

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ENHANCING  
WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN**

**THESIS**

**Shogofa SAHAR**

**Department of Political Science and International Relations  
Political Science and International Relations Program**

**APRIL 2020**

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**APRIL 2020**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications. I read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and accept the responsibility for conducting the research and writing this thesis. I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this study that may arise in conducting the research, obtained the relevant ethical and/or safety approval (where applicable), and acknowledged my obligations and the rights of the participants. I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis (01 / 05 /2020).

**Shogofa SAHAR**

**Signature**

*To my sisters*

## **FOREWORD**

It is very grateful to have the presence of God who has given human beings the power of speech and research, and I have been able to study and prepare the present thesis. In gratitude for the blessings of God, it is a great favor that I have been graciously motivated and persevered, and now I have been able to complete my treatise.

I would like specially thank to my advisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Filiz KATMAN for guiding and supporting me to finish this thesis. I also express my gratitude to all the professors, my family and friends who have motivated me to learn science and knowledge over time.

**APRIL 2020**

**Shogofa SAHAR**

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## **OBSERVATIONS**

<b>AIHRC</b>	: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
<b>ANDS</b>	: Afghanistan National Development Strategy
<b>AREU</b>	: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
<b>AWM</b>	: Afghan Women's Mission
<b>AWN</b>	: Afghan Women's Network
<b>CSOs</b>	: Civil society organizations
<b>EVAW</b>	: Elimination of Violence against Women Law
<b>FMF</b>	: Feminist Majority Foundation
<b>GEP</b>	: Gene expression programming
<b>MOWA</b>	: Ministry of Women's Affairs
<b>NATO</b>	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NAPWA</b>	: National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
<b>NGO</b>	: Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NSIA</b>	: National Statistics and Information Authority
<b>ODA</b>	: Official Development Assistance
<b>UN</b>	: United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	: United Nations Development Program
<b>UNAMA</b>	: UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
<b>USA</b>	: United States of America
<b>USAID</b>	: U.S. Agency for International Development
<b>USSR</b>	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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## THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ENHANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of *international organizations* in increasing the *political participation* of *Afghan women*. The current situation in Afghanistan has created a series of restrictions for women, such as traditionalism, extremism, terrorism, misconceptions and distortions of the Islam. Despite such conditions in Afghanistan and the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan, *international organizations* and many countries have focused on *humanitarian aids*, and women have also been subjected to financial projects and supports. Based on the objectives of this research, the attention of *international organizations* and the international community in the field of women and their empowerment projects is certainly based on a series of goals, but along with each goal, some advantages have been created for women in the case of their human and civil rights. Today, *Afghan women* work alongside Afghan men in public affairs and participate better in political and international affairs of Afghanistan. According to research hypotheses, *Afghan women* have emerged from legal restrictions based on a series of legal actions and changes with the support of the international community and *international organizations*, but not to the desired extent. Afghanistan's relations with many *international organizations* have attracted their attention for *humanitarian aids*. The plight of women in Afghanistan before a decade has led to a large number of *humanitarian aids* being provided to Afghanistan to improve the situation of women. With the effectiveness of some of those aids, it had a positive effect on the legal status of women and *women rights*. Although women's rights are still being violated in many cases in some parts of Afghanistan, but the situation of women in general has improved much more than in previous decades. *International organizations* have generally provided two types of assistance to Afghanistan in the field of women. One part was financial and budgetary assistance, and the other was technical and operational assistance under empowerment projects. As a result, the assistance of *international organizations* in the field of *Afghan women* has been able to have a positive and significant impact on their civic and *political participation*. Although these assistances have not been managed more effectively and there are still many problems facing *Afghan women*, but mainly it had a positive impact on *women rights*. With the implementation of some women's empowerment projects and the support of the international community for women, the Government of Afghanistan has also undertaken several activities in the field of gender equality, which has increased the role of women in Afghanistan's political and international affairs.

**Keywords:** *International Organization, Humanitarian Aid, Women Rights, Political Participation, Afghan Women.*

## AFGANİSTAN'DA KADINLARIN SİYASİ KATILIMINI GELİŞTİRMEDE ULUSLARARASI KURULUŞLARIN ROLÜ

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma, *uluslararası örgütlerin Afgan kadınlarının siyasi katılımını artırmadaki rolünü* inceliyor. Afganistan'daki mevcut durum, kadınlara gelenekçilik, aşırıcılık, terörizm, yanlış kavrayışlar ve İslam'ın çarpıtılması gibi bir dizi kısıtlama getirdi. Afganistan'daki bu koşullara ve Afganistan'ın jeopolitik önemine rağmen, *uluslararası örgütler* ve birçok ülke *insani yardıma* odaklanmıştır ve kadınlar da finansal projelere ve desteklere maruz kalmıştır. Bu araştırmanın amaçlarına dayanarak, uluslararası kuruluşların ve uluslararası toplumun kadın alanındaki dikkati ve güçlendirme projeleri kesinlikle bir dizi hedefe dayanmaktadır, ancak her hedefle birlikte, kadınlar için bazı avantajlar yaratılmıştır. insani ve medeni haklarına ilişkin dava. Bugün *Afgan kadınları*, Afgan erkekleriyle birlikte halkla ilişkilerde çalışıyor ve Afganistan'ın siyasi ve uluslararası işlerine daha iyi katılıyor. Araştırma hipotezlerine göre, *Afgan kadınları*, uluslararası toplumun ve *uluslararası örgütlerin* desteğiyle bir dizi yasal eyleme ve değişikliğe dayalı yasal kısıtlamalardan ortaya çıktı, ancak istenen ölçüde değil. Afganistan'ın birçok *uluslararası örgüt*le ilişkileri *insani yardım* konusuna dikkat çekti. On yıl önce Afganistan'daki kadınların durumu, kadınların durumunu iyileştirmek için Afganistan'a çok sayıda *insani yardım* sağlanmasına neden oldu. Bu yardımların bazılarının etkinliği ile kadınların hukuki durumu ve *Kadın Hakları* üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi oldu. Her ne kadar Afganistan'ın bazı bölgelerinde *kadın hakları* hala ihlal ediliyor olsa da, genel olarak kadınların durumu önceki on yıllardan çok daha fazla iyileşti. *Uluslararası örgütler* Afganistan'a kadınlar konusunda genellikle iki tür yardım sağlamıştır. Bir kısmı mali ve bütçesel yardım, diğeri ise güçlendirme projeleri kapsamında teknik ve operasyonel yardımdı. Sonuç olarak, *Afgan kadınları* alanındaki uluslararası kuruluşların yardımları, sivil ve *siyasi katılım*ları üzerinde olumlu ve önemli bir etkiye sahip olmuştur. Bu yardımlar daha etkili bir şekilde yönetilmemesine ve *Afgan kadınlarının* yüz yüze kaldığı birçok sorun olmasına rağmen, esas olarak kadınların insan hakları ve *Kadın Hakları* üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olmuştur. Bazı kadınların güçlendirilmesi projelerinin uygulanması ve uluslararası toplumun kadınlar için desteği ile Afganistan Hükümeti, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği alanında kadınların Afganistan'ın siyasi ve uluslararası ilişkilerindeki rolünü arttıran çeşitli faaliyetler de üstlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Uluslararası Örgüt, İnsani Yardım, Kadın Hakları, Siyasi Katılım, Afgan Kadınları.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

According to previous studies and their results, gender equality and enhancing women's participation in social affairs especially in policymaking is one of the most important principles in the equality of employment and legal equality of women with men. According to the sources used as background for research, there are conclusions that gender equality and employment equality can play a key role in women's participation in social and political affairs. In these resources and studies on gender equality and its role in increasing the role of women in national and international affairs, we will investigate the role of international organizations in enhancing women's social and political participation in Afghanistan.

In international affairs, sharing similar interests, be this economic, social or political, a series of actions have resulted in the joint benefit of some countries, which have created international organizations. It is widely believed that international organizations pursue shared regional and global goals. According to the studies, international organizations are exchanging views among members based on these goals. Afghanistan, which is a member of many international organizations, has received a lot of assistance from these organizations over the years, given the acute political and social situation in the country. International assistance and aids in Afghanistan are mostly in the fields of peace and security, human rights, and democracy. Significant budgets are being allocated to gender equality practices to improve women's conditions in Afghanistan as well as to improve their legal status and increase their political participation. Legal restriction of women in Afghanistan, their constraints in the social system and the oppressions and practices of violence against women have attracted the attention of international organizations and the international community. Accordingly, in this research, I seek to examine the role of these assistance, donations and projects of international organizations in improving women's legal status and their political participation in Afghanistan.

According to historical evidence, the social and law enforcement situation in Afghanistan has caused human rights and women's rights to be routinely harmed. However, Afghanistan has been a member of many international organizations and due to its geopolitical importance, a great deal of support has been provided by the International Organizations and International Community for various sectors in the country. These assistances have been instrumental for building statehood in Afghanistan, and a large part is for peace and security, human rights and the prevention of violence against women. Extensive part of the provided assistance by the International Community and International Organizations for the development of Afghanistan is also used to empower women and increase their social, economic and political presence. Implementation of women empowerment projects with the financial support of international organizations and the International Community has increased the presence of Afghan women in the social dimensions, as well as their participation in economics and political affairs. However, there is still a range of problems and challenges to be addressed in order to improve the status of women in Afghanistan. The existence of corruption in Afghanistan, terrorism and insecurity, religious extremism, the traditionalism of some strata in Afghanistan, are factors that have impeded women's active social and political participation. Considering all financial support and developmental projects by international organizations and International Community, the question is how these aids have played its role to increase women's political participation in Afghanistan, how the efforts have been implemented so far? What effects did they really have? Which developmental projects have been successful and which ones have failed to result in enhancing women's conditions? While most of their efforts have resulted to improve women's economic, social and political participation in Afghanistan, why have other developmental projects to help women get economically independent been failed? What were the role of education and social awareness in this regard?

All scientific researchers are important according to their goals. Based on the main goals of this study, it highlights the role of International Organizations' and the International Community's assistance to Afghanistan, its use for women empowerment and its effectiveness to improve women's legal status, and their social, economic and political participation in the country. Therefore, the present research, based on its scientific and social significance, is considered important for the researcher.

This research mainly pursues the following questions:

**Main question of research:** How is the impact of International Organizations assistance on women's political participation in Afghanistan?

**Sub questions:**

1. How is the relationship of Afghanistan with International Organizations?
2. How is the legal status of women and their social economic and political participation in Afghanistan?
3. What assistance has been provided by International Organizations in the area of women's rights in Afghanistan?

This research also peruses the aims as follows:

**Main objective:** To Study the role of international organizations' assistance on increasing women's political participation in Afghanistan.

**Sub objectives:**

1. To Study the relationship of Afghanistan with international organizations.
2. To understand the legal status of women and their social, economic and political participation in Afghanistan.
3. To elucidate the kind of assistance by international organizations in the area of women's rights in Afghanistan.

In this research, we will proceed with these hypotheses:

**Main Hypothesis:** It seems that international organizations' assistance in supporting women empowerment projects had positive impact on women's political participation in Afghanistan.

**Sub Hypothesis:**

1. It seems that chaotic situation of Afghanistan grounded a constructive relationship with international organizations that every year Afghanistan resaves a lot of humanitarian helps from international organizations to improve its social system.

2. It seems that legal status of women in Afghanistan was not optimal over the past years, consequently, women are in the social and political constrains.
3. It seems that international organizations have lots of contribution in the case of women empowerment and their social, economic and political participation.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND FEMINIST THEORY**

This section deals with scientific concepts related to research. Women's political and international participation as a dependent variable can be increased with the help and support of international and foreign aids. Women's political participation is an institutional part of women's citizenship rights. Accordingly, it is scientific to use feminist theory to conclude this research. This theory includes various factors in gender equality and thus increases the role of women in social affairs, will increase their political and international presence.

### **2.1. Feminist Theory**

Feminist theories first emerged in publications such as “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” by Mary Wollstonecraft, "The Changing Woman" (Wendy K Kolmar; Frances Bartkowski, 2005). "The Changing Woman" is a Navajo Myth that gave credit to a woman who, in the end, populated the world. In 1851, Sojourner Truth addressed women's rights issues through her publication, "Ain't I a Woman". Sojourner Truth addressed the issue of women having limited rights due to men's flawed perception of women. Truth argued that if a woman of color can perform tasks that were supposedly limited to men, then any woman of any color could perform those same tasks. After her arrest for illegally voting, Susan B. Anthony gave a speech within the court in which she addressed the issues of language within the constitution documented in her publication, "Speech after Arrest for Illegal voting" in 1872. Anthony questioned the authoritative principles of the constitution and its male-gendered language. She raised the question of why women are accountable to be punished under law but they cannot use the law for their own protection (women could not vote, own property, nor give themselves in marriage). She also criticized the constitution for its male-gendered language and questioned why women should have to abide by laws that do not specify women.

Nancy Cott makes a distinction between modern feminism and its antecedents, particularly the struggle for suffrage. In the United States she places the turning point in the decades before and after women obtained the vote in 1920 (1910–1930). She argues that the prior woman movement was primarily about woman as a universal entity, whereas over this 20-year period it transformed itself into one primarily concerned with social differentiation, attentive to individuality and diversity. New issues dealt more with woman's condition as a social construct, gender identity, and relationships within and between genders. Politically this represented a shift from an ideological alignment comfortable with the right, to one more radically associated with the left. (Cott, 1987).

