

QUICK GUIDE TO ADDRESS WOMEN'S ISSUES DURING THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW ON AFGANISTAN¹

These Guides include:

- A list of issues mentioned in the National Report, the Compilation of official UN Documents and the Summary of Other Stakeholders Submissions, with references to the particular paragraphs in which they can be found.
- The full text of those paragraphs
- A reference to "gaps", that is, issues on which the National Report should/could have applied a gender perspective but failed to do so.
- Suggested questions and recommendations

References in the two working languages of the Council (English and French) have been kept in their original language.

Issues are highlighted, while **recommendations** are in bold and underlined. References from the National Report are *in Italics*.

All women's rights issues (included sexual rights' issues related specifically to women) are referred to in this Guide. Other sexual rights issues are referred to in the Sexual Rights Guides for each state under review

CEDAW ratified, OP-CEDAW not ratified, Palermo Protocol not ratified, Rome Statute ratified.

Gaps

The National Report should/could have applied a gender perspective -that is, make reference to how the issue affects women and men in particular ways- but failed to do so in the following sections: Commission Addressing Observance of Human Rights in Investigation, Interrogation and Detention Stages (23-24), Commission Addressing Problems of Children and Juveniles (24), Civil society human rights institutions(29), Sustainable capacity building (31), Public awareness and consultation (32), Afghan National Development Strategy (42), Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation 2005 (43), National strategies and policies on justice sector (44), National strategy for children at risk (47), Economic, social and cultural rights (49), Right to work (50-51), Right of access to suitable living conditions, food and shelter (53-55), Right to participate in cultural life (61), Rural development (62-63), Right to life (64-65), Media and freedom of expression (67-68), Political and social activities (69-70), Rights of minorities (72), Right to security from torture and cruel treatment (73), Prevention of slavery and human trafficking (74), Right of freedom and personal security (75), Right to citizenship (78), Rights of the disabled (85), Rights of the returnees and the displaced persons (86), Rights to environmental protection (87), Rights of civilians to safety during military operations (88).

ISSUE	N Report	Compilation	Summary
Access to justice		Lack of formal justice mechanisms, including knowledge of rights and access to justice (22)	Legal rights denied as tribalism prevails. Women consulting lawyers instead of traditional customs give rise to prejudices. Need to

¹ These Guides were produced by the Sexual Rights Initiative, a coalition of organizations based in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and North America whose mandate is to advance women's issues broadly and sexual rights issues in the Human Rights Council. For questions, comments, suggestions please contact Alejandra Sardá-Chandiramani at alejandra@mulabi.org

			ensure accordance with international standards (7) Obstacles. Lack of confidence. Prevalence of customary assemblies (21)
Early / forced marriage	Women legal age for marriage is 16 years but there is a high rate of premature / forced marriages(77)	Forced marriage as most extended form of violence against women (31)	57% of girls get married before the age of 16. (27)
Equality and Non discrimination	Legal status (76) Laws and policies to promote women rights (79). Government organs /citizens discriminate against women (71). Obstacles against women rights (81)	Permanence of discriminatory practices based on sex (10 c).Gender disparities (58). Progress for girls and women conditioned by persistence of rooted discrimination/traditions (11)	
Harmful traditional practices		Prevalence of customary law. Practice of <i>baad</i> (21)	Forced /early marriages, <i>walwar</i> , <i>baad</i> , domestic abuse (Para 28)
Illiteracy	300,000 women attending literacy courses (60)		Literacy rates for women (35)
Laws that discriminate against women		Need for revision of family and criminal law / detained women situation. Need for policies to eliminate all forms of violence (60)	Achievements: model marriage contract, revision of women's family law rights, family law and women's rights civil society (47)
Maternal mortality /maternal health	National Health Strategy expects to reduce maternal mortality rates to 50 %, by 2015 (46). High rate of maternal mortality (75)	Access to health care for women remains a concern (41)	Maternal mortality: 1,600 to 1,900 per 100,000 live births (35).
Public and political participation	Constitutional guarantees (80)	No new electoral law adopted, concerns about women's participation in upcoming elections (36)	Social resistance and violence (32)
Reporting to CEDAW	No report submitted since ratification in 2003 (35)		
Reproductive health/rights	High rate of malnutrition. Lack of reproductive health services in clinics, most of births without medical support (57).	Factors contributing to high maternal mortality rates; suggestions to lower them (40)	Factors contributing to high maternal mortality rates; preventative measures weak (37) Some progress in reproductive health services through Basic Package of

