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EVALUATION REPORT



**UDF-AFG-10-379 – Raising Awareness about Women’s Social. Political and Economic
Rights in Afghanistan**

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All photographs used in the report were provided by DPA.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this report are those of the Evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Project data

The project *Raising Awareness about Women's Social, Political and Economic Rights in Afghanistan* was implemented between 1 May 2012 and 30 April, 2014 by Development and Public Awareness (DPA), an Afghan NGO, based in Kabul. The total grant was \$300,000. The project was implemented by DPA in 15 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, in all four regions of the country. Implementation was undertaken in cooperation with three implementing partners: the Afghanistan Academic and Islamic Research Centre (AAIRC); NEBRAS Research and Study Centre; and, the NAI Organization.

Given the low levels of women's representation in political life in Afghanistan and their limited engagement in public life, the project sought "to promote the democratic rights and participation of women." The key outcomes pursued were:

- *increased awareness and support of women's rights in 15 provinces in Afghanistan; and,*
- *increased participation in advocacy for women's rights through regional women's rights networks in the target provinces.*

(ii) Evaluation findings

Relevance: The project's overall objective and outcomes were relevant to the development problem of enhancing women's awareness of their rights and facilitating a greater presence for women in public life. However, the weak focus of the project's intended results and its failure to specify beneficiaries beyond "Afghan women" limited its relevance in supporting practical steps to meet the real needs of ordinary women. The project's implementation strategy was woven around a series of mainly stand-alone activities, with resources scattered among too many initiatives delivered in too many locations, in all areas of Afghanistan. The flaws in project design undermined any prospect for achieving impact.

Effectiveness:

a) Some Fundamental Problems Concerning the Project: Despite the claims to the contrary by the grantee in the Final Report and in interviews conducted for the Evaluation, the Evaluators were unable to confirm that the project was fully implemented in all provinces. On the basis of the information available, it was confirmed that one activity, the production and broadcast of radio and television roundtable presentations on women's rights, took place in all fifteen provinces, as planned. However, it is also apparent that other activities took place in no more than a small number of the target locations. No evidence was available to demonstrate that any other activities took place in nine of the provinces. Detailed documentation of the implementation of the full programme exists for only three provinces.

Given the absence of adequate documentation on project implementation, serious questions must be raised about the reliability and veracity of reporting by the grantee, as well as of the financial reports provided. Generally, it is not difficult for a grantee to provide documentary and photographic evidence, along with detailed records of financial expenditure, to support reports on

project activities. In this case, the grantee, DPA, was unable to provide information of this kind, except for a small number of provinces, as explained above. There were no special circumstances to explain these information gaps, but, according to the grantee, everything took place as described in the Mid-Term and Final Reports.

b) Effectiveness of the Project as Implemented: The project was poorly coordinated, with DPA failing to take on the pro-active role in programme integration, as it claimed it would in the Project Document. There were weak, or non-existent, links across project activities, and there was no continuity of participation by beneficiaries. In the one area, where, according to the project strategy, a link was to be built – between participants in training and engagement in regional women’s rights networks (to be established with the support of the project), no action was taken, and the networks were not established, despite the claims in the Final Report.

Preparation for all activities was weak or absent: for example, the relevance of the training curriculum to the situation of beneficiaries; the absence of any effort to link the content of both the training exercises and the radio and TV roundtables to the local context in the provinces where they were delivered, along with the absence of any effort to address practical questions and concrete issues; the failure to provide any preparation or written guidelines to Imams who were to deliver sermons on women’s rights, despite the plan to do so in the Project Document; the poor quality and uninteresting design of the comic books on women’s rights, along with the failure to distribute them as proposed.

In summary, it must be concluded that, for the most part, the project was not implemented as planned. Where activities did take place, as a consequence of poor design, the absence of direction and a lack of attention to detail, they were ineffective. This is not the fault of those who delivered the training, who followed a set curriculum, or of those who took part in the roundtables, where no substantial guidance was provided on format or approach in capturing the interest of the audience while meeting their information needs. There was a lack of care taken by management in matching project initiatives with the priorities of ordinary women. A baseline study, while imperfect, revealed the particular lack of awareness concerning their rights among less-educated women. Despite this important finding, this group of women was completely ignored by the project, which included no-one in its management team with expertise in gender equality or women’s rights.

Efficiency: Given the circumstances of project implementation, described above, there is little that remains to be said about project efficiency. Clearly, it cannot be stated that the project made effective use of the resources available. Neither DPA, nor its partners, delivered the programme as planned. The project was poorly managed, and there was little apparent coordination among the partners. Contracts were agreed between DPA and two of its implementing partner, NAI and NEBRAS. Yet, DPA management denies their existence, and no reference to them is made in project reports. In Herat, recognized by the international community as one of the most promising sites for development cooperation programmes, surprisingly, responsibility for project implementation was sub-contracted to a local NGO. There is no reference to this, or other, provincial-level sub-contracts in project reports. There is also no record of expenditures by the partner organizations or sub-contractors in the Final Financial Report.

Impact: The Final Report includes a long list of statistics, purporting to demonstrate the results of project activities. “Before and after” evaluations conducted at training exercises, unsurprisingly, showed that trainees knew more about their rights at the end of the training exercises. Data is also presented on the results of the sermons in addition to the knowledge of rights of mosque attendees, and of the audience for the radio and television broadcasts. Given, the overall findings concerning project implementation, serious doubts exist about the basis for these “results”. Going beyond the short-term results of activities, an “Impact Study” was conducted. By comparing findings of the survey with those obtained from the baseline survey, it is claimed that there was a modest increase in the knowledge and awareness of more educated women. Since no question was asked about whether or not respondents had been exposed to any project activities, or to any other rights-related initiatives, and given that most activities took place in only a small number of provinces, these findings must be viewed as spurious. Unfortunately, there is nothing to suggest that the project had any impact.

Sustainability: The Project Document itemized a series of steps the grantee would take to reinforce the sustainability of results achieved through the project. This included ongoing engagement with the Imams who gave sermons on women’s rights, and facilitation of dialogue between the Imams and members of the women’s networks. The networks were not established, and there was no follow-up with the Imams. All project activities were isolated, “one-shot” events and nothing initiated by the project was sustainable.

(iii) Conclusions

It has been found impossible to confirm that the project was implemented in full. While it appears to be the case that the radio and television roundtables planned for production and broadcast in the 15 target provinces did take place, other activities have been implemented in no more than six, and as few as three, of the provinces. This calls into question the veracity of project reporting, as well as the information presented on financial expenditures. Leaving aside this rather fundamental concern, the remaining conclusions address the project as implemented.

- The Project Document indicated the intention to conduct activities in 15 of 34 of Afghanistan’s provinces, situated in all four geographic regions of the country. In mounting such an ambitious effort, the grantee reduced the prospects for achieving results through a scattering of activities in locations throughout the country. It is apparent that the grantee failed to appreciate the scale of the risk it was taking on. Beyond this, weak integration of activities by project management, and a failure by the grantee to collaborate closely with its implementing partners, limited both the effectiveness and the impact of the project.

- A critical weakness of the project design was the failure to specify in precise terms the beneficiary group which the project would support. The focus on “Afghan women” was hardly a focus at all. Findings of a baseline study, which indicated the particular need for learning about their rights on the part of less-educated women, were ignored. In fact, during implementation, project beneficiaries were principally better-educated, younger women.

