew in their area who were earning were female teachers. Female adults from Shirabad Ulya did not mention that women at this level earned their own income, while all the adult participants from Kart-i-Bakheter explained that both men and women at the top step of the LOPF in their area were earning well. Finally, female adults from Naw Da said that due to the lack of opportunities in their community, women had no work no matter where they stood on the LOPF.

As for men, male adults in Shirabad Ulya said that men on the top level were traders or occupied high government positions. They also included male elders on this step even if they did not have jobs, since they still wielded significant decision-making power. By contrast, male adults from Naw Da claimed that even men on top of the LOPF in their area were limited to working in the stone mines.

Taken at face value, the narratives of all adults in all study communities claimed that women and men on the top rung of the ladder had control over the money they earned. Examining things more closely however, it appears that in practice this generalisation only applied to men, with women subject to specifications or conditions about what they could purchase with their own money.

Female adults from the two Kabul communities said that women could spend their own money on things that were legal and not against their culture (Boyina Bagh), and personal belongings such as clothes and jewellery (Shirabad Ulya). While women in the Parwan communities initially affirmed the general view that women on the top step could spend their money in any way they wanted, the statement below conveys the opposite:

> *Women are able to buy some things which are common in the family for women like clothes, shoes and some gold, but not big things like cars, houses or others items. For those, they need to ask permission from their husbands.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

Due to the relatively poor economic conditions across study communities, savings were apparently a rarity. In Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya, only men were reported to have some amounts saved; none of the participants from Naw Da were able to say if the women and men at the top of the LOPF had any savings; while adults from Kart-i-Bakheter seemed to imply that women and men at the top rung could save whatever they wanted because they had control over their money.

Perhaps particularly significant was the lack of correlation between education levels and placement on the top step of the LOPF among both men and women. Only the two Kabul villages made specific reference to the educational attainment of those on the top level of their respective LOPFs. Within and between these two areas, the educational attainment of the women and men differed. Female adults from Boyina Bagh explained that none of the women on any of the rungs of the ladder had any education. On the other hand, male adults said that men on the top step had the highest educational attainment in their community. In Shirabad Ulya, female adults said that women at the top level of the LOPF were able to select the universities they wanted to go to earn a bachelor's degree. Conversely, men who had reached only the 11th grade were classified as on the top rung.

In summary, the main characteristics of men who are on this level of the LOPF are that they are mobile; they earn a living; and have full control over their money. In comparison, while the women on this rung are mobile, they may or may not be earning money on their own, and if earning, they are limited to buying only those items that are not in conflict with what is culturally acceptable (i.e. nothing beyond jewellery and personal effects).

Bottom step: No decision-making power, no income, very limited mobility

Adults from all study communities described women and men at the bottom level of the LOPF as lacking everything that those on the top step had: decision-making capacity, mobility, education, and jobs:

> *They are uneducated, powerless, without freedom and jobless. They spend their lives at home, busy with household chores and bearing children.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *On the bottom step, there is no income source, relationships between wives and husbands are not good because of poor financial situations, and women at the bottom step cannot make decisions. They have no education and do not have good relationships with their relatives and friends.*
>
> All female adults, Naw Da

Male adults from Boyina Bagh and Naw Da and female adults from Kart-i-Bakheter said that women on this rung of the ladder have to seek their husbands' permission when doing anything, such as spending the household income or making purchases from themselves. Male adults from Naw Da added that women on this step were "completely dependent on their husbands" in almost all things.

Men placed on this step lacked decision-making capacity as well as mobility. Male adults from Boyina Bagh explained how this type of man would normally need permission from

other family members, while male adults in Shirabad Ulya claimed that they were led by their household heads or other men categorised as on the top step of the LOPF.

All adults in Boyina Bagh and female adults in Shirabad Ulya related that the relationships between couples on this on this level of the LOPF are quite strained, with male adults in Boyina Bagh adding that such tensions could sometimes spill over into heated arguments. Only male adults in Shirabad Ulya said that relationships between couples at this level remained friendly. Moreover, in three out of the four communities (Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya and Naw Da), newly-wed couples were generally classified as occupying the bottom level of the LOPF. This was because without assets or decision-making power, they needed approval or permission from the older members of their households before deciding about anything in their lives.

From the descriptions provided above, it might seem that the women and men at the bottom step of the LOPF are on an equal footing since they all need to ask someone's consent before doing anything. However, if one could add a step below the bottom step, it is surely the women that would belong there since they still need to seek the permission from their husbands who are already situated at the bottom of the LOPF.

Second step from the bottom: Engaging in home-based income-earning activity, limited decision-making power, mobility within the community

Both urban communities presented similar characteristics of the women and men on the second level of the LOPF. They were alike in their descriptions of 1) the income-generating activities women engaged in; 2) women's decision-making capacity; and 3) the levels of mobility enjoyed by both women and men.

Female adults in both communities stated that women on this step were engaged in some form of income generation within the home. For instance, female adults in Shirabad Ulya said that women were doing embroidery or tailoring, while female adults in Kart-i-Bakheter answered that women on this level of the LOPF were involved in poultry-raising.

All adults in Shirabad Ulya said that women were still limited in terms of decision-making power, and could only make decisions for themselves on matters related to their children. For other things, such as spending the money they had personally earned or purchasing personal items, they need to ask their husbands' opinions. Female adults there also stated that in lieu of their husbands, women on this level of the LOPF could also seek permission from other powerholders in their families, such as their mothers-in-law. This scenario was largely the same for women in Kart-i-Bakheter.

In terms of mobility, female adults in Shirabad Ulya said that women on this step could go anywhere within the community, but not outside of it. According to female adults in Kart-i-Bakheter, the mobility of women on this step was more restricted, limited to visiting their relatives within the community with the permission of their husbands. Men, on the other hand, could go around the community and find jobs without seeking anyone's consent. In Shirabad Ulya, however, if men wanted to leave the area, they need to ask the permission of the household head.

Each community differed in its accounts of the educational attainment of the women and men on this step, and of the types of paid work men were involved in. Male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter said that women on this rung had very little education, but did

not specify what level exactly. By comparison, none of the adults from Shirabad Ulya mentioned that women on this step of the ladder had any education at all. According to them, only the men on this step were educated, in some cases up to the 12th grade. As for paid work, male adults from Shirabad Ulya said men on this level were able to access a limited amount of skilled labour or were daily wage labourers earning about 200 Afs (US$ 4) a day. They also mentioned that some of these men had savings amounting to 5,000-10,000 Afs (around US$ 100-200), and that they could buy anything that they wanted without having to ask for permission. However, participants from Kart-i-Bakheter did not offer any information about men's paid labour at this level.

In sum, women on this level of the LOPF were engaged in economic activities but not necessarily outside the house. Men, on the other hand, were sometimes able to work as day labourers. In terms of decision-making, women on this rung of the ladder were able to decide on matters related to their children, but nothing else. In addition, they were still dependent on the say-so of either their husband or other household powerholders to spend the money they themselves had earned. With regard to mobility, men could go anywhere they wanted within the community without seeking consent, but still needed to ask permission from older household members if they wanted to leave the area. Women were able to move around the village or go to their relatives' houses as long as their husbands permitted them to do so.

Third step from the bottom: Relatively harmonious relationships between husband and wife, long-established marriages, some decision-making power

The two urban communities were again comparable in terms of the characteristics of the women and men on the third step of the ladder. Similarities were found in: 1) the relationships between household members among those on this level; 2) the mobility of the women; 3) the educational attainment of both women and men; 4) their income-generation activities; and 5) decision-making on matters related to expenditures in the household.

All adult participants in Shirabad Ulya and male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter agreed that the households of the women and men on this level were in good shape. Female adults from Shirabad Ulya said that the women had been married for quite some time, though not as long as those on the top rung. Male adults from Kart-i-Bakheter added that there was less conflict within households on this level because of their stable economic status.

All adults from both areas also stressed that both women and men on this step of the LOPF were highly educated. All male adults also mentioned that the men had access to regular employment and earned a stable income. Male adults in Shirabad Ulya added that these men were either government or NGO employees, had their own businesses, or worked in private companies. However, only the female adults from Kart-i-Bakheter said that women on this rung were also earning a stable income, while female adults from Shirabad Ulya said instead that women on this step came from rich families or were married to high-earning men.

All female adults from both areas explained that women on this level of the LOPF could go around their own areas without asking their husbands' permission. Female adults from Kart-i-Bakheter added that this level of mobility facilitated women's ability to build networks within the community. However, female adults in Shirabad Ulya noted that unlike men, women on this level could not go out of their communities on their own.

Female adults in both communities said that couples discussed decisions on matters related to the household and their own expenditures together. Women were also able to decide how best to spend their own income when it came to making purchases to meet household needs (especially those of the children), buying personal items, and saving a portion of their income. However, female adults from Shirabad Ulya said that women could not decide to buy household appliances and other luxury items on their own. Men, of course, could buy anything they wanted.

A synopsis of the characteristics of the people on this rung is that there is basically a good relationship between the husband and the wife; they are highly educated; both women and men can go around the community without necessarily seeking anyone's permission; and women have greater decision-making power, albeit still confined to issues concerning the family and their own personal needs.

Middle step on the three-step LOPF: Husbands are income-earners, with influential families, limited mobility, good relationships between husband and wife

The rural community of Boyina Bagh created a three-step LOPF. Women placed on this level of the ladder were typically married to a man working outside the community either as a shopkeeper or shop owner. Female adults there added that in these women's households there were family members who had gone to school and so were a little more open-minded. Male adults described men on this rung of as young, but already earning their own income, adding that these men came from influential families in the area.

All adults also attested that the couples on this step maintained good relationships with each other, with female adults going on to mention that couples strove to have a good life and avoid arguments, regardless of whether one or other of them had gone to school.

Despite this, women on this rung were apparently limited in their mobility and could only go to their neighbours' houses without permission. If they wanted to go anywhere further afield, they had to seek the permission of their husbands or other male family members. Men, on the other hand, only had to ask permission from their household head if they wanted to leave the area.

With regard to their expenditures and savings, all adult participants said that women on this step decided with their husbands about what to do with their own money, although they were also permitted to save a portion of it for themselves. As usual, the men were able to decide independently about how to spend their own money.

Conclusion

The descriptions of the women and men at the different levels of the LOPF in the four study communities showed stages of transition in the areas of decision-making, education, and income-generation. It was noticeable that as each step ascended, the amount of decision-making capacity, educational attainment, and the type of work they are engaged in generally improved on the third and top steps. While there were gaps within each area's accounts (e.g. whether women on the third and top steps really worked or not), in general they gave a reasonably clear picture of the differences and similarities between women and men on each step of the LOPF, both within and across communities.