			Health Services implementation (38). Lack of access to health services., quality mother and child health care largely unavailable (34).
Rights of girls	Unable to attend school, deaths due to malnutrition or curable diseases, forced to work. Victims of violence, smuggling, exploitation, sexual abuse (84)	Early work, esp. in rural areas, girls working more than boys (37)	
Right to education	National Education Strategy (45). National higher education strategy (48). Compulsory primary education. 1/3 of students are girls. (58). Lack of qualified teachers, low salaries (59). New teachers colleges (60).	Girls and female teachers were attacked with acid by the Taliban to prevent them from going to school (45). Gender gaps and lack of security in schooling. Marriage prevent girls from secondary education (46)	Discriminatory/ unequal treatment of married girls (41). Girls and female teachers face serious security risks. Lack of schools and teachers. Early marriage causing drop out (40)
Right to social security	Guaranteed to women without support but lack of resources to provide social and welfare services, esp. in rural areas (52)		
Right to work	Non discriminatory recruitments policy in the public sector (71).	Need to include discrimination definition in Labour Code. Question about measures taken in labour field (12).	
Rural women	Small loans to promote employment. Big gap between urban and rural living standards (63)		
State Institutions/ Plans of Actions	Ministry of Women's Affairs (19). Independent Human Rights Commission (20). Commission for the Elimination of Violence against Women (28). National Development Strategy (42).	Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (6)	
Violence against Women	Civil society contributions (29)	Severe violence and honour killings (17).	High rates of domestic violence. Forced and under-

/Gender Violence		Lack of protection for victims and witnesses. Lack of specific legislation. Customary law criminalizes victims. Reporting, investigation and prosecution of rape cases (18). Criminalization of victims (19)	age marriage, physical abuse, rape, sexual harassments, trafficking, <i>bad dadan</i> , <i>honour killing</i> 12). Women who flee abusive marriages arrested (27)
Women Human Rights Defenders			Women's human rights defenders subjected to threats, attacks, arbitrary detentions, risk of life (16)

Access to justice

The 2004 Common Country Assessment (CCA) report noted that women's () rights are particularly affected by the lack of functioning **formal justice mechanisms** at every stage, including **knowledge of rights, access to justice**, and trial and detention. (Para 22, Compilation)

The central government's decreasing role in rural regions, coupled with **increased tribalism**, means that in rural areas women's **legal rights are frequently denied**, including the right to **legal representation and due process**. The International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Rights and Democracy) noted that women seeking justice through the official system are also facing problems. There is still persistent **prejudice against women who choose to consult lawyers** rather than resort to traditional customs. () Rights and Democracy further noted that **judges also have a biased attitude** toward women seeking justice through the formal justice system. (Para 7, Summary)

Amnesty International (AI) noted that citizens **lack confidence in the formal justice institutions** and regard them as slow, ineffective and often corrupt. Most Afghans, and particularly women, have difficulty accessing courts and legal assistance; most cannot afford court fees or the transportation costs for attending often distant courts. Traditional **community-based assemblies** handle an estimated 80 per cent of all disputes in Afghanistan, but they **operate in isolation of state courts** and without benefit of minimal standards of due process or evidence (Para 21, Summary)

Early / forced marriage

*Marriage age in the Afghan Civil Law for boys is 18 years and **for girls 16 years**. Despite this, the old traditions affect marriage and are a big challenge in this area. Approximately, **over 40 per cent of marriages are premature or simply a forced marriage**. Therefore, serious problems still prevail in ensuring the realization of this right (Para 77, NR)*

The High Commissioner made reference to a 2006 Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) study, which indicated that the largest category of cases of violence against women consisted of **forced marriage**. She stated that there is a failure by officials to bring about redress for forced marriage. Nevertheless, she made reference to a **then signed protocol on the eradication of child forced marriages** (Para 31, Compilation). AI noted the Afghan Civil Code, according to which **the legal age of marriage** for girls is 16 or 15 with the consent of her father or competent court. However, because of customary practices, approximately **57 per cent of girls marry before the age of 16**. (Para 27, Summary).

