



**WOMEN LEADING THEIR PROVINCES**  
*A leadership and political decision-making program  
for Women Provincial Councilors, their colleagues and constituents*

PROJECT DESIGN

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## **I. Summary**

This program is designed to build the political decision-making ability of Women Provincial Councilors in Afghanistan. Because women do not function in leadership positions in a vacuum, the program will also involve male colleagues on the Provincial Councils, colleagues in provincial administration and women in leadership at the village level. At all levels, through this program, men and women will be promoting girls education to ensure that the future generation of women leaders is prepared. The program will help develop the individual decision-making ability of the women provincial councilors, engender the provincial council as a whole and help them develop working relationships with women at other levels of governance such as Parliament and village shuras.

## **II. Background**

In September 2005, Afghanistan conducted legislative elections. Members were elected to the lower house of the Parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, and to provincial-level Councils. Quotas for women's participation in these legislative bodies were set, ensuring at least 20% in the Parliament and 30% in the Provincial Councils. Women achieved slightly higher than 20% of the seats in the Wolesi Jirga, taking 68 of the 249 seats with 19 women winning seats outright above the quota. Women took 121 of 420 seats on the Provincial Councils. Three seats were left open as no women registered to run for the seats.

The success of these newly elected women leaders is crucial to increasing women's participation in leadership. Significant cultural obstacles have prevented women from taking leadership positions and the country is watching whether this group who has been given the chance to lead will succeed. Their success or failure will significantly impact the future of women leaders in Afghanistan.

Despite the quota system, women struggle to ensure their effectiveness as leaders. Women who obtained provincial council seats cited various obstacles to their implementing their roles, such as support of the community, their societal roles, transportation, and their obligations in their families. In addition, beyond the quota, women struggle to obtain decision-making positions. Women cited many reasons for the lack of women in leadership, the primary reasons being the lack of education and the support of their family and the community.

Due to the lack of educational opportunities, women need extensive support to implement their roles as elected officials. Many international organizations have taken up the task of advancing the leadership abilities and caucus skills of women in the Parliament but there is still an almost limitless range of needs at the provincial and community levels, particularly with regards to gender. Provincial councils face many obstacles such as lack of clearly defined role; lack of offices; lack of funding and lack of transport. Although Associates in Rural Development (ARD) have a USAID-funded program to build capacity of the provincial administration, they have not yet identified a gender strategy. At the provincial level, areas of need include, but are not limited to: understanding their role as provincial councilors; effective outreach to the community; effective representation of community needs, developing relationships with the provincial administration; and public speaking.

While the directive of the program is to improve women in their political decision-making, this must be accomplished in the context of their work with male colleagues. A broadly-expressed

sentiment was that women's progress is very dependent on changing the cultural attitudes and practices of men in the country. Women cannot exercise political leadership in a gender vacuum – they must work effectively with their male colleagues and their male colleagues must participate in relevant program activities to encourage this participatory leadership. So much attention has been focused in the recent past on women politicians that there is a backlash developing among their male colleagues. An example is seen in women members of Parliament. The women MP's have been offered so many trips abroad to visit other legislatures that they needed to turn some down because they would never have been in the country. The male MP's became so jealous of what is seen as luxurious vacations that a motion was raised in Parliament to require women MP's to be accompanied on trips abroad by a male chaperone.

One challenge in developing effective programs is the educational level among provincial councilors. Because of decades of war, the literacy rates in Afghanistan are low, quoted by UNICEF in 2000 as 51% for males and 21% for females. Ironically, these percentages are often reversed among provincial councilors. Women provincial councilors tend to have better education levels than their male colleagues. For example in Ghor province, all 4 women councilors are literate, but only 1 of 9 male councilors can read and write. This will be an important factor in developing effective curricula for joint training. The women's-only activities can involve written materials, but those involving men will have to incorporate non-literate teaching activities.