- The resources devoted to the baseline and impact studies did not represent a worthwhile investment. Problems and inconsistencies in the survey methodology, along with the absence of questions which would link the surveys with participation of respondents in project activities, rendered reported findings an unreliable source in assessment of project

effectiveness. Further, as noted above, the grantee failed to use the baseline survey data in focusing implementation plans.

- Lack of adequate preparation undercut the value of the project's activities, while one of the most important initiatives, critical to sustainability – namely, the establishment of regional women's networks – did not take place at all. No effort was made to address concrete issues of concern to ordinary Afghan women, and the project lacked professional expertise in gender equality and women's rights, which constituted the core of the project.

- A lesson of experience that has been learned countless times in capacity development programming is that "one-shot" training initiatives are ineffective in building the capacity of trainees. Similarly, single television or radio programmes, with no linkage to ongoing campaigns or educational work, are unlikely to make a difference in enhancing the knowledge of viewers or listeners. DPA failed to take these lessons into account in planning the project.

- In the Project Document, emphasis was given to the importance of following up on activities to ensure continuing engagement of beneficiaries, while building their knowledge and self-confidence. No effort was made by the grantee to live up to these assurances.

- In those provinces where implementation did take place, the project will have made a minor contribution to increasing interest in women's rights, and will have provided new information on the topic to some beneficiaries. More broadly, however, the disconnected approach to activity planning, and its poor quality, along with the lack of follow-up and the gaps in continuity of participation, makes it unlikely that there was any impact on the overall development problem which formed the basis for the project.

(iv) Recommendations

Given the findings of the Evaluation, little purpose will be served in proposing recommendations to the grantee. Hence, ***the main focus will be on putting forward proposals to UNDEF to assist the organization in defending its projects from fraudulent (or "ghost") expenditures by grantees.*** It is understood that in fragile states and states where conflict continues, as in Afghanistan, Somalia, or Iraq, or where other conditions, such as the aftermath of a natural disaster, the situation obliges UNDEF to adopt an entirely hands-off approach to management. In such cases, the evaluation team believes it may be necessary to add some further requirements to grant agreements. It will be for UNDEF to determine whether such provisions will be applied universally, or to only a minority of projects, where certain conditions apply. It is unfortunate that such steps are necessary, but, without the introduction of requirements along these lines, it is the view of the Evaluation Team that there is a serious risk of the recurrence of similar problems with future projects.

It is recommended that for projects implemented in fragile states such as Afghanistan, Iraq or Somalia, UNDEF inserts the following provisions in addition to the existing reporting requirements already included in the grant agreement,:

- Far more detailed financial reports could be provided by grantees at both mid-term and the close of the project, with a full prose explanation of expenditures, line-by-line to UNDEF. Copies of any contracts or sub-contracts could be provided with either the Mid-Term or

Final Report, depending on the date of signature to UNDEF. Any such contracts could also be made available to Evaluators and Auditors.

- ***It is recommended that*** UNDEF includes a note in its guidelines to those considering putting forward grant applications advising them that they will be well-advised to prepare project proposals where resources match ambition, and where activities are to be carried out in a limited and realistic number of locations, within a manageable geographic territory.

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

(i) The project and evaluation objectives

The project *Raising Awareness about Women's Social, Political and Economic Rights in Afghanistan* was implemented between 1 May 2012 and 30 April, 2014 by Development and Public Awareness, an Afghan NGO, based in Kabul. The total grant was \$300,000, including \$25,000 for UNDEF monitoring and evaluation. The project was implemented by DPA in 15 provinces, in cooperation with three implementing partners: the Afghanistan Academic and Islamic Research Centre (AAIRC); NEBRAS Research and Study Centre; and, the NAI Organization. All three, like the grantee, are based in Kabul.

Given the low levels of women's representation in political life and limited access of women to the knowledge that would enable them to take a more active part in public life, the project sought "to promote the democratic rights and participation of women." The key outcomes pursued were:

- *increased awareness and support of women's rights in 15 provinces in Afghanistan; and,*
- *Increased participation in advocacy for women's rights through regional women's rights networks in the target provinces.*

The project intended to reach directly through its activities 1,350 women in provinces in all four regions of the country. The provinces selected for project activities were as follows, in the north: Balkh, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Samangan and Parwan; in the east, Nangarhar, Laghman, Khost and Paktia; in the west: Herat, Badghis and Ghor; and in the south: Kandahar, Helmand and Daikundi. The selected provinces (*see map of Afghanistan's provinces in (iii), below*) included the main population centres of the country, and provided for a broad representation of Afghanistan's major ethnic and linguistic groups.

This evaluation belongs to a larger set of evaluations of UNDEF-funded projects from Rounds 2, 3 and 4. The purpose of these evaluations is to "contribute to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the Project Document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved".¹

(ii) Evaluation methodology

For security reasons and financial reasons, as in the case of earlier evaluations of UNDEF projects in Afghanistan and Iraq, it was agreed by UNDEF and Transtec that the evaluation would be managed by the international consultant at a distance, with field research being conducted by the national consultant, guided by her international colleague. However, in this case, there was a slight variation in the approach. The evaluation was scheduled to coincide with a UNDP mission to Afghanistan (August 28 to September 26) by the international consultant to undertake a mid-term evaluation of a major multi-donor project in justice and human rights.²

¹ See: Operational Manual for the program of evaluation of UNDEF-funded project evaluations, page 6

² While security considerations were also a factor for the UNDP mission, for that mission, the international consultant had full UN security support for all aspects of the work. These arrangements are not applicable for consultants undertaking the Transtec/UNDEF evaluations, nor would the budget be sufficient to cover the costs.

With the agreement of UNDP, it was possible to arrange one long meeting between the two consultants at the outset of the field research. Unfortunately, tentative plans for a follow-up meeting, as well as for a visit to the grantee, were cancelled, as a result of persistent UN security alerts, restricting travel inside and outside Kabul.³

The evaluation process was managed by the international consultant, who maintained close contact by phone and email with his national counterpart throughout. Relations with the grantee concerning logistics and the detailed organization of the field work were handled by the national consultant, in consultation with her international colleague. On completion of the field work by the national Consultant and production of her report, contact between the two consultants was maintained by email and Skype, until the completion of the Draft Final Report.

A general plan for the evaluation was developed by the international consultant, following the outline described in the Launch Report, with a set of initial meetings held by the national consultant at the premises of the grantee, as well as at the offices of the three associated implementing organizations, to review “the story of the project”, along with details of project planning and organization, and cooperative arrangements among the partners. Discussions and interviews also focused on the experience of implementing the project, the methodologies employed, and results obtained. These meetings took place as planned, with an additional interview arranged with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, an important stakeholder in the project.

Caution was used in planning for field visits by the national consultant, taking into account risks to her security and that of those whom she expects to meet. Time, budget and security conditions restricted the opportunity to visit project sites to one location outside Kabul. Following the meetings in the capital, a short visit (with travel by air) was made to Herat, a major provincial centre, for two days of meetings focusing on project implementation. On return to Kabul, the national consultant arranged a final meeting with DPA, the grantee, and also conducted a phone interview with the organization’s coordinator for Kandahar and Helmand Provinces, to ensure that what was learned about the project, as implemented in Herat, was not atypical.

In Herat, two meetings were held with the project’s regional coordinator. In addition, a long focus-group session was arranged with a group of those who had participated in training organized by the project, and, separately, with two imams, who had also been involved in the training, as well as in delivery of sermons on gender equality. A full list of those interviewed in Kabul and Herat is included in Annex 3.