Clearly present in the descriptions of adult participants from all communities was a sense that, even though women's decision-making capacity and mobility progressed as they

moved up the LOPF, they were still subject to significant limitations when compared to male counterparts on each step. For example, while women on the upper steps could go out to relatives' or neighbours' houses within the community, they still often needed to secure the consent of their husbands or other household powerholders. By the same token, women on the upper steps had a degree of decision-making capacity in some areas—especially in matters related to children and their personal needs—but were limited in others. In all steps of the ladders the participants made, it is perhaps significant that only on the bottom step did women and men appear closest to being equal.

3.3 Movement along the LOPF

The factors that caused women's and men's movement up the LOPF were almost the same. Though it was only adult participants from Shirabad Ulya who meticulously provided details on what was needed to move up each step in the ladder, there was an obvious repetition of some of these factors in all of the communities.

In addition to the overarching question of mobility, the main things women on lower levels of the LOPF were deemed to need in order to climb up a rung included education, having a job, having networks, and making sure that their children went to school:

> *They must work hard and make efforts as well as make decisions with other household members; they must not quarrel with other family members; they must consult with their friends to inquire about information and assistance; and they must send their children to school as well as be careful of their expenses and avoid unnecessary ones.*
>
> All female adults, Shirabad Ulya

> *Some conditions need to in place, such as education, vocational courses and hard work to be able to move up the ladder. All women need these same things. Vocational skills such as tailoring, carpet-weaving, embroidery, or poultry-raising are especially important for a woman to move from one step to the next. As they get to the top step, their power and freedom will increase.*
>
> All male adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

By contrast, it was felt that all men needed to do to move up the LOPF was get a better job that paid well. However, it is important to mention that some of the male adults in Naw Da felt it was impossible for individuals on the bottom step to ever climb to the next step:

> *The men and the women who are on the bottom step do not have enough freedom, their life is not good, and they cannot do anything good with their life since they cannot overcome their problems. Because of this they cannot make a plan for their future and they are constantly faced with numerous problems. It is difficult for people to move up in this community.*
>
> Barraq, 40, Naw Da

It is also interesting that the female adults from the Parwan communities cited a change in cultural practices and gender rights as necessary for women's upward movement on the rungs of the LOPF. By this measure, individual or household efforts in their own right were thus not enough for people to move up to the next step or steps. In addition, an enabling community environment was also necessary, as was government help:

> *Starting with a small investment such as poultry or tailoring, going to school to be educated, doing work outside the house, improvement of culture, the*

> *government providing opportunities for women, development and changes in the behaviour of the men. If the above factors are implemented, women will find a good life and they will be in power.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

Only adults from Shirabad Ulya explained what could keep people on top of the LOPF. Male adults there explained that women and men "must not manifest negative traits," and instead sustain those attributes that brought them to that level in the first place. Female adults there also felt that women in particular could remain on top of the ladder if they continued to have a good job and contribute to economic development.

Opinions were more varied about the factors that could pull people back down the ladder. Two female adults from Shirabad Ulya reasoned that women at present have more chances to grow with the availability of education and jobs, and were hence less likely to drop back:

> *We don't know about this, and we don't see any reason for women falling down from the top to the lower steps because now the women have a chance to go up. The government is trying to change the lives of the women through education and employment.*
>
> Eiman, 51, and Eshal, 25, Shirabad Ulya

However, female adults in Kart-i-Bakheter contended that government policy inhibitions could pull down women from the top level:

> *There is a possibility of women moving up by doing business and with their own power, but the women who are on the top step could drop one step lower because of the restrictive policies of the government.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

In contrast, men on the top rung of the LOPF could be pulled down by events such as natural disasters or armed battles. Male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter also said that men could "lose their jobs or face health problems which might cause them to drop down."

The placement of women and men on each area's LOPF also demonstrated changes when compared with ten years ago. However, these changes were not consistent across different areas. Since each area developed its own steps of the ladder, only the placement of women on the bottom and the top rungs will be presented here for comparison and contrast.

All female adults from Boyina Bagh, Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da felt that the percentage of women in their community on the top level of the ladder had increased compared to ten years ago, while the percentage of women on the bottom rung had decreased (see Annex Table 24). By contrast, female adults in Shirabad Ulya thought that their percentage on the top step had remained roughly constant over the past ten years, while the percentage of women at the bottom had grown. While they did not offer an explanation for this change at the bottom, they attributed stability for women at the top of the LOPF to the fact that the community had been part of Kabul City ten years ago and was thus working off a high baseline.

Annex Table 25 shows male adults' assessment of the placement of men on the LOPF in their respective communities both now and ten years ago. Male adults from the two rural communities agreed that there had been an increase in the percentage of men on the top level of the LOPF and a decrease among those on the bottom rung. Men in Naw Da offered the following explanation:

> *Ten years ago, there was no freedom for men because the area was under the control of the Taliban. Most of the people were afraid of the Taliban and no-one was able to go anywhere. All decisions were made by the Taliban. The present ladder presents an opposite picture. It means that 30 percent of the men are on the top step and 70 percent are on the bottom step.*
>
> All male adults, Naw Da

Male adults from the two urban communities varied in their opinions about how the position of men on their LOPFs had changed over the past decade. In Shirabad Ulya, they thought that there had been no change in the percentage of men on the top step, and a growth in the percentage at the bottom. Male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter, conversely believed that the percentage of men on the top rung had shrunk, while those on the bottom had stayed the same.

Adult males and females in Shirabad Ulya shared similar observations on the status of women and men in their village both now and ten years ago. They both related that the percentage of individuals on the top level of the LOPF, for both women and men, remained the same, while those on the bottom rung had increased. Female and male adults in Naw Da and Boyina Bagh were likewise unified in their opinion, saying that the percentage of women and men on the top step had increased, while those on the bottom level had decreased. By contrast, female and male perspectives in Kart-i-Bakheter differed. For the female adults, the percentage of women on the top rung increased, while those on the bottom step decreased; male adults on the other hand stated that the percentage of women at the top had decreased, while those at the bottom had remained the same.

3.4 Shifts in women's and men's levels of empowerment over the past decade

To examine the shifts that occurred in the empowerment levels of both men and women, empowerment indices for each community are shown below. Tables 2 and 3 are for the two Kabul communities, and demonstrate that there has been a positive change in the levels of empowerment for women and men in Boyina Bagh, but not in Shirabad Ulya.

Boyina Bagh has experienced the introduction of a development initiative (in the form of the NSP) with a gender focus and a strong emphasis on women's participation (See Box 2). The community's—and specifically women's—exposure to NGOs operating in the community may also have played a role in this change.

The case of Shirabad Ulya, and specifically the women's empowerment index, may be questionable since both female and male adult participants indicated that women now have the option to stay at home or go out to work:

> *The women of this community are busy with household chores, and a few are working as teachers and government employees. During the Taliban they were not allowed to take jobs. Now they are able to work outside if they wish and if there are available jobs for them.*
>
> All female adults, Shirabad Ulya

> *In the past, women just worked inside their homes. But now, some of them are working outside, like teachers, government employees, and NGO workers*
>
> All male adults, Shirabad Ulya

Table 2. Empowerment index of Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province*

Steps	*% Now*	*% 10 years ago*	*Weighted mean now*	*Weighted mean 10 years ago*	*Empowerment index (difference in means)*
Men's ladder, Boyina Bagh					
3	30	20	1.9	1.7	0.2
2	30	30			
1	40	50			
Women's ladder, Boyina Bagh					
3	20	10	1.9	1.5	0.4
2	50	30			
1	30	60			

Table 3. Empowerment index of Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

Steps	*% Now*	*% 10 years ago*	*Weighted mean now*	*Weighted mean 10 years ago*	*Empowerment index (difference in means)*
Men's ladder, Shirabad Ulya					
4	40	30	2.95	2.7	0.25
3	30	30			
2	15	20			
1	15	20			
Women's ladder, Shirabad Ulya					
4	20	20	1.75	1.9	-0.15
3	5	10			
2	5	10			
1	70	60			

Table 4. Empowerment index of Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

Steps	*% Now*	*% 10 years ago*	*Weighted mean now*	*Weighted mean 10 years ago*	*Empowerment index (difference in means)*
Men's ladder, Kart-i-Bakheter					
4	5	10	2.15	2.3	-0.15
3	25	30			
2	50	40			
1	20	20			
Women's ladder, Kart-i-Bakheter					
4	60	30	3.3	2.3	1
3	20	10			
2	10	20			
1	10	40			

* "Empowerment Index" from the Ladder can be used as an analytic tool to frame comparative analysis. The men's and women's ladders have shares at each step for now and ten years ago. The distribution of and change in these shares can be synthesised into summary statistics that may be useful for assessing empowerment levels, and enabling a rough comparison of the trends affecting men and women in the same community. The fourth and fifth columns present the "mean" position on the ladder where the community members can be found, or the "mean step." See "National Synthesis Report (NSR) Guidance Notes," a supplementary guidance note of the "Gender and Economic Choice: Methodology Guide – Rapid Qualitative Assessment to inform the World Development Report on Gender, August 21010." (Washington, DC: The World Bank: 2010).

Table 5. Empowerment index of Naw Da, Parwan Province

Steps	*% Now*	*% 10 years ago*	*Weighted mean now*	*Weighted mean 10 years ago*	*Empowerment index (difference in means)*
Men's Ladder, Naw Da					
2	70	30	1.7	1.3	0.4
1	30	70			
Women's Ladder, Naw Da					
2	20	20	1.2	1.2	0
1	80	80			

However, female adult participants here also added:

> *Ten years ago, the community was a part of Kabul City and so the women of the community had freedom. [Now 20 percent of women on this step] only have power and freedom at the community level.*

Talking about the area's male empowerment index, Fahim, a 58-year old male *shura* clerk, reflected the views of other adult males when he explained that men had gained back their "power" after being dominated by the Taliban in the past. Ten years ago, conditions were dire, and there was no work available:

> *The men are always in power but in the past [during the Taliban time] the people were poor, there was no work available and they were faced with a lot of problems. Now a lot of people have work and have income.*

Tables 4 and 5 show the empowerment indices of the two Parwan communities. For the urban village of Kart-i-Bakheter, a positive change in the levels of empowerment was only seen among women, while the men's empowerment level had actually dropped. The statements below suggest some of the reasons behind this set of circumstances:

> *Men had activities in the past such as wage labour, farming and government jobs, and they are still doing these at present. Ten years ago, women had activities at home and did not do anything outside. Nowadays, there are jobs for women outside the home such as teaching and work for the government, and they also raise poultry.*
>
> All male adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *In the past, women did only household chores like preparing the fire and cooking, but now there are other options such as gas and electricity. Now some of them have jobs outside of the house. Most of the girls are going to school. Women participate in elections and run as candidates for the provincial council and other things.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

The women in Kart-i-Bakheter thus felt that progress was being made, leading to a significant amount of movement up the steps of the LOPF. When discussing the enabling environment that may have contributed to this change, participants cited the area's relatively high education levels compared to other communities, as well as people's exposure to other places and cultures with relatively liberal ideas during migration. Furthermore, the area has also benefitted from a development initiative (the NSP) with a strong focus on women's participation, as well as the presence of several NGOs

The explanation for the drop in Kart-i-Bakheter's male empowerment index could be that men in the community are already relatively educated. They have raised expectations

and consciousness and consequently expected that their community—and the country as a whole—would by now have offered a better deal for them and their families. As a consequence, they have produced a much lower rating and even a movement down rather than up the LOPF when compared with men in the other study communities. Their exposure to other places during migration could also have triggered an unfavourable comparison between people's situation in these areas and their own. The feelings of frustration this might have engendered could again account for their relatively low empowerment rating.

