

## Final Report

### “Inclusion of Homebound Women in 2014 Elections”

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report covers the progresses made during the three months implementation period of the project under the title of “inclusion of homebound women in the electoral process” in advance of the 2014 elections. The organization of Civil and Liberal Initiative for Peace (CLIP) takes this opportunity to express its profound gratitude and deep regard to The Asia Foundation (TAF) project management team for their exemplary guidance, monitoring and constant encouragement throughout the course of this project. The help and guidance given by TAF from time to time shall carry CLIP a long way in the journey of its life cycle in the future.

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The last but not least, CLIP also extends its appreciation to its local counterparts during the implementation phase, namely Panjshir Provincial Governor’s Office; Panjshir Provincial Independent Election Commission (PIEC); Panjshir Department of Women Affairs (DoWA); Parwan Provincial Governor’s Office; Parwan Provincial Independent Election Commission (PIEC); Parwan Department of Women Affairs (DoWA); Kapisa Provincial Governor’s Office; Kapisa Provincial Independent Election Commission (PIEC); Kapisa Department of Women Affairs (DoWA); Provincial Department of Hajj and Endowment of Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa; Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and Other Provincial Based Civil Society Organization (CSOs). Without their support and dedication it would not have been possible to successfully implement it!

Sincerely Your

Fazul Rahim Farahmand  
Director, Civil and Liberal Initiative for  
Peace (CLIP)

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The presidential election in 2014 play crucial role in the nascent history of democratization process in Afghanistan, as it marks the political and administrative leadership in the foreseeable future. The fraud-marred elections in 2009/2010 have created senses of pessimism in the mind of the public, especially women that make half of the population. Although women have had considerable achievements in the last decade, they still are considered the most underrepresented segment of the society. If they become aware of their democratic rights and responsibilities, they will confer legitimacy in the electoral processes through active participation.

Given the social and cultural context of rural Afghanistan, women cannot move independently and are often restricted to their homes. Moreover, these women have been largely affected by low literacy rates, widespread poverty, and geographic isolation. In spite of the fact that women's role in democratic processes is often overlooked, they are mostly homebound and largely influenced by men; while they have the same rights and privileges as men to know the importance of civic activism. However, it is very likely that many of these women have local influence and could emerge as leaders from the grass-root if the men in their families and their communities are sufficiently aware of women's right.

In an attempt to increase people's participation in the 2014 elections, especially women and youth, CLIP successfully completed a three month project in Panjshir, Kapisa and Parwan provinces. Supported by TAF, the overarching objective of the project was to "provide education for homebound women and their spouses" in the following three provinces: Panjshir, Parwan, and Kapisa. To meet its objective, CLIP provided several seminars and trainings for influential religious leaders and women civil activists to increase homebound women participation in the 2014 elections.

In light of its objective and relevant to the socio-political context of the country, the project had two activities. The first activity provided an opportunity to 75 credible and non-partisan to go through six "*Train the Trainer*" (ToT) sessions, two day each. A door-to-door awareness methods that is considered as the most effective way educating homebound women in rural Afghanistan, was applied throughout the life of the project. As a result, over 9,000 homebound women were approached directly in a face-to-face manner in three target provinces.

Under the second activity, recognizing the critical role of religious leaders, CLIP provided an intensive two-day awareness seminar to 60 *khateeb*s influential religious leaders. This seminar strengthened their understanding of the role the religious leaders play in encouraging men to allow their female family members to partake in the 2014 elections. A total of 27 Friday prayers were carried out in which these religious leaders informed hundreds and thousands of individuals from the population about the political right of women from the religion and human rights prospective in the target provinces.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

To achieve the overall objective of the project, CLIP conducted two activities in target provinces. The first one aimed at delivering civic education messages through religious; and the second activity focused on providing ToT for women civic educators and mobile monitors in target provinces: Panjshir, Parwan, and Kapisa.

