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Afghan University Women Graduates Are Not Well-Represented in the Job Market in Afghanistan

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

AFGHAN UNIVERSITY WOMEN GRADUATES ARE NOT WELL-REPRESENTED
IN THE JOB MARKET IN AFGHANISTAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN WOMEN'S STUDIES AND GENDER STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, IL

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I am eternally grateful to my mother for watching and encouraging the transitions I have made in my life and who has been endlessly patient and supportive of my studies. A special feeling of gratitude goes to Judy Casten for her friendly and endless supports for my social and professional life here in Chicago. I dedicate this work to all Afghan men and women whose works are essential to economically empowering the women of Afghanistan.

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We know that when women participate fully in their government and economies, they and their families benefit, but so do their communities, their countries, and even the world as a whole.

-Hillary Rodham Clinton

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCI	Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries
AICWED	International Center for Afghan Women's Economic Development
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategies
AREDP	Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Program
AWDP	Afghanistan Workforce Development Program
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FLFPR	Female Labor Force Participation Rate
HEP	Higher Education Program
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
KBDC	Kaweyan Business Development Center
KSU	Kahkashan-e-Sharq University
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoEc	Ministry of Economy
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs

MoWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NAPWA	National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Government Organization
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the contribution and representation of university women graduates in the economy of Afghanistan. Through a liberal feminist lens, the research views the socioeconomic and political dimensions of gender equality norms and women's empowerment in the country. This paper further determines applicable approaches and solutions towards representation of educated women within the job market and the economy of Afghanistan in the long run. It synthesizes insights and information from different sources such as Afghan and international policy makers, university students, women with university degrees, and relevant local and international organizations in order to present a wide range of perspectives in this research study. Other factors discussed include: work qualitative measures, reduction of high rate of corruption, women in reproductive economy, the domestic role of women, and gender equity within the workforce environment.

Unfortunately, the women's economic empowerment process has not been closely integrated with female university graduates in Afghanistan. For the past decade, lack of data, research, publications, and scholarly works have limited the scope of national and international policy makers in designing and implementing new projects for women's economic empowerment. The findings of this project can be used by local and international policy and decision makers in higher education and economic development in Afghanistan. Special emphasis is placed on small, innovative women-owned industries, gender equity reforms within higher education, and the nationalization of key

positions within the public and private domains of the country. Public higher education in Afghanistan is tuition-free which results in heavy expenses for Afghanistan's government and its donor agencies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has been one of the prominent sectors in Afghanistan for the past decade. There has been a steady increase in the representation of women within the higher education system in the country. However, the growth of an educated workforce within the job market and the growth of the national economy have not been equal. A high number of university women graduates are jobless, employed in non-relevant professions, or working in part-time jobs like teaching in primary and secondary school.

This thesis explores the status of Afghan university women graduates and their contribution to the economy of Afghanistan. Within this context, the research attempts to identify the socioeconomic and political dimensions of gender parity norms and women's empowerment in the country through a Liberal feminist lens. Alison Jaggar in *Feminist politics and human nature* (1983) defined Liberal feminism as seeking more equal access to education, employment, political rights, equal pay, ending job sex segregation and better working conditions. Acknowledging that regional, ethnic and class differences bear heavily on women's status, the focus here is on young, educated women who reside in urban areas and big cities. These women could be described as middle class. This thesis also determines approaches and solutions towards sustainable representation of educated women within the national economy of Afghanistan and its labor market. Moreover, it synthesizes insights and information from different sources, such as government policy

makers, donor agencies and university professors and students in order to inform this research study. Within this thesis I explore the subject through three central points. First, the thesis analyzes the status of Afghan women within the higher education system in the country. Second, the thesis analyzes the positionality and functions of the Afghan government and its international allies in relation to elevating the status of university women graduates as economic productive elements within the process of nation building. And third, it explores effective ways to deploy university women graduates as professionals in the job market and the Afghan economy. This procedure entails scrutinizing those important sensitive gender norms and introducing relevant and acceptable policies in short and long term frameworks.

The effective representation of female college graduates within Afghanistan's developing economy can bring more growth, prosperity, and dynamism to the country. Having educated women in the economy will also strengthen the representation of other women with little or no education in the labor market of the country. Unfortunately, the women's economic empowerment process has not been closely integrated with female university graduates in Afghanistan. For the past decade, a lack of data, research, publications, and scholarly works have limited the scope of national and international policy makers in designing and implementing new projects for women's economic empowerment. There has not been any specific study on this topic recently. Lena Ganesh (anthropologist researching and working on gender issues) and Valentine M. Moghadam (feminist scholar, sociologist, and author) have conducted research and studies on women's economic empowerment in Afghanistan. Although the economic empowerment

of university educated women was not the main focus of these studies, the projects' findings can be used by local and international policy and decision makers in higher education and economic development sectors of Afghanistan.

The past ten years of rebuilding process of the country was perhaps a good era for all women's rights proponents (particularly the higher authorities) to identify the weakness and strength areas of women empowerment and gender development programs in the country which has prepared the ground for the further steps. Although, the outcomes of efforts are not commensurate with the huge financial aid allocated for women's rights projects during the last decade, we cannot ignore a significant increase in mass awareness towards women's rights and gender parity at the grassroots level of Afghan communities. Like other sectors of the country, the Afghan economy is also highly male dominated and the intervention of women as a new workforce in a highly traditional Afghan society will present many challenges.

Research Methodology

The research methodology in this thesis applies qualitative and quantitative document analysis through a liberal feminist lens. I obtained necessary information from the specified documents and databases. This enabled me to analyze existing material and reach a better understanding of the context for my study. The feminist standpoint methodology recognizes the importance of situating research within the particular social, cultural, and historical context. By juxtaposing insights and information from different sources such as policy makers, donor agencies, and grassroots organizations I provide a broad perspective for this study. All the parties involved in this research are determined and committed to develop women's empowerment in Afghanistan.

The methods used for this process included data collection through direct quantitative surveys from forty university students, male and female, in public and private universities in Afghanistan. In addition, an on-line survey was designed for eighteen university women graduates in Afghanistan. Moreover, some of the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with representative of Afghanistan Ministry of Economy and Voice of Women Organization as a local women organization in the country. There were also some communications with few agencies and networks that implement projects for women's higher education and economic empowerment. Analysis and reporting on the available online data from the official government and donors' reports, project assessments, surveys, guidelines and other relevant documents establish and extend current practices.

The stand point implemented for this study emerged from feminist standpoint methodology. Feminist research is guided by the belief that the relationship between researcher and participants should be empowering, encouraging or enabling participants or other parties engaging with the subject to take action to improve their own and others' situations (Huilman & Winters (2011). As a liberal Afghan male feminist, understanding the research for this subject has situated me in a unique standpoint in approaching the status of Afghan educated women in Afghanistan's job market.

Moreover, accomplishing my bachelor's degree in business with the focus on women and rural development programs in India, and my master studies in Gender Studies with the focus of women's economic empowerment in the United States demonstrate a modest reflexivity for conducting this research. Also, several years of

work experience in Afghanistan on the subject of women empowerment and community development gives additional value to my reflexivity to this paper. Being an Afghan, young man who is determined to work on women's economic empowerment in a male dominated and a conservative country like Afghanistan I bring an appreciation of conflicting perspectives on the challenges of social change and hope to create a bridge between opposing parties. Through this paper, I observe and articulate a liberal feminism framework for analysis.

Representing my position as the research subject in relation to the object of my research as presented through this paper, shows the collaborative relationship in understanding both the process and outcomes of knowledge construction. Feminist researchers value analysis of their own positioning in research in large part because they question the ways in which objectivity has been traditionally constructed in research (Huilman & Winters, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Higher education in Afghanistan started for the first time in 1932 in Kabul with the establishment of the faculty of physical science (Abdulbaqi, 2009). The same faculty became the foundation for Kabul University in 1946, and several new faculties were established with the passage of time or according to the need in other big cities of the country. Historically, higher level education did not receive due attention in Afghanistan, and while the institutions started taking roots in second half of the 20th century, their progress was badly hampered by years of consistent war, immigration, and political unrest (Abdulbaqi, 2009).

Afghan women had an early representation in higher education after the establishment of Kabul University. The number of students in Kabul University was about 7,000 students, of whom 65 percent were female (Moghadam, 1994). By the 1970s, they made up over 60 percent of the 10,000 students who studied at Kabul University (Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). A new ministry of Higher Education and Ideological Training was established in 1977 and all the higher education institutions and vocational institutes were placed under its administration. Previously, all the educational institutions including higher education were regulated by the Ministry of Education. Enrollment of women students in higher education in Afghanistan was limited to high class and middle class families living in metropolitan areas in the country. After the beginning of war in 1980s, the status of higher education in Afghanistan began to

deteriorate. Many qualified professors, both men and women, fled the country and never returned. Lack of teachers, outdated syllabi, non-availability of books, virtual detachment from the educational institutions of other countries, lack of educational and research environment and low salaries that were rarely paid on time were other challenges that the higher education institutes faced during the Taliban period and earlier during Mujahedeen's period (Abdulbaqi, 2009). The higher education institutions which were already in a lamentable condition worsened under the Taliban regime because of their peculiar attitude. The fourteen institutions of higher education in Afghanistan when the Taliban came to power in 1996 were reduced to seven by 2001 (Abdulbaqi, 2009).

With the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan in 2002, universities and institutions witnessed a new era of development. The new government has taken bold steps to tackle the rehabilitation and development needs of the country, particularly those in relation to higher education. In December 2001, Afghan factions met in Bonn under United Nations (UN) auspices to agree on a transitional process leading to elections for a broad-based, multi-ethnic, and gender-sensitive, and fully representative Government. In subsequent years the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was founded. Within this ministry, the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) and the Higher Education Project (HEP¹) were designed and implemented as the supportive development projects for higher education system of the country (Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

¹ HEP or Higher Education Project is a program funded by World Bank and USAID for higher education of Afghanistan in order to build the academic capacity of professor and faculties in Afghanistan's higher education institutions.