To concentrate the effectiveness of any program, WCI decided to select four provinces for program activities: Nanagahar, Wardak, Bamiyan and Ghor. These provinces provide a variety of participants in terms of ethnicity, geography and community experience. Nangahar borders Pakistan in the east of the country and the primarily Pashtun population enjoys easy access to fellow Pashtuns and resources across the border. Many people have lived in Pakistan and educational levels are higher than average and many women have had access to education in Pakistan. It is a culturally conservative province, both in rural areas and the provincial capital of Jalalabad. Wardak borders Kabul and in many ways is effectively a suburb of the capital. It is ethnically divided between Pashtun and Hazara and there have been tensions between these two groups, with Pashtuns seen as more culturally conservative and supportive of the Taliban than the Hazaras who were intensely persecuted by the Taliban. Most educated women migrate to Kabul and work for NGOs there so there is severe shortage of women qualified for leadership positions who are willing to live fulltime in Wardak. Several women provincial councilors live in the capital city, as do many provincial administrators. Bamiyan is a northern province famous for the destroyed Buddhas. It has a majority Hazara ethnicity with a minority Pashtun community between which there is a history of tension over land ownership issues. Because of the severe winters in Bamiyan and lack of easy access, development programs have not been as active here as in other parts of the country. Ghor is among the most isolated of Afghan provinces, located in the center of the country. A majority Pashtun community dominates the provinces with a Hazara community bordering Bamiyan which tends to associate itself more with Bamiyan than Ghor province. Overland transport is so difficult it can take 3 days to travel from the nearest city, Herat. As a result of isolation and severe winter weather, there has been very little INGO activity or development programs. Education levels are very low and impact the ability to develop governance and economic programs.

During assessment visits in Kabul and the provinces an area of concern that was nearly universally articulated was lack of access and facilities for girls' education. This will be a focal

legislative issue to be used as a practical tool in providing context for skills being developed with the goal of educating the future generation of women leaders.

### **III. Program Goal**

The success of future women in political leadership in Afghanistan will in large part be determined by the women who have been provided the opportunity through quotas to demonstrate their ability. Scrutiny will be high and women provincial councilors are already starting to feel the pressure. This program, “Women Leading Their Provinces: A Leadership and Political Decision-Making program for Women Provincial Councilors, their Colleagues and Constituents,” is intended to increase the political decision-making capacity of Women Provincial Councilors using the issue of girls’ education as a focal tool.

### **IV. Objectives**

- Objective #1: Improve the personal leadership skills of women provincial councilors in areas such as constituent outreach; public speaking; negotiation, communication, and consensus-building; and government oversight.
- Objective #2: Improve the ability of male and female provincial councilors to work together to analyze provincial-level government programs to ensure gender equity with regards to education and to make recommendations to provincial administration for change as needed
- Objective #3: Strengthen women provincial councilors’ ability to champion issues of girl’s education by improving their working relationships with members of Parliament and colleagues in provincial administration and helping them to conduct effective outreach to their constituents.

### **V. Participants**

The primary target group is women who have been elected to the provincial councils in Wardak, Bamiyan, Nanagahar and Ghor provinces. Other participants will include male provincial councilors, Governors, provincial line department staff and women in village shuras.

### **VI. Program Activities**

#### ***A. Strengthening the Skills of Women Provincial Councilors***

In speaking with women Provincial Councilors, they often expressed a desire to improve their basic governing skills. It was also observed that many of these women would benefit from confidence-building skills such as public speaking and communication skills. In an effort to improve women’s participation in political decision-making by developing these skills a training program will include the following topics:

Day 1 – Identifying and overcoming barriers to women’s leadership and political participation; Qualities of an effective leader

Day 2 – Identifying and mobilizing potential leaders; confidence building

Day 3 – Public speaking

Day 4 – Media relations

Day 5 – Constituent outreach

Day 6 – Lobbying elected officials and provincial administrators

While skills' training is vital, such programs can be a bit generic and may be difficult for a person newly in a position of leadership to see immediate application. An issue identified as important to women in the province was as girls' education, and this topic will be used as a teaching tool as the focal legislative/outreach issue. Councilors can be trained on how to articulate their concerns about girls' education, how to reach out to communities to discuss impediments to girls' education, and how to lobby the governor and Members of Parliament for resources to improve girls' access to education in their area.

