

## **Afghan Women Limited to Education and Healthcare Roles**

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Female workers have little access to public sector jobs in northeast province.

Local government officials in Laghman province need to actively recruit female staff to redress the enormous gender imbalance in state institutions, a debate organized by IWPR has heard.

Mohebullah Sorkhrodi, from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), told the event that 7,431 people were employed in Laghman's government offices.

Women filled only 527 of these positions, all in the fields of education and healthcare.

Sorkhrodi said that the government needed to take positive steps to change this, adding, "Our commission has always tried to give female candidates special opportunities during the recruitment process, such as allocating some posts which can only be filled by women."

Debate participant Dil Aqa, a local activist, said that it was unacceptable that women were only working in the fields of education and healthcare.

Sorkhrodi noted that this situation also reflected social realities.

"Women are more interested in working in the field of education than in other areas, because their families allow them to work in education," he said.

Laghman director of women's affairs Nasima Sadat Shafiq called for public awareness campaigns to encourage women to work outside the home.

She also noted that low literacy levels also excluded women from public sector jobs. Girls had little access to education in much of the province, she said.

Hashima Sharif, of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission of Afghanistan (IARCS), said that corruption and intimidation were also major factors preventing women from finding jobs.

She gave a number of examples from her own experience, explaining that she had received numerous death threats from powerful individuals in the course of her work.

In another instance, Sharif continued, "I wanted to take the exam for a post in Nangarhar province, but I was not able to even obtain the application form, because a person who had connections had already been appointed to the post."

Laghman's director of capacity building, Hafizullah Asad, said that even educated women were affected by conservative Afghan traditions that frowned on women working outside the home.

"This problem is much worse in the districts than in the centre [of Laghman], but we have tried our best despite all these problems to increase the presence of women in government offices," he said.

One problem he identified was that provincial government officials were unable to directly appoint people to more senior management positions. If these powers were extended, Asad said that he would be able to actively work to redress the gender imbalance.

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**Location:** [Afghanistan](#)

**Topic:** [Women](#)

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