

## **Afghan Women Raise Their Voices**

**Author:** [IWPR Afghanistan](#)

Rights and justice issues aired in public meetings and explored in a series of reports.

A series of debates organised by IWPR has given Afghan women in the Kandahar and Khost provinces their first ever chance to make their views on gender equality known in a public forum.

Speakers discussed women's access to justice as well as the discrimination many face in the workplace.

In Kandahar, in the far south of Afghanistan, debate participant Shah Gul said she had been unfairly dismissed from her position with the provincial government.

"For the first time, this debate gave me the chance to speak out about the injustice done to me," she said.

Lailuma Nuri, deputy head of the Kandahar's department of women's affairs, added, "Women don't dare complain about men, and those women who do demand their rights face severe consequences, even death."

Debate participant Shogofa said the event provided a unique opportunity for local women.

"Such events are very effective in raising awareness [among us]. Through this debate, we can understand our legal position in society."

In the southeastern Khost province, many of the speakers said the debates were an important educational tool.

Bostan Walizai, head of the province's Human Rights and Civil Society organisation, said that he had never heard such outspoken debate in Khost before.

As part of the same project, **Promoting Human Rights and Good Governance**, funded by the European Union delegation in Afghanistan, three reports on gender equality were published in October.

One highlighted the important contribution a midwife training college was making in the underdeveloped southeastern province of Paktika, where there was previously only one female doctor for the entire province and women had little access to medical care. (See **Midwife Centre Breaks New Ground in Afghan Province**.)

Hamida, a trainee midwife from Sar Hawza district, said, "I have witnessed the deaths of many mothers during delivery. Now I have achieved my dream. After graduating from this centre, I will be able to save lives among the women suffering in this deprived province."

A further IWPR story focused on the dire consequences when women were deprived of access to medical treatment. (**"Honour" Rules Deny Care to Mothers and Babies**.)

The report explored how conservative views on "shame" and "honour" contribute materially to the high mortality rate. Many men refuse to allow their wives to seek antenatal care, apparently for fear of the possibility they may come into contact with male medical staff.

Another feature looked at the discrimination women face in the workplace. Female employees often experience sexual harassment, and conservative social attitudes and fear of being sacked make it hard to report such abuse. (See **Afghan Women Demand Action on Workplace Harassment**.)

In other work carried out under the human rights programme, a workshop on investigative reporting was held in the western Herat province for around 30 journalists. Participants said that as well as the skills needed to do in-depth reporting, they learned how powerful investigations could be for driving community development.

Najibullah Binesh, editor of the Rana production company in the northwestern Badghis province, said, "I learned in this workshop that people in Badghis don't need a provincial governor, a district governor or a police chief - they need investigative journalism, because it is that kind of reporting that brings peace, justice, and reform."

Hassan Hakimi, a reporter for the Pajhwok news agency in the Ghor province of west-central Afghanistan, said that he now realised his work could make a major contribution to rebuilding the country.

"If I were asked to choose between [investing in] roads, electricity, water or investigations, I would

certainly choose investigations because they can be the source of all development including roads, water and electricity,” he said.

*This report was produced under IWPR’s **Promoting Human Rights and Good Governance in Afghanistan** initiative, funded by the European Union Delegation to Afghanistan.*

**Location:** Afghanistan

**Topic:** Women's rights

**Focus:** Afghanistan: Promoting Human Rights and Good Governance  
Project Highlight

---

**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghan-women-raise-their-voices>