



NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK (NCSW) 2019 EVENT REPORT

30 October to 1 November 2019

ARG HOTEL
HERAT, AFGHANISTAN



INTRODUCTION

The Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS) celebrated the National Civil Society Week 2019 on 29 Oct – 1 Nov 2019 in Herat province. This event which is unprecedented in its kind in Afghanistan was participated by around 150 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), 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 30 Oct started with the opening remarks by Mr. Aziz Rafiee, a member of the AICS Board of Directors. He talked about the goals and objectives of the AICS' establishment and explained the importance of AICS programs. Subsequently, Mr. Zakir Stanikzai Executive Director of AICS delivered his invaluable speech about the second National Civil Society Week (NCSW) event and its agenda. He briefed the participants about the event agenda components, the structure of panel discussions, presentations, working groups, a cultural event, and networking plots. The Governor of Herat, H.E Abdul Qayum Rahimi was also one of the key speakers of the event, Mr. Rahimi talked about the pivotal role of CSOs in the national development and said that Herat CSOs play an



cultural event. In the end, the sum up panel, summed up the three-day event and provided specific recommendations to be followed up in future by CSOs, government, and donors. 146 participants (41 female) attended the event on first day, 132 participants (35 female) on second, and 136 participants (36 female) on third day. GIZ financially supported the event. This report summarizes the event's progress and conclusion.

active role in making provincial government accountable to the public. Following that, Said Wase Sayedi, on behalf of Western Region CSOs, talked about the CSOs challenges and achievements in the region and asserted how important role CSOs have played in recent years in this region. 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 events with the government.



The National Civil Society Week (2019) was formed of five-panel discussions, one presentation, one success story, and one documentary movie show. Also, the event had a



FIRST DAY

NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK

29th OCTOBER, 2019

EVENT PROGRESS

The program began with the recitation of verses of the Holy Qur'an by Mohammad Jawed Akbari.

Subsequently, the national anthem was performed live by the students of a school called "Athar" along with their music group based in Herat. The official commencement of the program was made by Aziz Rafiee a member of AICS Board of Directors. Mr. Rafiee welcomed the participants and talked about the role of civil society and historic trends of CSOs in Afghanistan.

He said "In the last 1.5 decades we have gained a lot of progress in the development of civil society in Afghanistan but still have several responsibilities in relation to justice, fighting discrimination, creating enabling environment for CSOs and supporting law enforcement. We have to use this 3 days opportunity to evaluate ourselves, think about our challenges, enhance our internal collaboration and find solutions for shrinking civic space in the country".



in Ghor province are now playing an active role in subnational budget development, and CSOs in Herat is also now able to raise the voice of their communities through media and undertake local advocacy efforts effectively. He added that our CSOs had limited influence on national policy processes and do not much impact on national level decisions, and we also need to boost our capacity to undertake systematic monitoring of local government



Following that, Mohammad Zakir Stanikzai, Director of AICS, reiterated on the undeniable importance of the AICS programs and the national civil society week (NCSW) which is happening for the second consecutive year in Afghanistan. He said that we hope to achieve our expected results as per the specified timeline during this 3 days long event. He explained that the overall goal of the program and elaborated on each agenda item in detail. He said, "The National Civil Society Week is one of those platforms that bring CSOs together for better coordination, learning, networking, celebrating and joining for common solutions".

Then, H.E Abdul Qayum Rahimi, Governor of Herat province welcomed the participants from across Afghanistan to attend the National Civil Society Week 2019. He thanked the event organizer for their tireless efforts. Mr. Rahimi then continued "The civil society can play an important role in peacebuilding in Afghanistan and civil society should have a say about the conditions set for peace talks. Civil Society can strengthen relations of the government with the public and we need CS support in this regard. He added that Herat province has a strong civil society but some government officials wrongly ignore civil society roles. We need to strengthen the mechanisms that support civil society coordination with the government."

Said Wase Sayedi, on behalf of Western Region CSOs, talked about the CSOs challenges and achievements in the region and asserted how important role CSOs have played in recent years in the region. He said that CSOs



activities. He requested national coordination bodies such as CSJWG and ACBAR to provide equal opportunities for provincial CSOs (including Herat) to participate in international events.

At last, Mr. Abdullah Ahmadi, Chairperson of the CS-JWG Secretariat, made his remarks. He said that CSJWG is the biggest CSOs network in Afghanistan and during the last one year we were able to establish CSJWG provincial structures in 20 provinces. He said "despite challenges, CSOs were able to gain considerable achievements in last years. We are a service delivery partner for government and have played an active role to advocate for public interests in the areas of human rights, access to information, elections, and public awareness. Afghanistan has gained Open Government Partnership (OGP) membership in 2016 and OGP national action plan has been developed with the active participation of Afghan civil society. Insecurity, limited coordination among CSOs and with government and increasingly worsening civic space for civil society organizations are among other the challenges". Followed by the key speakers' remarks, the first-panel discussion of the program about "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Afghanistan" was held.

