



Women's Protection Centers Guidelines

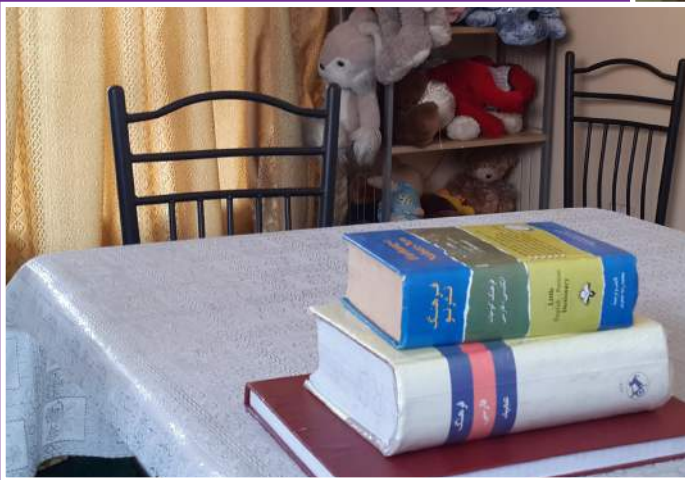


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Preface

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The revered prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) once said, "Women are venerated by a noble person and disrespected only by the acts of a mean person."

Violence against women is a global phenomenon, plaguing many women in different countries, albeit it is more apparent in third world countries.

Afghanistan is unfortunately among those countries struggling with this phenomenon, due to the violence and complexities resulting from years of war on the one hand and widespread detrimental customs and traditions, antagonistic in many aspects with the Sharia, on the other hand.

Given this situation, providing safe shelters for women who are victims of, or at risk of violence is vital as the absence of such centers leads to yet more social injustice.

Women's Protection Centers (WPCs), also known as shelters for abused women, are not merely places to house the women. Rather, the beneficiaries can, during their temporary stay in these centers and while following up with the legal processes against the perpetrators, take several educational courses, including learning to read and write, learning a trade, familiarizing themselves with religious and Islamic studies, learning about women's and children's rights within the family, etc., all of which can have a major impact on their future.

Considering the importance of these centers for women who are victims of, or at risk of violence, it is necessary to standardize the services they offer to beneficiaries as much as possible, so that they all follow the same procedures for similar issues. To this end, some of these centers have collaborated in the preparation of a guideline to achieve greater synchronization in the management of the centers and to ensure that they offer the same services. According to the bylaws or the Shelter Regulations of the women's centers, coordinating their activities is the responsibility of the Committee for the Cooperation and Solidarity of the Women's Protection Centers, run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), which consists of bureaus related to the Division of Elimination of Violence against Women. However, independent work-related coordination among the centers will certainly not detract from the responsibilities and obligations of this committee.

MoWA expresses its gratitude to all who helped with the preparation of this guideline.

Ministry of Women's Affairs

Kabul, Afghanistan

July 2014

Introduction: Women's Protection Centers

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

According to the definition given in the Women's Protection Center (WPC) bylaws, 'In recognition of Article 2 of the said bylaw, WPCs are created for the temporary housing of the women who are the victims of, or at risk of, violence.'

Women have long been the targets of violence. They have been, and continue to be, victims of domestic violence, rape, kidnapping, human trafficking and sexual harassment. As a result, support centers for the women who have suffered from gender-based violence are a necessity. WPCs were established to provide a safe haven for the victims of, or those at risk of violence, who do not have a safe place to stay. In addition, the WPCs help the victims demand justice; ensure that women's and children's rights are respected, including the right to normal physical and emotional growth; and finally, give the victims of violence an opportunity for education and vocational training.

WPCs aim to improve the lives of abused women and children, both financially and emotionally, in order to protect and uphold women's human rights. They have been successful in offering services and remaining open round the clock, in spite of running on low budgets. Since they first opened, countless victims of violence have benefited from the services and the unconditional assistance provided by these centers. The WPCs help women settle their cases through legal procedures in Afghan courts. They also provide them with basic education and training to advance their professional skills, life skills and self-sufficiency. Thanks to the efforts of the WPCs, many of the victims have returned to their families. Many are about to start a new life in the light of Sharia and laws.

Coordination:

As WPCs grow in number, synchronizing their activities becomes essential. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to reach common goals without the proper coordination of the staff and the various duties they perform. To avoid an overlap in performing their duties and to synchronize the activities and services provided by these support centers, coordination of different service sections is paramount.

These guidelines have been compiled from the ideas shared by the social workers active in the WPCs throughout Afghanistan, who are also members of the Afghan Shelter Network (ASN) [an umbrella organization for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) managing WPCs]. The goal of the ASN is to solve the problems of WPCs, achieve technical cooperation among different centers, and enrich their action plans. This goal is different from that of the Committee for the Co-



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operation and Solidarity of the Women's Centers. These guidelines are to be treated as a practical guideline, open to adjustment and improvement if required. They offer the necessary guidance to run WPCs efficiently and to provide the best possible services to the women protected in these centers. The guidelines also aim to encourage and strengthen communication between WPCs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) so as to improve the services provided by the centers.

Maintaining regular communication and cooperation amongst the staff of WPCs will help ensure the coordination of activities and sharing of experiences and lessons learned. This will in turn lead to improved services and facilities for the protected women and greater efficiency. By following the guidelines for the WPCs, we will be able to design and achieve the necessary standards and best methodology for implementing the WPCs' bylaws.

WPCs in Afghanistan act in accordance with the regulations and guidelines of the MoWA. The guidelines for the coordination of WPCs have been drawn up as an addendum to the bylaws of the WPCs, financed by the Colombo Plan office, and will be presented to the MoWA. If approved, the guidelines will be valid and binding. If there are any discrepancies between the guidelines and the bylaws, the bylaws will take precedence. The guidelines for the coordination of WPCs have been devised and written in accordance with the WPC bylaws. Every WPC should carry out its allotted duties in compliance with the bylaws. The guidelines have been created at the suggestion of the MoWA, after receiving an executive order from the President of Afghanistan.

The idea is to have all WPCs categorized according to the schedule of the MoWA. Once this is achieved, each center will deal with those cases that fall under its particular categorization, and offer shelter and services to the victims of the selected types of violence.

The compassionate efforts and acts of the authorities and staff of the WPCs are praiseworthy.

These guidelines comprise two sections.

The first section deals with the care and services provided to the protected women and the second section covers the management of WPCs.



I Providing Support and Safety for Victims and their Families



I Providing Support and Safety for Victims and their Families

1. Admission and Departure from WPCs

Different organizations refer women to WPCs, including the Attorney General's Commission on Violence Prevention, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Provincial Departments of Huquq (individual rights), Primary Court for Personal Status, the Department of Huquq at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Afghan Women's Network Office, police jurisdictions at the Ministry of Interior (MOI), etc.

When an abused woman is referred to a WPC by any police jurisdiction, she is officially handed over to the care of the WPC staff and the date and exact time (hour and minute) of her arrival at the center are recorded. The authorities and staff of the WPCs have requested that the gender department at the MOI send female police personnel to all of its jurisdictions in order to respect the principles of mahramiat (confidentiality) and ensure the smooth execution of the admission process.

To improve the referral and admission process of the victims of, or those at risk of violence, staff members from the attorney general's office in the relevant jurisdiction will be present to take on the cases of the women. In the form referring the abused woman to the MoWA or to the WPCs, the officer's name and signature along with the admission date and time confirm the official intake.

File preparation

When a woman is first admitted to a WPC, her proprietary file must be created with the following information:

-
- Name
 - Father's name
 - Grandfather's name
 - Place of birth
 - Permanent and present address
 - Marital status
 - Nature of the violence and the reason for seeking shelter
 - Level of education
 - Contact numbers of father, mother, husband and other close relatives
 - Date and time of the admission to the center
 - General description of her physical and mental state
 - Record of the cash, belongings and objects that the woman who is a victim of, or at risk of violence has with her when she is admitted to the center. (At the termination of the protection, the mentioned items will be returned to the protected woman.)
 - Verification of her interest in learning professional skills and in self-sufficiency programs.
 - Record of the number of children accompanying the victim to the center (in order to provide additional and better services for the accompanying children).
 - Whether she has been admitted to a shelter previously on a different occasion, if so where and for what reasons etc.
 - Means of referral to the center, for example, referral by organizations such as the police, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, MoWA, provincial women's affairs departments, the Attorney General's Commission on Prevention of Violence, courts and/or departments of Huquq in the capital and provinces etc., or whether she has approached the center on her own.
 - Record of her physical and mental status, to determine the next steps to be taken with regard to her case.
 - Record of all the measures taken for the abused woman throughout her stay at the WPC.
 - Record of the date the protected woman is released from the WPC, and her case closed.
 - Location and the situation of the protected woman after she is released from the WPC.



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Notices

- Notice to the Ministry of Women's Affairs

After a victim of, or one at risk of violence has been referred to a WPC, the center has to submit a written notice to the MoWA within 24 hours, informing the Ministry of the protected woman's admission and her identity. Public holidays are exempt from this rule.

Notice to the family

As stated in the Shelter Regulation, Article 13, with the permission of the protected woman and if this poses no threat to the victim's life or to the WPC, her family is notified of her admission in the center. Without the victim's permission, no staff in the WPC is allowed to inform her family of her presence in the center. If the family is informed, the location of the center should never be revealed to family members.

Identifying and determining the types of cases

Immediately after the admission and preparation of the file for the abused woman, several meetings are held with her to determine the root cause of her problems through the facts and the circumstances that brought her to the center.

The next steps are to solve the problems, follow up on the action items related to the case, and assist the protected woman with the legal issues of the case. To this end, the legal counsel draws up an action plan with the help of the case manager at the WPC. The main goals of the action plan are as follows:



- 1) case settlement and helping the woman to resolve her issues through mediation and reconciliation; and**
- 2) case settlement through the legal and justice system.**

- i) Case settlement through mediation and reconciliation

Mediation and reconciliation offers a protected woman the opportunity to resolve her situation without embarking on formal court procedures, which can often be lengthy as among other requirements, evidence must be gathered to support her case.

