



“No one hears our voices”

Summary: Situational assessment and recommended actions based on the perspectives and experiences of Afghan women

March 2022

Through surveys and interviews, Afghan women and women’s rights organisations describe their experiences under the new de facto government and set out their hopes for the future. In their own words, Afghan women [in the report](#) call for women’s rights, inclusion in public life, urgent economic relief, and for the international community to step up in solidarity with them.

Between December 2021 and February 2022, Women for Women International conducted phone surveys and interviews with current and former participants of our programs across Afghanistan and with Afghan women’s rights activists and organisations continuing their work within Afghanistan. The objective of these conversations was to better understand their current experiences and primary challenges, identify any promising support mechanisms, and to listen to their self-articulated hopes for their future.



I think if Taliban do not accept the women right and do not allow women to get education and work then the future of Afghanistan is dark and unclear especially for women, because if they completely take our freedom, we cannot go to school, we cannot speak freely to ask our right, we cannot go to work to earn money and live our life as women do in other countries. And most of the people are suffering from hunger and do not have food to eat today so how can they have hope for future.



One overarching message emerged – that the international community still has an important role to play in exercising its power and leverage to support Afghan women’s rights and alleviate the economic crisis affecting the country. Women’s rights are often portrayed as at odds with addressing the immediate needs of the humanitarian and security crisis in Afghanistan, but this is a false presentation of a zero-sum game. Women were not meaningfully included during formal peace negotiations and in the many venues of decision-making as part of the same false dichotomy, contributing to the crisis that disproportionately affects Afghan women today.

Women are asking for their rights and for long-term solutions to the economic crisis facing Afghanistan. The international community must develop longer-term economic solutions which uphold the agency and self-sufficiency of Afghan people, restore liquidity and financial activity, and support the function of Afghanistan’s central banking system. Without this, no amount of humanitarian aid will be sufficient to end the poverty or famine affecting the country.



There is food and we need it, but we cannot afford it to buy for our households. If the situation remains for a long time, lots of people will lose their lives especially children and women.



The purpose of this report and the recommendations outlined below is to create space for Afghan women's voices to be safely heard and meaningfully integrated into international humanitarian, development, and security responses; ensure the international community are advocating for responses grounded in evidence; and to inform the safe program adaptations that have allowed Women for Women International to resume programming in Afghanistan.

The full report can be read [here](#).

Recommended Actions

Since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021, decision-makers, international media, governments, and international institutions are often talking 'about' women in Afghanistan without speaking directly with Afghan women themselves, asking them what they are experiencing or understanding what they need.

In contrast, this report's recommendations are directly derived from the voices and lived experiences of Afghan women and civil society and cover the following categories:

- Women's Participation and Inclusion
- Economic and Humanitarian Crisis
- Sustaining the Afghan Women's Rights Movement within Afghanistan and Beyond
- Explicit National Laws and Policies
- UN Commitment to Women's Rights and Humanitarian Space

For the full recommendations with detailed context and evidence from women and women's rights organizations, please [see the report](#).

Many of the recommendations in this report call for women's rights, participation, and inclusion in public life within Afghanistan. But beyond acting on these specific recommendations, policymakers and advocates alike must embed participation and inclusion of Afghan women into the processes for developing recommendations and policies henceforth by directly engaging with Afghan civil society and asking and listening to Afghan women, themselves.

KEY FINDINGS

- 100% of women reporting deteriorated household financial situations:



45%

reduction or losses in their personal income

55%

no longer bringing in any income to their households



- 100% of women experiencing food shortages



33%

'sometimes' did not have enough to eat

66%

'often' did not have enough to eat



just 5%

reported receiving assistance from individuals, government, and/or organizations.*ⁱ

91%

report greater need for psychosocial support



ⁱSince this question was asked prior to the UN Security Council authorization of a humanitarian exemption to sanctions on December 22nd, more organizations may have since been able to expand their presence and provision of assistance in the communities that we previously surveyed. But at the time of the survey in early December, no women reported receiving assistance from NGOs or other aid organizations.