Susan Kingsley Kent says that Freudian patriarchy was responsible for the diminished profile of feminism in the inter-war years, (Kent, 1993) others such as Juliet Mitchell consider this overly simplistic since Freudian theory is not wholly incompatible with feminism (Juliet, 1975). Some feminist scholarship shifted away from the need to establish the origins of family towards analyzing the process of patriarchy. As the title implies, the starting point is the implicit inferiority of women, and the first question de Beauvoir asks is "What Is a Woman"? (Moi, 2000). A woman she realizes is always perceived of as the "other", "she is defined and differentiated with reference to him and not with reference to her". In this book and her essay, "Woman: Myth & Reality", de Beauvoir anticipates Betty Friedan in seeking to demythologize the male concept of woman. "A myth invented by men to confine women to their oppressed state. For women, it is not a question of asserting themselves as women, but of becoming full-scale human beings." "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", or as Toril Moi puts it "a woman defines herself through the way she lives her embodied situation in the world, or in other words, through the way in which she makes something of what the world makes of her". Therefore, the woman must regain subject, to escape her defined role as "other", as a Cartesian point of departure (Bergoffen, 1996). In her examination of myth, she appears as one who does not accept any special privileges for women. Ironically, feminist philosophers have had to extract de Beauvoir herself from out of the shadow of Jean-Paul Sartre to fully appreciate her. (Sullivan, 2000).

Elaine Showalter describes the development of feminist theory as having a number of phases. The first she calls "feminist critique" – where the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls "Gynocritics" – where the "woman is producer of textual meaning" including "the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career and literary history". The last phase she calls "gender theory" – where the "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system" are explored" (Showalter, 1998). This model has been criticized by Toril Moi, who sees it as an essentialist and deterministic model for female subjectivity. She also criticized it for not taking account of the situation for women outside the west (Moi, 2002). From the 1970s onwards, psychoanalytical ideas that have been arising in the field of French feminism have gained a decisive influence on feminist theory. Feminist psychoanalysis deconstructed the phallic hypotheses regarding the Unconscious. Julia Kristeva, Bracha Ettinger and Luce Irigaray developed specific notions concerning unconscious sexual difference, the feminine, and motherhood, with wide implications for film and literature analysis (Wendy K Kolmar; Frances Bartkowski, 2005).

In view of the above discussions and on the basis of the compatibility of this theory with the present research structure, the discussion of women's social and political participation relates to the political and social theories of feminist theory that need to be discussed. Accordingly, women's role in social affairs should be equal to those of men, therefore, in this section we discuss on the participation of women in social and political affairs, with political feminist theories.

Feminist theory can be applied to the field of Public Relations. The feminist scholar Linda Hon examined the major obstacles that women in the field experienced. Some common barriers included male dominance and gender stereotypes. Hon shifted the feminist theory of PR from "women's assimilation into patriarchal systems" to genuine commitment to social restructuring". (Hon, 1995).

Corresponding to the studies Hon conducted, Elizabeth Lance Toth studied Feminist Values in Public Relations. Toth concluded that there is a clear link between feminist gender and feminist value. These values include honesty, sensitivity, perceptiveness, fairness, and commitment. (Toth, 2000).

### **2.1.1. Feminist political theory**

Feminist political theory is a recently emerging field in political and international science focusing on gender and feminist themes within the state, institutions and policies. It questions the "modern political theory, dominated by universalistic liberalist thoughts, which claims indifference to gender or other identity differences and has therefore taken its time to open up to such concerns" (Wendy K Kolmar; Frances Bartkowski, 2005).

Feminist perspectives entered international relations in the late 1980s, at about the same time as the end of the Cold War. This time was not a coincidence because the last forty years the conflict between US and USSR had been the dominant agenda of international politics. After the Cold War, there was continuing relative peace between the main powers. Soon, many new issues appeared on international relation's agenda. More attention was also paid to social movements. Indeed, in those times feminist approaches also used to depict the world politics. Feminists started to emphasize that while women have always been players in international system, their participation has frequently been associated with non-governmental settings such as social movements. However, they could also participate in inter-state decision making process as men did. Until more recently, the role of women in international politics has been confined to being the wives of diplomats, nannies who go abroad to find work and support their family, or sex workers trafficked across international boundaries. Women's contributions have not been seen in the areas where hard power plays significant role such as military. Nowadays, women are gaining momentum in the sphere of international relations in areas of government, diplomacy, academia, etc. Despite barriers to more senior roles, women currently hold 11.1 percent of the seats in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In the U.S. Department of State, women make up 29 percent of the chiefs of mission, and 29 percent of senior foreign positions at USAID (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2010). In contrast, women are profoundly compressed by decisions the statespersons make (Baylis, 2001).

## **2-1-2. Feminist international relations theory**

In the world of politics, until feminist approaches in the 1970s entered the field of international relations, they were viewed with one-sided perspective. Nevertheless, the rise of feminist ideas into the academic discourse of international relations created a challenge in this regard. Feminists, though not all of them women, sought to demonstrate the role of gender in the analysis of international affairs. They argue that women's involvement in above issues can better understand international relations and that gender differences is a must for the world of politics. In the light of this nascent approach, however, international relations theories merely represent the characteristics of masculine states that are unified, logical, competing actors and the only actors in the international arena.

The important point in the feminist perspective is to pay attention to the business of women and to try to understand the reality from their perspective. Feminism as a theory that seeks to alter the structure of the international system and the relationship between states by incorporating the gender and women's experiences has not been the way to go. Ontological and epistemological assumptions of this view remains theoretical.

However, international structures do not seem to allow these changes. Margaret Thatcher, the first British Prime Minister in 1979, came from the Labor Party with the motto of improving the economy and remained in that position until 1990. Her performance in politics earned her the title of "Iron Lady," and analysts see Thatcher as politically well-versed in the famous and influential British Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the 5th and 6th decades. (Ana- Larson, 2008).

In addition, Angela Merkel, the first German female chancellor to hold the post since 2005, was elected by Forbes Magazine as the most powerful women in the world for five consecutive years (2011 to 2015). Previously, she was consistently ranked among the most powerful women in the world in the years 2009 to 2012. In the last decade, Merkel has been able to increase Germany's economic position, increase its political power and, by taking pragmatic approaches in the European Union, transcend the transnational organization through the worst financial crises of 2008.

These two figures, as prominent examples of the presence of women in the highest political office, show that the structure of the international system to date has dictated its rules to politicians without affecting gender. According to Kenneth Waltz, the theorist of the theory of structural realism, governments are the main actors in the international environment that seek to gain and increase power under the self-help system. Under these circumstances, a woman's reign did not change the attitudes of the German and British governments during the years under Merkel and Thatcher. In these conditions today, America, with little delay from its European allies, for the first time in its political history, is witnessing a woman's struggle for the presidency. The United States is set to respond to the efforts of its first female presidential nominee, scheduled for Nov. 8 (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2010).

At stake in Clinton's propaganda is her emphasis on promoting women's standing; she is trying to suggest that having a woman can have a positive impact on women's well-being. However, when we look at Clinton's positions on other international issues, we find that her plans for women are more in the US national interest than they sometimes are in promoting women.

Hence, the first female US presidential candidate is also playing a role in the realistic structure of the international environment, which, regardless of gender, seeks to achieve greater national interest and to enhance the status of American women as part of her role. (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2010).

Therefore, what is important to Hillary Clinton, like Merkel and Thatcher, is to increase the power of self-help in the anarchic system of the international environment, which is the approach that men will take if they come to power. Feminine experiences and traits such as the tendency for cooperation and convergence seen in women more than men in life are meaningless in the structure of power. Consequently, what will most definitely determine Hillary Clinton's presidency will be the international structure, and as long as the structures do not change, one cannot expect women to take office as prime minister and or that the UN Secretary-General make changes to the form of international environment interactions.

## **2.2. Political Participation**

Participation in the modern world is indispensable and inevitable, so that even the most closed political systems in the world and the few totalitarian systems that continue to survive will also be excluded from the participation of their peoples. Therefore, the principle of participation and its importance for all communities and countries at different levels and forms is in doubt. As Nuhlen puts it, democracy is nowadays seen as a way of global dimensional governance, and it is clear that political participation in democracies is vital (Qazi, 2007, 12).

Experts believe that particularly since the twentieth-century shift in the dominance of democracy and the hegemony of democracy as a model of governance; the term, political participation, has become extremely important. However, there is no consensus among scholars on the definition of the term despite its emphasis on the importance of that consensus. There are numerous definitions of the concept of partnership as well as political participation. In general, Alavi Tabar defines participation as the mental and emotional involvement of individuals' in-group situations that motivates them to help each other achieve the goals of the group and share responsibility for the work.

Thus participation, he believes, involves three parts: Engaging, Assisting and Accepting responsibility (Alavi Tabar, 2003, 16). In his definition of political participation, McCloskey states, political participation is the voluntary activity of community members in the selection of governors and direct or indirect participation in policymaking (Nasiri, 2004, 99). Political participation itself is one of the most controversial areas of participation. Political participation is a behavior that influences or results in the outcomes and decisions of governments (Ardestani, 2004, 56). Sarukhani defines political participation as participation in political affairs and the election of political leaders by the people.

From his point of view, in some cases political participation can only be realized by voting, but in many cases, where some are not satisfied with it, it also plays a role in political propaganda or party participation (Shakarbigi, 2007, p 522). From the viewpoint of Wiener, political participation includes any kind of successful or unsuccessful, organized or unstructured, cross-sectoral or continuous voluntary action

designed to influence the choice of public policy or the selection of political leaders at different levels of government, whether local or national, the legal or illegal methods used include political participation (Weiner, 2001, 247).

It can be said that political participation is a combination of terms that signifies the involvement of the people in political affairs, that is, governance, and has entered the political literature of the theorists of politics in the wake of the process of socializing human beings and interfering with the political management of countries (Rash, 1998, 123). It is only through partnership that political power is handled peacefully and the extent of a country's political development depends directly on this component. (Kazemi, 1998,101).

Finally, political participation can mean the opportunity for a large number of citizens to engage in political affairs (Abramson, 1383, 1241).

Robert Dahl in his book draws a picture of political participation that encompasses the following levels. In his views, political participation means, to participate in presidential elections, run for local elections, work in an organization dealing with some community issues, try to persuade others in their own way, work for a candidate or party during elections, contact government (local and national), participate in political meetings, form groups and organizations to solve community problems, as well as to join a national or international political organization related to the nation (Dahl, 2006).

One can conclude from the above discussion that political participation is a complex and multi-dimensional concept that is not limited to one species and one level. Political participation, while a quantitative concept, is also a qualitative concept and can provide a deep understanding of a society and its political peculiarities. Afghanistan is no exception, and it is particularly important to examine the political position of women in Afghanistan's society.

### **2.3. Political Participation of Women**

Women's political participation takes place in various forms, such as the formation of different groups and associations, whether directly seeking political ends and gaining power or working in secret. The participation of women in hidden groups, such as

research or public interest groups, is indirectly involved in determining the fate of society by influencing the political system.

Women's political participation emerges in the true sense when their participation is spontaneous, competitive, organized, and based on ideology appropriate to public opinion. Unless women's participation in political life is stimulated by other social groups (especially men), it is non-competitive and individualized and dispersed when it comes to affirming positions of power, ie, as a group movement and as a collective organization. Especially in accordance with the interests and morals of men, ie based on false masculine ideology, women's political participation will not be real (Kashani, 2010, p 24).

Political participation enables women to play an active role in the process of forming their own destiny. Women's political participation can be explored both as a goal and as a tool. Political participation as a goal serves the basic needs of women. Political participation can achieve personal economic, social and political goals, and also empowers women to become self-reliant and free from dependence. The issue of the attention of thinkers to the presence of women in politics can have an impact on the status of political participation as an international factor. Here, we will briefly address them (Khisravi, 2012: 108).

#### **2.4. Women's Political Participation in Societies in Transition to Democracy**

If we believe in terms such as transitional, developing, Third World and similar names with their distinctive characteristics from other societies, Afghanistan is undoubtedly a country that stands out among such societies. The transitional term itself has been the subject of much debate, especially among researchers in the field of development. The transition from tradition to modernity, from the point of view of modernization theorists, was reminiscent of a linear pattern that all countries had to go through. Nevertheless, nowadays, even Western scholars themselves have come up with serious criticism.

The transition to democracy is seen by some as an independent process for transitional societies that has nothing to do with the linear transition from tradition to modernity. Democracy as a paradigm of governance and a style of governance that has been considered the dominant paradigm in the present era and has actually shown its

advantages in practice. However, the transition to democracy also requires not only a change in the style of governance but also a change in value and culture. As Bashiriyeh states, the transition to democracy is a gradual and prolonged process that has expanded over time and without the immediate interest of ruling elites and established groups, once and for all. He promoted ideas within democratic institutions (Bashiriyeh, 1999, 2).

Among the requirements of democracy and the realization of democratic governance is the realization of citizen participation in various social and political spheres. However, political participation in developing countries, or in the transition to democracy, faces many obstacles, so that even the very democracy is at stake. This is much more serious with women. In many developing countries such as Afghanistan, there is still a strong patriarchal system whose values are accepted even by many women themselves and are undisputed.

In such societies, it is no surprise that women are less involved in politics than men are, despite of the fact that, many efforts have been made to support women to occupy political posts and high managerial positions in recent years. Even with a glance at the status of women's political participation in the global arena, it seems that despite the propaganda and activities of women in achieving higher political positions, women are still politically isolated and it is clear that this is even more severe in countries such as Afghanistan.

According to some experts, the inactivity of women and their failure to succeed are the result of men's domination of the political arena. Additionally, the political indifference of women is, for whatever reason, one of the undeniable realities of human political history, and political inaction can only be the logical consequence of such domination (Bashiriyeh, 1999, 296).

However, with all of these obstacles and problems stemming from the domination of patriarchal relationships, it seems that women have been struggling to gain their rights in recent years with growing social and political awareness even in developing countries like Afghanistan (Razaghi, 1992, 173).

## **2.5. Women Empowerment for Political and International Participation**

International and political participation of women in different countries of the world also faces various obstacles in the psychological, personality, economic and political dimensions, but cultural factors seem to have played a greater role in reducing the presence of women in society, especially at managerial levels. In Iran too, the lack of presence of women in political and social spheres is no exception. Cultural factors take many forms due to their vastness. From the way women think, to families, social insights, religious norms, and social traditions are also seen as manifestations of cultural factors (Abbott, 1990).