To fulfill this goal, the WPC, with the assistance of legal counsel, should take the following actions:

Hold numerous sessions with the concerned parties—that is, the victim and those who are responsible for her plight—along with legal consultations in order to reach reconciliation.

Explain the legal rights and obligations of the concerned parties towards one another. In the case of a married woman, this pertains to the duties and rights of both husband and wife towards one another and in the case of an unmarried woman, this refers to her rights in the given situation.

Based on the specifics of the case, work towards achieving a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable to all concerned parties.

Obtain a written commitment from the concerned parties to refrain from those actions and behaviors that led to the issue in the first place and hold them accountable to it, while recording these commitments through

legal processes such as the courts of Huquq Departments in the Ministry of Justice both in the capital and in provinces.

Topics discussed in mediation sessions

In these sessions, the violation of the woman's rights by the husband, his family, or any other perpetrator of violence is discussed. The attempt is to find ways to solve the problem. To this end, it is explained to the two parties that if such instances occur and exist, they should each consider their legal obligations.

Those responsible for violence against the woman should pledge to prevent its recurrence. If the abused woman wants her problem to be solved through mediation and reconciliation, the WPC will take the steps necessary to resolve the situation, including following up with her case for up to one year after a resolution has been reached. This is done to ensure the safety of the victim's life and prevent the recurrence of violence against the woman. Once the case is resolved through mediation and reconciliation, a counsel and/or staff from the WPC should accompany the protected woman and the reconciling party to their permanent residence. This is done to verify the validity of the stated address. To follow up with the case and ensure the prevention of recurring violence against the abused woman, her status is monitored and one of the WPC staff members makes weekly visits to her house.

The goals and benefits of following up with a case solved through mediation and reconciliation

Protecting and defending the religious and legal rights of the women and young girls who have been victims of violence.

Preventing the regular occurrence of domestic fights and recurrence of violence against the women and young girls who have returned home after the reconciliation.

Preventing the disintegration of the family and the marriage due to their quick and uninformed decisions about their own and their children's future.

Maintaining the confidentiality of the abused woman's family situation and solving her case in a short time without court procedures.

Supporting the abused woman by strengthening her decision-making ability in order to improve her life, respecting her decision making, and discussing and solving her problems through mediation and reconciliation in the presence of her husband and/or those responsible for the perpetration of violence against her.

Indirectly enforcing the Law of Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) through the mediation and reconciliation sessions as well as the follow up of the case after the woman has returned to her family's residence.

ii) Case settlement through the legal and justice system

A great number of cases are not settled through mediation and reconciliation, as the two parties are often unwilling to settle their case and their issues in this way. Such cases are referred to the legal and judicial system. Referring cases to the courts may happen due to the following reasons:

In settling cases through jirgas (an assembly of authoritative elders of a community that settles a variety of issues through a process of consensus), the legal demands and rights of the victim are not considered and since the woman cannot be physically present at these jirgas, her natural rights are violated. The decision made by the jirga is invariably in favor of the man, which often entails neglecting the woman's natural rights. The man

is rarely punished for his actions, and as such, the woman's only recourse is to take her case to a court of law. In most cases, the woman's problem is so serious that it cannot be solved through mediation and reconciliation.

The victim lacks the desire to continue in her marriage.

The follow-up of the cases sent to court based on the victim's demand is done in two ways:

a) Follow-up of the case by an attorney during the trial and before the court order is issued.

This kind of follow-up is carried out by the attorney in legal and judicial settings, to achieve the following: prevent the violation of the woman's human rights throughout the investigation and trial phases; and expedite the investigation and trial phases in order to avoid the violation of the victim's rights.

b) The follow-up of the case for a year after an order is issued by the primary court, appellate court and supreme court.

This follow-up is of utmost importance, because the woman is entrusted to the care of one of her close relatives after her separation or divorce, or the settlement of her case. Through a variety of methods, efforts are made to ensure that she is accepted back by her family. These include legal and social counseling by attorneys and the family counselors of the WPCs to educate her family on how to maintain and re-establish her rights and respectability, and to convince them that her intention in going to a court of law was only to evade abuse and seek justice for the same.

Therefore:

through the tenacious efforts of the WPC staff, the grounds are laid for the reunion of the abused woman and her relatives;

efforts are made to prevent the recurrence of domestic violence against the abused woman after her case has been resolved in a court of law;

the intention of the persistent follow-up is to prevent verbal abuse of the victim by her family members regarding her pursuit of the legal action; and

the enforcement of the follow-up process by the WPC staff after a woman leaves a WPC helps instill a sense of hope in the woman about her future and even empowers her to find ways to achieve self-sufficiency and employment.

Reunion

The purpose of the reunion is to reconnect the victim with her family after the legal processes have been completed and she leaves the WPC. The WPC staff make every effort to lay the grounds for reunion through offering beneficial family counseling, improving family members' awareness of how to respect women's rights and accept the abused woman back into the family as the law indicates.

Thirty years of war and struggle in Afghanistan have led to numerous problems and an increase in violence in the community, especially against women. The three decades of strife have greatly weakened the education systems and damaged the nation's economy and culture, which have in turn led to an increase in domestic violence against women and young girls. Furthermore, the existence of undesirable traditions in Afghanistan is another cause of domestic violence. For example, Afghanistan is a traditional country and if a woman or a

young girl goes out without a mahram (immediate male members of the family, from both the maternal and paternal side, with whom marriage is not permissible) and without a proper excuse, it is considered a shame and disgrace and she will be rejected by the family. Situations such as this can create problems within the family for women and young girls and have dire consequences such as suicide, self-immolation, running away from home, and the committing of various crimes. Fortunately, the legal organizations protecting women's rights are striving to keep families intact and protect women's dignity and rights. They maintain that women can and are entitled to defend their violated rights. At the same time, to protect the families' self-esteem, they lay the grounds for the reunion of the abused woman with her relatives through offering beneficial family counseling for both parties in the framework of Islamic rules and the applicable laws of the country. In this way, it is hoped that the incidence of domestic violence decreases and the family lives of Afghani women are not ruined.

Completion of protection

The protected woman will be released from a WPC under the following circumstances:

- She is accepted by her family or close relatives.
- If a woman is imprisoned, her daughter/s is admitted to a WPC in the event that no other shelter is available. Once the mother's sentence has been completed and she is released from jail, her daughter/s may also leave the WPC.
- After the finalization of the court order in the primary, appellate and supreme courts, and/or the settlement of the case via mediation and reconciliation, if there are no threats to her safety in the future, the protected woman's stay in the WPC comes to an end.
- She remarries in compliance with the laws of Islam.
- Her legal issues are resolved through competent courts.
- She completes her education or finds a job.
- She finds a place to live or is accepted by close relatives and documents are produced to confirm the close relation.
- When all of the factors in Article 11 of the WPC bylaws are eliminated, the protected woman should be released from the WPC according to Article 16 of the WPC bylaws or entrusted to her relatives or her mahram, with consideration of her safety as a pre-requisite to the release.

The departure of the protected woman from the WPC

Once a protected woman's case or lawsuit has been settled by legal and judicial authorities with the help of the attorneys working for the WPCs, she may depart from the center based on her own desire to do so and her family situation, depending on the status of her case.

It should be mentioned that sometimes, a protected woman leaves the center at the commencement of the trial, attorney general's investigation, or forensic medical examination, without informing the authorities at the WPC. In such cases, the center is obliged to take the following steps:

- 1) immediately inform the shelter management-for example, the Executive Director or his/her deputies-that the protected woman has departed from the WPC;

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- 2) inform the MoWA as soon as possible;
- 3) inform the organization that initially referred the protected woman that she has left the program; and
- 4) inform the department with the relevant jurisdiction over the situation via an official note.

Guidelines for the departure of the protected woman

1) Supported by the family

- When the protected woman's case has been settled through legal procedures, the victim's family is contacted. After her departure from the WPC, social workers from the center will regularly follow up on her situation, monitoring her living conditions and the way she is treated at home and among her family. Initially, the intervals between these visits are short; however, if and when the protected woman's life at her home and among her family improves, the intervals increase in duration.
- Every effort is made to persuade the families to support the protected woman's future and play a pivotal role in providing a healthy, principled and law-abiding life for the abused woman.

2) Supported by marriage

Those women whose cases have been settled by legal and judicial authorities may remarry if they wish, since remarrying is their legal and Islamic right. If a sane, mature woman marries according to the law but without her guardian's consent, her marriage contract is enforceable and binding. Islamic laws permit both men and women to get married and start a family under specific legal and religious conditions, advising faithful men and women to seek marriage. Article 60 in Afghanistan civil law reads, 'Marriage is a contract that legitimizes the relationship between a man and a woman with the purpose of starting a family, creating rights and obligations for both parties.' Apart from other conditions stated by Sharia law and Islamic jurisprudence, the condition of reaching legal age, stated in Article 70, clauses 1 and 2, and Article 71, clause 80, is important. In the light of Koranic verses, Hadith (traditions of Prophet Mohammad) and the civil law, the WPCs regard the marriage of abused women whose cases have been settled through courts of law, or who have no religious or legal restrictions for their marriage, to be highly advisable, provided the woman is agreeable.

