

**AFGHAN WOMEN AND GIRLS:
BUILDING THE FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN**

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL
OPERATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS,
HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY,
AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2010

U.S. SENATE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS AND THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS AND
ORGANIZATIONS, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND
GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
RELATIONS

Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 3 p.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Barbara Boxer presiding.

Present: Senators Boxer, Casey, Shaheen, Kaufman, and Wicker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA BOXER, U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA

Senator BOXER. Good afternoon. Today, the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Democracy, Human Rights and Global Women's Issues, and the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs meet to examine the status of women and girls in Afghanistan.

I'm very pleased that Senator Wicker is here. I hope that shortly we will be joined by Senator Casey, who is going to chair, as I understand it, the second panel. And I think that Senator Risch will be coming, and I'm very pleased about that.

I want to express a very warm welcome to our distinguished witnesses, some of whom came a very long way, and we're very honored.

It goes without saying that the women of Afghanistan have borne the brunt of the war, and of the violence and the tragedy that has plagued Afghanistan for decades.

Under the Taliban government, women were shut out of virtually all aspects of public life, largely denied the opportunity to hold a job or seek medical care, and prohibited from receiving an education.

But over the past few years, Afghan women have made important progress. Today, millions of Afghan girls are enrolled in school, Afghan women are serving in the Parliament, and many Afghan women business leaders are contributing economically to the future of their country.

But this progress is at risk as Afghan President Karzai moves to reintegrate elements of the Taliban into local and national politics and society through a process called reconciliation.

It is critical that Afghan women play a meaningful role in any reconciliation process so that women's rights and freedoms are guaranteed.

As aptly stated in the administration's recently released Action Plan for Afghan Women and Girls, "women's empowerment is inextricably linked to security, economic opportunity, effective governance, and social development. It is a simple fact that no country can prosper if half its citizens are left behind."

I'm very pleased that that statement is in the Action Plan for Women and Girls. And I am also very pleased that just a few minutes ago we received a revised version of the Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy. After I sent a letter to the administration, they went back and they incorporated women in every component of this plan, and I cannot be happier today. And I want to thank you, Ambassador, for that, and we'll get into it later.

Our first witness today is the Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer. As many of you know, Ambassador Verveer is a tireless champion for women around the globe. For more than 16 years in both governmental and nongovernmental roles, she has traveled to dozens of countries, first as an Assistant to President Clinton and Chief of Staff to First Lady Hillary Clinton, where she worked to make women's issues an integral part of our foreign policy and helped create the President's Inter-agency Council on Women.

Before becoming the Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, Ambassador Verveer served as the cofounder, chairwoman, and cochief executive of Vital Voices, a nongovernmental organization that identifies, trains, and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe. I know Ambassador Verveer cares deeply about Afghan women, having traveled to Afghanistan as one of her first official acts after becoming ambassador last year. In particular, she played a key role in helping to bring Afghan women to the table at the recent London conference on Afghanistan.

We will then hear from Mr. James Bever, the Executive Director of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force at the U.S. Agency for International Development. Previously, Mr. Bever served as the USAID Mission Director to the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 2004 to 2006. From 2003 to 2004, he was the USAID Mission Director to Afghanistan.

Thank you both for your service to our country. And we look forward to your testimony.

Before I turn first to Senator Wicker and then to Senator Casey for any comments they might have, I would like to welcome our second panel, which Senator Casey will chair: Sima Samar, whom I have known for a long time, and Rachel Reid, who have traveled all the way from Afghanistan to be with us today. They had a few bumps getting on the plane, but we made sure they got on that plane. That is, that Sima got on that plane.

So, I think what I would like to do is ask Senator Wicker if he has some opening statements, and then I'll turn to Senator Casey.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER F. WICKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI**

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank you for the opportunity to highlight the importance of continued efforts toward stability as we move forward in Afghanistan. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Chairman Casey and Senator Risch for their willingness to make this a joint hearing with the Near Eastern and South Central Asian Affairs Subcommittee.

A critical part of bringing stability to Afghanistan is securing the liberties of all citizens, especially women and girls. The advancement of women's rights is undeniably linked to security, economic opportunity, effective governance, and social development in Afghanistan.

I thank both panels of witnesses for giving their time today to appear before the committee on this topic.

During a congressional delegation trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan last month, I was able to see firsthand our military's ongoing efforts to rid Afghanistan of the Taliban and al-Qaeda extremists. I returned home hopeful that our men and women in uniform will succeed and confident of their capability of successfully completing this critical mission, despite the tremendous challenges that they must still overcome.

I was encouraged to see the prominent role of USAID and the State Department in the counterinsurgency plan as they begin the building phase, after our troops have cleared an area of Taliban. I'm interested in hearing more about what specifically USAID and State are doing to help women in these areas.

The United States alone cannot shoulder the burden of increased civilian engagement in Afghanistan. Cooperation with international partners is critical. I appreciated seeing that the U.N. is taking a greater role in Afghanistan and that other international partners are taking on more responsibility as well.

I recently returned from a parliamentary assembly of OSCE nations and am pleased to report that some 37 of our OSCE partner nations have troops on the ground involved in the fight in Afghanistan and are working shoulder to shoulder with the United States in an ISAF capacity. I'm eager to see how we're coordinating with these partners in our effort to help women and girls in Afghanistan.

As we continue our efforts in Afghanistan and focus on the issue of security, we must not lose sight of the role women play in the country's stabilization.

As I've already said, I believe women's rights are inextricably linked to the broader issues of security and economic development. Women and girls suffered horribly under the rule of the Taliban, both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although improvements have been made in areas such as access to education and women's health, progress has lagged in other areas. Some even claim that circumstances for women in Afghanistan have actually deteriorated.

So I look forward to hearing what our distinguished panelists have to say about this, the current situation for women and girls specifically. I would like to hear what steps are being taken to protect women's rights, as former Taliban are reintegrated into the Afghan society.

There are great challenges that remain and problems that need to be addressed as we continue to work to transform Afghanistan into a more stable country. I look forward to a comprehensive hearing today. Thank you.

Senator BOXER. Thank you so much, Senator. I think we have the same concerns.

Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much. I want to, first of all, thank Senator Boxer for gathering us together today as well as our Ranking Member Senator Wicker and Senator Shaheen, who is with us. I will have a longer statement before the second panel. So, I'll save the time for them.

But we're grateful for those who are here, especially our witnesses, Mr. Bever as well as Ambassador Verveer. I appreciate your public service, Madam Ambassador, but also I also appreciate your Pennsylvania roots.

But at this time, when we're engaged in such an important challenge in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we especially need to pay even closer attention to the issues that impact women and girls. And, as a father of four daughters, I can't even begin to imagine what some of these families have had to live through all these years, year after year of the kind of abuse and suffering, really, that they've have to endure. But we hope that this hearing sheds some much-needed light on that horrific challenge.

So, we're grateful for your presence here, and we look forward to your testimony.

Senator BOXER. Senator, thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

OK. So, we're going to turn to our panel, and we hope you can keep your remarks to about 5 minutes so that we have time for lots of questions before we hear from our second panel. So, let's start the clock, and I'm going to first call on Ambassador Verveer. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MELANNE VERVEER, AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador VERVEER. Thank you very much, Senator Boxer, and thanks to all of you for your commitment, dedication, and your words this afternoon. They are profoundly moving and, I must say, keep us going. So, thank you so much for that.

I am honored to appear before you today to describe why women and girls are among the most powerful—although still largely underutilized—agents for change to advance stability, security, and development in Afghanistan. I request that my submitted written testimony be entered into the record, and I will briefly summarize from it.

Senator BOXER. Without objection.

Ambassador VERVEER. Our civilian assistance strategy in Afghanistan incorporates the values of human rights, good governance, and the rule of law. Women's empowerment in Afghanistan and their full and equal participation in their society are fundamental prerequisites for achieving this strategy.

The era of brutal repression by the Taliban, that you have all noted, has passed, yet on every measure of development and in every sphere, women in Afghanistan continue to suffer solely because they were born female.

In the political realm, women made immediate gains after the Taliban era. Many entered political life at the most senior levels. However, the deteriorating security conditions have made the prospect of their participation in public life more difficult. Their political gains today appear fragile and require urgent and sustained attention from all of us.

The legacy of the Taliban continues to limit women's literacy levels, their ability to participate in the professional workforce, and the education and health care infrastructure and resources available to them. Pervasive discrimination remains at every level of society, and Afghan women suffer high levels domestic abuse and violence in many forms. This violence cannot be explained away as cultural or private; it is criminal and must be addressed and recognized as such.

In the face of so many deeply entrenched problems and barriers to progress, it would be tempting to see Afghan women as little more than the victims of the enormity of their circumstances, having nothing to do with waging a successful counterinsurgency campaign. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As you noted, Senator Boxer, I traveled to Afghanistan just before the Presidential elections, and I went to reaffirm our country's commitment to Afghan women and to hear from them how they were faring. To visit Afghanistan is to become aware of just how many capable Afghan women leaders there are who risk their lives every day in order to work alongside the men to create a better future for their country. Women such as Arzo Qanih, an activist in the area of education, who presented recommendations on behalf of all Afghan women at the international conference on Afghanistan that recently took place in London. She spoke passionately about the role that women must play in Afghanistan's security, governance, and development.

My written testimony talks about many Afghan women who are working for progress in all fields from the economy to government, but I would like to add that it is particularly meaningful today to have Dr. Sima Samar here to testify. After the overthrow of the Taliban, she made several trips to Washington in 2002 as Minister for Women's Affairs in that very young government at the time. Although the women had suffered unimaginable brutality under the Taliban, it was clear, even then, that if Afghanistan were to chart a successful new course, its women had to be part of the process. Sima was in many ways their voice to the world, and she rallied many of us, myself included, to address the urgent needs that women in her country confronted.

Many other women were helping to create a better life for the Afghan people and continue to do so to this day in ways large and

small. They are the teachers, the members of the police force, the midwives, the farmers, the provincial council members.

Clearly, Afghan women are agents of democracy and change, and yet their potential is largely untapped.

That pace of positive change can be accelerated if we work to remove the barriers that prevent them from working for the good of their country. It is a simple fact, as you said, Senator Boxer, that no country can get ahead if half its population is left behind. This is true the world over, and it is no less true in Afghanistan.

On January 28, 2010, when leaders from around the world gathered in London to discuss Afghanistan's future, Secretary Clinton underscored the importance of women in Afghanistan's development and unveiled the Women's Action Plan, which is incorporated in our U.S. Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy, which all of you had distributed to you this afternoon.

The strategy recognizes women as agents of change and underscores their importance to our civilian stabilization plan and our efforts to strengthen Afghan communities' capacity to withstand the threat posed by extremism. It establishes women's empowerment as critical to unleashing the full economic potential of the Afghan people.

To combat barriers to women's political empowerment, the United States has launched a broad grassroots effort to train women at the local level and to build their capacity to take on leadership roles. We are also working with women and men in law enforcement and in the judicial system, to diminish the impunity that allows threats, intimidation, and violence to continue to keep them out of public life.

Freeing women to participate in public life also frees them to participate in the economic activity of their nation. Jobs creation is among our most urgent goals, and agricultural development in Afghanistan is a top United States priority.

The key to increasing agricultural productivity is to increase the skilled human capital, and a very efficient way to accomplish that is by training women. To further build Afghanistan's skilled workforce, as well as to extend the many other benefits of education, the United States has promoted programs that rebuild the education infrastructure and that have enabled more girls to go to school and women to become literate.

We are also working to rebuild the health care services and particularly to stem the incredibly unfortunate statistic that Afghanistan is one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to maternal mortality.

The United States counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan addresses issues of security, economic and social development, good governance, and rule of law. The future security, stability, and development of that country depends in large part on the degree to which women will have an active role in rebuilding their society and a voice in their country's political process. To reach that level of participation, they need to be included in all levels of discussion in the civil service and have an active role in any discussions that have to do with the future of their country and the peace process. The principle is formulated in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, which sets out—

Senator BOXER. Can I ask that you wrap up because—

Ambassador VERVEER [continuing]. Women's role in international peace and security. You have mentioned the reintegration process and potentially a reconciliation process. We firmly believe that women need to whole-heartedly participate in that process because if peace is to endure, women will need to have a voice in the decisionmaking about the future of their country. Their rights must not be endangered or diminished in efforts to reconcile competing factions.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Verveer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR MELANNE VERVEER

I am honored to appear before you today to describe why women and girls represent one of the most powerful—but underused—forces that we have to advance security, stability, and development in Afghanistan. I'd also like to recognize Senators Kerry, Lugar, Boxer, and Casey for the leadership they have shown on issues affecting Afghan women and for recognizing the crucial role that women hold in advancing progress in that country. In some significant ways, this hearing builds on the October 1, 2009, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on the global costs and consequences of violence against women. I commend the senators here today for their recognition of the enormous costs exacted by violence against women, no matter where it occurs in the world, and their recognition of the enormous development gains that could be made if we free women from its ever-present threat and work to enable them to fulfill their potential.

In his State of the Union Address, President Obama declared that the U.S. government's policies in Afghanistan reflect our national values, including support for universally recognized human rights. Our civilian assistance strategy in Afghanistan incorporates the values of inclusive human rights, good governance, and rule of law. Women's empowerment in Afghanistan and their full and equal participation in their society are fundamental prerequisites for achieving this strategy. Secretary Clinton recognized and underscored this in her remarks in London on January 28 at the International Conference on Afghanistan, when she emphasized that women need to be involved at every step of the way in the process of rebuilding Afghan civil society. The participation of Afghan women is critical for sustainable development, better governance, and peace—in short, they are essential to securing a better future for Afghanistan.

The era of brutal repression by the Taliban has passed, yet on every measure of development and in every sphere, women in Afghanistan continue to suffer solely because they were born female.

In the political realm, women made immediate gains after the Taliban era. Between 2001 and 2005, many women entered political life at the most senior levels: there were three female ministers in national government, and there was a substantial increase in women striving to assert their rights and seeking legal support. However, since that time, deteriorating security conditions have made the prospect of women's participation in public life more difficult. In 2008 alone, at least ten women in public positions were assassinated. Women have suffered abuse by the police forces responsible for protecting them. They lack significant representation in the justice system, and the government denied women judges the right to have their own independent professional association. In the recent presidential election, women's political participation was hampered by fear and intimidation by the Taliban, as well as lack of adequate provisions for women at polling stations. Women politicians are often threatened and prevented from engaging in political life. Qualified and experienced women are rarely included in government decision-making or political negotiations. Their political gains today appear fragile and require urgent and sustained attention from the international community.

Under the Taliban, fewer than 900,000 boys—and no girls—were enrolled in Afghanistan's schools. Today, more than 6.2 million students are enrolled in Afghanistan's schools, and 35 percent of them are girls. Nonetheless, overcoming years of exclusion from education is a long process. Only an estimated 21 percent of Afghan women are literate, and the female illiteracy rate is as high as 90 percent in rural areas. Although there is broad popular support for girls' schooling, extremists still try to impose their brutal agenda by force, by burning down schools, gassing schoolgirls, or throwing acid in the faces of female students.

In health as well as in education, the Taliban excluded women from all services. The legacy of those restrictions has left Afghanistan with the second-highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and other health indicators for women, particularly in the area of reproductive health, are similarly low.