In Naw Da, only the men experienced an increase in their level of empowerment compared to ten years ago. Male adult participants' response showing an increase in power at present suggests that restrictions on mobility and decision-making imposed on them during the Taliban period were indeed debilitating, especially for men socialised to find work, raise families and possess decision-making abilities. Furthermore, the men in this poor rural community were only moving up from the bottom of a two-step LOPF. Although they complained that the work they did was one of the worst ways to make a living, they still earned an income from it. With this income, no matter how small, comes the corresponding power and authority associated with acting as a bread-winner for the family.

By contrast, women's status on the LOPF had not changed, with female adults in the community insisting that "the scenario is the same because nothing has changed in this community." This group also felt that in order for women to gain power and freedom, they needed to be educated, while the government and other actors such as NGOs and community elders needed to recognise women's rights and encourage the men to follow:

> *If we want to change the lives of the women for them to gain power and freedom, a lot of work has to be done by the government, NGOs, elders and mullahs. They should know the rights of women and push the men to accept these rights. In the present situation, we do not see any chance for women to change their lives.*
>
> Ban, 57, and Bakhtawar, 60, Naw Da

> *We are not educated and we do not know anything. We do not know how we would be able to change our lives to obtain power and freedom and move to the next step.*
>
> Baraah, 60, Naw Da

4. Marriage and Children

4.1 What makes an ideal spouse?

Participants generally described the traditional and assigned roles of women—managing household expenses, carrying out household chores, and looking after children—as attributes of a good or ideal wife, both now and in the past (see Annex Table 13). All adults of both sexes in all four communities shared this view. In addition, all adults in the two urban communities (Shirabad Ulya and Kart-i-Bakheter) mentioned that being educated and having a job were also now considered characteristics of a good wife. Male adult participants' accounts of a good wife also emphasised good behaviour toward her husband, specifically keeping in mind what her husband tells her (Boyina Bagh); avoiding conflict with her husband (Shirabad Ulya); showing good behaviour with her in-laws (Kart-i-Bakheter); and respecting her husband (Naw Da).

In describing currently held views of what constituted a good husband, all adult participants described a figure who earns a living, provides for family needs, and is aware of the rights of his wife (see Annex Table 14). This latter attribute also extended to respecting his wife's relatives (Shirabad Ulya), not placing restrictions on her (Kart-i-Bakheter), and not beating either his wife or his children (New Da). Except in Naw Da, all female adults articulated that a good husband today is also one who is educated or literate. In addition, all male adults in Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya, and Kart-i-Bakheter felt that a good husband should also help his wife with the household chores. Finally, adult participants in Shirabad Ulya and Kart-i-Bakheter added that good husbands also look after the welfare of their children.

The greatest—if not the most significant—similarity in the descriptions of what currently makes a good husband or wife is that they are still tied to gender roles traditionally assigned to men and women. To be considered a good husband or a good wife, one thus has to conform to these expectations. The emergence of new perceived traits of a good husband and a good wife (for a wife: education and employment; for husband: knowledge of women's rights and helping out in the household), did not necessarily translate to a change in what is actually practiced. However, the articulation of these new, additional traits may represent the start of a new understanding of what marriage relationships should look like. It is now a matter of working out how to translate this new-found consciousness into action.

People's descriptions of what constituted a good wife in the past are largely similar to those of the present. The good wife in the past was pictured as the caretaker of the children, the home, and the expenses of the household. However, participants in each area also produced significant additional descriptions of the past attributes of good wives. Female adults in Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya mentioned that submissive women were once considered good wives (see Annex Table 15); female adults in Kart-i-Bakheter also stated that the good wives in the past guided their children even if they could not access any form of formal education. For male adults, good wives were those who always sought the permission of their husbands before leaving the house. Male adults in Naw Da especially also said that frugal women who were less concerned about themselves were once seen as good wives. Female adults from this village seem to suggest that good wives had once been submissive when they said that wives in the past were not open-minded.

Since good wives in the past took on the role of taking care of the household, adult participants from all communities logically went on to say that previous views of good

husbands essentially focused on their ability to financially support or provide for their families (see Annex Table 16).

Another quality of good husbands in the past mentioned in FGDs among male adults in Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya, and Kart-i-Bakheter was that they had power over their families, particularly their wives. This attribute speaks to the complementary characteristic of submissiveness that was once the mark of a good wife. However, female adults from the rural villages of Boyina Bagh and Naw Da stated that in the past, men in their communities had not behaved nearly as well in practice, a fact they attributed to the violent conflict happening in their community at that time. Finally, it is also important to note that good husbands in the past were not expected to be educated, as they are in the present.

4.2 Timing of marriage

All the youth in all study communities felt that late-teens to mid-twenties was the best window for young adults to get married; female youths in Boyina Bagh commented that marrying at this age left enough time for couples to enjoy their married life together. However, in practice youth in Naw Da married much earlier compared to the other communities, with boys marrying at 15-16 and girls marrying as young as 13. According to all the youths in Shirabad Ulya and all the male youths in Boyina Bagh and Naw Da, the acceptable age range for a woman to bear her first child was 16-25 years old, while the youth participants from Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da felt it would not be good for woman to have a baby if she were below 18 years old.

It is still common in all of the four study communities for parents to arrange the marriage of their child. Youth participants generally agreed with this practice, with youths from Kart-i-Bakheter adding that the economic stability of both families is an important factor to consider when planning for a marriage. However, it is also worth noting in this respect that the majority of youths in Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya and Naw Da explained how—in contrast to past practice—the consent of a couple engaged to be married is now sought before the arrangement is finalised.

> *When the boy and the girl accept each other, then some women from the boy's family will go to the girl's house and will woo her family. If the girl's family does not accept the boy's courting, then some elders will go to their house to explain and satisfy whatever they want, and will specify all the issues they want settled and then they pray together and bring the sweets. Sweets are distributed among the friends and relatives to let people know that the engagement is complete.*
>
> Faaz, 19, Shirabad Ulya

> *Some women marry at the age of 14-15 but some of them wait up to 30-35, but this is not good. According to the culture, a woman or girl cannot go and ask for marriage; she just waits if someone comes and wants to marry her. After that, her parents and other members of the family decide about her marriage. When they come to a decision, they will ask her if she agrees to get married. If she does not agree, her parents need to reject the marriage request.*
>
> All female youth, Naw Da

However, it remains unclear what happens when either the boy or the girl refuses the arrangement. Do the parents seek another partner for their daughter or son, and if so, when? Equally important is the question of whether the parents instantly accept the rejection of their children of their choice or if a "persuasion" stage occurs which may ultimately lead to the boy or the girl accepting the arrangement.

4.3 Marriage practice: Outcomes and possibility of changing

Participants in all study communities felt that the marriage practices described above appear highly unlikely to change. In general, many youths felt that the practices they observed had been handed down by their ancestors and deserved respect. However, some also voiced some suggested changes on matters related to *walwar* (bride prices) and the age of marriage.

All female youths from Boyina Bagh and some female and male youths from Kart-i-Bakheter wanted to see a decrease in the size of *walwar*, and some of these male youths even wanted it abolished entirely. The female youths from Boyina Bagh in particular emphasised the strain that the bride price places on newly-married couples:

> *Now, people pay big amounts for the walwar. But the women want to be married without taking the walwar because it causes problems within her family. Most of the people are poor, so they cannot afford to pay a walwar. The groom will sell agricultural land or he will borrow from someone. After the wedding, the one who lent the money wants his money back, but the groom's family doesn't have the money to pay...most of the time they blame the woman who has got married. Because of this, we want to remove the walwar.*
>
> All female youths, Boyina Bagh

> *I do not think that the marriage practices would change in our community and the same tradition will still be practical in the future too, and people are happy with these customs. However, they talk about the need to change or abolish the walwar.*
>
> All male youth, Kart-i-Bakheter

Female youths in Kart-i-Bakheter debated over the reduction of the bride price after one recommended that the amount be decreased. Another disagreed, arguing that the amount of the *walwar* determines the value of the woman whose hand is being sought:

> *The walwar is too high, the amount should be decreased.*
>
> Aala, 18, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *If the walwar is decreased, then the value of the girl will also go down. Other villagers will blame her father for not receiving enough money. Someone will tell him that his daughter is not a good girl.*
>
> Aalia, 20, Kart-i-Bakheter

The youth participants from Naw Da did not discuss the bride price. Instead, the change they wanted—especially female youths—was for the girls to marry at a legal age (it was assumed that they meant 18 years and above). As noted earlier, women in Naw Da marry at much younger age compared to women in the other three study areas; this is possibly due to the community's relative isolation and limited access to information given the lack of media availability there.

4.4 Family size and family planning

Families across the four study communities are generally large. For instance, all the youth participants in Boyina Bagh stated that women there usually bear eight children, and that they themselves had come from large families. Youth participants in Kart-i-Bakheter told similar stories, but added that they wanted to have fewer children than their parents, and that the average family size in the community was declining.