As would be expected, it appears that very little of the project’s documentation is available in English, and the national consultant reviewed training materials, agendas and meeting reports, and examined participant and presenter lists, as well as background material on the planning of the surveys and assessment exercises, recordings of the broadcast roundtables, and the comic book prepared.

³ Please Note: arranging any meeting in Afghanistan in 2014, even in Kabul, is complicated because of security, logistics, scarcity of safe meeting places, restricted hours for meetings, and restricted access for nationals to UN facilities (without special authorization), and even more restricted access to the secure residences where UN staff and consultants are accommodated.

(iii) Development context

The project took place in the context of a country which has suffered from decades of conflict and instability, dating back to the 1970s. It is estimated that, over the past four decades, as much as one-half of the population has been displaced as a result of conflict and insecurity, and that as many as one-third have left the country as refugees, or, in the case of those with the education and the opportunity, as migrants.⁴ Despite the overthrow of the Taliban in late 2001, followed by the arrival of NATO forces and extensive international donor support over the past 13 years, economic and social indicators remain at a low level. Hence, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked at number 172 of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (2011). The state remains entirely dependent on the international community for its revenues, and its ability to provide basic social services is extremely limited.

Although there have been some gains in recent years, particularly in health and education, it is questionable whether such gains are sustainable. Putting in place the building blocks of a functioning system of governance remains a work in progress, and, despite outward appearances, many of the principal line ministries are afflicted by corruption and patronage appointments and the absence of job descriptions and accountability systems. Not surprisingly, many public officials lack both the core competencies and the incentives to fulfil the principal tasks associated with the mandates of their ministries. With reason, citizens lack trust in their institutions and those who represent them, whether they are ministers, government officials, judges, prosecutors or police. As The US State Department (2013) has observed, there is widespread disregard for the rule of law on the part of government officials and political leaders, along with official impunity for those who commit human rights abuses.⁵

As is well-known, gender inequality in Afghanistan, reinforced by traditional beliefs and a conservative political culture, is marked. On both human development more generally, as well as on gender equality, Afghanistan is the lowest ranked Asian country, falling significantly below the levels of gender equality attained by Pakistan and Bangladesh.⁶ For all this, since 2001, Afghanistan has experienced some critical improvements in the legal basis for women's rights, which are guaranteed under the 2004 Constitution.

In principle, various gender restrictions on access to education, work, and health care have been lifted. Several million girls have enrolled in school for the first time (although the enrolment of boys in primary school still accounts for 80 per cent of all students)⁷ and women have returned to the public sphere, with many entering the workforce in Kabul and some other cities.⁸ In this regard, it is estimated that women now make up close to 30 per cent of employees of government ministries in Kabul.⁹ However, these developments have occurred in a context of general ignorance of rights among citizens of their rights, and improvements in rights often exist only on paper. For these reasons, and because of persistent resistance at all levels to efforts to address gender inequality, the gains that have been achieved remain modest and may be under threat.

⁴ See: Introduction to J. Alexander Their, Ed., *The Future of Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace (USIP), 2009, p.2.

⁵ US Department of State, *Afghanistan 2013 Human Rights Report*. Washington D.C., 2014: see Executive Summary. See also: UN Department of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent Patterns and Trends, Survey Findings*. Vienna, 2012.

⁶ <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/68606.html>

⁷ Data from: *Afghanistan Country Profile*, UN Statistical Office, 2013.

⁸ See: Catharine Powell, "Women and Girls in the Afghanistan Transition", *Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Working Paper*, June 2014, p.3.

⁹ Source: David Ignatius, "Afghanistan's Improving Ways", *Washington Post*, 16 January, 2013.

Further, a look behind the statistical improvement in women’s employment in the public sector would show that, while improving prospects for women of obtaining a place in the labour force certainly amounts to progress, there is a limitation to this development. For the most part, female staff members are to be found on the lowest rungs in the hierarchy and lack the education, experience and access to professional development programs and skills training, which would enable them to compete with men for more desirable positions.¹⁰ Similarly, it may be observed that statistics on enhanced access to education and social services should not be taken at face value, and qualified by an awareness of contextual realities.

In Ghor (or Ghowr) Province, close to the geographic centre of the country (see map below), where inroads by the Taliban have been limited, an official report concluded that, of 4,000 teachers currently on the payroll, some 3,200 have no qualifications and cannot read and write. The report goes on to note that 80 per cent of the 740 schools in the province are not operating.¹¹ Despite modest improvements in life-chances for women in major urban centres, it must be concluded that, on the whole, women remain poorly educated, as well as highly restricted in access to opportunities and their freedom of action. Further, as the Project Document notes, in the absence of rule of law and a reliable justice system, they remain **Map of Afghanistan's Provinces** extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse.¹²



In terms of political participation, there are quotas for women’s representation in elected bodies, with 25 per cent of seats in the lower house of parliament (currently 27 per cent of elected members are women), and 20 percent of seats on district and village councils reserved for women. Under the Karzai administration, there were three women cabinet members. Yet, despite improvements in levels of political representation, women are often excluded from deliberations on major issues. Male support for women to take on prominent roles in the public realm is low, and it is probable that, without support and pressure from the international community, levels of representation would decline.

¹⁰ Observation based on: research conducted in Kabul by International Consultant in 2012 and 2014.
¹¹ As quoted by Rory Stewart, “Afghanistan: A shocking Indictment”, *New York Review of Books*, November 6, 2014, p.6.
¹² On the general situation of women and their vulnerability to domestic and other forms of violence, see: “Way to Go: An Update on Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan”. Kabul: *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*, December 2013, Context, pp.11-13; “Corruption is a Brutal Enemy of Afghan Women”, *Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission*, 3 May 2013. <http://www.trust.org/item/20130502130716-v16ht/>

More seriously, women in public life, including members of parliament and members of the High Peace Council, are subject to constant threats of violence and kidnapping.¹³ A number of women, prominent at local and provincial level, as well as national level, including provincial representatives of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and senior policewomen, have been assassinated in recent years.¹⁴ As recently as November 16, 2014, a suicide bomber attacked an armoured car carrying a prominent Afghan parliamentarian and women's rights leader in Kabul. While the woman who was the apparent target of the attack was unharmed, three people were killed and 32 wounded in the incident.¹⁵

¹³ See: [US State Department Report](#), p.28.

¹⁴ International Consultant's own research while evaluating UNDP projects in 2012 and 2014; see also [US State Department Report](#).

¹⁵ [New York Times](#), November 17, 2014.

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

i. Project strategy and approach

The project intended to reach directly, through training and associated activities, 1,350 women in provinces in all regions of the country. However, the intention of the project was also to attract the participation and interest of men. In addition, it was expected that an additional 30,000 men and women would be engaged as the audience for Friday sermons. Finally, the project also invested resources in radio and television productions at provincial level, intended to reach a broader audience, but with the focus on women.

The 15 provinces selected (from a total of 34 for the country as a whole) as a focus for project activities were broadly representative of the population as a whole, though activities within them focused on urban centres. The approach adopted appears to have been systematic and to follow a logical sequence. Yet, in designing the project, DPA chose to stretch its activities and distribute its resources across 15 provinces. In doing so, potentially, it risked sacrificing the opportunity to build capacities and work towards sustainability through a concentration of its efforts in favour of touching and influencing a much larger group of beneficiaries. The evaluation will examine the costs, benefits and results achieved by the project strategy selected.

