



انستیتیوت جامعه مدنی افغانستان  
د افغانستان د مدنی ټولنو انستیتیوت  
Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society

هفته ملی جامعه مدنی  
۷-۵ سرطان، ۱۳۹۷  
د افغانستان د مدنی ټولنی ملی اوبی  
۷-۵ چنگاښ، ۱۳۹۷  
**Afghanistan National Civil Society Week**  
26 - 28 June, 2018



# NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK 2018

26th-28th JUNE 2018

ARG HOTEL  
HERAT, AFGHANISTAN



UNDERSTANDING, COOPERATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY



# ABOUT AICS

The Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS) was established in 2014 to support a credible and competent civil society sector in Afghanistan by linking CSOs, donors, government and capacity building services through culturally appropriate certification schemes. AICS encourages the growth of a vibrant civil society, promoting pluralism and participatory, non-discriminatory development in Afghanistan. AICS' main objective are to raise credibility of the civil society sector by certifying local organizations against locally defined and internationally recognized standards; systematize capacity building efforts of local organizations by coordinating initiatives against measurable performance indicators; strengthen the role of civil society in Afghanistan's development through collective efforts of policy dialogue and active engagement with government, donors, the private sector and the broader civil society sector; and provide a channel for resources for civil society by strengthening philanthropic and corporate social responsibility efforts.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

The Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS) celebrated the National Civil Society Week 2018 on 26th – 28th June 2018 in Herat province. This event which is unprecedented in its kind in Afghanistan was participated by more than 150 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), civil society activists, government officials, media, academia and private sector representatives from across the country. The objective was to bring together CSOs and their partners, from different regions, provinces and backgrounds and provide them with an open space for reflection, learning and networking on issues related to the enabling environment for CSOs and CSOs development in Afghanistan. This event was designed to:

- Connect the different sources and forces of citizen action and encourage both formal and informal networks;
- Share tools and experiences for enhancing civic engagement and civil society development;
- Celebrate inspiring examples of social change by CSOs, local heroes or change agents and by sharing success stories.

The first day of the event on 26th June started with the welcoming remarks by Mr. Zakir Stanikzai, AICS Executive Director.

Subsequently, Mr. Baryali Omerzai, founding member of AICS and Director of Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) delivered his invaluable speech about goals and objectives of AICS's establishment and talked about importance of the certification program. Then, Mr. Jawid Amin, AKF representatives conveyed message of S. Jalaluddin Shah, Director of AKF Afghanistan and acknowledged AICS's endeavor for strengthening the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. H.E. Mohammad Asif Rahimi, governor of Herat province was also the key speaker of the event, Mr. Rahimi talked about the pivotal role of CSOs in the development process of Afghanistan and said that there are certain shortcomings in CSOs' work that will be addressed as time passes by because the Afghan civil society is still nascent. Following that, Ms. Rubi Ajanee, Director of Oxfam Afghanistan, talked about the donor community's support to CSOs and asserted how important role CSOs have been playing in the recent years in the country. At last, Mr. Abdullah Ahmadi, Chairperson of CS-JWG Secretariat, made his remarks about CS-JWG, its combination and how it represents CSOs in joint meetings and event with the government to support CSOs role.

The National Civil Society Week (2018) was formed of five panel discussions, two international presentations, three success stories, and presentations by OGP secretariat, Innovation for Change and AICS about the Certification Program. Also, the event consisted a theatre show and sightseeing to two of historical places of Herat. Furthermore, eight newly certified CSOs were granted their certificates by AICS. At the end, the sum up panel, summed up the three day event and each of the panel members that came from different backgrounds and organizations, provided specific recommendations to be followed up in future by facilitation of AICS.

The Aga Khan Foundation in partnership with Counterpart International supported the event, with support from the USAID-funded Afghanistan Civic Engagement Program. This report summarizes the event, including commitments made by all partners, consensus on common challenges, need for establishing and promoting cross-sector partnerships, and implementing the agreed priorities throughout the country.



