



# AFGHANISTAN: PATHWAYS TO PEACE

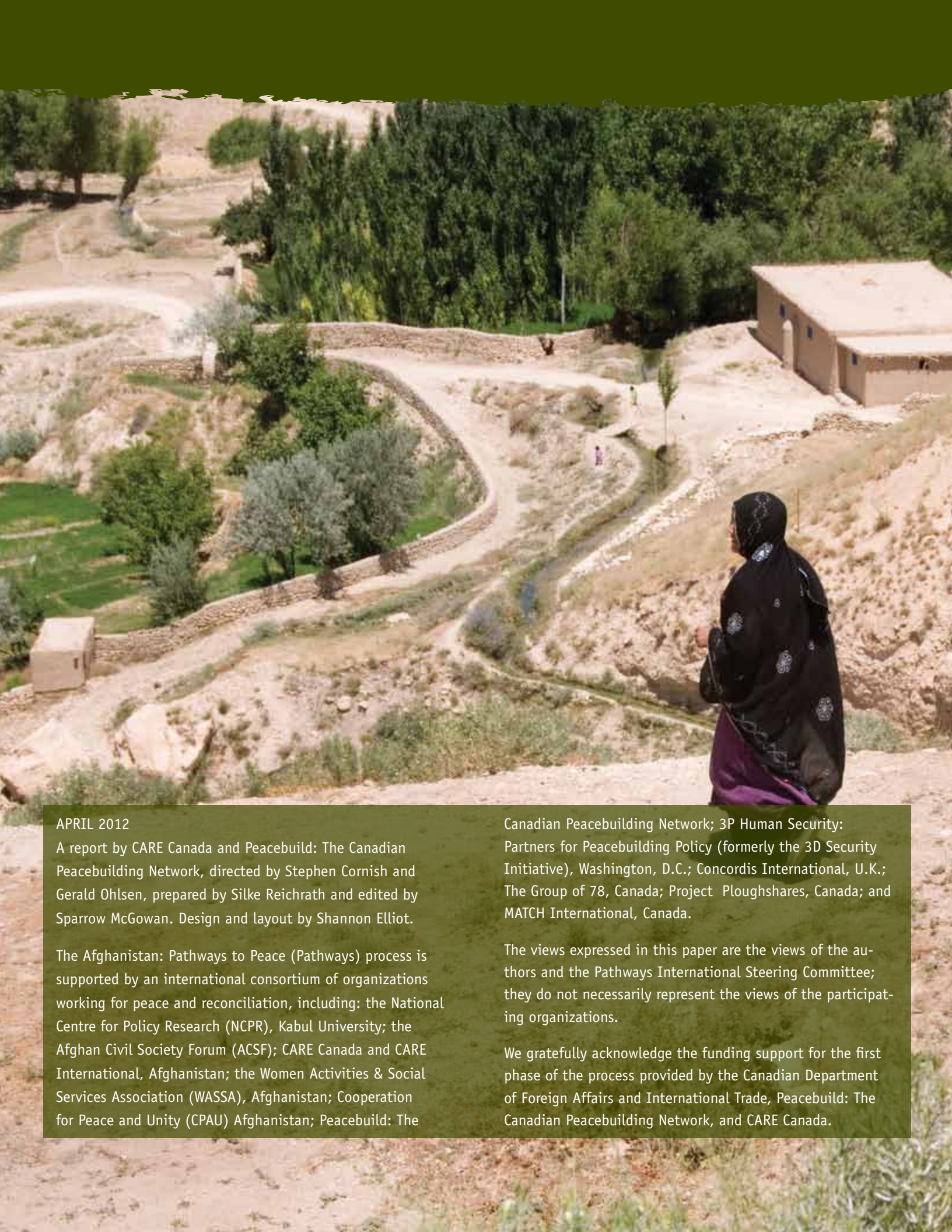
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN



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APRIL 2012

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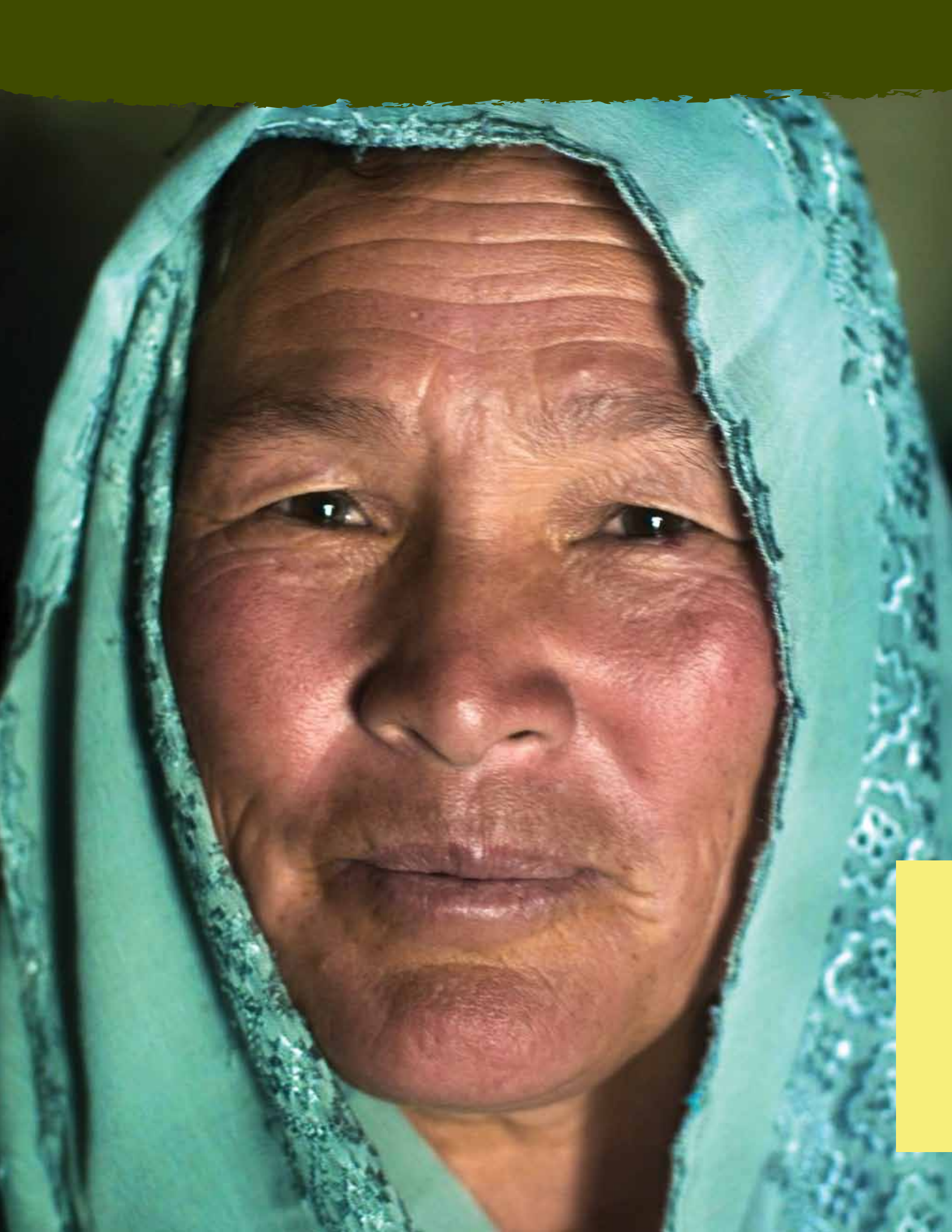
The views expressed in this paper are the views of the authors and the Pathways International Steering Committee; they do not necessarily represent the views of the participating organizations.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The planned withdrawal of the majority of international military forces from Afghanistan, coupled with a recognition that force alone will not lead to success in the destabilized region, demands a serious consideration of a negotiated end to the current war.**