There has been tremendous attention to the higher education system – particularly women’s higher education -- by the international committees and the government of Afghanistan. The academic collaboration and network of Afghan higher education institutions with overseas universities has developed consistently during the last few years. A wide range of scholarships, exchange programs, and exposure visits for Afghan professors and students to several well-known universities and higher education institutions across the world have been made available.

There are no exact statistics on the number of students who study abroad; however, based on figures presented by the Ministry of Higher Education; from 2003 to 2010 about 3,500 students were offered scholarships for their bachelor’s degree abroad. Three hundred fifty went to women. And of 594 MA and Ph.D. students abroad, 59 were female. In addition, 1,620 male students and 325 female students have taken part in short term scholarships (UN, 2011, p, 59).

The representation of women in higher education system of the country as lecturers, administrators and assistant professors is negligible. At present, the postsecondary system has approximately 2,200 members of faculty in four-year institutions of which 12 percent are women. Slightly more than 50 percent of all faculty have a bachelor’s degree, less than 6 percent hold a doctorate (Chauhan, 2008). Students face gender biased policies and programs in the Ministry of Higher Education. Gender segregation between fields of study for the first year students is perhaps the most critical issue. As such, the enrollment of women in disciplines such as management, leadership,

engineering, science, and Information Technology is very limited. Instead women are directed to enroll in literature, fine arts and education programs.

Public higher education in Afghanistan is tuition-free for students, resulting in a heavy financial burden for Afghanistan's government and its donor agencies. However, the recent steady increase in the number of university students among Afghan women and the insufficient admission capacity of public schools have resulted in the establishment of many private schools within the higher education system. Despite the substantial financial and academic resources and expenses, there have been comparatively small returns in the shape of an educated female workforce as a contributing factor to the country's socio-economic fabric.

Long term sustainability is one of the main concerns for the higher education system in Afghanistan. While long-term peace is a prerequisite, there is an urgent need to deliberate upon the system of education, particularly at higher levels, and the foundations upon which it has to be established (Abdulbaqi, 2009).

Nevertheless, investments in education for Afghan women over the last decade have produced significant results (Abdulbaqi, 2009). Today, nearly 40 percent of school-aged girls (around 3 million) are enrolled in schools, including 164,000 in secondary school. An additional 40,000 young women attend public or private universities or technical and vocational training institutes, with more enrolling each year (Abdulbaqi, 2009). For the past few years, about 100,000 secondary school graduates have taken the university entrance test "Kankoor", but due limited capacity only about half of those students enter higher education government institutions. Some students who cannot enter

the public higher education institutions enroll in costly private institutions. While education in public schools is free in the country, private schools maintain and charge a tuition fee for their students. The Following chart indicates the number of women students in higher education in Afghanistan

Table 1. Number of Higher Education Students 2008-200-(CSO)

Educational Year	Male Students	Female Students	Total
2008	46,435	10,016	56,451
2009	49,152	12,216	61,368
2010	67,752	14,834	83,883

According to the periodic report of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW, (United Nations [UN], 2011) from the government of Afghanistan and United Nations, the last eight years have seen a tremendous increase in the overall number of higher educational institutions in the country and women have benefited substantially. However, the representation of university educated women in the job market and the nationwide development process of the country are much lower than the representation of women in higher education. Myriad gender barriers, economic challenges, and a lack of national security are the major reasons for the low representation of women university graduates in the Afghan economy. A high number of women graduates remain full-time housewives, part-time teachers in primary or secondary schools, or enter jobs not relevant to their training because there are not enough professional careers for them outside the house.

The population of the country is estimated around 32 million; women represent 47 percent (Index mundi, n.d.). Unfortunately women have the highest rate of illiteracy in the country at about 85 percent of the total population; men have an illiteracy rate of 60 percent (Index mundi, n.d.). Based on the study conducted by USAID –Afghanistan, 27 percent of Afghan women are engaged in the formal sector of the economic structure of the country. They access less than one percent of the financial resources.

The population of women in Afghanistan can be divided into two major categories. Rural women have lower skills and higher illiteracy while urban women have higher level skills and better educations. However, many illiterate women also live in the cities, particularly those who have recently emigrated from rural areas. Recently, factors such as poor security, lack of job opportunities, and drought in many rural areas have forced many rural Afghan families into urban areas and big cities.

While insecurity, a lack of infrastructure, and weak business-supporting policies and services negatively affect all legitimate economic growth in Afghanistan, Afghan women face unique challenges in sustainably engaging in their country's economy. The historical context in Afghanistan renders women as less than equal to men (Ganesh, 2013). This limits the way women are viewed by society and the way they view themselves. The economic empowerment of women in terms of policy in Afghanistan is greatly complicated by the interlinked absence or limited presence of human rights. While short-term initiatives and efforts by politicians, academics, civil society activists, political parties, religious scholars, tribal elders, provincial councils, members of commerce and trade and other groups are critical to keeping the momentum going, more

long-term term human and resource investment is vital for the rejuvenation of society (Ganesh, 2013).

During the Soviet occupation, Afghan women were a strong part of the academic and professional fabric of society; they studied and served as doctors, engineers, and professors. In urban Afghanistan, women were involved in a variety of professions since the 1940s. They had active participation in jobs as teachers, doctors, government workers, and entertainers. According to the World Development Index, by 1990, 34 percent of the formal labor force was female (Gender Stats, 2002). Just six years later, women made up half of the civil service in Afghanistan (Malikyar, 1998).

However, since then and due in large part to the Taliban's rule, the position of women in society has changed. Afghan women frequently lack the support of their families and the community for being allowed to work outside the home. Ganesh (2013) indicated that family and community support for women's work outside of the home has fallen from 71 percent in 2006 to 62 percent in 2011. This often serves as a deterrent to women's participation in the workplace. Another survey in 2012 found that 80 percent of women say women should be allowed to work outside the home compared to just over half, 55 percent, of men. Likewise, significantly more urban respondents agree with the statement. The highest levels of support for women working outside the home are reported in the Northwest, with 80 percent support followed by, central/Kabul, 75 percent, central/ Hazarajat, 71 percent, Northeast, 65 percent, East, 59 percent and West, 58 percent. Opposition is highest in the Southwest, at 55 percent but also significant in the east with 40 percent and west with 38 percent (Hopkins et al., 2012).

Women's representation in the labor market is disorganized and piece-meal (Ganesh, 2013). The data collection and analysis of the women's labor participation is very weak in the country. Women's representation in the job market remains at the lower end of value chains for the lack of access to many internal and external resources. The chief problem for female entrepreneurs in Afghanistan is the conservative attitude of the community and the larger society; these attitudes make it difficult for a woman to function and to make decisions independent of a husband or father. These issues have particular relevance for establishing and running an enterprise. Furthermore, women "are not consulted nor represented in dialogues on national trade policies and international trade consultations, therefore, their particular needs and concerns are not surfaced, recognized and addressed" (Ganesh, 2013, P 51).

Afghanistan is in a post-conflict period which urgently needs suitable policy and strategy interventions in its development process. Most of the social and economic structures of the country have been hampered by a dearth of resources and political influence. Women's economic empowerment in the county has been negatively affected for the past several decades. Current development structures and sectors involved in the system are comparatively new and face a myriad of financial and technical obstacles. These challenges are common to many situations. There is no clear political agenda, there is also marginal influence within government, and few human and financial resources available in the system (O'Connell, 2011). Evidence of successful support for women's ministries or institutions in conflict-affected and fragile states, in the form of institutional

capacity building, donor influence and sectorial gender audits, is slender and very context specific (O'Connell, 2011).

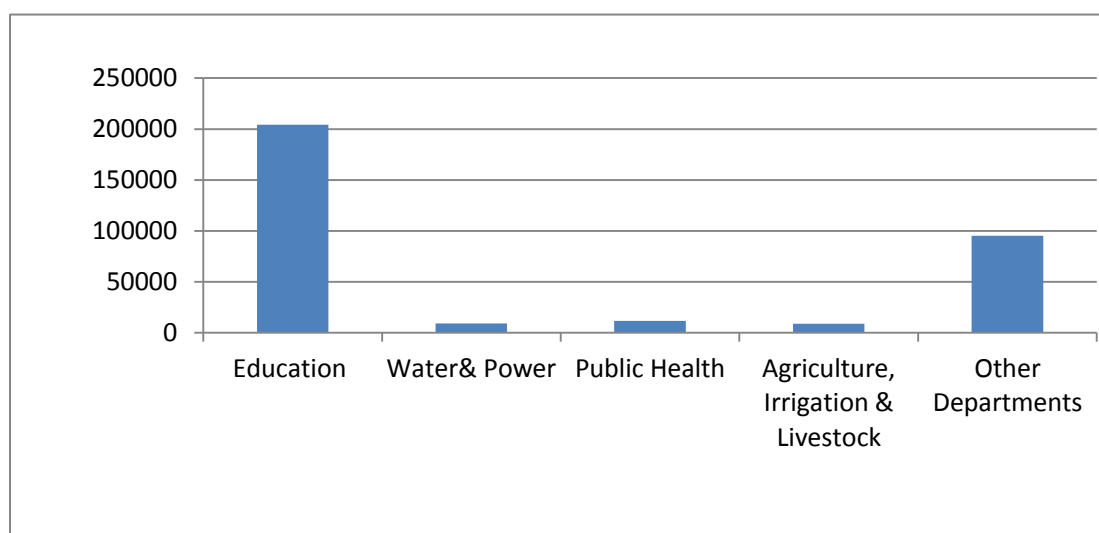
Diversity of backgrounds in Afghan communities has been challenging for the development process. The existence of several religions, ethnicities and languages among Afghan community members require different relevant policies and strategies in the development process of the country, particularly those in relation to women's development programs. O'Connell (2011) in her article, *What are the opportunities to promote gender equity and equality in conflict-affected and fragile states?* emphasizes the importance of political and leadership gains for women in the process of women's economic empowerment in the post-conflict period. She believes that women's economic empowerment should reflect and build their political empowerment and leadership skills. Externally-supported or internally-driven activities should avoid reverting to programs that solely target women's gender roles as careers and household managers (O'Connell, 2011, p, 462).