FIRST DAY

**NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY  
WEEK – 26TH JUNE, 2018**

The program began with recitation of verses of Holy Qur'an. Subsequently, the national anthem was performed live by the Arman e Delha – an orchestra group based in Herat. The official commencement of the program was made by the invaluable speech of Mr. Zakir Stanikzai, Executive Director of AICS. Mr. Stanikzai welcomed the participants and talked about the National Civil Society Week (NCSW) objectives. He said “We have always talked about coordination among CSOs but there is no constant coordination mechanism that can bring CSOs together to discuss the common challenges and approaches. The National Civil Society Week is one of those platforms that bring CSOs together for better coordination, cross learning, networking and celebration.”

He conveyed the valuable message of Mr. Jalal, Director of AKF Afghanistan that said “These kind of programs pave the ground for better coordination among all stakeholders including the donor community and it is the platform that highlights challenges such as budget deficiency, social gaps, insecurity and challenges in terms of networking. The National Civil Society Week will pave the path for transparency, professionalism and sustainable support for CSOs.”



Following that, Mr. Baryalai Omerzai, Director of Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau (ANCB) and founding member of AICS, delivered his remarks about AICS's mission and objectives and how AICS has paved the ground to support the enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan. He emphasized the undeniable importance of the certification program that is to run for the first time in Afghanistan and said that we hope we reach our deliverables as per the specified timeline.

H.E. Mohammad Asif Rahimi, Governor of Herat province welcomed the participants from across Afghanistan who came to Herat to attend the National Civil Society Week 2018. He thanked AICS team for their tireless efforts. Mr. Rahimi then continued “The civil society concept is new in Afghanistan. Nevertheless CSOs and civil society activists have been remarkable. There are some challenges and unlike we identify the challenges we cannot offer solutions. CSOs are actively involved in major issues of the society and they have brought positive changes. We will reach nowhere if we always talk about shortcomings without admiring the achievements.”

Mr. Jawid Amin on behalf of the Agha Khan Foundation (AKF) then welcomed the participants and thanked AICS for conducting such an amazing and unprecedented program.



Ms. Ruby Ajanee, Head of Oxfam Afghanistan delivered her remarks. She acknowledged the hard work of AICS for successfully conducting the NCSW 2018. Ms. Ajanee said that role of civil society is complicated and more important because Afghanistan faces and experiences the dichotomy of democratization and conflict altogether. In some places CSOs conduct campaign and advocacy for individuals' rights and in some places they deliver the basic services. So far, CSOs have been playing important role in literacy and education services, women's rights and raising awareness about environmental changes.

She stressed that the donor community, apart from funding CSOs, can help them in building their capacity. She said that AICS's certification program is key to bringing transparency and identifying the gaps. She congratulated the grass root CSOs who have obtained certificates from AICS with the financial support of Oxfam Afghanistan.



He talked about the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that has been signed between CS-JWG and the Afghan Government; "the MoU has not been implemented and we are revising it to make it more practical." Mr. Ahmadi added "One of the key challenges in Afghanistan is that there is no precise definition of the term civil society. It causes misuse from the name of civil society. Unfortunately, government, warlords and political parties have their own civil society groups through which they pursue their political and personal aims." He suggested that CSOs must come together and seriously work for some common objectives such as peace, elections and development.

Followed by the key speakers' remarks, the first panel discussion of "Understanding Civil Society" took place.



Mr. Abdullah Ahmadi, Chairperson of the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG) was one of the key speakers of the event and at first he provided brief information about CS-JWG that is formed of 15 networks and 550 CSOs from all over the country. CS-JWG possesses almost 1600 indirect members and it works for democratization, advocacy, good governance, policy-making and representing the Afghan civil society in international platforms.



# First Panel Discussion



## Understanding Civil Society (definition, nature, history, characteristics and challenges in understanding)

Ms. Zakia Adeli, PhD and university lecturer, defined the term Civil Society from Hegel's point of view. According to Hegel, civil society refers to the sector between family and government. She added that civil society is different from the political society because the latter fights for political power. She said that Civil Society Organizations can obtain grants and funds from outside resources but political organizations cannot receive foreign funds because such funding will be considered as political interference of other countries. She suggested that CSOs should not merely work based on projects designed by donors, they must stick to moral principles as well and address the real needs of the Afghan people. Following that, Mr. Wase Samim, University lecturer and religious scholar, talked about the religious perceptions about civil society. He emphasized that we must knot the tie between the traditional society and values with the civil society which is thought to be a new concept in Afghanistan. He said that there are no contradictions between Islam and its values and the civil society.