Perhaps the greatest remaining impediment to women's full civic participation is violence against women and girls, which remains endemic in Afghan society. In addition to facing pervasive discrimination at every level of society, Afghan women suffer domestic abuse, rape, forced marriages, forced prostitution, kidnappings, so-called "honor" killings, and cultural practices that use daughters as payment to settle disputes and that condone self-immolation. Crimes go unpunished because of anemic rule of law and weak institutions of justice. Approximately 80 percent of crimes and disputes are settled through traditional justice mechanisms. Absent the types of reform the USG is promoting, these institutions are often flagrantly discriminatory toward women. Violence against women and girls in Afghanistan cannot be explained away as cultural or private; it is criminal and must be addressed as such.

In the face of so many deeply entrenched problems and barriers to progress, it would be tempting to see Afghan women as little more than the victims of the enormity of their circumstances. Nothing could be further from the truth. I traveled to Afghanistan just before the 2009 presidential elections there to reaffirm President Obama's and Secretary Clinton's commitment to Afghan women and girls and to hear from them how they were faring.

To visit Afghanistan is to become aware of just how many capable Afghan women leaders risk their lives every day in order to work alongside men to create a better future for their country. Some of these are prominent women leaders who are doing crucial work, such as Habiba Sarabi, governor of Bamyan province; members of Parliament who are advocating for women's rights, such as Fawzia Koofi or Shukria Barakzai; or women in the civil service, such as Rahela Sidiqi, who created the Afghan Women's Leadership Caucus Group, which works to increase the number of women in executive positions in the government. Some are prominent businesswomen, such as Amir Taj Serat, who owns a soccer ball manufacturing business called Green Way that employs over 250 women; or Massooma Habibi, who is helping build Afghanistan's electricity and power sector and is supporting U.S. military needs through the company she founded and continues to run despite harassment, discrimination, and threats to herself and her family. Some are leading educators who integrate community education into the framework of Islamic values, such as Sakena Yacoobi, founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning; or legal expert and former State Minister for Women's Affairs, Professor Mahbooba Huquqmal. And some are leaders within civil society, such as Dr. Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, with whom I am proud to testify today; or Andeisha Farid, Executive Director and Board Chair of the Afghan Child Education and Care Organization, which operates four orphanages in Afghanistan, and two for orphaned Afghan refugees in Pakistan, overseeing the care of over 300 orphans; or Arzo Qanih, an activist in the area of education, who presented recommendations on behalf of Afghan women at the recent London Conference, and who spoke passionately about the role that women must play in Afghanistan's security, governance, and development.

Many other women are helping to create a better life for the Afghan people in other ways, large and small: they are teachers, members of the police force, midwives, farmers, and provincial council members. Clearly, Afghan women are agents of democracy and change, and yet their potential is largely untapped. That pace of positive change can be accelerated if we work to remove the barriers that prevent them from working for the good of their country.

It is a simple fact that no country can get ahead if half its population is left behind. We know from an accumulating body of studies and research from governments, multilateral organizations, corporations, and think tanks that investing in women is the single most effective development strategy that we have for poverty alleviation, economic growth, and a country's general prosperity. This is true the world over; it is no less true in Afghanistan. On January 28, leaders from around the world gathered in London to discuss Afghanistan's future. Secretary Clinton underscored the importance of women in Afghanistan's development and unveiled the Women's Action Plan, which is incorporated into our U.S. Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy. As Secretary Clinton said, "the plan includes initiatives focused on women's security, women's leadership in the public and private sector; women's access to judicial institutions, education, and health services; and women's ability to take advantage of economic opportunities, especially in the agricultural sector. This is a comprehensive, forward-looking agenda."

The Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy recognizes women as agents of change and underscores their importance to our civilian stabilization plan and our efforts to strengthen Afghan communities' capacity to withstand the threat posed by extremism. It establishes women's empowerment as critical to unleashing the full economic potential of the Afghan people.

To combat barriers to women's political empowerment, the United States has launched a broad grassroots effort to train women at local levels and to build their capacity to take on leadership roles. We also recognize that increasing women's political participation requires working with both women and men in law enforcement and in the judicial system, to diminish the impunity that allows the threats, intimidation and violence to continue that keep women out of public life.

The U.S. government has been supporting local civil society organizations in providing civic education through a coordinated approach of training, capacity building, and support for media programs. Department of State programs within the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) have trained 525 female police officers and more than 600 women working in the justice sector. They've supported the creation of police Family Response Units that are staffed primarily by female police officers and that offer a safe place for women, children, and families to report crime and seek dispute mediation. INL has funded workshops for more than 550 male and female police officers on domestic violence. We are also supporting political development programs by providing training to 35 female Parliamentarians and their 165 staff, and have assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs in strategic planning, communications, and institution building.

Our efforts focus not only on building the capacity of women and mitigating the security issues that impede their political progress, but also on securing prominent allies within Afghan culture and society. Through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), the Department of State currently supports four programs, totaling more than USD 2 million, that promote women's rights at the local level by engaging religious leaders and local officials to engage women in the electoral process and to develop women's participation in local governance. In one such project, more than 800 religious leaders, government officials, media representatives, and civil society members received training on human rights concepts, including the rights of women, within the context of Islam. One of the mullahs who participated in the training now has a regular one-hour program on Sharq Television, in which he has spoken about the rights of women, children, and families.

The United States prioritizes these programs for women's political empowerment not only because women have the right to participate in the processes and decisions that affect their lives, and not only because their country—and the world—needs to hear their perspectives and experiences, but also because the scale of security, economic, healthcare, and educational reforms that the country must tackle cannot happen without the commitment and involvement of women and men to good governance and rule of law.

Freeing women to participate in public life also frees them to participate in the economic activity of their nation. Job creation is among our most urgent goals, and agricultural development in Afghanistan is a top U.S. priority. Eighty percent of the people in Afghanistan earn their income from agriculture, yet only 50 percent of the arable land is currently under cultivation. The key to increasing land yield and productivity is to increase the skilled human capital and boost land productivity—and an efficient way to accomplish that is by training women to participate in the workforce.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has pursued this kind of economic development in a program involving 52,500 women working as goat herders—teaching them about the high value of cashmere and the proper methods to harvest and market this commodity.

Other USAID and U.S. government programs partner with the Afghan government to expand women's role in animal husbandry and commercial agriculture. For example, USAID has partnered with the provincial Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock to train 180 women in poultry breeding and management, and provided them with the birds they need to start their small enterprises. A similar U.S.-supported program called the Alternative Development Program Southwest began in 2008 and provides training and support in raising poultry, along with the creation of greenhouses, for hundreds of female farmers, many of whom are widowed and supporting families. Thanks to these types of initiatives, chicken egg production is now a sustainable enterprise for a number of Afghan women. Programs like these are having a positive impact. As one Afghan said "It is unbelievable how our family life changed from misery to prosperity."

During my trip to Afghanistan this past summer, U.S. Ambassador Eikenberry and I announced a new USD 26.3 million fund for small flexible rapid-response

grants to empower Afghan women-led NGOs at the local level and to build their skills. These small loans are already supporting the work of Afghan-led women NGOs, including those working in the following areas: computer and English skills, handicraft training, radio programming for women, and the provision of dairy cows for women's agricultural initiatives. A portion of the grants will also promote groups that seek women's political empowerment. Future grants will help these organizations grow and manage their own financing. In these ways, Afghan women are helping each other improve their own lives and those of their families.

Beyond agricultural assistance, we're working to provide Afghan women with the tools they need to begin a microbusiness or to take an existing business to the next level of development. As of September, 2009, USAID had provided over 108,000 microfinance loans to Afghan women via its Agriculture, Rural Investment, and Enterprise Strengthening Program, and the organization has provided skills training to 4,300 female business owners over the past two years. Their cash-for-work programs have reached over 21,000 women, providing them with both income and business development assistance. The U.S.-Afghan Women's Council is also active in this area, and is working with private industry to promote women's economic skills and entrepreneurship. They have, for example, set up a partnership with the hand-knotted carpet industry to provide training, literacy skills, and access to health care for Afghan women and their families.

To further build Afghanistan's skilled workforce, as well as to extend the many other benefits of education, the United States has promoted programs that rebuild the education infrastructure for women. Through two major partnerships between USAID and the Afghan government, we are taking on the enormous obstacles that remain to women's educational equality. The Partnership for Community Education in Afghanistan establishes primary school classes in previously remote areas and integrates them into the public system. The project also supports adult literacy and trains teachers. To date, 2,446 primary grade classes have been established; 60 percent of participants are female. The Afghanistan Learning for Community Empowerment Program provides literacy and productive skills training to young people and adults and helps the newly-literate translate their skills into jobs. More than 50 percent of their learning centers are for women.

The United States has also worked to rebuild Afghanistan's healthcare services. INL funds the only three residential drug treatment centers for women in the country, in Kabul, Herat, and Balkh. Three new centers will open in 2010. With USG assistance, access to health services has risen dramatically since 2001. The number of midwives available to assist with deliveries has quadrupled; the number of health facilities with women health workers has more than doubled. There has been a 26 percent increase in the total number of antenatal visits, and a 30 percent increase in the number of women delivering with the assistance of a skilled midwife.

The U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan addresses issues of security, economic development, social development, good governance, and rule of law. The future security, stability, and development of Afghanistan depend in large part on the degree to which women have an active role in rebuilding its civil society and a voice in their nation's political process. To reach that level of participation, women need to be included in the political process at all levels, including in greater numbers in civil service positions, and they must have an active role in the peace process. This principle is formulated in UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which sets out women's role in international peace and security. Women's inclusion is critical for negotiations on lasting peace worldwide, but perhaps nowhere is this more critical than in Afghanistan. Their voices must be heard.

As reintegration efforts move forward, the United States is committed to ensuring that Afghan women's rights will not be sacrificed. At the London Conference, Secretary Clinton made clear that reintegration of former Taliban can only take place if they renounce violence, renounce al-Qaida, and accept all the tenets of the Afghan constitution, including its commitment to protect women from violence and oppression. Afghan women want a process that promotes peace in their country. They must be part of that process. Secretary Clinton introduced the Afghan women who attended the London Conference and honored them by saying, "They are among the women who have been working in Afghanistan for the last years on behalf of expanding opportunities for women and protecting human rights and women's rights. I've had a chance to work in the past with some of the Afghan women who were here for the conference today, and they are very much committed to their country's future, but they're also very committed to making sure that women in Afghanistan play their rightful role in that country's future."

If a peace process is to endure, women need to have a voice in the decision-making about the future of their country. Their rights must not be endangered or dimin-

ished in efforts to reconcile competing factions. There can be no progress, in Afghanistan or in any other part of the world, without women's progress.

Senator BOXER. Director Bever.

STATEMENT OF JAMES BEVER, USAID AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN TASK FORCE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. BEVER. Thank you very much, Chairman—Chairwoman Boxer, Chairman Casey. Thank you, Member Wicker, Senator Shaheen. Thank you very much for the invitation for USAID to testify today. I ask that my full written statement be submitted for the hearing record.

Senator BOXER. Without objection.

Mr. BEVER. Thank you. As I start, I would like to recognize three of our American AID colleagues who are in the audience with me. If they would just stand for a moment.

Ms. Goronka Heneger from the State of Georgia. Goronka goes back to Afghanistan this evening. She has just come back for a quick visit.

Ms. Shannon Darcy. Shannon, from the State of Massachusetts, is one of our health experts.

And Ms. Allison Salyer from the State of New York who is our gender expert back here in Washington, but helps us in the field.

I'd just like to start by saying AID is highly committed and passionate about providing assistance for development in the world, but especially for the lives of women. We place a premium on the advancement of women, to empower them and to provide the legal protection for them as well as equal partners. We know that development change can happen in Afghanistan only if women are central catalysts to it.

Senators, I want to personally and professionally thank you for the support you have given to us over the years with the American People's Assistance Program. For the benefit of women in Afghanistan, we have programmed over \$500 million, thanks to your support since 2004, when I was the AID Director there.

I want to just mention a couple of other things here before we get into a discussion, if I could. We have two new programs. One is the Initiative to Promote Afghanistan Civil Society, and another is an Ambassador's Small Grants Program. The latter one in particular, which is focused on women's grants—I look to Chairman Sima Samar to help us when we get back to post with her thoughts and counsel on that. We're very excited those new programs.

I also want to give you a very important thought that comes from us on the AID side, that we are dependent on the elevation of women to realize change in Afghanistan. Only by the full integration of women into the polity and the economy of the country can long-term change in Afghanistan really be fulfilled.

And I'll just give you two quick vignettes to summarize. When we were rebuilding the American road from Kabul to Kandahar, I met with the Governor of Zabul, who was later assassinated. He had a lunch at that time. It was in late 2003. And after the lunch with tribal leaders, one of the tribal leaders came up to me and pulled out my arm and pointed here and said, "Remember one thing. You Americans have all the watches. We Taliban"—and he

pointed to himself—"we have all the time." And that was a point for me of an epiphany, if you will, because I could have retired at that moment, and it came on me like a flood how important the role of development is and the international commitment to the Afghan people because it's in our interest as well.

And the second little vignette I will tell you has to do with a very famous woman in Afghanistan, two-star Major General Sadik. Dr. Sahel Sadik was the Surgeon General for the Afghan National Police. She held the Taliban off herself with her own surgical instruments when they tried to break her clinic door down. She later became the head—the first Health Minister. I went out with her, just before I left the country in the summer of 2004, to a small village north of Kabul in what's called the Shamali Plains, on the way to the northern valleys.

And we were dedicating a health clinic, and at the end of the dedication, the shura of men from the village came over to talk with us. And she liked to tease them. She said, "Well, what did you think of this?" And they said, "Well, this is great, but now we want to help build a school." And they pointed to all the children under the trees in the distance. And there were little boys and little girls there under a UNICEF sort of make-shift tent. And she said—she kind of, again, liked to tease them—and she said, "Well, respected elders of the village, you know we're a poor country. We'll only be able to build a school—we can only afford a school for the boys."

And the men looked at each other and talked with each other, and at that moment the sky opened up above us. A shaft of sunlight came down on us and on that little shura of male leaders from the village. And they turned to Dr. Sadik and to me, and they said, "Dr. Sadik, with all respect, God does not discriminate on any of us as to who receives the benefit of sunlight. Why should we discriminate—we who serve God—discriminate as to who receives the benefit of education? We want girls in this school." And that was one of my lasting motivations when I left Afghanistan. It's why I've come back to work on this program, because the motivation comes from within them.

Thank you very much for allowing me to comment.
[The prepared statement of Mr. Bever follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES BEVER

INTRODUCTION

Chairmen Boxer and Casey, Ranking Members Wicker and Risch and distinguished Members of the subcommittees, thank you for the invitation to testify before your subcommittee on this vitally important topic. I look forward to outlining the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) efforts in Afghanistan to provide assistance to women and girls throughout the country. My oral remarks will stay within the requested three minute time frame, but I ask that my full written statement be submitted for the hearing record.

We know from an accumulating body of studies authored by representatives of investment banks, foundations, think tanks, and other major organizations that investing in women is the single most efficient international development strategy available. These studies indicate that women reinvest up to 90 percent of their earnings in their families and communities, which is twice the rate of men. The status of women is a bellwether for the viability of a nation.

USAID is committed to providing assistance for development that improves the lives of women, men, and children around the world. USAID has a special interest in the advancement of women worldwide and is working to improve women's equal-

ity and empowerment. Not only because it is just, but because it is necessary for successful development.

In my written statement, I would like to briefly comment on USAID's actions to provide assistance to women and girls in Afghanistan; the progress that has been made; the challenges that remain; and, our thoughts on moving forward to help this sector of Afghan society.

USAID ENGAGEMENT

In Afghanistan and throughout the world, USAID policy requires the incorporation of gender considerations into all of our project designs. The mission-wide gender team ensures effective integration of gender policies throughout all programs. Furthermore, in order to strengthen and coordinate gender related efforts and projects on the ground, the Embassy has an Interagency Gender Policy Group, of which USAID is a leading member. Chaired by the Embassy's Ambassador-ranked Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, the group also includes representatives from the Embassy's Political, Economic, Public Affairs, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, and Rule of Law Sections. Finally, since 2002, USAID has had a full time gender advisor dedicated to leading the mission's efforts regarding assistance to women.

I recognize that Congress has shown great interest over the past several years in the status of Afghan women and girls and has directed funds for the purpose of improving their lives. In recent years, USAID has met and in some instances exceeded the women and girls funding requirement based on our own programming. By our own calculations, since 2004 we have provided approximately \$500 million in assistance for women and girls in Afghanistan.

We will continue to provide direct and project-based assistance to women and girls in line with the priorities laid out in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the National Action Plan for Assistance to Women of Afghanistan.

PROGRESS

The rule of the Taliban regime had a devastating effect on development in Afghanistan, and women and girls continue to bear the brunt of these development challenges. Under the Taliban, Afghan women and girls were systematically denied the opportunity to engage in the political, economic and social sectors of the country. Stripped of their most basic human rights, women were forbidden to obtain an education and to participate in the workforce. Their health and education indicators were among the worst in the world. Only 900,000 students were enrolled in school—almost all boys. Since most female doctors were banned from the workforce, women frequently lacked access to even the most basic health care. As a result, Afghanistan had the highest infant mortality rate in the world. Women were prohibited from participation in civil society and politics. They were required to remain hidden and voiceless.

Considering the plight of women and girls under Taliban rule, the achievements in Afghanistan since 2001 are especially remarkable. Girls and women are back in school at all levels, and school enrollment tops six million students, with women and girls making up over 35 percent of that population. Women and children make up 70 percent of those seeking health services, and the maternal and child mortality rates have decreased. The infant mortality rate has fallen by 25 percent. The number of women entrepreneurs and women-led and/or -focused NGOs is increasing, and more women are participating in the public and political sphere.

CHALLENGES

While much progress has been made, many challenges remain. These include, but are by no means limited to: violence, a challenging legislative process, and overcoming misperceptions regarding female participation in USAID programming. Implementation of projects and programs overall is made much more difficult by the level of violence the country is currently experiencing as a result of the ongoing insurgency. That violence is compounded in its effects on women and young girls as they traditionally bear the brunt (both physically and emotionally) of societal upheaval. Be they young girls seeking to go to school or women politicians and police officers seeking to go about their given tasks, these women and girls deserve to be praised for their courage and efforts. USAID will continue to do all we can to provide access to education and health services; training for politicians; and support to entrepreneurs as these women are essential to the advancement of their country.

Furthermore, we have been concerned with developments as they relate to the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law (EVAW), the Shia Personal Status Law, and the recent Parliamentary decree on elections and related matters.

The EVAW is a noteworthy piece of legislation that if implemented and enforced consistently could provide tangible benefits and protections for women. I am concerned that this has languished in Parliament for quite some time and that eventual enforcement of its various provisions will not be consistent.

Despite revisions through the spring of 2009 and extensive domestic and international controversy, the Shia Personal Status Law still contains many provisions that are quite troubling regarding the status of women in Afghanistan. Articles in the law of particular concern included minimum age of marriage, polygamy, inheritance rights, right of self-determination, freedom of movement, sexual obligations, and guardianship.

As this decree is a fairly new development that we are still looking into, I would simply like to note that this is on our radar screen and we hope that it fully protects the advances and rights of women.

Finally, one of our ongoing challenges has been to overcome societal misperceptions regarding female participation in USAID programming. We have found that in order to enable women to obtain even the basic necessities of life, USAID needs to provide outreach to provincial and district leaders and village elders prior, during and following completion of activities.

By framing the need for the participation of women and girls in various education, health, income generation and other activities in terms of family and community well-being and benefit, we find that activities can be undertaken with the participation of both men and women, albeit separately. In other words, we consistently look for “buy-in” from families and communities, and that has led to an increased acceptance of women and girls in school, lower maternal and child mortality, increased numbers of women and children receiving basic health care, ever increasing numbers of women in business, and women in all levels of the political process.

MOVING AHEAD

As we work to make substantial and sustainable gains for women in Afghanistan, the U.S. Government is taking steps to ensure that we obtain maximum impact from available resources. Towards that end, we promote “Afghanization,” the U.S. Government effort to support sustainable Afghan-led projects. In that vein we are also working to provide more of our assistance directly to and through Afghan entities.

As it relates to the provision of assistance to women and girls, this includes, but is not limited to, our work with the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and National Solidarity Program (NSP), non-governmental and civil society organizations as well as project level and direct assistance to Afghan Ministries.

As you are aware, the U.S. Government is a key contributor to the ARTF. Both the recurrent cost (which funds government operating expenses such as salaries, operations and maintenance) and the investment windows (which funds programs) benefit women and girls. One of the largest expenditures within the recurrent cost window is salaries for teachers, which increases girls’ access to education.

Gender is taken into consideration for all ARTF project designs. The ARTF does have several projects that have developed good operational policies for women and girls that are being tracked, including the NSP, Microfinance for Poverty Reduction, the Education Quality Improvement Project, and the Horticulture Livestock Program. ARTF funding supports 15 microfinance institutions throughout 24 provinces. Women comprise 62 percent (about 273,000) of the program’s clients and 39 percent (about 1,882) of the program’s 4,825 employees. The repayment rate is 94.4 percent. Since 2004, ARTF supported the construction of more than 800 schools, organized 8,000 school management committees, financed 2,500 school improvement plans, trained 45,000 teachers and provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education (MOE); the program specifically targets women and girls.

The NSP is designed to ensure gender equity at every step of the process: community mobilization to Community Development Council (CDC) elections to Community Development Plan formulation to subproject implementation, operation and maintenance. NSP is generally acknowledged as one of the most inclusive forms of community-development in Afghanistan. In particular, NSP has quantitative targets in the field of activities and women’s participation in CDCs. At least one project per community financed from NSP must have been prioritized by the women.

In so far as assistance to non-governmental and civil society organizations is concerned, USAID has two primary programs that work to provide funds to those organizations that are either led by or focused on women. Through our Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society Program (I-PACS) as well as the Ambassador’s Small Grants Program, USAID is working to provide training, technical support, strategic

planning assistance, and grants support to non-governmental and civil society organizations throughout Afghanistan.

As part of the overall U.S. Government strategy in Afghanistan, USAID is on track to increase the amount of assistance we provide directly to Afghan Ministries. This is done through assessments and certifications. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has not yet been certified to directly receive USAID funds, however, the Ministries of Public Health and Communications have been certified and provide services that directly benefit women. Furthermore, although the Ministry of Women's Affairs has not been certified to receive funds directly, we do continue to provide capacity-building activities at the Ministry and provincial level programs through the Directorates of Women's Affairs.

CONCLUSION

The United States and other donors recognize that while much has been achieved, much work also remains to be done with and for the benefit of women and girls in Afghanistan. Consequently, the international community will continue to work with the Government of and people of Afghanistan and international donors to develop strategies and plans supportive of the needs of women and girls. While Afghanistan's partners have gained valuable insights into development issues related to women and girls based on its work in the country, additional focus has been provided through the Afghan National Development Strategy and the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan. Activities focused on women and girls will include protection, governance, rule of law, human rights, political participation, economic growth and social development in education and health.

The U.S. Government recognizes that the needs of women and girls will change as Afghanistan moves across a spectrum of relief, stability, reconstruction and sustainable development programming and into long-term development assistance. Providing assistance to women and girls and encouraging Afghan society's efforts to integrate them fully as productive contributors to a peaceful nation and growing economy will be long-term efforts.

Senator BOXER. Thank you. Thank you so much. We're going to let you have 7 minutes for questions. I just want to say that's a beautiful story. Lucky for them it wasn't the Taliban making the decision, which leads to my first question. I'm going to ask my questions largely to the Ambassador because they are about U.S. policy. But if, Director Bever, you have anything to add, please, don't hesitate.

A December 2009 report by Human Rights Watch found that in Afghanistan, "Well over half of all marriages are forced or involve girls under the age of 16. In many of these situations, the girls are forced to marry without their consent, and they are subject to violence, intimidation, kidnapping; they're traded; they're used as compensation. As a result"—and we're talking about half of all marriages here, colleagues—"some of these young girls take drastic action. For example, on October 9, an MSNBC article tells of a story of a young Afghan girl named Rezagul, who at the age of 11 was married to a man 20 years her senior." So, at 11, "She endured beatings by her husband and his family for failing to do her housework. Frustrated and homesick, she doused herself in gasoline"—I can barely say this—"and set herself on fire. 'I didn't want to be alive,' she said. Fortunately, she survived her injury, and she's back home with her own family."

There's strong evidence that child and forced marriage lead to high rates of sexual violence and material mortality and lower educational opportunities for women and girls. And I want to share with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle some of these statistics. One out of every five children dies before the age of 5 in Afghanistan. Life expectancy for women is 44 years old. And the ma-

ternal mortality rate is the second highest in the world. One woman dies every 27 minutes due to pregnancy-related conditions.

So, my question is: What pressure can we put—and can the world put—on the Afghan Government to enforce the laws that protect women and girls from child and forced marriage? There are laws that say you can't marry her off until she is 15. That's bad enough in itself. Here are girls who are 11 years old. So, Ambassador, what can we do if we focus like a laser beam on this one issue? Half of all marriages involve girls under 16, and most of those are under protest.

Ambassador VERVEER. Thank you for that, Senator. It's a really terrible, terrible problem, and you're so right. The system tolerates it, and that is what has to change. We have done several things. There are several levers, many of which have to come together in a way that have not yet come together. But there is one development that I think could have some significant impact, and that is the recent decree of the Elimination of Violence Against Women Act, which has been promulgated in the country. It is law. It hasn't been implemented. Nothing has basically happened with it, but it is really an extraordinary piece of legislating that trumps a lot of the other problems we've seen, like the Shia law.

I think if we can do a massive campaign to basically demonstrate why violence against women is wrong in all of its forms—and this is one of the most egregious—and enable women to understand their rights at every level and begin to ensure that violators do get prosecuted for those violations. We need awareness and we need the prosecution.

Senator BOXER. Yes. Well, I am really glad that you told us about this because, clearly, they are not enforcing the old law which prohibited marriage under 15 years of age. Now there's a new law—but it means zero if they don't implement it. And I was saying to Senator Wicker, if there's a way for us to help, both sides of the aisle, writing a letter and moving forward and giving you the backup you need to say we expect to see this law implemented or we're just not going to be so generous, let us know. We can't close our eyes to this. We've got to do something—I'm not saying "linkage" per se, but I'm saying expectations per se. We expect this.

Now, here's another situation. There's been considerable news about President Karzai's plan to reintegrate members of the Taliban into Afghan politics and society. We all want to see a reformed Taliban. Let's say we want to see them come forward and reject their policies. However, we have to be realistic here, and Director Bever makes a good point that there are so many good people in Afghanistan, but we have a problem with the Taliban. And I don't think I need to remind anyone we're talking about reintegrating the same Taliban who engaged in the brutal assault on women in Afghanistan, the same Taliban who required that windows of Afghan homes be painted over, so no one could see a woman inside, and forced the wearing of the burkha, which Ellie Smieal forced me to put on years and years and years ago. And when I put that burkha on, I swear to you, I—I couldn't breathe, and I realized that I had disappeared, which, by the way, some people were very excited. But—

[Laughter]

Senator WICKER. I'm not even going to smile. [Laughter]

Senator BOXER [continuing]. I could not even smile in it. The fact is we can't have half the population subjected to becoming nothing and no one. And as we point out, all of us, men and women alike, half the country, have to play a role in the stability and the prosperity of this country. So, these are the same Taliban who, even today, take pride in throwing acid in the faces of young school girls.

So every integration effort ought to be pursued, and we all want to see everyone come together and walk away from this horrible tainted past. It seems to me women must play a role—a key role—to ensure that the protection of their rights is a priority, and they must not be silenced. Now, that's why I'm so thrilled you've amended this document. I am so happy this document has been amended to include women in everything that we do there.

I have a tough question, but I'm still going to press you for an answer, both of you. Do you believe that Afghan President Karzai is committed to ensuring that women's rights are not traded away?

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, he says he's committed. This was raised with him very significantly at the recent London meeting. Secretary Clinton went out of her way to put this on the agenda in a high priority fashion. It appears in the communiqué. It appears in all of the literature and statements that came out of that meeting. We have been working and hearing from the women in Afghanistan who, obviously, are deeply concerned. They articulated those concerns, those of them who came from civil society to London and had an opportunity to speak to that.

Now it's going to be watching and ensuring. I don't want to sit here and say it's too late. I don't want to sit and say there's no hope, because I think that is the worst message to send, for sure, but whatever messages we send have to be based on reality.

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Ambassador VERVEER. I would believe that the reality is that they will have that opportunity that's been articulated to participate in the discussions. The peace Jirga is coming up very soon. It's where some of the conversation will begin to take place about the seriousness of this proposition that's put before the country. They have got to be there. They've got to be in all the other related discussions, and they have to be part of what happens going forward, and we have to ensure that that process is an honest process that's inclusive.

Senator BOXER. Well, my time has expired. But here's what I want to say, and I ask you both for this: Since President Karzai has said the words that we want to hear, that he is committed to ensuring that the women are included, that he is strongly behind this Violence Against Women Act, that he has agreed to enforce these things, I need to know from both of you that you will stay in very close touch with both sides of the aisle on this committee to give us a report, because we want to know. I don't want to have to read these stories and learn there's another case of a young girl committing suicide or running away or getting harmed because she was forced into a marriage at age 11. We need to make sure that these words represent the deeds that are going to follow. So, do I have both your word that you will get back to us on a regular basis to let us know if things are going better, and when they start en-

forcing the law, or if they're not enforcing it, because you are our eyes and ears, and we trust you to do that. Will you do that for us?

Ambassador VERVEER. It goes without saying, Senator, and also I'm here today with other members of the State staff who are focused on Afghanistan, and we're working on this assiduously.

Senator BOXER. Well, we need your feedback. Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I begin my questions, I just can't help wondering is there somewhere out there a picture of Barbara Boxer in a burkha. [Laughter]

Senator BOXER. There probably is. I'm not giving it to you. [Laughter]

Senator WICKER. OK. This is a very troubling subject, and Senator Boxer chose to ask about marriages. It's hard to decide where to begin, and I think I will try to ask about health and maybe governance.

In many areas, even where the Taliban is no longer there, a woman or a girl cannot be touched by a male physician or a male nurse. And if that happened, it's not only a mortification, if you will, it disqualifies that young woman from ever being married. It's that serious. Are there efforts—are there enough women midwives and women providers to answer that problem in Afghanistan?

Ambassador VERVEER. I'm sure Jim probably wants to talk about this as well, but let me just say that I think even though the indicators for health and for access to health have been so low that it's hard to—when you say there's been progress, it's hard to actually see tremendous progress because we're starting from such a low level. But this is one of those areas in which I think we can justifiably take some pride that we have made some steps that have been very positive, and one is the ability to train midwives and to have greater numbers of them who can begin to address some of these critical health needs, particularly given the maternal mortality rate, which is stunningly high, and the child survival rate, which is stunningly low.

Senator WICKER. And the life expectancy.

Ambassador VERVEER. Right. And the indicators are beginning to climb. Ever so slightly, they're beginning to climb.

Senator WICKER. So, you can give us numbers to indicate greater participation by women in the health care field. OK.

And, Director Bever, would you like to respond also?

Mr. BEVER. Yes. You, Senator, you've pointed to a very important, basic, fundamental starting point, which is health, which has in some ways, one could say, discriminated against women's health over time, particularly during the Taliban period. There is some prospect for improvement there. We and others have worked very hard at this as have, most importantly, leaders who attend the Afghan health system themselves. I do have a few numbers, but I can send some more for the record.

The under-5 mortality rate was 250 or so per 1,000 live births per year. It has dropped to below 200. So, that's a 25-percent improvement since the time of the Taliban, over 8 years, if you're talking about access to basic health services. But this is very minimal health services. A rural clinic with very minimal support went

from less than 10 percent of the population, around the time that we dispersed the Taliban in late 2001, to about 64 percent today.

The coverage of female health workers, which is one thing you mentioned, Senator, is very interesting in this regard. With Afghan Health Ministry's efforts and NGO efforts, it's gone from less—about 25 percent access to facilities with female health workers, those who can deal with a woman or a girl's problems, to over 85 percent today. But, I have to say, it's very rudimentary. They are minimally trained. They have minimal pharmaceuticals, and there's a great deal of room for improvement.

The other one is antenatal services. About the time the Taliban were dispersed, it was about 5 percent of pregnant women who used antenatal services. Now it's 32 percent. It should be 100 percent, but in the conflict situation that has prevailed, particularly in the East and South, this has been especially difficult.

So, those are just some indicators that, yes, we have some statistics. The health and medical surveillance system is very weak in Afghanistan, but it's improving, but there's a long ways to go.

Senator WICKER. Well, thank you for that.

I would just observe it would seem to me that that progress in this area would be a double benefit of providing the health service, but also a role model for young girls to see that health care professional performing.

And, quickly, here's my little vignette. I was chatting with both of you before the hearing began. I was in the southern Afghanistan town of Garmsir, which is in Helmand province. It's a town that has been retaken from the Taliban. And our delegation walked through the bazaar in this town. We must have seen a thousand people. There were no women and girls out, and the streets were lined to see this delegation of Senators, one of whom was Lisa Murakowski, a female U.S. Senator from America. No women.

So, there's 28 percent now of the Parliament that is female. They exceeded the quota. In a community like that, this is what you're up against. A town that's no longer Taliban, and a girl alone will not show her face. Where do you find the leadership? And in that Parliament, are there women with university education? And so, if you could use my observations as a starting point and answer the question, if you can.

Ambassador VERVEER. It's a good starting point, Senator, you know, and you remind me that not only have women not been able to access male health practitioners, for example, but either they can leave their homes to go get the training they require to be, for example, midwives. So, one of the more successful efforts has been working with our Afghan partners to enlist mullahs who will sanction the women leaving their homes, going to another community, getting the training they need to come back and work in their own communities. So, it has required a real integrated approach, to the extent it can always be gotten, to deal with some of these severe barriers.

But what you point out in terms of the women in the Parliament, they are there. In terms of their educational background, their educational background is higher proportionately compared to their male colleagues', and they have literally taken their lives in their hands to get it because of the threat to them every single day.

When I was recently talking to a parliamentarian whose district was in the West, I asked her—I said, “How do you make this trip?” Because it’s so arduous. And she said, “I fly to Herat, and then I pray from the moment I get in a car to drive 2 hours to get to my district, never knowing I am going to get here. And that’s where my family is, and that’s where the people are whom I serve.”

So, they are serving at great personal risk to themselves, and it is why, in order to have more women fully participating, particularly in public life, security is something that critically has to be addressed, and it has to be addressed, obviously, by the Afghan Government to ensure that they’ve got the kind of protection they need.

Mr. BEVER. If I may just add, I’ve also served 8 years in India and in Pakistan, and my own observations are that a lot of the women’s empowerment in a political sense also comes from the grassroots. Once women have economic power, once they have some means to earn income in their communities, it gains them a role in the family of a financial fiduciary level. It gains them some credit in the community and, if you will, buys them access into the political system.

So, one of the programs that we’ve been very proud to support is a national solidarity program—and I’m sure Sima Samar may comment on that one when it’s her turn—which involves women a lot more at the local level in the community development councils. So, these are important features both of involvement and of income generation, and we, with the aid money, will also be helping to improve microcredit for women in the country.

Just one other comment, if I could, related to—if I’m allowed—related to the question about President Karzai—

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Mr. BEVER [continuing]. Whether he’s committed. I saw him very committed to women’s issues in the constitutional Loya Jirga back late 2003. We would like to trust him, but we—the verification of that trust will come from other things, like civil society advocacy, legal defense, women judges, whether the mullahs and the religious leadership, as the Ambassador mentioned, are in fact—particularly those in the moderate, and they are many moderates in that group—willing to step up and stand up, and the press. Those are all the features that are needed to put the formula together to hold this commitment to its conclusion.

Senator BOXER. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Wick-er. Thank you, Senator Casey.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I wanted to start with just a brief commentary or notation of an article from the New York Times Magazine this past summer, in August. Many have heard the story, the horrific story, about a number of young girls being sprayed with battery acid in their faces and other parts of their body. The name of this—the title of this article was “A School Bus for Shamsia,” by Dexter Filkins. And he, of course, provides almost a minute-by-minute recitation of the attack. I won’t read all that. It’s easy to imagine how horrible that was, or at least attempt to understand how horrible that was upon reading it.

But he goes on to say, later, that he—when he came back to see her—or when he saw her many months later, he said that a scarlet

scar the size of a tennis ball still covered her face. And she said, and I quote—he’s quoting her now—“I cried a lot after the attack.” She said, “My mother”—or “my parents told me to keep coming to school even if I am killed.”

But despite all that horror, there’s some good news. He reports in the article that the school that she was attending had closed after the acid attacks, but only for a week. And when he showed up there, he saw her, Shamsia, and he said she was not only in attendance, but animated and lively. Just a remarkable testimony to how they could overcome that kind of horror, and I hope it gives all of us some bit of inspiration to keep going.

And I know, Ambassador Verveer, you’ve seen some progress made, albeit too gradual and too slow-moving, but I wanted to ask you a couple of questions about some of the mechanics or the elements here of the challenge. One of the broadest problems we have with regard to our strategy in Afghanistan is accelerating as fast as humanly possible the training of the Afghan Army and the police. But in preparation for this hearing, an aspect of the police training I wasn’t focused on was the lack of police training as it relates to gender-based violence and all of the training that should go with that.

And I wanted to get your sense of whether or not progress has been made on that, and a related question, I guess, would be with regard to women voters. On paper, I guess, they have the opportunity to vote, but if the polling station isn’t secured and they’re not able to vote, they obviously are disenfranchised. The question of security at polling places for women—what’s the progress, if any, on both of those, the police training and gender-based violence and the voting question?

Ambassador VERVEER. They’re two very good questions, Senator. Let’s start with the electoral question, because we have parliamentary elections that are going to be on top of us before we know it, and the record of the last election was fraught with all kinds of challenges and fraud, et cetera. It is a big problem for women to not only vote safely but also to ensure that the votes that are cast are sacrosanct and that others aren’t voting on their behalf—in numbers that sometimes are larger than the number of women in the village.

And there has been a decree that has been made in the last several weeks for electoral changes that, for example—among other elements that we are still studying and trying to understand because the language is difficult and it’s very complicated, we’re trying to understand the full consequences of it—President Karzai now has the full power to name all the commissioners on the commission. They are Presidential appointees. The commission formerly, for example, had international reps; it had the Human Rights Commission that Sima Samar represents. And no longer will that be the case.

What the implications of this are remains to be seen. There are other issues that have to do with whether or not this impacts women’s seats or seats that women have held under the quota. If, for example, there’s a vacancy, is that automatically going to a man in this case or will it follow the rules that have existed under the Constitution? And there are related issues having to do with

threshold amounts of resources to run for office. So, those are the issues that I think have to be seriously looked at, and we are doing that, trying to understand the magnitude of this law.

But the ability of women to vote—and we all have that image in our eyes, just as you just described that New York Times Magazine story, which is hard to forget once you’ve read it. The image of what it represented for the women to vote—we have a photo in our office of an Afghan women, burkha-clad, who is casting her vote for the first time. Women have to have that right, and we have to do everything in our power to ensure it. And we have various proposals that we’ve been discussing to try to move that forward, certainly for the next election cycle.

In terms of the policing issue and whether or not as this transition is being made and we see more Afghan police trained, more security forces, whether or not there will be a sensitivity too, as there must, to protecting women, to the consequences of gender-based violence, to the criminality of gender-based violence, have to be part of the training. I think this is something we need to do more about, and to the extent that we can do that, we need to do that because I think we are not in an optimal situation today.

Senator CASEY. I’ll have a little more when we get some more time. Thank you.

Senator BOXER. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. And thank you to you and Senator Casey for holding this hearing today. I also want to thank our panelists, both Ambassador Verveer and Mr. Bever, and our next panel, Dr. Samar, who I had a chance to speak with in Afghanistan—it’s so great to see you here—and Ms. Reid. Thank you both for coming this long way to be here.

I’m going to repeat what we’ve already heard from the other Senators here today, but because I think it’s so important to point out the commitment of this administration, the President and Secretary Clinton, to the importance of women and girls in Afghanistan and around the world.

You’ve all mentioned the importance of empowering women and what that does for families, for communities, and for countries. And I think it’s very important that we integrate women’s issues, this commitment to empowering women, more fully into all of our foreign policy. We shouldn’t take an ad hoc approach and treat women’s issues as a separate piece of our development and assistance puzzle. It needs to be integrated throughout everything we do. And I know all of you appreciate that, but I think it’s important to state for the record again how critical this is.

You’ve all alluded to the question of security for women in Afghanistan, but to what extent are women still the direct target of the insurgents, and is this continuing to be a component of our current security strategy, and do we need to do more?

Ambassador VERVEER. Well, I think there’s always room for improvement, Senator. Clearly, and as we read about growing numbers of cases—and I’m sure especially Dr. Samar, who is there on the ground seeing these issues every single moment, can bring more light to that. But it’s clearly still a very, very big challenge.

Senator Casey asked about the training for some of the male policemen and security forces as their numbers grow. One of the

things that has been very successful that we've done and also need to grow are the Family Response Units, which include safe places where victims of abuse can come and not just get counseling and be in a safe place, but also places that provide training to police personnel who can ensure that these are the exceptions and not the norm, because these are not activities that should be condoned or practices that should be condoned.

So, I think we have some very good programs that need to grow and need to expand, and we need to learn from those experiences, but this is not a problem that doesn't need to concern us. Women are still very much targets of abuse. And violence against women is endemic, and then there is the purposeful kind of political violence that is directed in ways that we've been discussing here, particularly against women who dare to participate in public life.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Bever, do you have anything you want to add to that?

Mr. BEVER. Yes. I'd just add it's important to keep supporting protection for judges, whether they're male or female. When they have enough courage to bring a case before a court, that there's not retribution for them during or after that case, and that the convictions, if there are, that they get carried out, that the prosecutors are also protected, that the witnesses are protected. These are extremely important elements, as you know, of a rule of law that are highly challenged in many places in Afghanistan.

I would also just add that I think what we ought to be looking into more—and I have discussed this briefly with Minister of the Interior Hanif Atmar—ways to involve the communities in Afghanistan to hold the police accountable to the law and to protect the community and to do their jobs. We have the authorities—had had them in past—for exemptions for what is known as section 660 in the Foreign Assistance Act, that allows us to do what's called “community policing.” I think it may be coming to be time to do that in Afghanistan, and I think we have a partner in someone like Interior Minister Atmar and other reformers in the Cabinet.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. We had the opportunity to meet with Minister Atmar last year when we visited Afghanistan and asked him about the training on domestic violence and violence against women for law enforcement, and he indicated his commitment and efforts to address that.

You've talked about some of the successes that would seem not as much as we all would like, but some of those—if you had to pick one area that's a priority for progress in the coming year, what would that be? Where should we be focused to get the most benefit for the efforts that we're putting in?

Ambassador VERVEER. I would pick two areas, Senator, if I might. One is certainly the political participation to enable women at the most grassroots level in these community councils where they're able to work on projects that can change their community, and, as Jim mentioned, hopefully even hold their officials responsible, learn that empowerment at both the most local level as well as the level that we opened this session about, which is in terms of the reintegration process and where the future of the country goes politically, so that they can participate fully and help chart that course in the right direction.

Second, I think, economic empowerment. We know that when it comes to even dealing with violence against women, it is so critical for a woman's enhanced status and for her personal confidence and well-being to be able to have that tangible opportunity to work and to earn a living, to be able to support herself and her family. I think to focus on vocational education that is really focused on the jobs women can do—and that's just about anything—we really need to be doing more of that. Agriculture has proven to be a very successful area in which women have begun to be more engaged, whether it's in animal husbandry or it's in crops or small business development.

I think a greater concerted effort in this area to grow economic empowerment would have a powerful impact because it would also show that there is progress that is being made for the people as a whole, and when their lives improve, there is a belief in the future.

Thank you.

Senator BOXER. Thank you so much. Well, this ends our first panel. I just want to thank the Ambassador and Director for their candor. And we know their commitment is powerful. I just want to say those of us on this panel are going to count on you to be our eyes and ears. We want to help you. And our work is only as good as the information we get because we want to be strong here, but we can't if we don't know what's happening on the ground. So, help us with that. You've said you will. We count on you, and night or day we're always available to hear from you.

Thank you both for your dedication. Thank you very much.

And at this time, I'm going to hand this gavel over to chairman of the Subcommittee, Senator Casey, and he is going to introduce a very special second panel.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.,
U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much. I want to thank Chairwoman Boxer for presiding at the first part of our hearing and for the first panel. We're grateful for her leadership on these issues. And we look forward to our second panel, even as we say thank you to those on the first panel who are leaving. Thank you very much for your testimony.

Let me start by—I'll just—I want to put an opening statement into the record, and then we'll take our—we'll take the testimony from our witnesses.

Today, the subcommittee meets to examine the many crises confronting Afghan women and girls, a topic which has important humanitarian as well as national security implications. Our development assistance as well as our civil engagement strategy in Afghanistan should start with a focus on women and girls, especially given the central role they play in Afghan society, and improving their lives today can have a ripple effect on helping generations of Afghans on a wide range of issues, including equality before the law, nutrition, education, and security. Supporting women and girls in Afghanistan is not only in our national interest; it is the right thing to do.

Since the fall of the Taliban, there have been some improvements to women's rights, such as the creation of the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the guarantee of equal rights for men and women in the new constitution.

Yet, despite the Afghan Government's pledges to continue advancing women's rights, there have been minimal followthrough. Indeed, Afghan women remain among the worst in the world with respect to life expectancy, as we heard earlier from Chairwoman Boxer, as well as quality of life. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights has stressed that it is the Afghan Government's responsibility to lead the fight to reduce violent actions against women by educating the population and demonstrating an active commitment to safeguarding women's rights.

Just last year, a report released by the U.N. entitled, "Silence Is Violence" illustrates the trend of violence against women, including rape, which is on the rise. The report discusses the numerous attacks on girls schools and female students, including gas, and as I noted earlier, acid attacks. Many incidents of violence and rape go unreported, and when they are reported, they are rarely a priority for the police.

A human rights report recently published by Canada's Foreign Minister—or Foreign Affairs Department, I should say, highlights the increasing rate at which women are turning to suicide to escape the abuse they suffer daily. Many of the women who commit suicide are in their early twenties. Almost two-thirds of Afghan marriages involve girls under the age of 16, as Chairwoman Boxer noted, many of whom are forced into marriage. Some girls try to escape, but there are few places for them to go, and some only find shelter in prison.

Afghan women face an uphill battle in politics, too. In last year's Presidential election, Afghan women were unable to exercise their basic rights of suffrage because they require a separate polling place, many of which weren't open due to a lack of female electoral staff. We have received reports that Afghan officials are considering changes, as was noted earlier, which could diminish the role of women in Parliament.

The United States Government can do more to help Afghan women. The Afghan Civilian Assistance Program has had great success in delivering supplies to help families rebuild their lives in conflict areas of the country. In the event of civilian deaths in Afghanistan due to ISAF operations, compensation for families across the country is uneven, despite ISAF countries providing different levels of compensation or no compensation at all. In a culture where compensation is expected, this has caused more suffering among women in particular, who need immediate funds for funerals, to travel, to stay with family, or to feed their children. I know that General McChrystal has championed an effort to create uniform standards for family compensation, and I hope the upcoming NATO ministerial conference will address this important issue.

We are joined today by an esteemed panel of experts, both the first and the second panel. On our second panel, I'll first introduce Dr. Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. Dr. Samar also served as the—or serves, I should say,

as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan.

Our second witness is Rachel Reid, a Kabul-based researcher for Human Rights Watch. She is also—also has an extensive journalism background, working as a reporter, editor, and producer for the BBC. And at this moment, we will—I think we'll just take the testimony. Doctor, you may start, and we'll take your testimony. We'll try to do our best to summarize a longer statement. If you want to put a statement in the record, that will certainly be part of the procedure. But if you could limit your opening to about 10 minutes, we'd appreciate it. Thank you, Doctor.

STATEMENT OF DR. SIMA SAMAR, CHAIR, AFGHANISTAN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Dr. SAMAR. Senator Boxer, Senator Casey, and Members of the Foreign Relations Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today.

Without a doubt, Afghanistan would not even be at this stage of security or development without the support and assistance of the international community, especially the United States. However, it is a not enough; much more needs to be done to gain the hearts and the mind of the public.

Today, I will mainly focus on the situation of human rights and women's rights. The situation in this area has improved a great deal since the Taliban rule. Access to education for women and girls is much better. At least, there are no official bans on female education, which was the case during Taliban. Still, about 40 percent of girls have not access to education. Girls who attend schools are also subject to various forms of reprisal such as the acid attack and all the other kinds of violations.

Access to basic health services has improved in Afghanistan, but in many parts of Afghanistan, women have not seen a medical doctor in their entire lives. Maternal and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world.

The political participation of women is very limited. At the recent conference on Afghanistan in London, no women or no human rights activists were included in our government's delegation. After the recent elections, only one woman was approved as a minister.

The electoral process must guarantee the fairness, legitimacy, and credibility of the whole process, including the full and equal participation of women voters. The new election law does not provide these assurances and guarantees.

Women's access to justice is also very limited. One of the reasons is the low number of women in the judiciary system. No women are in the Supreme Court Council.

Women's rights remain unprotected under the laws of the country. The Shia personal status law, for example, violates the constitutional and international treaty obligations of the Afghan government.

Most women lack economic empowerment and live in poverty.

A culture of impunity exists for sexual violence in the country. Forced marriages, child marriages, and exchange marriages and the sale of the girls are prevalent.

Support for the tribal system will only accelerate these practices and will continue the denial of the rights of women and girls.

The lack of security reduces the freedom of women and of expression. Security must be defined to include human rights, women's rights, and economic well-being, along with the absence of fighting.

Accountability for all violations of human rights and women's rights is a prerequisite for security.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my recommendations.

First, recognition that women exist in Afghanistan is important. The lack of mention and recognition of women's rights by the United States and the international community allows Afghan men in different state institutions to continue to ignore women's rights.

Second, women must be included in decisionmaking, peace talks, and peace-building. The strong military and political presence of the international community and U.N. Security Council Resolutions such as 1325 and 1820 are made meaningless when a new policy of reintegration and reconciliation with the so-called good Taliban is considered without any discussion of the consequences for women and women's work. Women were the primary victims of the Taliban in the past, and they will be in the future unless attention to women's rights is paid and upheld by the Afghan Government and the international community, particularly the U.S. Government.

Third, political solutions should not be interpreted solely as negotiations with Taliban and opposition groups. These efforts should not be allowed to overshadow desperately needed work to enhance good governance, rule of law, and human rights. Any political negotiation with the antigovernment elements must address accountability and justice. Rather than being marginalized, the principles of human rights and women's rights should be fundamental.

Fourth, without full participation of women, the problems in Afghanistan cannot be solved. Respect for culture and religion should not be used as an excuse to ignore women's rights in Afghanistan. This excuse over the past three decades of war has been disastrous for women.

Fifth, support for the education for women at all levels is the main tool to empower women and to change the mentality within the society.

Sixth, women's access to health care, especially to reproductive health care, is vital, which is not enough.

Seventh, long-term commitment and comprehensive strategies for the international community are needed to enable the Afghan Government to overcome the challenges. Strong political will is needed by the all parties to promote and protect human rights and women's rights and to support good governance and rule of law.

Ninth, human rights and women's rights should be at the center of every policy if we really want to achieve peace in Afghanistan. Neither peace and stability, nor development and security can be achieved unless human rights and women's rights are sustained and promoted. Accountability must replace impunity. A culture of peace building will not be complete or sustainable. The people who believe in democracy and human rights defenders must be supported politically and morally.

Finally, the job in Afghanistan is not done. Short-term fixes are not going to solve the problem. By joining our hands together, we will be able to complete and achieve the goal.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Samar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. SIMA SAMAR

Senator Boxer, Senator Casey and Members of the Foreign Relations Committee, Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today.

Without a doubt, Afghanistan would not even be at this stage of security or development without the support and assistance of the International Community, and especially the United States. What has been achieved so far is vital for the transition of Afghanistan from a malfunctioning administration to a semi-operational government with functional state institutions. However, it is not enough. Much more needs to be achieved to gain the hearts and minds of the public.

The U.S. intervention and continued mission in Afghanistan has had several justifications—to fight terrorism, to reduce on poppy production, to protect human rights, particularly women rights, to promote democracy, and, finally, to protect your country and your own people.

Today, I will mainly focus on the situation of human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan.

The protection and promotion of human rights, women's rights and gender equality has improved a great deal since the Taliban rule in Afghanistan. For example:

- Access to education for women and girls is much better. At least, there are no official bans on female education, which was the case during Taliban. However, still only about 40 % of girls have access to education. Also, the quality of education is not as good as it should be. In rural areas of the country, restrictions on girls' access to education continue because of the lack of facilities, school buildings, and trained teachers, especially female teachers. Moreover, in some parts of the country, girls who attend schools have been subject to various forms of reprisal such as the acid attack in Qandahar.
- Access to basic health services has improved in Afghanistan. But, we still face the same problems. In many parts of Afghanistan, women have not seen a medical doctor in their entire lives. Women have no means to control the number of the children that they have. Maternal and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world.
- The political participation of women is very limited. At the recent conference on Afghanistan in London, no women or human rights activists were included in our government's delegation. After the recent elections in the country, only one woman was approved as a minister despite the lobbying efforts of women rights activists. Nominations of three women cabinet members were proposed to the parliament. However, only one of them received the vote of confidence. No women are included in the National Security Council. Twenty-five percent of the parliament is comprised of women because of the constitutional quota system. However, these women are not independent of most of the powerful men in the parliament.
- The electoral process must guarantee the fairness, legitimacy and credibility of the whole process, including the full and equal participation of women voters. The new election law does not provide these assurances.
- Women's access to justice is also very limited. One of the reason is the low number of women in the judiciary system. No women are in the Supreme Court Council.
- Women's rights remain unprotected under the laws of the country. An example is the Shia personal status law, which violates the international and constitutional obligation of the Afghan government to abide by the international treaties the government signed and joined. The introduction of legislation to eliminate violence against women is a positive step, but it is stuck in the parliament.
- Most women lack economic empowerment and live in poverty. The absolute majority of women are not independent economically. Although some women have their own business, there are few of them.
- A culture of impunity exists for sexual violence in the country. It is always seen as private matter of the family. State institutions refuse to intervene in some

cases. In other cases, they promote the ownership of females in the family by men.

- Finally, forced marriage, child marriage, and exchange marriage in which girls are given to disputes in the family or tribe are prevalent in the county. The sale of girls is still very common practice. Supporting for the tribal system will only accelerate these practices and will continue the denial of the rights of women and girls.
- The lack of security is another problem that reduces the freedom of women and freedom of expression in general. Security must be defined to include human rights, women's rights, and economic well-being, along with the absence of fighting. The absence of security undermines women's rights and human rights. Accountability and justice for violation of human rights and women's rights is a pre-requisite for security.

I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my recommendations.

First, the recognition that women exist in Afghanistan is important. The lack of mention and recognition by the United States and the international community of women's rights allow Afghan men in different state institution to continue to ignore women's rights.

Second, women must be included in decision-making, peace talks, and peace building. The strong military and political presence of the international community and important United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 are made meaningless when a new policy of reintegration and reconciliation with the so-called good Taliban is considered without any discussion of the consequences for women. Women were the primary victims of the Taliban in the past and will be in the future unless attention to women's rights is paid and upheld by both the Afghan government and the international community, particularly the United States.

Third, emphasis on political solutions should not be interpreted solely as negotiations with Taliban and opposition groups. These efforts should not be allowed to overshadow desperately needed work to enhance the capacity and capability of the existing institutions based on good governance, rule of law and human rights. Any political negotiations with the anti-government elements must address accountability and justice. Rather than being marginalized, the principles of human rights and women's rights should be fundamental. Victims of human rights violations should not be victimized for political gains again and again.

Fourth, without full participation of women, who are the half of the population who are supportive of peace, freedom and democracy, the problems in Afghanistan can not be solved. Respect for culture and religion should not be used as an excuse to ignore women's rights in Afghanistan. This excuse over the past three decades of war has been disastrous for women.

Fifth, support for the education for women at all levels is the main tool to empower women. Little attention has been paid in this sector. For example, with all the talks about women's empowerment, there are no institutions to teach and train people, especially young generation on human rights, democracy and gender to enable the people to understand and structurally mainstream gender and human rights in their advocacy efforts.

Sixth, women's access to health care, especially to reproductive health care is vital. Women must be given the choice to control their own body and the number of the children that they have. If women have 10 children they will not be healthy and cannot take an active part in political and social activities.

Seventh, women's participation at the decision making level is crucial to the situation. Women's issues are political issues. Without women's full participation in politics, not single decision will be in their favor and friendly to women's rights.

Eighth, the chronic problems of a country like Afghanistan require long-term commitment and comprehensive strategies from the international community to enable the Afghan Government to overcome the challenges and troubles facing peace and stability in the country.

Of course, any possible progress in the country requires the Afghan Government to enhance its capacity to absorb international aid and development assistance and to increase its commitment to good governance, rule of law, human rights and justice. Strong political will is needed by the Afghan government and international community as partner to the Afghans for promotion and protection human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan.

Nineth, human rights and women's rights should be at the center of every policy if we really want to achieve peace in Afghanistan. Neither peace and stability, nor development and security can be achieved unless human rights and women's rights are sustained and promoted. Accountability must replace impunity. One of the most important ingredients of peace is justice. Without justice, the peace building will not

be complete or sustainable. As Kofi Anan rightly emphasized—development without security is not possible, and security is not possible without development. But both are not possible without respect for human rights and, I would add, the full participation of women. In order to promote democracy and human rights in a society the people who believe in democracy and human rights defenders should be supported politically and morally. Without democratic people and human rights defenders in the ground the goal will not be achievable.

Finally, I would conclude that the only solution for the problem in Afghanistan would be the promotion of democracy and values of human rights and women's rights. The job in Afghanistan is not done. Short term fixes are not going to solve the problem. By joining our hands together, we will be able to complete the job must faster.

Thank you very much.

Senator CASEY. Doctor, thank you very much, and you did it under the time limit. That doesn't happen too much around here. [Laughter]

Thank you very much. We are honored by your presence here today.

Ms. Reid. Thank you very much.

**STATEMENT OF RACHEL REID, AFGHANISTAN RESEARCHER,
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, KABU, AFGHANISTAN**

Ms. REID. Thank you. Thank you very much, Senator Casey, thank you, Senator Boxer, for the invitation to testify at this important and timely hearing.

I am very encouraged by your comments earlier, your clear commitment to women's rights in Afghanistan. I'm also very encouraged by the amendments to the stabilization plan, which came as a surprise today. And thank you again, to Senator Boxer and Ambassador Verveer, who I suspect played a big role in that.

I have been living in Afghanistan for much of the last 3 years. For the past year, my focus has been primarily on women's rights, including bringing out a report in December.

For the past few weeks in Kabul, I've been speaking to women leaders and to some women in districts largely controlled by the Taliban, and to some former Taliban themselves about their hopes, their views, about reconciliation and reintegration. So that's primarily what I'll talk to out about today.

I should start by stressing that, in my view, reconciliation and reintegration cannot work unless you have a credible, legitimate, and honest Afghan Government. And so, otherwise, we'll see deals, rather than reconciliation. We'll see the purchase of a temporary peace. We'll see corruption fueled and probably the empowerment of more local strongmen. So, before reintegration plans race ahead, which, to be honest, they seem to be doing, from my conversations in Kabul recently, the United States must keep its focus on improving the Afghan Government's record on rights, governance, and rule of law.

And one more caveat about wishful thinking, which Dr. Samar touched on as well: U.S. officials in both State and Pentagon are attempting to assert that the majority of insurgents are not driven by ideological motivations, that it's about economics or local grievances. And while, clearly, many who choose to fight, do so for many reasons, some of them—many of them not theological, the extremist interpretation of Islam is integral to the identity of the Taliban.

As a reminder of that, in recent weeks, I've been doing a series of interviews with women in districts under de facto Taliban or Islamist control. These are places where women saw brief freedoms after the fall of the Taliban. Many of them took up their jobs again as teachers or midwives. They sent their girls back to school. They talked about having hope again for their futures. Then the insurgency took hold, and in the last few years, the few new freedoms unraveled. Many of these women have had phone calls, threatening letters, visits from armed men to their homes, and they've been forced to give up their jobs. Elders in their communities have kept on telling them to take their daughters out of school and to stop working.

So, I think we need a bit more honesty about the potential risks of deals with the Taliban.

Obviously, all of the women I'm talking to want peace. Women pay a heavy price for this conflict, but it doesn't have to be peace at any price. Women don't want their constitutional rights abandoned. They want their basic freedom to go to school, to work, to have access to health care, and to participate in political life. They also want much more transparency about the reconciliation and reintegration process that's happening now, and they want inclusion at all levels, whether it be the village level shuras that are already taking place, the national policy formulation that's happening now, the peace Jirga that we're expecting soon. And this needs to be representation that they recognize as representing their views, rather than token Karzai loyalists, which we've seen happen in the past.

So, I would ask you to ask the Afghan and United States Governments what they're doing to ensure that women are being consulted and included in the policy formulation that's taking place right now in Kabul and in Washington, DC.

Another area where the United States can offer very meaningful assistance is in support for women in public life. As Ambassador Verveer mentioned, there was a very negative development just last week, when the President changed the electoral law by decree, and we believe that these changes are likely to reduce the number of women in Parliament already. Women parliamentarians, councilors, human rights activists face constant threats and intimidation. There have been several high-profile women murdered in recent years, and nothing has been to bring their killers to justice.

So, again I would urge you to write to the Afghan Government and ask them why nothing has happened about the killing of Sitara Achakzai, of Malalai Kakar, of Zakia Zaki.

The broader picture of violence against women is more of what we've already been hearing today, and there was this one bright spot that was the law passed by decree last summer on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The law is not perfect, but it does make rape a crime for the first time. So, clearly, hugely significant.

The role of the U.S. military—and, Senator Casey, you touched on this—in terms of training the police force, particularly at this escalated speed, it's already skewed to paramilitary-style training. I fear that as this escalation in the speed of training carries on, that will be worse, and basically there will no rule of law unless

the police force knows the law, including these new laws that are designed to protect women.

So, now would be a good time to evaluate and modify the current police training to ensure that it is actually putting the protection of women and girls at its heart.

One last issue of concern that I'll mention: This year an amnesty law was brought into force that gives a blanket pardon to past or present combatants who agree to reconcile. This gives a *carte blanche* to the government, basically, to bring anyone back into the fold, no matter what crimes they've committed. At a time when the United States and other governments are pressing the Afghan Government to try and improve its legitimacy, bringing more war criminals into government is a backward step. The government is meant to be trying to establish more rule of law, while at the same time sending this message that the worst crimes, including very serious crimes against women, will not be punished by the state.

So, please ask the Afghan and United States Governments to exclude war criminals from reconciliation and to ensure that serious human rights violators are brought to justice.

In conclusion, Afghan women and girls remember very well the promises made by your country when the United States—when it ousted the Taliban from power back in 2001 and will be looking to you to ensure that their rights are not traded away, even as the United States reduces its troop commitments in coming years.

The Afghan Government clearly bears responsibility here, but let's be frank: In terms of reintegration and reconciliation, this administration will have much more influence than any Afghan woman, perhaps with the exception of Dr. Samar. [Laughter]

And so, you can help ensure that women are included in these processes. You can help ensure that serious rights violators are excluded, and that the fundamental freedom of women that's enshrined in their constitution are not sacrificed.

Thanks for listening. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Reid follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RACHEL REID

Thank you, Senator Boxer and Senator Casey, for the invitation to testify at this important and timely hearing.

I have been working on Afghanistan since 2006, and living there for most of the last three years. For the past year much of my focus has been on women's rights—including authoring a report, "We Have the Promises of the World: Women's Rights in Afghanistan," published in December 2009. The report details emblematic cases of ongoing rights' violations in five areas—attacks on women in public life; violence against women; child and forced marriage; access to justice; and girls' access to secondary education. I've just flown in from Kabul, where for the past few weeks I've been asking women leaders about the prospect of the Taliban's reintegration and reconciliation with the government. Most women I've spoken to say they want:

- Peace with justice,
- Transparency and inclusion, and
- No illusions about "moderate Taliban."

The last eight years have seen much progress for women and girls in Afghanistan. Thanks to a constitutional guarantee of women's political participation, a quarter of the parliament is female. There have been real gains in education, with more than 2 million girls in school, though only 4 percent of secondary school age girls reach grade 10. The U.S. Government has provided essential assistance in key areas of women's development and empowerment, including more than \$150 million allocated for Afghan women and girls this year. The support from Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton at January's London conference was much needed and welcomed by the women leaders who participated. The efforts of the ambassador-at-large of the Office of Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer, and individual members of Congress, such as Senator Boxer, who have gone to great lengths to promote Afghan women's rights, have been critical.

Afghanistan's women leaders and human rights defenders are themselves the greatest hope for women and girls in Afghanistan. I have had the privilege to work closely with many impressive women who work fearlessly to continue to try to push the boundaries and achieve greater rights and freedoms.

Unfortunately, the trend for women's rights is now negative in many areas. While the oppression of women and girls under the Taliban was cited as a justification for the 2001 invasion, the Afghan government and its international backers have not always treated women's rights as a high priority. Recent years have been marked by a number of disturbing developments, such as the passage of the Shia Personal Status Law in 2009 with the support of parliament and President Hamid Karzai, unpunished assassinations of women leaders, and the consolidation of power by fundamentalist factions in government, parliament, and the courts. This month President Karzai sought to issue a decree that would have decreased the number of reserved seats for women in parliament—just the latest in a series of worrying moves by President Karzai to prioritize the demands of conservative factions at the expense of women (at the time of writing the decree's final wording was still unclear). Sadly, it is no longer clear what commitment President Karzai has to women's rights.

The Afghan government, often with the support of the Bush administration, has empowered current and former warlords, providing official positions to some and impunity to the rest. Backroom deals with extremist and abusive commanders profoundly undermine the rights and security of Afghan women. As political power has gradually coalesced around former warlords and hardliners, women have been further marginalized, with those who speak up for their rights—including women members of Parliament—coming under threat. This threat may increase if women articulate their fears about the political re-emergence of the Taliban, whose leaders are accustomed to threatening and killing those who criticize or oppose them. We are deeply concerned that, with discussions of some form of political settlement with the Taliban and other insurgent groups now part of the strategy of the government and NATO, further backroom deals will be made, rather than an inclusive reconciliation process. If this is the case then the risk of further compromise of women's rights seems high.

It is important not to engage in wishful thinking. U.S. military and civilian officials are now keen to stress what is portrayed as the non-ideological nature of large numbers of Taliban fighters and other insurgents and are minimizing the differences in world views. This is being done to create the political space for deals and reintegration to be more palatable to their domestic audiences. Emphasis is placed on economic incentives for insurgents, and on reference to the so called "moderate" or "pragmatic" Taliban. While poverty and local grievances are clearly factors in the insurgency, this perspective tends to disregard the long history of misogyny within the Taliban and the serious abuses that women are suffering today at the hands of insurgent groups. There may be many insurgent commanders who are not ideologically committed to the subjugation of women and could accept the Afghan constitution, but it is important not to overstate the size of this group or to understate the threat facing women should those committed to extremist ideologies be given power at the local, provincial or national levels.

The role of the United States in helping to ensure the long-term promotion and protection of women's rights in Afghanistan is crucial. The gains made over the past eight years are being threatened daily. U.S. development and military assistance, political support, and reintegration and reconciliation efforts all need to be conducted giving full consideration to their impact on the women and girls of Afghanistan.

The legacy of almost a decade of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan should not be the restoration of rights-abusing extremist groups. It is not only the women and girls of Afghanistan who expect support from the U.S. The reaction of the U.S. public and the international media to the Taliban-style Shia Personal Status law in 2009 showed the deep empathy that still exists in the United States and around the world for Afghan women and girls.

REINTEGRATION, RECONCILIATION AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Human Rights Watch and partners have conducted a series of interviews in Kabul and in districts where insurgent groups are strong in recent weeks, asking women

about their hopes and fears for reintegration and reconciliation. Most women living in areas where insurgent groups have become more powerful over the last two or three years say they have seen the brief freedom they enjoyed after the fall of the Taliban disappear. Many have been told to stop working through phone calls, received threatening “night letters” (written messages left overnight), or been intimidated by aggressive groups of armed men. Communities have been warned not to allow girls to go to school. Women have also told us that elders come under pressure from insurgent groups to enforce their demands to restrict freedom of movement and the right to work. Policy makers should have a proactive strategy to deal with this pattern of intimidation and abuse of women and girls as they work to achieve reintegration and reconciliation.

I have also recently discussed these issues with two former Talibs, including Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, a founding member of the Taliban movement and the former ambassador to Pakistan. Both echoed the claims of the Taliban government while it was in power that restrictions on women, including the closing down of girls schools, were merely due to lack of resources. Mullah Zaeef said that the freedom to work and study that women had enjoyed in recent years (specifically in mixed offices and classrooms) had resulted in their “moral corruption.”

Unsurprisingly, all of the women we interviewed say they want peace: women are paying a heavy price in the current conflict. But all are concerned about the potential consequences of deals with insurgents for their basic rights—even those who are barely able to exercise these rights today. Most women describe what could be considered “non-negotiables.” These include:

- Access to education,
- Access to health care,
- Freedom to work,
- Freedom to participate in political life, and
- Maintaining the constitutional protection of these rights.

Many of the women expressed frustration that there is little transparency about the government’s reintegration and reconciliation plans. They are well aware that initiatives and policies are currently being drawn up that will have enormous impact on them, but they have not been kept informed, let alone consulted. Women want to be included in a serious manner while they still have a chance to make recommendations and influence decisions. They also want to be represented in large numbers if a peace jirga takes place by women who will advocate their views and rights—not by what they fear may be compliant and token delegates.

In response to the London Communiqué, a group of women leaders drew up their own list of demands.¹ We urge the U.S. to support their recommendations (which we endorse). The following recommendations are largely drawn from their demands:

- Prioritizing women’s inclusion at every stage of planning for reintegration and reconciliation.
- Prioritizing women’s inclusion in decision making bodies.
- Ensuring that women who participate in decision making bodies and the peace jirga are representative of women civil society activists (ideally they should be nominated by the Afghan Women’s Network and Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission).
- Ensuring that those who broker deals do so in a transparent and inclusive way.
- Ensuring that the government of Afghanistan offers guarantees of women’s constitutional rights, including basic freedoms such as access to education, right to work, access to health, access to justice, freedom of speech and freedom of movement.
- Ensuring that a proportion of the financial incentives to communities to support reintegration should be used to support women’s empowerment and development.
- Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to protect the rights of women and girls in reintegration and reconciliation plans through rigorous monitoring and mechanisms of redress.
- Devoting a significant proportion of international donor assistance (including funds going through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund) to women’s needs in the areas of reconstruction, rule of law, and access to formal justice.

¹ These can be found at <http://peacewithjustice4afghanistan.blogspot.com/2010/02/kabul-press-conference-reactions-from.html>

TRADITIONAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Part of the reintegration package being considered involves efforts to strengthen or create traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. While in the abstract this sounds sensible in a country where the court system is hardly functional and does not reach isolated areas, traditional dispute resolution can be very dangerous for women. It is already widely practiced and routinely involves “settlements” harmful to women, including the use of baad (providing women or girls as compensation for a crime or civil dispute, including in rape cases) and honor killings. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and the Afghan Women’s Network have all expressed strong concerns about measures that might bring added legitimacy to these customary practices. Their intervention has resulted in significant improvements in the new policy guidelines on paper, but they maintain valid fears about their practical implementation, particularly at the village level and in more conservative areas of the country.

Support for this initiative from the United States appears to be driven by counter-insurgency objectives, to address concerns among Afghans that the court system is too corrupt or weak or absent in rural areas to address or resolve disputes. This has been exploited by the Taliban, which in some areas has been quick to provide forms of dispute resolution through its own processes. Yet informal justice initiatives are unlikely to make the protection of women’s rights a priority while the motivation for these initiatives is counter-insurgency rather than justice and rights.

We urge that the U.S. insist that any policies or programs on traditional dispute resolution:

- Make the protection of women’s rights a principal objective, not to be traded to obtain other goals.
- Help ensure that women’s constitutional rights are protected in any judicial or dispute resolution system.
- Ensure that baad and honor killings are never used in criminal or civil cases and that those who continue to engage in these practices are prosecuted.
- Do not result in resources being diverted away from strengthening the formal justice system, particularly at local levels, and women’s access to justice through the courts.

ATTACKS ON WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE

One of the great advances since 2001 is the possibility for Afghan women to be active in politics, government, civil society and other spheres of public life. Yet women in public life are subject to routine threats and intimidation. Several high-profile women have been assassinated in recent years, and their killers have not been brought to justice. Women in insurgent-controlled areas are often threatened and intimidated into retreating to their homes. Every time a woman in public life is killed, her death has a multiplier effect, as women in her region or profession will think twice about their public activities.

Women in parliament and on provincial councils face challenges that their male counterparts do not, and require specific training, support and protection. Without a strong platform in government and society from which to lobby for their rights, women’s advancement in Afghanistan will grind to a halt. We urge the United States to:

- Press the Afghan government to investigate and prosecute attacks on women in public life.
- Encourage President Karzai to maintain the reservation of 25 percent of seats for women in parliament and extend this to all sub national forms of government.
- Work towards the implementation of the demand from women leaders at the London conference that women be allocated 25 percent of positions in all government bodies, particularly in decision-making positions, the peace jirga, and civil service, including senior positions in the civil service.
- Work with the government to provide protection for women facing personal threats.
- Develop specific training programs on law, rights and governance for women in parliament, provincial councils, and all sub national forms of government.
- Support programs of gender awareness for men at all levels public life to discourage discrimination and an atmosphere of hostility and intimidation.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women in Afghanistan is endemic. A nationwide survey by Global Rights of 4,700 women, published in 2008, found that 87.2 percent had experienced at least one form of physical, sexual, or psychological violence or forced marriage in their lifetimes. The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, which came into force in July 2009, was a notable achievement on the part of women's rights defenders, despite weaknesses in the law. The law strengthens sanctions against various forms of violence against women; including making rape a crime for the first time under Afghan law. Because it was passed by decree, it can be amended by parliament, where powerful conservative factions are trying to weaken it. President Karzai and the international community should act to ensure this does not happen.

The support of the U.S. Government in working with the legal department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Justice is appreciated by women activists, as are commitments to expand short training programs on gender awareness and the mentoring and training for Family Response Units. However, there are concerns that additional pressure this year to rapidly expand the Afghan police and army will result in the continued prioritization of counter-insurgency capacity, and the reduction of training time, which may result in the further reduction of training components that deal with women's rights and human rights, as well as basic law enforcement duties.

To address violence against women, we urge the United States to:

- Press the Afghan government to vigorously investigate and prosecute all crimes of violence against women, including sexual violence.
- Work with the government to implement a nationwide and sustained campaign to ensure that rape is understood to be a criminal offense by law enforcement agencies, judges, parliament, civil servants, and the Afghan public. The campaign should also aim to reduce the stigmatization of victims of rape.
- Ensure that expansion of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police is accompanied by efforts to ensure the security forces have the protection of women as one of their main functions.
- Provide long-term support to the government to embark on a training program for prosecutors, police, and judges to ensure that the Elimination of Violence Against Women law is implemented.

JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Human Rights Watch is deeply troubled by the recent discovery that the Afghan government secretly gazetted the controversial amnesty law, the National Stability and Reconciliation Law, that had been passed in 2007 but never made official. This law was pushed through parliament by warlords and their supporters to give them immunity for human rights abuses, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed over the long period of armed conflict in Afghanistan. In response to international outrage, including by the U.S. Government, President Karzai had privately reassured the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and civil society groups in 2007 that he would not sign the law.

This law is deeply offensive to Afghans, and in contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law. A major opinion survey by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission found widespread support for bringing those responsible for serious past crimes to justice.

Women have played a leading role in the emerging victims groups demanding accountability for past crimes. Many of the women leaders we have interviewed have expressed deep concerns about the amnesty law. Its revival at this time is seen by some as connected to the current moves towards reintegration and reconciliation.

The amnesty law abdicates the responsibility of the state to investigate and prosecute past crimes. Defenders of the law say it still allows individuals to seek prosecutions on their own. But this is an unreasonable and likely impossible burden—few Afghans are going to take the risk of standing up alone to a warlord or other powerful abuser. To place such a burden on women who have been victims of sexual violence as a weapon of war is particularly egregious and insulting.

It should be the policy of the U.S. Government to work for the repeal of this law. It has been a great disappointment to Human Rights Watch and Afghan activists that the Obama administration and other key actors in the international community have failed to react more strongly. It is our understanding that the U.S. is satisfied with the provision allowing individuals to bring claims, despite the impracticality of the provision, and the abdication of state responsibility.

Afghanistan has an international legal obligation to investigate and prosecute as appropriate those who have committed serious violations of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The United States should press hard with Afghanistan's other supporters to see that this obligation is met.

But this isn't just a moral and legal issue; there are strong pragmatic arguments against betraying the victims of these crimes. Accountability for serious human rights abuses is an important part of a sustainable peace process. The alternative—peace without justice or accountability—is at best likely to result only in temporary calm. The fact that there are already many human rights abusers in government should not be used as an excuse to introduce more, but it frequently is. At a time when the U.S. and other allies of the Afghan government are trying to exert pressure on the government to increase its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, further appeasement of people who large numbers of Afghans see as war criminals would be a major step backwards.

We urge the U.S. to:

- Press the Afghan government to repeal the amnesty law and to take steps to uphold its obligation to investigate and prosecute as appropriate serious human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, including deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, and rape and other sexual violence.
- Make clear that accountability is integral to the reintegration and reconciliation process and that serious human rights abusers should be excluded from amnesties provided through this process.

CONCLUSION

As the United States increases its troop commitments and political engagement in Afghanistan, it is important to recognize that the threat to women's rights comes from the Afghan government as well as former warlords, the Taliban, and other armed groups. Too often, politics trumps justice when women's rights are at stake. President Karzai's efforts to reach out to Taliban leaders cannot be an excuse to appease fundamentalist demands to oppress women.

Afghan women were deeply disappointed that President Obama's December 2009 speech outlining a new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan did not mention women. Similarly, women and girls were largely missing from the Afghanistan and Pakistan Stabilization Strategy released by the Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan in January 2010. Women were also an afterthought at January's London conference, though thanks to the tenacity of Afghan women and the support of Secretary of State Clinton they were able to have their voices heard.

Despite the talk of Afghan leadership in the reintegration and reconciliation process, the reality is that the U.S. will play a serious and potentially decisive role in its outcome. Consequently, Afghan women and girls, who have not forgotten the promises made by the U.S. Government when it ousted the Taliban in 2001, will look to the U.S. to ensure that their rights and freedoms are not traded away as the U.S. seeks to reduce its troop commitments in Afghanistan. The U.S. should not only help to create space for women to raise their concerns, but also articulate where the red lines must be drawn: serious human rights violators should not be put into positions of power, and the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Afghan constitution should not be sacrificed.

Without pressure on President Karzai and a commitment from the U.S. and international community to respect the basic rights of women and girls, the hard-won freedoms of the last few years can be quickly unraveled. The trend is already negative. Afghan women will continue to fight to defend their freedoms, but President Obama and the U.S. can do much more to let them know through words and deeds that the United States will support them rather than abandon them in a scramble for deal-making. Women's rights must at all times be central to U.S. policies and goals in Afghanistan.

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you very much, Ms. Reid. You're under your time, too. So, we're going to invite both of you back, for many reasons.

I know that Senator Boxer may have to leave, and I wanted to have her take the first round of questions.

Senator BOXER. Thank you so much, Senator. Both of you are just so important to us as our eyes and ears and, I know, to the Ambassador and the Director as well.

Colleagues, we just can't—"colleague." [Laughter]

We can't lose this moment because this is really a critical moment. We've got a military campaign going on against the Taliban, and we all want it to succeed. And after this military campaign—and we hope it ends soon—comes reconciliation. And now is the time that we have to, it seems to me, put the pressure on all sides that there can't be reconciliation unless there's certain changes in the treatment of women.

And what I'd like to do with you both right now—because I've taken this straight out of Ms. Reid's testimony—is go through where I see the possibilities arise and what we should support, but I need to know if this is right.

I think the first thing that goes along with reconciliation is an end of violence against women in Afghanistan and that there must be a proven commitment that the Violence Against Women Law will be passed by the Parliament. Right now, it's my understanding that it's just been a decree, but that it will in fact be enforced. That's number one.

No. 2—and this I take straight from your testimony, Ms. Reid, so I want to make sure I don't leave anything out. And, Dr. Samar, I'm very interested in your opinion. It seems to me that the first thing we should support is freedom from violence. Also, access to education, access to health care, freedom to work, freedom to participate in political life, and maintaining the constitutional protections of these rights.

I'd like to know if this list is complete, or if we have left anything out. Because what I would like to see us do—and I really think Senator Wicker may be very interested in working with us on this—is be very clear and simple and just let our administration know what has to happen. I know Ambassador Verveer is right in there with Secretary Clinton, and Secretary Clinton's voice is going to be so crucial here. This is the moment. If this moment passes, we're back where we started, and that's disastrous.

So, have I left anything out, or could we say it, Dr. Samar, in a more artful way? Is this list complete, or is there something else we need to add to it?

Dr. SAMAR. Thank you, Senator. I think what is important is to recognize the women in Afghanistan, that we are existing and we are there, and we are able to think and we are able to feel.

Senator BOXER. Recognize more equality of women—Afghan?

Dr. SAMAR. Recognize not only the equality, the existence, because with the whole process of reintegration and reconciliation, there were no consultations with any woman in the country. They even tried to keep it for themselves, not really sharing it with us, under which mechanism they want to reconcile.

Senator BOXER. So, let me just restate it in sort of our way of talking here, and tell me if this is right: to ensure that women are involved in every part of the reconciliation process.

Dr. SAMAR. Absolutely.

Senator BOXER. OK, that's No. 1. OK.

Dr. SAMAR. And then, of course, recognition in including the women.

Senator BOXER. Yes, that's what I said. Including them in every part of the reconciliation process.

Dr. SAMAR. And it should be——

Senator BOXER. Of the decisionmaking.

Dr. SAMAR. Yes. It should be transparent, that we——

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Dr. SAMAR [continuing]. Have the support of the public.

Senator BOXER. It could also be on C-SPAN.

Dr. SAMAR. Yes. [Laughter]

Senator BOXER. Oh, that's another debate. Sorry. [Laughter]

Dr. SAMAR. It should be and——

Senator BOXER. I hear it.

Dr. SAMAR [continuing]. The people should understand because even today in Afghanistan, the people think that they want the Taliban to come and pay a bribe to them in order to lay down their guns. And this is lack of transparency.

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Dr. SAMAR. And third issue, I think, I insist—I think we all, the human rights defenders and women's rights are insisting that it should be a kind of accountability and justice because the people or the members of the Taliban who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity cannot just come and get another position in the government, as we have all that with us.

So, there's no condition right now by the government on this issue. They only say that they accept the Constitution. They should accept the Constitution. It is not enough because under which mechanism they should accept the Constitution and who is going to observe and guarantee that they will accept and respect the Constitution?

Senator BOXER. OK. Do you agree with the access to education for women, access to health care, freedom to work, freedom to participate in political life? And this seems to be what the women have told the human rights campaign people.

Dr. SAMAR. Yes——

Senator BOXER. I mean, not human rights campaign; Human Rights Watch. Sorry.

Dr. SAMAR. Yes. I think access to education is very important, and we have to pay more attention on higher education in order to give them capacity to be in the decision-making level. And every level education is needed in the country in order to build the confidence for them to take part in different sectors of the social life.

The second thing, I think, would be access to health care and, especially, on reproductive health——

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Dr. SAMAR [continuing]. And their access to family planning, because if they have 10 children, they cannot really participate in politics or any other social activities. We do have some progress on health care, but it's not enough, specifically on family planning. They're not talking. They're so cautious on those issues.

And, third, I think it should be more job opportunity and economical——

Senator BOXER. Yes. Freedom to work?

Dr. SAMAR. Yes.

Senator BOXER [continuing]. And participate in political life?

Dr. SAMAR. Participation in political life and decisionmaking level is very, very important because we should not only have women as a token in some places.

Senator BOXER. Yes.

Dr. SAMAR. It should be women who are really qualified and who stand for women's rights. Where we have some woman who doesn't really talk about women's rights as far as they have the position.

Senator BOXER. Anything else, Ms. Reid?

Ms. REID. Sure, I would agree with everything that Dr. Samar has just said, obviously. I think we have to be skeptical about the degree to which President Karzai is himself committed to women's rights. We've seen several pretty negative indicators for all the assurances he'll give to Western audiences. For instance, the Shia personal status law that he signed, the freeing of a couple of gang rapists in exchange for, you know, political alliances he was trying to build, and, of course, his increasing reliance on fellow warlords and fairly fundamentalist factions in government. So, all of these are very negative indicators that I think we have to keep—we have to sort of bear in mind. And the more he's now reaching out to Mullah Omar and these even more fundamentalist factions, the less likely he's going to be a real advocate for women's rights, which is why the United States can play such a vital role at the moment.

I would also say that there's many forms of reintegration and reconciliation around the world. It doesn't necessarily have to equate to handing over political power to these factions. So, some scrutiny now at this stage as to how much political power will be granted to these former insurgents would be useful.

And, as Dr. Samar says, inclusion is vital as is transparency and accountability in the processes. The issue of freedom of movement is really important. I did, as I mentioned, a couple of interviews with some former Talibs, including Mullah Zaeef, the former Ambassador to Pakistan, and both of them repeated the same claims that the Taliban made while they were in power, that the only reason they weren't allowing girls to go to school or to work was lack of resources at the time, which is clearly disingenuous then and now.

So, I think that's the sort of thing we need to be bearing in mind. Mullah Zaeef talked about the problem with these freedoms for women being basically that they were being morally corrupted by mixed schools or offices. And this is the viewpoint, the world view, that we need to really bear in mind. And that's why we have hindrances to women's access to education and health care and workplaces.

So, we need really firm commitments from the government, and we need to have women involved in key decisionmaking policy boards that are being formed now.

Senator BOXER. Well, if I could just close with this, Senator. I hope—I think that Senator Casey and I—and we're hoping Senator Wicker—can team up. Let's get something going, a push here, because this is the moment. We all strongly hope that the military campaign is going to go in the favor of the coalition forces and what we're saying is let the Afghan Government know that women in Afghanistan cannot be used as a bargaining chip in this rec-

conciliation process, and they can't be used and they can't be thrown overboard in this reconciliation process because that would be, well, immoral, for starters, and totally counterproductive. Because, as we have said over and over again, all of us, you cannot have a successful Afghanistan if half the people are frightened and they're sitting home and the windows are painted dark because no one can look in on them. You can't have a successful country where half the people are suffering in the shadows and are forced to get married and are treated in this fashion.

So, I think this is the moment, and this hearing didn't come a moment too soon. I just think this is the time. So, because I need to go to another meeting, what I wanted to say to all of you is that I intend to work with Senator Casey and other Senators on both sides of the aisle and move quickly on this because Dr. Samar, you came a long way to give us this message, and even though you don't tend to be dramatic; you're just very forceful and straight-forward—I hear what you're saying.

I mean, what you essentially said is hold these people accountable for what they've done, and you wouldn't say that if they weren't guilty of doing a whole lot of horrible things to the women of your country. You're saying hold them accountable for their past actions, be transparent, and make sure that we don't just lose this opportunity.

Did you want to say something else?

Ms. REID. Could I? Yes, I'd love to.

Senator BOXER. OK.

Ms. REID. I have just one more thing, which is about access to justice. It's partly because one of the policies that everyone has been excited about for the last 6 months, from the international community side, is involvement with so-called traditional dispute resolution, which is village Jirgas, essentially. And part of the view is that, from the counterinsurgency perspective, the Taliban are stepping into a justice vacuum. So, they want to get involved. The risk is that what they'll end up doing is strengthening or legitimizing a form of justice that's very harmful to women, that uses practices such as "bad," where women are given as compensation for crimes, and honor killings.

Partly because of the work that Dr. Samar has done and the Ministry of Women's Affairs has done, the language on paper in Kabul has got much better on these justice guidelines, which is, you know, encouraging, but, frankly, at the village level what it means in practice remains to be seen. I think it needs to be extremely closely monitored to ensure that we're not actually pushing further away the day when these traditional customary laws, which are so harmful to women, are replaced by formal court systems, where the women are more likely to see justice.

Senator BOXER. Thank you so much, and to you both, you're courageous; you're brave; you're direct; you're helpful to us. And I just say to you, keep it up and Godspeed to both of you because you really are doing incredible work for people who need your help.

Thank you very much.

Ms. REID. Thank you, Senator.

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you very much. I want to thank Senator Boxer for her work and her leadership as chairing more than

one committee and several subcommittees. You can see why she's attained the title of Chair.

I wanted to—some of this—some of my questions will be by way of reiteration or a different—maybe a different emphasis on parts of the questions that have already been asked, but the first thing I wanted to ask, I guess, Doctor, you have traveled a long way, and you have demonstrated extraordinary courage and ability over so many years, and you've been an example for so many of us who are just beginning to fully understand some of these challenges as they relate to women and girls in Afghanistan, as well as other places in the world.

But I want to ask you a fundamental question. You gave us nine recommendations, and I'll ask a few questions about those, but just in particular, if there was something that the United States could do in the next, say, 6 months, even the next 3 months, whether it's actions that we can take in the Senate—and Senator Boxer and I have already discussed some of those; we'll be working together on that—but something that the Congress could do or the administration, as you know better than I, the good work that's being done by Secretary of State Clinton and Ambassador Verveer and USAID and so many other parts of our government have been doing for years, but even more so, I think, in the last year. In addition to all of that—and there—we should recognize the progress that has been made without overemphasizing or dramatizing it—in the next couple of months, if there was an action that our government could take, either at the—by the executive branch, the President and Secretary of State, or, maybe more pertinent to this hearing, what Congress could do, are there one or two steps you would hope that we would take in the next couple of months?

Dr. SAMAR. Well, I think because we might have a parliamentary election in September, one of the things that your government can do is try to push for fairness and openness and a credible election. And, of course, the full participation of women and the rule of law in the election, because people should not be allowed to use a woman's name and vote on behalf of the woman, for two reasons: One, I think they are just violating the rights of the woman to vote. Second, there's a lot of possibility of fraud in the election, which has happened last year and we don't want to be repeated again in the coming election.

Second, I think of course on the Election Complaint Commission, it was—before it was three foreigners, which was introduced by the U.N., and one from the Human Rights Commission and one from the Supreme Court. But in this current election law, it's not any foreigner, and not even the Human Rights Commission is a member of the Election Complaint Commission.

But I think you should look at the mechanism, how to really look—overlook at least, or observe, that the Election Complaint Commission is really doing their job. And they should not violate the people's right to vote or to—promotion of democracy is one of the ways that it is really to participate in an election and to have a free and fair election.

The second thing I insist that I think your government should really insist on is education, and especially education for women at every level, because it is a long-term solution, but this is the only

tool, in my view, to change the mentality in the country. Education for women gives them more possibility, more opportunities, more confidence in themselves that they could come up with support, of course.

Economic empowerment of women is important, but I think if they are educated, they can get to economic empowerment through the education, through the capacity that they have.

This is the two things that I insist on.

Senator CASEY. Could I interrupt you for one second on the second part, the education part? It's obvious that progress has been over the last—at least the last decade. I was reading—I don't know if these numbers are accurate, but reading in the same article I referred to where it says—and I want to ask if you think this is accurate or even reasonably accurate: In 2001, a million Afghan children were enrolled in school, all of them boys. The education of girls, of course, was banned. Today, approximately 7 million Afghan children attend school, of which 2.6 million, or roughly one-third, are girls.

Does that sound reasonably accurate to you?

Dr. SAMAR. Well, it's—to be honest, I don't think it's accurate because, if you look at Kandahar, for example, or Oruzgan—there should be 230 or 220 schools functioning in Oruzgan Province, but practically it's only 21 schools functional we have on the list of the Ministry of Education. And it's only one girls school.

Senator CASEY. One of 21, you said?

Dr. SAMAR. Yes, in the center of the capital. So, it's very, very difficult to say that it's correct. Even if it's correct, still 40 percent of the children doesn't have access to education. Like in Kandahar—of course, in Kandahar, I think we have more than 300 some schools in the list of—it's a bigger province, but practically, it's not more than 50 of them are functional or open we have on the list. You know the corruption in the country. And they keep it on the list. They even get the salary of the teachers. And then somebody on the way is using that money.

So, this is not going to help if we have really a high number on the list in our reports, but what is important is that in reality the children do have access to school. And then, what is the quality of education? How many trained teachers do we have? We had one case from Vorio [phonetic spelling] that there was a man with his brother in law—both of them had a shop in the center of the city, but one was the principal and the other one was a teacher, and they were getting salaries of seven teachers of the school district. The school was not existing. They were practically busy in their shops in the center of Vorio. So, it's a lot of those kinds of cases. It's very difficult to say that this number is accurate.

Senator CASEY. So, just in terms of the next couple of months, you would focus on the—basically on those two: the election and education?

Dr. SAMAR. Well, I think not only on primary education, but higher education also is important because, for example, this year we had 100,000 students who graduated from 12th grade, and then all over the university, in higher education, including teacher trainings and some other institute like accountant and some other small things that we have. They can absorb about 35,000 people.

Not all the young boys and girls who graduate from 12th grade. We are not going—we cannot really build Afghanistan with 6-year educated students or even 12 years.

Senator CASEY. I wanted to ask you another question or two. I just wanted to move to Ms. Reid. I guess what hangs over—one of the things I think that kind of hangs over these questions of what happens to women and girls, what happens on education as well as the larger questions on what our path forward is going to be on security and governance—we keep coming back to President Karzai. At least I do. And I've said this in the hearing room here when Richard Holbrooke was here, and I've said it a number of times. I've had only two occasions to meet him, and I was hoping for more, especially in this past August and about 48 hours after his reelection. And I'm very concerned about the—what I perceive as a lack of progress on his part on all of these indicators, whether it's governance or anticorruption, the justice system, and, as we've been highlighting today, in particular, the commitment that he has—and I hope it's a full commitment—to what happens to women and girls on a whole number of issues.

But I guess I want to have you put on both your journalist's hat as well as the experience you've had dealing with—in observing and analyzing what the Afghan Government is doing, just your sense of I guess two things: One is—two questions: One is the commitment President Karzai has to these reforms as he has enunciated or pledged to make progress on as it relates to women and girls, No. 1. And, No. 2, your assessment of where we are. Have we made substantial progress in the last year or not? And just—both from the vantage point of what President Karzai is doing or will do.

Ms. REID. Well, I think one of the indicators in terms of President Karzai's commitment were the recent Cabinet appointments, and we saw several very conservative figures—we saw some—one fairly prominent figure who was very much associated with corruption in the past. So, this to me was a fairly negative indicator. And there are further appointments are still to come. And also what will need a lot of scrutiny are his subsequent nominations at the ministerial level, governors, district, and police chiefs.

We've also seen mutterings about who he is trying to have as the real power beneath what's happening in Marjah, again another fairly corrupt figure. These are all really negative indicators still, which is why I think you have to be very skeptical about the degree of his commitment to the reforms that are taking place.

Now, in terms of progress over the last year, as I say, I see various negative indicators. The elections were shambolic and, you know, a very clear indicator that there wasn't a commitment to reform. There was, as I say, the Shia personal status law, which is a very negative indicator about his commitments, particularly to Afghan women and girls.

So, you were asking Dr. Samar about what the priorities are in the next couple of months. Certainly, I've already said my piece today on the need for inclusion for women and girls in reintegration and reconciliation. I would second Dr. Samar's points on the elections, and the United States has huge leverage here. You're going to be paying for a lot of this, and we're already seeing very

negative signs about the degree to which there will be further loopholes for fraud. So, you know, I think some demands need to be made really early about—both on the anticorruption front, but also on women’s participation, which plays a big role in the corruption. We saw the failure—the spectacular failure to address the need for women in polling stations, which could have been predicted years ago. It wasn’t dealt with until the last couple of weeks before the elections.

Senator CASEY. Can I stop you there, just for a second? What do you think has to happen there to rectify that? I guess it’s both a security issue and a governance issue, but, in other words, how do we—for this upcoming election, what steps have to be taken to make sure that polling place, as it relates to women, problem is rectified?

Ms. REID. Well, you can make very clear some conditions to the independent electoral commission about what they need to do, which is really earlier recruitment of women to staff the polling stations, much earlier commitment to the security forces to ensure that both women candidates and voters are getting security. Security has to be given its grace and favor that runs along the patronage networks. So, women candidates are pretty low down the pecking order to get that security. There was a very last-minute attempt to address that in the last election. That could be dealt with much earlier. Sadly, women tend to be, you know, left at the bottom of the list in all of these discussions, and that includes discussions that ISAF and U.S.—the Pentagon are involved in as well. So, you know, they can be nudged as well to play their part.

And also on the elections, ISAF really failed to do its part on the vetting front. There are—you know, it’s a flawed mechanism, but there is a mechanism for vetting. And they could do much more at an earlier stage to ensure there is some vetting to it, to make sure that some of those with links to illegal armed groups are not able to stand for the elections this year.

So, I mean, I’m happy to give you a long list of things that could be requested now of the election commission, but the pressure needs to be put on now, and there needs to be genuine conditionality attached, because I fear that actually in terms of the need for success stories for U.S. domestic audiences, the elections will be allowed to happen in any way, shape, or form because they just need to happen. They need to be seen to be happening. But it could even be worse than last year.

Senator CASEY. Well, one of the difficulties in terms of implementing policy here in Washington or at the federal level from the distance between here and Kabul or here and anywhere in Afghanistan is that the American people just went through a long chapter with Iraq, and one of the constant refrains we heard was we don’t know how we’re doing there, we don’t have—there’s all kinds of metrics and measurements. And part of what we have to do is, I think, use this election season or upcoming season that use other indicators as well to have some way to measure, some way to demonstrate, not only to the American people but to the international community, that we take very seriously what’s happening to women and girls and we can measure success or measure the lack

of success. So, any help you can give us on those would be—I'd be grateful.

I guess for both of you—either or both, if you want to comment on this—this police training question that I raised earlier in the first panel, I wanted to get your thoughts on that because, look, for as much as I and others have been critical of President Karzai, a couple of his ministers have received much higher marks than he has sometimes. Minister Atmar, that I met—and Senator Shaheen mentioned meeting him.

I've met, and he came at least at that time, back in August 2009, came with high marks in a broad way. I don't know if we have an assessment of how he's been doing lately with regard to police training and the recruitment of the police.

What's your sense of that generally in terms of training police to be sensitive to and trained in violence against women issues, and specifically with regard to Minister Atmar's commitment, ability, and progress on that very specific issue of police training as it relates to women?

You can be as direct as you want, or you cannot answer if you want.

Dr. SAMAR. Well, he's very good to put a plan, and he's very good to speak very articulately, but what's happening is that, if we train the police, do we have a mechanism to evaluate their activities? And we train the police; why we do not able to build the trust and confidence of the public to the police? This is, I think, one of the important issues.

The second thing is that I personally—or we on the Human Rights Commission, we are not happy with his community defense initiative, because it doesn't matter—we don't put a tribal militia name on it to make it another kind of auxiliary police or community defensive initiative, but it is a tribal militia. They're not really controlled. If the government or the Ministry of Interior is capable to control those people, why they're not integrating in the national police, rather than having the tribal people, giving them guns, and you cannot control them? They're the ones who usually take the gun and go and join the Taliban. They're the ones who facilitated Taliban and some of the suicide attacks to carry out in the different parts of the country.

So, it is quite difficult to clearly assess, but the action of the police during the last election was not very good. Honestly. They were facilitating the fraud, rather than controlling.

On the election, if I may say something—

Senator CASEY. Sure.

Dr. SAMAR. I think we have to be strict by saying nobody can vote on behalf of another person, be it men or women.

Senator CASEY. Was that rampant in the last election?

Dr. SAMAR. Oh, yes. I mean, there were less people, maybe a hundred people, but it was 600 ballot papers in the boxes. So, this should be clearly decided.

And finally, I would say on the election that the international community and your government, particularly, is pertinent to that Afghan Government, and you have to be real strict because I believe the failure and success is shared. It's shared responsibility, and we have to be very, very serious on that issue.

I am happy to say that, yes, we are supportive of the Afghanization of the whole program, but the election law does not guarantee. It's not going to build the confidence of the people to the institutions.

And a final word, I would like to say that we are talking about good governance, but I believe that we have to focus on all the state institutions, not only on good governance, because if we have a bad Parliament who passed the amnesty law, how can the judiciary system work? If we have a good Parliament even passing good law, the only one is not yet passed by the Parliament, the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, but if the judiciary is not a good judiciary system, they are not going to implement it. They are not going to make it reality. So, we have to focus on institution building in Afghanistan, not only on good governance.

On security, when we talk about the ANA and ANP, but nobody talks about the intelligence. If we do not really train and build the capacity of the intelligence in the country, how police can act? And our intelligence service yet, they don't—they did not make their law public to the—to any one of us, although he promised the High Commissioner for Human Rights that he is going to give a copy of the legislation of the whole institution, but nobody has seen it. He promised me that he will give a copy for my eyes, but he has not given it to us. So, we don't know what is the law and legislation, what is the rule. What is the term of reference that they are working under?

So, these are issues that nobody really tackled on intelligence and building the capacity of the intelligence service in the country.

Senator CASEY. I wanted to ask you—and I know we have to wrap up soon, in the next few minutes—but one of the frustrations that we have around this town is we have hearings and we spotlight an issue, something as critical as what happens to women and girls in Afghanistan or in other countries around the world, and then, unless we get back to it 6 months later or a year from now, we don't—there's not enough accountability or monitoring for what we have examined, even something this grave and this serious.

I guess I'd ask you—and maybe there's not a good answer to this or maybe you have one you could point to, a resource—but just to keep track of and measure the progress that we're making, that the Afghan government is making, just on this specific issue, not security overall—we're going to have benchmark reports and all of that, and they're important—but how do we measure success or how do we measure progress on these issues in the next 6 months, the next year, the next 2 years? Is there a set of questions that we can put on paper or a set of benchmarks or indicators? How many schools that girls are able to attend is one kind of measure.

But some of the measures won't be that quantifiable or specific. What can we do about that? Or is there—do you think there is a measuring—a resource that we can use as a measure?

Dr. SAMAR. I think one simple measure on accountability and justice, we can look clearly at how many people who are involved in opium and narcotics and also in corruption have been detained or arrested. This is very simple. We are all talking about corruption, corruption, corruption, but who has been kept accountable? This is very simple. We could see in 3 months that maybe who and who or this minister or this deputy minister or this chief of police has been kept accountable—or a judge. When we hear about this kind of news, we raise a lot of concern, and then they just remove that person from this province and put in another province, or sometimes they get a higher position. So, that's clear. It's very simple: how many people have been detained or kept accountable.

Thank you very much.

Senator CASEY. Thank you.

Ms. REID. I would second that and say that it's also—there hasn't been any accountability for those in—those senior positions of power who have been accused of war crimes. So far, there's been none. We may be about to see that worsen, as I say, with this amnesty law. And I would also mention that, back in 2007, when this law was first drafted and passed by Parliament—it has only just come into force—but back in 2007, the United States and many countries in the international community spoke out very strongly against it. But in this current climate, moving towards reconciliation and reintegration, there's been almost silence on it, which is a bad sign.

Another measurable, I would say, is how many women are you seeing in positions in public life, in—not just in the Cabinet—as deputy ministers, as governors. And another measurable in terms of the implementation of this law that is in force, the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law, are we going to see more prosecutions of people who commit rapes and serious crimes against women? Are we going to see people prosecuted—the law actually criminalizes child marriage for the first time. Will we actually see that implemented? And will we also see a reduction on school attacks? Will, for instance, as you move into talks with the Taliban, will that be a condition, a confidence-building measure, that you insist that they cease all attacks on schools, cease assassination of people who are working for the government, cease attacks and threats against women before you move forward with these processes? Because at the moment, there's no clear sign really from their side that that they're actually interested in reform and change.

Senator CASEY. Well, I know we're over our time a little bit, but I do want to thank you for the time and the commitment that you've demonstrated on these issues for a long, long time. We're grateful for your presence here, your scholarship, and your commitment. And, please, keep reporting back to us, and one of the things you can do is hold us accountable as well.

Thank you very much.

Ms. REID. Thank you. Should I request that my written testimony is submitted for the record?

Senator CASEY. Yes.

Ms. REID. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. For the record, the testimony of all the witnesses will be made a part of the record.

Ms. REID. Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much. We're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:03 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