First Panel Discussion: Status of SDG achievements in Afghanistan



Panelists:

- **Mirwais Baheej** Director General of Policy in Ministry of Economy (MoEc)
- **Jan Mohammad Ahmadian** Director of Afghanistan National Education Coalition (ANEC)
- **Aziz Jami** from Coordination of Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan (CRSA)
- **Moderator: Rahim Jami** from Watch on Basic Rights Afghanistan Organization (WBRAO)

Mirwais Baheej Director General of Policy in Ministry of Economy presented a video presentation on SDGs and its contents. Afterward, he provided a detailed presentation on SDGs-Afghanistan.

He explained SDGs' (2015-2030) background information which is endorsed by 193 countries and possesses 17 goals, 169 targets, and 232 indicators. Later on, he defined SDGs and its differences with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While explaining the progress and challenges of SDGs he highlighted that significant progress has been noticed in main streaming SDGs in national policies and in the integration of SDGs in national budge, though the poor economy, violations, and instability are the factors among the challenges we have in the implementation of SDGs.

Subsequently, he explained SDGs-Afghanistan and role of the Ministry of Economy in SDG as a responsible entity for coordination, nationalization, oversight and reporting its implementation.

In addition to explaining stages of SDGs- Afghanistan implementation and its structural hierarchy (committees and working groups), he described nationalization of global SDGs in the Afghanistan context and added that Afghanistan only follows 16 goals, 110

targets, and 177 indicators.

He also elaborated that how SDGs have been aligned with NNPs and other development programs as well as the SDGs Afghanistan prioritization process.

In the end, he highlighted that civil society can have a key role in SDGs implementation in Afghanistan by raising public awareness about SDGs, monitoring the implementation of SDGs, support in implementation (especially goal 16), data collection and data analysis, as well as undertaking dialogues and research activities correlated to SDGs in Afghanistan.

He also suggested that CSOs should align their programs with SDGs and assist the government in developing required systems, conducting research, aligning SDGs with other programs, and monitoring SDGs implementation.

Following that, Jan Mohammad Ahmadian Director of Afghanistan National Education Coalition talked about the roles civil society has in SDGs.

He added, unfortunately, there is less awareness about SDGs among CSOs and public, and CSOs should search the overall goals, they contribute to, through the projects they implement in the SDGs context.

SDGs implementation can also help to strengthen coordination among government and CSOs by engaging CSOs in planning and implementation processes.

CSOs and the government should strategically plan their projects for every SDGs goal (not only goal 16). We are still at the nationalization stage while other countries have started the implementation of SDGs since 2016. Therefore, we need to enhance public participation in SDGs implementation and establish mutual collaboration to achieve desired results in the given timeline. At last, Aziz Jami from Coordination of Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan (CRSA) said that SDGs are pathways to combat poverty in underdeveloped countries and a platform for participation. He also added that access to reliable and up-to-date data is important for planning projects under SDGs' umbrella and Afghanistan civil society can help the government in this area.

He also said that low capacity, government bureaucracy, and instability have also weakened the abilities to better implement projects and achieve results.

The panel discussion was followed by participants' questions that were addressed by panel members accordingly.

Second Panel Discussion: Civic Space



Panelists:

- Ikram Afzali Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA)
- Aziz Rafiee Director of Afghan Civil Society Forum Organization (ACSFo)
- Hameedullah Zazai Director of Mediothek Afghanistan
- Ainuddin Bahodury from Access to Information Commission
- Moderator: Abdullah Ahmadi Chairperson of CS-JWG Secretariat

This panel discussed the civic space in Afghanistan, including the overall situation of freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of

assembly and their associated challenges and opportunities. The panel provided relevant recommendations to CSOs, the

Afghan government, and donors. Abdullah Ahmadi said that CSOs are significantly influenced by the legal environment in which they operate. Domestic laws and policies govern the degree to which civil society activities are recognized and protected.

This includes the protection of rights and freedoms necessary for expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and access to information.

Ikram Afzali Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) said that freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly are the basic rights of the citizens and only 4% of the world population are unfortunately fully enjoying these rights. In Afghanistan, the situation is worsened and we have been facing challenges in these areas in different



government regimes and for decades now. As the Afghan civil society was in a nascent stage, CSOs could not easily challenge government restrictions on open civic space in the last 1.5 decades. He also said that CSOs (especially IWA) faced legal challenges when they raised voice for transparency and government accountability to the public.

The CSOs that got big service delivery projects from the government cannot easily challenge government transparency as their advocacy will come under the direct influence of the government.

We believe in open government policies and it is a prerequisite for healthy civic space.

He also recommended that the government should replace failed bureaucrats with capacities who believe in open government. In addition, CSOs should struggle hard to establish more synergy among themselves to protect civic space.

Afterward, Hameedullah Zazai Director of Mediothek Afghanistan talked about freedom of assembly. He said that Afghan civil society shared its concerns about the new Law on Gatherings, Strikes, and Demonstrations with the government but still there are concerns that the existing law is restricted CSOs and public freedom. He recommended that CSOs should evaluate themselves and solve their internal problems and have to play proactive advocacy rather than reactive advocacy and provide more space for grassroots CSOs.

Ainuddin Bahodury from Access to Information Commission talked about access to information in Afghanistan. He said that Afghanistan has the best access to information law in the world. He added that, as per the Law, the commission is mandated to: ensure the right of access to information for all citizens from the government and non-government institutions, to observe article 19 of International



Covenant on Civil and Political Rights considering article 3 of Afghan constitution, to ensure transparency and accountability in the conduct of governmental and nongovernment institutions, and to organize request processing and provision of information. The commission is a newly established entity and has developed gradually in recent years.