Equality and non-discrimination

According to the Constitution of Afghanistan, all citizens have equal rights and responsibilities before law without any consideration of their () **gender** () (Para 76, NR).

Article 22 of the Constitution of Afghanistan stipulates "discrimination and favouritism of any kind is prohibited" () Despite the provisions of the law, there are still discrimination **against women** () by some government organs and some citizens (Para 71, NR). During last seven years Afghanistan has achieved **great success in** reference to **ensuring Women's Rights**. The formation of Ministry of Women Affairs in the government structure, joining the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, **exerting equal rights** of men and women in the Constitution, presence and active participation of women in social, economic and cultural spheres, all are considered major gains in such a relatively short span of time (Para 79, NR)

Although the Constitution formally recognizes equality and the principle of non-discrimination, the High Commissioner noted that, in reality, **discriminatory practices based on sex**, () exist throughout Afghanistan (Para 10, Compilation). A 2007 UNODC report noted that despite progress made, women continue to face enormous **social, economic, security and human rights** challenges (Para 58, Compilation)

*Insecurity in some provinces, culture of **immunity from punishment**, low awareness of women's rights particularly **among women**, **old and harmful traditional beliefs**, and lack of **job opportunities** are among pressing challenges that women rights is facing in Afghanistan today for the improvement of which, the government should take effective measures (Para 81, NR)*

While the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner respectively acknowledged some progress on women's economic advancement and that women and girls had continued to make gains in the workplace, education and government, the High Commissioner noted that **progress remains tentative**, because of pervasive social, political and economic discrimination against women, as well as insecurity and the persistence of **customary practices** (Para 11, Compilation)

Harmful traditional practices

The High Commissioner noted that **customary law** prevails, where traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are frequently used in place of formal court systems in criminal and non-criminal cases. These mechanisms **often fail to respect even the most basic human rights standards**, especially as regards women and girls. A particular issue of concern is the practice of *baad*, by which girls as young as 7 years of age are given away to settle feuds and murder cases (Para 21, Compilation).

Rights and Democracy further noted that numerous practices inconsistent with women's rights are widespread in the country. The most challenging issues include **forced marriages**, **walwar** (a practice whereby the groom pays compensation to the bride's family for expenses incurred in caring for the bride from birth to marriage), the practice of **baad** (literally, "blood money," whereby a woman is given away by her family as compensation for a crime committed by one of its members to the family of the victim), **child marriages**, and **domestic abuse** (Para 28, Summary)

Illiteracy

() *It should be stressed that a total of **300,000 women are attending literacy courses** in different provinces of the country. In 2008, more than 300,000 literacy students, **75 percent of them women**, have gained literacy (Para 60, NR).*

AI noted that () the literacy rate for **adult women is 21 per cent** compared to 36 per cent for men (Para 35, Summary).

Laws that discriminate against women

Rights and Democracy also noted the following as achievements: a **model marriage contract** was recently accepted by Afghanistan's Supreme Court and is currently being disseminated within the country as widely as possible; 2) there is currently a substantive and substantial ongoing dialogue within Afghanistan's civil society on **women's family law rights** which promises to be conducive to changes compliant with women's rights; and 3) an active **civil society on family law and women's rights** has emerged in Afghanistan and already shows signs of sustainability (Para 47, Summary).

In 2005, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women **made recommendations with respect to inter alia review of family and criminal law; women in detention; and prioritizing in public policy women's human rights and the elimination of violence against women** (Para 60, Compilation).