Although the majority of Afghan women are illiterate and living in rural areas, the number of girls and women in schools and universities in cities is growing significantly. Therefore, it is important to seek comprehensive economic solutions which lead to employment for women with different capabilities across the country. Having very skilled women in the job market is a part of national development, and will decrease the country's dependence on foreign experts and human resources.

A global analysis by the ILO (2010) finds that worldwide women are overrepresented in sectors that are characterized by low status and pay (Elborgh et al.,

2013). In Afghanistan as well the representation of women in the labor market is limited to a few fields, mostly within government sectors. The following chart indicates the sectors with the highest employment rate among Afghan men and women workforce in 2009.

Figure 1. Sectors With Most Employees in 2009- (CSO)



Representation of women within the government sector is highly concentrated in education. The challenges that Afghan women face are considerable and require a strategic and multifaceted approach to overcome. Women must be empowered at all levels of economic engagement; at the livelihoods level, as employees, and as business owners—and they require the development of an enabling environment that promotes their abilities in achieving those goals (Elborgh et al., 2013). The present figures on university educated women indicate a significant improvement in women's higher education for the past several years. However, moving this educated workforce into the development process of the country has been less successful and has received less attention by the government of Afghanistan and its international allies.

Although accessibility to education is widespread in cities, urban areas and some rural parts of the country, the majority of the population, particularly women, are still illiterate. Lack of female dormitories and proper public transportation are major problems for many rural female high school graduates to enter higher education in big cities. As previously noted, the rate of illiteracy among Afghan women as estimated by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education in 2012 may be as high as 85 percent (Afghanistan Ministry of Education, 2012). On the other hand, there are more than 40,000 female graduating students from all disciplines in cities like Kabul, Herat, Mazare-Sharif and Jalalabad (MoHE, 2012). Unfortunately, the ratios of women graduating from universities and women employed in the labor market do not correspond.

There is no specific study on the employment rate of university educated women in Afghanistan. However, the level of women's participation in social and economic sector is gradually increasing reaching between 35 to 50 percent in some fields. In 2007, generally speaking around 18 percent of women were employed in all fields. MoLSA has allocated an appropriate share for women in different programs, particularly technical and professional training. For instance, in 2008, 326,513 individuals have been recruited in governmental agencies, and private sectors, out of which 35 percent are women (United Nations, 2011). However, a high number of women graduating from universities simply cannot find work in their field of study. The number of young educated women who will need jobs will only continue to grow.

The lower representation of university educated women in the job market and the economy of Afghanistan is a new, invisible, and fast growing problem in the country.

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of university educated women since 2002. A real return of Afghan women to higher education began in 2002 after decades of conflict and the Taliban's ban on women's education. This period also saw a significant increase of male students asking for higher education and requiring a job.

Unfortunately most of the women's development allocated budgeting and human workforce were channeled to and mobilized in highly damaged infrastructures or improving the most essential public services such as, public health, primary education, child mortality, and drinking water. After achieving a moderate satisfaction on those primary set-targets in the last decade, women's empowerment process is entering into a new development phase. The graduation of thousands of young potential women and men from higher education institutions across the country and mobilization of this huge workforce into the economic development process of the country demands a new era of systematic planning and decision-making at micro and macro levels. The subject of university educated women's employment should be studied as an issue of national development. It should not be limited to and considered as a women's issue only.

The population of the country is growing younger. Around 64 percent of the current population, about 32 million is estimated to be under the age of 25 (Index mundi, n.d.). Thus, there is a population of around 20.5 million under the age of 25 in Afghanistan. On the other hand, the growth rate of the population is 2.25 percent in Afghanistan (Index mundi, n.d.). Now, if we want to have an estimation of young work force by the year 2025, we would have around 29 million young workers of which at least 50 percent would be women. Therefore, the consideration of such a huge number

into the macro-economic and development process of the country in long run is highly important. Asamoah (2014) in a study analysis of African countries mentioned that “the higher density of the population allows domestic markets to be created, demand to emerge and local firms to develop in an economic environment that is more business friendly than 20 or 30 years ago” (Surge in Domestic firms, para, 1). The huge number of university educated women projected by 2025 is one aspect of improving gender equality in the society, but the main purpose of this huge investment is to transfer their knowledge into the development process of the country.

Findings from the report on *Equality and Work Economy, Social and Cultural Rights* (2004) conducted by International Women’s Rights Watch demonstrate conclusively that gender equality with regard to rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in a holistic approach is essential to maximizing the economic and developmental potential of a country. However, just as investing in women and girls can create a positive development cycle in state-building process of the country; the opposite can have a negative impact on women’s empowerment. For instance, families may be more reluctant to support their female members’ higher education, causing a community to shift toward gender inequality in the long term. Also, countries that fail to empower half their population will suffer lower productivity, slower economic growth, and weaker development outcomes.

CHAPTER THREE

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Women Development in Global Context

Women's rights movements across the world went through numerous ups and downs in the past centuries. Women activists have worked consistently to gain rights to higher education, suffrage, equal payment for equal work, and other social, economic, legal, and political rights. Women's rights and women's empowerment issues soon became an important topic for international human rights agencies like the United Nations. In 1946, the United Nations established a commission on the status of women which is now part of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since then, a series of conferences on women's issues have been organized by the UN in different parts of the world. These conferences have created an international forum for women's rights, but also illustrated divisions among women of different cultures and the difficulties of attempting to apply principles universally (UN women, 2014). There have been four major world conferences on women's rights and women's empowerment issues namely in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995) respectively. In 2010, UN Women was founded by merging several women and gender related departments and institutes within UN organizational structures by General Assembly resolution (UN Women, 2014).

Globally, it is known that economically empowering women is essential to bring about positive changes in women's lives and societies through achieving broader

development goals such as economic growth, poverty reduction, health, education and welfare. In the Afghan context, women's economic empowerment can additionally be contextualized as first, the availability of economic opportunity that monetizes and/or makes visible their labor and second, the allowance given by socio-cultural norms and economic contexts to access these opportunities (Ganesh, 2013).

While it can be seen that definitions of women's empowerment have, from the outset, encompassed an economic dimension, this dimension has become increasingly visible within the international policy discourse in recent years. The Beijing Platform for Action spoke of the need to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and 'ensuring equal access for all women to productive resources, opportunities and public services'. The Millennium Development Goals on gender equality and women's empowerment adopted an increase in women's share of non-agricultural employment as one of its indicators of women's empowerment. 'Full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people' were later added as a target in relation to the overarching MDG on halving extreme poverty. (Kabeer, 2012,p, 7)

Women's empowerment is now the third of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, established in 2000 by the UN, are quantifiable, time-bound, and focus on key aspects of development, as well as on establishing a partnership between developed and developing countries. The MDGs provide benchmarks for measuring the progressive realization of human rights among the nations. The enormous gap between the potential realization of development and actual attainment has led to a global determination to broaden and deepen international cooperation. The Millennium Declaration recognizes that "in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level." (Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] & Human Rights, 2013, p, 23). Women's empowerment is a key indicator of the world's

development process. Furthermore, empowering women has a direct impact on several others of the MDGs. For instance, economically empowered women can elevate the economic status of a country, decrease the poverty rate, increase the level of education among children and improve the health status of their children and family members.

Provision of women empowerment opportunities is under the condition of provision of equal rights and equal access in deployment of available resources among all members of the community, including women. The representation and contributions of educated women in the development process of the country, as in the labor market of a country, can play a significant role in maximum utilization of the human talents and stability in a community. Implementing policies that remove labor market distortions and create a level playing field for all will give women the opportunity to develop their potential and to participate in economic life more visibly (Elborgh et al., 2013). There is ample evidence that when women are able to develop their full labor market potential, there can be significant macroeconomic gains (Loko & Diouf, 2009; Dollar & Gatti, 1999).

Aguirre and others (2012) suggested that raising the Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)² to country-specific male levels would, for instance, raise GDP in the United States by 5 percent, in Japan by 9 percent, in the United Arab Emirates by 12 percent, and in Egypt by 34 percent. Based on International Labor Organization (ILO) data, Aguirre and others (2012) estimated that of the 865 million women worldwide who have the potential to contribute more fully to their national

² Labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period (World Bank).

economies, 812 million live in emerging and developing nations. The employment of women on an equal basis would allow companies to make better use of the available talent pool, with potential growth implications (Barsh & Yee, 2012; CAHRS 2011). While not uncontroversial, there is also evidence of a positive impact of women's presence on boards and in senior management on companies' performance. Companies with female managers could be better positioned to serve consumer markets dominated by women (CED, 2012; CAHRS, 2011) and more gender-diverse boards could enhance corporate governance by offering a wider range of perspectives (OECD, 2012; Lord Davies, 2013). Moreover, a larger share of women in decision-making positions could reduce the share of high-risk financial transactions that are normally conducted by male traders (Coates & Herbert, 2008).

While women now represent 40 percent of the global labor force (World Bank, 2011), FLFPR have hovered around 50 percent over the past two decades. The average rate masks significant cross-regional differences in levels and trends: FLFPRs vary from a low of 21 percent in the Middle East and North Africa to over 63 percent in East Asia and the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa. While Latin America has seen increases in FLFPR of some 13 percentage points over the past two decades, rates have been declining in South Asia. The rate in Europe and Central Asia has stayed broadly constant (Elborgh et al., 2013). The recent report from Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) revealed that FLFPR in Afghanistan is estimated around 25 percent. This reveals the fact that the labor participation for women in Afghanistan is significantly below the world average.