To date, negotiations have been limited to closed door ‘talks about talks’ between high-level leaders in the Afghan government and armed opposition groups, as well as among regional governments, armed opposition groups and members of the United Nations mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

There have been limited attempts to demobilize rank-and-file opposition fighters and to initiate a national dialogue through a national Peace Jirga and High Peace Council. While these efforts might lead to a Government-Taliban pact for power-sharing, they are unlikely to stop the fighting and even less likely to lead to a positive peace, as conceptualized by Johan Galtung.<sup>1</sup>

A positive peace would restore relationships, meet the needs of the whole population, provide ways to manage conflicts constructively, and hence be widely regarded by Afghans as legitimate, fair, and worthy of support.

A lasting, positive peace can only be achieved through a comprehensive peace process that addresses the major causes of three decades of war and includes all major stakeholders.

**MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE RIGHTS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED NEED A CHANCE FOR TRUTH-TELLING AND FORGIVENESS.**

**MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS NEED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE LANGUAGE RIGHTS AND RESPECT FOR THEIR CULTURE.**

**THE YOUNG GENERATION NEEDS TO HAVE A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN BUILDING THE FUTURE.**

Any peace process will be neither comprehensive nor lasting without the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1889 or without the full inclusion of women. Women play a transformational role in peacebuilding and have a particularly high stake in a more just, open, and tolerant society; a society that allows for their participation in politics and the workforce, and respects the expansion of their rights along with the human rights of all residents. A legitimate peace process should be guided by the core values of accountability, transparency, inclusivity, and transitional justice, along with trust building, nation building, and the rejection of impunity.

Positive peace requires a transformation of society, a process that takes generations. However, the peace process provides a window of opportunity to sow the seeds for achieving this change. A move in this direction would require:

- links between grassroots and national processes through elected representatives, a structured consultation process, and/or the effective mediation of civil society organizations;
- participation of men and women from all sectors of society in local and national dialogues; and
- peace education and trust-building to prepare people for participation in the comprehensive peace process, and to transform a culture and mentality of war into an appreciation for human rights, participatory governance, and non-violent conflict resolution.

The building blocks for a solid peace include multi-layered but linked processes at the grassroots and national levels, the effective participation of women and men, and peace education in schools.

Further, the international complexity of the Afghan conflict demands the engagement of the regional and international communities, at both the governmental and civil society levels, in the search for a solution.





## PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

The official peacebuilding architecture in Afghanistan was established after the June 2010 National Consultative Peace Jirga. It consists of a High Peace Council and efforts to reintegrate lower-level fighters through the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Program (APRP).

There are, however, a number of factors operating against its success. The High Peace Council was intended to establish the infrastructure for a peace process; however, it lacks legitimacy as many Afghans see it as a government institution and not objective.

Top-level negotiations, which have likely been limited to pre-conditions for an eventual ceasefire, have been held in strict secrecy, as is typical of these types of negotiation.

More public structures and negotiations, dating back to the Bonn Agreement, have been plagued by the exclusion of some

warring factions (e.g. the Taliban in 2001, the Haqqani network in 2011) and Afghan civil society representatives.

In part due to the noted issues, negotiations have focused on the security and business interests of a few, and neglected key issues such as government legitimacy, the need for structural reforms, the demand for justice for human rights violations, and the distrust and tensions between ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, spoilers excluded from the negotiations have managed to discredit and derail high-level talks. Thomas Ruttig points out that “negotiations leading to a possible power-sharing arrangement including the Karzai camp ... and any insurgent group ... would very likely not result in an end to the fighting ... More importantly, it would not remove the major causes of the insurgency, like widespread political and economic exclusion, predatory behaviour by government representatives, corruption, and impunity.”<sup>3</sup>

# THE NEED FOR A BROAD-BASED, COMPREHENSIVE PEACE PROCESS

The root of failure for many peace agreements can often be found in a lack of popular support and a failure to address the underlying causes of a conflict. It is crucial that peace processes allow for the participation of all major sectors of a society, and address fears, interests and grievances related to security, politics, economics, territory, and identity.