Maternal mortality/maternal health

Based on ANDS objectives, the **National public health and nutrition strategy** was adopted in 2008. The anticipated outcomes of this strategy are () to **reduce maternal mortality ratio () to 50 per cent by 2015 from the baseline.** (Para 46, NR). **Afghanistan has the worst ratio as far as health indicators are concerned: () high mortality especially among mothers: 1,600 deaths per 100,000 live births** (Para 57, NR).

The High Commissioner reported that Afghanistan continues to suffer from **high mortality rates**. She also underlined that, despite some progress, provision of and access to adequate health care, particularly for women and children, remains a serious concern. (Para 41, Compilation).

AI noted that **Maternal mortality** is one of the highest in the world at an estimated **1,600 to 1,900 per 100,000 live births** (Para 35, Summary).

Public and political participation

() *The Constitution in article 83 ensures the presence of at least two female deputies from each province to the Parliament. Also, at least 25 per cent of the Parliament must be women, currently women make up 28 per cent of the National Assembly. Similarly, in the judiciary, out of 1,652 judges working in military and civil courts, a total of 189 are women. This makes up 5.4 per cent of all the present judges in the country. Likewise out of 1,095 prosecutors employed by Office of Attorney General, 103 of them are women, which make 9.4 per cent of the prosecutors. Among civil servants out of 221,684 state employees 47790 are women (excluding ministry of interior and defence)* (Para 80, NR).

As reported by the Secretary-General, the National Assembly **was not able to adopt a new electoral law**. In view of the coming elections, the High Commissioner expressed various concerns, notably at the **participation of women**, freedom of movement due to hostilities, the vetting of candidates, and the complaints processes (Para 36, Compilation)

AI noted that the last four years have witnessed increased participation by women in politics and public life. However, the conditions under which Afghan women exercise **political rights remain constrained by social prejudice and violence** (Para 32, Summary)

Reporting to CEDAW

The GoA ratified this convention in 2003; however, up to now **no report has been submitted** (Para 35, NR)

Reproductive health/rights

Malnutrition is regarded as one of the most serious public health challenges in Afghanistan that requires safe water and good diet, which is not accessible to all. () There are only 17 doctors and 48 health workers for every 100,000 individuals in the country. 80 per cent of health clinics in districts are ill-equipped, and **short of reproductive health services**, sufficient medical personnel and facilities. Over 70 per cent of births take place at homes **without medical support or attendance**. Only 20 per cent, mostly complicated births are referred to hospitals (Para 57, NR).

A 2007 WHO brief indicated that the lack of physical infrastructure impedes the improvement of health. Also, the **low status** given to women, low level of water supply and sanitation coverage, extremely poor hygiene and environmental health shortcomings contribute to high infant and child mortality and morbidity. () UNICEF informed that a **substantial long-term investment** to strengthen the health system is needed while making efforts to increase **access to high impact in un-reached areas** and addressing neonatal deaths (Para 40, Compilation)

World Vision Afghanistan (WWA) noted that there is limited access to quality health care throughout the country. Infant malnutrition and the **poor nutritional status** of women are major contributors to high early **death rates**. Insufficient training and **lack of physical infrastructure** impairs the accessibility and the quality of health care services. There is a large gap between health care facilities that are available to the **urban and rural** populations of Afghanistan. Remote areas are hard to service because of the lack of roads, electricity, and skilfully-trained health workers. **Preventative health measures are weak** due to poor information and substandard levels of hygiene and nutritional practices. These constraints similarly reduce the effectiveness of the health care system in controlling communicable diseases (Para 37, Summary).

Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) noted that universal access to quality services is a **primary means** to reproductive health that the Afghanistan Government is committed to providing through the Ministry of Public Health. () The Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan has made some progress to expand the **Basic Package of Health Services** to around 90 per cent of the population. To date, according to SRI, the implementation of these programmes has made a demonstrable difference (Para 38, Summary)

In the latest survey on socio-economic rights, conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), **15 per cent of** respondents in **urban areas** and **30 per cent in rural areas** have said that they do not have access to **health services**. Quality mother and child health care is mostly **unavailable**; resulting in still high maternal and child mortality rate (Para 34, Summary)

Rights of girls

() Afghan children, **primarily girls**, still are faced with great challenges. For example, millions of children mostly in conflict provinces **can not attend schools**. Daily, hundreds of children are **dying from malnutrition and curable diseases** and 35 per cent of these losses emanates from **waterborne diseases**. Due to growing poverty of their parents, yet, thousands of children go to labour markets, work in small plants or in farms. Children also are subject to different forms of violence, such as **smuggling** or abduction, exploitation, or **sexual abuse** (Para 84, NR)

UNICEF referred to findings of a 2003 survey indicating that 24.3 per cent of children aged between **7 and 14** years were working, that **girls work more than boys** and that there is more child labour **in rural** than urban areas (Para 37, Compilation).

Right to education

The National Education Strategy was adopted in 2007 on the basis of ANDS benchmarks. This strategy has been prepared to meet by 2020 the educational objectives set out in Millennium development Goals (MDG) (). These goals include: increasing the **level of girls' enrolment and**

school retention, incorporate *human rights concepts* (Para 45, NR). The National higher education strategy was adopted for 2007-2013, on the basis of which one hundred thousand students, *30 per cent of them girls*, will be enrolled in the universities. () This strategy provides grounds for the increase in the attendance of girls to universities () (Para 48, NR).

Primary education is compulsory until ninth grade. Student population which reached to one million during the Taliban and *was limited only for boys*, now in 2008 exceeds six million, *one third of which are girls*. It should be noted that during the Taliban all school curricula was confined only to religious subjects. (Para 58, NR). Serious challenges lies ahead of education sector in Afghanistan. For example, () *shortage of qualified teachers, especially female teachers*, *shortage of financial and technical resources leading to low salary* for teachers (Para 59, NR). In order to alleviate shortage of qualified teachers in the country, a total of nine *teachers colleges* have been established throughout the country (Para 60, NR)

In 2009, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict expressed grave concern about the increase in the number of *child victims of attacks* against schools by Taliban insurgents who deny children the right to education. She deplored *the throwing of acid* to prevent *girl children* and *female teachers* from going to school (Para 45, Compilation). UNESCO informed that in terms of access to education and of *reducing gender disparities*, Afghanistan has made significant progress during the last years. UNICEF noted that there are still *enormous gender gaps* and that *lack of security* is a major challenge. The High-Commissioner noted that *early marriage* also tends to deprive girls of the opportunity to receive secondary education (Para 46, Compilation)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that despite a presidential decree guaranteeing *married girls' right to attend school*, in April 2008 the Ministry of Education reinstated a policy directive ordering schools to *separate married girls from other students* and provide separate classrooms for them. There is no such policy for married boys, and this discriminatory directive may result in pushing married girls out of the educational system. (Para 41, Summary). AI noted that boys are twice as likely as girls to complete primary school, and this difference widens significantly at higher levels of education. According to AIHRC, access to education is hampered by an ever-increasing insecurity, including *assassination and intimidation of female teachers and students*. () girls are particularly vulnerable and constitute *only 35 per cent of students*. *Lack of girl's schools* is another factor as currently only 15 per cent of schools have been reserved for girls. HRW noted similar concerns and noted that even in areas free from armed conflict, girls continue to face *immense obstacles to education*, such as a lack of girls' schools and transport, *fear of sexual harassment and violence* while en route to school, and *early marriage resulting in drop out*. The severe shortage of qualified female teachers outside of urban areas has not been adequately addressed (Para 40, Summary)

Right to social security

The state has guaranteed the right of the retired and should provide necessary assistance and support to the elderly, women without family support, among others (). Despite all the efforts, the GoA does not have the ability to provide to social security due to shortage of resources and facilities. (Para 52, NR).