The main activities undertaken included the following:

- Design and implementation of a baseline survey of women’s awareness about their rights in the four regions of Afghanistan, to be followed, late in the final quarter of the project, with a post-implementation impact survey;
- A comprehensive “literature review” of laws and the legal framework in Afghanistan to explore the treatment of women’s rights;
- Production and distribution of 7,500 illustrated booklets (15-25 pages) with information on women’s rights under Afghan laws, the international human rights conventions and Islamic teachings;
- A Training-of-trainers workshop (3 days) for 4 trainers in Kabul;
- Planning and delivery of 45 2-day workshops (3 for each of the 15 target provinces), with 30 participants in each event on building an understanding of women’s rights. Women participating included civil society activists, students and teachers, as well as Imams and community members;
- Production and broadcast of 12 radio and 3 TV roundtable discussions to discuss the practical applications of women’s political, economic and social/civil rights;
- The establishment of women’s rights networks in each of the four zones, drawing on members from project participants in the 15 target provinces.

For each activity, where applicable, detailed plans were developed for completion of questionnaires by participants to determine the impact on their level of knowledge (“before and after” studies) concerning their rights.

Project Management. The project was planned and implemented by DPA, which was able to draw on its prior experience in completing a series of projects concerning public participation and civil society monitoring of government decision-making. One of its prior

projects focused on building women's awareness as a basis for their involvement in the 2010 parliamentary elections.

For the UNDEF project, DPA took responsibility for overall project direction, management and administration and monitoring and evaluation. It was assisted by three partner organizations, each of which was to take primary responsibility for one component of the project. The three were: the Afghanistan Academic and Islamic Research Center (AAIRC); NEBRAS Research and Study Center; and, the NAI Organization.



Training Workshop in Balkh

AAIRC, an independent organization of moderate Muslim scholars, linked to the Ministry of Religious and Haji Affairs, was responsible for identification of Imams and the mosques which might be involved in the project.

NAI, an NGO concerned with encouraging the development of

independent media in Afghanistan, concentrated on the media aspects of the project, including negotiating with broadcasters and making practical arrangements for the roundtables, as well as working with DPA on the design of the activities. Finally, NEBRAS, an independent research agency, took charge of designing and implementing all survey and assessment activities, including data analysis and reporting.

A reading of the Project Document would suggest that DPA was to take a strong role in the coordination of the project, as well as in management and monitoring of all activities. In practice, it appears to be the case that, for the most part, DPA contracted out responsibility for design and implementation of activities to its three partners, and that it played a minimal role in direct engagement with project activities, even where its specific role was explained in the Project Document. Based on the filed visit to Herat, there is also some question about the depth of involvement of NAI in organizing the media component of the project.

ii. Logical framework

The chart is based on detailed information included in the project's framework, as set out in the Project Document and the Final Report. The International Consultant reframed the Long-Term Development Objective to ensure its presentation as a results statement.

Project activities	Intended outputs/outcomes	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objective
<p><i>Development of Survey Plan #1; recruitment and orientation of survey administrators & interviewers; conducting Survey; Data analysis and reporting; dissemination of findings</i></p>	<p><u><i>Comprehensive Baseline Study in 15 provinces on the Level of Awareness among Women is Completed:</i></u></p>	<p>1. <i>increased awareness and support of women's rights in 15 provinces in Afghanistan;</i></p>	<p>Promotion of the Democratic Rights of Women</p> <p><i>Conversion into a Results statement:</i></p> <p>The Democratic Rights and Public Participation of Women are Enhanced through Education, Awareness-Building and Facilitation of Advocacy Networks.</p>
<p><i>Development of Survey Plan #2; recruitment and preparation of survey team; data analysis & reporting; dissemination of findings to stakeholders</i></p>	<p><u><i>Comprehensive Impact Study in 15 provinces on the Level of Awareness among Women, Following Project Activities, is Completed:</i></u></p>		
<p><i>Selection of expert review team; Laws and literature relating to women's rights are reviewed and analyzed</i></p>	<p><u><i>A Detailed Literature Review is completed as a basis for design of training materials and for media production plans</i></u></p>		
<p><i>Planning, design and development of Informational Booklets; production & distribution in the 15 target provinces</i></p>	<p><u><i>Planning, Writing, Production and Distribution of 7,500 Comic-format Informational Booklets is completed</i></u></p>		
<p><i>Trainers recruited and trained; training curriculum and learning plan designed and materials prepared; workshops organized; participants identified and invited, with target of 30 for each workshop; delivery of workshops; before & after impact survey conducted</i></p>	<p><u><i>Delivery of 45 Training Workshops on Women's Political, Social and Economic Rights in the 15 Target Provinces</i></u></p>		
<p><i>Imams and mosques identified and recruited; materials provided on suggested content of speeches; delivery of speeches (sermons); impact questionnaires administered to mosque members; follow-up with Imams</i></p>	<p><u><i>Delivery of 100 Women's Rights Speeches at Friday Prayer Gatherings at 100 Mosques in the 15 Target Provinces; Encouragement to Imams to continue to emphasize Gender Equality</i></u></p>		
<p><i>Developing content guidelines and defining scope of roundtables; script</i></p>	<p><u><i>Production and Airing of 12 Radio Roundtable Discussions</i></u></p>		

<p><i>development; identification of moderators and panellists; logistics and selection of radio stations; production & broadcast of 12 roundtables; monitoring of impact</i></p> <p><i>Developing content guidelines and defining scope of roundtables; script development; identification of moderators and panellists; logistics and selection of TV stations; production & broadcast of 12 roundtables; monitoring of impact</i></p> <p><i>Identification of network members; organization of 4 meetings per zone for establishment, orientation & training in collective action & advocacy; selection of secretariat & liaison person for each network; building connections & facilitation of communications across the networks & provision of ongoing support to network activities; monitoring of progress</i></p>	<p><u>Production and Airing of 12 TV Roundtable Discussions</u></p> <p><u>Establishing 4 Women’s Rights Networks in the 4 Regional Zones, Drawing Members from the 15 Provinces</u></p>	<p><i>2. Increased participation in advocacy for women’s rights through regional women’s rights networks in the target provinces</i></p>	
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IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation is based on a framework reflecting a core set of evaluation questions formulated to meet the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The questions and sub-questions are listed in Annex 1 of this document.

(i) Relevance

The overall objective and outcomes of the project were generally relevant to the needs of women, and democratization and human rights priorities in Afghanistan, and, hence, relevant to UNDEF goals and values. However, although the Project Document included a solid situation analysis, the project design represented a somewhat superficial response to addressing the priorities of women, given the character of Afghan society and public life. Despite commissioning a baseline study on the awareness of women in the 25 target provinces concerning their rights and on the position of women in law, with analysis by the level of education of interviewees, the grantee made no effort to specify its primary beneficiary group. For a small project, to merely describe the beneficiary as “Afghan Women” is a recipe for a poorly-focused initiative, lacking in direction and unlikely to produce results.¹⁶

The Project Document listed a set of activities, all relevant to the needs of women, but unlikely to make a lasting difference to the beneficiaries. In principle, a linkage across project activities might have enhanced possible impact. However, with the possible exception of the suggested relationship between training workshops and network-building, no such linkages were suggested. Beyond the “menu-like” character of the activities undertaken, it must also be observed that the project was too ambitious in seeking to deliver activities in 15 provinces in all four regions of the country. From a management and logistical perspective, the span of control was much too broad. As will be apparent from the analysis presented below, DPA proved unable to manage and coordinate activities as was required.