- If a protected woman wishes to get married after the settlement of her case, she will receive legal assistance.
- The protected woman's marriage contract will be drawn up in competent courts.
- The WPCs, in cooperation with the MoWA, will give the bride (the protected woman) away to her newly wedded husband.
- During the process of marriage, no person or organization has the right to ask for money in the name of wedding cost or dowry.
- After the wedding, the staff of the

The screenshot shows a software interface for managing client cases. The top section is titled 'CLIENT DETAILS FOR' and includes fields for Name, Registered Date (7/12/2012), Lead Advisor (Abdul Karim Arif), Contact, Referral Source (Police Station), and Referral Date (7/12/2012). Below this is a tabbed interface with tabs for CLIENT INFO, ACCOUNTING, CLIENT INFO, HISTORY, CASE DETAILS, TREATMENT AND RES, DANGER, CONTACTS, NOTES, and ADR. The 'CASE DETAILS' tab is active, showing a list of case problems on the left and a 'CASE PROBLEMS & CLOSURE' section on the right. The list of case problems includes Domestic Violence, Rape, Sexual Abuse, Forced Marriage, Child Marriage, Prohibited Marriage, Exchanged Marriage, Debt, Mental Problems, Physical Problems, Economic Problems, Social Problems, Harassment, Child Sex, and Trafficking. The 'CASE PROBLEMS & CLOSURE' section has two columns: 'CLOSURE REASON' and 'CASE RESOLVED THROUGH'. The 'CLOSURE REASON' column has checkboxes for First Visit Only, Refused Further Services, Referred Elsewhere, and Other. The 'CASE RESOLVED THROUGH' column has checkboxes for Counseling/Mediation, Jirga/shura, Legal Means, and Other. Below these columns are buttons for OPEN, FOLLOW UP, and CLOSED. At the bottom, there is a field for 'Notes about case closure:'.

WPC will check up on the protected woman to verify the quality of her life at her new husband's home.

- The woman's family should not impose high expenses on the bridegroom's family for a wedding assisted by the WPCs.

3) Procedures for releasing the protected woman to non-mahram

- In order to avoid future risks to the protected woman, every effort is taken to place her with her close relatives. Her close relatives must provide documents to the WPCs and the MoWA to prove their family ties with the protected woman.
- If the protected woman does not have close relatives or if her close relatives refuse to accept her, efforts are made to find other ways of entrusting her to the care of her family.
- If the protected woman has no close relatives, according to the WPC bylaws and with the agreement of MoWA, the protected woman will be referred once again to the WPCs via an official letter from the MoWA until a suitable solution has been found. The next step will be to help the woman become financially self-sufficient. It is noteworthy that providing a job in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is a task for the department of open centers (an income generation program for women to help them develop skills in a trade), in accordance with a quadrilateral agreement among the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, open centers, the Ministry of Justice and the attorney general's office.
- The protected woman will under no circumstances be entrusted to those who have no relation to her, or who are not trusted by the protected woman.

4) Introducing the protected woman to the policy and guidelines of the WPCs

Once a protected woman is referred to the WPCs, she should be made aware of the following:

- The security measures and confidentiality policies at the WPCs as stated in the guidelines, i.e., the center is a safe place and the women's cases will remain confidential.
- After the protected woman has been admitted to a WPC, she will undergo medical and psychological assessments as indicated in the guidelines.
- To assist a protected woman in pursuing and settling cases related to her situation through the legal and judicial authorities, the attorneys working for the WPCs will offer consultancy and legal aid as indicated in the WPC guidelines.

Managing a consistent database

The purpose of creating a database for WPCs is to provide accurate, inclusive and error-free information about the functions and activities of the WPCs in their entire working arena. Therefore, there is an urgent need to create a database for each of the WPCs as developing a single, homogeneous system in every WPC will allow the swift gathering of accurate and valid information on each protected woman's case, which can then be presented to the authorities who are making reports. Setting up the databases will also enable the categorization of the protected women's case files based on the activities, information and actions taken for each woman.

- WPCs can employ staff to manage a comprehensive, up-to-date and error-free database. This person will be in charge of updating the cases regularly, including medical records, legal actions and procedures, edu-

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cation and skill training undertaken at the WPC, etc.

- The database will be a compilation of information on each protected woman as well as on the daily activities that the staff at the WPCs perform for each protected woman. To ensure accuracy, the information in the database will be compared with the original (hardcopy) file.
- The database will promote the use of a standardized filing system, which will help the WPC authorities access information on the protected women's cases in a short time.
- Every event, change and problem concerning each protected women, from the moment she enters the WPC to the time that she leaves, should be recorded in the database.
- Individual files for women will be prepared in the database based on the type and description of the crime committed against them or the type of their legal case, which will assist WPCs in providing accurate reports. A database thus provides order, clarity and accuracy to the functioning of the WPCs.

2. Providing Health Services

The goals of health services at the WPCs include:

- providing free health services for women and children suffering from illnesses or those at risk of disease;
- tending to the general health of the protected women;
- vaccination of the protected women who are at risk of diseases; and
- improving the level of health services for the women residing in the WPCs.

The first member of the staff at the WPC that meets the abused woman is the nurse or a physician. Once the victim's health is assessed, other services can be provided to her. To achieve the goals mentioned above and to provide health services, WPCs should employ nurses and/or physicians for a monthly salary. In case of an emergency situation, WPCs can either call upon a doctor to treat the abused woman, or refer her to a hospital.



The duties and obligations of nurses and/or physicians at the WPCs

As per the job description developed by the WPCs, the nurses and/or physicians employed at the centers are responsible for the following duties:

- treating and helping the patients by conducting a medical examination, diagnosis, prescribing medical drugs and administering the drugs according to the doctor's instructions;
- holding the first session with the newcomers to the center, conducting the initial and thereafter regular health screenings of the women;
- tending to the protected women and assisting them with their health issues;
- assist in gathering evidence and preparing documents to prove the crime or violent acts against the protected women;
- referring patients to a hospital in the event the WPC is not equipped to handle the medical condition of the protected woman;
- administering injections and IV fluids; and
- recording all the activities of the doctor on duty in the relevant file.



Medical assessment and preparing relevant documents

As soon as a woman is admitted to a WPC, the nurse at the location makes a file specifically for her medical records in order to assist her with her medical issues. In this file are kept the medical reports, current status updates, and reports on the improvement in the woman's health as a result of the treatment she receives at the WPC. This file is confidential and no one other than the nurse and/or physician can access it.

Soon after a woman has been admitted in a WPC, a preliminary health check is conducted to assess her health status. This health check is the first session of the physician with the protected woman. The results of the examination are recorded in the form of a checklist; completing this checklist is part of the physician's job description. This form is then attached to the woman's health file. It describes her health status as well as the treatment she is receiving at the WPC, including any special diet that she may require.

Gathering legal documents and evidence

If the protected woman has suffered from multiple acts of violence and has escaped from her home as a result of these violent acts or if she has filed a lawsuit, with her consent and permission, she is sent to the forensic examination center. Considering the legal aspects of the case, in order to prove the abused woman's claims, gathering relevant documents and evidence is of the utmost necessity. It is explained to the protected woman that the accumulation of this evidence is of great value in proving her case and establishing her rights. The documents and evidence will be the base upon which the abused woman's claim is proved. To prepare the evidence and legal documents, a variety of tests are needed: blood type test, HIV test if the center deems it necessary, X-ray, impression of bruises on the woman's body as a result of being battered and tortured, pregnancy test, any written document that establishes evidence of violence against the woman, etc.

The nurse and/or physician and the legal assistant to the case play an important role in helping to gather the required information. The cooperation of different governmental and non-governmental medical centers is also needed. WPC authorities must request that a copy of all the results of the protected woman's forensic examinations and other tests are sent to the WPC so they can include them in her medical records. If the woman does not agree to undergo forensic examination, it should not be enforced.

Constant care

After the completion of the initial examinations and medical tests, if the woman needs further examination, or is found to be suffering from an illness that cannot be properly treated at the WPC or if a medical emergency arises, the abused woman is referred for treatment to one of the hospitals with which the WPCs have an agreement or a protocol on cooperation through the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). The hospital is responsible for preparing a comprehensive report on the treatment provided to the protected woman and once she recovers, the hospital should send an official letter to inform the WPC of the fact. If the medical authorities think it necessary for the abused woman to come to the hospital again to continue her treatment, this should also be submitted in written form.

If the protected woman stays in the WPC for more than six months, an examination is done every six months to assess her general state of health.

Medical education and preparing for emergencies

Teaching first aid: The protected women in the WPCs are taught various emergency care practices. These include lessons on administering first aid during pregnancy, post-partum care, special care during menstruation, blood pressure control, how to treat broken bones and cuts, and prevention methods for successive pregnancies. This helps the protected women to not only learn the science behind such methods of care, but also to respond to an emergency case in the absence of the nurse.

- WPCs should have first-aid kits for emergency cases. The first-aid kit should contain insect repellents, painkillers, dressing kits for wounds, burns, etc.
- WPC nurses should hold workshops for protected women and staff. These workshops should cover the following: taking action in accordance with an emergency medical plan at the time of an emergency, dressing wounds, dealing with security incidents, controlling blood pressure, and other basic skills.
- Donor institutions can be approached to fund first-aid teaching seminars for abused women and the staff of the WPCs.
- Apart from the first-aid education, workshops are also held on how to respond to earthquakes, electric shocks and other dangers.

Treating women suffering from contagious diseases

If during the course of her medical examination a woman is found to be suffering from a contagious disease, then every possible effort should be made to keep her apart from the other women living in the WPC. Even her toilet should be separate. If the WPC is not equipped to handle keeping women in quarantine, then the center, in cooperation with MoWA, should provide a suitable place outside the WPC to house the women suffering from contagious diseases. The attending physician should explain to these women why they are being kept in isolation, so that the patients do not feel that they are being discriminated against and thus depressed.

To the extent possible, WPCs should avoid admitting and housing women who have hard-to-treat diseases. Instead they should be referred to and treated in a medical center run by the MoPH. If possible, WPCs should keep track of the progress of patients who are sent to other facilities for treatment, offering them moral and psychological support.

Pregnant women protected by WPCs

Pregnant women need more care; therefore WPCs pay more attention to restoring and maintaining these women's health. To this end, the centers administer the required vaccines, ensure the women are eating a proper diet and monitor other factors contributing to their health.

Shots and vaccination

MoWA, with the cooperation of MoPH and WPCs, works to ensure that protected women are given the required vaccines.