While perspectives varied within and across different communities, the decision on the number of children to have was generally felt to be in the hands of the husband. It should be noted that in Kart-i-Bakheter, there was a particularly strong divide between the perspectives of male and female youths, with women stating that a wife would be responsible for this decision and men insisting it rested largely with the husband:

> *Mostly it is the women who are making the decisions in this regard.*
>
> All female youth, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *The men decide about it, but women also have a role in it. Husbands usually make the decision and women act upon it. If a woman makes the decision, she will need to get her husband's consent.*
>
> All male youth, Kart-i-Bakheter

Regardless of who is ultimately involved in making this choice, the majority of all youth participants appeared to want families smaller than those currently prevalent in their respective communities. However, opinions were divided about whether it was better to have sons or daughters. In Boyina Bagh, only one male youth expressed a preference for a son over a daughter, citing male children as a source of security for their families:

> *People in our community like to have more sons because any family that has more sons is happy and spared from the cruelty of other families. If families do not have more sons, the other families in the community are harsh to them.*
>
> Dawlah, 19, Boyina Bagh

The majority of the youth participants from Shirabad Ulya offered no opinions on this issue; three male youth declared a preference for a large family, but said it did not matter how many sons or daughters were involved.

The scenario was different in the two Parwan communities, where both male and female youth participants expressed a preference for male children. The principal reason given for this choice was that sons remain with their families even when they get married, providing a valuable source of income, eventually taking the place of their fathers as head of the household and inheriting the family's property:

> *To have a son is better than to have a daughter because when the daughter gets married, she will go to another household, whereas the son stays with his parents. If the father dies, the son is responsible for the family.*
>
> Aaleyah, 23, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *In our community people think that when the daughter grows up, she gets married grows up and goes to her husband in his home, but a son remains with parents forever and serves his parents.*
>
> Aaban, 18, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *A son takes care of the family after his father passes away while the daughter goes to another home; that is why people prefer to have sons rather than daughters.*
>
> Baha al Din, 24, Naw Da

> *Most of the people prefer a son, because in our community, life is difficult for the person who does not have a son. Most of his relatives are interested in his property. When he dies, his property is distributed to his relatives and nothing will go to his wife or daughter. If he has a son, all the property will go to his son.*
>
> Bahijah, 23, Naw Da

The majority of youth participants were not comfortable discussing family planning services. In Kabul Province, only male youths were prepared talk about whether women in their respective communities had access to family planning services. Even in these instances, they simply said they had no information since this was a private matter for couples alone. In the two Parwan communities, by contrast, all youths responded to this question, but differently. The youth participants from Kart-i-Bakheter explained that there was a lack of information about the number of women who use family planning services, while youths Naw Da claimed that women in their village did not access family planning services because they do not know about them and there were no health facilities in their community.

> *Here women are uneducated; they don't know how to use family planning services because they are busy with their household chores.*
>
> Babar, 18, Naw Da

> *Women cannot do anything regarding family planning in this community... because there are no facilities in the community and it is difficult for them to go Charikar since their husbands do not let them.*
>
> All female youth, Naw Da

4.5 Gender equality and domestic violence

Participants in both urban communities demonstrated awareness of the idea of gender equality. Central to their understanding of the issue was the fact that women's and men's rights are afforded to them by Islam, and that these rights should be observed by everyone.

> *The rights that are provided by Islam are good. There is no violence against women in this community. They spend their lives happily and are able to balance their lives. Yes, there is equality and this is a good thing.*
>
> All female adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *We heard from the mullah that in Islam, women have their own rights, and the men have their own rights. But the problem is we don't have any more information about this.*
>
> Eliza, 45, and Eiman, 51, Shirabad Ulya

The recognition of these gender rights, however, did not necessarily translate to a change in perceptions in these communities. Male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter noted that having seen how gender rights and roles were dealt with in the cultures of other countries, they were starting to modify their practices. Male adults in Shirabad Ulya may also have changed their practices, but warned that if the notion of gender equality means that their women would become like the "women in Europe and America," and "what the present administration and the non-Muslim people want," then they were not interested.

Domestic violence was not a topic adult participants felt particularly comfortable discussing. Even the participants from the two urban communities who had been quite open with their views on gender equality were hesitant to talk about domestic violence or abuses. Female adults in Shirabad Ulya, all adults in Kart-i-Bakheter and male adults in Naw Da went further, specifically stressing that the issue should not be discussed in public because it was a private matter.

> *In some families there are conflicts, but that is not reported to the police. Maybe there are conflicts in some families that are solved by the community. But no one wants to talk about that, because if these families find out that*

you are talking about their disputes, they will get angry and will fight you and ask why you are talking about their family issues.

Eliza, 45, Shirabad Ulya

There is no family which does not have problems and if problems do occur in the family, they are solved by the head of the family and no one is informed about it. Family problems are kept secret at home.

All male adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

Family issues are not talked about.

Baligh, 35, Naw Da

However, there were two factors that consistently surfaced as reasons for conflicts within the household or between husbands and wives. Both female and male adult participants mentioned that poor economic conditions or financial difficulties could trigger tensions between couples. Women's misconduct or, as female adults from Shirabad Ulya framed it, "too much conservatism," was another precursor of marital conflict (see Annex Tables 26-29).

In Naw Da, adult participants argued that domestic violence was a family matter that no one should interfere with, but went on to say that this form of conflict could have a severe impact on the household and often resulted in husbands beating their wives and children. Furthermore, both female and male adult participants felt that even "a simple wrong accusation or gossip can cause a woman to be beaten up by her husband."

When a member of an extended family like a daughter, mother-in-law or brother tells a lie to the husband and says to him, "Your wife is going to the neighbour's house without your permission," the husband beats up his wife and a conflict occurs between them.

All male adults, Naw Da

In most instances, it was the man who "threatened" or "abused" the woman. The term "threatened" was also used by male adults in Shirabad Ulya when asked whether wives could ever abuse their husbands. They explained that a husband would feel insecure if his wife were earning more than him, or if she were more educated. By contrast, adult participants in Kart-i-Bakheter explained that while a woman cannot abuse her husband, she could threaten him by declaring that she will commit suicide.

Even if majority of participants in all study communities were hesitant to expand on the issue of domestic violence, they at least confirmed its presence, both now and a decade ago. However, it is worth noting that in all communities, the number of cases of domestic violence was reported to have decreased over the past ten years.

4.6 Divorce: Taboo as a topic of discussion

Discussion on divorce generated negative reactions from most of the male participants in the study. Female adults from Kart-i-Bakheter said that there were times when a couple's disputes could escalate and lead to their separation. In Naw Da, male adults avoided questions on divorce altogether. Female adults and youths there claimed that divorce has not happened in their area because it was against their culture and tradition and that elders in their community attend to couples who have fights and help settle the issues between them:

It is against the culture and traditions of our community and such event has not happened in our village so far. Divorce is considered very bad in our

> *community and it is not easy for a woman and a man to separate. If there are differences between wife and husband, family members solve their problems, so the couple can live happily together.*
>
> All female adults, Naw Da

> *Here only men have income. They use their money for the home, and there is no conflict between husband and wife about money. People of this community detest and loathe the word divorce and they do not even want to pronounce the word.*
>
> All male youth, Naw Da

In Boyina Bagh, male adult participants disagreed that divorce was a right for women, saying that it contravened the laws of Islam:

> *Divorce in western countries is also considered the right of wives...this kind of right is not good because it is against Islamic laws and culture and traditions.*
>
> All male adults, Boyina Bagh

Male youths from this area also said that divorce is an uncommon event in their community because it is seen to bring shame on a family.

5. Education

5.1 Who is currently sent to school? Why?

In general, participants from the rural communities were less educated than their urban counterparts, possibly because of the comparative lack of nearby schools. Furthermore, rural areas were more conservative in their views on sending children to school, especially girls and young women. Across all study communities, sex selection was very much evident in determining who was sent to school. Although almost all participants claimed that there was no distinction between which children would go to school when they reached school age, the data show that more boys than girls are sent to school. Whether youths or adults, more males than females have attained at least a certain level of education. In Boyina Bagh, not a single female participant had ever gone to school. In all of the communities except for Naw Da—where out of all participants, only one male adult participant had ever attended school—it was also apparent that young people had better access to schools than their adult counterparts.

Participants in all four communities cited a combination of distance and security concerns as reasons for why more boys were sent to school than girls. Adhering to traditional gender roles was another reason raised by participants in both the urban and rural community in Kabul, suggesting that the divide between women's private and men's public world still operates in these areas. In Boyina Bagh, participants noted that as girls grow older, families tended to arrange their engagement to get married rather than send them to school:

> *If the school is next to our village then the families' decision is that that they send girls to school and when they reach 11-15 years [old], they are made to stay at home. Once they grow up...it is bad for these girls to go to school... they get engaged instead.*
>
> Deema, 19, Boyina Bagh

The problem of sending girls to school in Shirabad Ulya was compounded by the incident of a girl who was sent to school and then got married without the permission of her parents (see Box 3). As mentioned, this event has affected parent's opinions about sending their children—specifically young women—to school, convincing many that doing so would mean their daughters would no longer adhere to the customs and traditions observed by their families. In this community, the threat of kidnap was also raised as a barrier to both girls and boys attending school:

> *There is no difference among girls and boys, whenever they reach five or six years old, they have to go to school. The only problem for them is that the school is very far from this village and most of the families, due to kidnapping problems, can't send their children to school. That is the big problem here. In this case, there are more constraints on girls because...families are more protective of girls than boys.*
>
> Fadi, 22, and Ehsan, 20, Shirabad Ulya

In Naw Da, the most impoverished of the communities studied, participants cited poor economic conditions as an additional reason for not sending girls (and boys) to school. Since girls would be joining another family when they got married, the idea of investing in their education was not entertained by their own relatives. As one male youth there put it, children's education in Naw Da is a secondary concern to their economic roles:

Our economic condition is very weak so instead of going to school we go to work. Children, instead of going to school, work to help family members.

By contrast, none of the participants from Kart-i-Bakheter brought up issues that hampered girls' education, complaining only of the lack of higher educational institutions near the village to accommodate those who want to pursue higher degrees. As noted in the previous chapter, residents in Kart-i-Bakheter are generally more open to the idea of sending both boys and girls to school, in part as a result of new ideas imported by returning migrants. All youths in Kart-i-Bakheter stressed that parents in the community were eager to send their children to school regardless of whether they were boys or girls.

5.2 Desire for education

Participants across all four study communities acknowledged that education is a major factor in getting a job, and there were signs that even in rural areas, attitudes toward women attending school were changing:

> *Education has a big role in finding a job...a person who has education can land a job and do it well.*
>
> Participant in an FGD for female youths, Boyina Bagh

> *If we had attended school and were educated, we might have had jobs in the government or in NGOs, but now we cannot have any job except for mining stones and being labourers.*
>
> Participant in an FGD for male youths, Naw Da

Female youths in Boyina Bagh in particular resented that they were not being sent to school. They insisted that the prime consideration in deciding on who goes to school or not should be the value of education, trumping questions of distance to the nearest school or security concerns. They also expressed a desire to change how they were spending their time, and were keen to substitute time in school for time spent doing the housework.