Panelist, Ms. Hassina Sherjan, Director of Aid Afghanistan for Education (AA4E) defined civil society from her point of view as one who has been working in civil society for several years. She said that CSOs are like a bridge that connect people with the government and she reiterated the important role of community based civil society groups. She said that one of the key weaknesses of the CSOs is that they are immensely donor driven. CSOs build strong relationships with people they cannot initiate community based funding.

### Panelists:

- Abdul Qadir Salehi, Religious Scholar
- Zakia Adeli, University Lecturer - Hassina Sherjan, Director of Aid Afghanistan for Education
- Sajja Behgam, Senior Advisor on Women and Youth Affairs, Office of Chief Executive
- Moderator: Jawid Sahkib, Civil Society Activist

Ms. Sajja Behgam, Senior Advisor on Women and Youth Affairs to Office of the Chief Executive, then emphasized the healthy relationship between government and CSOs. She said that CSOs should stand beside the government to support and monitor. She suggested that CSOs should come up with policy proposals and they should offer written suggestions to the government. Ms. Behgam reiterated that CSOs should act impartial and represent all not a specific ethnicity or sect.

The panel discussion concluded that financial sustainability is the major challenge for CSOs. In other countries, CSOs are driven by volunteers, but in Afghanistan, people join CSOs for income. There should be more focus on funding generated through indigenous resources. Besides, cultural debility and lack of commitment happens to be other challenges that hinder formation and growth of a thriving civil society.

One of the participants said that must differ the real civil society activists from fake activists. There are people in the name of civil society activists who stand behind certain candidates for the upcoming elections and campaign for them. We must work on mechanisms that does not allow such people to represent the Afghan civil society.



# Second Panel Discussion



## Coordination and Cooperation between CSOs and the Government Panelists

Coordination between CSOs and the government is a key issue. Ministry of Economy (MoE) registers and monitors NGOs and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) registers and monitors associations and the Directorate of Civil Society Affairs in the Administrative Office of the President links CSOs directly with the president. Besides, the Civil Society Joint Working Group (CS-JWG) is another linkage point of CSOs with the government. Mr. Hakim Gul Ahmadi, Senior Adviser to MoEc said that - approximately 2076 local NGOs and 1277 international NGOs are registered with this ministry and MoEc monitors their projects time to time. MoEc is there to monitor and facilitate and CSOs should obey the law and better coordinate with MoEc.

Mr. Abdullah Ahmadi, Chairperson of CS-JWG, said that CS-JWG mainly works on advocacy and monitoring the government. CS-JWG represents CSOs in important governmental summits and meetings. Though CS-JWG has signed MoU with the Afghan Government but mostly this MoU has not been applied in practice. Mr. Ahmadi, talked about the important role of CSOs in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) that consists 17 members of the Afghan Civil Society. Mr. Ahmadi emphasized that CSOs' role in national and international summits must not remain symbolic. He added that government should strengthen its partnership with CSOs and create conducive environment that enables them to deliver the services to the public in a better way. CSOs must be given meaningful involvement in key political processes (e.g. peace process), rule of law (e.g. access to information), and policy formulation (e.g. Electoral Law).

Ghulam Mohammad Rahmani, Provincial Director of Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in Herat, acknowledged the importance of coordination and cooperation between CSOs and the government and added: "CSOs convey people's needs and necessities to government and when government responds,

### Panelists:

- Hafiz Fayaz, Director Civil Society Directorate in President Office
- Hakim Gul Ahmadi, Advisor to NGO Coordination Directorate in Ministry of Economy
- Sayed Ghulam Moh Rahmani, Provincial Director of the Ministry of Justice
- Abdullah Ahmadi CSJWG Representative
- Abdullah Ahmadi CSJWG Representative
- Moderator: Mirwais Wardak, Managing Director of Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO)