The need to reach out beyond armed actors and to include civil society in peacebuilding and conflict prevention has been recognized as a determinant of success for a peace process.<sup>4</sup>

**OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE IN AFGHANISTAN IS THE PARTICIPATION OF RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC AND TRIBAL LEADERS, WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, THE MEDIA, NGOS, AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.**

In 2000, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was adopted, urging member states and international organizations to increase the representation of women in decision-making mechanisms and institutions for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict.

In 2001, then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for an international conference of civil society organizations working in conflict prevention, which led to the establishment of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Through GPPAC, Peacebuild and many other civil society organizations have actively promoted more engagement and collaboration to prevent violence.

Some of the most successful peace processes have included mechanisms to allow for broad-based participation in the negotiation, approval and/or implementation of peace agreements, without bogging down the decision-making process by having too many stakeholders at one table.

In Guatemala, this was achieved through a Civil Society Assembly; in the Philippines, through local, regional and national consultations; in Mali, through numerous parallel local peace negotiations and agreements; in South Africa, through an elected Constituent Assembly; and in Northern Ireland through elected political parties participating in the negotiations.

Other tools have included referenda and media activism, both used to inform the public and analyze the peace process.<sup>5</sup> Such participatory mechanisms have helped build national consensus and a broader and deeper commitment to the implementation of peace agreements.





# PATHWAYS TO PEACE PROGRAM

**AFGHANISTAN: *Pathways to Peace*<sup>6</sup> is a partnership among Afghan and international civil society organizations which aims to build Afghan civil society capacity for peacebuilding, reconciliation and dialogue.**

Further, it promotes, supports, and informs Afghan-led initiatives for official and unofficial peace processes at community, national and regional levels. A first phase of activities took place between December 2009 and June 2010. It included:

- field research in 12 provinces and the city of Kabul; the research looked at causes for conflicts and entry points to address these;
- desk research on comparative peace processes to develop concepts and inputs for the process;
- a research symposium entitled “Coordinating Peace Efforts in Afghanistan,” held in Kabul in January 2010;
- a civil society peace conference entitled “A Common Voice for Peace and Reconciliation,” held in Kabul in April 2010;
- a round table with senior media representatives; and
- a course for media representatives taught by 3P Human Security, which initiated a discussion on the role of the media in peacebuilding.<sup>7</sup>

## Research

The field research, led by Dr. Seddiq Weera and carried out by Kabul University faculty and students, was designed to identify grievances driving the conflict and to develop potential responses.

Semi-structured interviews were held with 325 men and 128 women between January and March 2010. Thirty focus group discussions with 130 participants took place in 11 provinces and the city of Kabul; two of these were women-only focus groups in Kabul, the others were mixed gender.

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of the survey respondents was close to their demographic representation in Afghan

society. However, given the time constraints, a decision was made to interview people who would be easily accessible and able to analyze political trends and formulate policy proposals without prior awareness raising or training. Thus the sample was predominantly male (71.7%), urban (75.9%), and educated (86.7%).

The findings indicate that issues of fairness in access to power, resources, and redress for past crimes and injustices between identity groups (based on ethnicity, religion, age, gender, and place of residence) are central to the conflict, although the causes of conflict are not limited to them.

Participants pointed to the need for:

- a reconciliation of multiple versions of history and transitional justice processes;
- a more balanced distribution of power between the centre and the peripheries;
- a strong, independent and ethnically-balanced government; and
- more effective responses to corruption and drug-related crime.

Many also called for a census to clarify the ethnic composition of the country, and official status for additional languages.

The discussion conceived of women as victims of murder, abuse, and traditional practices such as forced marriage, rather than as “vital actors in reconciliation and in the construction of a peaceful society”.<sup>8</sup>

There were however calls for mechanisms to uphold and enact women’s rights, and to include what amounts to 50% of the population more fully in the peace process.



Pathways convened two national conferences on various aspects of peacebuilding, each drawing more than 100 civil society representatives from throughout the country and from many walks of life.