We have strengthened our structure recently (by increasing the number of staff from 11 to 51). We have also worked with government institutions and assessed them, and we informed them about the findings of our oversight to information to them and instructed them to bring the required improvements. To ease the process, we have categorized government entities according to their access to information status and developed indicators to measure this progress. He recommended that CSOs should start national discourse to review their long term vision.

He also recommended that CSOs should strengthen their internal coordination when they implement projects on access to information and use standard awareness manuals on the subject issue (these manuals are available with the access to information commission). In the end, he said that CSOs should

build public awareness on access to information law and use the accessed data for a fight against corruption.

Following that, Aziz Rafiee Director of the Afghan Civil Society Forum Organization (ACSFo) said that there are several human rights conventions and all of them are aimed to support civic space in the world. Unfortunately, there are several parallel regulations with the Constitution and national laws which are not coinciding with the laws. Today, violations against human rights defenders and civil society activists have deep roots in gaining power and maintaining autocratic leadership.

So, CSOs are more vulnerable to civic space challenges and they need to build coalitions and support open civic space. He recommended that CSOs should work on advocacy mechanisms for human rights defender and they have to get security protection.

The panel discussion was followed by participants' questions that were addressed by panel members accordingly.

The first day of the NCSW 2019 concluded with a group photo by the event participants.



SECOND DAY

NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK

31th OCTOBER, 2019

The second day of the event started with a brief summary of Day 1 by the event facilitators. Mr. Shafiq Sultani and Zahra Azada who presented the summary of the activities and recommendations of the Day 1.

The second day of the event started with a presentation on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Afghanistan.

Presentation: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Afghanistan Presenter: Aziz Tasal AICS Policy Engagement and Research Director

Aziz Tasal stated that AICS conducted first civil society research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2019. The objective of this research is to evaluate the status of CSR in Afghanistan.

(Definition: It is a self-regulating business model that helps a company be socially accountable to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By practicing corporate social responsibility, also called corporate citizenship, companies can be aware of the kind of impact they are having on all aspects of society, including economic, social, and environmental).

CSR is critical for CSOs development. He explained CSR drivers in the country as; 1) the legal regime within the country; 2) Government incentives; 3) Shareholder preference; 4) Marketing effect and enhancing the image of a corporation; 5) Philanthropic motivations of business owners, and 6) Religious motivation.

He explained that mobile telecommunications industry has been the initiator of modern-day CSR in Afghanistan, and afterward some other players: Roshan, Azizi Bank, Bayat Group, the Barakat Group, the Ghazanfar Group, Moby Group, the Alokozay Group, Afghan Holding Group, Mayhan Steel, etc.

Started CSR in Afghanistan. He stated that there are no policies, laws or regulations for or against CSR in Afghanistan, and there is no intent for offering incentives to promote CSR in the country. Besides, there is no tax or other incentives in place, and no penalties for



socially irresponsible behavior, and no social pressure against irresponsible social.

He highlighted that 65% of large corporations and 36% of medium-sized corporations have CSR activities and CSR for ethical (50%) and “giving back” reasons (60%), while 30% did so for marketing reasons.

In most corporations, there are no dedicated CSR departments, and 30% corporates perform it through finance departments and 20% through marketing departments.

He concluded that Afghanistan can leapfrog the global experiences in CSR, the government must create a legal/regulatory framework for CSR and offer incentives (tax, etc.) to encourage CSR in the country.

CSOs should create the infrastructure to attract CSR contributions and start a comprehensive public awareness campaign to enhance the power of the consumer to choose between responsible and irresponsible companies.

Besides, corporations should develop effective CSR Strategy and seek assistance and support from specialized companies.

Third Panel Discussion: Role of CSOs at Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

Panelists:

- Mohammad Ehsan Zia Country Director of USIP Afghanistan
- Laila Jafari Civil Society Affairs Director in Ministry of Peace Affairs
- Fahim Hakim, Ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
- Soraya Subhrang, Ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
- Moderator: Mirwais Wardak Director of Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO)

Mirwais Wardak the panel moderator explained his experience in civil society about peacebuilding and said that CSOs can play an important role in building peace in a community by avoiding partisan /political engagement. Later on, Soraya Subhrang, Ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was given the floor to explain the role of women in the peacebuilding process (including peacebuilding in the family and community level). Ms. Subhrang, who conducted research on the role of women in peacebuilding, said that positive peace or sustainable peace is the end of war and violations. She said that peace and war issue in Afghanistan has both domestic and international dimensions, therefore, peacebuilding in Afghanistan needs national, regional and international solutions. In addition, a good understanding of the field realities, proper management, and appropriate mechanisms are also important to reach sustainable solutions. She explained women's social, economic, international and political roles in peacebuilding to the participants. She said mother as the first



teacher of children in a family can play an important role in building social peace in a family unit. She added that economic income and productivity in a developed community was only possible with active and meaningful participation of women, therefore women by supporting the family and community economy

can be a change agent for peace. As the political situation has its effect on both men and women in society, women's active representation from the Afghan society in peace processes is equally important.