Male youths in this community appeared to agree with their female counterparts in saying that a person's talent should be the main thing determining whether they went to school or not. In the words of one male youth:

> *First, parents should think about whether a girl has the merit and talent to go to school and study or not. If she has enough potential, then obviously she must go to school. Clothes, shoes, books, and notebooks should be provided for her.*
>
> Dean, 26, Boyina Bagh

This apparent statement of support for equality among boys and girls in this respect should, however, be contrasted with the fact that in Boyina Bagh, the only factor determining whether or not boys were sent to school was their age, and not their potential.

In Naw Da, youth participants were keenly aware of the value of education despite the fact that none of them had been able to attend school. Significantly, youths in this community expressed a desire to go to school and work at the same time. While they anticipated that balancing these activities would be a challenge, they still felt that having access to work was necessary since it would provide them with an income that could help pay for their schooling and support their families during their studies.

6. Economic Opportunities

6.1 What are the best and worst jobs?

Respondents from Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya and Kart-i-Bakheter mentioned teaching and working in the government as the best ways to make a living. By contrast, male participants from Naw Da mentioned economic activities such as driving, tailoring, raising livestock, and—for youths at least—shopkeeping, as the best ways for them to earn a living. Female adults from the community felt that the best jobs involved "raising livestock, shopkeeping, modern farming, government employment, teaching, engineering, and engaging in the medical profession." However, no-one of either sex from Naw Da occupied any of the positions mentioned (see Annex Tables 5-12). Men in the community mentioned that for now, they are not really after the best jobs and would be satisfied with any means to earn an income.

Decent pay and regular work were the main reasons people felt teaching, being in the government or in a medical profession (and in the case of men, running a business) were the best ways to make a living. Other reasons included the fact that these jobs were less strenuous, and highly regarded by other community members.

By contrast, farming and any form of daily-waged labour were seen as the worst ways to make a living, especially in rural Boyina Bagh and urban Kart-i-Bakheter. Youth participants from Boyina Bagh said that these forms of economic activity require hard work and yet pay less, while adults and youths in Kart-i-Bakheter tended to focus only on the lack of decent pay. In the case of Naw Da, all participants concluded that the worst ways to make a living were in fact the jobs they already had—quarrying stones, hauling goods, and gathering and selling firewood. However, they also noted that such work was better than having no income at all. Male youths from Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya saw joining the army or the police as the worst jobs since doing so would put their lives at risk in fighting against lawless elements and the Taliban.

6.2 Women's access to paid work

In all study areas except Kart-i-Bakheter, women have no more access to paid work than they did ten years ago. Participants explained that women were overwhelmingly confined inside the home performing household chores and taking care of children. Ten years ago, ongoing armed conflict and the presence of the Taliban in their communities prevented women from going outside and working. Today, it appears that the views of women and men in these three communities regarding women working outside the home are much more positive. Instead, the factor hindering women's participation in the workforce is the lack of employment opportunities and a lack of education that renders them uncompetitive for the few chances that do exist.

The participants from the two urban communities mentioned that for men and women to get into the government or private companies, assistance from employment and professional agencies was necessary. People in Kart-i-Bakheter also raised the issue of bribery and nepotism, essential for anyone seeking serious employment, as CQ informants in the community described:

> *Government employment is available, but to get the job you must have relatives [in the government] or pay bribes, otherwise it is impossible. Currently in our village there are a lot of people who are literate but they are*

> *jobless because they don't have any supporters or relatives and can't afford the bribe. During the Taliban period, there were more jobs but people didn't have care about work and a lot of people had left.*

In Naw Da, participants said that women did not work ten years ago mainly because both women and men adhered to the belief that women stay at home and take care of the house and children. At present, women are still invisible in the workplace, but participants said that if there were job opportunities for them, they would definitely join the workforce. However, they also pointed out that people in the community had little idea about how to look for jobs.

6.3 Types of job available to men and women

Local traditions and perceived differences in the biological make-up of men and women came out as the main factors influencing the types of jobs that women and men engage in, along with questions of education, distance, class, and power. In all four communities, tradition continued to play a significant role in determining how women were viewed. Female adults and youths made specific mention of the discrimination this engendered and the limits it placed on what jobs women could do. According to a female youth participant in Kart-i-Bakheter:

> *For women finding a job is different because of work discrimination. For example if a woman becomes a police officer then she will be faced with discrimination but if she is a teacher or doctor, she will not face any discrimination because it is acceptable for a woman to take on such types of jobs.*

In relation to this, distance was also an additional factor for women in particular to consider when taking a job in all communities apart from Kart-i-Bakheter. Given religious and traditional norms limiting women's movement, the feasibility of women being able to work was almost nil if the job was located outside the community. There was a general feeling across these three communities that women would need a *mahram* (a male relative to act as chaperone) if they were to take on work outside the community. By contrast, in Kart-i-Bakheter, there were women who were able to work outside of their homes and outside of the community without a *mahram*.

Most if not all of male participants said that there was a division in terms of what jobs women and men could undertake. Jobs that needed physical strength were for men, as were jobs undertaken outside the home. However, this view is slowly changing, especially in urban areas like Kart-i-Bakheter and Shirabad Ulya. Even in the rural communities, women and men are slowly opening up to the idea of women working outside of the home, especially in times of economic difficulty.

There was a significant divide in opinions about perceived changes in attitudes to what jobs women could do among adult participants across research communities. Female adults from Shirabad Ulya, Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da felt that there should be an end to gender-specific job access. Female adults from Naw Da said that women have the capacity to perform jobs normally reserved for men, such as a professional work (although they felt that women could not be involved in physical labour like quarrying):

> *That there are jobs solely for men or for women is not important, because women can do the jobs men can. For example, men and women outside our community perform similar jobs such as teaching, engineering, medical jobs*

> *and vocational courses etc. This is not happening in our community though, because both men and women are not educated and will not qualify for these jobs.*
>
> All female adults, Naw Da

Some female adults also stated that tradition inhibited women in getting engaged in paid work, yet they also repeatedly suggested that there should be separate jobs for women and men because of their biological differences and their level of mobility.

In contrast, male adults from these three communities started discussions by asserting these differences should remain. Later on, however, they expressed that it would no longer be important if women and men worked together. Ultimately, they felt that if their communities were to develop economically, men should be provided with job opportunities first because they remained the main breadwinners, and women therefore did not need to earn money:

> *If there are available jobs it does not matter whether women are separated or work together with men. But now we need to find work and jobs so it is okay if these jobs are separated. Based on the present situation of the community there is no work for men. If someone wants to help the community, the first step they will do is to help the men because the men [are] responsible for providing food and for the overall maintenance of the family*
>
> All male adults, Boyina Bagh

Continuing this line of thinking, all the male adults and youths in Boyina Bagh, male youth in Shirabad Ulya, and male adults in Kart-i-Bakheter believed that men would be more affected than women if they lost their jobs. Again, they argued that this was the case because the demands of raising a family were on men's shoulders.

Even among youths, there was a sense across all four study communities that, in terms of economic activity, women's place was in the home while access to the public sphere was largely restricted to men. Interestingly, while female and male youth participants were conscious of the differences in their economic pursuits, none of them ever expressed a willingness to switch any of their activities with those of the opposite sex. Female youths in Shirabad Ulya said they were happy with what they were doing, while youth participants from Naw Da pointed out the difficulty women would have working in the stone mines, and how men are uncomfortable doing household chores (although female youths from this community mentioned that men help in fetching water and collecting firewood).

Only in Boyina Bagh did anyone state that economic opportunities should be afforded to both men and women—a view expressed by one male youth and all the female youths. However, this is an important thought if the typical scenario of women/house and men/work is to be challenged.

> *If the road were be paved and loans provided to us to support our economic [activities], the same assistance [should be given] to women, because they [too] don't have any economic activity.*
>
> Dawid, 18, Boyina Bagh

Engaging in business is not a woman's place

The gender divide of "who does what" was particularly evident when participants discussed the question of who could engage in a business enterprise. Overwhelmingly,

the feeling was that business should be conducted by men since business enterprise is conducted outside the home, and the outside world was largely seen as a male domain; male youths in Boyina Bagh explained that "according to our tradition, women do not do business in our community."

As a consequence, participants generally thought that it would be very difficult for a woman to succeed in a business endeavour without the support of her husband. This was a point stressed especially strongly by adult participants across all communities:

> *If the man wants to open a business and the woman does not agree with him, he will not face a big problem. But if the woman wants to open a business and the man does not agree with her, she will face problems, because in our community the man is powerful. They have freedom and able to make decisions, but women need the support from men.*
>
> All female adults, Shirabad Ulya

> *In our community the men are strong and they have access to information and resources and are able to move every time and everywhere. The support of the men is most important for women.*
>
> Male adults, Kart-i-Bakheter

> *According to our culture men are more powerful than women. A man is able to make decisions without the support of the woman. It is more difficult for a woman to make decisions without the support of the men in the family. This is because women do not have access to information, markets or other main factors related to business.*
>
> Bakr, 65, Naw Da

The three most common reasons cited by all participants for why women would struggle to run a business on their own were as follows: 1) men have more authority in terms of decision-making; 2) men are more mobile than women, allowing them more access to information and networking opportunities; and 3) it is not culturally acceptable for a woman to open a business on her own. It is also worth noting that on top these issues, the enabling environment for would-be female entrepreneurs in these communities was also minimal, with no government programmes or NGOs offering economic support such as low-interest loans. This is critical since women by and large lack any independent access to capital.

By contrast, male adults in three communities (Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya and Kart-i-Bakheter) felt that a wife's support would be largely immaterial to whether or not her husband's business prospered, since all decisions were made by men in any case:

> *Because the husband is responsible for financial questions...the wife's activities [i.e. support] do not affect him.*
>
> Dameer, 32, Damurah, 28, and Dani, 27, Boyina Bagh

> *The husband is the head of the family and he is powerful. Also, the husband is responsible for food and expenditures. He can do all the work without the support of his wife, although if this is the case, the relationship between husband and wife may be affected.*
>
> All male adults, Shirabad Ulya

> *A woman is not in the position in our community to make decisions regarding business outside the home. She is just able to do some things inside the house,*

> *while men are able to go everywhere and make decisions regarding work or business.*
>
> Barir, 30, Naw Da

However, there were two groups of male youths in Boyina Bagh and Kart-i-Bakheter who said that men would have difficulty in pursuing a business if their women would not support them. In Kart-i-Bakheter, male youths explained this in terms of traditionally ascribed gender roles, suggesting that without a wife's support in managing affairs inside the home, he would struggle to run a business outside it.