### **Activity 1: Deliver civic education messages through religious leaders in Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa provinces.**

In close coordination with TAF, on January 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, CLIP conducted a two day seminar for 60 influential ulema and khateebis in *Charikar City*, capital of Parwan province. During the initial phase of the project, CLIP not only identified influential religious leaders to participate in the seminars, but it also developed and distributed around 100 training manuals with topics on women socio-political rights from the religion, Afghan Constitution and Human Rights Declaration to the participants. Participants also received around 4500 posters in order to distribute in their respective districts upon return from the trainings. These posters included messages on the importance of women's political participation from the religion text, the constitution and the electoral law. Furthermore, CLIP designed and produced a total of 10 banners with messages about women political right in the venue. It is worth mentioning that all materials were approved by TAF before printing.

However, prior to seminars, TAF and CLIP prepared evaluation forms and pre-post-tests. The purposes of these tests were to measure the knowledge of the trainees before and after the trainings, while the evaluation forms were used to scale the understanding of the homebound women during door-to-door awareness sessions. In addition, CLIP under the supervision of TAF developed and produced around for the trainings. During the trainings, the khateebis along with the master trainers discussed and elaborated upon various issues related to women rights, especially women political right in Islam. Many of the issues were focused on the cultural sensitivities and the traditionally biased views that are prevalent in the rural areas. Through the manuals and discussions, the khateebis were given a broader and relatively new perspective about the women rights not only from the perspective of Islam, but also from the perspective of civil and international law.

## **IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

As a result, a total of 540 Friday prayers were conducted by the 60 *khateebis* (nine in each target provinces) throughout the life of the project. As per the reports CLIP gathered, these khateebis addressed over 7000 people in 3 target provinces at the end of the first month (January 6-February 15, 2014) of the project. Between 289-330 people attended in every Friday prayer in Parwan province; around 239-289 people attended in every Friday prayer in Kapisa province, and approximately 260-300 people attended in Panjshir province. During the last month of the project (February 15-March 15, 2014) over 8000 individuals participated in the Friday prayers. As per the reports gathered from the provinces, between

310-370 people attended in Parwan; over 235-295 people showed up in Friday prayers in Kapisa; and between 253-310 people participated in Panjshir province. As far as means of verification is concerned, CLIP has kept record of all the supporting documents such as list of participants, evaluation forms, pre-post-test etc. Other supporting documents that could support the overall number of participants in each Friday prayers includes official letters CLIP has received from Departments of Hajj and Endowments, weekly updates the project officers provided based on their observations of target mosques.

## **Activity 2: Provide ToT civic educators, field coordinators and mobile monitors in Panjshir, Parwan and Kapisa provinces.**

As part of the second activity, CLIP conducted six ToT workshops, two-day workshops in each target provinces, for women civic educators. However, before the training, CLIP in close consultation with TAF identified 75 most influential women civic educators from among the provincial teachers and civil society networks. Meanwhile, CLIP developed around 200 trainings manuals about the political and civic rights of women from Islamic, Afghan Constitution and Human Rights. In addition, CLIP supported by TAF developed around over 800 posters to be distributed through women civic educators.

### **PANJSHIR TOT WORKSHOP**

The first series of the two-day ToT workshops were conducted on January 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Panjshir province. The trainings took place at the provincial Department of Women Affairs (DoWA) in Bazarak, capital of Panjshir province. The workshop was opened by the remarks made by the officials from the provincial IEC, head of DoWA, and the provincial governor's office. Twenty five women civic educators participated in the workshop, of which five of them were chosen as monitors to observe the work of the other 20 civic educators at the end of the workshop. Meanwhile, 25 manuals out of the 200 that were already developed and approved TAF distributed to women civic educators in Panjshir. Participants actively engaged and discussed on various sections of the manual, seeking for more clarification. In response to their queries, CLIP's master trainers provided sufficient interpretations to further broaden their skills. Upon completion, the 25 women civic educators began conducting face-to-face awareness campaign throughout the province.

### **IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

As per the reports from the five monitors and CLIP's provincial project officers, each of the 20 women civic educators reached to around 218 women per month, totalling 4360 homebound women in Panjshir. In addition, these civic educators distributed over 2500 posters that conducted messages about the importance of women participation in the elections based on Islam, Afghan Constitution and Human Rights. As far as means of verification is concerned, CLIP has kept record of all the supporting documents such as list of participants, evaluation forms and questionnaires. Other supporting documents that could support the

overall number of direct beneficiaries include reports from the field monitors and provincial project officers.