Given the project’s objectives, a more appropriate strategy would have concentrated resources in no more than two regions and four provinces, with far greater attention to defining the beneficiary group first, and, secondly, designing interventions to address their needs specifically, taking into account the local context. By contrast, the project, as implemented - despite the research it supported - made no serious effort to move beyond a “generic” approach to the topic focus of activities. Greater attention would also be given to integration of activities to optimize possibilities for achieving results. Finally, far greater emphasis on overall management and bringing together implementing partners would have helped generate a project to work towards the designated objectives.

¹⁶ It should also be noted that no reference is made in the Project Document or project reports to efforts to engage with vulnerable and marginal groups.

The risk management matrix presented in the Project Document is relevant to most of the probable challenges facing the project, except for those stemming from the ineffective management strategy adopted by the project team, along with the neglect by the grantee of its basic responsibilities, as will be discussed below. In a few cases, the strategy developed by the project to mitigate possible risk proved to be effective. For example, by partnering with AAIRC, DPA was able to identify a cadre of moderate Imams, willing to deliver sermons emphasizing women's rights.



Training Workop in Herat

Another problem identified concerns the difficulty facing virtually all public participation projects in Afghanistan of ensuring that a reasonable proportion of beneficiaries are women. Despite reassurances in the Project Document, in provinces such as Kandahar, where cultural practices and customs make women's participation

particularly challenging, the project team proved unable to address the problem. Consequently, in such cases, most participants in the training workshops were men.

(ii) Effectiveness

Some Basic Concerns Regarding the Integrity of the Project: Before beginning a detailed assessment of the effectiveness of the project, as implemented, it is necessary to deal with a number of fundamental problems which became apparent in the course of the Evaluation. Most serious is the finding that, while project progress and financial reports present the picture of a project implemented fully in 15 provinces, the Evaluation was only able to identify evidence that the complete list of activities had taken place in a much smaller number. It is apparent that the radio and television roundtables did take place in all 15 provinces. However, for nine of the provinces, the grantee was unable to provide any evidence that any other components of the project had been implemented. Where an NGO undertakes a project in a number of different locations, it should not be difficult to provide documentation to confirm that the activities actually took place at the targeted sites. DPA was unable to do this.

The information provided by DPA was checked thoroughly by the National Consultant. It was found that attendance sheets for training workshops for twelve provinces were strikingly similar, with the only information provided for either trainees or participants consisting of names and signatures. No information was provided for the trainers involved. This contrasts with the information for the same workshops conducted in Herat, Balkh and Nangarhar, where the completed lists included, for each participant: name, occupation, organization with which the

individual is affiliated, telephone number and signature. In addition, full information is provided on the trainers who delivered the workshops. In terms of the grantee's links with the provinces where activities were said to have taken place, during discussions on logistics and information-gathering, it was discovered by the National Consultant that, while DPA indicated that it had coordinators for all 15 provinces, the organization was only able to make contact with coordinators for the three provinces listed above.

In addition, the Evaluators requested that DPA provide photographs for activities in each province. None were made available for twelve provinces, except for a few unidentified, grainy pictures that do not appear to show the training workshops supported by the project, and which could have been taken anywhere. For Herat, Balkh and Nangarhar, photos clearly show project-supported training activities, with trainers, participants and locations readily identifiable.

The absence of documentation of most project activities (except for the radio and television roundtables) in at least nine, and as many as twelve, provinces raises some very basic questions about the integrity of the grantee and its management of the project, its reporting and the records of financial expenditure provided. The doubts in the minds of the Evaluators raised by the gaps in project information, described above, were reinforced by inaccurate information provided by DPA personnel, which, in some cases, directly contradicted the documentary record, and, in others, was not confirmed by responses to the same questions by representatives of the three implementing partners, or, in some cases, by the two project coordinators in the provinces who were contacted. Finally, DPA was unwilling to discuss the contracts with partners put in place to facilitate cooperation on project implementation.¹⁷

There are conflicting accounts of the division of labour between DPA and its partners. Both Nebras and NAI confirmed that contracts had been agreed, while DPA suggested otherwise. Clearly, NEBRAS would have incurred significant expenses in the design, implementation of, and reporting on, the baseline and impact surveys. It is also known that a local NGO was sub-contracted by the DPA Coordinator in Herat to organize the programme of activities in that province (see discussion below). However, no record of the sub-contracting is included in the Final Financial Report, and expenses incurred by partner organizations are not identified.

Effectiveness and Project Implementation: A Review of Activities: The project's interventions were limited in both quality and depth, and too scattered, with little connection across activities. This limited any prospect of achieving results. The Project Document suggested that strong management, monitoring and follow-up would take place and that this would enhance the effectiveness of activities. In practice, there were weak connections between DPA and its three implementing partners, and minimal follow-up to activities occurred.

The **baseline survey**, planned and implemented by NRBRAS, was intended to provide a foundation for the focusing of project activities. In preparation for the work, as well as to inform the development of training materials and the production of comic-books, the organization also conducted a **literature review** (another project output) on laws and official and professional literature pertaining to the rights of women in Afghanistan.

The survey itself was implemented in all four of the country's geographic zones. The questionnaire listed 20 questions on women's awareness of their rights, covering the categories

¹⁷ The exception to this pattern was AAIRC, which simply provided a list of names of Imams who would be suitable candidates to work with the project. There was no financial relationship between it and DPA.

of social, political and economic rights. The sole independent variable, used to classify groups of respondents, was level of education. Sixty field researchers were recruited; all of them (according to NEBRAS) had worked on previous surveys undertaken by the organization. All of the researchers were recruited locally and worked in their home provinces in administering the survey.

It is apparent that there were some technical limitations to the methodological basis of the survey. While NEBRAS designed the questionnaire, it did not provide an overall sampling framework. Consequently, it was the responsibility of local researchers to draw the sample in each province. This raises the strong possibility of inappropriate procedures. Further, the fact that different approaches were adopted in each province undermines the representativeness of the overall sample. The NEBRAS team was only able to visit three provinces to verify the quality of survey implementation. DPA played no role in supervision or monitoring of the project's survey component.

Leaving aside these limitations, through analysis of the survey data, it was found that, overall, women who were illiterate, or who had only basic education, had 0 per cent awareness of their rights, while the more educated, who had at least graduated from secondary school, achieved scores in the 3 to 14 per cent range. Late in the project, a follow-up, or impact, study was conducted.¹⁸ According to the report on the findings of this study, while there was no change in the scores of the less-educated group, for those with more education, scores were now achieved in the 8 to 23 per cent range. If the samples were precisely matched, it would appear to be the case that some improvement for the better-educated cohort had occurred. However, no details are provided on the profiles of the two samples. Further, no question was included to check on exposure of respondents to project activities. Hence, the survey results are of questionable value. Finally, it seems that no reference was made to the results of the baseline survey in determining the basis for selection of project training workshop participants, for the focusing the content of training materials and the comic books, or for informing material drawn on in preparation of model scripts for Imams to deliver, or for the radio and television roundtables. This is one of a number of indicators of the weak integration of project activities and limited managerial direction.

Training Workshops were directed to a group of women with higher levels of education, and who would have already have had some basic knowledge of the concept of gender equality, if not of the specifics of the legal basis for women's rights in Afghanistan. Despite the findings of the baseline survey, no effort was made to engage with, or reach out to, the less-educated and most vulnerable and marginalized groups of women.¹⁹ Most of those who took part were recommended by the provincial Departments of Women's Affairs (DOWA). In Herat, all of the women interviewed for the Evaluation had been introduced to the project by DOWA. All were relatively young and well-educated. They included students, young professionals and NGO and DOWA employees. According to the DPA Coordinator in Herat, the age range of the women who took part in the workshops was from 18 to 27.