Women Development in the Context of Afghanistan

The year 2002 is known as the beginning of a new chapter of life for many Afghan women across the country. This is the year public bans on women's education, women's work outside of the home, and many other socioeconomic restrictions for women were lifted six years of the Taliban regime which was known as the darkest era in the history of Afghan women. Even though the new government has been criticized for a high rate of corruption, insufficiency, and weak performance for developing women's rights in the country, it has been able to achieve adequate and acceptable progress on the national and international gender equality norms for the last ten years. The country has signed, ratified, and endorsed several national and international resolutions and treaties in many sectors, whose principles and guidelines serve as a framework for some of the existing laws, policies, strategies that have direct and indirect impacts on women empowerment process. United Nations resolution 1325, Convention to Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are some of the examples at international level. In treaties on fairness, protection and non-exploitation of employees in the labor market, Afghanistan has ratified 19 International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions including on equal remuneration for work of equal value and non-discrimination in employment and occupation (Ganesh, 2103). Afghanistan's ratification of these treaties serves as additional protection for women's rights as the country is legally bound to these resolutions and treatises through its Constitution and through the Bonn Agreement (Ganesh, 2103).

At the national level, the government has been able to develop the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS)³ and National Strategy Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA)⁴, where particular attention has been given to the women's legal, social, and economic rights. Within various components of ANDS, gender equity and women's effective participation within the development process have been well-synthesized and emphasized. The Gender Equity Cross Cutting Strategy is the basis for ANDS to address women's historical disadvantages. The strategy provides a road map for various sectors to bring changes to women's position in society, as well as their socio-economic condition and access to development opportunities. It further emphasizes all government sectors must pursue commitments for all women's development as embodied in the constitution, Afghanistan MDGs, Afghanistan compact, Interim-ANDS, and international treaties, such as CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action(BPFA), (ANDS, 2010). However, implementation of these new laws has been challenging and problematic for the young developing government of Afghanistan. Moreover, a lack of active and powerful women in policy and decision making positions is another cause for poor implementation and observation of such laws within the government sectors.

³ The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), formally approved by President Hamid Karzai on April 21, 2008, is the document that outlines the Government of Afghanistan's strategies for security, governance, economic growth and poverty reduction (the embassy of Afghanistan).

⁴ The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) is the main vehicle of government for implementing its gender commitments in the Constitution, Millennium Development Goals, Afghanistan Compact, ANDS and other national and international policy instruments on women (NAPWA 2008).

Afghanistan's women's economic empowerment process needs high profile and prominent entities of women activists both at national and international level. The presence of national and international well-recognized powerful women activists and business women will function both as developing policies and strategies, and as role models for many other young educated women in the country. Warner in her report *Women's Leadership* (2014), states that lack of a role model for many women in the male heavy dominated organizations is a prickly and tenacious structural barrier.

Moreover, Afghanistan needs to develop awareness of female leaders in politics, business, academia, and the various economic sectors in and outside of the country. Dialogue should strive not only to build women's access to tools that support their participation in the economy, but also to reach out to both men and women to help them understand how Afghanistan can overcome a culture in which women are valued less than men. Women must be empowered and the enabling environment must be changed (Benton, Heinzelman, & Sackett, 2012).

Hillary Rodham Clinton has been globally recognized as a pre-eminent woman activist, striving for women's rights everywhere. Clinton has been very cooperative and responsive, and promoting women's development programs in Afghanistan for the past several years. She spearheaded efforts to connect Afghan women activists to stakeholders and donor agencies at a macro level. As Secretary of State of the United States, she further lobbied for strengthening women's empowerment at policy and decision making levels.

Hilary Clinton is known as a motivator for many Afghan women activists. She held constant meetings with women activists and civil rights societies in the country, encouraging them to bridge the gap between the women rights activists in Afghanistan at ground level with authorities, donor agencies, and policy and decision makers across the world. She has been truly committed to Afghan women in for the transition period and to their contribution to the important and higher level positions in the development process of the country.

Afghan business women and entrepreneurs are very important in maintaining and observing the social and traditional values and beliefs in the community. A number of prominent young educated women enterprises in Afghanistan have provided positive position for other educated women seeking economic opportunities. Their entrepreneurships and businesses have provided many new job opportunities for women and men. Moreover, the gender equality norms within these women- led enterprises are the best in the country. They are gender oriented and have provided a trusting and safe work environment for many working women, families and community members.

Kamila Siddiqi is the founder and CEO of Kaweyan Business Development Services (KBDS) Company in Afghanistan. For several years, she has been recognized as one of the most prominent Afghan business women. Her career began with a small dressmaking business in Kabul; she expanded the business to about 100 women employees during Taliban's time. Gayle Tzemach Lemmon who worked for the ABC News Political Unit, wrote the book *the Dress Maker of Khairkhan* (2012). The book tells the riveting true story of Kamila Seddiqi and her dressmaking business in 2002, she

opened Afghanistan's first business development consultancy company (KBDS) in order to promote business and entrepreneurship for and potentially qualified Afghan women. Despite their qualifications, Siddiqi noticed many female job seekers were unequipped for the search itself. They "are young intelligent women with university degrees, but no knowledge about how to get jobs," she says (VOCES, 2013, para 2). With support from the USAID-funded Afghan Workforce Development Program (AWDP), Siddiqi's KBDS trains women to create an action plan, perfect their interview skills, write compelling CVs and market their skills. The training accelerates a process that she says can otherwise take more than two years. To date, the program has graduated 146 women in Kabul, of which 46 found jobs, received promotions or raises (VOCES, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW APPROACHES TO EDUCATED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY

The Government of Afghanistan and big donor agencies like World Bank, USAID, and UN Women are the main contributors to the women's development process. As a coordinator and implementer of some of these projects, the government plays a vital role in creating a systematic plan for the appropriate mobilization of resources. The reconstruction process during the last ten years has been uneven – a weakness which is acknowledged by the country's decision and policy makers and the international committees.

The government of Afghanistan needs to study and analyze all potential internal and external resources in order to develop a systematic framework and action plan for the upcoming years. At the regional level, it must explore regional macro-economic programs and must coordinate efforts for expanding international business programs, women's economy and business forums with countries like India, China, South Korea, and United Arab Emirates.

However, the important upcoming political changes in the country, such as the presidential election and the high possibility of international forces' withdrawal from the country in 2014, may affect all development processes in the country, particularly the process of women empowerment. Therefore, it is the task of the upcoming government and its international donors to maintain and improve the development process for Afghan

women. The new government of Afghanistan needs to institutionalize the participation of women particularly in the national economic development process, and make use of 50 percent of its local workforce and talents.

Current collaborations and ties with donor agencies need to be strengthened in order to design a systematic mechanism and framework for women's participation in the economy. Since the country receives its largest and most sustainable financial support from these institutions, it is highly recommended that the government make women's economic role a priority. However, this requires more research through scientific field studies, as well as planning at the micro and the macro level.

Based on *Transparency International* report 2012, the government of Afghanistan was among the third most corrupted governments in the world. The influx of millions of dollars for reconstruction of the country has resulted in negligible achievements since 2002. Many of the designed and planned infrastructure projects are yet untouched. Most of the funds have been spent on education, health services, legal rights, and public women's rights awareness. Thus, for the past twelve years, women's economic empowerment has not been a priority. This is more evident for university educated women and their representation in the economy.

Despite a low amount of investment for and push towards a viable women's economy, several small and medium pilot projects at the grassroots level have been launched. These projects are limited to illiterate women and women with lower skills. Sewing, embroidery, carpet weaving, handicrafts, and livestock have been the major economic vehicles for these women for several years. Unfortunately, the last ten years

has seen very few macro-economic projects designed for women. Although larger amounts of capital and human resources including millions of dollars, have been dedicated to women empowerment projects, no significant impacts on the economic status of women.

Since the establishment of the new government, some of the governmental sectors and departments have gender departments within their structures. Gender units in all respondent ministries are discrete from the planning and policy-making units of the ministries. Most gender unit staff are lower-ranking and do not contribute to policies, implementation and impact assessment of the ministerial projects and programs; the lead person is sometimes senior and therefore can participate. The practical job remit of gender units seems to chiefly focus on the recruitment of women into the ministries. Some gender units have conducted a few intra-ministry trainings. In some ministries their job is seen as restricted to celebrating Mother's Day and International Women's Day, when banners and posters are made and small ceremonies are held within the Ministry for those staff who care to attend (Ganesh, 2013). Among those ministries with a gender policy, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)'s policy is relatively substantive. MRRD has a Gender Directorate since 2011, and one of its more successful programs, the AREDP, also has had a Gender Equality Strategy tailored to meet its programmatic needs within the Gender Policy of MRRD (Ganesh 2013).

The lack of accountability within Ministries to gender mainstreaming is related to the low position given to Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) as an implementer. MoWA is seen as unable to "advocate counterparts in other ministries more forcefully or

successfully” (Ganesh, 2013, p, 68). MoWA as the main ministry on women’s development programs needs to have much higher capabilities and a larger implanting role in the system. However, the government has just begun to focus on women’s economic potential, and programs and strategies are underway to realize this potential. For these to be realized in full, all ministries and their strategies, as well as international aid, have to be fully oriented toward, especially, ANDS and to all principles of the NAPWA.

However, in most of the international conferences and their resolutions and declarations mentioned above, the “woman question,” when included in discussion and agreement, has remained focused on legal, social and political rights (Ganesh, 2013, p, 24). Women’s economic right, a key human right, has generally remained in the margins rather than as a fulcrum that could support other rights in the power dynamics of gender, both local and global. Legal steps need to be taken to facilitate and improve women’s access to and control over assets, investments and, their ability to utilize their income and credit, and provide safety nets against potential risks (Ganesh, 2013). In particular, it must be noted that the economic empowerment of women, particularly, university educated women, has not been reviewed as much in this past decade, as compared to the number of projects undertaken and resources invested. Ganesh (2013) believes that Afghan women’s economic engagement has generally been overlooked and concentrated in favor of vocational training and micro-jobs like sewing or learning to operate a computer, which have had no specific market outlets.