- For those women who refuse to receive shots and/or vaccines, WPC staff and doctors should work to increase their health and hygiene awareness so that these women appreciate the role of vaccination in keeping them healthy. The advantages of each vaccine should be explained and they should be encouraged to receive their vaccines.
- Vaccination should be free for children and women staying in WPCs. When they depart from the center, their vaccination cards should be given to them so that they may continue to receive their vaccines outside of the centers as well.

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Treating protected women's psychological issues

If necessary, psychological therapy and treatment are offered to protected women, supervised by specialists in nervous and mental diseases. Most women protected by the WPCs have suffered from violence and it is possible that they have been traumatized. To help and treat such women, counselors and psychiatrists should be employed by the WPCs and different psychological treatments should be made available for them outside the women's centers as well. The psychological counseling for each victim is not obligatory and is voluntary and confidential. The physician or psychologists inform the patient of the process, approach and benefits to the treatments prior to conducting them.

Mental health training for the staff

WPCs train their staff in the preliminary steps required for the treatment of psychological disorders, including assessments, communication means and treatment methods. These trainings are given by psychiatrists, psychologists or mental health professionals to ensure that the WPC staff will use the most effective treatments for the abused women who suffer from psychological disorders. The experts in psychology who work with the WPCs should provide training on stress management for both the protected women as well as the staff.

Entertainments, sports activities, and religious events for protected women

For their spiritual upliftment and to aid in the treatment of women with psychological disorders, the WPCs can offer entertainments, sports activities, art classes, gymnastics and the like. Such activities can be organized to celebrate various occasions, for example, different Eids, Nowruz, and other national and international days in cooperation with other WPCs. Any programs that can alleviate the victims' spiritual and emotional state should be adopted and become part of their routine schedule.

Starting a volunteer group

Starting a volunteer group, for example the Friends of the Safe Houses (another term for WPCs), is another way to help treat and improve the women's emotional well-being. Individual and group volunteer work will result in positive changes in the situation of the women at the centers. The guidelines for volunteer work should be composed in accordance with the WPC policies and bylaws.

Support groups

WPCs set up support groups in order to help protected women regain their mental health. These support groups are comprised of women who have faced similar challenges and have found their way to regaining their physical, mental and emotional health, overcoming their problems.

Prescription drugs

Drugs are prescribed and administered under the supervision of a doctor. In order to avoid their improper use, drugs must be bought and administered according to the doctor's prescription. To avoid serious accidents, the medicines should be given to the protected women by the medical staff on duty. Patients should not be allowed to access the medicines themselves. If the medical staff and the nurse are not present, the WPC staff on call should administer the medicine according to the instructions given by the doctor.

If a protected woman was ill or on a particular regimen of medication before coming to the WPC, the doctor's opinion should be sought as to the continuation or termination of the previous medication.

Medication for emergency cases and painkillers should be bought when the medical staff deems it necessary and/or according to the doctor's instructions. The medications should be kept in a safe place, inaccessible to protected women. They should also be replenished on a regular basis.

3. Vocational Training and Education

The main goal of education at WPCs is not to impart school-like teaching, but rather to provide the protected women, regardless of their age, with information, knowledge and skills in different areas. The education programs help increase the protected women's self-confidence and knowledge, and equip them to get the most out of society, culture and their environment in general. Through education, the protected women are made aware of their rights and the injustices they have suffered, they are familiarized with the law, and they are taught how they can attempt to rectify violations of their rights. Those who work as teachers in WPCs should:

- have at least a high school diploma with two years of work experience, or be a graduate of a two-year college, or have a bachelor's degree; and
- have an educational conference attendance certificate.



Education in WPCs is delivered in two ways:

- 1) Education at the WPCs includes literacy, Koran, national and foreign languages, learning different skills including personal and environmental hygiene and computer skills, depending on the interest and request of the protected women. Educated women and girls who are admitted to the WPCs can learn how to become teaching assistants.
- 2) Pursuing higher education. WPCs assist students in continuing their education. If the abused woman is a university student, the authorities at the WPC are responsible for providing information and knowledge at a higher level about the country, government, geography, etc. If the WPC is unable to provide the required higher education, then the center will assist the protected women in pursuing higher education outside the center.

Literacy education

Illiterate women will be educated at the WPCs. Teaching is provided in the mother tongue and in accordance with the curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education. At the end of the course, the student should have learned the following:

- Reading and writing: The protected woman should learn how to read and write the alphabet, recognize words, combine words, make sentences and read sentences.
- Math: Teaching should focus on the practical use of math. The protected woman should obtain a practical, daily-life familiarity with the following topics:
 - counting numbers and things
 - knowing and performing addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
 - knowledge of units (time, money, volume, weight)
 - managing money
- Religion: Religious education should cover the following:
 - teaching the Koran to all protected women, who are not already knowledgeable at all educational levels;
 - teaching basic Islamic practices (religious edicts, e.g., the conditions of prayers, fasting, ablution, etc.);
 - providing religious edicts to Shiites and Sunnites separately;
 - information on Hadith (tradition of Prophet Mohammad), including interpreting and explaining Hadith; and

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- retelling the stories of the prophets (briefly and educationally).

Rights and life skills

Protected women will have access to courses on women's rights, parents' rights, citizenship rights, basic knowledge on EVAW, environmental hygiene, personal hygiene, etiquette, general knowledge about the society, government, hospitals, different neighborhoods, life skills, information on the country and region, the general structure of the government, computer knowledge, using the internet and the like, depending on the interest and request of the protected women.

Children's education

Protected women with very young children may bring their children to the WPCs to stay with them. All children of school-going age staying at the WPCs should be encouraged to attend a public, private or professional school. Day care facilities should be provided for those who are too young to attend school. In addition, Children's Support Centers have been set up to take care of those children whose mothers and/or fathers are in prison. These centers provide housing for the children as well as courses and after school activities. Children are taught Math, English, Dari, Pashto, computer skills and life skills etc. at these centers, to complement their regular school instruction.



4. Security Action Plan

All WPCs are responsible for ensuring the security of their staff and the women who are in their care. If required, WPCs, with the support and cooperation of MoWA, can request the MOI to assist in providing security to WPCs.

- If a department of the MoWA wishes to review the security arrangements at any WPC, they should inform the center in advance and mention the nature and the time of their visit.
- Security in WPCs should be provided in compliance with the WPC policies, bylaws and the security guidelines of each center, while considering the conditions of the center's surroundings and neighborhood. The head offices of the WPCs should work with the WPCs in the smaller towns and rural areas to ensure that they have adequate security arrangements.
- Each WPC should provide for the security of the premises, and for the safety of its staff and the protected women. To this end, and to improve the security arrangements in WPCs, security workshops should be held for different sections of the WPCs, addressing the different responsibilities, duties and functions of the staff in the event of an incident, threat or danger. Training sessions to improve the abilities of the security guards should also be held.
- Each WPC should develop a security policy, which is broadly aligned with the security policy of the headquarters, but adapted and tailored to fit the specific needs of the WPC and the security environment of the region it is located in. Security measures should be provided in accordance with this policy.
- Ensuring the individual safety of an abused woman at the court, police station and attorney general's office is the responsibility of the WPCs and requires particular attention and care. (The presence of both parties to the lawsuit and the abused woman's family members in the court creates a potentially volatile situation. In order to prevent incidents, WPCs should seek the cooperation of the court, the attorney general's office and the police to provide security for the abused woman.)
- To improve the security of the WPCs, means such as barbed wire, shards of glass in the wall, security locks and skilled guards should be used.
- Armed and unarmed men as well as security guards should not be allowed to enter or stay in the area where the protected women are housed, unless there is a special security emergency.
- WPCs have the authority to choose, appoint and dismiss security staff in order to improve the security status of the centers.
- In the event of an incident or if faced with a dangerous situation, communication among the staff and communication with headquarters should only be through a special line and a special phone number.
- All WPC staff should have a list of the special security phone numbers, which they can quickly access to contact each other and/or the headquarters in times of danger. Headquarters should send assistance as quickly as possible.
- To assist staff in responding to security problems quickly, charts should be made of the names, contact numbers, positions and responsibilities of the relevant security organization authorities as well as of the authorities and employees of other WPCs, ministries and related organizations.



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- WPC staff must pay careful attention to the activities of the protected women and report any misbehavior in the daily report of the staff on duty. The measures that were taken to deal with any security situation that arises should also be mentioned in the report.
- Special safety measures and action plans in case of an emergency are made in compliance with WPC policy and in cooperation with MoWA, MOI, General Department of National Security, etc.

Special cases and emergencies include

A protected woman leaves the WPC without informing the staff.

- Armed or unarmed robbers break into the WPC.
- A member of the WPC staff or a protected woman comes under threat.
- A fire breaks out in the WPC premises.
- A protected woman commits self-immolation.
- A protected woman commits suicide or any kind of harmful act towards herself or others.
- A protected woman is abducted from a WPC by unlawful armed individuals or those who have committed the crime of violence against her.

Handling of special and unexpected incidents in WPCs

- If any of the above listed special cases or emergency situations occurs, WPC authorities and staff are responsible for taking action to remedy the incident, including either calling or sending a letter to MoWA and the relevant security department and/or calling the fire department.
- Installing firefighting equipment on each floor of the WPC buildings will help deal with an outbreak of fire.
- To improve security, WPCs should start and reinforce a system of reporting on the performance of the security guards and the staff on duty during both the day and night shifts.
- If an incident occurs, the WPC authorities must be given a report on the following: details regarding how the incident occurred and the measures taken by the employees to prevent or mitigate the incident from the beginning to the end. If the incident takes place at night, when the main office is closed and most of the day shift staff are not on duty, then the night-shift employees will be responsible for providing information on the emergency incident. If the night-shift employee is illiterate, he or she must verbally relate all the incident details to the WPC management. Based on this, the management staff will prepare a written report. If a protected woman was involved in the incident, then the management will also procure her signature or fingerprint on the report, after she has verified that the facts presented are correct.
- To provide security at the centers and prevent or respond to incidents, WPCs shall cooperate with the relevant security organizations and work on strengthening their ties with such organizations.
- WPCs should select staff members to form a 'reserve group'. This group will be responsible for responding to emergencies, and will be the first to help the protected women and the staff of the WPC in such situations. WPC authorities shall define the duties of each member of the reserve group in times of emergency. This will enable the reserve group to perform more efficiently and will help the center in resolving problems.
- To maintain proper security and preserve the confidentiality of the protected women, the center's authorities should formulate a procedure for visitors to WPCs, if they deem such a process necessary. This handbook should be in compliance with the WPC bylaws and guidelines.
- Meetings between the protected women and their family members are arranged according to the bylaws of the WPC and are organized only after the protected woman has been asked for her opinion and consent.

5. Access to Justice

WPCs should assist the protected women in accessing justice so their rights may be protected and upheld. To this end, they should recruit qualified legal advisors and defense attorneys who can provide legal counsel and ensure that the women learn more about their legal rights with regard to their cases. The legal advisors and attorneys should work to advance the women's cases as needed, either through mediation or through judicial institutions. These services should be provided free of cost to the protected women.

- The attorney or the legal counsel of the WPC meet the protected woman and offer their legal services in order to gather facts for the case, determine the type of lawsuit the abused woman should file, and decide on the type of counsel that will be provided to the abused woman.
- Legal counsels providing assistance to the WPCs, should, according to the law, hold at least a bachelor's degree and be a graduate of the fields related to Islamic Studies and Law faculty. Those who do not meet these qualifications are known as facilitators and are welcome to participate in the counseling sessions of the advocate as assistants. Facilitators should strictly follow the principle of confidentiality. In order to ensure the safety of the protected women, all information pertaining to their identities-including their names, names of their family members, addresses, etc.-and their cases must be kept confidential. To this end, a confidentiality agreement should be signed and strictly observed.
- Based on the legal counsel she receives, which includes an understanding of her rights, a protected woman can decide how she wishes to proceed with her case. She can either choose to settle the matter out of court, by holding mediation and/or legal counsel sessions. Or, if she wishes to take her case to court, the legal counsel shall assist her in doing so and inform her of the progress of her case or lawsuit.
- Legal counsels shall inform protected women of their legal rights, including their right to choose and enter into contracts with their attorneys or cancel their contracts. The protected woman can cancel her contract with an attorney if the attorney has not acted on schedule or has not pursued the woman's case regularly and efficiently. Regardless of the stage of her lawsuit, she can acquire a new attorney to advance her case.
- Since laws give structure to the daily lives of members of a society, legal counsels and attorneys should hold workshops to increase protected women's awareness of relevant laws, explaining some articles of the Constitution, civil law, EVAW, and other laws that have a significant role in the women's daily lives.
- Attorneys and family counselors should try their best to maintain family integration by settling cases through mediation and providing legal counsel.
- With the cooperation of the WPC management and in order to facilitate legal services at the centers, attorneys and legal counsels can provide basic legal education to some highly educated protected women, thus training them to be paralegals.
- While gathering evidence and documents that will prove the claims of their clients, attorneys should abide by temporary penal codes, the bar association regulations and other applicable laws of the country. They should seek the cooperation of the staff in various sections and the nurses and/or physicians at the WPCs to gather evidence and facts for presenting to the court. If these documents and evidence are not

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gathered, the protected woman might lose her chance to prove her case in the court. If the protected woman does not agree to a forensic examination, it should not be performed.

- By observing the mahramiat principle (the confidentiality principle), WPCs should make every effort to employ female lawyers, as the protected woman will undoubtedly be more comfortable discussing her case with a female versus a male lawyer. In this way, the mutual trust between the lawyer and the client can be built in the shortest possible time.
- According to the regulations of the bar association, lawyers working with WPCs should maintain their own journal of documentation in which they record all the details pertaining to the cases they are working on, including the measures taken to resolve the cases. This will serve as proof of their work and will provide a backup source of information and facts, in addition to the case files maintained by the WPCs. They should also sign independent contracts between the legal counsel and the client.
- Attorneys working independently of the WPCs, who have a contract to represent protected women and advance their cases or lawsuits, should give priority to the pursuit and advancement of the cases at the WPCs over the others.
- If for any reason a protected woman's case is referred from one WPC to another, an official letter should introduce this referral with an attachment detailing all the measures taken for the case and all the results achieved by the WPC that was handling the case earlier.
- WPCs should work closely with MoWA to ensure that cases are distributed among WPCs fairly. To this end, a separate case referral form should be prepared for each center. Once the cases mentioned in the forms have been registered, WPCs should coordinate with MoWA to refer the cases to the WPCs after giving due consideration to the workload and capacity of each center.
- WPCs should request MoWA and the women's affairs offices in provinces to send an official written notice to the police departments, attorney general's offices and other organizations about the types of cases that the WPCs accept so that cases incongruous with WPC policies are not transferred to the centers in the first place.
- To facilitate coordination among the centers and the staff of different sections, e.g. legal, administrative and financial, WPCs can organize meetings involving the staff of the different sections, e.g. legal and judicial, to make necessary decisions. In special cases, urgent meetings can be called to review or make decisions about the cases or special issues.
- Supported and advised by the courts and attorney general's offices, legal counsels should find proper resolutions to the issues faced by the protected women and take the necessary measures when the solution is not explicitly expressed in the law or when executing the law can create problems for the protected women. For example, introducing witnesses to the hearing sessions can be problematic as it is very difficult for an abused woman to transfer witnesses from her province to a court in Kabul. Retrieving her birth certificate from her original birthplace (especially if it is in an unsafe area) can also be difficult. It is unfeasible for the protected woman to retrieve her birth certificate based on her husband's birth certificate as the husband will not help the protected woman. Changing the court location from one province to

another, the absence of the defendant in the hearing sessions and the like are also some of the problems in the legal processes of these cases. Among other problems are contacting MOI because of the scarcity of female supervision centers in some provinces, and referral of criminal women to a WPC contrary to the policy of these centers, which results in the refusal of admission. Necessary measures should be taken for all the above mentioned issues and the like.

- WPC authorities should work to ensure that judges and attorney generals treat abused women according to the statements of the law, respecting their dignity throughout the investigation and trial.





6. Confidentiality

Considering Article 38 of the Constitution, paragraph 6 of Article 6 of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women, and paragraphs 1 and 2 of Articles 21 and 23 of the Shelter Guiding document of the MoWA, confidentiality is one of the important and basic principles to be followed by WPCs. Every staff member at the WPC, the attorneys, various ministries including the MoWA and governmental/non-governmental institutions that are working with WPCs must observe confidentiality with respect to the WPCs.

- Confidentiality includes every aspect of an employees work, including the location of the WPC, information on the cases, the names of the victims, specifics of the cases and their resolutions. No one, including the staff of the WPC, has the right to disclose the address of the WPC, positions and the names of the staff, presence and movement of the protected women, much less the resolutions and remedies for the cases.
- All WPC employees must follow the confidentiality principles in every aspect of their work. They should advise new staff members to observe confidentiality and never talk about their cases to other people. They should be regularly reminded to follow the confidentiality principles until their departure from the WPC.
- The employment agreement for part-time and full-time employees of WPCs must have a section that specifically elaborates on confidentiality.
- WPC management should punish employees who do not observe confidentiality, which is part of the employment agreement.
- WPCs should hold workshops on confidentiality for their staff frequently.
- The staff and the management of the WPCs should educate the protected women about the importance of confidentiality and oblige them to observe confidentiality principles while following the security measures.
- The staff of the WPCs must educate high-level authorities, including the judicial and legislative branches, about confidentiality in order for them to better serve the victims and protect them from any negative consequences.
- The staff of the WPCs must request journalists and the public media to follow the confidentiality principles and never enter or film footage of the WPCs pursuant to the Constitution, public media regulations and the WPC bylaws.
- WPC staff must inform guests who wish to visit the WPCs to first contact the MoWA officially and subsequently the WPC they wish to visit, in accordance with the WPC confidentiality principles.
- The management of the WPC should make it clear that no organizations or individuals can visit the WPC without prior notice and must follow the appropriate procedures required by the WPC they are interested in visiting. (The chairperson of the WPC at the MoWA is an exception to this rule.)
- The management of the WPCs should make it clear to the visitors that after they have been granted per-

mission to visit, the visiting party is not permitted to bear arms or be accompanied by their bodyguards while they are inside the premises. In order to observe confidentiality, the visitors' cars and their security entourage should be parked in a disguised location or far away from the WPC.

- The management and the staff of the centers should be vigilant about the address and location of the WPC, which under no circumstances is to be revealed to or by the public media. The central office of the WPC is the only exception to this guideline.
- WPC staff should be vigilant about maintaining the confidentiality of the WPCs when communicating via mail with governmental or non-governmental organizations. Every effort should be made to ensure that no piece of mail mentions the address or location of the WPC.
- WPC management must make it clear to the legal counsel and the attorneys involved in the victim's cases at the courts and judicial centers that they are obliged to observe confidentiality in all aspects of the case and with regard to the WPCs, pursuant to the Constitution, the bar association and the WPC bylaws.
- The attorneys and legal aid entities following up with the victims' cases do not have the right to enter the WPC as per the confidentiality principles observed at the centers. The protected women are transferred to the central office of the WPC in order to meet with their legal counsel or lawyers. Sometimes, these meetings may also take place at the MoWA offices.
- WPC management should inform the close relatives of the abused woman that they do not have visiting rights at the WPCs. Visitations can take place only after an official request is made to the MoWA and the ministry approves the visit. Once the visit has been officially approved, the victim's consent for the visit is mandatory. If necessary, the WPC can determine the location of the visit and arrange security for the protected woman.
- Depending on their position and responsibility for the protected woman, WPC staff must also be present at the family visitation.
- In accordance with the confidentiality principles, the MoWA should designate a safe place, away from the general public, for the purpose of family visitations.
- In order to enable the WPCs to better implement their confidentiality policies, the management and the staff of the WPCs should work closely with the MoWA and other relevant agencies to ensure cooperation in the following matters:
- Mandate their employees not to reveal names, addresses and any other information about the protected women and their cases to any person at any organization, the public media, and the family members of the victim, as doing so could endanger the protected women.
- Request the respectful chairperson of the WPCs at the MoWA to issue an official memorandum stating that the security personnel and the staff responsible for the registration, intake processing, etc. of the protected women have no right to make any comments or provide any information about the WPCs, the WPC staff, or the protected women's cases to family members, any person at any organization or the public media. Punitive measures will apply to violators of the confidentiality policy.

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- Request the provincial offices of the EVAW units at the attorney general's office, responsible for domestic violence, to issue special ID cards for the vehicles that transport protected women from the WPCs to the provincial attorney general's offices to help ensure that confidentiality is maintained.
- WPCs offer protection to victims of violence referred to them by different organizations including the police and attorney general's office jurisdiction of domestic violence, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Department of Huquq in Kabul, primary court of the personal status, Department of Huquq at the MoWA, office of the Afghan Women's Network, etc.
- In order to enable the WPCs to better implement their confidentiality policies, the management of the WPCs should request the assistance of the MOI and the related police jurisdictions in Kabul in the following:
 - All police stations with jurisdiction over domestic violence should follow the confidentiality principles and report the date and time (hour and minute) of transferring the victims to the WPC after completion of the registration process. In order to provide better service in transferring the protected women, the gender office at the MOI should include a female police officer in their team.
 - The attorney general's office should ensure that the confidentiality of the cases of women who are the victims of, or at risk of violence, in its security jurisdiction is maintained. Further, the representatives of the attorney general's office should sign their names on the release form and include the date and the time that the woman is handed over to the care of the WPC or the MoWA.
 - The representatives of the attorney general should make every effort to discretely perform any research related to a protected woman's case, and use a separate office in the domestic violence section of the attorney general's offices.
 - In accordance with confidentiality principles, the court authorities should assist the protected woman in following her case in an orderly court and prevent any threat or physical violence against the victims by their family members or relatives before and after the court hearings.
 - The MoPH should help ensure that doctors and other hospital personnel offer their full cooperation in cases dealing with victims of violence, while also following the confidentiality principles.

7. Standards of Living at WPCs

The WPCs provide a safe haven for women who are victims of, or at risk of, violence. They aim to provide these women with certain services and care, in accordance with the centers' capacity and the means available to them.

- While the services offered at the WPCs are adequate to cover the needs of the women, they cannot provide luxurious amenities, a fact that should be made clear to the protected women so their expectations are in line with the services offered.
- Clothing, underwear and all the essential needs of the women are provided to them as soon as they begin their stay at the WPC. Children also receive clothing when accompanying their mother.
- Personal needs such as shampoo, hairbrush, toothbrush, soap, and other needs, must be replenished as needed.
- Rooms, living quarters and the facility must be cleaned on a daily basis. Items such as bed sheets, pillowcases, curtains, etc., must be changed at least once a week.
- Clothing should be provided according to the season and it must be in accordance with Afghan and Islamic customary norms. Non-Islamic clothing should be avoided. Girls older than seven years of age are eligible to enjoy the same benefits and rights as those of the protected women at the centers.
- To celebrate national and international days such as Eids, New Year and March 8th, seasonable clothing and underwear should be provided to the women and their accompanying children after they have completed the forms specifically prepared for this purpose.
- Based on the choice and taste of the protected women, clothes compliant with Afghan and Islamic cultures should be purchased for the women. For their safety, the protected women are not allowed to go to the markets alone to purchase clothing or other products, as all their necessities are provided by the WPCs.
- To avoid extravagant waste, the WPCs should refrain from purchasing or making items that cannot be afforded by the protected women.
- WPCs should have different spaces and rooms for different activities of the women. Bedrooms must be separate from the general living areas and each bedroom should house no more than four protected women.
- To improve their level of knowledge and to provide healthy entertainment, the protected women should have access to publications, radio and TV.



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- Women should be encouraged to plant flowers, herbs, trees etc. so they are engaged in a constructive hobby and also contribute to beautifying their surroundings.
- Food at the WPCs should be prepared in accordance with the season, and the special dietary needs of the women with illnesses should be observed. The menu should thus change with the season, and the menu for the week should be set at the beginning of each week.
- To support women's health, the WPCs should provide a well-balanced and nutritional diet that includes a variety of foods such as beans, vegetables, dairy, fruit and meat.
- Protected women share the responsibility of cleaning, cooking, etc. at the WPCs. For example, the women cook in turn, according to a schedule drawn up by the staff. All food should be prepared under the supervision of the WPC staff to ensure proper quality.

II Management of the Women's Protection Centers



II Management of the Women's Protection Centers

1. Capacity Building (Internal and External Activities)

1. Employee Capacity Building

The staff at the WPCs are the backbone of the organization and as such, attention to their appointment, employment, capacity building, support and care, rights and benefits, security, and retention are the most important responsibilities of the WPCs in cooperation and consultation with the MoWA. To this end, workshops, trainings and education opportunities must be provided to the staff in order to help them improve their skills and work capacity.

- Workshops in a variety of fields related to the work and responsibilities of the staff should be provided as needed and as time allows. If interested, employees can attend all workshops related to their job and that help them improve their capacity. To improve the staff's knowledge and in order to advance the capacity of the employees in different fields of work and promote better cooperation among them, workshops in the following fields can be arranged: report writing, database management, alleviating mental health disorders, working with women suffering from psychological disorders, developing professional work skills, providing legal advice, utilizing other staff's work skills, resolving issues by mediation, dealing with public media, self-sufficiency, and writing essays, papers and books for publication.



2. Gaining Experience from Other Countries

WPCs in Afghanistan are a recent development. Although the community supporting women in need has gained a remarkable amount of experience in a short period of time, the need for gaining additional experience from outside Afghanistan is felt tremendously. Lessons learned from visiting WPCs in other countries can be used to improve the services and support provided at the WPCs in Afghanistan.

3. Programs for Alleviating Employee Stress at WPCs

Staff members at WPCs have to deal with a fair amount of job-related stress. Spending a great deal of time with women who are victims of violence and who may be suffering the psychological side effects of being abused, being unable to take advantage of national holidays, and repeating the monotonous jobs at the WPCs can often negatively impact the employees. Therefore, WPC management should plan entertainment programs for employees and provide support for them as needed.





III Sustainability (Self-sufficiency of the Protected Women and Self-sufficiency of the WPCs)



III Sustainability (Self-sufficiency of the Protected Women and Self-sufficiency of the WPCs):

The purpose of promoting self-sufficiency among the protected women in the WPCs is to empower the victims of violence and homeless women so they can survive without the assistance of individuals, organizations or institutions and can financially support themselves and their families. To this end, in addition to the regular programs held at the WPCs, and based on the interest and the request of the protected women, the centers can offer skills training programs such as carpet weaving, jewelry making, knitting, crochet, dressmaking, embroidery, baking, haircutting and hairstyling, beadwork, making patterns for clothes, making handbags, cooking, making jams and garnishes, pickling, making tomato paste, videography, cell phone repair, etc. These programs will enable the women to learn the skills that will help them to become self-sufficient. The centers can also offer support such as marketing and monetary assistance.

- Encouraging the protected women to become self-sufficient and supporting them in achieving this through providing educational services and training programs on professional skills are among the most important goals of the WPCs.
- WPCs should coordinate their activities and provide support for women's activities, directly or indirectly, which will help them achieve self-sufficiency.
- When planning self-sufficiency programs, WPC management should keep in mind the confidentiality policy, the status of the cases and the situation of the protected women. Women who are at risk of any danger should receive self-sufficiency training in those professions or jobs that they can safely undertake once they have left the WPC.
- WPC staff should explain to the protected women the legal and sharia benefits of working and becoming self-sufficient.
- WPCs can hold temporary or permanent exhibitions of products and handicrafts produced by the protected women, for the purpose of marketing and empowering the women, as well as helping them to achieve self-sufficiency.
- Awareness programs should be designed for both the WPC staff and the protected women. These programs can act as an inspiration for the women, encouraging them to learn how to make a living by engaging in professional and legitimate work.
- WPCs should approach different institutions, businesses, union associations of businesswomen, and initiate relationships with them, so they can collaborate and develop strategies to help the women achieve self-sufficiency.
- In order to achieve self-sufficiency goals, WPCs should allocate at least one to several of their employees for this purpose.
- Based on the interest, request and aptitude of the women, WPCs should plan appropriate training and educational programs to teach the women professional skills, while considering the confidentiality concerns in the centers.
- Helping to integrate the graduates of the literacy courses in regular public schools or vocational schools

will ease the job finding process for those women whose cases have been resolved.

- A woman residing in a WPC should be encouraged to learn skills pertaining to a profession that is suited to her education level so she is able to successfully practice the profession and attain self-sufficiency.
- WPCs should identify the skills and the capabilities of the protected women, and provide appropriate opportunities for them to merchandise and market their products. To this end, they can set up small manufacturing shops and production projects.
- WPCs can organize joint vocational training programs with women outside the centers, so the protected women are able to see, through the example of these women, that it is possible to lead a self-sufficient life outside the WPC. They can charge a nominal fee for a program of a specified length of time.



- WPCs should teach professional skills including art, traditional crafts, embroidery, sewing, and other skills that can inspire the protected women to continue with further education. Cooperation in production activities encourages collaborative activities among the women.
- WPCs should try and showcase the achievements, skills and products of the protected women internationally, so as to garner cooperation and assistance for improving the level of the women's productions.