### Coordinating Peace Efforts: A Symposium

A symposium entitled *Coordinating Peace Efforts in Afghanistan* was held in Kabul in January 2010 to bring together governmental, non-governmental and social groups; present the Pathways process; identify gaps in policy, programming and research; and share experiences and lessons learned. The event underscored the participants' desire for

peace and their concerns with the interference of international actors. Speakers pointed to the need for a coherent peace policy and improved coordination. The need for human rights protection and transitional justice was also stressed, as was the requirement to address poverty, unemployment, and access to quality education.

### National peace conference

A national civil society peace conference, *A Common Voice for Peace and Reconciliation*, was held in Kabul in April 2010 and brought together 160 participants from across the country and from a wide range of organizations and ethnicities. Approximately one third of participants were women. The research findings were presented and insights were drawn from Ireland, Sudan, and other comparative peace processes.

Issues and concerns addressed at the conference included:

- the need for a consultation process in the provinces, as Afghanistan is “not just Kabul”;
- the need for a more inclusive peace process and for better coordination within civil society, and between civil society, the government and the international community;
- the need for training in negotiation and other peacebuilding skills for both men and women, as well as public outreach and awareness-raising;
- the importance of media training and of peace education;
- the need for more avenues and support for women's involvement in peace and peacebuilding initiatives; and
- the potential benefits of a central research repository in both paper and electronic form as a tool for sharing findings from the diverse research taking place in Afghanistan and its use by civil society to develop positions and proposals, and to conduct monitoring.

### Core values

The conference generated a consensus on a set of core values around which peace should be built:

1. **Accountability and transparency:** It is of vital importance that information be shared about the peace process, its participants, and the issues discussed, if the process is to be considered acceptable by the population and to be successful in the long run.
2. **Inclusivity:** All sectors of society - men, women, young, old, moderates, radicals, and all ethnic, religious and major tribal groups - must be involved in peacebuilding for the peace process to be considered legitimate.
3. **Transitional justice and rejection of impunity:** Justice mechanisms need to provide opportunities for safe truth-telling and hold individuals accountable who have committed serious human rights violations.
4. **Trust building:** Trust is situated at the heart of peacebuilding. All parties must trust the process through which peace is being negotiated, and trust must be built among the various communities that are in conflict. Third party mediators can play a central role in trust building.
5. **Nation building:** Genuine national unity will lead to peace between the various communities and steps must be taken to strengthen such unity. Civil society can play a role in this national process. Peacebuilding is a long-term, comprehensive process, not a project; it is broader, deeper and longer-lasting than 'official' negotiations with insurgents.

## Next steps

The conference also identified a number of issues and potential next steps to move the Pathways process forward:

### Better coordination

Participants pointed out that there were numerous peacebuilding initiatives within Afghanistan, and more were expected to arise in the future. These activities would benefit from better coordination, especially with a view to developing a participatory mechanism for a comprehensive peace process. Such coordination is required at three levels: first, within civil society; second, between civil society and government; and third, between civil society and the international community, both Western and neighbouring countries.

### Country-wide engagement

To be comprehensive and effective, a peace process has to be country-wide and reach all social sectors. Engagement with the provinces should, at a minimum, include consultations in order to create inclusivity in the process and proposals representative of the whole of Afghanistan. It would have more impact if it involved actual negotiations on local/provincial issues and an opportunity for the grassroots to shape the national process.

### Monitoring peacebuilding initiatives

In its capacity as “watchdog,” civil society has a crucial role to play in monitoring various peacebuilding initiatives, particularly peace negotiations. Civil society has to ensure that key issues and concerns such as women’s rights, impunity, and the role of families in ex-combatant integration are not ignored in the overall peacebuilding process. Civil society has to be provided with the resources to carry out its monitoring role effectively, including financial resources, demand-driven capacity building, access to information, and protection for civil society leaders.

### Sharing research

Peacebuilding must be informed by realities on the ground. Therefore, research is of fundamental importance. There is considerable research being conducted by Afghan and international organizations, but often the results remain in the grey literature of project documentation or in reports posted on diverse websites or gathered on shelves. Therefore, a clearinghouse is needed to allow Afghans ready access to the findings about their own country.