For this reason, increasing women's political and social participation requires comprehensive cultural planning in order to raise the level of public awareness of the importance of women's presence in society, and to gain greater recognition of their values, abilities, as well as the significance of their social and political participation. Sociologists and scholars in the field of women consider the cause of women's lack of access to social and political relations to be more due to gender stereotypes, authoritarian and patriarchal cultures that have always promoted traditional, patriarchal beliefs.

In fact, traditional beliefs and patriarchal cultures have deprived women of equal opportunity by dividing work into the home and community and delegating home affairs to women. Of course, this particular segregation is not limited to Iran, as there is a fundamental division between the public and private sectors in the whole west. Consequently, confining women to the four walls of the house and humiliating her thoughts, beliefs, and deeds and suppressing her ingenuity and innate powers to the extent she is even frustrated with herself, markedly reduced her efficiency.

On the other hand, as most of the managers are men in Afghanistan, the way men look at women has been one of the obstacles to maximizing women's participation in the social and political arena. It is said that Iranian male managers usually have three types of attitudes towards women in their subset, all of which hinder the growth and promotion of women in the workplace to a higher level and promote them. The three perceptions are as follows: (a) the risk-taking view, (b) the protectionist view, (c) the contemptuous view.

At first glance, because of the value it places on women, it is always concerned about letting the responsibility of one or more women and publicly undermining the public image of the women's community be compromised. The concern of other managers besides undermining the general view of women's overall ability is that the upstream male manager should be held accountable for the potential errors made by subordinates. In this case, management or responsibility is not delegated to women higher decisive position than usual.

The second (protectionist) view is about honest executives who regards subordinates in the area of their responsibility as creatures. Creatures lacking masculine ambitions, who have family problems, where their families in general do not allow them to think about growing up to higher levels of management. For this reason, there is virtually no place for the creativity and competence of their subordinate women to be produced by the supportive manager. The dominant attitude of these managers in employing women managers are more symbolic.

The third view (humiliation) is rooted in patriarchal culture, where women are subordinated and men have male-dominated attitude toward women. The view that women are intellectually and logically weaker due to the intensity of their emotions and rationales, and therefore does not consider women worthy of being given serious decision-making responsibilities. Although these three views are from three different cultural minds, the result is the same, with the lack of women being appointed in managerial, political and other social decision-making positions.

In addition, in Afghanistan, as in many other Third World countries, the presence of women in many jobs is not effective. This negative judgment insight comes from the fact that some admit that women have maternal roles, so they are not usually successful in combining both their roles at home and outside the home. In fact, the gender of those who work more than the content of their work reflects the extent to which the work is specialized or non-specialized.

These arguments can in fact fall under the theory of gender differences. According to this theory, the position of women in society differs from that of men. It is believed that this type of view is in fact derived from gender stereotypes and closely related to the cognitive process. Due to the fact that society generally recognizes individuals

based on traditional gender roles, they expect differing attitudes from men and women. This results in the preservation and perpetuation of traditional beliefs about the status of men and women in society. In addition, according to this theory, society identifies men with characteristics such as independent, reckless, adventurous, powerful, and manager, women with characteristics such as dependent, passive, sensitive, soft and gentle.

It should be noted that if a society treats women in unequal ways culturally, that is, they describe them as weak or negative compared to men, or if they limit women's access to valuable social opportunities and resources, this form gradually becomes part of the components of women's mental institutions. Thus leading to a negative perception and poor assessment of their abilities to shape their psychological and personality structure (khosrow, 2013, p 14).

From the point of view of Islam, social, economic and political spheres are open to women participation and activities. The discussion of women's empowerment can provide a platform for women's development in Islamic societies, using the backing of religious beliefs to reform laws and secondary judgments in many areas. In fact, the greater the scope of its influence, the greater its social impact. To this end, we can summarize the strategic approaches for empowering women in different fields and the importance of the role of NGOs:

- Elimination of traditional and customary beliefs created by the pervasive perceptions of gender in society.
- Amendments to the laws and elimination of discrimination which obliges the government to respect women's rights in all respects with Islamic standards and to create a conducive environment for the development of the women's personality and the restoration of her material and spiritual rights.
- Preventing violence and humiliation against women that negatively impacts and results in abnormalities leading to behavioral disorders and lack of confidence and self-esteem in women.

- Long-term, targeted planning and specific budget allocation to support governmental and nongovernmental research and implementation plans and projects on women's issues.

## **2.6. International Organizations**

In international law, international organizations are organizations whose members are governments (Zharzh, 1994).

Cooperation between them has been limited since the formation of governments in the contemporary era, and especially since the 17th century. In the same vein, the history of international relations shows that the use of bilateral diplomacy methods has not been sufficient and effective to solve global issues. As such, governments have strived for greater international co-operation, the first form of their cooperation being in the context of international conferences.

The Westphalian Peace Conference in 1648, Congress of Vienna in 1815, and The Hague Peace Conference in 1899 and 1907 are examples of the first major international conferences in recent centuries (Daneil, 2000).

The establishment of regional commissions is another manifestation of transnational cooperation between governments. With the advent of the Rhein Commission and shortly thereafter, the creation of other committees on the management and use of the rivers, an extensive network of governments was formed to coordinate their interests and goals within these specific areas. In the mid-19th century, inventions and discoveries also necessitated the formation of a wide range of international organizations in order to create harmony. As such, international organizations, as international organisms, have been assisted by governments to solve problems arising from international relations (Mosazadeh, 1999).

### **3. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK: WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ASSISTANCES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO AFGHAN WOMEN**

#### **3.1. Women's Political Participation before 11 September 2001**

Afghanistan is a country that, genuinely speaking, has little experience with democracy, and the existence of democratic institutions. As Dalton puts it, in 2001, before the fall of the Taliban, every country in the world seemed more capable of transitioning to democracy except Afghanistan. The country has been ruled for more than three decades under authoritarian regimes. The kingdom of Zahir Shah, the absolutist government of David, the communist regime under Soviet control, and finally the Mojahedin regime. Things got worse after the Taliban came to power in the country.

The Taliban adopted a religious outlook and used religion to justify their ruthless totalitarian government that lacked any moral or religious value (Dalton, 2007, 13). However, Afghan affairs researcher Judy Benjamin admits to the International Committee in New York that although the Taliban is "terrible" and has caused serious harm to the women's community, few people know how. They understand their performance properly. When we regard Taliban as the source of all problems means that we have not studied history well. Benjamin believes it was not common to see women working in many urban centers before the Taliban took over.

Poverty in women and lack of health and medical care are old problems in Afghanistan (Deghban, 2000, 42). According to a 1999 human rights report, the widespread human rights abuses during inter-party wars continued during the three-year Mojahedin's Government in Kabul and before the Taliban took over. These wars continued from 1992 to 1995 (1971-1974); Torture, rape and other mistreatment of women have occurred frequently (Allameh, 2001, p 73).

Based on the above, it can be said that the unfavorable social and political participation situation and the position of Afghan women as a whole is not only related to the

Taliban but also to the earlier monarchical era of the country. The Shah and the Mojahedin regime cannot even talk about women's social and political participation. It is true that in the history of Afghanistan, women have been excluded from participation in social affairs, especially political affairs. They were not considered effective social forces, but this should not be interpreted as implying that the situation of Afghan women, particularly lack of their participation in political affairs during the past regimes in contemporary Afghan history, have been the same as the Taliban regime.

In the pre-Taliban era, women's participation in social and political affairs can be discussed and examples are given. In the past, some democratic institutions have been existed, of course, and elections have a history. Saffronchi points out that women's rights and freedom were recognized in the constitution of 1964 and 1977. However, due to the prevailing culture in the country, especially in rural areas, women mostly lived indoors. The old constitution granted women limited rights, but under the same conditions, women had the right for education at all levels and the right to vote (whether as a voter or as a representative).

For example, there were three women ministers in the cabinet under Mohammad Zahir Shah, and by the early 1990s, most teachers, half of government employees and 40 percent of doctors in the country were women (Zafaranchi, 2011, 33). Marzden also acknowledges that since the 1950s, women in Afghanistan have been counted as the workforce and have been able to serve as secretaries, nurses, receptionists and hostesses in the service sectors. A number of women with higher education were able to pursue careers in medicine, law, engineering, and journalism. Traditional Afghan leaders and scholars, however, also opposed these gradual and very slow changes. In the depths of their conservative thinking, there was a fear of being influenced by aliens' beliefs and instilling their beliefs in children through women's education or employment (Marzden, 2000, 105).

As the Taliban came to power, women's relative participation in political and social affairs was neglected and strongly opposed by the ruling religious forces. The traces of Talibani ideologies and their disruptive thoughts of the status of women can be even seen in the current government. Taliban, in their first decree closed all schools for girls, forced women not to appear in public as much as possible. Women were deprived of

all employment and their right for education was taken. Prohibition of driving, banning the sale of goods by women, banning public baths for women, and so forth are all Taliban's overplays of Afghan women. Taliban imposed severe restrictions on Afghan women, excluding them from socio-economic activities; they were only allowed to go out in case of the hospital, funerals or urgent purchases. Mohammad Omar, one of the leaders of the Taliban group, believed that women's and girls' rights were opposed to Islam and believed that social participation of women would cause moral corruption in the society (Kashani, 2010, 58).

With the Taliban's domination, their radicalization of their medieval and dark religion and the so-called return to the golden age of Salafism made the country's transition to democracy worse and witnessed a return. At that time, people of Afghanistan were considered nothing, but slaves whose duty was to obey. As a local culture there is no mention of the concept of partnership as political participation during the Taliban rule over Afghanistan. This applies to all Afghans regardless of gender. However, situation of women during the Taliban's rule was much worse, and this was due to the Taliban's disturbing view of women. Elahi and Bakhtiari point out, the Taliban's perception of women's socio-political rights meant denying any of their political-social activity. Taliban leaders deprived women from all socio-political rights, relying on the reactionary notion that it is the duty of women only to care for their children (Afshari, 2002).

In fact, the ideology of the Taliban movement was based on the idea that women are a symbol of men's honor and dignity, which should be taken care of. It is clear that with such a view, women should only stay at home and protect themselves and refrain from participating in the social and political affairs of their society. Afghan people, especially the young Taliban militias, cite this as their reason and believe that their sole purpose is to protect their sisters from corrupt people. They believe that since the most important mission of a woman is the raising children, she should avoid being present in the community and take care of the home and upbringing of her children (Ahmadi, 2001, 44).

While, the discussion of women's political participation in the pre-Taliban era was merely mass participation, meaning participation in demonstrations and marches, however during Taliban regime, women did not even have the courage to ask their

rights for education. Therefore, elite-level participation that requires women to be nominated and elected to the legislature, influence on political institutions at high levels of decision-making was far from imagination (Afshari, 2002).

### **3.2. Women's Political Participation after 2001 (In New Power Structure)**

The destruction of the symbols of the material power - the World Trade Center - and the military power - the Pentagon - in the early hours of September 11, 2001 was a violent challenge to American supremacy as the so-called West Symbol. A staunch modernity in the East that had legitimized this supremacy (Dejban, 2000, 145).

As September 11 attacks unfolded, international attention turned to Islamic fundamentalism and its center, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda's 9/11 surprise and devastating blow of World Trade Center of US led the United States to launch a military action in Tora Bora, Jalalabad and Valley of Khyber to dismantle terrorism in its mountainous safe houses (Karbala'i, 2009, 60).

11 September 2001, is a turning point in the formation of a new government in Afghanistan. With the US-led NATO invasion and the overthrow of the Taliban Islamic Emirates, a new plan has been put forward at the Bonn Conference to form a government in Afghanistan. The International Community's coalition and the cooperation of domestic forces in Afghan wars, was the result of the Bonn Agreement, which opened new avenues for political and social changes for the country. The basis of the Bonn Agreement was the advancement of democracy, which was envisaged in the form of mechanisms such as the adoption of the constitution, holding presidential and parliamentary elections, etc. (Hekmat, 2009, 308). At the Bonn conference, several factors were highlighted like human rights, freedom of expression, free press and women's rights, which laid the groundwork for a new system in Afghanistan.

According to Dupree's idea, the cornerstone of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was laid at the Bonn Conference that began on November 21 and continued until December 5, 2001. Out of the 24 official representatives of the four factions attending the Bonn conference, only two were women. One being Amina Afzali, the wife of a renowned Herat Mujahedeen (Martyr Afzali) who attends most conferences as a female representative of the Islamic People's Party, she was also among the official representatives of the United Northern Front. Second, Sima Wali was an Afghan

women's rights activist in the United States who worked closely with most American institutions and served as the president of the Institute for Migrant Women for Development in America and as an official member of the Roman Group.

Among the 37 unofficial members of the conference, three were women, Rena Youssef Mansouri (daughter of Dr. Mohammad Youssef, former Chancellor of Afghanistan) of the Roman delegation, Fatemeh Gilani Ahmadi (daughter of Seyyed Ahmad Gilani) of the Peace Assembly and Sediqah Balkhi (daughter of Mohammad Ismail Balkhi), a women's rights activist from Mashhad who was part of the Cyprus group. Thus, out of 61 official and unofficial members of the Bonn Summit, five women participated in total (Dupree, 1977, 211).

1- Paragraph Eight of the Preamble, which sets out the aims of the Agreement, states that "Understanding and accepting that these Provisional Arrangements are intended as a first step towards the establishment of a broad, effective, multiparty, and sovereign government of all peoples, in such arrangements".

2- The composition of the Provisional Administration in Article 3 states that the President, the Vice-President and other members of the Provisional Government shall be appointed by the Members of the United Nations Parliamentary Assembly on the subject of Afghanistan. Their individual competence and merit have been taken into account, of course, the ethnic, regional, and religious considerations of Afghanistan as well as the importance of their contribution. Two women were included in the cabinet; Dr. Sima Samar as one of the five Deputy Chairs, who also served as the minister of a newly established ministry for women called the "Ministry of Women's Affairs". Then Dr. Soheila Sadiq the first woman to become a General under the Communists, was Appointed as Minister of Public Health of the Provisional Government

3. In Section 4 of the Independent Commission on the Emergency Loya Jirga referred to Article 2 (c), with regard to the appointment of representatives, a substantial number of Afghan women shall attend the Emergency Loya Jirga. In the final articles, the need for women to participate in the formation of the emergency Loya Jirga has been emphasized once again. This was taken more seriously by the formulation and drafting of the constitution.