### **KAPISA TOT WORKSHOP**

The second round of two-day ToT workshops were conducted on January 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 in Kapisa province. The trainings conducted in Mir Masjedi High School that locates in the centre of Kapisa province. The workshop was opened by the remarks made by the officials from the provincial IEC, head of DoWA, and the provincial governor's office. Twenty five women civic educators identified who then participated in the trainings. Five of them were chosen as monitors to observe the work of the other 20 civic educators. In the meantime, 25 manuals out of the 200 manuals that were already developed and approved TAF distributed to participants. The participants eagerly asked the PIEC many questions about the 2014 elections such as date of the elections, policies and structure of the IEC and Election Complaint Commission (ECC). Other questions referred to the structure of the seminar emphasising on dialogue rather than mere explanation. As a result, CLIP redesigned structure making it more participatory. At the end, the 25 women civic educators travelled to their respective districts to conduct face-to-face awareness campaign.

### **IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

According to reports CLIP received from the five women monitors and its provincial project officers. Each of the 20 women civic educators targeted around 148 women per month, totalling 2960 homebound women in total. Moreover, these civic educators distributed over 2500 posters that conducted messages about the importance of women participation in the elections based on Islam, Afghan Constitution and Human Rights. In terms of means of verification, CLIP has kept record of all the supporting documents such as list of participants, evaluation forms and questionnaires. Other supporting documents that could support the overall number of direct beneficiaries include reports from the field monitors and provincial project officers.

### **PARWAN TOT WORKSHOP**

The third and last series of ToT workshops took place on January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at City Hall Complex that locates in Charikar, the capital of Parwan province. The officials from the PIEC and TAF opened the workshop. Twenty five women civic educators that were identified at the initial stage of the project attended the trainings. At the end, five out of the 25 of the participants were chosen as monitors to observe the work of 20 civic educators in the field. Moreover, CLIP distributed 25 manuals to 25 women civic educators that were already developed and approved by TAF. The participants in Parwan were more vocal compare to the former attendees. They asked questions from the PIEC about the 2014 elections and its related policies and structure. The status of the polling stations was asked as burning questions by almost all the participants. The participants also asked for further

clarification about the seminar and the manuals where CLIP's masters trainers provided sufficient information. As the workshops completed, the women civic educators travelled to their respective districts and began conducting door-to-door awareness campaign.

## **IMMEDIATE IMPACT**

According to reports CLIP received from the five women monitors and its provincial project officer, each of the 20 women civic educators targeted around 210 women per month, totalling 4776 homebound women in total. Moreover, these civic educators distributed over 2500 posters that conducted messages about the importance of women participation in the elections based on Islam, Afghan Constitution and Human Rights. In relation to means of verification, CLIP has kept record of all the supporting documents such as list of participants, evaluation forms and questionnaires. Other supporting documents that could support the overall number of direct beneficiaries are reports that the field monitors and provincial project officers. It is worth mentioning that all of the ToT workshops were covered by project team from TAF. CLIP benefited from the feedbacks received for further improvement of its activities.

## **MONTHLY COORDINATION MEETINGS**

As part of the project, CLIP also conducted two monthly coordination meetings with religious leaders and women civic educators in target provinces. The first round of three monthly coordination meetings was convened between 11<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2014.

As part of the first round of coordination meetings, CLIP launched the first one in Panjshir province on February 11, 2014. Twenty khateebes and 25 women activists gathered at the provincial municipality. As it was discussed, the participants did not face any major issue while providing electoral awareness to the public either through mosques or in way of door-to-door on the whole. However, the major challenge raised by almost all participants was the shortage of mobile voting cards registration centre in some districts of Panjshir province. Additionally, the participants' touched upon the irresponsible behaviour of the PIEC. They believed that the PIEC rarely paid attention to the public demand such as increasing the number of voting cards registration centres, add more polling station throughout the provinces because people cannot travel long distances to vote etc. The second coordination meeting was launched on February 12, 2014. It was convened in two locations; for ulema CLIP rented the meeting hall of the provincial department of Hajj and Endowment where 20 khateebes attended. For women activists the Mir Masjedi High School was chosen as the venue, and all 25 women civic educators attended. Insecurity in rural areas in which the majority of the population live was raised as the major challenge that often prevented them to deliver the messages or travel to reach out to homebound women. The participants believed that even if the people have voting cards and they are eligible to vote, insecurity would not allow them to risk their lives and cast their votes in the ballot boxes. The third coordination meeting was carried out on February 20, 2014. It was convened at the provincial municipality

hall. The ulema, all 20 of them, joint the meetings along the 25 women activists that covered the entire province. The participants sounded like they did not faced any specific challenge said and challenges, but their main concern was less voting card registration centres. Other than one centre that located at the provincial capital, there was no other place for people to go and get one.

