

AFGHANISTAN

Decades of conflict have left Afghanistan's economy devastated. As a result the social services that would normally act as a safety net for vulnerable people barely exist and are located in bigger cities and run by NGOs. Under the applicable framework, women may be charged with adultery and exposed to further harm, which discourages them from seeking redress.

1. What are the issues surrounding the stigma faced by survivors of sexual violence, their families, communities etc.

- Under law, there remains a conflation of rape with adultery, meaning that the complainant herself may face a criminal charge.
- Women are perceived as the custodians of a family's "honour" and are seen as "dishonouring" their families and communities when they are subjected to sexual violence.
- Women and girls are prevented from reporting acts of violence for several reasons – domestic violence is regarded as a private matter; stigma, shame, discrimination, fear of reprisals from the perpetrators, feelings of guilt and lack of support from family and friends.

2. Who is doing something already in these countries incl. FCO, DFID, Champion countries, local initiatives (NGO, government, leaders)

- The **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women** has provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and civil society in the management and operation of 13 women's protection centres and two family guidance centres, as well as in advocacy and awareness-training to promote prevention of violence against women.
- The UK has a wide range of programmatic and policy interventions that seek to address the issue of sexual violence and support survivors, examples include: improving access to justice; raising awareness of individual rights; support the work of human rights defenders and the provision of emergency health care

3. Specific activities that need doing e.g. access to legal or medical care, judicial reform, evidence gathering etc.

- Ensure the safety of service-providers, human rights defenders and monitors and to address the lack of accessible services for women and girls; to ensure that sexual violence is clearly defined and criminalised in the penal code.¹
- Urge the Government to adopt legislative reforms to ensure that sexual violence offences are not associated with adultery and to establish an infrastructure for the delivery of protection, health and legal services to survivors.
- Accelerate efforts to integrate women in the Afghan National Police helping to enhance its capacity to address sexual and gender based violence.²

¹ SRSF Report: Conflict Related Sexual Violence 2016

² Report of the UN Secretary-General: Conflict-related sexual violence, March 2015

- The lack of equal participation of women in decision-making positions and peacebuilding processes and the lack of implementation of legislation and its impact on women's access to justice are some of the key challenges faced by women.
- Better evidence gathering and forensic capacities to help women's access to justice
- Afghanistan passes and then properly implements an effective law on Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW).