

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:00 March 7, 2022**

## **On International Women's Day, Afghan women are making their voices heard in new research**

**In interviews with Women for Women International, Afghan women and women's rights organisations describe their experiences under Afghanistan's new de facto government and set out their hopes for the future. In their own words, Afghan women in the report call for women's rights, inclusion in public life, urgent economic relief, and for the international community to step up in solidarity with them.**

*"I think if Taliban do not accept the women right and do not allow women to get education and work then the future of Afghanistan is dark and unclear especially for women, because if they completely take our freedom, we cannot go to school, we cannot speak freely to ask our right, we cannot go to work to earn money and live our life as women do in other countries. And most of the people are suffering from hunger and do not have food to eat today so how can they have hope for future."*

Between December 2021 and February 2022, Women for Women International conducted phone surveys and interviews with current and former participants of our programs across Afghanistan and Afghan women's rights activists and organisations continuing their work within Afghanistan. The objective of these conversations was to better understand their current experiences and primary challenges, identify any promising support mechanisms, and to listen to their self-articulated hopes for their future.

One overarching message emerged – that the international community has an urgent and important role to play in exercising its power and leverage to support Afghan women's rights and alleviate the economic crisis affecting the country. Women's rights are often portrayed as at odds with addressing the immediate needs of the humanitarian and security crisis in Afghanistan, but this is a false presentation of a zero-sum game.

Women are asking for their rights and for long-term solutions to the economic crisis facing Afghanistan. The international community must develop longer-term financial solutions which uphold the agency and self-sufficiency of Afghan people, restore liquidity and financial activity, and support the function of Afghanistan's central banking system. Without this, no amount of humanitarian aid will be sufficient to end the poverty or famine affecting the country.

*"There is food and we need it, but we cannot afford it to buy for our households. If the situation remains for a long time, lots of people will lose their lives especially children and women."*

During the course of the research, women and women's rights organisations in Afghanistan said:

*"It is almost six months that girls are calling for their rights...but no one hears their voices."*

Since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in August 2021, decision-makers, international media, governments, and international institutions are often talking 'about' women in Afghanistan without speaking directly with Afghan women themselves, asking them what they are experiencing or understanding what they need.

In contrast, this report's recommendations are directly derived from the voices and lived experiences of Afghan women and civil society and cover the following categories:

- ***Women's Participation and Inclusion***
- ***Economic and Humanitarian Crisis***
- ***Sustaining the Afghan Women's Rights Movement within Afghanistan and Beyond***
- ***Explicit National Laws and Policies***
- ***UN Commitment to Women's Rights and Humanitarian Action***

Many of the recommendations in this report call for women's rights, participation, and inclusion in public life within Afghanistan. But beyond acting on these specific recommendations, policymakers and advocates alike must embed participation and inclusion of Afghan women into our processes for developing recommendations and policies henceforth. Any decisions about Afghanistan must be made through direct engagement with Afghan civil society, especially by speaking and listening to Afghan women themselves.

The [full report can be read here](#). Women for Women International is sharing these findings and recommendations with world leaders and decision makers.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

[Download the full report here](#)

[Download graphics, images, and diagrams here](#)

Spokespeople available to interview in Afghanistan, USA, UK, and Germany.

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#### **About Women for Women International**

Since 1993, Women for Women International has invested in the power of over 519,700 women through their [Stronger Women, Stronger Nations program](#). Participants in the program learn the necessary skills they need to rebuild their families and communities. In Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Sudan, women who join the program connect with each other to form support networks. They learn to earn an income and save money, gain knowledge and resources to care for their families and defend their rights. Women use their power together, passing it on to neighbors and their children for lasting change.