### **3.3. Afghanistan's Relation with International Organizations**

Afghanistan's relations with international organizations and the international community stem from Afghanistan's foreign policy towards the International Community. Due to Afghanistan's challenging history, human rights and the social system in Afghanistan have always been depleted, and many humanitarian projects have been implemented in the country. In this regard, Afghanistan's foreign policy has been good with international organizations and donor countries due to not having sufficient resources to support Afghanistan's growth and its development.

With Afghanistan's strong efforts to become a member of regional and extra-regional organizations, it became possible to gain membership in some regional and extra-regional organizations and a shared membership space to identify Afghanistan's national interests and explain its foreign policy towards other countries. International organizations for a country like Afghanistan, whether liberal or realist, are of great importance in coordinating or exerting political pressure. As a victim of terrorism and the intervention of competing nations on its soil, Afghanistan needs international organizations as a regulatory force. Therefore, strong access to multilateral diplomacy through international organizations and awareness of effective practices and techniques in international organizations are considered to be one of the important requirements of Afghan foreign policy.

Afghanistan's foreign policy has been constantly evolving over time in the region and around the world. As Afghanistan has become a member of many regional and global organizations, it has developed the ability to recognize the programs and policies of countries seeking to have relations with Afghanistan. Based on this cognitive transformation, Afghanistan is enabled to pursue its foreign policy and to act better against friendly or hostile countries. Afghanistan's membership in various international economic organizations has in some ways contributed to Afghanistan's national interests and consequently to promoting Afghanistan's position internationally.

Therefore, Afghanistan's foreign policy towards international organizations has determined Afghanistan's relations with these organizations. Afghanistan has been

able to attract a lot of assistance from these organizations by implementing better foreign policy towards international organizations and trying to join them.

### **3.4. International Organizations Assistancess to Empower Afghan Women**

Change in the lives of Afghan women is one of the key goals of the international community in Afghanistan. They devoted huge projects to women and spent a lot of money on this regard. One of the biggest projects in this case is the "Promote" project funded by the United States of America. The \$ 216 million "Promote" project is set up to empower Afghan women and train 72,000 women in leadership, governance, litigation and economic growth from 2015 to 2020.

Emphasizing women's empowerment is important not only for humanitarian reasons and for gender equality, but also for the development goals, especially the roles that women play in the economic growth and development of different humane societies. So that they are also part of the development agenda. Nevertheless, in Afghanistan, unfortunately, women have always faced gender discrimination and various social and cultural restrictions deprived them from having equal opportunities as men. For the past eighteen years, women's participation and the creation of equal educational, political, social, economic and cultural opportunities have been one of the main concerns of women's rights activists. Despite of significant contributions from the international community and international women's rights advocacy bodies, substantial enhancements are still needed. Comprehensive consideration has not been given to the lives of all Afghan women, and only a limited number of women have been able to take advantage of the programs designed to improve their lives. Afghanistan government also held the third international women's symposium in Afghanistan entitled "Women's Empowerment, Achievements and Challenges" in 2019. The other two women's empowerment symposiums were held in Washington, DC, in the United States and Oslo, in 2013 and 2014. The purpose of this two-day program was to review the achievements of Afghan women and the challenges they face. At the present time, Afghan government is also committed with Afghan women wish, which is that they are not willing to back down, instead they want to go hand in hand with Afghan men, and demand a clear and comprehensive contribution.

Considering that Afghanistan's foreign relations with international organizations, it has succeeded in attracting a great deal of support from international organizations and the

international community in the field of women. These contributions have clearly influenced the increase in women's political and social participation in Afghanistan, which will be discussed in Section 4.

### **3.4.1. UN assistance mission in Afghanistan**

UNAMA has been one of the historic organizations involved in the development of developing countries, which has provided a range of assistance to Afghanistan in line with its organizational goals. Their assistance has been used in many sectors. In addition to donations for all project on women and their rights, UNAMA has also implemented a series of other donations.

Human rights is a priority issue for UNAMA. UNAMA's Human Rights Unit, as part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, pursues an overall strategy to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights in Afghanistan or "human rights everywhere all the time for everyone" in support of all Afghan people.

UNAMA Human Rights focuses on aspects of women's rights throughout all of its priority issues, but gives particular priority to combating violence against women and enabling their participation in the public sphere, especially in political life and in peace and reconciliation processes. UNAMA has released public reports documenting widespread harmful practices against women and evaluating the Government's progress in implementing the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW law). These reports, based on extensive country-wide research, found that while the Government has taken some measures to enforce legal protections to protect women and girls from violence, most cases are still mediated with further intensive and concrete measures required to end widespread violence and discrimination against Afghan women and girls and ensure they have access to justice (UN, 2018).

UNAMA's work on women, peace and security is enshrined in UN Security Council resolution 2210 (2015) which reinforces the Mission's imperative to promote gender equality including increasing women's role in public life and Afghan society. The promotion of Women, Peace and Security agenda is guided by a series of commitments to women's rights including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration, the eight UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace

and Security: 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015).

As wars and conflicts around the world have a disproportionate and unique impact on women and girls, the United Nations reaffirms that women have an important role to play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building. It also stresses that the equal participation and full involvement of women in conflict resolution can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security (UN, 2018).

Through the efforts of all sections - including implementing, programming and support personnel - UNAMA supports Afghan institutions and civil society to enhance women's meaningful contributions in Afghanistan's political and security transitions, including the peacebuilding agenda. The Mission firmly believes women's equal participation in the public sphere, is crucial towards shaping lasting peace in the country.

#### **3.4.2. World bank**

The World Bank is among the organizations that have provided the most assistance in many areas, including women's empowerment. The project that the World Bank is implementing for women in Afghanistan relates mostly to women's rights and their social and political participation. The World Bank reflects on how it works and helps Afghan women. Women in rural areas are severely affected by poverty, and the value of what they do at home is neglected. Traditions have made it difficult for rural women to get funds, make loans, and start businesses or even have access to financial information.

However, women who have benefited from empowerment programs and been provided with economic opportunities have made a significant contribution to the growth and development of their community. These women have created successful business systems and have thus reduced poverty at the household level and overall in their villages. While, after many years of war, the process of development in the major cities of Afghanistan, including Kabul continues, poverty and unemployment expanded in early stages. According to the findings of the Survey of Living Conditions in Afghanistan, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, the poverty rate in

Afghanistan has later decreased from 4.9 percent in 2008 to 2.6 in 2010 (World Bank, 2018).

### **3.4.3. United nations human rights**

According to its regulations, the organization has provided the most appropriate financial and project assistance to Afghanistan. Women's rights regulations in the organization have been upheld by international standards that have inspired many non-violence regulations against women. Over the years, the organization has been instrumental in implementing humanitarian projects in the field of women's rights in Afghanistan in its ground of activities. Therefore, with its financial and technical support, the organization has been influential in promoting a better culture of gender equality in Afghanistan.

Among the international human rights treaties, the Convention takes an important place in bringing the female half of humanity into the focus of human rights concerns. The spirit of the Convention is rooted in the goals of the United Nations: to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human being, in the equal rights of men and women. The present document spells out the meaning of equality and how it can be achieved. In doing so, the Convention establishes not only an international bill of rights for women, but also an agenda for action by countries to guarantee the enjoyment of those rights.

According to the women right strategy of this organization, the agenda for equality is specified in fourteen subsequent articles. In its approach, the Convention covers three dimensions of the situation of women. Civil rights and the legal status of women are dealt with great details. In addition, and unlike other human rights treaties, the Convention is also concerned with the dimension of human reproduction as well as with the impact of cultural factors on gender relations.

The legal status of women receives the broadest attention. Concerns over the basic rights of political participation has not diminished since the adoption of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. Its provisions, therefore, restated in article 7 whereby women are guaranteed the rights to vote, to hold public office and to exercise public functions. This includes equal rights for women to represent their countries at the international level (United Nations H-Rights, 2012).

#### **3.4.4. United nations development fund for women**

UN Women (previously UNIFEM) has been working in Afghanistan since 2002, and has supported the development, monitoring and implementation of policies that both protect and promote the rights of women. These include, but are not limited to, the development of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), the adoption of a quota in national constitution, laws and policies to combat violence against women and girls at the national level, and mainstreaming gender in Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

UN Women was created in 2010 to address challenges the UN was facing in its efforts to promote gender equality globally, including inadequate funding, and no single recognized driver, to direct UN activities on gender equality issues. UN Women has the role to be a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels. To be able to fulfill this role UN Women in Afghanistan has been repositioning itself and restructuring the office to support a stronger results-based, programmatic approach and promote national execution. As a result, Afghanistan now has three programmatic Pillars; Political and Economic Empowerment, and Coordination and Advocacy) through which resources are channeled in a pooled fund approach. Each Pillar is managed by a national Manager and Deputy Manager, with international staff only to provide specialized technical support. Projects are implemented by NGOs selected through a competitive process. This strengthens the sustainability and cost effectiveness of UN Women's projects.

UN Women is also scaling up its work as a key gender advocate within the UN Country Team and the overall international community, to ensure that opportunities are not lost to engender the institutions, process and plans of the country, as well as to raise the voice of those women and communities that are still in desperate.

#### **3.4.5. Afghan women's mission**

Afghan Women's Mission was founded in January 2000 by a small group of Americans to support the humanitarian and political work of RAWA. Projects include many programs run by Afghan women including Malalai Clinic, schools, orphanages, agricultural programs, demonstrations and functions in support of women's and human

rights. Afghan Women's Mission funds a variety of projects in Afghanistan (AWM, 2016).

### **3.4.6 Feminist majority foundation (USA)**

The Feminist Majority Foundation (FMF) has been working to help Afghan Women and Girls since 1996: first, with the campaign to Stop Gender Apartheid, then after the Taliban regime collapsed, and now during the Afghan Reconstruction. The Feminist Majority Foundation Campaign for Afghan Women and Girls has four major components: Public Education and Community Organizing, Public Policy Research and Strategy Development, Global Outreach and support of Humanitarian Aid for Afghan Women-led Organizations and to programs serving Afghan Women and Girls.

The campaign, chaired by Mavis Leno, was the first of its kind to build a U.S. grassroots constituency around a foreign policy issue of women's rights. It successfully brought the Taliban regime's atrocities against women and girls in Afghanistan to the attention of the United States and the world. In 2002, the Feminist Majority Foundation intensified its nationwide public education campaign for Afghan women and girls to win the full and permanent restoration of women's rights, promote the leadership of women in the planning and governing of post-Taliban Afghanistan. FMF amended and monitored the provision of emergency and reconstruction assistance to women and girls, urge the expansion of peacekeeping forces, and support the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Afghan Independent Rights Commission and Afghan women-led non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Because of its work on behalf of Afghan women and girls, the Feminist Majority Foundation was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. With the support of literally tens of thousands, their work was key in stopping U.S. and U.N. recognition of the Taliban and in winning extensive funding for Afghan women's programs, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA). In total up to 2010, they succeeded to win some \$367 millions of U.S. funding of Afghan women and girls' programs.

In July, 2013, Rajiv Shah, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development announced that USAID was launching a new five-year program "targeting the education, promotion, and training of a new generation of Afghan women, ages 20-30. Towards this effort, USAID is pledging \$110 million and has set

the ceiling for the program at \$416 million seeking another \$110 plus million from other international donors. FFM's work first to end gender apartheid in Afghanistan and then to help Afghan women and girls over these past 18 years since the fall of the Taliban has had tangible impact. They have repeatedly urged fund for strengthening Afghan women-led groups and women's right organizations in Afghanistan as well as other women's developmental programs (Feminist Majority Foundation, 2015, <http://www.feminist.org/afghan/>)

The Feminist Majority Foundation has provided direct funding to Afghan women's NGOs and other forms of direct assistance from its own funds. In addition to providing grants, they have provided technical assistance to small, women-led non-profits, helping them with grant-writing and circulating their proposals among other donors (FMF, 2015).

#### **3.4.7. Canadian women for women in Afghanistan**

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1998 to advance education and educational opportunities for Afghan women and their families and to educate Canadians about human rights in Afghanistan. Donor-funded projects fall within four main field program areas: (1) Investments in Basic Education; (2) Community Libraries, Literacy and Books Program; (3) Technology for Education; and (4) Public Engagement.

Canadians take action, in partnership with Afghan women, towards improving conditions of human rights, ending women's oppression, and providing opportunities for Afghan women to live their lives with dignity, certainty and purpose (CW4WAfghan, 2016).

#### **3.4.8. United nations development program**

Afghan women have gained improved access to public services and the public sphere following the harsh years of Taliban rule. Compared with no girls in 2001, some 46 percent of girls now attend schools and there are more women working in schools, hospitals and government offices, including the country's first female Governor, Habiba Sarabi appointed as the Govenor of Bamyan in 2005, and Provincial Council Chair, Tayeba Khawary has been elected in 2015. However, huge challenges remain with respect to women's mobility, participation in public life, decision making, health

and access to economic and educational opportunities. Although nearly half of all women participate in the labor force now, but almost all are in vulnerable employment. They are often forced to stay at home and work on activities like carpet weaving, sewing and farming. Only 5 percent of businesses are owned by women, only 15 percent of women can read and write, and almost 90 percent have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence or forced marriages. Incidents of violence against women remain underreported due to social norms and religious beliefs. Victims fear social stigma and exclusion and can face threats of further violence for reporting cases. Sometimes, police and prosecutors do not follow legal procedures and refer cases, including serious crimes, to traditional assemblies (such as Jirgas and Shuras) for advice or resolution. These often reinforce harmful practices. For example, a court may sentence a rapist to imprisonment but a Jirga or Shura may decide the rapist should marry the victim. As such, the program has implemented the Equality in Employment and many other projects in the field of gender equality and women's rights. The Gender Equality Project II (GEP-II) focuses on improving policies and legal documents, boosting economic empowerment and ensuring access to justice and human rights. According to the Ministry of Women's Affairs of Afghanistan (MoWA), this organization provide policy support and capacity building for MoWA officials to oversee implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan, review the policies of other ministries and ensure that ministry budgets are gender responsive. GEP II establishes models for cooperation and coordination among key governments, NGOs and civil society partners to bring about gender mainstreaming and strengthen the position of women. For example, UNDP led the development of Afghanistan's first-ever master's program on gender and women's studies, which was established at Kabul University.