Later on, Laila Jafari Civil Society Affairs Director in Ministry of Peace Affairs explained the peace negotiation in Afghanistan. She said that suspended peace talks with the Taliban was only a bilateral negotiation between the US and Taliban which only encompassed their mutual interest and does not necessarily contain the interest of the Afghan community. The advocacy performed by civil society originations has also played an important role in suspending the signing of the agreement between the US and the Taliban. She added that peace is the only solution for war and we only can achieve sustainable peace when we have real participation of the public in the negotiation processes and when it is led by Afghans. The current efforts to resume peace talks are very important but we hope that Afghans' interest gains prior consideration in the upcoming talks. She also admitted that the Peace High Council was not adequately successful in achieving desired results. The Ministry of Peace Affairs is a positive step to organize government's peace activities by establishing a government institution that is more accountable, reportable to the public and driven by single-mandate. Ministry of Peace Affairs will manage the peace talks and will define negotiation contents/agenda. She concluded that grassroots CSOs can play important role in peacebuilding through peaceful advocacy and as a complementing player along with the Ministry of Peace Affairs. Afghan civil society can also monitor the peace negotiation by sharing their observations with the public and with government as well as by oversight from the implementation of peace agreements.

Fahim Hakim ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission explained the characteristics of peace in

relation to human rights. He said that peace guarantees human rights' principles. He explained in peace the public enjoys prosperity, happiness, economic independence, no violation, justice, no discrimination, and balanced development, and all of these are human rights values. He also explained that today we are suffering from a high level of civilian causality, corruption, force migration, destruction of public properties, poor governance, poverty, unemployment, war economy are among the challenges depriving us of peaceful co-existence which is a basic human right. He also added that brutality and prejudice affected ordinary citizens which in turn affected human dignity and caused violations.

Mohammad Ehsan Zia Country Director of USIP Afghanistan could not attend the event who was expected to brief participants on peace movements (such as Helmand Peace March) and other similar activities supported by USIP in Afghanistan.

A Success Story

In order to celebrate and acknowledge CSOs achievements, a CSO was given the opportunity to talk about their success stories. Khalida Tahseen from Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA), was invited to stage to present DHSA success story via video presentation. Ahead of the event, AICS asked leading coordination bodies to nominate their nominees to AICS to compete for a success story to present their stories as a successful CSO in the National Civil Society 2019. A committee consisting of the civil society representatives evaluated the applications as per the criteria and decided to select DHSA as a success story. Therefore, DHSA was given the opportunity to share their journey for success. The mission of DHSA is to redefine development in Afghanistan by promoting a dynamic and capable civil society as a means to foster local ownership of development, dignity and a peaceful and sustainable future for all Afghans. To achieve its mission, DHSA is working in sectors such as; education, public media, environmental protection, Humanitarian services, and cultural heritage.

DHSA came into existence as a response to the violent civil war following the Soviet invasion in 1992, founded largely by demobilized Afghan freedom fighters. Throughout these years, DHSA focused primarily on drawing strength from local knowledge and traditional relationships to fill gaps, caused by a weak national government and the absence of public services.



During Taliban rule, Afghan Intellectuals, artists and progressive thinkers flee their homeland to be a refugee in neighboring Pakistan.

DHSA continued its work in exile by adding cultural development to its list of core activities. DHSA served as a hope home for the Intellectuals, artists forced to exile under the regime. The political changes brought by the Bonn Agreement in 2001 allowed DHSA to add the development of civil society in Afghanistan – through its media, education and various community development projects – to its portfolio, in addition to humanitarian assistance. This era could be labeled as the busiest era of DHSA's history. DHSA was able to implement some of Afghanistan's most innovative, complex, large and result-oriented development programs.

NCSW 2019 was initially planned to be held in Bamyan province but due to limited flight to Bamyan province, we had to move the event to Herat province. In order to showcase Bamyan CSOs activities, Mr. Ismail Zaki one of the Bamyan civil society representatives was also invited to present the achievements and challenges of Bamyan CSOs to event participants.



In the end, a CSO representative from Herat province shared a photo presentation about Herat's history and culture.



Documentary Movie: Showing a Documentary Movie on The “State of Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan”

AICS has the long-term goal of enabling CSOs to realize their potential in support of the development of Afghanistan. It works to achieve this by raising the credibility and capacity of local organizations and through conducting research and multi-stakeholder discussions on the environment in which civil society operates. In order to assess the state of enabling environment for CSOs in Afghanistan, AICS conducted comprehensive researches in the last three years.

The 2018 research “The State of Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan” evaluated the enabling environment of Afghan civil society and assessed the progress made, challenges faced, over time by looking at the legal, socio-cultural, governance, operational and security environment of CSOs in the country. For review SEECA 2018 report, please refer to the AICS website. Later on, AICS produced short video clips intended to promote findings and recommendations of the SEECA 2018 report as per its five thematic areas:

- 1) legal environment of CSOs
- 2) socio-cultural environment of CSOs
- 3) governance environment of CSOs
- 4) CSOs operational environment; and 5) CSOs security environment in 2018.

During National Civil Society Week 2019, AICS presented these documentary movies to the event participants.