1. Professional Training and Employment

One of the main purposes of professional training is to enable the protected women to pursue healthy activities, earn money and achieve self-sufficiency. The protected women can opt to learn skills that apply to a field of their interest and capability in order to become self-sufficient. WPCs offer different vocational courses and hire qualified teachers for these trainings. Courses include sewing, embroidery, housekeeping, bead working, carpet weaving, jewelry making, haircutting and hairstyling, flower arrangement, etc. During and after the training period, the protected woman can sell her products in the center, or through good marketing and with the cooperation of others, outside the center. They can also gain self-sufficiency outside the WPCs by offering their products for sale.

2. Sustainability and Reporting

WPCs should engage in regular reporting so as to evaluate their achievements and the services provided to women who are victims of, or at risk of violence, in order to assist them and help protect and uphold their rights.

- WPCs should cooperate with each other when preparing reports on their programs and achievements for MoWA and/or their donors. Sharing information on the number of cases they undertake, transfer of cases

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from one WPC to another, relevant information on critical cases etc. is good communication practice and helps ensure consistency and accuracy in reporting.

- The process of reporting helps strengthen the relationships both among the WPCs and between WPC and donor institutions as it helps ensure that evidence and important case information doesn't get lost when cases are transferred from one WPC to another.
- Reports that highlight the effectiveness and service growth of the WPCs help create accountability between WPCs and donor institutions as the institutions are kept informed of the activities and achievements of the WPCs and can hold them accountable in the event that the WPCs fall short of expectations.
- Clear and informative reports can become a great decision-making tool for donor institutions and other organizations working towards women's rights.
- Reports as tools for securing financial assistance
- Reports can be used to encourage donors to extend financial assistance to WPCs. Proper documentation of the WPCs' activities and of their judicious use of funds will encourage donors to continue their assistance and also provide support for any special need that may arise. To this end, WPCs should adopt the following practices:
- Prepare reports in accordance with a standard template that will help develop realistic and reasonable budget proposals. This will help donors better understand the needs of the WPCs and provide funds accordingly, and can also lead to longer-term funding, thus helping the WPCs achieve sustainability.
- Prepare detailed reports that highlight the efforts made by WPCs to improve their services and activities, thus indicating their commitment to providing ever better support to women in need.

3. Guidelines for the Media and the Press

- Media and the press have no right to enter or take footage of the WPCs, publish or disseminate information about the cases of the women at the WPCs in accordance with the Constitution, guidelines of the media, and WPC bylaws and confidentiality principles.
- In order to help improve the status of women in society and uphold their rights, while also protecting their right to decline talking to the press about their cases, WPCs can cooperate with the media and the press after verifying their work permits. However, WPCs reserve the right to accept or deny interviews regarding specific cases of the protected women. A decision is made after considering the facts of a case and assessing any risks associated with it, which may endanger the women.
- WPCs should advise their staff on how to interview, how to present in an interview, and the amount and type of information they can share about the women's rights or a specific case.
- WPC staff can engage in interviews with the media and the press on various issues but they cannot talk about the ways in which the centers run their business. Staff cannot provide any information about a particular case, nor can they give any interviews whatsoever, unless they have the permission of the woman and the management of the WPC, especially if they are underage, or illiterate.
- A protected woman may not give an interview if it exposes her to any risks or danger. Further, she may not be interviewed unless she gives her written consent to the interview in advance. Such interviews are only allowed under the supervision of the WPC management.
- Media and the press are not allowed to run any interviews with a protected woman unless the WPCs

are informed in advance. The conditions of the interviewers should be communicated to the protected woman and the conditions of the WPC as well as the protected woman should in turn be communicated to the interviewers. This does not apply to any interviews that a protected woman might have partaken in before being admitted to the WPC.

- The media and the press will be taken to court if they violate the confidentiality observed by the WPCs with regard to revealing the names or any details of a protected woman's case.
- The management and the staff of the WPCs can give interviews to the media and the press to introduce and inform people of their activities provided they follow the WPC confidentiality policies.
- The kind of information shared and the tone of the interview on the WPCs' activities must be approved by the WPC management. Every effort should be made to have legal scholars and other experts perform the interviews.
- If the media and the press request the MoWA for an interview with a protected woman or to learn about the activities of the WPCs, the MoWA should contact the WPC management to obtain their consent for the interview. The Ministry can then inform the media whether or not the interview has been approved by the WPC management.
- If an interview has been approved, then the interview questions must be provided to the WPCs and/or the protected woman one or two days in advance. If the centers' management identifies any questions that violate their policies, they have the right to deny the questions or the publication of the interview.
- WPCs have the right to arrange roundtable discussions or interviews in the media to clarify any controversial issues related to the goals, policies and activities of the women's centers.
- Governmental or non-governmental organizations, as well as individuals, cannot use WPCs as a self-promoting device in the media or the press.
- WPCs, individually or as a group, can have a public relations section responsible for the promotion and publication of their material, as well as cooperation with the media and the press.
- WPC staff should subscribe to one or two daily newspapers, which are appropriate for the women to read and are approved by the management, in order to familiarize the protected women with the current conversations in the country. This is very important for improving the women's level of cognizance.
- WPCs can publish material at the national and international levels, based on WPC policies, in order to promote the women's rights. It is imperative to cooperate with other organizations that work for the improvement of the status of women in society.



4. Relationships with Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations

- Building a network of WPCs is essential to promote coordination among the different sections of the centers, which enhances relationships among them. It can also help the centers better serve the protected women and cooperate with governmental and non-governmental organizations. The goals and objectives of this network, known as the Afghan Shelter Network (ASN), are different from that of the Committee for the Cooperation and Solidarity of the Women's Protection Centers at the MoWA, explained in previous pages.
- Organizations working to support women's rights, which are involved in the WPCs affairs in one way or the other, can join the ASN. They can appoint a liaison who will actively work with the ASN in both the capital and the provinces.
- The ASN meetings will be held on a regular monthly basis, with the Executive Directors participating at least every two months. Participation of the centers' chairpersons is mandatory on a monthly basis. Emergency meetings for special cases can be called by members of the network. Members based in the provinces can participate in the meetings remotely, via the telephone, Skype, videoconference etc. and thus remain informed of the issues that are discussed, decisions made and final pronouncements of the ASN.
- A separate guideline and terms of reference, different from that of the WPCs, should be prepared for better organizing the activities of the ASN.
- Coordination among the WPCs, organizational charts, responsibilities and accountabilities, qualifications for membership, employment and exiting, collaborating with sister organizations, resolving issues arising from the organizations' activities as well as the legal cases, and finding jobs for the protected women at the centers, should all be included as part of the guidelines and established through the meetings of the ASN.
- Responsibilities and accountability of the ASN are as follows:
 - Establishment and betterment of relationships, and promoting coordination among the WPCs.
 - Establishment and betterment of relationships between WPCs and governmental/non-governmental organizations.
 - Resolving issues at the WPCs, including those arising from a lack of cooperation or coordination among the WPCs.
 - Decisions made by the ASN for the improvement of the WPCs' activities must comply with the WPC by-laws and internal policies at all levels of work reflected in the network's guidelines.
 - Working with MoWA and other related judicial organizations to help resolve the issues faced by those women living in the WPCs who have no family to go to, and based on Islamic and legal provisions, assist with the remarriage of the women whose cases have been resolved and who have been legally divorced. Charging the women for these services is illegal. Making any decisions for the abused woman is only permitted after her consent in the matter.
 - MoWA's liaison works as an active member in the ASN. The MoWA is requested to confirm their responsibilities and accountabilities in this regard and facilitate legal approaches for resolving issues and support-

ing the activities at the WPCs.

- The ASN can follow up with the issues involving the WPCs and government organizations and/or the donors.
- The ASN is responsible for receiving funds for the improvement and development of the WPCs by communicating and following up with donor organizations and institutions.
- The WPCs must make every effort to earn the cooperation of other, relevant organizations and strengthen the relationships among the ASN members, so the various WPCs are better able to coordinate their activities and achieve better performance.

5. Contracts

Signing contracts is part of the responsibility of the WPC network. To facilitate the daily business of the WPCs, they can sign contracts that will support the performance of their activities and strengthen relationships with other organizations and institutions.

The WPCs request that the MoWA sign memorandums of understanding with the MoPH, the public health section of the MOI, National Security, Sardar Mohammad Daud Hospital and Rabia Balkhi Hospital in order to support the work of the WPCs. The above named organizations should assist the women referred by the WPCs in the treatment of their health issues while observing the confidentiality policies of the WPCs.

The WPCs request the MoWA to also sign contracts with the psychotherapists referred to the WPCs.

6. Contracting with Mereston (Women's Rehabilitation Center)

The MoWA is requested to sign contracts with the Mereston organization (which works with vulnerable, low-income families that are unable to care for their children or handicapped and/or mentally ill family members) for the referrals of the mentally ill women whose presence and care at the WPCs can pose a challenge to the centers' administration as well as to the other protected women. These women need a proper place to stay in and mental health treatment on a regular basis.



IV WPCs Involved in the Conception of this Guideline



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1. Afghan Women Skills Development Center

One of the first WPCs was established by the Afghan Women Skills Development Center, also known as the AWSDC. This organization was initially recognized in 1999, outside Afghanistan. It was primarily a coalition of concerned Afghan women who assumed assistance to the suppressed Afghan women as their number one priority. They started by offering workshops and training courses, assisting in the building blocks of social reconciliation and helping the less fortunate women and young girls who were the victims of abuse in their families as a result of unappealing cultural and traditional behavior. AWSDC moved its offices to Afghanistan after 2001, as security improved, and has been working tirelessly to assist Afghan women who are victims of, or at risk of violence. The main objective of AWSDC is to spread awareness on women's rights in society, and especially to educate women and young girls on their human rights in an Islamic society and empower them to achieve their maximum potential with regard to their skills and economic means. AWSDC is working in several areas throughout the country, including the fourteen districts of Kabul, six districts of Parwan and six districts of Faryab, and has joint jurisdiction with the police and the security commanders in the above named districts.