UNDP creates women entrepreneurs by providing training on how to set up, operate and market a business, including study visits to successful businesses in other provinces and neighboring countries. This organization also provide the raw materials needed to get started and help to establish distribution networks. In their production and demonstration centers, women come together as cooperatives to produce, package and sell a variety of products. The project provides logistic and financial support, along with training to Women Assistance Centers in five provinces. They also offer

mediation services in cases of violence against women, as well as property and inheritance disputes, or refer cases to the appropriate authority (UNDP, 2019).

### **3.5. Historical Role of the United Nations in Empowering Women**

The history of international attention to women's rights goes back to the work of the Organization of American States. Existing evidence points to the organization's efforts to raise the issue of equal rights for men and women. The role of nations must be greatly emphasized in identifying and empowering women. The UN's role in empowering women is one of the things that has done well to strengthen the structure of national and international decision-makings.

The United Nations uses the "human development" model to measure countries' development. This model encompasses a country's cultural, social and political successes. The importance of the human development model is that countries rank differently in terms of their outcomes. It contributes to critical indicators. From the United Nations perspective, social development, social system capacity building, social structure, institutions, services, politics, resource utilization are more desirable (Kumar: 2007, 232).

Although the United Nations declared the 1960s and 1970s to be the decade of Islam's development, in the early 1980s we witnessed political, social, cultural, and economic developments for women. 67% of the world's working hours are owned by women, 10% of the world's income is earned by women, and two-thirds of the world's illiterate are women, and women make up less than 1% of the world's wealth. The 1975 Declaration of the International Year of Women is based on the assumption that development programs have been transformed and the United Nations decade has drawn worldwide attention to the undeniable part of women in political development (Kumar, 2009: 482).

As the shortcomings of the discourse of development became clear and the gradual formation of the discourse of sustainable development, the indicators of measurement in political development also changed. Until the 1960s and 1970s, growth indices focused mainly on economic growth, but then the political development approach replaced economic growth and the metrics changed.

To identify women's empowerment in global societies, encourage greater growth and development, and empower women in the individual, social, and political spheres, the United Nations has designated the Women's Decade from 1976 to 1985 as witnessing many articles and books on women's relationships and roles.

First, the women's perspective on development has been proposed to be closely linked to the liberal American feminist approach and modernization theory that identifies the role and position of women in national and international decision-makings. This view emerged in the early 1970s to improve education, job opportunities, and political participation at the national and international level, with the view that women were deprived of political, social, and economic opportunities or involved in the decision-making process in a way that they are deprived of their rights, freedom and access to the resources they need.

In the decade of women, there have been widespread efforts by different nations to identify the role of women in their development and political participation in national and international decision-making processes. Although women's material conditions have greatly improved, but these efforts have had little impact on improving the economic and social power of participation. When comparing the politics of women with that of men, Feminists have criticized women's views in political and developmental decisions in two ways:

- 1- Slow progress in equality between men and women for the power and access to resources.
- 2- Marginalizing women in development goals and achieve them.

Given that women's development perspective has been successful in only two areas of poverty reduction and efficiency, and considering women as half of the world's population to meet their needs, the issue of equality between men and women has emerged as a source of division of roles, labor and profits. The result, and the formation of traditions, customs and cultures about women, has been overlooked.

In a society where women's political participation in employment and economic activity is greater, social welfare will also be greater, as women's participation in the labor market will reduce fertility rates, increase productivity, increase per capita

income, and thus increase income and employment. Unemployment and underemployment is one of the major causes of poverty and in order to eliminate poverty, unemployment and inequality, both sexes must be taken into account, and the recognition of women's position and their role in the development of its various dimensions should be the focus of planners' attention.

Overall, prior to 1980, there were no international development policies on women to solve their problems, but in their new approach, they are not only recipients of aid but also producers, contributors, and at the same time beneficiaries of the development process. The developments that underpin women's empowerment in political participation and development somehow show that the cognitive approach to development has moved away from a dual-value approach to a multi-valued approach. The perspective of women in development has identified roles for them. In some countries, a woman's ministry was established and state and non-governmental institutions were established. That is why; the United Nations designated it as the World Decade of Women as the 1976-85 decade (Mohmand, 2012: 151).

Women in the UN economic sector make up more than 31% of the staff of the UN Economic Agency, reflecting the fact that women have fallen to high levels and there are no women in the top four jobs, and there is only one woman out of five regional economic commissions. Moreover, in five regional commissions, there are between 28.7% to 36.8% female employees merely. One of the factors that led to the moderation of the highly ideological, patriarchal, and state agendas of these international congresses, is affairs management. Increasing their contact with international women's NGOs at regional and global conferences was under the auspices of the UN.

These connections provided many women with unique opportunities to discover, learn, and intercultural dialogue across ideological foundations. The potential of the emergence of some international NGOs that had strong global connections was encouraged and supported by UN initiatives. Realizing this potential power contributes to the growth and excellence of the women's movement, which is an essential part of civil society. Although the new international human rights system emerged after World War II, human rights and efforts to expand its worldwide have a long history. Many women's political, religious, and social movements have tried to expand human rights

throughout history, but have failed to do so. However, global efforts were finally and formally held at the 1945 of San Francisco Conference on the Formation of a World Organization. At the end of the conference, the participants signed a document establishing the UN. The UN Charter provided for humans' rights provisions. In accordance with Articles 13, 62, 63 of the General Assembly and the Economic Council, it was really the responsibility of conducting studies and forming commissions, providing guidelines for the realization of women's rights and freedoms.

The UN programs and its elected offices and branches over the last two decades have focused on promoting sustainable development worldwide, along with empowering women. The goal is to enable the effective exploitation of human capabilities to create a politically appropriate environment for the present and the future, and such empowerment will not achieve its goals without the political participation of men and women, and empowering women in sustainable development. Tangible and real, as it is, it has been objectively treated with regard to its particular philosophical content because any planning would inevitably be based on Western models.

UN programs to empower women are on the rise. To harness empowerment in the world requires the upbringing and advancement of women in the political field. According to the UN report, empowerment and sustainable development have three pillars, economic, social and environmental aspects. These aspects apply to all societies around the world because no country in the world has achieved all the dimensions of empowerment and sustainable development.

Global statistics give a very negative and disturbing picture of the situation of women. According to the UN, many of the world's nearly 100 million displaced and homeless populations are women. 70% of the 1.3 billion people living below the poverty line are women and girls, which has led to the phenomenon of poverty becoming feminized in the world. Discrimination, inequality and humiliation of women, who make up half of the world community, degrade human dignity. Discrimination hinders women's growth and dynamics and undermines their political participation in the individual, social, family, and global arenas. Women's response to discrimination is expressed in various ways and has harmful effects on the family, damaging society and exacerbating current problems (Khisravi, 2012, p 12).

## **4. RELATION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ASSISTANCES AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN**

### **4.1. Supporting Women through Foreign Aid and National Projects**

As it has become clear in the previous sections, Afghan women had been deprived from many of their rights due to the traditional culture, which was even heated by Taliban in the country's history. These inequalities hurt women's social and political participation. The gap in women's rights and the existence of many years of war in Afghanistan has created a good prospect for regional and international actors and organizations to get involved in Afghanistan. The presence of these powers, international organizations, have certainly contributed to the women's affairs in Afghanistan. The international organizations as mentioned in the previous section have continuously provided many financial and non-financial contributions to the women of Afghanistan.

With the help of international organizations and the support of women's relief organizations, much has changed for a large portion of women in Afghanistan since 2001. Key achievements have been access to education, health services, formal employment and political participation, in addition to enacting laws to protect women from abuse and establishing a policy framework for gender sensitivity.

However, many assessments, when compared these achievements with donors' commitments at the beginning of the NATO mission in Afghanistan and also with regard to the flow of aids to Afghanistan over the past decade, show progress from 2001 till now, if was not completely disappointing, but has been at least uncoordinated. Although much assistance has been provided by international organizations and the International Community in the field of women in Afghanistan, the level of social and political participation of women has remained below expectations. Girls' attendance at schools is significantly lower than boys. Maternal health is among the worst in the world, and the government as a whole has shown little willingness to comply with new laws and policies to protect women against violence or to change government behavior

for the benefit of women. At a deeper level and in an area where progress can be less measured are the following; Women's lack of access to property, excessive focus on women's femininity, which severely restricts their movement and treatment, besides increasing reports of cruel violence against women resulting from family and community control over them. All of which are the representative of a society with one of the most inappropriate conditions in the world in terms of gender equality comparing to the countries in the region. It is here that the desire for gender equality in Afghanistan has drawn the attention of many international organizations in the country and has led to many contributions to Afghan women (Ganish, 2013).

In addition, many activists have witnessed conservative resistance to the protective infrastructure that has been in place since 2001. The law of non-violence against women has been affected by this situation as well as women's safe houses have been repeatedly questioned. Even the implementation of very small and minor reforms has been difficult. A recent review of developments since 2001 shows that one of the key reasons for the current situation is that donors have adapted to a non-political, agent-driven approach (Abi-Rafi, 2007).

Misuse of international aid and ineffective management of women's empowerment assistance, rather than addressing the root causes of gender inequality - behaviors, principles, power relationships that empower women in the family, environment, politics and life Socioeconomic status tends to focus more on technical issues such as women's inability to access credit, political posts, or lack of buildings for women's upbringing.

A key argument, therefore, is that donors have not acted seriously as part of the Afghan government's accountability and budget allocation. It is emphasized that donors, international organizations, maintain high government pressure and hold government agencies accountable for implementing laws and policy frameworks. They have been asked to use their influence over the Afghan government to ensure the continued presence of women in key meetings, in ministries and in elected and security agencies, as well as in gender strategies, budget allocation and reporting (Ganish, 2013).

This approach emphasizes the role of donors as “supervisors” of the affairs as well as the main agents of change. However, a deeper look at donors' tools also highlights

some limitations. What usually happens, especially when the conditionality of aid requires careful reporting of government programs and developments, is that donors usually pay for a company of reporters only, who do not have a place in government structure (Hoshang, 2012). That is, foreign consultants and organizations write reports on behalf of the government that have little reflection on what government agencies actually do. For example, there is evidence that much of the writing and production of the National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA) in 2008 was outsourced.

Due to the general turmoil in Afghanistan, even if women's empowerment projects have not been effective, but to some extent, they paved the way for women's social and political participation. The ineffectiveness of some projects related to women has also diminished international financial and technical assistance. Given the decline in external assistance, it seems that developing new policy frameworks and mechanisms, laws and reports, apparently developed by the Afghan government but involving costly external cooperation, has been a disadvantaged priority for donors. (Ganesh, 2013).

In view of the foregoing, there has been a great deal of assistance from the international community to Afghanistan in the field of women, which has failed to properly manage the empowerment of women and increase their social and political participation. Despite all the challenges facing women's empowerment programs, women's rights have again experienced positive changes that have influenced women's political participation in Afghanistan's national and international affairs.

Education in Afghanistan is one of the areas in which foreign aid has been able to improve the situation of women. According to the Ministry of Higher Education report, over 9 million children are enrolled in schools across Afghanistan, of whom over 3.5 million are girls, whereas in 2001 no girls were going to schools. There are 300,000 students, including around 100,000 women enrolled in public and private universities all over the country.

In 2017, more than 300 scholarships abroad have been allocated to women. As many as 700 female students are studying their master's degree at domestic universities. Comparing to Kabul University with more than 6,800 female students and Herat University with more than 6,700 female students, Balkh University with more than 7,500 female students is one of the top 37 universities in the country with the highest number of female students. Of the 37 public universities, three have no female students

in Uruzgan, Maidan Wardak and Paktika provinces. 33% of students at Kabul Central University and 54% of Afshar University of Education students are girls (Ministry of Higher Education, 2018).

According to the statistics from the Ministry of Higher Education, the total number of female professors at public and private universities is more than 2,000. Of the 779 female professors at public universities, 13 have doctoral degrees, 287 have master's degrees and 479 have bachelor's degrees.

With the help of international organizations and the international community, women's participation in various sectors, including Afghanistan's political and international affairs, has been steadily increasing. About 20 women are in senior management positions at academic institutions as university president, vice chancellor, and graduate president. There are 67 women lawyers in the House of Representatives, according to the list published by the Afghan Parliament's website. Of the 102 senators in the House of Representatives, 21 are women (<https://p.dw.com/p/1Dmv6>).

The local government office in central Afghanistan and the provinces has more than 6,000 employees, more than 100 of whom are women.

There are also three female ministers in the Afghan cabinet. There are at least six deputy ministers in five ministries of the country. The number of ambassadors and female employees under the auspices of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs is more than hundreds working with Afghanistan diplomatic missions in different countries. Women are now leading important departments in the center as well as provinces. (<https://p.dw.com/p/1Dmv6>).

#### **4.2. The Upward Trend of Women's Political Participation**

In view of the above, as the international community and international organizations have given a series of assistance to the women in Afghanistan, proportional to these assistances for empowering women and increasing their social and political presence, despite of the fact that there hasn't been an optimal efficiency. However, the continued efforts of some international organizations related to women in Afghanistan have been able to make the policy and program of women's empowerment more realistic and adaptable and persuaded Afghan government to start empowering women, increasing their social and political participation.

**Due to the assistance provided by international organizations to Afghan women, women's political participation has increased over the years.**

The extent to which women have access to public institutions and their presence in the country's political space can be used as a measure of women's empowerment. In Afghanistan, the public space is severely separated from the private space, and women's observance of customs and traditions is regarded as the honor of men and their families. Thus, the presence of women in the public sphere has had a profound effect on the role of gender in society.

Since 2001, women have participated in various international debates that have helped to rebuild the country. In Constitutional Loya Jirga of 2003, 114 out of 504 were women representatives. Women have participated in the 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 presidential elections as well as in the 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2018 parliamentary elections in addition to the provincial council elections in 2005, 2009, 2014 and 2018. In these elections, about 10 to 25 percent of the candidates were women.

**Table 4-1.** Participation of women as candidates or voters in presidential elections, provincial councils and parliamentary elections.

<b>Election</b>	<b>Total Numbers of Votes (Million)</b>	<b>Women Voters (Percentage)</b>	<b>Total Candidates</b>	<b>Female Candidates</b>	<b>Female Candidates Outside the Quota</b>
<b>President 2004</b>	7.3	37%	18	1	--
<b>Provincial Council 2005</b>	6.4	41%	3025	247	24
<b>Parliamentary 2005</b>	6.4	41%	2775	335	19
<b>President 2009</b>	5.9	39%	39	2	--
<b>Provincial Council 2009</b>	5.9	39%	3196	328	20
<b>Parliamentary 2010</b>	4.2	39%	2577	406	18

**Source:** (Ganish 2013, p 18)

**Table 4-2.** Last statistics of Women’s Political Participation

<b>Election</b>	<b>Total Numbers of Votes (Million)</b>	<b>Women Voters (Percentage)</b>	<b>Total Candidates</b>	<b>Female Candidates</b>
<b>President 2014</b>	7	36%	22	3
<b>Provincial Council 2014</b>	6.9	32%	2591	296
<b>President 2019</b>	1.8	31%	18	0
<b>Parliamentary 2018</b>	4	34%	2504	401

**Source: National Bureau of Statistics and Information (2019),** Statistical Yearbooks from 2010-2019, NSIA, (<https://www.nsia.gov.af:8080/fa/category/books/>)

The statistics shown in the above tables show the political participation of women in large political scale. Although women's political participation in key milestones has not been as significant as it has been for the years 2001-2014, the role of women has been increasing at lower administrative levels of Afghanistan political society.

There were insufficient numbers of female staff at the polling stations on Election Day. Women voters did not have enough information about the electoral process and candidates, because they usually did not attend local political debates and did not have sufficient access to election information programs. Voting for women is, in fact, a powerful tool for asserting their rights and participation in public programs. On the other hand, women in these elections were more likely to vote for female candidates for solidarity. Women know that problems men cannot understand, are better understood by female candidates.

However, no gender-based candidates have campaigned well for the elections. In general, not only have women's access to safe and secure resources and facilities for conducting the election campaign been restricted, but also men had the same limitations due to various problems of sightseeing or commuting (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

The presence of women in the Wolesi Jirga (The House of Representatives of the People) and National Assembly is seen as a factor in balancing political power. There are 69 women out of the 249 members of the Wolesi Jirga and 28 out of the 102 members of the Meshrano Jirga. However, many of the female members of the National Assembly who have sometimes spoken out loud have faced verbal attacks and intimidation by the majority of the religious and conservative members of the council, and their female colleagues in the council have gone silent at such times. These women representatives are not immune from insurgent attacks.

At the ministries, female lawyers are also less qualified than male lawyers are. Of the 9 Independent Election Commissioners, 2 are women. Two women are also on the Election Commission's leadership committee. Of all the commission's staff, 7 percent were women, of whom only 6 percent were permanent staff. Half of the staff of the provincial offices and districts of the election commissions are women. Men and women have almost equally participated in election campaigns across the country. The direct presence of women throughout the country has been secured. Women represent 20 percent in local councils and 36 percent in local development councils, while those for male representatives are 56 percent and 60 percent, respectively (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

Although the number of women in government and civil service departments is higher than in 2001, only 4 percent of local development council officials are women. While, 31 percent of civil service employees in 2006 were women. Despite the government's commitment to 25% participation of women in the civil service, it currently accounts for 20% of all female government employees, most of whom work at low levels of government (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

Although men and women are separated in Afghan community, the number of female police is still very small. In 2010, 584 women served in the police force. The Law and Order Fund for Afghanistan was established in 2002 to assist Afghan police forces. The fund launched a training program for women in the police force in 2010. According to officials in the fund, in 2011, 1,200 women were serving in the Afghan National Police. Yet, according to a policewoman, they were sexually assaulted while performing their duties. They are more likely to serve in police departments, since

there is resistance in the police departments as well as The Ministry of Interior, which fights against these harassments.

Despite of the gradual increase since 2001, the presence of women in Afghanistan's judicial and legal systems is still weak. In 2010, out of 2203 judges, only 5 percent were women, 48 women in criminal courts and 60 women in civil courts. Not surprisingly, however, women are responsible for managing and leading family and juvenile courts. Of the 546 prosecutors, 4.6 percent, which makes if 35 women, and of the 1241 judges, 1.6 percent equivalent to 75 judges are women. However, The Afghan Women Judges Association was established in 2012 with 150 women judges and no woman is a member of the Supreme Council of the Supreme Court, which has nine members.

The very low presence of women in the executive, judicial and law enforcement agencies shows a negative indicator of women's political participation in Afghanistan. In March 2012, the Supreme Council of Ulema of Afghanistan approved all 150 members of the association in a statement declaring some forms of violence against women that he condemned, calling for improvements in laws. He asked for separate facilities for women to work in the offices, better health facilities, compulsory hijab and the presence of women with confidentiality (Mahram) outside the home. Later in the press release, the council's request was also approved by the president. If confrontations to such demands, which was common in Afghanistan before 2001, were not resisted, its consequences would have affected all the constitutional achievements with a reverse effect, which in turn means the efforts towards changes for the women of Afghanistan would have been hindered even more (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2013).

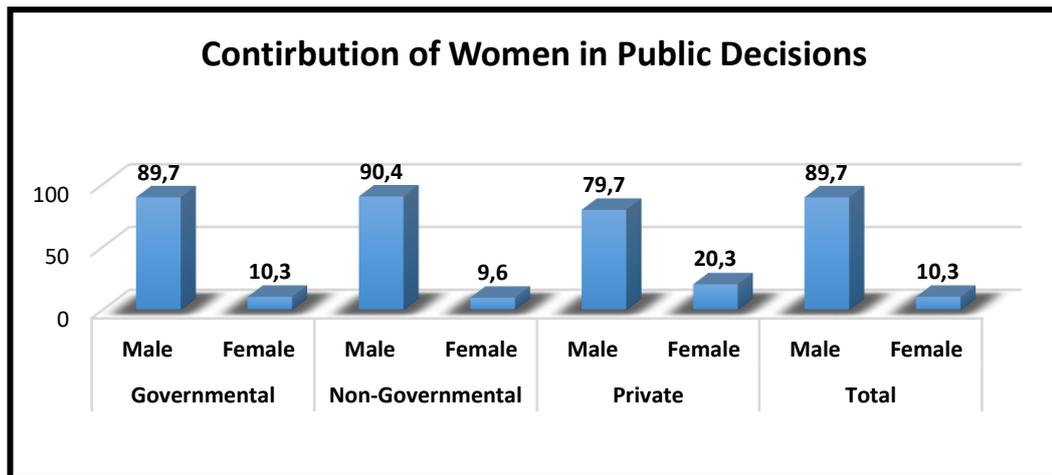
Outside the home and in public places, women have been visible over the past decade. While this is mostly true in urban areas, the legitimacy of this achievement ultimately depends on the will of the political system. In the past decade, women have used the power of gender solidarity to address the issue of their separation from society. Overall, the presence of women outside their homes also faces restrictions. Women are threatened with going out of their homes in a variety of ways, including face-to-face, linguistic, physical harassment, or even rape. Women's political and public participation remains one of the most stressful areas in the country.

What can be deduced from this is that the clergy should be assisted to address this problem. In this regard, although efforts have been made by various institutions and private entities, women representatives believe that the Ministry of Hajj and Endowments is responsible for investigating the ugly customary or traditional practices that take place under the name of Islam. However, the ministry officials have repeatedly said that, as traditionally believed, private places are the only ideal place for women.

#### **4.3. Increasing the Overall Presence of Women in Social and Political Sectors**

In view of the accuracy of the statistics and in order to conclude the effectiveness of the international organizations role in empowering women and enhancing their social and political participation, we have considered the contribution of women in middle years from the last decade, where women's contribution in social and political affairs is reflected accurately.

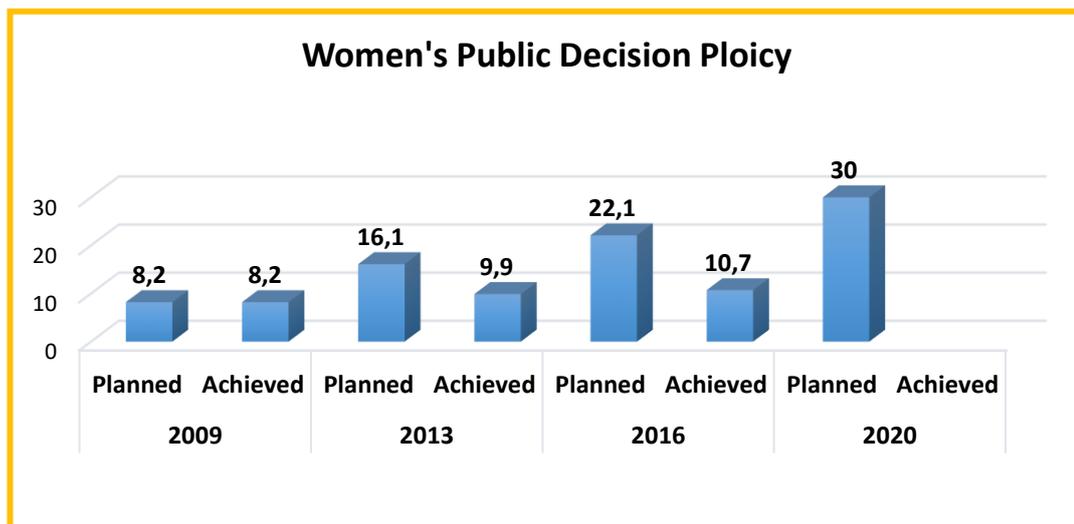
Afghan government is also considering a series of measures to empower women. By these national measures with external assistance and support of women related projects by international organizations, Afghanistan government could increase the women's contribution in social and political affairs. The collected data shows that the design and arrangement of effective panels to empower women and to meet the target of 30% increase in government decision-making by women, women participation in public sectors, private and non-governmental organizations have been supported by international organizations and the International Community. This can serve as a good incentive to achieve the goal of increasing women at the decision-making level of 30% (Kamalyan, 2006, p 193).



**Figure 4-1.** Contribution of men and women at the decision-making level by sector

**Source:** National Bureau of Statistics and Information (2019), Statistical Yearbooks from 2010-2019, NSIA, (<https://www.nsia.gov.af:8080/fa/category/books/>)

The findings of the study show that the share of women at the decision-making level shown in the figure is very low. While, in the public sector the share of women is 10.3 %, in the private sector is 9.6 % (Statistical Yearbooks, 2010-2019)

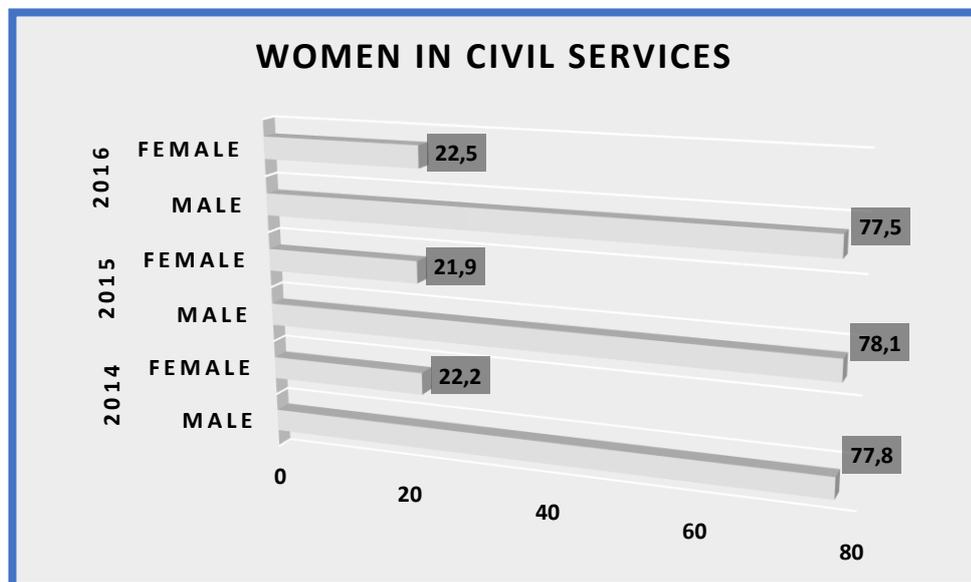


**Figure 4-2:** Achieve goals set for women to reach decision-making levels

**Source:** National Bureau of Statistics and Information (2019), Statistical Yearbooks from 2010-2019, NSIA, (<https://www.nsia.gov.af:8080/fa/category/books/>)

The findings of the Surveys related to participation of women and men in decision-making at years 2014, 2015 and 2016 shows that women have achieved few goals with the help of the organizations. As can be seen in the figure, the targets set for women's participation in decision-making for the years 2009, 2013 and 2016 were respectively determined as 8.2%, 16.1%, and 22.1%. While in 2013, 9.9% and 10.7%. Percentage of determined goals have been achieved, and due to the lack of effective management process, shows a very slow growth over the years (Statistical Yearbooks, 2009, 2013 & 2016).