Fourth Panel Discussion: Role of Civil Society in Promoting Culture and Peace



Panelists:

- Najibullah Shinwari Director of Bakhtar News Agency, Ex-Director of Hewad Newspaper and Ex Cultural Rep of Afghan Government
- Moqadesa Ahmadzai Civil Society Activist and Winner of 2018 N-Peace Award and Deputy of Afghan Youths' Parliament
- Mir Ahmad Joyenda Chairman of Foundation of Culture and Civil Society (FCCS) and Ex Parliament Member
- Moderator: Said Wase Sayedi from Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA)

Najibullah Shinwari Director of Bakhtar News Agency shared his analysis on relations between democracy and culture. He said that democracy or liberal democracy, civil society and culture are interrelated elements and they reciprocally support each other in an environment. To implement democracy a society needs certain foundations and environmental prerequisites or conditions in a society. Liberal democracy is one of the most successful social, political and economic systems that encompasses human

rights, equality in front of the law, freedom of speech, and human dignity. In order to implement democratic principles, certain factors such as a reliable and powerful legal system in the country expanded the middle-class community, and active and committed civil society is needed. If a society has all these factors, it can easily exercise democratic principles. He added, the human is associated with culture from the beginning up to the end of its life, so humanity is living with the culture which helps human to live in a society.

He defined culture as “human achievements gained throughout its life is human culture”. He said that Afghanistan did not have all three basic prerequisites/factors for democracy when we started our journey to implement democracy in the country almost 18 years before.

He also said that cultural development cannot be accelerated as economic development, therefore development in other sectors cannot immediately coincide with the cultural values of a community.

In conclusion, he said that in all decisions of a community cultural values should be flagged and he requested that all citizens including CSOs should play their social responsibility to protect cultural heritage of this country.

Mir Ahmad Joyenda Chairman of Foundation of Culture and Civil Society (FCCS) and Ex Parliament Member talked about the role of CSOs in the protection of cultural heritage and the role of cultural heritage in the promotion of national identity. He said that human is the key element in today's civilization and afghan culture has above thousands of years' history which is a social asset for everyone living in this country. He also said the culture is a mean for national unity; for example when Bamyán Buddhas were destroyed people from every part of the country were disappointed and condemned the invasion of the national cultural asset. He also said that

culture can connect ethnicities and unite them to be a single nation. He said that previous governments worked less for cultural development and transferring them to other geographies. He added that Afghanistan has more than 3000 historical places and more than 12000 cultural sites but fewer efforts have been made to familiarize new generations with their traditional cultures through education programs. In sum, neither the Afghan government nor the international community has invested enough in the protection and promotion of afghan cultural heritage.

In the end, Moqadesa Ahmadzai Civil Society Activist talked about relations between peace and culture. She said peace and culture are like brother and sister. Our communities have certain standards that facilitate development and coexistence among residents, and these standards are obeyed in light of cultural norms. When these standards are violated in a community and norms are breached, the local governance mechanisms apply retributions and punishments and ultimately promote peaceful coexistence. She also said that culture is a set of community values that pave the way for peace in a community, so values, norms, and culture are key elements for the peacebuilding process. She also highlighted that Jirga is a type of local culture that has been used by local communities for years to solve their local conflicts.





THIRD DAY

NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY WEEK
1st NOVEMBER, 2019



The third day of the event started with a brief summary of Day 2 by the event facilitator. Mr. Shafiq Sultani presented the summary of the activities and recommendations of the Day 2.

The Third day of the event started with group work discussions among event participants. The event participants were divided into three groups and asked to work in groups on the following three specific topics. In addition, 3 group work facilitators and three co-facilitators were also selected from the participants to manage the discussions among participants in the assigned groups.

- Thematic Areas for 1st Working Group: CSOs Public Image
- Thematic Areas for 2nd Working Group: CSOs' Sustainability, Diversification in CSOs Funding and Volunteerism
- Thematic Areas for 3rd Working Group: Role of civil society activists, informal groups for social change (including peacebuilding).

Group Facilitators and Co-Facilitators:

- First Working Group Facilitators and Co-Facilitators: Said Ashraf Sadat and Farzana Halimi
- Second Working Group Facilitators and Co-Facilitators: Freshta Yaqubi and Asadullah Khaliz
- Third Working Group Facilitators and Co-Facilitators: Jawad Wafa and Roshan Seran

Members of groups convened in different locations and held participatory discussions on different dimensions of given topics.

The group work facilitators and co-facilitators helped process facilitation, idea collection and noting the findings of the group work discussions. Subsequently, each group was given 10 minutes' time to present their findings and recommendations in large plenary sessions to entire event participants. The followings are the key points highlighted in the presentation of each group.

Frist Working Group



Findings of “CSOs Public Image”

- 1- Poor coordination among CSOs, project-driven approach of CSOs, and less volunteerism in CSOs are among the factors affecting CSOs image in public.
- 2- Threats by insurgents and warlords, repressed civic space, and instrumental use of CSOs of their own mandates are among other challenges that affected CSOs image among the public.
- 3- Positive image and credibility are critical for CSOs to fulfill their social responsibilities and enhance their own sustainability.
- 4- The public often confuses CSOs with some do not understand the concept of “non-governmental” or “nonprofit,” which is an indication of insufficient awareness about CSOs.
- 5- Political engagement of some CSOs, reduced coordination among CSOs and government, administrative corruption in some CSOs, are among other challenges affecting CSOs image.
- 6- Improved coordination among central and grassroots CSOs, promoting volunteerism, avoiding engagement in political activities by CSOs, building specialized capacity in CSOs, protecting civic space, building awareness of public and government about the real mandate of CSOs are among the solutions to promote CSOs image in public.
- 7- Building collaboration with grassroots CSOs, religious groups and building CSOs financial sustainability are among other measures to improve CSOs public image.
- 8- Engaging local social structures in major civil society activities and conducting regular self-assessment (self-regulation) by CSOs are other solutions to improve CSOs public image.
- 9- CSOs should create and regularly update their websites and social media pages as well as publicize their annual reports and financial information on their websites and through local media to gain more credit in public.