Training with some of the above topics was observed being conducted in Nangahar province coordinated by Afghan Independent Human Rights Center with trainers from the Afghan Center in Karte Char Kabul. Third country trainers used previously by WCI could also be brought in. The Asia Foundation is scheduled to do an extensive project with women in the provincial Department of Womens Affairs and these women could be included in the program to help develop working relationships between women provincial councilors and women in provincial administration.

Depending on the schedules and transportation needs of the councilors in different provinces, this training can take place over the course of 3 full days or 6 half-day sessions.

The training would be held in the four individual provincial capitals so that the curricula can be adjusted as needed for literacy levels of participants and reduce potential cultural/logistical issues such as the need for a mahram (chaperone) to accompany women to training in a remote city.

The training will be implemented under a Training-of-trainers (TOT) program. A team of foreign and Afghan trainers will train a team of Afghan trainers who will travel to the provinces to conduct the training. This will enable the team to be utilized in the future as well, should additional provinces be added to the program. The Afghan training partner will be selected from among several groups interviewed in the provinces and Kabul. Women trainers will be identified who are able to travel to remote provinces and have experience working with both mixed gender and illiterate classes.

## ***B. Engendering Provincial Councils***

One theme that was consistently emphasized during the assessment visits was that improving women's participation in political decision making involved working with men as well as women. It is crucial that the men and women on the Provincial Councils work together effectively and are cognizant of women's issues and effective participation.

While ARD is scheduled to be doing extensive training for Provincial Councilors in a variety of governance areas, their program currently has no specific gender component. WCI will complement ARD's work by adding such gender components as:

1. Gender awareness: Increasing understanding of gender terms, such as gender mainstreaming, gender integration, and gender equity as well as examining topics in which men and women are impacted differently

2. Gender analysis: Increasing understanding of the ways in which laws, government programs or policies take gender impacts into consideration; and
3. Gender budgeting: Increasing understanding of the ways in which the national (and provincial) budgets impact men and women differently and ways in which the provincial councilors can address these issues.

Excellent programs on such topics have been conducted at both the Ministry and Parliamentary level by such organizations as medica mondiale and GTZ so that curricula and potentially trainers could be sources for this as well.

As an example of integrating the gender training, during a workshop of budgeting skills, WCI could include the skills needed to consider gender issues. This would be effective since it would be incorporated into an existing training on a critical topic and not seen to be a special “women’s” training. These topics would be included in upcoming workshops to be held monthly at the provincial level by ARD. WCI would work with ARD training curricula developers to integrate the subjects and the time allotted into their workshops.

### ***C. Human Rights Training***

An area of information that was frequently requested by Provincial Councilors and expressed as a need by others was information on human and women’s rights under the Constitution and Islam. WCI is the technical advisor for USAID-grantee Equal Access’ program on Human Rights in the Contexts of Islam and Afghanistan. This program will include a grassroots training program on human rights in Islam and community mobilization and will be targeted in the provinces of Bamiyan, Ghor, Nangarhar and Wardak, the same as WCI’s target provinces for this program. Men and women Provincial Councilors, provincial administrators, Governors and religious leaders will be invited to participate to increase their knowledge on these topics as well as have an opportunity to continue developing their working relationships during this three-day training, which will be provided by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in each province.

### ***D. National Agenda Workshop***

US Congressional-funding recipient International Republican Institute (IRI) will be conducting national agenda workshops with women Members of Parliament in their provinces this summer. This program will involve women MPs traveling to their provinces and holding workshops to gather constituent input on issues that should be part of women’s national agenda. IRI has issued an invitation for women provincial councilors in WCI’s four target provinces to participate. WCI will precede this with training on articulating issues, informal networking and lobbying to be included in day 6 of the women’s leadership training sessions.. This would allow women provincial councilors the ability to develop their constituent outreach skills, advance their knowledge of issues on the national level, and provide an opportunity to build their relationships with the women MPs from their area. WCI will coordinate the attendance of women provincial councilors once IRI has finalized their program agenda and provincial schedule during the Parliamentary break.