CSOs are there to monitor whether the response is right or not. In case, government responds better, CSOs will convey good feedback and in case of improper response, CSOs can criticize the government until it brings the required changes." Mr. Hafiz Fayaz, Director of Civil Society Affairs Directorate at AoP, thanked AICS for its successful conduction of the NCSW 2018 and said: "Our directorate closely works with both CSOs and CS activists and we are regularly in touch with the secretariat of CS-JWG. Recently, in coordination with CS-JWG we did the advocacy to give part to CSOs in public policy making and strategy development and luckily the President of Afghanistan has accepted the suggestion." Mr. Fayaz said that president has instructed all the high council in his office to involve CSOs in their meetings as well. According to Mr. Fayaz, CS-JWG has recently submitted a comprehensive anti-corruption plan to the government of Afghanistan. The panel discussion was followed by participants' comments and questions that were addressed by panel members accordingly. One of the participants said that the lengthy and corrupt process of registration and reporting to relevant government administrations, avoids any attempt of better coordination from both sides. He suggested that government should ease the processes.



The first day of the NCSW 2018 concluded with a spectacular theatre show by Ravi Theatre and Cinema. The main subject of the show was about fraud in elections and the show conveyed important messages about citizen responsibilities to fight against corruption and fraud in elections. Please see the complete video of this show in AICS

SECOND DAY

**NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY  
WEEK – 27TH JUNE, 2018**

# Third Panel Discussion



## Coordination among CSOs in Afghanistan

Mr. Rafiq Shaheer, Director of Shura –e- Mutakhasisan Herat, thanked AICS for conducting the first ever NCSW in Afghanistan. Mr. Shaheer said that unlike CSOs understand their responsibilities and tasks, they cannot create better coordination among themselves. He added “After 17 years of function with all the international support we have had, still CSOs do not know what their real prophecy is and they cannot define themselves.” Mr. Shaheer said that one of the main tasks of CSOs is to support the political system in the country as long as it is democratic. He briefed two major challenges that taints better coordination among CSOs, one is the unhealthy rivalries and the second is the formation of ethnic and sect based organizations and networks. He added that the structure of the networks mainly centers on Kabul-based NGOs, without strong direct connections among regional or smaller, local CSOs.” At last, Mr. Shaheer acknowledged that NCSW and other similar event are good opportunities to create coordination among CSOs.

Baryalai Omerzai, Director of Afghan NCOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB), talked about formation history of coordination bodies and talked about the role of the large coordination bodies in Afghanistan. Mr. Omerzai said that unfortunately, coordinate bodies become more active and coordinate better only when any international opportunity appears such as international conferences. He emphasized the important role of CS-JWG and said that according to the newly developed strategic plan of CS-JWG which is meant to be applied for 5 years, CS-JWG has to work on better coordination among CSOs. Mr. Omerzai added: “Coordination among CSOs can eliminate gaps and duplication in services, help harmonize actions, and lead to information sharing, collaboration and joint planning.”

Mr. Raz Mohammad Dalili, Director of Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), talked from a positive perspective. He asserted that any society with strong civil society is more democratic.

### Panelists:

- Rafiq Shaheer, Shura-e-Mutakhasisan Herat
- Baryalai Omerzai, Director of Afghan NCOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB)
- Raz Mohammad Dalili, Director of Sanayee Development Organization (SDO)
- Mujeeb Khalvatgar, Director of Nai Media Group
- Moderator: Said Wasse Sayedi Director of WASSA organization

He said “In far-flung and insecure areas that government does not exist, civil society reaches out people and delivers services.” Mr. Dalili said that civil society has hardly worked against extremists and advocated against deep-rooted stereotypes in the society that can eventually embolden extremists. He said that until 2012 the government of Afghanistan did not pay any heed to civil society and today the government has given more a symbolic role to CSOs than their real role as change makers.