Training exercises were short, one day in duration (two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon). In Herat, three one-day workshops were held, with the first two workshops including the same group of participants. While DPA reported that there were 30 participants in each

¹⁸ The survey, like the initial baseline study was planned and implemented by NEBRAS. However, DPA claimed that it undertook the survey. Despite these claims, DPA staff interviewed for the Evaluation had no familiarity with the details of the Impact Study.

¹⁹ This concern was also raised by the official of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, interviewed for the Evaluation.

workshop, in Herat, the average number was 20. Hence, given that the same group of trainees attended the first and second workshops, the total number of trainees for Herat was 40, and not 90, as reported.



Trainer at Workshop, Herat

In addition to the women participants, five Imams took part (included in the numbers above), and also spoke on Islam and women's rights. These same Imams were also selected to give sermons on women's rights. They were the only men to take part in the workshops in Herat.

As to the training curriculum, prepared by DPA, much of the content was of marginal relevance to the objective of increasing the awareness of women of their rights. Modules were devoted to: "leadership": the philosophical relationship between the leader; leadership and the group; the characteristics of leadership; the duty of

leadership; and, the distinctions between "leader" and "manager"; "communications"; and, "advocacy". All these topics were treated in generic fashion, and not related to women's concerns. The only component which related directly to the project objectives was one which explained the provision for women's rights in the Afghan Civil Code. Even for this module, the approach was theoretical, with no reference to practical matters.

The topic of women's rights in Afghanistan is a complex one, and a strong understanding of the social, cultural and economic context is required as a basis for building women's (or men's) comprehension of the subject. These matters received little or no attention in the curriculum and training materials prepared. Further, the same materials and workshop design was used (or to be used) in all four geographic zones of the country, with no allowance made for the significant social, ethnic and cultural differences among them.

A number of the trainees interviewed in Herat noted the lack of connection made between the concepts and ideas presented and the day-to-day problems and challenges facing women in the province, where domestic and family violence and arranged marriage are major concerns. All learned from the session on legal rights in the Civil Code, but no information was provided on how to act on the basis of such rights. There was no follow-up to the training, although trainees indicated that they shared what they had learned with colleagues and friends. Project reports indicate that monitoring of the workshops in Herat took place, and it has been confirmed that at least two of the workshops were attended by a DPA monitor.

As to the trainers, DPA indicated that it organized a three-day Training of-Trainers (ToT) session for four trainers in Kabul to prepare them to conduct the workshops. In practice, it was found that, in Herat, the three workshops were delivered by trainers provided by a local women's NGO. The trainers had been given no special training, but received the training materials from DPA one week prior to the workshop. They were contracted through the NGO, the Health and

Rehabilitation Programme Centre (HRP), which was also given responsibility for organizing the workshops and for arranging details of production and broadcast of one television and one radio roundtable. In addition, they were requested to ask the five Imams who took part in the training to spread the word on women's rights through sermons at five grand mosques. The DPA Coordinator in Herat was unwilling to provide any information on the financial aspects of the contract.

According to the Project Document, The training was intended to provide a launching pad for a further project output, the formation of **local and regional networks** formed by the participants in the training workshops. The networks were to be the basis for communication and advocacy. In practice, no action was taken on this project component, and no linkages were formed among women training participants. Despite the claims in the Final Report that the targets for this activity were achieved, with: "67 people and 23 NGOS joining the networks", and "96 meetings held", there is no evidence that any of these activities occurred.

Another project output was **the production and dissemination of 7,500 "comic booklets"** in the 15 provinces. The booklet was examined and found to be similar in approach and content to the training materials. Produced in both *Dari* and *Pashto* versions, the booklet sought to explain women's rights under national and international law and in Islam. It was not attractive to the reader, and the illustrations were poorly done and did not encourage the reader to read further. DPA claimed that the booklets were widely distributed to women in the target provinces. However, the DPA Coordinators for both Herat and Helmand and Nangarhar Provinces advised the national consultant that they had not received booklets for distribution. In Herat, neither the trainees, nor the Imams, nor the workshop trainers, had seen it.

Delivery of Sermons on Women's rights by Imams: On the basis of names supplied by AAIRC, though its local coordinators, where these existed, DPA (or, more likely, a sub-contracted local NGO) issued invitations to Imams to support the project by delivering sermons on women's rights at Friday Prayers. At least in Herat, the Imams, all closely linked with the Ministry of Religious and Haji Affairs, were invited to participate in the training workshops. They drew on the experience of the training to inform the writing of their sermons, and received a small honorarium from DPA for the two activities. According to the Project Document, "AAIRC will help Imams to digest the content of the materials about women's rights that are developed by DPA and its partners so that they can deliver their speeches in a way that everyone understands it." In practice, no materials, beyond those made available at the training sessions, were supplied to the Imams, and AAIRC played no role in assisting them in preparing their sermons.

The Project Document also indicates that, following delivery of the sermons, "the DPA monitoring team will interview the Imams and religious leaders in (*sic*) three intervals to follow up on the activity, to see whether further actions were taken to disseminate the messages and to encourage them to continue emphasizing women's rights". In practice, there was no DPA monitoring team, and no follow-up with the Imams took place. The imams reported that they had no contact with DPA.

Production and Broadcast of Radio and Television Roundtables: In principle, this component was managed by NAI, the implementing partner with expertise in training, advocacy for the cause of open media, and radio and television production. It appears that NAI may have been responsible for general arrangements and for developing the concept for the roundtables

and the profile of panellists. However, at least in the case of Herat, a provincially-based organization was contracted by DPA, through its provincial coordinator, to make detailed local plans with the local media outlets and to engage panellists. There is no evidence that NAI was actually involved.

Typically, the panellists for the roundtables included religious scholars and imams, civil society activists and representatives of the provincial DOWA offices. The involvement of religious authority figures was of critical importance, in a highly-religious and conservative society, in giving legitimacy to the discussion of women's rights. In Herat, the panel members for the TV roundtable reflected the desired model. The Director of the Legal Section of the Herat DOWA explained women's rights under national law. A university professor discussed women's rights under Islamic law, and a social activist reviewed the protection for the rights of women provided for under the major international human rights conventions. The format adopted was formal in style, with each panellist lecturing on his/her topic. There was no consideration of practical issues and matters of direct concern to ordinary women in Herat. Consequently, the presentations would have been unlikely to have any resonance with ordinary men and women, though they may have been informative for a more educated audience.

There was no follow-up to the roundtables. However, it does appear that DPA monitors were present for their broadcast presentation.

Summary of Project Effectiveness: Given that the Evaluators have been unable to confirm that the project was implemented fully in a majority of the 15 target provinces, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about its effectiveness. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it must be concluded that, for the most part, the project was not implemented as planned. Where the project did take place, while particular activities were conducted, more-or-less as planned, none was particularly effective in supporting project objectives. They compare unfavourably with similar activities undertaken in Afghanistan and elsewhere by other grantees. The lack of engagement by DPA with its partner organizations, or in following-up on activities, also undermined the effectiveness of the work undertaken. Not only was the project poorly-coordinated by the management team, it also lacked access to those with substantive knowledge to inform the design of programme of activities. The team included no-one with expertise in gender equality and women's rights, and, consequently, the grantee produced a weak, poorly-focused project, where activities lacked direct relevance for beneficiaries.

