



**Bureau for Reconstruction and Development
(BRD)**

Strategy Paper

**Enhancing the Capacity of Civil Society in Human Rights
Advocacy through Networking and Partnership Building in
Afghanistan**



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1. Introduction

Considering the current political, social and economical situation in Afghanistan, weak rule of law and the lack of local governance the protection and promotion of human rights is remained a key challenge, overcoming from this challenges requires a vibrant civil society. The local civil society faced with significant challenges of low capacity and lack of skills in human rights advocacy and community mobilization, low appreciation of their collective strength, limited knowledge and awareness on their role in society and responsibility to the state and the people and also lack of resources for CSOs activities are the factors for the poor record of human rights at the local level in Afghanistan.

Enhancing the awareness of the CSOs role and responsibility, collective strength, development of the local CSOs advocacy skills and facilitating networking and partnership between CSOs will play a crucial role in prompting protecting and advocating human rights in order to improve the human rights situation at the local level.

This paper is the out come of 2 days Networking and Partnership Building Seminar Organized on 29-30 June in Kabul in connection with BRD Civil Society Capacity Building Project, funded by the National Endowment of Democracy (NED).

The paper outlines the current challenges in the way of human rights protection and promotion, the role of civil society in human rights advocacy and community mobilization, current status of CSOs coordination and networking at the local and national level, steps for building networks and partnership among CSO, capacity needs of the CSOs, followed with the recommendations for overcoming of these challenges.

2. Context and Challenges

Afghanistan is a desperately poor, war-ravaged country. The usual challenges of post-war reconstruction are made even more difficult by the continuing insurgency, by the age-old centrifugal forces that have always made Afghanistan hard to govern, by the extreme weakness of modern institutions, and by widespread corruption and lack of rule of law.

During the two decades of war and internal conflict, which human rights violations were arbitrarily committed. These abuses have continued unabated due to the lack of awareness about human rights in the general public, and also on the part of public officials and non-governmental organizations.

Although Afghanistan is now in post-conflict recovery, where dozen people are still killed or wended in the on-going internal conflict in the country, the absence of the security in the majority of rural areas in the country is one of the main constraint toward the reconstruction and development activities and in the result vast number of people continue to live in extreme poverty and many more lack the good health, education or simply the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

Human Rights abuse, killing civilian , poor service delivery, corruption in the government institutions,voilance against women and children, Poor Level of Public Awareness about their Rights and Law, unequal distribution of assistance, lack of participation in local decision making process are the issues and concerns are the serious issues and concern in the provinces of Afghanistan.

The protection and promotion of human rights amongst all members of society is an important and crucial step towards achieving a society that is more democratic and empowers its citizens economically, socially, politically and culturally.

Considering the current context and situation in Afghanistan improving the human rights situation in the country , the primary focus should be on building a vibrant civil society in Afghanistan , who can continuously advocate and promote human rights , build effective partnership with community for overcoming challenges of peace, security and human rights that the country is currently face with.



Building a strong and viable civil society in Afghanistan will contribute greatly in raising the level of public awareness on human rights, changing of individual and social mindsets and behaviors to institutionalize human rights and to replace the culture of war and violence with a culture of peace, participation, democracy and human rights.

Civil society organizations harness the voices of the people, serve as vanguards of human rights, and develop local institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, particularly the poor. Enhancing the capacities of civil society organizations in human rights advocacy will strengthen their resolve to support the victims of human rights abuses and mobilize the people to fully own and participate in the transitional justice process.

3. Current Capacity and Status of CSOs Networking and Coordination

In the past some work has been done for capacity building of the civil society organizations in the provinces, but still the civil society organization functioning in the provinces are not vibrant to address the current human rights concerns and also mobilize community. They are also not aware of their own mandate, role and their collective strength.

There are some networks functioning at the center level at Kabul, and some of the CSOs in provinces has vertical linkages with these networks, but these relation is also very weak and limited, but the horizontal relation and linkages between the civil society organizations in the provinces and districts which is very important for the collective action and community mobilization is not exist at all.

The below diagram shows the existing level of collaboration and coordination among the civil society organization, there is no horizontal relation between these organizations at the local level.