Mr. Mujeeb Khalvatgar, Director of Nai Media Group, talked about role of media raising awareness about CSOs. He said that media is not apart from civil society but it has got important tasks, such as defining civil society and localization of the concept. Mr. Khalvatgar said that Media can make the traditions compatible with modernization and contextualize the concept of civil society. He said “Media must raise awareness about CSOs and social norms. Media must also take CSOs accountable.” He added that Media can play positive role in strengthening CSOs’ reputation and credibility in public by covering their activities and achievements. At the end, media despite of its tremendous success in past 18 years has not been able to act upon all its responsibilities.

The panel discussion ended with comments and questions from the audience and were addressed by the panel members.

# Presentation 1



## CSO Transparency and Accountability

On the second day of the NCSW program, Hon. Rollin A. Van Broekhoven, Visiting Scholar, University of Oxford Centre for Socio-Legal Studies delivered a comprehensive presentation about CSOs' transparency and accountability. Mr. Van Broekhoven has had decades of experience working with CSOs as board member in USA. He started with his personal life and went through his professional experience in civil society. He highlighted importance of morality for CSOs to be more accountable and transparent. "When CSOs act transparent and accountable it will definitely raise their public trust and support." According to Mr. Broekhoven, there are certain ways that can bring transparency into CSOs work:

- The moral capital and values that make CSOs inclined to more transparency and accountability;
- Adhering to the law and regulations;
- Existence of an independent board;
- And financial oversight.

Mr. Broekhoven added: "For the most part, we are talking about philanthropy and charity, and much of the research is done in these areas. If this is the case, there should little conflict with government. The problem often occurs when the CSO becomes an advocacy voice for a political position. Also, CSOs such as Amnesty International, the Human Rights Association, and Greenpeace cross the lines of pure philanthropy into public policy. Organizations such as these are most often in conflict with governments, and also with the market. I have dealt with these conflicts some in Cambodia and China.

My sense is that the London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society and the Berlin Center for Civil Society define civil society in this way, as something distinct from the state, family, markets, and where there is un-coerced and collective, volunteer action around shared ideas, interests, purposes, and values. This is generally where I am in my understanding of civil society, but it is also an area of great internal threat. Now, we know that most CSOs must be registered by the state, and sometimes regulated by the state."



# Presentation 2

## Open Government Partnership (OGP), National Action Plan, Commitments, Progress and Challenges

After a short tea break, Mohammad Ibrahim Shahab from OGP Secretariat in office of the President, took the stage to present his presentation about Open Government Partnership (OGP), National Action Plan, Commitments, Progress and Challenges. Mr. Shahab talked about improvements have been made and highlighted current challenges. Mr. Shahab reported that several CSOs have obtained membership of the Supreme Audit office. He also said that hereinafter, CSOs and the lawyers' union will be able to scrutinize draft laws coming to Ministry of Justice and draft laws will be publicly shared through MoJ official website in order to include public opinions in formation of laws. This will be the first open legislation in Afghanistan. According to Mr. Shahab, a committee that addresses women's issue in conflict zones has also been created which consists of several women from the civil society sector. Moreover, a joint committee of CSOs, MoE, MoHE, private schools and universities unions have been formed to monitor quality of educational services in the country.



### Success Stories

In order to celebrate and acknowledge CSOs achievements, three civil society organizations were given the chances to talk about their success stories. First, Mr. Kabir Mokamil from Artlords, presented Artlords success story via several images that showed Artlords work. Artlords is an artistic organization that paints murals on blast resistant walls and through that conveys important messages to the people and government. Mr. Mokamil said that the secret to their success is that they hear people and they create the murals together with the people. At the end, he pledged Artlords cooperation with other CSOs. The second success story was presented by Organization for Research and Community Development (ORCD). Mr. Ihsanullah Fazli, ORCD representative talked about how this organization has made it to a success story; he said that ORCD has applied transparency principles in all areas of its work throughout Afghanistan. He added that ORCD even functions in conflict zones where many organization cannot reach and we work together with the community.

Mr. Fazli said that ORCD has included youth's perspective into their programs and given them opportunity to draw upon their potential towards development of the organization. ORCD has close global partnership as ORCD global, ORCD Pakistan, ORCD Ghana and ORCD Canada. This organization has been known for its success across Afghanistan and it has also been certified by AICS.