Right to work

Non-discriminatory policy in public service recruitments is one of the most important aspects of the GoA's agenda (Para 71, NR)

In 2008, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations asked the Government inter alia to include in the new Labour Code a definition of discrimination, in accordance with Article 1 of the ILO Convention No. 11146 and to

indicate the measures taken to promote equal access to vocational training and employment and occupation of women () (Para 12, Compilation)

Rural women

The GoA has tried to establish 22,000 village development councils through the National Solidarity Program. Also, it provides rural services, drinking water for 6 million people, () creating employment and sustainable livelihood through small loans to 700,000 persons, 65 percent of whom are women.. Despite all, there is still a big difference in living standards in urban and rural areas which requires balanced growth for villages (Para 63, NR).

State Institutions/Plans of Actions

In order to implement reforms in legal and judicial sectors, the GoA has adopted several national programs including: () establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs as a human rights protecting mechanism for women (Para 19, NR). Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was established based on Article 58 of the Constitution, () AIHRC is also promoting rights () of women(), observing cases of human rights violations, transitional justice and raising human rights awareness (Para 20, NR). The Commission for the Elimination of Violence against Women was established in 2005 to address violations against women within the five year strategic working plan of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (Para 28, NR).

The Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was approved by President of Afghanistan on 21 April 2008 for the implementation of a series of priorities, programs, and projects envisaged for the years 2008-2013.. According to the second Pillar of the ANDS: Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights, certain benchmarks should be met among which are: () gender equality, promoting the political participation of women in state and non-state activities, and implementation of action plan for development of women at national level by the year 2010, including providing legal privileges for women in the law. Based on these benchmarks the GoA will allocate a minimum 35 per cent participation in vocational training, a minimum of 20 per cent employment opportunities, and will lower the gender disparity for ensuring access to justice (Para 42, NR)

The Secretary-General noted that implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) has begun but that further progress will depend on political will, the availability of resources and implementation capacity. (Para 6 Compilation)

Violence against Women/Gender Violence

The civil society has performed effectively and advocated in incorporating human rights standards into laws, particularly (), law on prevention of violence in families, family law, draft law on addressing the juvenile violations () (Para 29, NR).

In 2005, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences reported that despite a number of significant developments, the situation of women remains dramatic, and severe violence against them is all-pervasive. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions stated that honour killings continue to be widespread and numerous (Para 17, Compilation).

The Secretary-General mentioned the insufficient protection for victims of or witnesses to sexual violence and the low level of cases being prosecuted, notably due to fear of violent retaliation and to the lack of specific legislation in line with CRC. In 2008, the Secretary-General noted that in the system of administration of justice, the criminalization of women who have been victims of gender-based violence and gender discrimination in the application of customary law continues to be a major concern. The High Commissioner highlighted that there were signs of increasing willingness on the part of victims to report rape, and of the authorities

to investigate and prosecute some cases with high profile cases in 2008 (Para 18, Compilation). The High Commissioner () noted that victims, particularly of sexual offences, often find themselves accused and detained illegally on charges of adultery or elopement (Para 19, Compilation).

AI stated that women in Afghanistan suffer from high rates of domestic violence and do not have recourse to legal protection. AIHRC also noted that women are subjected to numerous forms of physical and psychological violence, such as forced and under-age marriage, physical abuse, rape and other forms of sexual harassments, trafficking, bad dadan, honour killing and other forms of violence (Para 12, Summary). Women who seek to flee abusive marriages are often detained and prosecuted for alleged offences like "home escape" or "moral" crimes that are not provided for in the Penal Code (Para 27, Summary)

Women Human Rights Defenders

Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FL) noted that human rights defenders (HRDs) in Afghanistan are subjected to threats, intimidation, harassment, surveillance, arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances and killings. HRDs working in the area of women's rights and transitional justice as well as independent journalists face particular risks as a result of their work. () The perpetrators are both state and non state actors (Para 16, Summary).

