

U.S. Embassy Kabul Gender Strategy

Continued progress on issues affecting women is fundamental to Afghanistan’s security, governance, and development through transition and beyond. This strategy, drafted with input from U.S. Embassy Kabul’s Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), serves as a basis for U.S. Embassy Kabul’s policy and programmatic engagement on gender issues.

The strategy identifies five key strategic focus areas:

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND SECURITY	LEADERSHIP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	EDUCATION	HEALTH
The Afghan population supports greater enforcement and advancement of women’s legal rights	Afghan women can enter and advance to positions of influence and decision-making in public, private, and civil society	Women substantially contribute to economic growth and development in Afghanistan	Increased social, political and economic support for the education of women and girls	Increased overall health and well-being of Afghan women

It also highlights the need to continue to mainstream gender issues into all policies and programs so that decreases in U.S. funding and presence in Afghanistan do not disproportionately affect women as transition proceeds. Implementation of this strategy will help to ensure the positive gains that have been achieved by women in Afghanistan become irreversible.

Background

The IGWG serves as a coordinating body within the U.S. Embassy whose purpose is to ensure a streamlined and comprehensive understanding of and response to issues and events impacting Afghan women and girls. The IGWG is led by representatives of the office of the Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs (CDDEA) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and includes representatives from a number of offices across the Department of State, USAID, and interagency partners. The group also includes civilian and military representatives from the U.S. field posts, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A).

Purpose and Key Priority Areas

The strategy is in alignment with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) priorities as articulated in the *National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA)*, the *Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)*, and the *ANDS Gender Strategy*. It also supports the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the U.S. Government *Civilian Strategy for Assistance to Women in Afghanistan 2010-2013* and the U.S. Government’s *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*.

The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the Mission has a common strategic understanding of gender priorities across sectors and that Mission efforts are in line with Washington policy and in-country realities. Strategic level goals and objectives within the strategy fall into five key areas:

Access to Justice and Security:

Achieving greater equality for women within Afghanistan relies on inclusion of Afghan women in every phase of the justice system, including as police, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, civil and family law attorneys, litigants and Islamic law scholars.

Afghan women must also have the opportunities to access the formal and informal justice systems with the expectation of fair and legitimate results. They must:

- see a greater respect for their rights,
- experience greater awareness of these rights on the part of society, and
- recognize enhanced community support for measures to combat violence against women and to promote their greater freedom and equality.

Leadership and Civic Engagement:

Afghan women must have opportunities for entry and advancement within the public, private, and civil society sectors.

To enhance women's leadership opportunities, this strategy supports programs and projects that:

- significantly increase women's involvement in every sector,
- strengthen organizations working to institutionalize women's rights,
- achieve a critical mass of women in government decision-making bodies, and
- ensure that women have the leadership and management skills needed to be effective participants in every sector of society.

Economic Development:

Afghan women's increased employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the local and regional economies are important to building a stronger Afghan economy. This strategy will promote broader societal recognition of the key role of women in advancing economic development and will continue to:

- encourage broad-based, public support from leaders in civil society, politics, and the private sector for Afghan women's full participation in all sectors of the economy;
- support education and training opportunities that improve women's professional skills and enhance their competitiveness as employees and entrepreneurs; and
- facilitate increased access to financial services and markets to help women open businesses or support existing enterprises.

Education:

Girls' education is central to Afghanistan's future, and this strategy will focus on activities to overcome obstacles to girls' education and create an enabling environment for girls' participation.

Activities will be implemented to ensure women's equitable participation:

- community-based education aimed at providing girls with access to secure basic education,
- creating a cadre of qualified female teachers through accelerated learning programs,
- expanding livelihood opportunities for women and girls through vocational and technical training, and
- focusing on increasing the number of female faculty and staff at universities.

Health:

Capacity building and increasing the number of female health workers through pre- and in-service trainings is central to better health care delivery. Additionally, this strategy will focus on improving

access to quality health services for rural-based women and children under five through local, community-based interventions.

Work at the central and provincial levels in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health will focus on:

- developing a sustainable foundation for a nationwide health care system by building capacity, strengthening health care financing, and increasing the number of female health care workers.

Interventions supporting basic health and essential hospital services include:

- maternal and child health care,
- counseling and immunizations,
- fighting malnutrition and communicable diseases, and
- providing essential medicines.

Principles to Implement Our Gender Strategy

Support

- alliances and networks between activists, businesswomen and politicians.
- Afghan efforts to engage and educate men and boys on the positive impacts of women's development and empowerment.
- greater public/private connectivity and engagement among civil society organizations, the Afghan private sector, and GIROA line directorates.

Engage

- religious and tribal leaders, maleks, imams, and mullahs, particularly in provinces outside of Kabul to enhance education on women's rights and status within Islam.
- local legal aid providers as primary points of contact for women's access to justice issues.

Coordinate

- efforts with the international community, consolidating programs, reducing duplication, and encouraging regional buy-in wherever possible.
- institutionalization of opportunities for the entry and advancement of mid-level professional women within the public, private, and civil society sectors.

Develop

- alternative strategies to provide post-secondary education diplomas which acknowledge experience as credit worthy and flexible course offerings that are consistent with women's schedules.
- programs that clearly result in dissemination of information and opportunity beyond the direct beneficiaries.

Implementing the Strategy and Measuring Progress

These goals are aligned with the realities of the transition period and the transformation decade (2014-2024) and affirm our goal to achieve sustainable results. The strategy will help set goals and priorities for U.S. Embassy Kabul's policies, programs, and projects across all sectors. The IGWG will monitor progress against this strategy and produce regular assessments to Embassy leadership on whether we are moving sustainably in the five priority areas, and in support of women across Afghanistan.