Second Working Group



Findings of “CSOs' Sustainability, Diversification in CSOs Funding and Volunteerism”

- 1- CSOs should diversify their resources and this should be associated with a) continuous follow up of the CSOs projects, b) transparency and accountability, c) effective communication and coordination, d) promoting volunteerism d) specialization of CSOs.
- 2- Three factors should be kept in mind when we evaluate CSOs sustainability. These factors are a) CSOs capacity, b) strengthening small CSOs, c) institutionalizing local payments like membership fees.
- 3- Volunteerism should be promoted by; a) create laws to regulate volunteerism; b) conducting an awareness campaign to promote volunteerism, and c) utilizing traditional cultures to promote volunteerism by CSOs.
- 4- It has become increasingly difficult for CSOs to secure institutional development or core funding from donors which affect CSOs sustainability.
- 5- Donors' eligibility, compliance and reporting requirements have become increasingly difficult, demanding and rigorous. Most donors do not provide meaningful feedback to unsuccessful applications for funding.
- 6- Some CSOs need more capacity development, especially in writing quality proposals.

Third Working Group



Findings of “Role of civil society activists, informal groups for social change”

- 1- Informal groups and civil society activists can play an active role in changing public opinions specifically about peacebuilding. They can be leading advocates for peacebuilding.
- 2- Informal civil society groups need capacity-building support and they also need resources to better implement their programs.
- 3- Informal groups do not have government support and some civil society activists face threats.
- 4- Informal groups can play a better role in building public awareness in local communities and can also monitor the government and private sector in remote localities.
- 5- Religious groups and scholars along with CSOs can play an intermediary role in peace negotiations
- 6- Informal groups should not be instrumentally used by political parties during demonstrations. Each group work presentation ended with questions from the participants which were answered by group members.



Fifth Panel Discussion:

Coordination and Cooperation among CSOs and Government



Panelists:

- Roshan Mashal Advocacy Manager of Afghan Women Network (AWN)
- Ali Ahmad Saadat NGO Coordination Director in Ministry of Economy (MoEc)
- Baryalai Omerzai Director of Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB)
- Saeed Ahmad Khamoosh IDLG General Director of Provincial Councils
- Said Hafizullah Fayaz from Civil Society Directorate in President Office
- Moderator: Kalil Raufi from Afghanistan Youth Social & Educational Org (AYSEO)

advocacy guideline for CSOs and provincial councils as well as a regulation to order public meetings with their elected members and CSOs, tools for public monitoring at the community level. All these tools will increase subnational transparency and accountability, increase public participation and improve the quality of public services. He also added that IDLG has developed an MoU that facilitates coordination among local governments and CSOs. IDLG has signed this MoU with nine leading CSOs coordination networks (both national and regional) yet.

Baryalai Omerzai, Director of Afghan NCOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB), talked about the formation history of coordination bodies and explained the role of the large coordination bodies in Afghanistan. Mr. Omerzai said that unfortunately, coordination bodies become more active and coordinate better when any international opportunity appears such as international conferences. He reiterated the important role of CS-JWG. He also said that society has three important sectors (government, civil society, and private sector) and coordination among these sectors is key for sustainable development. He said, when we have a strong civil society then we can help to build a strong government, and when we have a weak government than civil society also remain inactive.

Saeed Ahmad Khamoosh IDLG General Director of Provincial Councils thanked AICS for conducting the NCSW in Afghanistan. In the beginning, he presented relevant constitution articles, laws and presidential decrees that illustrate describe local government structures and their governance mechanisms. He added that provincial councils (in near future district councils will also be elected) create participation opportunities for the public in local governance through their representatives. IDLG will create approaches that can further strengthen provincial councils reporting to the public. He added that IDLG has also developed an

He also said that coordination among CSOs and government at the central level have been improved after MoEc improved CSOs registration and reporting mechanisms with direct input from leading coordination bodies but coordination among CSOs and the provincial government still needs to be improved.

Ali Ahmad Saadat NGO Coordination Director in Ministry of Economy talked about NGO's roadmap and one-NGO-one-Budget initiative of the government. He said that creating an NGO roadmap was one of the recommendations of the national NGO conference held in 2017. The roadmap has been prepared since last year and executable now. The NGO roadmap discusses 1) coordination between NGOs and government, 2) simplification of processes and procedures, 3) developing procedures and regulations in lights of NGO laws, 4) transparency (audit). He said that one-NGO-one-Budget does not limit CSOs work but it helps MoEc to understand which projects will be implemented by NGOs in the upcoming reporting period.