On the basis of the information available for the Evaluation, the particular difficulties of managing and implementing projects in Afghanistan had no direct impact on the quality of activities assessed. The security situation did impact on the participation of women in training workshops in some locations, for example, Kandahar, but this made no difference to the limitations of the training curriculum, discussed above.

It must be observed that, during the period of project implementation, the security situation in some of the 15 targeted provinces was extremely problematic. The absence of any detailed reference in project reports and interviews to difficulties encountered, beyond those noted in the preceding paragraph, and how these were dealt with also serves to reinforce the doubts of the Evaluators about the project.

(iii) Efficiency

As with Effectiveness, given the absence of evidence that the project was, in fact, implemented fully in a majority of target provinces, it is difficult to draw conclusions about efficiency. However, on the basis of the information available, it cannot be said that there was a reasonable relationship between project resources and actual project outputs, or that the budget was deployed in such a way as to enable the project to meet its objectives. Beyond these broad conclusions, some very serious questions must be raised about the accuracy and veracity of the information included in the Final Financial Report, as well as the project's Mid-Term and Final Reports.

Leaving these fundamental questions aside, in terms of implementation that did take place, institutional arrangements were adequate at very basic level, in that the implementing partners did what was asked of them in those provinces where it has been confirmed that implementation occurred. Yet, the role the partners played is not always clear. For example, in Herat, as discussed earlier, the role played by NAI with regard to the radio and television roundtables seems to have been minimal or non-existent. More broadly, for all activities, there was a lack of care and attention to ensuring that their design matched the needs of local women. The investment of resources in the baseline and impact studies was largely wasted, for reasons discussed above. The needs of ordinary women, with basic education or less, were ignored entirely.

The Project Document was very clear on the importance of monitoring, follow-up and measurement of impact. Presumably, this was a factor in the decision by UNDEF to award the project grant to DPA. In practice, it appears to be the case that inconsistent attention was given to these matters. The reader of the Project Document would have the impression that DPA would be a pro-active manager, engaging with its implementing partners throughout, and taking a strong role in design of, and follow-up to, particular activities. Despite claims to the contrary in project reports, and interviews with DPA staff, in practice, the principal partners, NEBRAS and NAI, and/or local sub-contractors, were left alone, as sub-contractors, to do their work, with little involvement by DPA management.

An exception to this pattern seems to have occurred, at least in Herat, in relation to making detailed arrangements for training and the radio and television roundtables. In this case, DPA's provincial coordinator played a role, but only in selection of another sub-contractor, HRP, which was given responsibility for planning and conducting the training workshops, and providing the trainers, as well as in selecting the panellists for the media roundtables and working on detailed logistics with provincial radio and TV stations. HRP was also expected to make contact with Imams to take part in the training workshops and deliver sermons on women's rights.

(iv) Impact

Project objectives have not been achieved, and the project has had a minimal impact on the key development problem addressed: strengthening the democratic rights and participation of women. While the grantee reports that **the impact survey** shows an increase in women's awareness, following completion of project activities, from 11.9 to 14.3 per cent. This result is likely to be spurious, and, in any case, no relationship between exposure to the project and results reported can be demonstrated. The problems with the design and carrying out of the baseline and impact studies have been discussed above.

It is further reported that 90 per cent of **training** participants demonstrate increased knowledge by 95 per cent.²⁰ This finding was based on “before” and “after” questionnaires administered to trainees (in those provinces where the training actually took place) by project monitors, as explained in the Mid-Term Report. However, these results are based on the finding that participants knew more at the end of the training session than they had done before about social, economic and political rights. Given the low level of knowledge of even more educated women in Afghanistan, this does not amount to a substantial change in the knowledge of their rights on the part of the trainees.

Certainly, even given the limitations of the training program, described above, it would be expected that there would be some increase in knowledge on the part of participants, but the findings of the “before” and “after” survey do not add up to a result. It is a disappointment that the project did nothing to build on the modest beginning represented by the training programme to provide something more to a group that was clearly eager to learn and acquire skills to enable them to deal with the everyday challenges that they face.

Claims made for the impact of **the training booklet** are unsubstantiated. It is known that no booklets were distributed in Herat, Kandahar and Helmand Provinces. Yet, it is claimed (Final Report, p.13) that all 7,500 booklets were distributed, and that each was read, on average, by “more than five persons.”

With regard to the **project’s media activities**, claims are also made (Final Report, p.13) that there has been a “90 per cent increase in the numbers of listeners/viewers that are aware of their rights”. This was the target, proposed in the Project Document, and it is reported that it was achieved, though the claim is qualified by later remarks, suggesting that the increase might only have been 65 per cent. Once again, a question arises as to how these figures were arrived at, and what questions were asked, and, of whom. Audience research is an expensive undertaking, and determining the actual, active listenership/viewership to a particular station at a particular time requires a major investment of resources. To then determine how the audience’s knowledge of the topic addressed was improved and to quantify the extent of improvement could only be achieved by establishing a representative viewers and listeners panel. None of this research infrastructure was in place.

Similarly, no explanation is provided of how the figures were arrived at to support the claim (also Final Report, p.13) that there took place “a 95 per cent increase in the number of **mosque attendees** who became aware of their rights.”

Leaving aside issues of how the figures for “impact” were arrived at, a core problem of the project and its ability to achieve results was the lack of connectedness among project components. No doubt, in some cases, the sermons delivered by the Imams struck a chord and caused members of the audience to think a little differently about the position of women, but without reinforcement, the effect of the messages delivered would be likely to ebb away. Similarly, for those with a prior interest in the topic, the radio and television roundtables may have provided useful additional information. However, once again, even for those who watched and listened attentively, without reinforcement, the impact, over time, would be minimal. The poor design of individual activities, and the lack of commitment to optimizing effectiveness – for example, in providing background documents or presentation outlines in advance to Imams, or

²⁰ See: Final Report, p.12.

for thinking about the target audience for all activities, or to developing a format for the roundtables designed to engage viewers and listeners, and including an emphasis on topics of immediate concern to local audiences – further minimized the prospect of project impact.

(v) Sustainability

The same factors undermining impact also account for the project’s weakness in terms of sustainability. A number of provisions for enhancing the sustainability of the project’s efforts were set out in the Project Document (p.9), for example, in relation to follow-up with Imams and the attendees at those mosques where Imams became involved in the project. This required DPA to play a very active role, both in preparation for this component of the project, and in following up. Based on the information available to the project, DPA has not played the pro-active role required. Similarly, no action was taken to facilitate the establishment of the women’s networks. Further, the Project Document referred to facilitating “prolonged discussions...between women and religious leaders” (p.9). There is no evidence to suggest that such activities have been encouraged, nor that they have taken place anywhere.

(vi) UNDEF Added Value

As the international community reduces its presence in Afghanistan, development cooperation funds become scarcer, and there is growing emphasis on a small number of larger initiatives. While there was no particular added value to this project, for Afghanistan more generally, UNDEF funding of human rights and democratization initiatives is likely to grow in importance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

(i) On the basis of the information available to the Evaluation Team, it has been found impossible to confirm that the project was implemented in full. While it appears to be the case that the radio and television roundtables planned for production and broadcast in the 15 target provinces did take place, other activities have been implemented in no more than six, and as few as three, of the provinces. This calls into question the veracity of project reporting, as well as of the information presented on financial expenditures.

Leaving aside this rather fundamental concern, the remaining conclusions address the project as implemented.