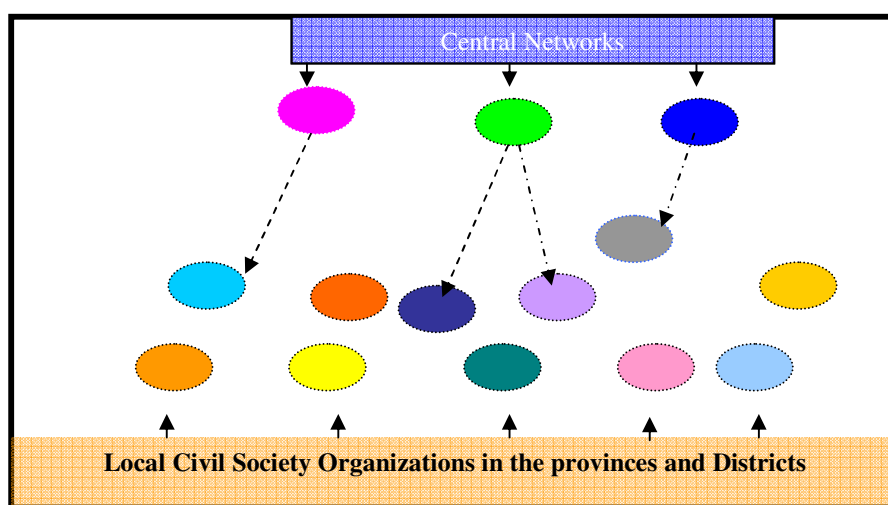


Fig. 1- existing networking and linkage between CSOs at local and national level

The CSOs capacity for effective partnership with the local government institutions and collaboration with local communities, including the lack of awareness on their mandate and responsibilities resulted, increased human rights violations, poor service delivery, Increased corruption in local institutions, lack of participation in the local decision making and absence of basic mechanism for advocacy and protection of human rights at the local level, and poor less support from the communities.

Due to the poor linkages and relation between the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the civil society is another key gap in the way of addressing human rights concern in the local community, where the AIHRC is only working with a limited group of civil society organizations located at the national level, ignoring a broader part of the CSOs at all levels.



Building both vertical and the horizontal relation between the CSOs by networking and Partnership building with parallel institutional and operational capacity will improve collaboration between CSOs, Coordination of activities and prevent duplication , increase capacity and create a strong force at local level for protection promotion of human rights, combat corruption, monitor service delivery, ensure participation in the local decision process and increase the level of awareness of the general public on their rights and ways to protect it.

4. Enhancing CSOs Coordination and Networking

4.1. Advocacy Network Vision

CSOs open network, which monitor, promote and advocate human rights, community demands based on the Islamic principle, national constitution and other laws effective in the country, international conventions ratified by the country, actively engaged in ensuring transparency, accountability, monitoring local service delivery and decision making in collaboration with the local community and local institutions.

4.2. Goal

- To develop the capacity of local CSOs in Human Rights Advocacy and community mobilizations, monitoring the service delivery and promoting community demands.
- To enhance coordination and collaboration through network building between CSOs at local for increasing impact of CSOs activities.
- To create a platform for sharing experiences and integrate CSOs services delivery in the provinces and also ensuring their effective engagement in the local decision making process.

4.3. Structure of Local advocacy Networks

The network structure of the Civil Society organizations will be consist of the members and a lead organization , who will be responsible for internal and external communication of the network, facilitation of meetings of the networks and as required provide guidance for, the network for any collective action , campaign and other activities to be conducted by the network members. The lead organization will selected by the majority of the network members based on the criteria and the required capacity for this task to be carried out on voluntary basis.

The network members will be consist of women groups, professional societies, cultural and media organizations, local NGOs, student and teacher associations, religious and traditional shuras, youth societies based on their interests and agreement with ToR of network.

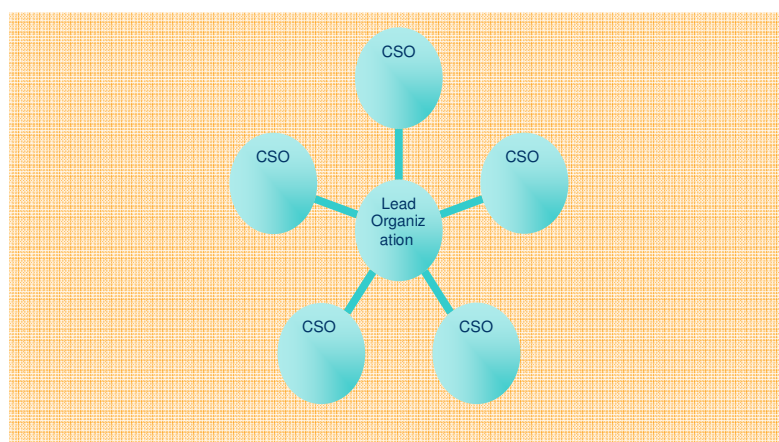


Fig 2: Structure of the Provincial Network



4.4. Linking Local and National Networks

For increasing The support and provision of better access of local networks to the policy advocacy for addressing key policy issues, financial support, active participation in the decision making process at the national level, strengthening the voice of CSOs at the local and National level, it is important to link the CSOs local networks with the existing central networks, or establish a central network in participatory decision making process between the central and local CSOs networks.