### Increased inclusion of women

Peacebuilding initiatives would also benefit from increased inclusion of women as participants and leaders, and of women’s voices and priorities on peacebuilding agendas. Because men and women have different experiences of violence during war, the presence of both perspectives in peacebuilding ensures that reconstruction benefits everyone. The Afghan Constitution, the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and the UNSCR 1325 and 1889 reinforce women’s rights in regards to peacebuilding. Civil society, government and the international community each have a role in implementing these policies and supporting women’s participation in local and international fora.

### Fostering future leaders

Recognizing that peacebuilding is a long-term process, often taking generations, civil society must be involved in the preparation of future leaders who will champion peace over war. Peace education in schools and universities can play a crucial role in this. This requires the integration of peace education in teacher training and the support of higher education facilities to develop peace-related curricula.

### Education and outreach

Public education and outreach programs must be developed by both civil society and government in order to inform the wider population about peacebuilding issues, change attitudes, and generate discussion. A capable and independent media can play a particularly vital role in this respect; radio programming with its wide reach in Afghanistan is ideal for this purpose. Civil society can contribute to media training and engage journalists on issues related to peacebuilding.

Since 2009, the Pathways process has informed and supported civil society-led approaches to reconciliation and peacebuilding. It has promoted and facilitated more inclusive dialogue, both in terms of participants and issues covered. Further, it has made important inroads in identifying grievances driving the conflict and in developing civil society-generated options and proposals to address them. Initial funding for development of the process was provided by CARE Canada and Peacebuild. The first phase of activities was largely funded by the Canadian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.



# ENSURING A BROAD-BASED COMPREHENSIVE PEACE PROCESS

**The Pathways Program identified three key areas of work necessary to ensuring a comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan: linking grassroots peacebuilding to a national peace process, the participation of both women and men, and the need for peace education and reconciliation.**

## 1. Linking grassroots peacebuilding to a national peace process

A comprehensive peace process takes place at three interconnected levels: top-level political negotiations, bottom-level grassroots healing processes, and the middle level of organized civil society – the latter forming a bridge between the top and bottom.

John Paul Lederach developed a pyramid with these three levels, showing a few highly visible political and military leaders at the top; ethnic, religious, academic and NGO leaders in the middle; and local community leaders at the bottom.<sup>9</sup>

Initiatives at the middle level usually include research, policy advocacy, workshops, commissions, civil society dialogues, and the strengthening of linkages between the levels and between functional sectors. In a comprehensive peace process, civil society makes a significant contribution at the middle level as well as the grassroots, and its voices are heard and taken into account by top-level leaders.

At the Pathways peace conference, speakers pointed out that a legitimate peacebuilding process required transparency. Political, legal and social processes that are meant to achieve peace have to be widely understood.

Substantive negotiations should not take place behind closed doors - people have to be able to monitor the process, which means that they need to know who the government is talking to and about what issues. Civil society organizations, local leaders, and community institutions like jirgas, shuras, or development committees have to be able to monitor most elements of the peace process, as well as government actions that may have impacts on the future of peace and security in Afghanistan.

Without such openness, Afghans will not have confidence in the peace process. In fact, the lack of trust among Afghans was universally mentioned during the various Pathways consultations. Building trust was believed to be important and, if the stakeholders could not initially trust each other, it was important that they be able to trust the process itself.

One of the suggestions emerging from the consultations was for a national campaign to solicit people's support for the peace process. The international community should back such a campaign through comprehensive consultations across the country, including all voices. The campaign or consultation should be linked to the national process and become a starting point for peace to succeed.

The National Consultative Peace Jirga in June 2010 was intended to consult widely with Afghans, including all ethnic groups and anti-government forces. However, the participants, who included national and provincial leaders and civil society representatives, were neither elected as representatives to the Jirga nor did they have the opportunity to widely consult with the constituency they were representing.