Roshan Mashal Advocacy Manager of Afghan Women Network (AWN) said AWN applies different approaches to enhance coordination with its members such as informal or volunteer coordination, and formal and programmed coordination approaches. AWN also enhances its coordination with its members through joint working sessions and forming working groups. She added that our coordination helped us to achieve our objectives efficiently, enhanced our collaboration with our partners, reduced security risks, and empowered us to have a strong voice for our common interests. He added that our networking abilities helped us to gather public



information easily and better exchange our skills and experiences.

Said Hafizullah Fayaz from Civil Society Directorate in the Office of Administrative Affairs said that this directorate established in the president's office for coordinating the affairs related to CSOs. He added that this directorate was established in 2014 after the London Conference on Afghanistan. Our mandate is to strengthen coordination among CSOs, civil society activists and government. This directorate is helping CSOs to closely follow their advocacy issues in different government institutions and to access President Office easily. He said, "We can communicate your message to HE President within 24 hours and we can make your voice heard". We are closely working with CSJWG and other networks and coordination bodies. We are supporting CSJWG's recent development to establish provincial secretariats in some provinces.

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



NCSW RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up the three-day event and provide recommendations for future measures, a sum up the panel was formed from all five panels. The sum up panel formed Rahim Jami, Zakir Stanikzai, Roshan Mashal, Roshan Seran and Abdullah Ahmadi. Following recommendations were made by the sum up panel and presented in front of event participants at the end of NCSW 2019:

1- **Status of SDG achievements in Afghanistan**

- Uplifting and confirming the active role of civil society in planning, designing, and implementation of SDGs in Afghanistan.
- Undertaking inclusive discussions at national and subnational levels about the purposes and benefits of implementing SDGs in Afghanistan.

Establishing a national information center (database) for plans, achievements, challenges, opportunities, and activities of SDGs in Afghanistan in consideration of different sectors, objectives, and indicators.

- Developing national financial and budgetary strategy for SDGs objectives to help alignment with real national needs.
- Formulation of an implementation framework for ten years (2020-2030) for SDGs and creating evidence-based, effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

2- **Civic Space**

- In order to institutionalize democracy in Afghanistan, CSOs and civil society activists should empower their internal coordination to support newly elected leadership.

- Law on Gatherings, Strikes, and Demonstrations should be revised by the government in close consultation with CSOs to support open civic space in Afghanistan.
- To effectively implement Access to Information Law, coordination and cooperation mechanisms between CSOs and Oversight Commission on Access to Information should be established.
- Initiating national and subnational consultations and discourses on access to information.
- Developing mechanisms to protect and support human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society organizations in support of freedom of speech.

3- **Role of CSOs at Peacebuilding in Afghanistan**

- Initiate discussions and discourses about peace processes to highlight the role of CSOs in reflecting public views in these discussions.
- Engaging civil society in peace processes and assure that civil values and basic human rights are observed in peace agreements.
- Incorporating peace culture and human rights values in national curriculums.
- Undertaking awareness campaigns by CSOs and government about national processes such as peacebuilding, elections, etc. and celebrate different human rights occasions in the country.
- Provide transparent information to CSOs about progress in peace talks. Ministry of Peace Affairs should conduct periodic meetings with CSOs to provide specific and on-time information about peace negotiation progress.

4- Role of Civil Society in Promoting Culture and Peace

- Establish and strengthen coordination among CSOs and the Ministry of Information and Culture to undertake public awareness campaigns in support of protecting historical places and cultural heritage.
- The government should create cultural zones and implement national programs in coordination with CSOs to protect cultural heritage.
- The government should include protection and support of national heritages and historical places in school curricula.
- To empower national identity among different ethnicities and religions and to protect their shared values, the government should implement national exchange programs on common values and boosting ownership spirits at the national level.
- Civil society activists, as a pressure group, should advocate for the protection of national heritage and cultural paces.

5- Coordination and Cooperation among CSOs and Government

- Developing mechanisms for better coordination and cooperation among CSOs and civil society networks at the national level.
- The government and civil society should revise the MoU signed between CSJWG and the Office of Administrative Affairs (AoAA) and ensure its implementation at all government units.
- Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Finance should conduct regular (monthly or quarterly) coordination meetings with NGOs and associations to solve their problems.
- NGOs Law and NGOs roadmap and other legal documents related to civil society should be drafted in consultation with the CSOs (national and local). The government should simplify and implement laws, regulations, and procedures related to CSOs engagement at national processes in coordination with CSOs
- CSOs should share their views, plans and proposed programs about national processes (elections, peace, etc.) with civil society networks and coordination bodies at regional and national levels. As per the MoU, these documents will then should be shared with Civil Society Directorate at the Office of Administrative Affairs for the required follow up and implementation.