Third success story was about Mashal-e-Hedayat Social Organization (MHSO) which is grass-root CSO. Mr. Waheed Alkozay, Director of MHSO said that this organizations was established in 2015 and despite of its short history of establishment, this organization has successfully delivered important services in six districts of Herat province. This social organization has delivered the following services in Herat:

- Advocacy;
- Conducted roundtable discussions;
- Conducted free English language courses;
- Conducted tailoring & agriculture learning courses to women;
- Established kindergartens;

The very eye-catching truth about this organization is that it has run its services without any donor funding and its financial resources comes from the community support.

# Presentation 3

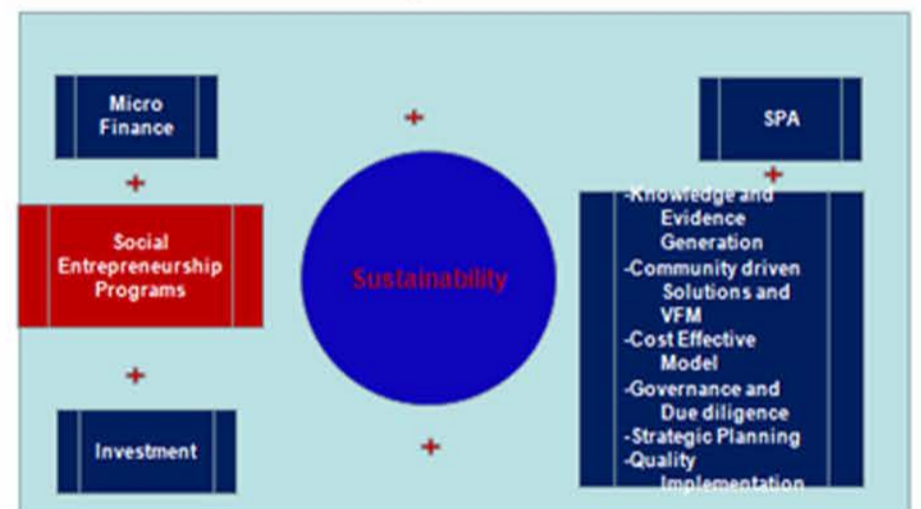


CSOs Sustainability and Diversification in CSOs Funding

Mr. Anowar Hussain, Country Representative of BRAC Afghanistan, delivered an inspiring presentation about CSOs Sustainability and Diversification in CSOs Funding. Mr. Hussain briefed the audience about the establishment history of BRAC by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of BRAC. He addressed BRAC's income generation through investments and social entrepreneurship projects. BRAC became international by embarking its activities in Afghanistan and at the time, possesses 11 international offices around the world and three affiliated offices in Netherlands, UK and USA. Later, Mr. Hussain focused on the financial sustainability of BRAC as a role model to CSOs in Afghanistan. He said "BRAC along with its social development programs, runs social enterprise programs as well and 50% of the profit goes to the social development programs." According to Mr. Hussain, BRAC has started another project in Afghanistan which is a secondary education project of girls for upcoming eight years and it has established vocational centers in 14 districts of Afghanistan.

BRAC revises its strategic and financial plans every five years and it has developed strategic partnership with UKAID and AUSAID. Referring to BRAC as a role model, Mr. Hussain said that investment, social enterprise and microfinance are the key ways that can sustain an organization financially. Also he emphasized that organization with high level of transparency and accountability can attract donors' trust and this trust can bring strategic partnership that in the long run bring financial stability to the organization.

## Sustainability Elements of BRAC





At the end of the second day of the event, NCSW partners went field visit to Qalai Bakhtiaruddin and Manazar e Jihad which are popular historical places in Herat city. Members of Herat CSOs coordinated the field visit and the explained historical backgrounds of these two places to visitors from other parts of Afghanistan.