Peace jirgas have a long history in Afghanistan, but their success depends on the participation of genuine community leaders or representatives; on a genuine, transparent, open-ended dialogue and decision-making process; and on a real commitment by the government and the international community to respect the decisions of the jirga.

Participants in the Pathways consultations believed that dialogue at the village level needed to be part of a national peace process, with community elders involved in the process. A truth-telling and transitional justice process was thought to be an important element of such a dialogue. This would contribute to trust-building between neighbours, communities, and ethnic groups who had been in conflict with each other.

## 2. Women and peace

CARE has found in its work in Afghanistan that women's empowerment can take place within a local cultural and religious context. Economic empowerment can have the full support of local men if it is sensitive to tradition and the ground is carefully prepared.<sup>10</sup> Further, social, political and legal empowerment can follow from work focused on livelihoods.

CARE's Humanitarian Assistance for Women of Afghanistan (HAWA) project started with food aid for 13,000 widow-headed households in 1994 and came to foster women's empowerment through livelihoods support, health services, literacy classes, widows' associations, research, and advocacy.

More recently, CARE facilitated the formation of 'solidarity groups' to build a collective voice for women's needs, aspirations and rights. Some members of these groups have successfully defended their legal rights, obtained an education, and developed political aspirations.<sup>11</sup>

Although limited by short time frames, the initial phase of Pathways included women among survey respondents, focus groups (including two women's focus groups), and in the Kabul Peace Conference.

About a third of the delegates and seven of 24 speakers at the Kabul Peace Conference were women. Although they tended to congregate at tables with college-age delegates or at tables with international participants, several of them presented the outcomes of their working groups to the plenary and were listened to respectfully.

Several emphasized that they appreciated the opportunity to participate and to actively contribute to the debates. Keynote speaker Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, highlighted the crucial role of women in peacebuilding: "Women are not just victims, but vital actors in reconciliation and in the construction of a peaceful society. It is simply not possible to have peace without the support of 50% of the population."

The participation of women in all dialogues and events related to the peace process should be unquestionable. Their inclusion is guaranteed in numerous documents including

the Afghan Constitution, the NAPWA, and UNSCR 1325 and 1889. Yet even at international events, such as the 2010 London and Kabul Conferences, only one woman was allowed to speak at each event, and only after extensive lobby efforts. Similarly, it took months of advocacy for women to be granted 20 per cent of the seats in the 2010 Consultative Peace Jirga. In preparation for the 2011 Bonn Conference, the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) held consultations with more than 500 women leaders from 20 provinces and published a position paper outlining women's perspectives and recommendations; AWN had to promote these from the sidelines as it was not invited to the main conference.<sup>12</sup>

The international community, including Canada, should consult with women and girls throughout Afghanistan and should use appropriate incentives, including conditional aid, to ensure that women's rights be guaranteed in all peace negotiations and that a critical mass of representative women be included in all peace and policy processes.

A National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security should be integrated in national policies to ensure the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1889. A proportion of donor funding should be dedicated to addressing women's and girls' specific needs. Further, training and reform programs should be developed in gender-sensitive ways – especially those involving the training of police, military, justice officials, and civil servants.

In addition, donors should foster women's leadership not solely through capacity building, but by providing women with the resources to generate and access evidence, analyze evidence, develop their own policy positions and advocate for their positions.

Support for Afghan civil society requires long-term core funding and ensuring that their voices are heard, either through direct participation or at least through effective representation of their views and positions in high-level fora to which they do not have access.



### 3. Peace education and reconciliation

The field research revealed a “multiplicity of histories” with each linguistic, geographic and religious community having its own version, including histories of pain and victimization. Many respondents had little or no understanding of the history and perspectives of other communities.

As a result, there is a lack of understanding of the suffering of others and a tendency for each ethnic group to blame the others for the victimization it feels it has suffered. In addition, decades of conflict have led to a war mentality, an autocratic culture, and a tendency to resort to violence to solve conflicts.

The lack of access to quality education was the most frequently named obstacle to peace in the Pathways field research. In addition to promoting development, there was an expectation that education would help people to not look down on other ethnic groups, to analyze the nature of “true Islam”, to acquire a sense of justice and moral values, and to develop tolerance and trust. For education to fulfill this potential, peace education needs to be integrated into the school curriculum.