Needless to say, wives succeeding in business were ultimately seen as a rare and even peculiar scenario across all study communities by the majority of adults and many youths. Female adults in Shirabad Ulya and all participants from Kart-i-Bakheter also said that even if a woman were to run a successful business, she would still have to consult with men about how to spend the money they earned. Only male youths in Boyina Bagh claimed that such women would have "One hundred percent control over the money they have earned."

6.4 Economic cooperation between women and men

In terms of economic cooperation within the household, the general scenario was that a man earns a living and turns over the income to the women to take care of household expenses. This description was especially evident in the accounts by male adults in Boyina Bagh and Shirabad Ulya, and female adults in Naw Da:

> *There is economic assistance among men and women in their family life. If a woman is educated and there is a job for her, she takes the job and gets [a] salary...or if she is uneducated and there is a job for her, then she also does the job...if a woman doesn't have a job and she takes care of the house, doesn't spend more, but according to the husband's income...this is also economic assistance.*
>
> All male adults, Shirabad Ulya.

> *Upon receiving their wages, the men turn over the money to the women and men and women try to make do with their earnings and they share whatever they have in the family.*
>
> All female adults, Naw Da

It is notable from the responses of female adults in Naw Da that this form of economic cooperation only occurs among the couples on the top level of the ladder of power and freedom (LOPF; see Section 2), and that women at the bottom of the ladder were not involved in this kind of teamwork.

7. Summary and Conclusion

Results of the study show that women are faced with considerable barriers that prevent them from accessing economic opportunities. Across all four study areas, women remain constrained by discriminatory attitudes that restrict their mobility, limit employment choices and hinder control over assets.

Adherence to traditional gender stereotypes that regard men as income earners and women as dependents still prevails. This restricts women's mobility and leaves them disadvantaged when it comes to decisions about who will be sent to school and who will join the workforce. Lack of knowledge and education contribute to women being powerless or having no voice in decision-making processes both within and outside the home. In rural areas, women were either unaware of their rights, or unable to exercise them, and decisions about their lives were in the hands of others. This chapter lays out the key findings and some potential ways forward in each of the study's main areas of focus.

Power and freedom

Spending free time was not a common activity in the study communities, and in cases where it did occur, there were differences between how men and women spent it. Women and girls either spent their free time doing household chores or visiting relatives' houses inside the community. For boys and men, on the other hand, activities ranged from doing nothing to studying for classes.

In the LOPF, mobility and decision-making capacity are the primary indicators of one's placement in society, and women with these capabilities were generally placed on the highest rung of the ladder across all four study communities. However, women on the top rung were still faced with limitations not encountered by their male counterparts: Being placed on the top step of the ladder did not necessarily mean that they were earning their own income, and even if they did, they were not guaranteed to have full control over the money they earned.

The men and women on the bottom step of the LOPF lacked both mobility and decision-making power; in this respect, they appeared in some ways to be more equal than men and women on the top rung of the ladder. However, a closer examination of the status of women on this step reveals that if there were a step below the bottom step, they would actually be placed there. This is because without the power to make decisions themselves, they still have to seek the consent of men who may themselves already be on the bottom step.

As one climbs up the LOPF, one observes a gradation of decision-making capacity and mobility among both men and women. However, while mobility and decision-making ability are the chief factors needed for any man or woman to move up a step on the LOPF, women had to put in significantly more work to make this transition than men did. For example a woman on the bottom step has to have an education, a job, networks, and to make sure her children are educated in order to move up a step. By contrast, the main thing a man needs to move up is a good job that pays well. In terms of slipping down the LOPF, it was felt that restrictive cultural practices could still knock a woman off the top step, whereas men could only slip down as a result of natural disasters, violent conflict or health problems.

It is significant to note that women in both Kart-i-Bakheter and Naw Da accompanied their assessment of who was where on the LOPF by explicitly laying out the conditions

they felt needed to be made to foster greater upward mobility on the ladder. In doing so, they argued that communities needed to modify their cultural practices and acknowledge women's existing rights in order to provide them with more opportunities.

Women's limited decision-making capacity, mobility and education also has a significant impact on their levels of political capital. While women's networks remain largely kin-based and confined to the household, men are able to attend organised meetings and make decisions on matters of importance to the community. While this division has been eroded somewhat by the introduction of women's *shuras*, via the NSP, questions over their long-term sustainability remain. To date, no woman has ever been elected to a community-wide leadership position in any of the study areas, with the leaders of women's *shuras* elected only by women.

Marriage and children

In general, people's idea of what constitutes an ideal spouse focuses—just as it did ten years ago—around the customary gender roles assigned to men and women. A woman who takes care of her husband, carries out household chores and manages the family budget is characterised as a good wife. Similarly, a man who has an income and provides well for his family qualifies as a good husband. However, certain other attributes of what currently makes a good spouse cited in different study communities pointed to a change in perspective compared to the previous decade. For example, female adults in the two urban communities explained that a good wife now has an education and earns her own income. In all communities except impoverished Naw Da, a good husband is now expected to have at least some level of education. All participants also stated that good husbands should be knowledgeable about women's rights. These new attributes of a good spouse represent—up to a point—a shift away from traditional perspectives. It is important to examine both what has driven these shifts, and what implications they might have for the future. In particular, the new expectation that husbands understand women's rights represents one potentially fruitful opportunity for positive change.

Encouragingly, there appears to have been a significant change in marriage practices across all four study areas in recent years. Youth participants in each community related that at present, boys and girls are asked whether or not they accept the person that their parents have arranged for them to marry. However, this does not erase the fact that parents are still fundamentally the ones in charge of determining when and to whom their children will be married.

While youth participants were pessimistic about this overall state of affairs changing any time in the near future, they still made certain suggestions about more specific elements of marriage practices in their communities. For instance, youth participants in Naw Da proposed that children be married only when they reach legal age (i.e. 18 and above). More widespread, however, was the suggestion on the part of both male and female youths that the *walwar* be reduced, and in the case of Kart-i-Bakheter, abolished. Complaints about the *walwar* focused both on the fact that could antagonise newly-married couples because of the debts it generated, and the commodification of women it represented by putting a price on a young girl's life (a commodification that some female youth participants, by contrast, were ready to accept). Reducing or abolishing the *walwar* must therefore be examined and addressed, not only to assist newly-wedded couples, but to convey that no monetary value can compensate for anyone's being.

The majority of youth participants wanted to have small families, even though most of them came from large households. However, the actual decision on how many children

a couple will have apparently still rests with the husband. Neither of the two Kabul communities expressed a specific preference over the sex of their children. However, youth participants in Parwan generally wanted sons more than they did daughters for the following reasons: 1) boys protect their families; 2) even when boys get married, they remain economically productive members of their own families, unlike girls who go and live with their husbands; and 3) boys inherit all property and responsibility when their fathers die.

Only a few participants ventured to discuss domestic violence. Their answers suggested that there was a link between levels of violence and a couple's place on the LOPF, with women on the lowest rung most susceptible to abuse from their husbands, in part because of the stress economic hardship placed on their households. Beyond this, participants all but refused to discuss questions of family planning or divorce, insisting that they were private matters dealt with within the household.

All of these three areas present significant challenges to policymakers and programmers looking to provide choices or agency for women to take command of their own bodies and being. It is thus important to develop strategies to raise consciousness on these issues and explore how communication campaigns might be integrated into existing formal and informal education programmes. In terms of domestic violence specifically, incorporating women's *shuras* in efforts to address the issue—for example via mediation—represent one possible avenue to be explored in future.

Education

In general, male youths across all study communities had much better access to education than their female counterparts. When making decisions on whether to send their daughters to school—if they could afford to do so—parents primarily considered the distance to the nearest school, along with the prevailing security conditions and, in some cases, traditional norms. For boys, by contrast, the only limiting factor beyond economic considerations was age.

Currently, education did not play much of a role in the LOPF ranking since most female participants (except in the urban communities) had low levels of education, and many had not gone to school at all. That said, improving the degree of women's education is a critical foundation for any improvement of their status and rights. Getting an education has clear economic returns since it is directly linked to the kind of job opportunities that are available. Currently, however, the chances of girls going to school in these communities will remain low until structural changes—such as the provision of new schools within the villages, reliable transportation, and better security on the roads—take place.

Economic opportunities

In Kart-i-Bakheter, some women were doing paid work and in Shirabad Ulya, some women were engaging in home-based income-generating activities. However, in the other two communities, women were doing no more paid work than they were ten years ago under the Taliban. For a woman, being able to earn an income had a significant impact on her decision-making power and mobility, in turn helping her move up the LOPF. In addition, exposure to the outside world that paid employment in particular brings can help raise women's awareness and, in turn, change both their own and their families' expectations of themselves.

A number of factors affect women's entrance to paid work. At first glance, cultural constraints were the main factors hindering women's mobility and thus shutting off

their chances of taking work outside their homes and communities. However, participant responses across study communities suggested that attitudes toward women working outside the home are shifting. This highlights another important constraint: in the current economic climate, relatively few work opportunities are available, and without enough education or experience, women are at a major disadvantage in competing for those jobs that are available.

It is also worth noting that despite the above shift in attitudes toward women being able to work for pay, there was still a sense among many participants that women and men should still work in accordance with their assigned gender roles. This meant that distinctions remained in terms of the types of work it was appropriate for women and men to engage in. In this context, female and male youths agreed that they would not want to switch places with the opposite sex in terms of their economic roles—a factor it is important to consider when designing gender-specific programmes or education for young people. Beyond this, there was also a sense that men's work is ultimately more important than that of women. Since men are still expected to act as the main breadwinner, it was felt that it would be more problematic for a man to lose his job than a woman, and that if new opportunities were to be created, they should be made available to men first and foremost. As a consequence of these perceptions, women's work and unpaid economic contributions to their families are devalued, which could in turn lead to a tendency to be lenient in terms of work policies and guidelines in jobs where most of the workers are women.

These distinctions where especially stark when it came to the question of who could own or operating a business. This was largely seen to be the sole preserve of men, and participants across study communities remarked that a woman setting up a business would represent an unusual or even peculiar scenario. Adult participants also felt it would be difficult for women to set up a business without a man's support for the following reasons: 1) men hold the majority of decision-making power in the household; 2) men enjoy more mobility than women; and 3) is not normal cultural practice for a woman to set up a business on her own. Some of these participants also noted that even if women were able to successfully run their own businesses, they would still need their husbands' permission on how to spend their income.