EVENT AGENDA:

National Civil Society Week (NCSW) - 2019

(Understanding, Cooperation, and Accountability)

Herat, Afghanistan

Event Agenda

Location: Arg International Hotel

From 30 Oct to 01 Nov 2019

Day 1 – Wednesday, Oct 30, 2019

08:30 - 09:30	Registration Facilitated by AICS staff Distribution of Information Kits: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AICS and CSOs' Publications and books display and distribution- AICS and NCSW 2019 display stands- Introduce Signing Board to the Participants
09:30 - 09:50	1- Recitation of the Holy Quran 2- National Anthem
09:50 - 10:45	Opening Session Opening briefing by Zahra Azada Event Opening by AICS Board Representative Aziz Rafiee Keynote Speakers: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introductory Remarks by AICS Executive Director Zakir Stanikzai2. Welcome Remarks by The Governor of Herat, H.E Abdul Qayum Rahimi3. Remarks by West Region CSOs' Network Representative, Said Wase Sayedi4. Remarks by Civil Society Joint Working Group (CSJWG) Representative, Abdullah Ahmadi
10:45 – 12:15	Panel Discussion 1: Status of SDG achievements in Afghanistan <i>Panelists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mirwais Baheej Director General of Policy in Ministry of Economy- Jan Mohammad Ahmadian Director of Afghanistan National Education Coalition- Aziz Jami from Coordination of Rehabilitation Services for Afghanistan- <i>Moderator: Rahim Jami from Watch on Basic Rights Afghanistan Organization (WBRAO)</i>
12:15 – 01:30	Lunch and Prayer Break
01:30 – 03:00	Panel Discussion 2: Civic Space <i>Panelists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ikram Afzali Director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA)- Aziz Rafiee Director of Afghan Civil Society Forum Organization (ACSFo)- Hameedullah Zazai Director of Mediothek Afghanistan- Ainuddin Bahodury from Access to Information Commission- <i>Moderator: Abdullah Ahmadi Chairperson of CS-JWG Secretariat</i>

03:00– 03:40	Tea break
03:40– 03:50	Day 1 Closing remarks By facilitator Mr. Shafiq Sultani
03:50– 04:00	Group Photo By: <i>Professional Photographer</i>
03:40– 03:50	Day 1 Closing remarks By facilitator Mr. Shafiq Sultani

Day 2 – Thursday, Oct 31, 2019

08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:30 – 09:45	Day 2 opening remarks by Sana Hakimi He/she provides a summary of Day 1 and reiterates the structure of Day 2 activities.
09:45 – 10:00	Presentation 1: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Presenter: Aziz Tasal
10:00 – 11:30	Panel Discussion 3: Role of CSOs at Peacebuilding in Afghanistan <i>Panelists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Mohammad Ehsan Zia Country Director of USIP Afghanistan</i> - <i>Laila Jafari Civil Society Affairs Director in Ministry of Peace Affairs</i> - <i>Fahim Hakim, Ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission</i> - <i>Soraya Subhrang, Ex-Commissioner of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission</i> - <i>Moderator: Mirwais Wardak Director of Peace Training and Research Organization (PTRO)</i>
11:30– 12:00	Success Stories: One successful CSO will share its experiences (20 minutes) Bamyan CSOs Representative will share provincial experiences (10 Minutes)
12:00 – 01:30	Lunch and Prayer Break
01:30 – 02:00	Documentary Movie Show on the State of Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan <i>Presenter: AICS</i>
02:00– 02:40	Tea break
02:40 – 03:50	Panel Discussion 4: Role of Civil Society in Promoting Culture and Peace <i>Panelists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Najibullah Shinwari Director of Bakhtar News Agency</i> - <i>Jan Mohammad Director of Southern Western Afghanistan & Baluchistan Association for Coordination “SWABAC”</i> - <i>Mir Ahmad Joyenda Chairman of Foundation of Culture and Civil Society (FCCS)</i> - <i>Moqadesa Ahmadzai Civil Society Activist and Winner of 2018 N-Peace Award and Deputy of Afghan Youths' Parliament</i> - <i>Moderator: Said Wase Sayedi from Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA)</i>

03:50– 04:00	Day 2 Closing remarks by Sana Hakimi
Day 3 – Friday, Nov 01, 2019	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:10	Day 3 opening remarks by Zahra Azada and Mr. Shafiq Sultani She/he provides a summary of Day 2 and reiterates the structure of Day 3 activities.
09:10 – 10:30	Working in Groups : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Group One: CSOs Public Image 2- Group Two: CSOs' Sustainability, Diversification in CSOs Funding and Volunteerism 3- Group three: Role of civil society activists, informal groups for social change (including peacebuilding) <i>Group Facilitators and Co-Facilitators:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Group One: Said Ashraf Sadat and Farzana Halimi 2- Group Two: Freshta Yaqubi and Asadullah Khaliz 3- Group Three: Jawad Wafa and Roshan Seran <i>Working in Groups will be followed by Group Work Presentations</i>
10:30 11:00	Tea break
11:00 – 12:00	Continuation of Working Group discussions and GW presentations <i>Working in Groups will be followed by Group Work Presentations. Each group will be given 10 minutes to present their findings.</i>
12:00 – 02:15	Lunch and Juma Prayer Break
02:15 – 03:30	Panel Discussion 5: Coordination and Cooperation among CSOs and Government <i>Panelists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roshan Mashal Advocacy Manager of Afghan Women Network (AWN) - Ali Ahmad Saadat NGO Coordination Director in Ministry of Economy (MoEc) - Baryaliai Omerzai Director of Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB) - Saeed Ahmad Khamoosh IDLG General Director of Provincial Councils - Said Hafizullah Fayaz from AOP - Moderator: Kalil Raufi from Afghanistan Youth Social & Educational Org (AYSEO)
03:30 - 04:00	Preparing and presenting a list of recommendations based on the event findings By: Panels' representatives
04:00- 04:30	Tea break
06:30– 08:30	Cultural night