

## **Afghanistan: Conservative Traditions Limiting Progress**

**Author:** [Mosa Khan Zabuli](#)

Event hears how social development has suffered as a result.

Conservative traditions are holding back progress in Afghanistan's southeastern province of Zabul, according to speakers at an IWPR-organised debate.

The event, held in the provincial capital of Qalat city on January 23, 2017, heard that human rights and gender equality were particularly affected by such practices.

Tribal leader Abdul Wali Wali said, "Many time-worn cultural traditions are common in Zabul province; for example, the payment of high dowries, child marriages, not taking women in labour to hospital to give birth and other similar problems."

"Due to the old, unpleasant traditions, people in Zabul face poverty and other difficulties," he continued. "Adhering to these customs mean that people don't obey and respect the laws of the country, and instead do whatever they want."

Mohammad Hakim, head of legal affairs at Zabul police headquarters, said a lack of education was mostly to blame.

"Due to the high rate of illiteracy, old and detested traditions still dominate and serve to distract government attention. The state is busy solving these individual issues rather than working on the wider problems people face."

The effect on gender rights was particularly grievous, he added.

"Many women are deprived of education in Zabul province, so they fall victim to these abhorrent customs," Hakim continued.

Local activist Zarmina Pathan agreed, adding, "The main reason behind the illiteracy and poverty of Zabul people are these long-standing, horrible traditions."

Social development was nearly impossible under these conditions, she continued.

"Due to a lack of education and public awareness, these traditions still dictate life in Zabul province. That means women are stuck at home and have to remain there."

She added, "It doesn't mean that a woman is immoral if she leaves her house. It means that she is lifting herself out of poverty by finding work and earning money to support her children."

As for child marriage, domestic abuse and other rights violations, Pathan continued, "Violence against women is unacceptable. Islam and our rich culture do not permit us to use violence against others, especially against women."

Mohammad Naeem Storai, broadcasting manager of Zabul Melli Radio TV, said that local people needed to take responsibility for driving change themselves.

"When we complain about the activities of our government, we should also look at our own actions; to what extent are we obeying and respecting the law of the land, and what are we doing to benefit our country? We are living in a land where no one respects regulations and our people think they are above the law, and this causes more and more problems."

Storai added, "If Afghans start respecting each other's rights, then it will be easy to eradicate old traditions and it will prepare the ground for starting afresh."

**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:** [Rule of Law](#)

**Focus:** [Promoting Human Rights and Good Governance in Afghanistan](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/afghanistan-conservative-traditions-limiting>