Goals and objectives

- Assist the less fortunate women and children in developing their skills and inner abilities to their maximum potential in different aspects of life including family, social, financial and educational, while helping them to gain a respected status in society.
- Promote and work with others to sustain reconciliation and peace across the country.

Achievements

- Establishing WPCs in Afghanistan, and providing services to the women who are victims of, or at risk of violence, who reside in the WPCs.
- Offering legal workshops for the women discussing social, health, financial and educational issues.
- Offering educational workshops for the police force, educating them and helping them to improve their investigation process dealing with domestic violence.
- Empowering and assisting women to access justice.
- Offering workshops to build awareness on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Constantly educating women and providing general literacy as well as vocational training for less fortunate women and young girls to help them achieve their highest potential in the job market while promoting their financial well-being.



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2. Women for Afghan Women

Women for Afghan Women (WAW) is a legal, social, non-political and non-governmental organization, established in 2007. WAW's mission is to provide free legal services and other consultations to women. The organization works with experienced consultants, specializing in legal and family matters, to help Afghan citizens, especially women and children who are the victims or, or at risk of violence.

Since its inception, WAW has worked hard to achieve its objectives and has successfully established humanitarian services in eight provinces including Kabul, Balkh, Kapisa, Kunduz, Faryab, Saripol, Badakhshan and Nangarhar.

Goals and objectives

- Providing shelter for women and young girls who are at risk of abuse and the victims of violence. Providing health, financial, legal, vocational and traditional education services for the women at the WPCs.
- Helping to resolve women's financial problems by assisting them in acquiring professional skills and helping them to find jobs so they may become self-sufficient.
- Helping protected women return to their families.
- Provide training to the homeless women living in the WPCs in a variety of skills including knitting, sewing, jewelry-making, beading and weaving kelims.
- Marketing and merchandizing protected women's products.

Omid Halfway House Center (Hope Halfway House) for Rehabilitation of Women Prisoners (under the WAW)

Omid Halfway House Center opened in June of 2011. This center provides services for those women released from prison whose immediate families or close relatives are not willing to take them back in or accept them as part of the family, and their lives are at risk if shelter is not provided for them. While their legal cases have been resolved, most of these women do not have a place to live. Halfway houses help women attain skills to earn income and eventually become self-sufficient so they may leave the centers.

Women for Afghan Women Rehabilitation Center (Halfway House)

The WAW Rehabilitation Center opened in November 2011 in Kabul. This center provides services to those women whose lives are at risk if they live with their family or they do not have any immediate family member and their close relatives are not willing to accept them. WAW assists them in finding jobs and becoming self-sufficient so they may survive outside the shelter on their own. These are cases that have been referred by the long-term shelter after the legal case has been closed.

3. Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA)

In 1992, young Afghans in Pakistan started working with Afghan women and children who had fled the country. They provided literacy courses, training for artisanship and education to increase awareness on various humanitarian issues. After seven years of sporadic activities, in January 1999, they decided to consolidate their activities and bring them all under the umbrella of one organization named Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan, HAWCA.

HAWCA has won several international awards in recognition of their outstanding activities in the fields of restitution of women's rights, gender equality, elimination of violence against women, education for women, and peace building efforts across the country. The awards include the Isabel Ferrer award from Spain, the

Amnesty International Award from the Italian office, Sabino Arana Foundation's Golden Shield from Spain, and the Emma Humphrey award from England, among others.

Goals and objectives

- Fight against any racial, ethnic and gender discrimination in society.
- Joint effort to create safe and secure communities.
- Work to eliminate violence against women and children in all aspects of social activities.

Achievements

- Protecting women and children who are victims of, or at risk of violence.
- Assisting women who are victims of violence to access justice.
- Creating educational opportunities for women and children.
- Empowering women to contribute to peace building efforts and resolving conflicts.
- Empowering women by creating financial opportunities for them.
- Providing individual assistance to women and children.
- Providing basic health awareness and health care services for women and children.
- Providing emergency assistance when women and children are faced with a crisis situation.

4. Voice of Women Organization (VWO)

Voice of (Afghan) Women Organization was established in 1998 by a group of doctors, engineers, lawyers and activists. The organization started with setting up underground schools for young girls during the Taliban regime. Initially, the founders supported the less fortunate women and families through their own personal contributions.

In 2004, the board of directors decided to move their headquarters to Herat, as women in the western part of the country were in great need of assistance, their plight having been neglected for many years. VWO was among the first institutions that focused on supporting women and defending their rights. Later they rolled out extensive programs for the improvement and advancement of women in their social and economic endeavors. VWO did not limit its activities to Herat, establishing women's centers in other provinces such as Ghor, Badgheis, Farah and Nimrooz. They have expanded their activities to focus on the social and legal rights of women and to this end, provide services to women who are victims of, or at risk of violence. They provide legal consultation, family therapy, social services and psychoanalytic therapy at the women's centers, free of charge.

Goals and objectives

- Supporting the social and legal rights of women.
- Providing access to justice for the victims of domestic violence.
- Preventing self-immolation among women and young girls.
- Spreading awareness among men about women's rights and including women in decision-making processes.

5. Cooperation Center for Afghanistan (MATA)

MATA was established in 1990 by a group of Afghan intellectuals to protect human rights, sovereignty and historical values in Afghanistan. They were one of the few organizations that managed to maintain their integrity and activities during the Taliban era and keep their offices open in Kabul, Balkh and Bamiyan.

MATA's activities are coordinated by a consulting board and the heads of the working departments, through a decentralized process by which the chairperson and key officers are elected annually. MATA's employees represent the vast majority of ethnic groups in Afghanistan and are dedicated to supporting the needs and interests of the Afghan people, regardless of their ethnic or language background.

MATA's activities focus on human rights, rule of law and reinforcement of democracy. It plays an important role in promoting women's rights and self-sufficiency and raising awareness about vulnerable populations, particularly women.

One of MATA's most important initiatives in northern Afghanistan is chairing a series of three-year projects to support and empower women in Balkh, Samangan and Baghlan. It has been involved in these projects since 2006 with the financial support of the European Commission.

Domestic violence has a variety of consequences such as denying access to school and education, physical and emotional abuse, forced marriages and underage marriages. Domestic violence is considered to be a family matter culturally and the women or young girls at risk of abuse are either not capable of reporting their issues to the authorities, or they are afraid to leave their families and face the risk of criminal indictment, imprisonment, losing face in the community, etc. MATA works to eliminate or reduce violence by offering educational workshops and raising awareness in the districts of Balkh, Baghlan and Samangan.

MATA has accomplished the following activities to help women who are victims of, or at risk of domestic violence:

- The Women's Research Center: The center provides primary and introductory legal counseling in order to lay the groundwork for conducting legal counseling. Furthermore, the Women's Research Center raises awareness on the legal rights of women and coordinates with the other two women's research centers also located in the city of Mazar Sharif, Balkh province.
- Visiting prison: MATA staff regularly visit the women's prison in Mazar Sharif (Balkh province) to review the status of the prisoners, provide introductory legal consultations and counseling and ensure that the women have access to legal counsel.
- Women's Protection Centers (also referred to as Safe Houses): WPCs were established in 2007 and have provided shelter to more than 100 women from different provinces. MATA has been providing counseling on family matters, as well as arbitrations to resolve family issues in cooperation with the governmental organizations involved in the case. Most issues can be resolved through arbitration, enabling the women to safely reunite with their families.
- A commission has been formed to coordinate activities among the different governmental organizations

and between these organizations and MATA. This commission works as a support umbrella for the safe houses and includes representatives from legal and key governmental organizations. In addition to referring cases to the safe houses, they assist individual women with their issues and cooperate with MATA to facilitate arbitration with the families. MATA's long-term commitment is to empower women and appeal to the government and society to support those women who are victims of, or at risk of violence.

- Maintaining the WPC in Mazar Sharif: As they did not receive adequate funds from the government, MATA made an international appeal for financial aid and through the assistance received, was able to keep the WPC in Mazar Sharif running. They managed to provide shelter for women who are victims of, or at risk of domestic violence, and they will keep the doors open in the future as well.
- Provincial access group for women: MATA's consultants visit prisons and provide consultation services for the referral networks, local authorities and social groups. They also provide internal training for the female employees of the prisons in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.
- Creating awareness and providing training: MATA provides training and publishes guidelines for civil servants and non-governmental organizations, while spreading awareness on the issues of women's rights and domestic violence against women.
- Training the police: MATA works with the police units in charge of family affairs and domestic violence cases, training and assisting them to better handle such cases.
- Legal investigation and judges' handbook: MATA helps in the evaluation of domestic violence cases through inspection for the purpose of strengthening the legal defense strategies.
- Establishment of WPCs in neighboring provinces: MATA is committed to developing WPCs in neighboring provinces. It has successfully set up WPCs in the provinces of Jowzjan, Samangan and Baghlan. These women's centers have been able to provide support to the women who are victims of, or at risk of domestic violence, in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.

Resources and References

1. Holy Koran, Chapter Noor, Verse 24; Chapter Ra'd, Verse 38
2. Holy Hadith
3. Constitution of Afghanistan
4. Elimination of Violence Against Women's Law
5. Afghan Civil Act
6. Media Act
7. Women's Protection Center Guidelines
8. Women's Center Policies [Afghan Women Skills' Development Center (AWSDC), Women for Afghan Women (WAW), Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), and the Voice of Women Organization (VWO) in Herat.]

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9. Islamic Declaration of Human Rights
10. Universal Declaration of Human Rights
11. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
12. Children's Rights Convention

Guideline content created by:

1. MoWA (Ministry of Women's Affairs)
2. WAW (Women for Afghan Women)
3. AWSDC (Afghan Women Skills Development Center)
4. VWO (Voice of Women Organization)
5. HAWCA (Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan)
6. CCA (Cooperation Center for Afghanistan)
7. The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific
8. IDLO (International Development Law Organization)