THIRD DAY

**NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY  
WEEK – 28TH JUNE, 2018**

# Fourth Panel Discussion



## Role of CSOs in Development and Governance

Mr. Shah Mahmood Miakhel, Director of United States Institute for Peace (USIP) at the first hand, thanked AICS for this initiative. He talked about good and bad governance and how CSOs can contribute to the good governance in a country. Mr. Miakhel added that in any society, government and CSOs have their own important roles and both must incline to transparency and accountability. CSOs must always consider national interest and support the political system, moreover CSOs should take part in good governance. Tainting factors to the good governance are corruption, distrust, lack of financial resources, insecurity and distorted investments. Mr. Miakhel emphasized professionalization of CSOs and said that unlike CSOs become more professional in different areas, they cannot advocate properly. Improper advocacy will embark contradictions and the contradictions weaken cooperation between government and CSOs.

Mr. Ehsan Zia, Director of TADBEER consulting firm, starting with the UNDP definition of governance which says "The value system and administrations that governs its social, political, financial and cultural issues is governance and it happens with contribution of government, civil society, private sector and people." Mr. Zia said that unfortunately, until 2002, civil society and private sector were completely overlooked and that is the reason behind our undeveloped situation. Civil society can bridge up the people with government and as much as people are engaged in decision making, their trust will increase. Mr. Zia talked about seven characteristics of good governance as follow:

1. Participatory
2. Transparent
3. Consensus oriented
4. Accountable
5. Effective
6. Inclusive
7. Responsive

### Panelists:

- Ajmal Sherzai, Director Future Generations
- Shah Mahmood Miakhel, Director of United States Institute for Peace (USIP)
- Mohammad Ehsan Zia, Director of TADBEER Consulting
- Moderator: Najeeba Ayubi, Director of The Killid Group (TKG)

Mr. Ajmal Sherzai, Director of Future Generations Organization, thanked AICS for its warm welcome and successful initiative. He then specifically talked about role of civil society in development. Mr. Sherzai talked about how civil society differs country to country and it can be defined differently. CSOs are well-defined in the law and there should not be mere focus on definitions. In any country all the three sectors; government, civil society and private sector play their roles and civil society facilitates the social, financial, and political interplays. He added that there are common ground among civil society, government and the private sector and also common ground between each two of the sectors. Development is the result of improvement in all the common grounds.

The panel discussion ended with question from the participants which were answered by panel members. One of the participants asked the panel members that how it is possible to ensure rule of law while laws remain only on papers and are not implemented.

# Fifth Panel Discussion



## Role of CSOs in upcoming Elections

Ms. Wasima Badghisy, Commissioner of Independent Elections Commission (IEC) thanked the AICS team for having a panel discussion on elections and said that since one year and a half, despite many challenges, the newly appointed team of IEC strive to hold the upcoming elections in a better way than before. She said “We are trying to ease the process and mitigate the expenses as well.” She acknowledged the important role of CSOs in elections and welcomed CSOs to work together with IEC in order to insure transparency in the upcoming elections.

Mr. Naeem Ayubzada, Director of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) said that CSOs are based on democratic and human rights values and the definition is very obvious, but different concepts hinder internal coherence and coordination. Mr. Ayoubzada added that there should be defined mechanisms for elections and CSOs oversight on the process. CSOs must be involved in the very initial processes of elections and they must oversight the expenses and as well as the candidates. From his point of view, security stands to be one the major issues in upcoming elections and government must develop effective mechanisms to address the issue.

Mr. Yosuf Rasheed, Director of Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA), talked about the importance of CSOs’ engagement with the IEC in the upcoming elections. He said that IEC must cooperate with CSOs and civil society activists and it is up to CSOs to raise awareness about the election process among people.

### Panelists:

- Mohammad Yousuf Rasheed, Director of FEFA
- Wasima Badghisy Commissioner of Independent Elections Commission (IEC)
- Idress Stanikzai, Youth Trend Afghanistan
- Mohammad Naeem Ayubzada, Director of TEFA
- Moderator: Sediqullah Tawhidi from Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJCS)

Mr. Rasheed added that the unhealthy rivalries among candidates can cause dangerous aftermaths and CSOs must voluntarily do the oversight to ensure a transparent election process. Moreover, CSOs have the responsibility to monitor independence of IEC and they must act independently themselves. He said “Despite the fact that the election process had already started, the Election Compliant Commission (ECC) has not started it work yet. People have complaints. Where should they file the complaints?”