Peace education, according to UNICEF, refers to the process of “promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace.”<sup>13</sup>

It should teach the values, standards and principles articulated in the United Nations human rights instruments signed by the Government of Afghanistan, including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as national instruments like the Afghan Constitution.

It should convey the values of peace, tolerance and appreciation for all the cultures and language groups of the country. Moreover, it should teach the practical skills of non-violent conflict resolution and mediation.<sup>14</sup>

If schools are to teach children and young people these values and skills, teachers need to be trained to teach them. This requires the integration of peace education in teachers’ training. The discipline needs to be informed through the development of locally relevant and appropriate peace studies programs at post-secondary institutions.

In addition to teaching peace values and skills to the new generation, peace education is needed for the current generation, particularly for local and national leaders in government, civil society and the private sector.

Local leaders, district and provincial governors, and national parliamentarians need to be trained in peace values, human rights (including women’s rights), and respect for all ethnic groups.

Peace education work with traditional elders and religious leaders is a particularly promising entry point because of their legitimacy and their credibility in advancing human rights in accordance with Islam.

The media with their wide reach are also crucial to reaching the general population. “Dialogue and reconciliation work through the mosques, the media and education events” were emphasized by 65% of survey respondents in the Pathways field research.

Intertwined with this call for peace education and dialogue is the call for a process of truth-telling, reconciling, apology, and forgiveness, to allow for healing. Almost all participants of the Pathways focus groups mentioned in one way or another that Afghans, particularly political and military groups, do not trust each other. This underlines the importance of trust-building, which can be achieved through well-facilitated dialogue and truth-telling.

# KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Canada and its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) partners should:

- Initiate discussion of a comprehensive peace process with the Afghan government, coalition members, international organizations and neighbouring countries;
- Develop an international 'Group of Friends' mandated to provide financial support, coaching, negotiation training, and capacity-building for all groups in an Afghan peace process;
- Support dialogues and consultations at local, district and provincial levels, including victims of human rights violations, minority ethnic groups, young people, women and all other major stakeholders;
- Seek the effective participation of a critical mass of representative women in all aspects of the peace process;
- Ensure that women's and minority rights be guaranteed in the outcome of peace processes; and
- Support the provision of peace education courses for political, civil society, and religious leaders, and for the media.

International NGOs should:

- Support coordinated peacebuilding efforts among civil society groups and between civil society, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community;
- Privilege peacebuilding initiatives led by Afghan NGOs and women's groups, including local, district- and province-level dialogues;
- Enable representation of Afghan women in national and international peacebuilding fora and in meetings with the Afghan government and international stakeholders; and
- Support Afghan civil society in developing public education and outreach programs to inform the wider population about peacebuilding issues, to change attitudes, and to generate discussion.

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- 5 Schirch, Lisa. "Policy Brief 4: Structuring Public Participation in Official Peace Processes." Washington, DC: 3D Security/Afghanistan: Pathways to Peace, 2009.
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- 7 Following up on these activities, Dr. Lisa Schirch of 3P Human Security conducted further research in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the components and mechanisms needed for a peace process. This resulted in a major research report published by the United States Institute for Peace on "Designing a Comprehensive Peace Process in Afghanistan" and a shorter six-page overview of "Afghan Civil Society and the Peace Process". 3P Human Security and Pathways' Afghan partners are now exploring ways to move forward the agenda laid out in the research. Prof. Nicole Birtsch, Head of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at Kabul University, continued to organize and conduct research projects, seminars and conferences on different issues related to a comprehensive approach to peace and reconciliation for students and professors at Afghan universities. The goal is to form a Peace Studies Network involving at least five universities in the provinces. The program will focus on integrating Peace and Conflict Studies into academic curricula and building a forum for public peace dialogue as a platform for discourse on critical topics like negotiation, reconciliation, gender, ethnicity, and dealing with the past.
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