Within these multiple barriers, though, there are still cracks and spaces for women to pass through, and enabling environments in the different study communities have already yielded various changes in outlook and practice. These have included women's empowerment initiatives on the part of both the government (the NSP) and NGOs, migration, higher education levels, availability and proximity to schools for boys and girls, and good infrastructure links to neighbouring communities. In future, strategies could also be developed to create participation processes that empower women to voice out their particular ideas and issues in more equitable ways.

Overall, women's situation in the study communities seemed at first glance to have progressed little over the past ten years. However, a closer look reveals that important changes are taking place, opening up spaces and avenues for women's participation in development endeavours that result into their empowerment. It is vital to continue and build on this momentum by making maximum use of these opportunities, which are vital in helping women and young people gain more control of their lives.

Annex

Annex Table 1: Summary table of fieldwork activities conducted in Boyina Bagh, Shirabad Ulya, Kabul; and Kart-i-Bakheter, Naw Da, Parwan

Data collection method	*Duration*	*Purpose*	*Informants/participants*			
			Boyina Bagh	*Shirabad Ulya*	*Kart-i-Bakheter*	*Naw Da*
Activity 1. Community questionnaire	1 hour	To gain an understanding of the local context; community-level factors that may contribute to gender differences and changes in gender norms; and practices surrounding economic decision-making and access to opportunities	Key informants with 3 participants	1 key informant	1 key informant	2 key informants
Activity 2. Focus group discussion with youth: Making economic choices	2.5 hours	To explore with young women and men: • Happiness • Daily time use • Decisions surrounding transitions from school to work and family formation • Independence, cooperation and obligations in economic decision-making processes • Divorce, family dispute resolution mechanisms • Local economic opportunities • Savings practices • Community participation • Knowledge of gender-related rights • Role models • Hopes for the future	1 FGD of **female** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 9 participants 1 FGD of **male** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 9 participants	1 FGD of **female** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 9 participants 1 FGD of **male** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 9 participants	1 FGD of **female** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 8 participants 1 FGD of **male** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 8 participants	1 FGD of **female** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 12 participants 1 FGD of **male** youth, ages 18 to 24 with 8 participants
Activity 3. Focus group discussion with adults: Ladder of power and freedom	2.5 hours	To explore with adult women and men: • Happiness • Differences in the exercise of power and freedom, with a focus on economic decisions • Local economic opportunities • Independence, cooperation, and obligations in economic decision-making processes • Divorce, family dispute resolution mechanisms • Sources of economic support • Household gender relations • General patterns of domestic and community violence • Hopes for the future	1 FGD of **female** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 10 participants 1 FGD of **male** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 8 participants	1 FGD of **female** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 10 participants 1 FGD of **male** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 10 participants	1 FGD of **female** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 10 participants 1 FGD of **male** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 8 participants	1 FGD of **female** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 10 participants 1 FGD of **male** adults, ages 25 to 60 with 11 participants
Activity 4. Mini-case study	1 to 2 hours	To provide in-depth analysis of a finding that emerges as important for understanding gender norms or structures shaping economic decisions in the area	Key informants with 3 participants	Key informants with 3 participants	Key informants with 2 participants	Key informants with 3 participants

Annex Table 2: Number of participants from CQs, FGDs, and mini-case studies

Area		*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Boyina Bagh	Adults	9	15	24
	Youth	8	9	17
Total		17	24	41
Shirabad Ulya	Adults	10	10	20
	Youth	9	9	18
Total		19	19	38
Kart-i-Bakheter	Adults	10	11	21
	Youth	8	8	16
Total		18	19	37
Naw Da	Adults	11	15	26
	Youth	12	8	20
Total		23	23	46
Overall total		**77**	**85**	**162**

Annex Table 3: Socio-demographic profile of adult FGD participants

Attributes	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Age:			
25-33	5	8	13
34-42	10	10	20
43-51	15	8	23
52-60	7	8	15
61 and above	0	6	6
Marital status:			
Single	0	0	0
Married	37	40	77
Educational level:			
0	32	15	47
1-3	0	0	0
4-6	1	4	5
7-9	1	1	2
10-12	3	12	15
12th grade+	1	7	8
No. of children:			
0	1	1	2
1-3	7	5	12
4-6	16	10	26
7-9	9	14	23
10-12	4	10	14
Total	37	40	77

Annex Table 4: Socio-demographic profile of youth FGD participants

Attributes	*Female*	*Male*	*Total*
Age:			
18-21	20	23	43
22-25	17	9	26
25 and above	0	2	2
Marital status:			
Single	23	24	47
Married	14	10	24
Educational level:			
0	28	10	38
1-3	0	0	0
4-6	2	0	2
7-9	2	7	9
10-12	5	16	21
12th grade+	0	1	1
No. of children:			
0	24	25	49
1-3	6	7	13
4-6	7	2	9
Total	37	34	71

Annex Table 5: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of adult female and male FGD participants in Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female adults*		*Views of male adults*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√	√	√
Government work		√	√	√
Doctor	√	√		
Business				√
The worst ways to make a living				
Farmer		√		√
Shopkeeper		√		
Tailor	√	√		
Poultry/livestock-raising	√	√		
Wage labour				√

Annex Table 6: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of youth female and male FGD participants in Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female youths*		*Views of male youths*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√	√	√
Government work		√		
Doctor	√	√		
Business/trade		√		√
Tailoring	√			
Livestock-raising		√	√	√
Driver				√
The worst ways to make a living				
Farming		√		√
Embroidery	√			
Poultry-raising	√	√		
Wage labour	√	√		√
Collecting wood	√			
Cook		√		
Police		√		
Army				√

Annex Table 7: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of adult female and male FGD participants in Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female adults*		*Views of male adults*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√	√	√
Government work	√	√	√	√
Doctor	√	√	√	√
Business/shopkeeper		√	√	√
NGO worker	√	√		
Engineer			√	√
The worst ways to make a living				
Farmer		√		
Driver				√
Fruit-picking		√		
Soldier/policeman		√		√
Wage labour		√		√

Annex Table 8: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of youth female and male FGD participants in Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female youth*		*Views of male youth*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√	√	√
Doctor	√	√	√	√
Government work	√	√	√	√
Trade	√	√	√	√
Tailor	√	√		
The worst ways to make a living				
Fruit picking		√		
Shopkeeper		√		
Soldier		√		
Poultry-raising		√		
Driver				√
Farmer				√
Livestock-raising			√	√
Baker			√	√
Brick-making				√

Annex Table 9: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of adult female and male FGD participants in Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female adults*		*Views of male adults*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√		
Government work	√	√		
Doctor	√	√		
Shopkeeper	√	√		
Business		√		
Factory work			√	√
Poultry-raising			√	
Carpet-weaving/embroidery			√	
Carpenter				√
Livestock-raising			√	√
The worst ways to make a living				
Farmer	√			
Washing clothes	√	√		
Wage labour	√	√	√	
Driver	√			
Porter	√	√		

Annex Table 10: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of youth female and male FGD participants in Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female youth*		*Views of male youth*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Teacher	√	√	√	√
Government work	√	√	√	√
NGO work	√	√	√	√
Factory work			√	√
Trade/shopkeeper		√		√
Tailor			√	√
The worst ways to make a living				
Farmer		√		√
Construction work		√		√
Wage labour		√		√

Annex Table 11: Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of adult female and male FGD participants in Naw Da, Parwan Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female adults*		*Views of male adults*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Driver				√
Tailor			√	√
Livestock/poultry-raising	√	√	√	√
Government work	√	√		
Shopkeeper		√		
Modern farmer	√	√		
Teacher		√		
Engineer		√		
Doctor				
The worst ways to make a living				
Quarrying stone		√		√
Wage labour		√		√
Collecting wood				√
Fetching water			√	√
Potter		√		
Traditional farmer		√		
Porter		√		
Street vendor		√		

Annex Table 12. Best and worst ways to make a living: Responses of youth female and male FGD participants in Naw Da, Parwan Province

The best ways to make a living	*Views of female youth*		*Views of male youth*	
	Women	*Men*	*Women*	*Men*
Shopkeeper		√		√
Driver		√		√
Tailor	√	√	√	√
Household tasks	√		√	
Teacher	√	√		
The worst ways to make a living				
Quarrying stone		√		√
Carrying stone		√		√
Collecting wood	√	√		
Fetching water	√	√	√	√

Annex Table 13: Characteristics of a good wife today: Result of female and male adults' FGDs

FGD	*Boyina Bagh*	*Shirabad Ulya*	*Kart-i-Bakheter*	*Naw Da*
Female adults	1. Good behaviour within the family 2. No fighting; patient 3. Sociable; deals well with neighbours	1. Educated 2. Has a job 3. Has a good attitude toward other people 4. Accepts her husband's orders 5. Serves her husband's parents 6. Spends money according to the family's economic conditions	1. Educated 2. Kind 3. Doctor 4. Broad-minded 5. Takes care of the children	1. Has good manners 2. Modest 3. Kind to other villagers 4. Courageous 5. Sociable
Male adults	1. Keeps in mind what her husband wants 2. Lives according to husband's financial position 3. Does not demand things from her husband 4. Good behaviour; does not quarrel with husband 5. Looks after her family/ children, cooks good food, and pays attention to the home	1. Contributes to the income of the family 2. Takes care of her children 3. Keeps the house clean 4. Has a good attitude toward her husband and prevents conflict 5. Has a good attitude toward her in-laws 6. Educated 7. Has skills like cooking, tailoring, and embroidery	1. Educated 2. Shows good behaviour toward husband and members of family 3. Educates her children 4. Prays five times a day 5. May go out and work	1. Must be an expert in the housework 2. Must follow and respect husband 3. Must think about the family expenses 4. Helps husband by raising livestock

Annex Table 14: Characteristics of a good husband today: Result of female and male adults' FGDs

FGD	*Boyina Bagh*	*Shirabad Ulya*	*Kart-i-Bakheter*	*Naw Da*
Female adults	1. Education 2. Has good behaviour 3. Knows women's rights and family 4. Deals well with relatives and friends	1. Literate 2. Has a good job 3. Has good behaviour and deals well with other people 4. Respects his wife's relatives 5. Protects the children 6. Has a good style 7. Pious	1. Educated 2. Broad-minded 3. Does not impose a lot of restrictions 4. Merciful 5. Clever 6. Developed 7. Has a good job 8. Uneducated but still a good father 9. Farmer but works hard 10. Sensitive toward responsibilities	1. Hardworking, kind and responsible 2. Has good income 3. Is responsible for providing all requirements of the family. 4. Has good manners, is kind and does not beat his wife and children.
Male adults	1. Good behaviour toward the wife; listens to her 2. Helps his wife with the household chores 3. Solves problems with his wife and does not abuse her 4. Does not restrict his wife 5. Good financial status; fulfils his responsibility to the family	1. Has a good job/income 2. Helps his wife with housework 3. Fulfils his wife's needs/ does not fight with her 4. Has good relations with in-laws and other villagers 5. Cares about children's education 6. A Muslim	1. Educated and knows the rights of men and women 2. Helps with household tasks 2. Good behaviour with all family members and wife 3. Solves problems at home	1. Kind to his children and other family members. 2. Has income and will provides a good life for his family