Mr. Idress Stanikzai, Director of Youth Trend Afghanistan (YTA) then said “CSOs in Afghanistan must not imitate the Western CSOs as their conditions are much different from ours.” He added that there is not defined mechanisms for transparency in expenses of the election process. Mr. Stanikzai said that CSOs can play their role in elections as follow:

- Raise awareness
- Bridge up people with the government and international community
- CSOs should act independently
- CSOs must voluntarily have members at the IEC to oversight the process
- There should be defined mechanisms to follow up with the oversight process in the capital and provinces

Mr. Omid Salman, Communication and Outreach Specialist of Innovation for Change (I4C) – South Asia Hub, then delivered presentation about Innovation for Change (I4C), in particular about the South Asia Hub. He said that this initiative is an international platform which links CSOs from different countries in 7 regions of the world. The South Asia hub consists 8 countries and was formed in 2015. The objective was to better coordinate, support CSOs and strive for financial sustainability of CSOs. Services offered by Innovation for Change are as bellow:

- Digital Security
- Legal Resources
- Innovative Funding Models
- National Innovation Labs
- Youth Space, art and cultural labs for social change

Mr. Fazal Amiri, Certification Manager of AICS presented a comprehensive presentation about the certification program. Mr. Amiri explained how and why the certification program was launched by AICS and its partners and how the process is going. He gave information about the certification model and clarified CSOs certification program, application for certification and its process. Later in the program newly certified CSOs were granted certificate by AICS. The newly certified CSO are as follow:

1) Medica Afghanistan-Women Support Organization (MA-WSO)

Award of Best Practices in Project Management and Program Delivery and Financial Management.

2) Afghanistan Rehabilitation & Education Program (AREP)

Award of Best Practice in Project Management & Program Delivery and Human Resource Management

3) Afghans Coordination against Corruption (AFCAC)

4) Bu Ali Rehabilitation and Aid Network (BARAN)

Grassroots CSOs/Funded by EU

5) Razi Social Development Organization (RSDO)

6) Development & Change life of Women Organization (DCLWO)

7) Care for Life Organization (CLO)

8) Social Capacity Development and Welfare Organization (SCWO)

To sum up the three day event and provide recommendation for future measure, a sum up panel was formed. The panel was moderated by Mr. Zakir Stanikzai, AICS Executive Director. The following recommendations were made by the sum up panel at the end of NCSW 2018.



# RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. AICS should conduct a nationwide research on the civil society and its values. This research should consist ideas of CSOs and civil society activists about the values. Findings of the research will define and specify the civil society values and norms.
2. AICS should conduct a nationwide research on good governance and how CSOs can contribute to it. The research should consist view of CSOs and civil society activists from across 34 provinces of the country.
3. National approaches should be identified and used to increase the public trust towards CSOs.
4. CSOs should count on their success and sacrifices as well. CSOs should prove to the people that despite of difficulties, they are committed to democratic values and have sacrificed in this way.
5. Coordination bodies should act more democratic by conducting internal elections and giving the opportunity to the new generation of leaders to lead the coordination bodies.
6. Self-regulation stands to be a key success to CSOs. CSOs must embark internal reforms and these efforts should become operational.
7. CSOs must actively take part in raising awareness and monitoring the upcoming elections. For this purpose, defined mechanisms should be developed and implemented.
8. CSOs should modernize and enrich their data collection and information sharing systems, and make their databases available for other CSOs.
9. Donors, UN agencies and the government should set their funding priorities in consultation with CSOs. And since CSOs are closely engaged with local communities, it can contribute to the financial sustainability of CSOs.
10. The government should build a trustful relationship with CSOs. As much as CSOs are engagement in public policies formulation, sustained CSOs-government dialogue, and increased information sharing that much it can help building trust between CSOs and government.
11. Government should ease the registration and taxation procedures, as well as difficulty in CSOs access to governmental information and officials. More responsibilities in the field of CSOs' registration, reporting, monitoring and taxation should be delegated to provincial government offices after building institutional capacities.
12. CSOs should prove accountability not only to donors and government, but also to the public and private sectors as well. CSOs' reputation and image among the private sector is dependent on their technical expertise and specialization, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.