. Suggested questions and recommendations

- Recommend that Afghanistan concentrates efforts in building its legal system in such a way that it can guarantee every citizen, and particularly women's access to justice, inter alia by introducing minimal standards of due process and evidence, as well as sensitization on gender issues, in the community-based and the official system.
- Ask Afghanistan what measures have been implemented as a result of the signed protocol on the eradication of child forced marriage /Recommend that Afghanistan takes all the necessary steps to eradicate the practice of early and forced marriage, including by raising the legal age for marriage up to 18, conducting awareness-raising efforts with traditional leaders, prosecuting those parents responsible for early/forced marriages of their daughters, and providing incentives for families to send girls to school.
- Recommend that Afghanistan bans traditional practices that are harmful to women and girls - like *walwar* and *baad*- and implements an intensive program of sensitization in traditional communities to eradicate those practices.
- While congratulating Afghanistan on the efforts already made towards equality in marriage, recommend to speed up the reforms to family law that will make the country's legislation compliant with women's rights standards.
- While congratulating Afghanistan for adopting its National Public Health and Nutrition strategy in 2008, ask what steps have already been taken to reduce maternal mortality rates, what progress has already been observed (if any), what obstacles have surfaced and how are they being confronted, and how is civil society -and particularly women's groups- involved in these efforts. /Recommend that Afghanistan continues its current efforts to reduce maternal mortality rates and prioritizes making a substantial long-term investment with the help of the international community to strengthen the health system while making efforts to increase

access to high impact in un-reached areas and address socio-cultural factors that stop women from accessing pre and post natal care.

- Recommend that Afghanistan makes serious efforts to eradicate child labour, including sensitivity and awareness training for rural and traditional communities as well as incentives to send and keep children in school, particularly girls.
- Ask Afghanistan what security measures are being implemented to protect girls and female teachers in areas where they are being attacked in schools, and recommend that Afghanistan takes as a priority the protection of girls and female teachers and implements all necessary measures for their security, including awareness-raising so their own communities will devise ways to protect them.
- Recommend that Afghanistan repeals the Ministry of Education's directive that separates married girls from other students (and not married boys) and instead implements programs to ensure that married girls will continue their education, including awareness-raising with their families and communities and incentives.
- Recommend that Afghanistan issues clear directives to avoid criminalization of victims of sexual violence and/or abusive marriages by eliminating all legal ambiguities on the matter, affirming the primacy of the legal over the customary system for justice, prosecuting the perpetrators and offering assistance to victims, and conducting awareness-raising initiatives in the communities.
- Recommend that Afghanistan takes immediate measures to provide protection to human rights defenders and particularly to those working for women's rights.

Sexual Rights Initiative:

- The Afghan Government needs to rapidly expand its capacity to provide basic services to the population throughout the country and implement measurable improvements in fighting corruption, upholding justice and the rule of law and promoting respect for the human rights of all Afghans.
- The Afghan Government should give priority to strengthen provincial institutions - including civil administration, police, prisons and judiciary. These institutions need to have appropriate legal frameworks and appointment procedures; trained staff; and adequate remuneration, infrastructure, and auditing capacity.
- Reforming the justice system needs to be a priority for the Afghan Government and the international community. The aim will be to ensure equal, fair and transparent access to justice for all based upon written codes with fair trials and enforceable verdicts. Measures will include completing legislative reforms for the public as well as the private sector; building the capacity of judicial institutions and personnel; promoting human rights and legal awareness; and rehabilitation.
- The government need to take necessary steps to improve coordination between NATO and Afghan National Army during military operations to reduce the civilian casualties to lowest level.
- To open a dialogue on culture and human rights, to guarantee that no human rights violations will be perpetrated under the name of culture or tradition.

- To take all necessary steps to improve the training and skills of current health workers and to develop and implement a campaign and plan of action to actively involve women in the health care professions, including through special bonuses, incentives and scholarships.
- The Ministry of Public Health and the Health Sector Agencies must take all necessary steps toward improving post abortion care services and encouraging families to use the available family planning services in order to avoid unwanted pregnancies that are mostly ended with unsafe abortions.

Amnesty International

- To ensure that the extent that traditional assemblies make quasi-judicial rulings, their procedures and decisions are in accordance with international standards of fairness (Para 7, Summary)