The central network will support the local advocacy networks in addressing the policy issues for greater impact at the local level, facilitating and channeling resource for local networks activities, capacity development and also in making their linkages with international and UN Agencies and Human Rights Commission at the national level.

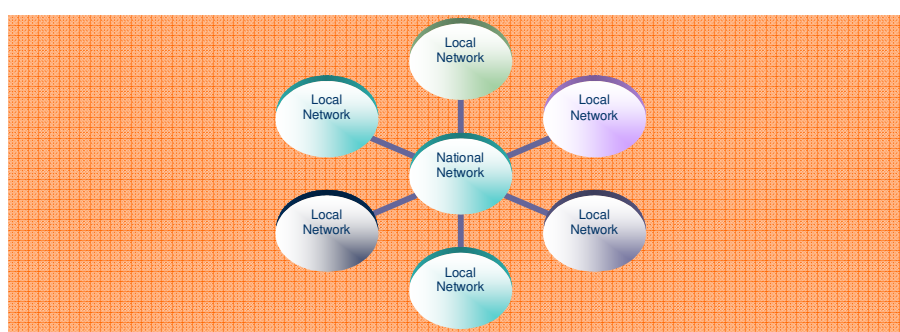


Fig 3. Structure of Local and National Network

4.5. Networks Capacity Development

Creating a vibrant advocacy networks of the civil society organizations in the provinces to effectively engaged in advocacy, community mobilization, monitoring the service delivery, local decision making, transparency, accountability and establishment of effective collaboration with the community, requires more time and extensive resources to be allocated, but as first step the effort should be focused on the following activities:

1. CSOs Awareness from their role and mandate and responsibility.
2. CSOs law Awareness
3. Strategic planning, and advocacy planning
4. Awareness of the National and International instruments which are the basis of the advocacy.
5. Monitoring
6. Networking and partnership Building
7. Advocacy and Community Mobilization.
8. Training methodology
9. National and Regional seminars for sharing the experiences and lesson learnt
10. Access to the resources and linkages with donors and other supporting organizations.
11. Promoting the sense volunteerism among CSOs.

Some of the above outlined needs will be addressed under the current human rights advocacy program, some of these areas can be supported by other support organizations, or may be addressed in the second phase of the project in case, there is no support from other organizations.

4.6. Networks Advocacy planning

After enhancing the networking and partnership between civil society organizations and development their knowledge and skills, next step should be; Advocacy planning by the networks, and this plan should clearly outline the existing human rights concerns and challenges toward addressing those



concerns , objectives and activities out put/ outcome , activities can be conducted on voluntary bases by CSOs and activates which need financial resources, there may be one or two activities in the plan which may requires financial support and resources to allocated.

The completed plans can be shared with International supporting organizations, donor agencies and UN Agencies in order to gain their support for the activities requires financial resources and and will help aware them from the CSOs actions at the local level.

The financial support from the supporting organization for the activities outlined in advocacy plans , should not channeled directly to the advocacy networks , but it should be managed through the facilitating organizations , who can manage the resource properly and financial standard and controls and make sure that allocated resources achieve the planed objective.

5. Conclusion

For development of a sustainable mechanism to promote and protect human rights at the local level , civil society can play significant role if mobilized and integrated, even they can cover broader areas of the local issues such peace building and conflict resolution at the community.

There is interest and willingness among the CSOs for collaboration and partnership to address the problems that community faced with, educate community; the main constraint is the poor capacity and lack of effective coordination and networking among the CSOs and supporting organizations.

6. Recommendations:

1. Urgent action should be taken for building linkages between the CSOs at local and national level, to prepare ground for effective policy advocacy at the national level, create adequate strength for influencing the policy change, monitor performance for improving the services and combat corruption.
2. The current focus of the Afghan Independent Human Right Commission (AIHRC) for working with a limited group CSOs should be changed and their relation should extended to broader CSOs groups at provincial and district level to ensure better coordination and effective collaboration between CSOs and AIHRC for addressing , human rights issues and concerns at the local level.
3. The efforts for addressing the capacity needs of the civil society should be coordinated among the supporting organizations to address the real capacity needs of CSOs with increased impact and achieve tangible results; more efforts of capacity development should be directed to local CSOs in the provinces and districts.
4. The Government of Afghanistan, Donors and UN should ensure CSOs participation in all the decision making process at all level, to facilitate good collaboration with clear role of every stakeholder and ensure addressing the priority needs of the local communities to help bring the country back from the current crises.
5. CSOs capacity building programs should be designed in a way that remove the current dependency and promote the sense of volunteerism among the CSOs.
6. Continues training is required to local CSOs to develop there skills and knowledge on human rights, advocacy, monitoring evaluation, networking and partnership building , community mobilization and governance in order to enhance their technical, professional and institutional capacity to conduct there activities effectively, educate community with increased collaboration at the local and national level.