The goals of the National Working Plan for Women, which include women participation at the decision-making level of 30% by 2020, are set to reach 5% annual growth between 2009 and 2013 and 3% annual growth between 2013 and 2016, respectively. Goals of 30% increase in women public decision-making by 2020 is ambitious. In order to achieve these goals, clear and comprehensive plans for development and implementation is needed (Kamalyan, 2006, p 194).



**Figure 4-3:** Percentage of gendered civil servants

**Source:** National Bureau of Statistics and Information (2019), Statistical Yearbooks from 2010-2019, NSIA, (<https://www.nsia.gov.af:8080/fa/category/books/>)

Likewise, in the civil service sector, the total number of government civil servants, including service personnel and workers, with the exception of the police, army and national security in 2014, 2015 and 2016 increased respectively.

In 2018, out of 56 ministries and departments, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled Affairs had the high number of female employees as 40.2 percent alongside the Ministry of Women's Affairs with 55 percent. Ministry of Education had 26.1 percent, Ministry of Public Health, 24.7%, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, 22.7%, besides 22 Ministries of Home Affairs and Government Administration with more than 11%, and other 30 ministries and government departments less than 11%, the Independent Local Government Authority. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock have the lowest percentages of female employees, 4.2, 0.9, 3, and 8.3 percent respectively (Ministry of Women Affairs, 2018).

The statistics in the above figures show that the increase in women's participation in Afghanistan's national and international affairs has been based on a series of donations and support, which most of these assistance has been provided by international organizations and the international community. In addition, if these aids were managed effectively, they would be more effective than they are now.

#### **4.4. Women's Participation in the Affairs of Afghanistan and its Institutionalization**

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a new chapter of aspirations and opportunities for Afghan women opened. With the arrival of US forces in response to 11 September, terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and the formation of a new government, the issue of Afghan women has become not only a domestic issue but also a global concern, to abolish discriminations against women. During the Taliban's rule, it was a major policy for donor countries and institutions. As a result, the level of demands for radical changes in the lives of Afghan women and girls has also increased. Some quick changes happened. School gates opened to girls, discriminatory laws were amended and women's participation in community and leadership positions became tangible. However, some other problems did not appear to be easily resolved, a ready-made process that provided the conditions for sustained change in favor of addressing gender inequality (Khesrow, 2013).

Finally, the effects of religion and culture, which have a decisive role in defining the values, rules, and expectations of gender and interacting with and influencing these institutions, were better addressed.

The complex political pressure exerted within the government of Afghanistan undermines its commitments to gender equality and women's rights. While donor countries advocate for gender equality, other domestic forces, from the Taliban to the conservative, do not clearly support this equality and change.

The move, along with other signs, gives the right to observers concerned with women's rights in Afghanistan and dealing with the Taliban and other conservative forces in the process of reconciliation, which in fact returns women's achievements and rights to their first point. The sheer volume of gender inequality and human rights abuses during the Taliban has raised the issue of Afghan women in the public minds of the world. The state of emergency for women and of course the war on terrorism were two issues that interfered. (Zaffronchi, 2011, p 8). The literal defense of the rights of Afghan women was at its height, often intertwined with issues of terrorism and the suppression of women.

As Mark Meloch Brown, the UK foreign affairs chief for Africa, Asia and the UN in 2009, said, women's rights were one of the reasons the British and many Western governments launched their campaign in Afghanistan. The international community has responded to Afghanistan's need for millions of dollars in financial assistance and military presence in Afghanistan over the past decade. Official Development Assistance (ODA) data shows an increase in donor countries' financial commitments from \$ 15 per capita in 2001 to \$ 187 per capita in 2010. The donor countries alone spent \$ 6.45 billion in 2010 (Abi Rafi, L (2007), Gender Equality and International Aid in Afghanistan, Kabul: AREU).

This volume of assistance has created opportunities and challenges simultaneously. While the level of coordination among the countries active in Afghanistan needed to be increased day by day, it was instead the challenges and complexities of coordination and assistance that were gradually increasing. The donor countries' positions on women's rights were very strong, their promises to Afghan women are very broad and deliberate. But their actions in the early stages of Afghanistan's post-Taliban

reconstruction were not as strong and meaningful as their verbal positions. There was little coordination between institutions and countries in advancing the project on the status of women, and little was spent on promoting gender equality in Afghanistan by the International Community.

The money was spent in a way that no one would be able to hold donors accountable for their promises to Afghan women. Finally, there was an infinite amount of investment in documenting women's rights and gender inequality to account for the progress made by all institutions and individuals for their verbal support and countless promises to Afghan women. While the Afghan constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child could provide a practical framework for coordination and accountability, the International Community did not adequately benefit from these documents.

The above conventions appear to remain largely within the UN framework itself and serve as a reference and benchmark for testing and fulfilling commitments in bilateral relations with the Afghan government, or guidelines for cooperation. General bias was not used. Donors relied on their national policies, not international commitments and responsibilities, on the development of cooperation with Afghanistan. As national priorities and donors did not coincide, it created divisions. (Abi-Rafi, 2007).

This model of prioritization and planning is wasting resources on achieving gender equality and undermining Afghanistan's ability to coordinate advances and priorities for Afghan girls and women. As one key person said, international donors are heterogeneous and dispersed actors working on their own agenda and priorities, and while UN is responsible for coordinating the foreign countries involved in Afghanistan, has never had such an influential and leading position in women's issues.

Instead of focusing on achieving public satisfaction in the volatile areas of Afghanistan, the country's development assistance has served its military objectives, focusing on and addressing other more important needs, so investment and assistance to women and girls has been diverted. The dire security situation has led donor countries to lose contact with people in rural areas of the country. Donors in Kabul have reported that their interactions are increasingly limited to ordinary people, with few able to travel around the country for security reasons. (Abi-Rafi, 2007).

In addition, it is seen that more attention is now being paid to “fruitful projects” and has rapid and objective results, such as school building and other similar opportunities, to work on the cultural and social changes that challenge traditions and influence perspectives. This kind of look and work clearly impacts donors' approach to gender issues. They are more likely to work within the existing system with the same gender inequality and norms, avoid conflict with sensitive cultural issues and social change, and are more interested in early and specific projects. However, although this approach in the short term achieves success in terms of people's participation in programs such as the National Solidarity Programs, schools, and small loans, it has the capacity to expand and consolidate long-term gains and sustainable change. In terms of gender equality, it is not very high.

Although donor countries have always argued that women should be recognized as full members of Afghan society from the beginning of their military presence in Afghanistan, but their actions have generally not been sufficient in light of the volume of problems and challenges. In addition, there seems to be a willingness to compromise on women's rights to progress in peace talks with the Taliban. Of course, the different agendas and capacities of these organizations make this role difficult and challenging.

Women's rights activists in Afghanistan, despite many unrealistic expectations, have taken important steps to improve the status of women. One of the challenges facing civil society is the various guidelines of its member institutions in Afghanistan. They focus on providing humanitarian assistance to remote areas to implement social development programs, monitor human rights, and advocate for women's rights. Their role is important in understanding and addressing the long-term needs and interests of women and men because of the government's questionable and limited commitments to promoting gender equality and women's rights in Afghanistan. (Ana Larson, 2008).

According to women's rights organizations involved in the AREU debate groups, the different agendas of civil society organizations in Afghanistan have been more defined and adapted to the demands and priorities of donor resources. Critics of Afghan civil society find it more project-oriented. As a civil society group, women's rights organizations have never been united in coordinating the goals and priorities of women's rights and gender equality in Afghanistan. The individuals interviewed for this study described internal disparities and lack of coordination in civil society, and

coordination between government and civil society that undermined the effectiveness of civil society in general. In particular, women's rights activists have been criticized for undermining women's struggles for equal rights because of competition for money and influence. In spite of these challenges, Afghan civil society has been able to exert some influence over laws and debates around gender equality at the national level.

This success is largely due to the work of the AWN Afghan Women's Network of 96 CSOs and 3,000 female members. Civil society organizations working on women's rights reflect the views and perspectives of Afghan women who had never been heard. In many international and domestic forms, civil society activists, on behalf of marginalized groups, have raised their voices to claim their rights and needs. (National Bureau of Statistics and Information, 2019).

While their work has received some criticism, women's rights activists point out that their first-hand experiences speak to people, and that their voices are needed to articulate women's demands in domestic and international communities. On the contrary, the role of civil society organizations in informing people, whether at the level of towns or villages, which is difficult to access information of the poor, is critical to women's rights and the need for changes in the law of Afghanistan.

The Afghan government, especially the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Commission on Human Rights and Civil Society, is working to educate people, provide legal advice to women, and hold seminars and workshops to raise women's awareness of their civil and religious rights. Women's institutions, such as the Afghan Women's Education Center, the Afghan Women's Resource Center, humanitarian assistance to Afghan women and children, operating in remote areas, have been a bridge to reducing Afghanistan's political and geographical distances.

The Human Rights and Democracy Organization of Afghanistan (AIHRC) is organizing a theater of law in various areas in a creative way. The theater discusses political participation and women's legal problems. These efforts have made a significant contribution to women's rights, but it should also be borne in mind that these efforts focus solely on women. Although many approaches and practices are creative and likely to influence values and perspectives on women's and gender issues,

beyond these must be the views and beliefs of men and women, and influential people, in the process of intellectual change in the relationship (Ganish, 2013).

The AIHRC is one of those organizations that has adopted a variety of approaches to focus on influential and effective leaders as agents of change. The commission has held training sessions to raise awareness of these leaders on human rights and women's rights to broaden the human rights discourse in mosques, communities and constituencies.

Some of its results are promising. However, despite some of the aforementioned educational and media programs, women's rights are largely misunderstood, and perceptions of their rights are widely dispersed. Until now, women's rights organizations still lack detailed information and understanding of the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Children, and the international obligations of the Afghan government. When it comes to women's rights, there is no reference to international conventions, and the topics are general, non-transparent and lacking details.

While much attention is paid to preventing and protecting women and children from violence and physical and psychological harm, women and girls as holders of a specific set of rights are reflected in the Convention on the Elimination of Violence against Children's Rights. Most importantly, one of the ongoing challenges for women's rights advocates is how to address women's rights and gender equality in different regions of the country in a way that is relevant to the lives of people and sectors in need. (Hoshang, 2012).

In the 2004 constitution, equal rights for women as citizens of the Afghan government were formally endorsed and guaranteed. With the constitution as the main legislative reference and criterion, there are several laws, such as marriage law, education law, public health law, and penal code, the law on the elimination of violence against women, rape, beatings, child marriage and abuse, adopted for legal protection of the rights of Afghan women and girls. The Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women, created in response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, was promulgated in 2009 by a presidential decree in Afghanistan, but was re-introduced to

the Afghan parliament in May 2013 for formal approval, after several months it was removed from the agenda of the Afghan parliament due to internal protests.

The law must be debated in parliament for re-approval. Despite this situation, a draft National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence against Women has been drafted. The program outlines a series of steps to implement the law through increased public awareness, preventive and protective measures, including monitoring and reporting on cases of violence against women. Review of the performance of judges, prosecutors and police from March 2010 to August 2011 showed some progress in implementing the Law on the Elimination of Violence, but these are limited to the few cases that the government has ruled on the totality of cases of violence against women (National Bureau of Statistics and Information, 2019).

Most cases, including serious cases such as rape and murder, are mediated and resolved through customary local practices and do not follow their legal procedures in the Afghan formal courts. Adoption of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women is only part of the complex and difficult problem of gender inequality that requires clear and sustained co-operation by lawmakers, policymakers, police and officials at all levels to overcome traditional barriers and values in order to tackle the problems of women and girls. And there is law enforcement. In addition to the aforementioned rules, quotas were also allocated for Afghan women in the People's Jirga and the Grand Jirga seats. (National Bureau of Statistics and Information, 2019).

As the AREU study on gender mainstreaming in the programs and policies of the six Ministries of Drugs, Education, Interior, Justice, Public Health, and Rural Development highlights these concerns. The primary and institutional mechanism of the government to promote gender equality is to integrate gender into its programs and policies. There are mechanisms in the interior ministries to deal with gender issues such as the gender bureau, gender monitors, international and domestic gender advisers, and women's associations.

It is therefore understood that gender mainstreaming has had little effect on the current performance of ministries. This means that the lack of political will and low capacity in domestic and international institutions is one of the causes of these failures. Gender bureaus and other mechanisms are usually supported by international donor agencies

and organizations; there is very little coordination between ministries on the above; Gender, and some ministries have not any mechanism. There are many stories about similar programs in Kabul.

Advances in gender equality are needed and essential. Despite tangible progress in building legal and policy frameworks to protect women's rights, there is still a need for further work to achieve real and lasting progress in the area of Afghan women's and girls' rights. Of course, it must be remembered that the existing legal and policy frameworks are not sufficient and effective to bring about changes in women's rights and gender equality as they should be. There are many reasons here to thwart efforts to transform programs and policies into action at the provincial level and below. In the process, it is also worth mentioning that the low political will, which is also rooted in various pressures from the international community and internal factions pursuing diverse views and interests in women's rights and gender equality is increased until 2014. Tangible efforts to improve women's legal equality in policymaking face cultural barriers and have resulted in significant disagreements over gender equality and women's rights across different generations, socioeconomic classes, ethnicities and areas. Therefore, while we have witnessed the signing of various conventions since the Taliban era, in practice the rapid changes in domestic and foreign political discourse and explicit support for women's rights and gender equality have not yet been fully implemented. Most of the conventions, caused reactions among some parts of Afghan society. Of course, it goes back to the era of Amanullah Khan and the Communist rule in Afghanistan and top-down reforms to bring about changes in the status of women and girls. The difficult task now is to build the capacities of local institutions and individuals to enforce laws that are written on behalf of women and girls. This means that the issue of gender is understood, expanded and consolidated at all levels of society, and therefore changes at the level of macro policies without changes in community norms and behaviors at local and national levels are not sufficient. (Khesrow, 2013).