The second round of coordination meetings were launched between March 15 to 17, 2014. On March 15, 2014, CLIP convened the first coordination meeting Panjshir at the provincial municipality. Following Panjshir, on March 17, 2014 CLIP conducted the second monthly coordination meeting was conducted in Kapisa and Parwan simultaneously. The CLIP team appreciated the participants’ effort in helping reaching out and raising people awareness in the target provinces. Then the ulema and women activists alike actively expressed their gratitude to CLIP and its funding agencies for the role they played in this crucial time before the elections. Afterwards the participants (60 khateeb and 75 women civic educators) shared their lessons learned and the challenges they faced during their awareness campaigns. They expressed their concern with PIEC in regards to the voting cards distributing canterers which were not sufficient for the homebound women in the rural areas.

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation
<p>1. Due to the cultural sensitivity, traditional perspective of the ulema whose social positions are based on hereditary structure rather than religious knowledge, CLIP faced with a minor criticism from a few of them during the first day of the seminar. These ulema pointed out that girls and women had no right to vote other than their fathers who represents the whole family in electoral process. Furthermore, they casted a doubt that these elections and seminars are a symbol of foreign elements in our culture.</p>	<p>In an attempt to mitigate the risked alluded to the ulema’s disagreement, CLIP immediate intervened and asked an influential khateeb from among the participants to elaborate on the issue further. Along with CLIP’s master trainer, the khateeb provided adequate justifications from the Quran and Hadith and managed to control the audience. As a result, the issue never escalated again throughout the seminar, and at the end, those who criticized apologised from CLIP and those who support women in the political processes.</p>
<p>2. During to the door to door awareness program by the 75 women civic educators, some of them faced with refusal from the homebound women to receive necessary awareness. This was an expected risk to some extent from the beginning as CLIP knows the nature of patriarchal family structure in rural areas of Afghanistan.</p>	<p>CLIP team managed to convince those who faced the challenges by its provincial officer and project coordinator continuously either through face to face meetings or constant telephone calls to encourage them to convey their messages about women right in election by cleverly delivering messages in the community occasions in their districts such as wedding ceremony, funeral etc.</p>

## **LONGTERM IMPACT**

In presence of many cultural sensitivities dovetailed in traditionalism, the project had great numbers of success only in two months. For example, over 14,000 direct beneficiaries were motivated to participate in the 2014 elections. Other is the change in perception of the young generation towards democracy, participation, citizens' rights and women's right in particular. Another is the shift in the attitude of religious leaders, powerbrokers, youth and women in comprehending the deeper and broader meaning of civil society.

As far as sustainability of similar awareness and educational efforts are concerned, there is need for continuous investments to make for the years to come, so that the marginalized groups, especially youth and women in the rural areas will gain necessary awareness, and be able to express and defend their fundamental natural rights.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

During the course of project implementation in the field, CLIP management team suggests the following recommendations to be used by the bigger CSOs family while planning their future projects in target provinces:

- Women civic educators in all the three target provinces, especially in Parwan province, recommended that, the seminars such as this should not be confined to the centre of the province. Instead, they should expand to the rural areas as well, since it will help rural communities, especially homebound women to realize about their civic and political rights. Women in rural areas suffer from poverty, violence, and disempowerment.
- The khateebis were of the view that awareness projects should not be designed for short period of time; they are less productive. Therefore they recommended expanding the duration of the project in future to a longer term so that the message gets through in an effective manner.
- More community occasions other than Friday prayers and door to door method in order to reach the marginalised group were recommended by the participants. For example, spring and harvest festivals, cultural gatherings such as poetry night, women's day celebrations, buzkashi matches in the winter and other sports events. By doing so, the rural areas will mobilise more easily and get more access to information.