### **E. Outreach to Women in Villages**

The current women Provincial Councilors serve as crucial role models for other potential women leaders. Thus, outreach to their constituents is key. An area that was often a source of frustration for women provincial councilors was their limited access to their constituents in remote districts and villages in their province. Many programs such as NSP and MOWA have created women's groups such as CDCs and Shuras in many villages. Other organizations such as AfghanAid and Aga Khan Development Network are working directly with these women's groups on various community issues. Working together with these organizations, WCI will finance and organize trips by women provincial councilors and their female colleagues in provincial administration to visit women's groups in select districts and hold a public meeting on the identified focal issue of girls' education. These trips will leverage the constituent outreach skills developed during day 5 of the women's leadership training detailed above. Because of weather issues that limit travel, Ghor and Bamiyan province visits will take place in early September and Wardak and Nangahar visits will take place during November. WCI will work with locally-based organizations to facilitate and finance transportation, meals and mahrams (chaperones) as necessary and schedule village gatherings.

## **VII. Program Partners**

Because so many organizations are involved in training women in elected office, it was crucial to develop partnerships both to leverage program opportunities and avoid program duplication. Partnerships will include formal ones where organizations are hired to provide specific training and informal ones where program participants will join an upcoming program sponsored by a partner organization.

For the human rights training, WCI will partner with Equal Access in facilitating attendance of program participants as well as in the role of technical advisor. In the national agenda program, WCI will partner with the International Republican Institute and facilitate attendance of program participants. For the village shura visits, WCI will partner with organizations working with such grassroots groups such as Aga Khan Development Network in Bamiyan, ALP-E in Nanagahar, Department of Women's Affairs in Wardak and AfghanAid in Ghor.

## **VIII. Timeline**

Some limiting factors in setting a timeline are the funding deadline at the end of November 2006, Ramadan/Eid holidays from approximately the last week of September through the first week of November and early severe winter weather in several target provinces.

For the programs such as human rights training and national agenda, WCI will have to coordinate their activities with the partner organization. For WCI-led programs a potential schedule can be as follows:

- A. Leadership Training for Women Provincial Councilors - July 2006 – One training in each of the four provinces
- B. Engendering Provincial Councils - August 2006 – One training in each of the four provinces
- C. Human Rights – WCI will coordinate with AIHRC as the training is scheduled in the individual provinces



D. National Agenda – WCI will coordinate with IRI as the training is scheduled in the individual provinces

E. Outreach - Early September 2006 – village shura outreach visits in Ghor and Bamian provinces; Mid-Late November 2006 – village shura outreach visits in Wardak and Nangahar province

## **IX. Human Resource Needs**

### **Program Officer**

WCI will employ one Program Officer who will spend on average 100 percent of her time on the USAID program. Her primary responsibilities will be developing and implementing the in-country activities; organization of logistics and content of training events; identification of and liaison with trainers and in-country consultants and partners; preparation of training packets and materials; attendance at training workshops; preparation of country program reports; preparation of quarterly technical reports and review of financial reports; liaison with sub-grantees and oversight of sub-grant program; and overall program monitoring and evaluation.

### **Administrative/Financial Assistant**

WCI will employ one Administrative/Finance Assistant who will provide administrative, financial and program support for the WCI program. S/he will assist the Program Officer with program implementation; s/he will manage administrative matters with respect to the program; assist with training materials needs; handle procurement; assist with financial transactions; make travel arrangements; participate in training workshops; and maintain files and records.

### **Trainers**

Training and consulting staff is to be determined, depending on expertise and availability, but may include the following:

- WCI staff and expert consultants
- Afghan Center
- GTZ
- Iltis
- CHA
- medica mondiale

Local expertise will be used to the greatest extent possible in providing training. WCI will partner with local organizations in providing its training.

## **X. Evaluation of Results and Impact**

WCI will build into the program from the outset the opportunity for several levels of program evaluation.

**Participant Satisfaction** with the effectiveness of trainers, facilitators, training and facilitation, and program components will be evaluated at the closing of each meeting through written

evaluations completed by the participants, partner organizations, contractors and trainers. Participants and all staff will fill out evaluation forms; WCI will use the tabulated results of these, along with responses to informal inquiries by program staff throughout the program, to make ongoing course corrections to stay on track in order to meet the objectives of both the participants and the program overall.

**Knowledge assessments** will be administered to participants before and after most training sessions. When compared to performance before the training, participant performance on the knowledge assessment following the workshop will show the increase in tangible knowledge and the development of practical skills.