In order to ensure and extend policy advancements and achievements, both during and after transition, it requires the intensive efforts of all institutions and individuals concerned to create awareness and acceptance of the above legal frameworks, the implementation of which are based on social conditions and contexts. It is a medium

and long-term process though. Despite of its slowness, do they have the potential for profound and sustained developments in gender equality? The Afghan government has a duty to facilitate and fulfill its obligations to women. The presence of donor countries and agencies in Afghanistan provides a structural foundation for litigation and protection of women's access to their rights and can hold the Afghan government accountable and committed to fulfilling its obligations.

#### **4.5. Obstacles to Women's Political Participation in Power Structure**

There are a number of obstacles to women's political participation in Afghan national and international affairs, which have led to the loss of much foreign aids to empower women. Various factors can be mentioned that have made it impossible for Afghan women to participate in politics as elsewhere in the world. These factors can be summarized in three general terms:

##### **4.5.1. Psychological causes**

Judge believes that two major psychological factors prevent women from actively participating in political participation, which is feeling powerless and lacking in motivation for political activity, since women view politics as complex and synonymous with violence, they see it as beyond their power (Judge, 2007, 151). Thus, the psychological barriers to women's participation in politics are more related to subjective factors. Afghan women do not have the mentality of active participants in politics. They do not believe in their political influence because they have not been considered in the political and social life of Afghanistan for a long time and this has become a habit and routine for them.

##### **4.5.2. Socio-economic causes**

Another obstacle to women's active participation in economic and social policy is the role women play as mother and wife, a sensitive and uninterrupted role, which endows woman to choice and give the opportunity to study and gain political consciousness. Unlike men, women do not have enough political experience. Many men have political experience because of the type of activity they do in the community. This causes that women lose the chance to work outside the home and deprive them of access to finance.

It would not be possible to work in politics without proper funding. Women who depend on men to finance their families are less likely to be financially independent than what they like to be - they cannot freely rely on their own financial power in the political structure of society. That has been an obstacle to their political participation in the society (Friedman, 2002, 26).

#### **4.5.3. Cultural and customary causes of society**

Cultural and customary component can be said to be one of the most important barriers to women's political participation, especially at high levels and of qualitative and effective political participation. As Friedman puts it, patriarchal culture, by dividing labor and delegating home affairs to women, has in effect, in some way, deprived women of equal opportunity, and has gradually become a mental institution, according to which patterns offer women the same treatment values. Isolating women in the home to serve a husband, child, or family gathering is one example that can harness other traits to embody a form of eternal female social construction. Politics has largely a male identity, as if it were a kind of rent-seeking position for men and placed them at the very top of the political structure (Rais Dana, 2004, 24).

Many in Afghanistan believe that women are not fit for political activities and are not capable of doing it at all. Even women themselves have accepted this prevailing belief because of men's lack of awareness and historical dominance. However, in recent years some governmental and non-governmental organizations and NGOs have been working to raise awareness and improve their position in case of Afghan women empowerment.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The prospects for the realization of women's human rights in each of the fundamental and legal sectors are varied, and if we go beyond the fundamental and structural reasons, the issue of gender equality in Afghanistan as one of the legal constituents of women is partly influenced by the initial actions and attitudes towards women. Existing differences have been the gender differences that has changed since the beginning of the decade after the fall of the Taliban. Donors and the Afghan government have been slow to adopt less common approaches to addressing human rights issues for women and girls in the field of social and political development. For example, the focus on entrepreneurship and small lending to women at the end of the decade was not as strong as it was at the beginning of the decade, and more attention was given to existing gender relations and norms in the community, and therefore had little social impact on the status of Afghan women. Laws on the prohibition of violence against women have fared better, but there is little evidence that the laws are being implemented. Various ministries are seriously suffering from a lack of staff capacity and skills to implement gender equality in policies and behaviors, and prioritize women's rights. The mechanisms in these ministries are also problematic and ineffective. Success or failure within sectors is partly related to the attractiveness and acceptability of gender equality projects and programs for different domestic and foreign entities. Overall, the sectoral programs that provide services to women in the form of existing gender relations and stereotypes in Afghanistan have not been looked well and have not been changed meaningfully. Programs that have explicitly challenged gender power structures and resource sharing have been less active and noisy. Perhaps one of the reasons is that these programs did not seriously threaten the dominant position.

Women are held captive in many countries of the world, especially in developing countries, where ancient traditions and beliefs continue to influence them. Although social relations in the patriarchal system continue to prevail in many countries around the world and this is an important obstacle to women's political participation,

especially at the highest levels, it is ultimately women who play the most important role in reproducing the system. Patriarchal and perpetuating social relationships and customs and traditions of the past play out. Tomorrow men will grow up in today's women.

In fact, the issue of women is a cultural one, and to solve it besides enacting laws and institutionalizing women's affairs in laws requires cultural work and planning and institutionalizing and stabilizing the presence of women in the minds of individuals in society. Afghanistan is a tribal society in which the culture and tradition of the tribe is blended and forms the source of decision making in socio-political relations. In tribal culture, the woman is the first victim because the tribal culture is patriarchal and there is traditionalism.

What Afghan women need is awareness and education so that they can gradually develop the mind-set into a dual male-female form that makes women naturally less capable and naturally less talented. It is about to change and in a way much of the responsibility is on Afghan women themselves. Afghan women have shown that they can change the situation to some extent to their advantage, but these efforts must certainly be stepped up to reach the goal of equating Afghan women's social and political rights with men.

Indeed, there has always been the involvement of international organizations and International Community with financial aids and technical supports in addition to the Afghan government. Since 2001, much has changed for a large number of women in Afghanistan. While door gates were totally shut down for girls during the dark era of Taliban, now more than 3.5 million girls go to school and around 100,000 women go to public and private universities across the country. At this time, 20% of the government employees are women and women own 5% of businesses. There are now three female ministers in Afghanistan cabinet and 27% of House of Representatives in the parliament are women. At least six deputy ministers in five ministries of the country are women. With the help of international organizations, women's participation in various sectors, including Afghanistan's political and international affairs, has been gradually increasing. There has been more than hundreds of female ambassadors and diplomats representing Afghanistan in different countries. More women are leading important departments in the center and provinces. Women now

work in schools, hospitals and government offices, including the country's first female Governor in Bamyán in 2005 and Provincial Council Chair, in 2015.

Despite of the significant growth in women's condition since 2001 and the flow of aids to Afghanistan over the past decade show progress in women's political participation in the country, but due to the lack of leadership in managing the assistances, and less coordination among donors, women couldn't deliver a sustainable growth in political and social spheres as planned. Empowering women is a matter of development strategies and policies that are essential for the implementation of developmental projects and international women's programs. External assistance, including that of international organizations, has therefore played a key role in changing the situation for Afghan women in the post-2001 period.

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# RESUME



## Shogofa Sahar

### Technical Personnel

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#### Profile

Sex: Female

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#### CURRENT POSSITON

22/12/2018–Present **Technical Personnel**

Excelled role in several departments from being Assistant to the Ambassador to contributing with Cultural Department, Protocol Department, Political Department as well as Consulate Section of the Embassy.

01/01/2018–Present **Co-Founder of BINA**

Board of Intellectual for National Awareness [BINA] Kabul, Afghanistan

We established this organization to make women aware of their rights, the impact they have in development of Afghanistan, betterment of the society and civilizing the nation.

- Raising women and youth contribution in social, cultural, economic and political spheres
- Giving awareness trainings and seminars
- Capacity building trainings for men to believe in women's rights, and to prevail it
- Organizing cultural, educational and competitive programs for the youth and children, engaging them in civil society from the early age to protect and save the generations to come
- Making policies and strategic plan for developmental programs, writing proposals to get fund from donors and implementing the projects efficiently and effectively

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

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21/11/2016–21/12/2018      **Commercial Director**

MAAS JET Aviation, Istanbul (Turkey)

- Leading operational teams in MAAS JET
- Overseeing service and development
- Identifying new market opportunities
- Determining the optimal pricing to balance profit with customer/client satisfaction
- Directing marketing operations
- Maintaining a consistent trajectory of growth, while avoiding obstacles that arise from a constantly shifting market

4/1/2016–31/3/2016      **Internship**

Consulate General of Afghanistan Istanbul, Istanbul (Turkey)

- Writing reports based on the updated information regarding the economic and trade relations between Afghanistan and Turkey
- Identifying and observing the challenges and barriers and suggesting applicable solutions for the problems

3/8/2015–7/9/2015      **Assistant in transport warehouse**

Neovia Logistics Germany GmbH, Kassel (Germany)

1/6/2009–30/9/2010      **Computer assistant**

The Ministry of Education, Kabul (Afghanistan)

- Preparing time table with the board of examination
- Making a database of the students who are selected for the scholarships
- Facilitating their documentation process
- Contacting the related organizations regarding students' concerns

1/12/2007–31/12/2008      **Journalist**

Radio Sada-e-Azadi Shamal, Badakhshan (Afghanistan)

- Reporting activities contributing national development and provincial construction
- Covering the stories from the community, NGOs and public institutions
- Addressing social concerns that needed attention

4/12/2006–25/11/2007      **Tutor**

Non-for profit organization Save the Children in Afghanistan, Badakhshan (Afghanistan)

- Teaching orphans their basic human rights and the ways to tackle with social problems
- Organizing educational and entertaining programs, giving them the opportunity to perform and show their capabilities
- Assisting with their school assignments, teaching them English language and increasing their general knowledge
- Emphasizing their capabilities, encouraging them doing sports

4/3/2002–4/3/2005      **Correspondent at kids program**

Good Morning Afghanistan Radio, Kabul (Afghanistan)

- Preparing educational programs for children
- Interviewing children
- Broadcasting the programs through the radio station
- As a child I traveled to Denmark in the release day of the documentary which was recorded from our work with the Radio by a Danish journalist

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

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26/9/2016–14/05/2020      **Master of Political Science and International Relations**

Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul (Turkey), (with a GPA of 3.75 out of 4.00)

### **General**

- International Affairs
- Political Thoughts and philosophies
- Critical Analysis of Political System

### **Occupational**

- Social and Political Theory
- International Relations in Theory and history
- Explore Power and Politics
- Research Methods in Social and Political Sciences
- Comparative Political Development
- Global Political Economy
- International Human Rights and Conflict esp. in Middle East
- Conflict resolution
- Security, finance and trade

5/7/2017–11/7/2017      **Performance in "What If Women Ruled the World"**  
**MIF (Manchester International Festival), Manchester (United Kingdom)**

We discussed:

- The greatest threat to humanity and the planet today
- What if women were genuinely in charge of the world
- Critical issues that could be solved, but are not being addressed
- We facilitated radical thinking and provided a discussion about the alternative to patriarchy

13/9/2011–6/6/2016

**Bachelor of Arts**

Anadolu University, Eskisehir (Turkey), (completed with GPA of 3.28 out of 4.00)

**General**

- Economic principles and tools
- Systematic and independent thinking
- Public administration and social sciences

**Occupational**

- Political theories and economic policies
- Economic growth
- International Relations
- International Economics
- Business and law

1/4/2015–11/9/2015

**ERASMUS+ exchange program**

University of Kassel, Kassel (Germany)

- International communication
- Field related studies
- Social integration skills
- Group working skills
- Increased my capacities and improved my capabilities

16/9/2013–18/6/2014

**Completion of Farabi Exchange Program**

**Istanbul University, Istanbul (Turkey)**

**General**

- Broadened my knowledge about the Turkey's educational and academic environment across Turkish cities and universities
- Experienced diversity, multiculturalism and fusion of European and Asian lifestyles and practices

## Occupational

- Knowledge of economic and business in legal and social context
- Field related studies

11/10/2010–22/8/2011 **Completion of Turkish Intensive courses up to C1 level Tomer, Bursa (Turkey)**

- Reading, writing, listening and speaking Turkish skills
- Adaption to a new environment and community

1/1/2009–28/5/2009 **Completion of Foundation Studies Program**

American University of Afghanistan, Kabul (Afghanistan)

- Reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in English
- Preparatory courses for undergraduate studies

22/3/2006–22/12/2009 **High School Certificate**

Najeebullah Shahid High School, Badakhshan (Afghanistan)

- General studies, (graduated with an average of 97.33 out of 100)

## PERSONAL SKILLS

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Mother tongue(s) Persian

Foreign language(s)

	UNDERSTANDING		SPEAKING		WRITING
	Listening	Reading	Spoken interaction	Spoken production	
English	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
Turkish	C2	C2	C2	C1	C2
German	A1	A1	A1	A1	A1

Levels: A1 and A2: Basic user - B1 and B2: Independent user - C1 and C2: Proficient user Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Communication skills,

- Good communication and interviewing skills gained from my experience working with media
- Good negotiation skills gained from my experience being the Commercial Director in MAAS JET encouraging the partner companies to make investments in our business as well as my experience of writing proposals for donors to get fund for my NGO
- My experience as a translator for different companies in Fair Trades in Istanbul helped me improve my social relations, interaction and networks
- Being announcer for different assemblies and school conferences developed my confidence in giving speeches, influencing and leading
- I have good presentation skills

Organizational / managerial skills,

- A good leader, planning, organizing, controlling and directing skills gained from my experience being as the Commercial Director in MAAS JET as well as attending several seminars in different countries
- Problem solving by strategic communication skills developed from my attributes to my NGO (BINA) as well as my experiences with media

Job-related skills,

- I am enthusiastic to learn and to have a continuing professional development
- I am a risk taker, highly motivated and friendly person
- The need in my society, subordination of women and unfair gender inequality in the community that I have been raised up, shaped my goals in a way that I have a desire for being competitive, capable of helping others to reach their potentials, being influential, empower women and help with the economy of my country and civilization of my nation
- I have leadership capabilities and seeking to develop my innovative problem solving skills

Digital skills,

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Information processing	Communication	Content creation	Safety	Problem-solving
Proficient user	Independent user	Independent user	Independent user	Independent user

Digital skills - Self-assessment grid

- I have proficiency in using Cool Edit program that I used to use for editing my audio reports when I was working as a Journalist
- I have some knowledge of professional photographing