The World Bank, USAID and UN Woman are designing and developing new long-run women and gender development projects for the country, which indicate optimism for the future of Afghan women after 2014. “PROMOTE”, a new designed project funded by USAID, is aimed to transfer economic and legal power for young Afghan educated women during the next five years. The PROMOTE program is designed to take decisive and long-term action to protect women’s current gains and maintain the momentum for future progress. PROMOTE will provide educated, young women with opportunities to develop strong, demand-driven technical skills, plus senior level management and leadership abilities and facilitate women’s entry and advancement into mid-high level positions in government, the private sector, business, entrepreneurship and civil society. There is unlikely to be a better confluence of financial resources and political will to influence the long-term preservation and advancement of Afghan women’s rights and opportunities than now (Johnson, 2013). This is more focused on educated women in order to provide them the adequate opportunities to assume effective and positive roles in the development process.

PROMOTE is based on the premise that this vigorous, long-term investment will produce a critical mass of women leaders in key, mainstream sectors in Afghanistan. This critical mass will change the decision making paradigm at the upper levels of government, civil society and the economy, enabling women’s perspectives and priorities to shape the national agenda, significantly improving the lives of girls and women at all levels and resulting in more inclusive, effective and sustainable social, political and economic progress for the country. PROMOTE will invest in opportunities that enable

educated women to enter and advance into decision making positions in Afghanistan's public, private and civil society sectors. For young women, particularly those who have higher education and are qualified, PROMOTE will provide access to advanced professional development opportunities through four specific trainings. There are four specific projects under the PROMOTE umbrella which are as follows: (1) Women in the Economy, (2) Women's Rights Groups and Coalitions, (3) Women in Government, and (4) Women's Leadership Development.

World Bank has recently announced that USD 100 million will go towards upgrading the higher education system in the country (Afghan Ministry of Higher Education, 2013). Additionally, the United States has given \$92 million for the development of the higher education system in Afghanistan (BBC, 2013). Furthermore, UN Women through its worldwide women's development programs has shown a strong determination towards women empowerment programs in Afghanistan for coming years. The exclusive role of UN Women in the World can bring more integration in the women's development process across the world. The particular attention of organization over Afghanistan can be platform for many women's rights activists to mainstream the women development programs accordingly with other women across the world. The recently initiated program called *Women Business Competition* invites women business developers and entrepreneurs to a global competition. The program is coordinated by the European Union which is one of the main project donors after the World Bank to development programs of women in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2013). All the above

mentioned financial and technical aids will strengthen the different components in relation to women's economy programs in Afghanistan.

In addition to this, the international Center for Afghan Women Economics Development (ICAWED) is an American University of Afghanistan initiative. It is a pioneering institution dedicated to advancing the role of women in Afghanistan's economy. The center will function as headquarters to incubate female-led small and medium-sized businesses, provide business training to female entrepreneurs, funnel investment capital to promising women-run businesses, and provide access for women to all the business and information technology assets at the American University of Afghanistan (American University of Afghanistan, n.d.).

Nilofar Sakhi, the executive director of the ICAWED stated; We have a range of international NGOs working in Afghanistan on women's economic empowerment. That being said, for most of them there's always an uncertainty about issues like funding and whether they will be staying or leaving after 2014. The permanence of our state-of-the-art center stands in marked contrast. No other facility exists like this in the entire country. We want to send a clear message; we're not going anywhere (American University of Afghanistan, n.d.).

The year 2014 will be the beginning of new phase of development for the people of Afghanistan, particularly for women. The pull out of the U.S. Army and its international allies and the nationalization of the Afghan army may bring some new political games and instabilities into the region. Thus, there is a possibility of losing a decade of reconstruction efforts and achievements, particularly those in relation to women's development programs. The political and financial realities of transition threaten the preservation and expansion of women's rights in Afghanistan. Women and girls would be sorely affected, perhaps losing even the basic human rights they have

gained over the last decade, and the country risks being deprived of the productive contributions of half of its population, greatly diminishing the nation's development prospects.

Designing, planning, and implementation of numerous projects in the last ten years should provide valuable lessons and experiences not only for the government of Afghanistan, but also for donor agencies, including The World Bank, UN agencies and USAID to rethink their projects and performance for better reflexivity and outputs in the long run. As part of a demand-driven and community-based approach, women should be explicitly targeted for job recruitment, which will be highly beneficial to agricultural production and incomes (World Bank, 2005, p, 71). Provisions of viable small and medium sized entrepreneurship opportunities for those with developed skills and education can be a secondary means of developing women's economy in urban areas. Technical entrepreneurship knowledge along the necessary capital should be provided for these women. The availability of strong potential agriculture and handicrafts domestic markets and employment opportunities for women, and higher demand in national and international markets for the products of these industries can help women in developing new entrepreneurship and business ideas. However, given existing regulatory issues and monetary problems, it is easier for women to start with light manufacturing and services.

The rapid growth in Information Technology (IT) and communication industries in the country can trigger a number of other innovative entrepreneurships for young female IT professionals. The demand for IT services is rapidly growing within the young

developing markets of Afghanistan. IT-educated women can gain a good portion of this young industry if they receive financial and technical support from relevant institutions.

Technology entrepreneur Roya Mahboob is working in clever new ways to change this continuing cultural stereotype. Mahboob's Afghan Citadel Software Co., an IT consulting firm founded in 2010, employs 25 people, 18 of whom are women. Her employees develop software and databases for private companies, government ministries and NATO. To make these jobs more accessible to Afghan women, five of the employees are able to work from home (Sandberg, 2013).

In Afghanistan, the major innovation needed now is the entry and advancement of qualified Afghan women into senior positions in major sectors of mainstream society.

Achieving a critical mass of women in leadership roles in government, civil society and the economy will make the phenomenon of women seeking and acquiring such roles less unusual, less inappropriate and will be viewed as a more "normal" pattern of behavior.

When applied to women, the critical mass theory is quite specific about how the advantages of women's leadership contributions accrue to and thus become apparent to and accepted by family, community, company, and country (Johnson, 2013).

Afghanistan has long been an agricultural economy, and has mostly been regularized by public sectors. With the establishment of the new government in 2002, the support for strengthening the private sectors and the shift into industrial and service providing economy in the country grew rapidly. Numbers of private institutions have been established since then to boost the private business and entrepreneurships in the country. The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) are the major private institutions in the country regulating norms and policies for the business and industries practicing within the private

domain. According to the World Bank, Afghanistan Investment Climate report in 2008, the private sector in Afghanistan is growing and has doubled in size since 2005 in spite of widespread corruption, crime and theft, weak economics regulation and policy enforcement, weak electricity supply and weak access to land and finance. Average growth in the surveyed companies is very high. The World Bank's 2008 survey of 1,066 Afghan companies in 10 cities showed that 77 percent of firms planned to expand in 2009, eight percent of them internationally.

Recent studies by the World Bank revealed that the private sector makes up 80 to 90 percent of the total economic structure of Afghanistan. However, women in this structure have comparatively lower contribution than men in the market. Nevertheless, micro-entrepreneurs in big cities and urban areas showed that urban women are more present in services, such as cutting hair, tailoring, embroidery, and carpet weaving. The development ground for university educated women has not been set adequately in Afghanistan. In addition, the concept of the entrepreneurship and operation of small and medium skills business has not been well-developed among the young educated population, particularly women.

Although the desire to work in the private sector among young educated Afghans, including women, is high, the country's poor economic condition has limited the private sector from providing enough employment opportunities for everyone. Better wages and better work concessions are the major reasons for many young people, including young educated women, entering private sectors for their professional careers. However, women's work, out of the house, whether in private or public sectors, is not yet well-

perceived and well-respected among many Afghan families in the country. The working environment in the highly disciplined private sector, particularly within multinational organizations and corporations, is more gender friendly than the public sectors in Afghanistan. Integration of the international norms and policies into the system means the private sector more readily meets human rights norms and standards within the working environment. Although there is no specific study, there is a high rate of sexual harassments within working environment in Afghanistan, particularly in the civil institutions. Sexual harassment at the workplace — as well as lack of mechanisms to address complaints arising from it — is one of the main impediments to female participation in the workforce (Mashal, 2013).

To increase the participation of young educated women in the private sectors, women need supportive programs such as English, computer skills, internet skills, management and leadership and other new technologies. Also, representation of women in corporate and economics majors at higher education level needs to be strengthened. Furthermore, gender norms within private sectors need to be developed. This is more demanding for small and medium local institutions in order to entice the trust of the women and the community for private sector employment. The government can also subsidize and support with better regulatory and operating environment for those organizations and companies with stronger women oriented structures, particularly those being run by women. The existence of a large number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at national and international level and UN agencies has provided potential employment opportunities for many young Afghan people including women.

CHAPTER FIVE

SURVEY FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

A methodology review is an important aspect of a study through which the researcher evaluates various procedures that may be used and identifies how different methodologies will result in different outcomes of the study (Neuman, 2006). Based on the nature of the research analysis of the subject, I used qualitative methods to collect and to interpret the data collected for this study. The research subject in this thesis is a new research area of social science in Afghanistan and there is not much literature and quantitative information to guide the area of study. The research methods also include the analysis of documents, materials and several semi-structured interviews and participants' observations through different surveys. Although the semi-structured interviews and the surveys used online technology, the information gathered allowed me to gain closer insights and information into the culture's practices, motivations and emotions as a member of Afghan community.

Data Collection Process

To identify and explore the status of university educated Afghan women, two different questionnaires were designed and used. Both the surveys were designed to be anonymous. A paper based survey with 15 questions was designed and conducted by 10 men and 10 women students in School of Journalism, Herat University, Herat, Afghanistan and 10 men and 10 women students from the School of Economics, Kahkashan-e-Sharq University, Herat, Afghanistan.

An online questionnaire through Survey Monkey was designed and conducted among 18 Afghan women university degree holders from different academic and career backgrounds. The respondents to this survey were mostly educated and employed from two cities, Kabul and Herat. The demographic findings indicate that 77 percent of the participants were in the age group of 22 to 30 and remaining 23 percent were over the age of 30. Also 55 percent of the participants were married and had their own family life. The findings also show that 85 percent of them are employed and they are working in different public and private sectors. All the women graduate participants hold only a bachelor's degree from a higher education institution in Afghanistan. They represent diverse academic backgrounds including, Business Administration, Law and Political Science, Business Accounting and Agriculture and Science.