Annex Table 15: Characteristics of a good wife of the previous generation: Results of female and male adults' FGDs

FGD	*Boyina Bagh*	*Shirabad Ulya*	*Kart-i-Bakheter*	*Naw Da*
Female adults	1. At peace with members of her family 2. At peace with those in the community	1. Attends to her husband, children, and the house 2. Does not go anywhere 3. Does not cause trouble or conflict 4. Accepts her husband's orders	1. Modest 2. Head of family 3. Not extravagant 4. Kind 5. Uneducated but able to perform her tasks as a wife and mother 6. Few are teachers and educated	1. Does not go anywhere; modest; not talkative 2. Courageous; hardworking; well-behaved
Male adults	1. Similar to the characteristics of today's good wife 2. Attuned to her husband's financial status and to that of the home	1. Has a good attitude toward her husband 2. Serves her husband, mother-in-law, and father-in-law 3. Has a part-time job as well as attending to housework	1. Does not go out of the house 2. Participates in tasks at home 3. Prays five times a day 4. Does not go out to homes of friends or relatives without the permission of her husband	1. Modest; follows her husband

Annex Table 16: Female youth daily schedules in Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province

Time	*Participant 3*	*Participant 5*	*Participant 2*	*Opposite sex*
5:00 a.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	School
8:00	Free time	Free time	Housework	School
9:00	Housework	Free time	Housework	School
10:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	School
11:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
12:00 p.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
1:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
2:00	Housework	Free time	Free time	Earning income
3:00	Housework	Housework	Free time	Earning income
4:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
5:00	Free time	Housework	Housework	Free time
6:00	Free time	Free time	Housework	Free time
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Free time
8:00	Housework	Housework	Free time	Free time
9:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time

Annex Table 17: Male youth daily schedules in Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province

Time	*Participant 1*	*Participant 3*	*Participant 4*	*Opposite sex*
5:00 a.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
7:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
8:00	School	School	School	Housework
9:00	School	School	School	Housework
10:00	School	School	School	Free time
11:00	School	School	School	Free time
12:00 p.m.	School	School	School	Housework
1:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Housework
2:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Housework
3:00	School	Earning income	School	Free time
4:00	School	Earning income	School	Free time
5:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
6:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Housework
7:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Housework
8:00	School	School	School	Free time
9:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time

Annex Table 18: Female youth daily schedules in Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

Time	*Participant 8*	*Participant 1*	*Participant 7*
5:00 a.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
8:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
9:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
10:00	Earning income	School	Earning income
11:00	Earning income	School	Earning income
12:00 p.m.	Housework	School	Housework
1:00	Free time	Commuting	Free time
2:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
3:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
4:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
5:00	Free time	Free time	Free time
6:00	Free time	Free time	Free time
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
8:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
9:00	Housework	Housework	Housework
10:00	Housework	Housework	Housework

Annex Table 19: Male youth daily schedules in Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

Time	*Partcicipant 1*	*Participant 5*	*Participant 8*	*Opposite sex*
5:00 a.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Free time
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Housework
8:00	Earning income	School	School	School
9:00	Earning income	School	School	School
10:00	Commuting	School	School	School
11:00	Commuting	School	School	School
12:00 p.m.	Commuting	School	School	School
1:00	Commuting	School	School	Housework
2:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
3:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
4:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
5:00	Housework	School	Free time	Housework
6:00	Free time	Free time	School	Housework
7:00	Free time	School	School	Housework

Annex Table 20: Female youth daily schedules in Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

Time	*Participant 1*	*Participant 2*	*Participant 3*	*Opposite sex*
6:00 a.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Free time
7:00	Housework	Commuting	Housework	Earning income
8:00	School	School	Housework	Earning income
9:00	School	School	Housework	Earning income
10:00	School	School	Housework	Earning income
11:00	School	School	Free time	Earning income
12:00 p.m.	School	School	Housework	Earning income
1:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Earning income
2:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Earning income
3:00	Free time	Free time	Housework	Earning income
4:00	Free time	Free time	Housework	Earning income
5:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Free time
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Free time
7:00	Housework	Free time	Housework	Free time
8:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
9:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time

Annex Table 21: Male youth daily schedules in Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

Time	*Participant 1*	*Participant 6*	*Participant 7*	*Opposite sex*
6:00 a.m.	Housework	Earning income	Housework	Housework
7:00	Housework	Earning income	Housework	Housework
8:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
9:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
10:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
11:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income
12:00 p.m.	School	Commuting	Earning income	Housework
1:00	Housework	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
2:00	Housework	Commuting	Earning income	Housework
3:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
4:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
5:00	School	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
6:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
7:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
8:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Free time
9:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Free time
10:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Free time

Annex Table 22: Female youth daily schedules in Naw Da, Parwan Province

Time	*Participant 5*	*Participant 8*	*Participant 9*	*Opposite sex*
5:00 a.m.	Housework	Free time	Free time	Earning income
6:00	Housework	Free time	Housework	Earning income
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
8:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Commuting
9:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
10:00	Housework	Housework	Free time	Earning income
11:00	Housework	Housework	Free time	Earning income
12:00 p.m.	Housework	Housework	Housework	Earning income
1:00	Free time	Housework	Housework	Commuting
2:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Earning income
3:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Earning income
4:00	Housework	Free time	Free time	Earning income
5:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Commuting
6:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Commuting
7:00	Housework	Housework	Housework	Commuting
8:00	Free time	Free time	Housework	Free time
9:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
10:00	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time

Annex Table 23: Male youth daily schedules in Naw Da, Parwan Province

Time	*Participant 1*	*Participant 2*	*Participant 3*	*Opposite sex*
5:00am	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
6:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
7:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
8:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
9:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
10:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
11:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
12:00pm	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Housework
1:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
2:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
3:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
4:00	Earning income	Earning income	Earning income	Free time
5:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
6:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
7:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
8:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Housework
9:00	Commuting	Commuting	Commuting	Free time

Annex Table 24: Placement of women on the LOPF at present and 10 years ago by percentage—Responses of female adults

Community	*Top step*		*Bottom step*	
	Present (%)	*10 years ago (%)*	*Present (%)*	*10 years ago (%)*
Boyina Bagh	20	10	30	60
Shirabad Ulya	20	20	70	60
Kart-i-Bakheter	60	30	10	40
Naw Da	20	20	80	80

Annex Table 25: Placement of men on the LOPF at present and 10 years ago by percentage—Responses of male adults

Community	*Top step*		*Bottom step*	
	Present (%)	*10 years ago (%)*	*Present (%)*	*10 years ago (%)*
Boyina Bagh	30	20	40	50
Shirabad Ulya	15	15	30	25
Kart-i-Bakheter	5	10	20	20
Naw Da	70	30	30	70

Annex Table 26: Causes of tension, forms of abuse, and consequences of abuse—Responses of adult men and women in Boyina Bagh, Kabul Province

Female adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Bad economy 2. Joint house 3. Living with in-laws 4. Disagreement 5. Enmity 6. Nervousness	1. Verbal 2. Punishment 3. Killing 4. Looting 5. Theft and kidnapping	1. Poverty and misfortune 2. Homelessness 3. Joblessness 4. Restrictions 5. Failing
Male adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Misbehaviour of wife 2. Lack of wife's attention to children's cleanliness and discipline at home 2. Careless in entertaining the guests 3. Not fulfilling husband's orders 4. Reacts against husband's father and mother	1. Verbal 2. Psychological (for example not talking to each other) 3. Physical	1. Financial restrictions on the wife 2. Not talking to the wife 3. Forbidding her from visiting her parents' home 4. Bad behaviour of husband 5. Negative changes at home regarding discipline

Annex Table 27: Causes of tension, forms of abuse, and consequences of abuse—Responses of adult men and women in Shirabad Ulya, Kabul Province

Female adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Not having their own house; renting a house 2. Having a joint house (living with other families in the same household) 3. Having economic problems 4. Feelings of hatred 5. Mental illness 6. Excessive conservatism	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse 3. Robbery and theft 4. Killing and murder	1. Loss of job 2. Restrictions 3. Conservatism; the family does not develop 4. Poverty and failure 5. Hatred 6. No house
Male adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Argument 2. Bad attitude of wife toward husband's family 3. Bad attitude of husband toward wife's family 4. Poverty and misery 5. Unemployment 6. Interference of husband's father and mother in the life of husband and wife	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse 3. Psychological abuse	1. Inhibiting wife from visiting her father's house 2. No talking 3. Sadness 4. No coordination; husband and wife do not help each other 5. Misunderstanding and no harmony between husband and wife

Annex Table 28: Causes of tension, forms of abuse, and consequences of abuse—Responses of adult men and women in Kart-i-Bakheter, Parwan Province

Female adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Weak finance 2. Interference of families 3. Backbiting between husband and wife 4. Selfishness 5. Suspicion 6. Prejudice 7. Restriction 8. Irresponsibility	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse 3. Psychological abuse 4. Economic abuse	1. Conflicts have negative impacts on children 2. Suicide may occur 3. There may be divorce or disunity between the couple 4. Man leaves home 5. Poor economic conditions 6. Disagreement in the family
Male adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Poverty 2. Illiteracy	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse	All members of family become unhappy; conflict affects children badly; more conflict and physical violence may occur

Annex Table 29: Causes of tension, forms of abuse, and consequences of abuse—Responses of adult men and women in Naw Da, Parwan Province

Female adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Poor finances 2. Fighting among children and grown-ups; involvement in a fight 3. Accusation 4. Joblessness of husbands	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse	1. Negative impact on children 2. Fighting; people have bad relations with each other in the village 3. Enmity among the people 4. No links between children 5. Poor relationship which ends up in violence; they hurt each other verbally and men hurt women physically
Male adults		
Causes of tension	Forms of abuse	Consequences of abuse
1. Unemployment 2. Poverty 3. Customs 4. Wife going somewhere without permission of husband 5. Violence of children	1. Verbal abuse 2. Physical abuse 3. Psychological abuse	Bad language between the son-in-law and mother-in-law; enmity

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