



Safety in Afghan Cities

Jalalabad, Nangarhar

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Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP)



Independent Directorate of Local Governance
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



**Ministry of
Urban Development and Housing**
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



Kabul Municipality
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy and programme experiences from different countries have shown the correlation between government legitimacy, stability and peace. Provision of basic services and infrastructure, fairness in service delivery (especially toward vulnerable groups), and inclusive and transparent governance processes are all factors that contribute toward creating state legitimacy. This establishes people's trust in their government and helps to build stable societies.

The Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP) addresses this complex relationship between governance and peace. This three-year programme (2015-18) on urban safety is currently being implemented by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, with technical assistance from UN-Habitat and funding support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The goal of the programme is to improve government legitimacy through fostering conditions where urban residents have increased trust in their local governments' capacity to uphold rights and to achieve safe and inclusive cities.

This report presents public perceptions on urban safety in Afghanistan by examining data from AUPP's eight target cities: Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Herat, Kunduz, Nili, Bamyan and Farah. Two sources of data have been used to develop this report: (i) quantitative data from a baseline survey conducted in November-December 2015 and (ii) supplementary qualitative data gathered in focus group discussions in July 2016.

This report describes people's opinion on safety and stability in Afghanistan by highlighting four dimensions of the issue:

1. Current perceptions on the state of urban safety at the national, city, neighbourhood and individual levels.
2. Awareness of rights and engagement with local authorities, which demonstrate the level of trust that people have in their government.
3. Provision of municipal and police services, particularly safety services and services for vulnerable groups, as measures of government responsiveness.
4. Changes needed to improve safety in cities, particularly to

address the challenges faced by vulnerable and marginalised people.

Key findings of the report are:

- People are generally positive about the situation in their cities and neighbourhoods. But this optimism diminishes at the national level. While 52% of survey respondents felt that their city is heading in the right direction, only 27% thought that Afghanistan is moving in the right direction. Furthermore, 82% of respondents felt safe in their neighbourhood, which decreased to 72% in relation to feeling safe in their city.
- Though conflict-related issues are expected to dominate the safety discourse in Afghanistan, people's definition of safety is more varied. Responses on what people considered to be the biggest threats to their neighbourhood revealed environmental hazards (48%), traffic/road safety (40%) and crime (41%) as the top challenges, with terrorism/war (23%) coming in at the fourth position. When asked about the major factors affecting long-term stability, survey respondents identified economic factors (55%) and terrorism/war (25%). Environmental issues (9%) and housing concerns (5%) occupied very low third and fourth positions.
- Urban residents have high levels of fear for their safety and low confidence in the police to protect them. The highest proportion of survey respondents (44%) reported that they always or often fear for their personal and family's safety. Though over half of them identified the Afghan National Police as being responsible for safety in their neighbourhood, under 15% had reported a violent act to them in the past year. There was no direct relationship between people's feeling of fear and how often they saw police officials or whether they thought that the police took their concerns seriously, reinforcing the lack of public confidence in the police.
- People are aware of their rights, but they don't engage much with their local authorities. Over a quarter of respondents identified the right to access basic services and over half identified political rights as the basic rights that Afghans are entitled to. But only 15% of respondents had interacted with their municipality in the six months prior to the survey. The level of interaction with police officers was also found to be

low (11%). A minority of respondents (11%) felt that they had influence over decisions made by the municipality. In addition, a high percentage of respondents (43%) did not feel safe expressing opinions about the municipality.

- Satisfaction with municipal service delivery is very low. The majority of survey respondents noted that municipalities either delivered very little or no services, with many people finding Community Development Councils or *Shuras* to be more effective in providing basic services. A very low percentage of people surveyed (less than 5% in any city) thought that making a request or complaint to the municipality would improve service delivery.

- Government responsiveness on safety problems, especially those faced by vulnerable groups, is rated poorly by people. Less than half of respondents (31%) reported that they felt the municipality and police addressed safety concerns effectively. Similarly, more than 60% of respondents felt that municipalities had no or very little ability to achieve

safe cities. Only 23% of respondents thought police officials addressed the needs of vulnerable people, which was even weaker (13%) in the case of municipalities.

- Addressing urban safety in Afghanistan requires multi-faceted responses. Survey results revealed generally similar trends between male and female respondents. However, there were large variances when data was disaggregated among the eight surveyed cities, depending on their security and economic conditions. When respondents were asked what municipalities could do to better support vulnerable groups, answers were almost evenly split between holding meetings with them (30%), and making social (37%) and economic (31%) assistance available. For both women and children, respondents thought staying at home was the best way to ensure their safety. Related to this, respondents asked for improvements in physical conditions, such as the provision of public spaces and safer roads, to increase their safety in cities.



Community-municipality-police consultation, Nili, Daikundi

BACKGROUND

A. Safety and Peacebuilding

As laid out in Afghanistan's National Priority Plan for Local Governance, good governance forms the foundation for long-term stability by meeting people's expectations regarding the achievements of core government responsibilities, including adequate service and security provision through inclusive and democratic processes.¹

Research undertaken under the many stabilisation and peacebuilding programmes that have been implemented in the last decade in Afghanistan and other fragile states consistently highlight the close ties between people's perception toward government and peace. The DFID Practice Paper *Building Peaceful States and Society* explains the link as follows: "Strong state-society relations are critical to building effective, legitimate states and durable, positive peace".² To build this state-society relation, the UK aid agency suggests focusing on developing core state functions (including security, law and justice) and responding to public expectations (including on security).

In the same vein, the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) has integrated support to governance and service delivery as part of its main funding focus in order to prevent fragile states from relapsing into conflict. An evaluation of the PBF support to Burundi notes: "Public administration and social services, delivered in an effective and equitable manner, can address grievances that underlie or trigger violent conflict

B. Programme Information

UN-Habitat has been working with communities in Afghanistan since 1992. UN-Habitat's work in urban and rural areas of Afghanistan is based on the principle that the best way to achieve sustainable and cost-effective development is through assisting communities to plan and implement development activities that they have clearly identified as their own priorities.

The Afghanistan Urban Peacebuilding Programme (AUPP) is a three-year programme (2015-18) being implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Independent Directorate of Local Governance, Kabul Municipality and the Ministry of Interior, with technical support from UN-Habitat. The goal of AUPP is to improve government legitimacy through fostering conditions where urban citizens have increased trust in their local governments' capacity to uphold rights and achieve safe, secure and inclusive cities.

To achieve this goal, AUPP focuses on the vital linkage between state-society relations, developing awareness on rights and duties of both municipal actors and communities. More specifically, AUPP's approach concentrates on enhancing safety through the principles of participation and inclusiveness, creating an enabling environment for governance and urban safety, and increasing municipal capacity to ensure safety for all residents, especially the most

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