The second tool applied for collecting data in this study was semi-structured interviews with representatives of government and non-governmental organizations and institutions in Afghanistan. The main focus of the questions identified for these interviews was the institution's plan, strategy, and policy for elevating the status of educated Afghan women in the job market and the economy of Afghanistan. These semi-structured interviews were conducted through emails or telephone conversations. Each interview began with a review of the informed consent letter that explained the purpose of study.

Herat province, as the second largest province in the country, was selected for the purpose of university students' survey in this study. Herat University is one of the largest public higher education institutions in the country which also covers Badghis, Ghor, and

Farah provinces in western region of the Afghanistan. There are also seven private universities and higher education institutions across the city. Based on Herat University, there were 10,429 students enrolled in Herat University in the academic year 2012 of which around 35 percent were female. Even though there is no specific data available for the number of students in private schools, several hundred men and women are enrolled in various private schools. There is a constant increase in the number of students, particularly women students, enrolling in higher education in the Herat province. The Department of Education in Herat announced that 53 percent of the total 17,400 new high school graduates participating in university entrance test (Kankoor) for higher education in Herat province are female (Frontier Post, February, 2014).

The School of Journalism at Herat University, as the second largest Journalism school in the country, was elected as one of the schools considered for this study. There are around 350 students enrolled in this school of which around 35 percent are women students (Herat University, 2014). A group of female and male students which consisted of 10 women and 10 men junior students participated in this survey. The School of Economics in Kakhkashan-e-Sharq University (KSU) is the second school selected for this survey Kakhkashan-e-Sharq University is one of the most prominent private universities in Herat province, founded by Afghan graduates of US universities of Brandeis and Oklahoma. There are 610 students enrolled in this university of which around 38 percent are women (Rasooli, personal interview, March 2014). The sample population selected for this survey consisted of 10 women and 10 men, all junior students from the School of Economics.

All student participants were Afghan citizens living in Herat city. They were mostly in the age category 18 to 22. The demographic data provided in this survey revealed that around 90 percent of the student participants were single. All the documents included the questionnaire and consent letters were translated into Dari/Persian (the local language) in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the research questions and other related information. One professor from each school was invited and agreed to conduct the survey. All the necessary information and guidance, including the consent letter were presented by selected professors to the students in the class before their participation in this survey. The questionnaires for all participants were kept anonymous through the entire process. The data obtained from these questionnaires were transformed to a basic Excel sheet and emailed to me.

Both men and women participated in this survey since the equality of job opportunities, employment, and equitable accessibility of the resources in the development process of a country are the issues that demand the integration and mainstreaming of men and women together in the community. Though perhaps strange to label as an opportunity structure, the attitude of men around the women who were successful are important lenses into their relative success (McCaw, 2013). Because the society is a male dominated structured, men in Afghanistan hold a comparatively higher political, economic, and social power. On the other hand, integration of men along with women into gender sensitive research such as, “women’s economic empowerment”, can strengthen the solidarity and the mass understanding of gender equality norms in the national development process of the country. Educated men’s views on mainstreaming of

educated women in the economics of Afghanistan are a critical factor in achieving the goal. It will further bring positive outcomes in designing and planning of micro and macro gender related policies in the country.

Research Findings

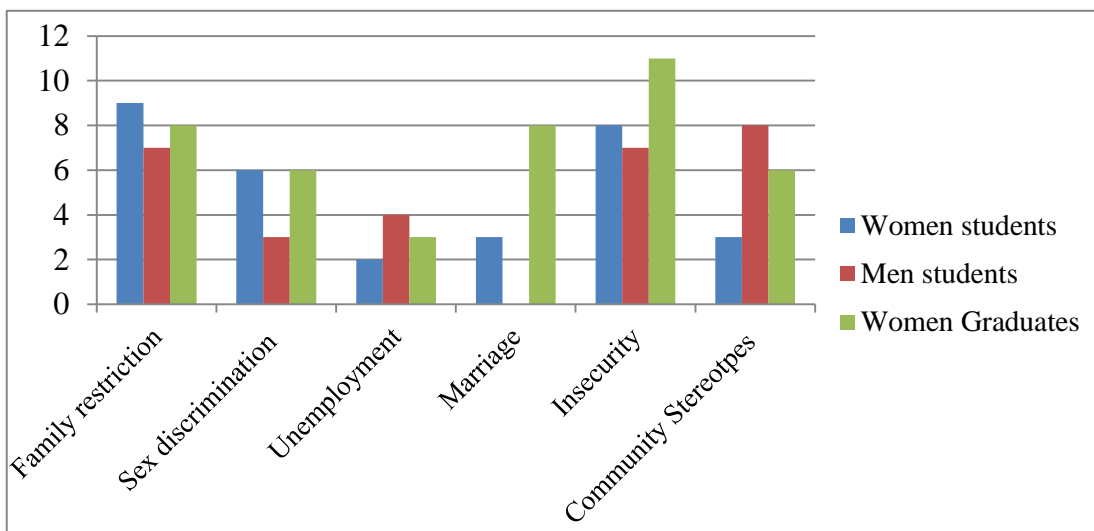
There were four steps designed for the data analyzing process of this study. Step one included organizing the information gathered from the three groups of participants, university students, university women graduates, and the representatives of governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations. In step two, the data collected was examined to identify relevant themes which were used as a framework for better analysis of data on the research subject. In step three, the themes were defined through studying and reviewing the data collected from all questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from the three above mentioned categories. The themes were then elaborated to obtain a deeper understanding of the subject. Step four involved creating textual and visual descriptions for each theme and subtheme.

Analyzing the responses to the questionnaires led to identification of important themes regarding the central phenomenon. The following four themes were identified through the data analysis: (1) Barriers for educated women and men to enter the job market, (2) Educated women can and should work in important and key positions, (3) The expectations from the Afghan government and the international communities to elevate the status of the educated women in the job market and the economy, (4) The employment options, expectations for educated workforce in the current condition.

The data indicate respondents recognize the existence of myriad barriers and obstacles for women to enter the job market and the workforce in the country.

Uncertainty about political unrest is marked by as one of the major barriers for educated women to enter the job market. About 65 percent of the male and female participants marked political unrest as an important barrier to enter job market. Family restrictions on limiting women's work out of house are the second largest barrier indicated by 50 percent of the women students and 45 percent of the women university graduates in entering the job market. The findings of the surveys indicate that young educated men have comparatively fewer family restrictions in entering job market. However, around 25 percent of the male participants indicated that family restrictions are issue for them, particularly for being employed outside of the city. Traditional family ties among many Afghan families can be an important cause, hindering young women and men from leaving for employment. The existence of gender inequalities in work environment was another major barrier for young educated men and women working outside their own towns. The following chart, illustrates the participants' responses in identifying the major barriers for educated women to enter job market after completion of their higher education.

Figure 2. Barrier for Educated Women to Enter the Job Market



Unemployment is another factor marked by all participants, particularly men students, as a major barrier in this question. Around 70 percent of them marked unemployment as a major barrier for them to enter the job market. Since the job market in Afghanistan is largely dominated by men and the rate of employment is very low, obtaining a job opportunity is highly competitive for men job seekers, including the young university educated men.

Even though unemployment in Afghanistan is one of the critical national concerns for the young generations of the country, only 34 percent of the women participants in this study believe unemployment can be an obstacle for them to enter the job market. The economy of the country is very fragile. In an analysis study done by USAID and Chemonics, Afghanistan ranked 183rd out of 183 economies in 2011 survey on national development for conducting and doing business USAID and Chemonics (cited in Ganesh, 2013, p, 29). Employment is one of the most important pillars in maintaining

development among the fast growing young population of Afghanistan. Although low employment is a widespread national concern for many Afghans, women students in this study do not see it as significant problem. However, it should be noted that around 50 percent of the women participants for this question were the employed women who do not consider unemployment as a serious concern.

Sex discrimination in the job market is another major reason that 45 percent of the men and women students and 33 percent of the women graduates selected as a barrier for educated women entering the job market. Sexual harassment at the workplace — as well as lack of mechanisms to address complaints arising from it — is one of the main impediments to female participation in the workforce. And the behavior is rampant. In civilian institutions, there are constant reports of verbal and physical harassment, blackmailing for sexual favors and the use of authority to coerce sex, according to interviews with several female workers, activists as well as independent studies (Mashal, 2013). While the above percentages of men and women believe sex discrimination is a problem for women entering job market, only 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of women participants determined that sex discrimination is a problem for educated men entering the job market.

Afghanistan is still known as one of the most traditional and conservative countries in the region. Women's work outside the home is a never-ending debate among many communities and tribes in the country. There are many community stereotypes of working women and this has adversely affected the mindset of the average man towards women's work outside the home. Even though the situation among families living in

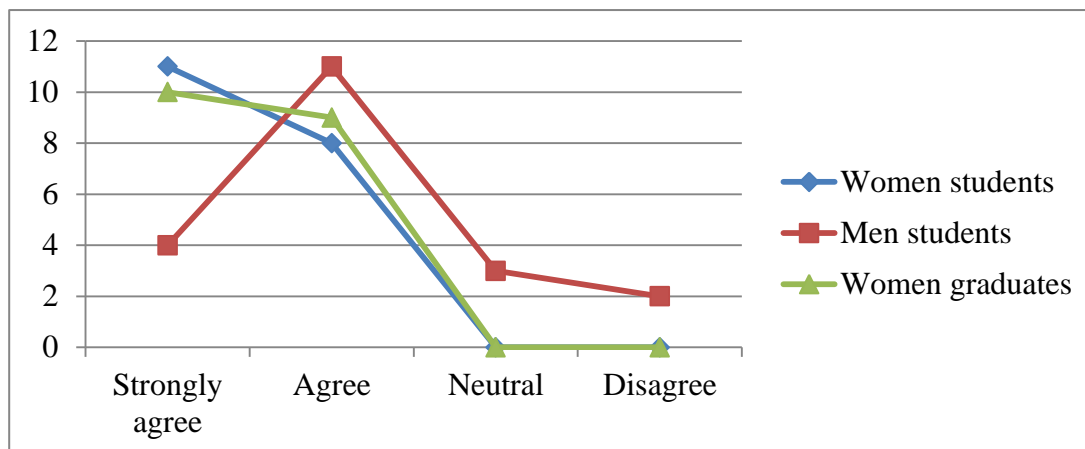
urban areas is improving, the larger portion of the population still need more time to associate and cooperate with women's work out of the home. As is illustrated in figure two, 15 percent of the women students and 33 percent of the women graduates believe that community stereotypes are serious challenges for them to enter the job market. The findings for this section indicate that the majority of women participants did not see community stereotypes as a barrier, while more than 50 percent of the men participants affirmed that community stereotypes challenge educated women seeking jobs. It can be concluded that most of the existing community stereotypes are male oriented stereotypes against women. Since men have more power and a stronger position in the social structures of Afghanistan, they can have an effective role in dismantling most of the existing stereotypes and wrongful traditional beliefs and behaviors against women's economic participation.

Lower payment and fewer job policy benefits such as insurance, bonus, and training opportunities in comparison to their male counterparts were marked by 46 percent women graduates as the major gender inequalities within work environments. Sexual harassment of various types, including verbal, non-verbal and physical harassments was indicated by 50 percent of the women graduates. Working at lower positions with lower skill activities, and slow promotions were the other major discriminations against women existing within the workforce.

Women's ability to work in important positions was viewed positively among all participants. The findings of the survey indicate that 100 percent of the women participants agreed on women's ability to be involved in important and decision making

positions. The following chart illustrates the respondents' attitude towards women's representation in working in important and decision making positions.

Figure 3. Educated Women Can Work in Important and Key Positions.



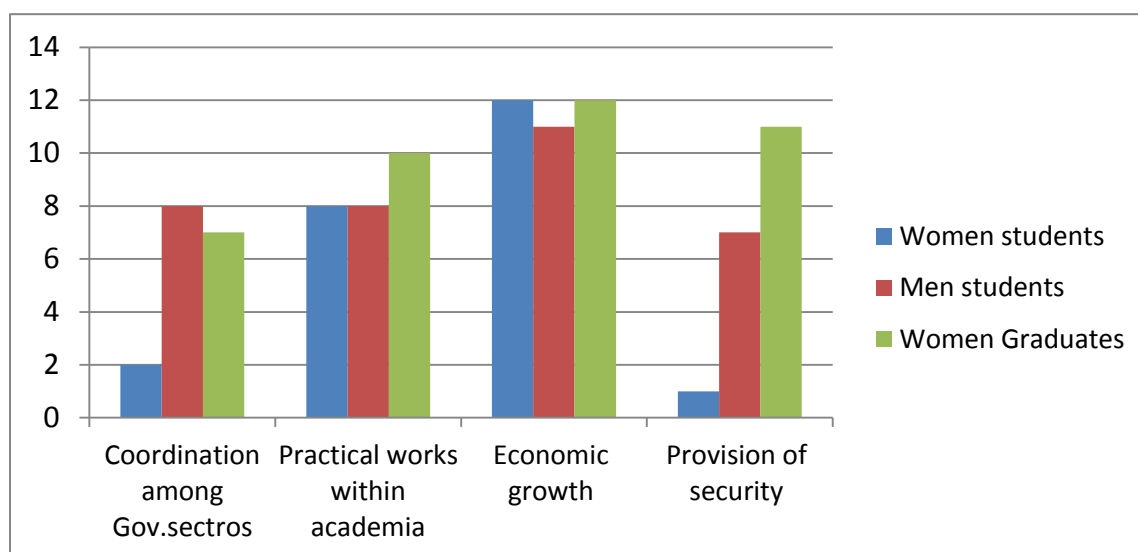
As indicated in the figure 3, 75 percent of the men participants also agreed that women can work in important and decision making positions. In response to the question, “Can educated women and men work together in important and decision making positions?”, 95 percent of all participants agreed that women and men should work together in important and decision making positions in order to bring more gender quality norms at macro-level in society.

The findings for these questions indicate that there is an acceptable gender parity understanding and equal sense of cooperation among young and educated men and women in the development process of the country. This conveys the fact that the current conservative and gender biased systems within the public and private systems will soon be changed with liberal and gender equality accepted norms and policies by the upcoming young and educated generation to Afghanistan.

As was stated in the literature review, the government of Afghanistan, donor agencies, and other international communities involved in the reconstruction process of the country equally play important roles in designing and implementing relevant policies and strategies in positioning of educated women more effectively in the job market and the economy of Afghanistan. In responses, participants indicate that a majority count the Afghan government and its international allies as potential levers to positively change the situation. MoHE for example is known as an important government sector in regularizing the higher education system to make it more practical and sufficient for everyone including women students.

Forty percent of the women and men students and 56 percent of the women graduates believe that institutionalizing some relevant practical works based on the needs and skills of each school can improve women's abilities before entering the competitive job market. The following chart illustrates the participants' point of views on important elements that Afghanistan government and its international allies can improve.

Figure 4. Role of the Government of Afghanistan and the International Communities.



Another factor selected by participants was developing practical and systematic coordination among relevant government sectors. The existence of institutional issues such as poor policy practices, lack of data, meritocracy, high practices of nepotism and favoritism, political unrest, and low resource availabilities are more evident in most of the government sectors. As illustrated in figure 4, around 50 percent of the participants see the lack of coordination as an important factor among the government sectors. One of the participants from the group of women graduates explained that:

The existing high rate of corruption among government sectors is a major obstacle for educated and skilled women to enter the job market. She believes many educated women and men cannot enter the job market, because they do not have the right personal relationship or the financial power. This engenders a distrusting environment and motion among many young educated men and women and it causes to lose their confidences in entering to a professional job market.

In answering the question “what specific supports do women students need along with their higher education in securing better positionality for entering the job market?”, around 70 percent of the women graduates believed that computer and internet skills, proficiency in English language, and management and leadership skills are very necessary for educated women to enter the job market. On the other hand, only 30 percent of women and men students declared that English language and computer skills are very important for women students before entering the job market. Although 70 percent of the students in this survey do not see English language, computer, and internet skills as essential for their future career, they should not ignore the globalization process of which Afghanistan is a part. The rapidly growing communication and technology industry in Afghanistan has connected the country to the world in all development sectors, including in the economic sector. Being an active and compatible member of this

game, it is a requirement to be equipped with enough knowledge of primary international communication means, which are English, computer and internet proficiencies. These programs can be provided through some short term courses or through some workshops, trainings, and seminars during the academic year.

Around 83 percent of the women graduate participants in this survey are employed. The knowledge gained through several years work experience within the public and private domains has given them a deeper understanding of elements relating to women's status in local job markets in Afghanistan. Rapid growth of private sectors, vast expansion of foreign investments in the country, and implementation of a wide range of modern technology within the country's economic cycles, demand an updated and skilled workforce.

Even though there is no specific data available about the degree of optimism among Afghan population, the upcoming important political shift in the country has been one among many uncertainties. The 2014 presidential election, the U.S. and international army withdrawal and continuing of the Taliban's attacks are the major threats; many Afghan people are concerned about the future of their lives in Afghanistan. However, based on a survey done by the Asia Foundation in Afghanistan in 2013, more than 57 percent of the people believe that Afghanistan is moving in a right direction and they are optimistic for the future of the country (Hopkins, 2013).

The pursuit of higher education among a good number of young Afghans mostly among those living in urban areas indicates a high degree of optimism among the most educated portion of the national population. The findings of this survey indicated that 94

percent of the women graduates are interested in continuing to pursue master and doctoral degrees in the future. In addition, 75 percent of the women students intend to pursue a master degree or even a doctoral degree in the future. Twenty five percent of the women participants, however, are not sure if they want to or if they will be able to continue a higher level of education in the future.

Level of optimism among women students for the future career life was 75 percent among the participants. Around 90 percent of the men students declared to be hopeful about their future career which shows a higher rate in comparing to their women counterparts. Women graduates in this study were more optimistic than women students. A high rate of employment among women graduate participants in this study may be why they are more optimistic about their careers than the women who have not yet graduated. Around 61 percent of women graduates are moderately hopeful for the future. Roughly 12 percent of them were either with low hope or they were pessimistic for their future's career. Even though a majority of women students in this study do not see unemployment as a real problem, their rate of optimism for the future career is comparatively lower than women graduates.

Although higher education is known as one of the developing sectors in the country, it still needs a lot of infrastructural development and expansion to reach an adequate response for the high public demand. Only a limited number of public and private universities offer higher education at graduation level. Kabul University and Nangarhar University are the two only public schools in the country which provide Masters Degrees in Education, Linguistics and Medical studies. On the other hand, the

American University of Afghanistan and Kardan University are private schools in Kabul which offer some degrees in Master of Business Administration (MBA).

The interest in advanced education among the young generation indicates that the higher education sector needs to be developed in terms of its infrastructures and expansion of its academic programs. Obtaining such goals will enable MoHE to cover a larger population among women and men students. However, to maintain such development momentum for higher education system in the country, the government of Afghanistan needs to generate a dynamic economy in order to absorb its educated human resources.

For the purpose of the data collection from the semi-structured interviews, Ministry of Economy (MoEc) and Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) were selected from the government sectors. Furthermore, Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), PROMOTE program from USAID and two local NGOs, namely, Voice of Women Organizations (VWO), and Women Agency of Social Services Association (WASSA) were selected for this purpose.

Since the study was conducted out of Afghanistan, the interview steps were preceded through number of emails and phone conversation. Despite constant contacts and regular communication with these interviewee institutions and organizations, only MoEc and VWO participated in the interview. There were two open-ended questions designed for government ministries. (1) What are the policies and strategies for the MoEc in elevating the employment status of educated women? (2) What are the possible changes and challenges for the new government's policies and strategies in the women's

economic empowerment process? In response to these questions, MoEc raised the policies and strategies set forth in National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and Afghanistan National Development Strategies (ANDS). It further stated that ANDS (2008-2013) is now replaced with a four year action plan on social and economic development plan.

Voice of Women Organization (VWO) is a local women Non-Government Organization (NGO) working in western region of Afghanistan since 1998. VWO is aimed to provide equal opportunities for women to develop their potential to actively participate in decision making and nation building process at all levels (VWO). The organization has been launching number of short and medium term women- oriented and women empowerment projects in Herat, Badghis, Farah, and Ghor provinces for the past several years.

The questions for VWO were designed in a way to examine the standpoint and role of local women NGOs on improving the status of educated young women in the job market. VWO believes that the government of Afghanistan and the local NGOs in-charge have not done enough in developing women's role in a productive economy. Moreover, it emphasizes that local NGOs can further boost the condition by enrolling more educated women within their organizations, promoting lobbying and advocacy, and increasing public awareness on women's economy empowerment. VWO further, marks the government as a key player in promoting and extending the women enterprise's products and services at national and international markets.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study was conducted for the purpose of examining the status of university educated women and their representation in the job market and the economy of Afghanistan. A qualitative study with a liberal feminism lens was utilized and the normative survey technique and semi-structured interview were used for gathering data. The rationale for this focus was derived from a growing body of evidence that suggests the number of young Afghan women with university degree has increased significantly in the last few years while representation of young educated women in the workforce has not significantly increased.

A constant increase in the number of young educated women along with higher numbers of educated men has become a new socioeconomic topic for the young developing economy of Afghanistan. The flow of young women into leadership and decision making roles would be a significant step towards challenging the customary, stereotypical and chauvinistic prejudices in the country. The world has taken notice of the need to restore Afghan's women's rights in a serious way. Moreover, the continuation of international donor agencies' financial and technical support for the government of Afghanistan is directly related to the Afghan policy of mainstreaming gender norms through all development processes. Any significant drawbacks or shortfalls in women's

rights mechanisms in the future will negatively affect all the financial and technical supports for many sectors in the country.

Limitation

There are some limitations in quantitative and qualitative studies of this paper. The samples of the study were small and limited to cities of Herat and Kabul. Although there is a higher number of university educated women in these two cities, a study with wider range of participants from other provinces of the country could have brought more comprehensive perspectives to the findings of this study.

Another area of limitation is the lack of response from government and non-government institutions and organizations for the semi-structured interviews. This resulted in limited access to insights and information from these institutions on the government's new policies and strategies towards women's economic empowerment processes. Furthermore, there has been very limited study and research done on this subject. Therefore, the literature review for this work is limited to articles, government and donor agencies' reports. Due to the scope of the issue and the limitation of the study, the results gained in this study paper are not able to represent the generalized condition for all university educated women and men in Afghanistan. Further studies with the focus on statistical analysis of the issue are recommended.

Recommendations

An analytical approach to the findings of this study led to the following recommendations. There are different levels of approaches for the government of Afghanistan and international donor agencies, businesses and corporations, and Afghan women students to improve the employment condition of educated women. The findings

of the surveys indicated that women students lack some practical projects within the academic system. The curriculum designers in Ministry of Higher Education needs to bring more academic practical works such as internships, outreach project activities, and exposure visits for the women students within the higher education curriculum.

Women students themselves need to seek more opportunities in improving their expertise in English, computer and internet programs and management and leadership skills. The findings from employed women graduate respondents suggest acquiring such skills will highly assist women students in finding an appropriate job. Thus, students should not merely depend on classroom education. In addition, establishing a professional coordinator board at the national level for university educated women is beneficial. This board can coordinate and facilitate the accessibility to credit, capital, training needs, and network with official local, national and international entities.

Furthermore, the government needs to conduct series of broadly based gender oriented surveys in order to undertake all aspects of the development process of the country. This will lead to obtaining a comprehensive database on labor market participation, employment, industrial and occupational distribution of workers, value chains, and women's employment opportunities for educated women.

The findings from both surveys indicate that a majority of the women participants wish to run their own business. Access to capital and financial resources is one of the main challenges for many women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan to operate an independent business. Thus, promoting protectionist and supportive policies such as enhancement of adequate financial supports through low interest loans, longer repayment periods, and

development eligibility criteria for young educated women is highly recommended.

Finally, as the private sector and the corporation system in the country is moving forwards, the representation of university educated women within these sector need to be extended and perceived equally along with the representation of men. This is particularly important for decision making roles. In general, women's economic empowerment has to be accepted as a cross-cutting subject at the central level of the Afghan government and all other national and international entities involved in development process of the country.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

Afghan University women graduates are not well-represented in the job market in
Afghanistan

Questionnaire for the students

Kazem Shakib (WSGS)-Loyola University Chicago
November, 2013

General questions for both male and female students	Check as many as you want.
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Your marital status: Single Married Divorced Widow **Your age group:** 18-22 22-25 25-30 30- above

Are you a man or woman? _____

Please do not mention any name, employer's name or any other type of personal identification while describing the information.

1- What is the reason you pursue higher education?

Self- interest for knowledge Family interest Work as a professional
Other _____

2- What do you want to do after your graduation?

Official professional career Teach in primary /secondary schools Don't know
Other _____

3- Do you want to continue your higher education at master's degree or PhD level?

Yes No Maybe Don't know

4- Where do you prefer to work as a professional?

Private companies Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Government sectors
 Teach in primary /secondary schools Independent job Other _____

5- What are the main barriers for educated women to enter the job market?

Family restriction Sex discrimination in job market Unemployment Marriage
Insecurity Community stereotypes Other _____

6- What are the main barriers for educated men to enter the job market?

Family restriction Sex discrimination in job market Unemployment Marriage
 Insecurity Community stereotypes Other _____

- 7- ***Educated women should work in key and decision-making posts?***
 Strongly agree Agree Neutral Strongly disagree Disagree
- 8- ***Educated men should work in key and decision-making posts?***
 Strongly agree Agree Neutral Strongly disagree Disagree
- 9- ***Educated women and men can work together in key and decision-making posts?***
 Strongly agree Agree Neutral Strongly disagree Disagree
- 10- **How should the government and international communities develop the system, so that graduates from college are able to get their desired professional position upon graduation?**
 Better coordination among the Gov. Sectors Institutionalizing the practical works within the academia Economic growth and employment opportunities No coordination needed Security Other _____
- 11- **What type of academic support and assistance do you believe women students need in order to gain their desired positions upon graduation?**
 English language skill Internet & computer skills Internship Management & leadership None Other _____
- 12- **What barriers exist for you to work as a professional outside Herat or your town?**
 Insecurity Family restriction Gender inequality in a new environment Unemployment None Other _____
- If your answer is none; why?
- 13- **Are you optimistic for your future career?**
 Highly Moderately Low Not optimistic
- If your answer is not optimistic; why?
- 14- **Is there anything about your undergraduate preparation for a career or current experience securing professional position that you think is important for this survey?**

Afghan University women graduates are not well-represented in the job market in
Afghanistan

Questionnaire for University Women Graduates

Kazem Shakib (WSGS)-Loyola University Chicago

November, 2013

No.	General questions for both male and female students	Check as many as you want.
-----	---	----------------------------

Your marital status: Single Married Divorced Widow **Your age group:** 22-25
25-30 30-35 35 & above

Please do not mention any name, employer's name or any other type of personal identification while describing the information.

- 1- **What did you study as of your major in higher education?** _____
- 2- **What was the reason you pursued higher education?**
Self- interest for knowledge Family interest Work as a professional
Other _____
- 3- **Do you want to continue your higher education at master's degree or PhD level?**
Yes No Maybe Don't know
- 4- **Are you currently employed? Yes No If yes, Where?**
Private company Non-governmental organization (NGO) Government sector
Independent job Teach in primary /secondary schools Other _____
- 5- **How satisfied are you with your current status based on your higher education degree?**
Highly Moderately Low Not optimistic
- 6- **What are the existed gender discriminations within your job environment?**
Lower payment Lower positions Sex segregation Slow job promotion process
Sexual harassment
- 7- **What are the main barriers for educated women to enter the job market?**
Family restrictions Sex discrimination in job market Unemployment Marriage
Insecurity Community stereotypes Other _____

8- Educated women can work in key and decision-making posts?Strongly agree Agree Neutral Strongly disagree Disagree **9- Educated women and men can work together in key and decision-making posts?**Strongly agree Agree Neutral Strongly disagree Disagree **10- How should the government and international communities develop the system, so that graduates from college are able to get their desired professional position upon graduation?**Better coordination among the Gov. Sectors Institutionalizing the practical works within the academia Economic growth and employment opportunities No coordination needed Security Other _____**11- What type of academic support and assistance do you believe women students need in order to gain their desired positions upon graduation?***English language skill* *Internet & computer skills* *Internship* *Management & leadership* *None* Other _____**12- What barriers exist for you to work as a professional outside Herat or your town?**Insecurity Family restriction Gender inequality in a new environment Unemployment None Other _____

If your answer is none; why?

13- Are you optimistic for your future career?*Highly* *Moderately* *Low* *Not optimistic*

If your answer is not optimistic; why?

APPENDIX B

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS AND THE QUESTIONS FOR
THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

List of the governmental, non-governmental and private departments, organizations and sectors for the interview

November 2013

No.	Government	Non-Government	Private
1	Ministry of Higher Education- (MoHE)	Promote- (USAID)	Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce & Industries-(ACCI)
2	Ministry of Economy- (MoE)	Voice of Women Organization –(VWO)	Afghan Citadel Software Company
3	Ministry of Women Affairs- (MoWA)	Women Activities and Social Services Association- (WASSA)	

General questions for each interviewee;

- 1- Is there anything specific within institution's strategies and policies in elevating and strengthening the status of University women graduates?
- 2- What is the institution's plan and strategy after 2014 for provision of University educated women empowerment projects?
- 3- What are your solutions and recommendations for integrating more educated women into the job market of the Afghanistan?

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VITA

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