(ii) The project set out to conduct activities in 15 of 34 of Afghanistan's provinces, situated in all four geographic regions of the country. In mounting such an ambitious effort, the grantee risked a reduction in the prospects for achieving results through a scattering of activities in locations throughout the country. It is apparent that the grantee failed to appreciate the scale of the risk it was taking on. Further, weak efforts by the grantee to integrate activities and to collaborate closely with its implementing partners limited both the effectiveness and the impact of the project.

(iii) A key weakness of the project was the failure to specify in precise terms the beneficiary group which the project was intended to support. The focus on "Afghan women" was hardly a focus at all. Findings of a baseline study, which indicated the particular need for learning about their rights on the part of less-educated women, were ignored. In practice, the project engaged mostly with better-educated, younger women, linked to the provincial networks of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA).

(iv) The resources devoted to the baseline and impact studies did not represent a worthwhile investment. There are a number of organizations in Afghanistan capable of undertaking surveys of the kind required to support the project plan. However, problems and inconsistencies in the survey methodology, along with the absence of questions which would link the surveys with participation in project activities, rendered reported findings an unreliable source in assessment of project effectiveness. Further, as noted above, the grantee failed to use the baseline survey data in focusing implementation plans.

(v) Lack of adequate preparation and attention to detail limited the value of the project's activities, while one of the most important initiatives, critical to sustainability – namely, the establishment of regional women's networks – did not take place at all. No effort was made to address concrete issues of concern to ordinary Afghan women, and the project lacked professional expertise in gender equality and women's rights, which constituted the core of the project.

(vi) A lesson that has been learned countless times in capacity development programming is that “one-shot” training initiatives are ineffective in building the capacity of trainees. Similarly, single television or radio programmes, with no linkage to ongoing campaigns or educational work, are unlikely to make a difference in enhancing the knowledge of viewers or listeners. DPA failed to take these lessons into account in planning the project.

(vii) In the Project Document, a great deal of attention was devoted to the importance of following up on activities to ensure continuing engagement of beneficiaries, while building their knowledge and self-confidence. No effort was made by the grantee to live up to these assurances.

(viii) In those provinces where implementation took place, the project will have made a minor contribution to increasing interest in women’s rights, and will have provided new information on the topic to some beneficiaries. However, the disconnected approach to activity planning, and its poor quality, along with the lack of follow-up and the gaps in continuity of participation, makes it unlikely that there was any impact on the overall development problem which formed the basis for the project.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings of the Evaluation, little purpose will be served in proposing recommendations to the grantee. Hence, ***the main focus will be on putting forward proposals to UNDEF to assist the organization in defending its projects from fraudulent (or “ghost”) expenditures by grantees.*** It is understood that in fragile states and states where conflict continues, as in Afghanistan, Somalia, or Iraq, or where other conditions, such as the aftermath of a natural disaster, oblige UNDEF to adopt an entirely hands-off approach to management, it may be necessary to add some further requirements to grant agreements. It will be for UNDEF to determine whether such provisions will be applied universally, or only to a minority of projects, where certain conditions apply. It is unfortunate that such steps are necessary, but, without the introduction of requirements along these lines, it is the view of the Evaluation Team that there is a serious risk of the recurrence of similar problems with future projects.

It is recommended that: in addition to the existing reporting requirements included in the grant agreement, UNDEF inserts the following provisions:

(i) Far more detailed financial reports will be provided by grantees at mid-term and the close of the project, with a full prose explanation of expenditures, line-by-line. Templates would be provided for both the financial statements and the accompanying prose explanation of expenditures. Copies of any contracts or sub-contracts must be provided with either the Mid-Term or Final Report, depending on the date of signature. Any such contracts must also be made available to Evaluators and Auditors. The UNDEF Project Manager will review such documents carefully in order to assess whether all seems to be as it should be.

(ii) ***It is recommended that*** UNDEF includes a note in its guidelines to those considering putting forward grant applications advising them that they will be well-advised to prepare project proposals where resources match ambition, and where activities are to be carried out in a limited and realistic number of locations, within a manageable geographic territory.

VI. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value-added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Project documents:

Project Document, UDF-AFG-10-379

Mid-term Progress Report

Final Financial Report 31 05 2014

Final Report

Milestone Verification Mission Reports, 23-24 January, 2013 and 16 November, 2013

Other Documents and Reference Materials:

Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission "Corruption is a Brutal Enemy of Afghan Women", 3 May 2013. <http://www.trust.org/item/20130502130716-v16ht/>

Ignatius, David: "Afghanistan's Improving Ways", Washington Post, 16 January, 2013.

Powell, Catharine, "Women and Girls in the Afghanistan Transition", Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) Working Paper, June 2014.

Stewart, Rory, "Afghanistan: A shocking Indictment", New York Review of Books, November 6, 2014.

Their, J. Alexander, Ed., The Future of Afghanistan: Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace (USIP), 2009.

UN Department of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent Patterns and Trends, Survey Findings: Vienna, 2012.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Way to Go: An Update on Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan". Kabul: December 2013.

US Department of State, Afghanistan 2013 Human Rights Report. Washington D.C., 2014.

ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

All meetings with National Consultant, except where stated.

A. KABUL

04 September 2014, Thursday
Introductory meeting and logistics: Mr. Mazzullah Hidayat, Project Manager, DPA.
07 September 2014, Sunday
Joint planning, International and National Consultants at offices of UNDP Justice and Human Rights (JHRA) Project.
08 September 2014, Monday
Mr. Mazzullah Hidayat, Project Manager, DPA.
09 September 2014, Tuesday
At DPA: Individual interviews and group discussion with: Mr. Mazzullah Hidayat; Mr. Akhtar Sediqi, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of project; and, Mrs. Maryam, Project Coordinator for final 6 months.
13 September, Saturday
1. Mr. Gol Agha Habib, Chief of Policy and Planning, AAIRC; 2. Mrs. Golghotay Azimi, Head of Research Unit, Ministry of Women's Affairs.
14 September 2014, Sunday
1. Mr. Haroon, Lead Researcher of the Baseline Survey for the project, NEBRAS; 2. Mr. Towhidi, Head of Media Watch in NAI Organization.

B. HERAT

15 September 2014, Monday
Travel of National Consultant to Herat by air
16 September 2014, Tuesday
1. Mr. Razaq, DPA Regional Coordinator/Facilitator of the project; 2. Mrs. Azimi, Trainer; 3. Participants in Training Workshop (Focus Group session), with Mrs. Azimi: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Fovziah, Member <i>Gozara Sponsored Sister Organization</i> and student (20 years old); • Mrs. Fatemeh, law student, 22 years old); • Mrs. Malihe Saljoghe, staff member, Red Cross Association; • Mrs. Sahar, high school student, 17 years old.
17 September 2014, Wednesday
1. Mr. Ahmad Hossaini, Imam, Directorate of Haji and Religious Affairs (55 years old); 2. Mr. Hajji Noor Ahmad, Imam, Directorate of Haji and Religious Affairs (52 years old). 3. Return by air to Kabul

C. OTHER

20 September 2014, Saturday
Telephone Interview with Mr. Nimatullah, DPA Project Coordinator for Kandahar and Helmand Provinces.

ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAIRC	Afghanistan Academic and Islamic Research Centre
DOWA	Department of Women’s Affairs (provincial)
DPA	Development and Public Awareness
HRP	Health and Rehabilitation Programme Centre
JHRA	Justice and Human Rights for Afghanistan
MOWA	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme