This is a summary of key findings of a World Bank study titled “Gender and Justice in Afghanistan”. The objectives of the study were to collect data and information on women's perspectives, knowledge, needs, and challenges related to justice issues. The study aimed to fill a knowledge gap hindering the capacity of policy-makers and development actors to devise effective policies and programs that improve women's access to justice. The full report of this study is available as a background document upon request.
**Background and Objective**

Women in Afghanistan face exceptional challenges to accessing justice, since they negotiate their rights and entitlements within gender-specific cultural circumstances. In spite of the significant attention given to women's rights and the Afghan justice system since 2001, barriers to accessing justice are numerous, compounded by a conspicuous lack of relevant and useful data. This lack of data makes it difficult for policy-makers to understand women's access to and experience of justice, and design appropriate interventions to address specific challenges.

The key feature of the justice system in Afghanistan is judicial pluralism. Like many countries, Afghanistan's legal and judicial framework does not have one source of authority able to monopolize legitimacy, to the exclusion of all other sources of legal and judicial power. Judicial pluralism refers to diverse configurations and degrees of cooperation or competition between various actors and systems, such as state and non-state justice institutions. In this study, the state justice institutions refer to organizations (normally courts) created by the state to administer justice by the state laws and sanctioned by the state authority. On the other hand, non-state justice institutions, sometimes referred to as traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, refer to forms of dispute-resolution existing at the community level. In Afghanistan, these institutions vary greatly from one province to another in terms of functionality, legitimacy, or normative basis. Village elders and/or religious or other community leaders play varying roles in the resolution of disputes in communities. An important general feature of non-state justice in Afghanistan is that it tends to prioritize mediation, conflict resolution, and often the maintenance of or return to the status quo, as its main social function is to mitigate the broader social risks of feuds between and among families.

The gender and justice study is to understand women's legal issues and justice seeking behaviors in four regions of Afghanistan. It focuses on four main themes, including: a) women's main legal issues; b) women's justice-seeking choices and rationale for those choices; c) the challenges women face when trying to access justice institutions; and d) women's satisfaction with the judicial process they experience in north (Kabul), west (Herat), central highlands (Bamyan), and east (Nangarhar, Logar). The study is underpinned by a conceptual framework that privileges understanding the dynamics of the demand for justice first, with a secondary focus on the supply side of justice. It has focused primarily on collecting data and information directly from actual or potential users of justice institutions, with efforts to maintain a gender balance among respondents. The knowledge and perspectives of justice service providers or other supply-side actors (like donors or program designers) have been used primarily to complement or be compared with data from the demand side.

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In achieving these, the study employs a mixed-method research strategy, focusing on collecting quantitative data from demand and supply sides, through household, user, and justice service provider surveys. The study interviewed more than 5,000 women and men in Kabul, Bamyan, Herat, Nangarhar, and Logar provinces. Respondents include those who have approached state and/or non-state justice systems to address their judicial issues (users), state justice service providers (such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and hoqooqs2), and non-state justice service providers (such as community elders and religious leaders). Almost 50% of household survey respondents and about 40% of user survey respondents are women. This mixed method approach was effective, particularly to triangulate data in acknowledgement of sensitivity of some of the issues involved, such as violence against women. The study made various regression analyses to shed light in probability of certain incidences.

1. Women's Main Justiciable Issues

Women's justice issues are predominantly in the family and domestic sphere, while men's issues are in the economic sphere. Women's main judicial issues are (in order of frequency): divorce (30%), violence against women (23%), inheritance (11%), land (10%), and child custody (5%). For men, the main disputes were primarily related to: land (28%), business (20%), and other property issues (12%). By province, Bamyan had a significantly higher proportion of land-related cases, for both women and men (42% and 54%, respectively), while women in Herat were more likely to have or report divorce cases (46%), and were somewhat more likely to have or report violence against women cases (32%). Women in Nangarhar were less likely to report having experienced violence against women issues (8%). Other types of disputes were raised in the study, which tended to go unacknowledged by survey respondents. According to data from justice service providers and the qualitative tools, women also experienced charges for running away and zina3, along with experiencing rape and sexual assault, and becoming victims of murder.

Female justiciable issues are often not a single case or event, but they are linked by chains of events in which one issue leads to another. In this chain, the status of the woman might switch between plaintiff/victim to defendant/criminal. The chains of cases are also not necessarily sequential. For example, domestic violence as a result of underage marriage (where a woman is the victim) might lead to her running away, which in turn might lead

2 The Hoqooq department is a division of the Ministry of Justice, responsible for registering, advising, and mediating between parties for five types of civil cases: family cases, land and property cases, commercial cases, debt recovery, and juvenile cases. If the hoqooq does not succeed in settling a dispute, it refers the case to the courts.

3 According to the Shari’a, zina references all forms of unlawful sexual intercourse, whether premarital or extra-marital. In this way, it does not differentiate between the concepts of adultery and fornication, as some other religions/languages do. Zina is a criminal offence under the Afghan Penal Code, in Article 426.
to her being charged and imprisoned, as a criminal for ‘running away’. One result of the plurality of systems present in Afghanistan is that a woman can be viewed as a victim by one forum and as a criminal in another at the same time. Furthermore, given the gap between state law and its implementation, the status of a woman can also vary within a single system.

2. Acknowledging Disputes and Seeking Justice

The household survey established a low prevalence rate of personal disputes compared to identifying the disputes of others. Of 3,851 respondents to the household survey questions, only 71 acknowledged having experienced a dispute, 24 of whom were women, resulting in a dispute prevalence rate of 1% among women and 2% among men. When responding about members of their household, 4% of women and 5% of men acknowledged a dispute. These rates represent a strikingly low prevalence of actual disputes among the general population, which is not likely to be a reflection of reality.

Divorced women are 45% more likely to acknowledge having a dispute and take some legal action. Legal action would include seeking help from family, state or non-state justice institution. Women who have young children at home are 9% less likely to acknowledge a dispute or pursue justice than those who do not. In addition, rural women are less likely to acknowledge a dispute than urban women. In Bamiyan, women were nearly 15% less likely to acknowledge a dispute than women in Kabul (it was 10% less likely in Nangarhar, while 8% so in Herat).

Access factors generally predict the likelihood that women will identify disputes. Women who have access to government offices were nearly 9% more likely to acknowledge having had a dispute, and those who have access to their own mobile phones were about 6% more likely to report a dispute. A woman's mobility, including her ability to go out of her home alone, or with a mahram, had some impact on her likelihood of acknowledging a dispute, although its impact was more significant on her choice of forum for seeking justice.

Education and employment status do not overall predict greater or lesser likelihoods of women reporting a dispute. Generally, returnees from Pakistan (5%) and some from Iran are more likely to have or acknowledge a dispute compared to irregular migrants (7%). Having some work may increase the likelihood of women stating that they have sought a divorce, and some education increases the likelihood of women acknowledging violence against women cases. What is clear from the low effect of education levels or literacy related to all disputes modeled, is that the education system is not yet a proactive contributor to greater legal awareness or to the de-stigmatization of women's social issues.
Women were significantly less likely to take action than men on issues, such as domestic violence (25% of women vs 3% of men), inheritance (21% of women vs 12% of men), and child marriage (22% of women vs 3% of men). Women from rural areas were more likely to say they would not take action on disputes (16%), as compared to women in urban areas (13%). By province, women in Bamyan were most likely to say they would not take action (20%), followed by women in Kabul (15%) and those in Herat (14%). Women in Nangarhar were least likely to say they would not take action (10%).

For those who would take action on a dispute, household survey respondents and focus group participants expressed a clear preference for the mediation of friends and family, and non-state dispute resolution mechanisms. This preference was stronger for men (78%) than for women (65%), and was also stronger for rural women (69%) than for urban women (55%). It was strongest among rural men (82%), while there was less discrepancy between urban men (61%) and urban women (55%). There was little difference with the preference to state justice system between men (17%) and women (19%). While the choice of forum is not necessarily most strongly influenced by gender, women seem more comfortable with individual non-state justice actors (like the malik) than councils of elders (like shuras and jirgas). 9% of women said they would seek the help of individuals, compared to 1% of men. On the contrary, 23% of men against 13% of women said they would seek help of groups, such as Shura, elders, and Jirga. Men also prefer direct negotiations as a means of dispute resolution (17% of men compared with 11% of women). Preferences regarding choice of justice system varied across provinces, and between urban and rural areas. According to key informant interviews, Kabul respondents preferred the state system more often, where Nangarhar, respondents favored the non-state system or family-based mediation more often. Qualitative data highlighted that in Bamyan, where respondents preferred non-state systems in the form of religious network of madrassas and ulema, which seems to be Shi’a-specific justice network. When women's personal characteristics are analyzed to predict their choices of fora, several factors stand out as strongly influencing their choices. Most consistently, women who have a high level of independent mobility, have already had another dispute in the last five years, or know someone in their community who has had a similar dispute to themselves, are most likely to act to address their dispute. For instance, in case of domestic violence, women who have a high level of mobility are 6% more likely, and those who have already previously experienced a personal dispute are 15% more likely to choose the state system.

3. Experiences with Justice Systems

In choosing forum to address judicial issues, the user survey indicates access, authority, timing, and costs appear key concerns for both men and women. In general, state justice actors were likely chosen by male and female users because of their authority, while non-state actors were likely preferred because of easy access and low
or no cost. There are some gender variations. Among those who approached state justice actors, 60% of men and 50% of women said the institutions had authority to handle the case. There was a large difference between women and men in cost considerations: 25% of women responded state justice institutions were cheap or free, while only 6% of men did. In choosing non-state justice actors, 71% of men and 57% of women said it was easy to access, while 56% of men and 40% of women said it was free or cheap. Additionally, women were more likely to approach non-state justice actors on advice from their family (38% of women, compared to 7% of men). Both men and women had the same perception on timing, as 25% of them responded non-state justice system would not take too much time.

For both men and women, physical access to justice actors ranges considerably by province. In Bamyan, both non-state and state justice actors are substantially less accessible than in the other study provinces, because Bamyan is predominantly rural with poor roads and limited modes of transportation. From surveyed households in Bamyan, the average distance was 6.4 km to non-state institutions and 85.9 km to state institutions, while in Kabul it was 2.9 km to non-state institutions and 6.4 km to state institutions. In Logar, Nangarhar, and rural Herat, access is most seriously affected by insecurity.

There are substantial gender difference, but this should be read in the context of the different types of disputes men and women take to the justice institutions for resolution. The shortest average time for processing a dispute is when men take their cases, related mostly to economic sphere, to non-state actors (average is 44 days per dispute). When men take their cases to state institutions, the average length of time becomes around 130 to 163 days at each stage (i.e., it would take additional 130-163 days if a case is escalated to second stage). For women, or cases related to family and domestic sphere, differences are less substantial in processing at non-state or state justice systems: the average of about 61 days in non-state system, while around 61 to 85 days in state justice system per stage. Likewise, if escalated to second or third stage, it would take double or triple length of time in the state justice system.

In terms of costs, men would spend about AFS 10,260 (about US$ 170) in non-state justice system. In state justice system, it would be about AFS 70,600 (about US$ 1,200) at first stage. For women, the costs are similar: AFS 8,800 (about US$ 150) in non-state justice system, while AFS 8,258 (about US$ 140) at first stage in state justice system. For both men and women, the cost per stage is about the same if escalated. Besides the nature of disputes are different between men and women (economic vs. family and domestic), there are several explanations that relate to this discrepancy. Firstly, women are less likely to have access to resources or their own money in general, which may make them less likely to be asked for bribes. However, the focus group discussion
with women in prison demonstrated that women do get asked for bribes, but often simply cannot pay them, and risk being penalized for not being able to do so. Secondly, women are a) more likely to have legal aid or legal representation with them, likely reducing the level of bribery that occurs at each level; and b) less likely personally present at their own legal proceedings, likely reducing the opportunities justice providers have to ask for bribes. Finally, in qualitative work, women complained that justice providers did manipulate them or asked for other favors, including sexual favors, rather than money, a factor entirely missed when using only the financial corruption lens.

In filing their cases, neither women nor men have little help in filing their case: 41% of women or 56% of men did not have any assistance with filing a case in non-state system, while 64% of women or 69% of men did not in state justice system. Among those who received assistance in filing, 33% of women and 19% of men received assistance in filing a case from their father's family. 14% of women received assistance from their husband's family.

Legal representation is not typical when using a non-state justice actor, but in the state system, women are more likely to have legal representation than men (33% of women vs 14% of men in the first stage). Legal representation is more common in the latter stages of processing a case in the state system (59% of women vs 21% of men in the second stage), demonstrating particular vulnerability early on, when access to representation is rare. Among women, those in Bamyan is least represented (0%), followed by Kabul (21%). Women in Nangarhar and Herat are more likely to have legal representation (61% and 45% respectively). While women are more likely to have legal representation, their source of representation differs from men, largely due to financial resources. For criminal cases, women are most likely to be represented by an assigned attorney, working for the legal aid department of the Ministry of Justice, while men are most likely to have a private attorney. For civil cases, women and men are most likely to have a private attorney (as opposed to a state or NGO attorney).

Generally, women are less likely to attend their own legal proceedings than men. When using non-state actors, this difference is highly significant (89% of men vs 47% of women), with a narrower margin apparent in the state system (78% of men vs 73% of women in the first stage). Among users of the non-state system, women from Bamyan appear most likely to be personally present for the proceedings of their case (58%), while women in Nangarhar and Logar are rarely present (47%).

Men are more likely satisfied with their experience with non-state justice actors (42% of men vs. 22% of women), while women are more likely to be satisfied with their experience with state justice actors (24% of men vs. 32% of women). Among the provinces, men in Nangarhar and Herat had the highest rates of satisfaction.
with non-state justice actors, and the lowest levels of satisfaction with the state justice system. Women in Herat and Bamyan had the highest levels of satisfaction with the state system, whereas they were more or less equally unsatisfied with non-state actors. When asked specifically about the level of respect they feel that they received from a given institution, men felt most respected by community elders (69%), and women felt most respected by the state courts (57%). Although not a justice service provider, women felt least respected by the police (18%), which is often the first contact of potential criminal cases. In their pursuit of justice through non-state justice actors, women are less likely to receive a positive reaction from their communities than men: 51% of men felt their communities responded positively, compared to 22% of women. However, pursuing through state justice actors, 43% of women felt positive reaction from their communities, vis a vis 34% of men.

4. Women’s Legal Awareness

When examining awareness of state and non-state institutions, both men and women were likely to know about non-state actors (women less than men). Women's awareness was low for many state justice institutions, especially for those institutions specifically mandated to help women, such as Department of Women Affairs (39% of women vs 78% of men) or EVAW Prosecution Unit (38% of women vs 73% of men). Men were considerably better informed about all state justice institutions. However, regarding awareness of legal rights, women were considerably more aware than most other stakeholders (including justice service providers and key informants) felt they would be. For instance, 70% of women knew they were entitled to report to someone if they were beaten. Approximately 89% of women respondents know that women may own land, and 60% know a girl's rights to her father's inheritance according to Shari'a. Women in Kabul and Nangarhar show higher levels of awareness than those in Bamyan and Herat. Women in Bamyan are least aware of legal rights, and Bamyan has the highest gender gap in legal awareness. In terms of factors that influence the likelihood that women will be more aware of their legal rights, women who are married or divorced are more likely to be aware of their legal rights, as are women who have already had a dispute or already used a justice actor/institution. For instance, 13.5% of married women are more likely aware of a woman's right to initiate a divorce, so are 33% of divorced women, and 15% of women who had a dispute. Education levels have an impact on women knowing their rights about domestic violence, in particular (illiterate women are 10% less likely to know), and poverty levels decrease women's likelihood of knowing such rights (nearly 6% less likely aware).

5. Perspectives from Justice Service Providers

While community elders estimated an average of 11 cases in the last six months, state justice service providers did substantially higher caseloads: prosecutors handled 97 cases, attorneys did 26 cases, and hoqooq officials did 208
cases. Among community elders, an average of 3.6 cases (out of 11) involved women: women were victims in about 2.7 cases and were rarely perpetrators. Among state justice service providers, cases involving women ranged from 26% - 51% of all cases. At the high end of the spectrum were the prosecutors (at an average of 51% of their caseloads), and at the low end were the attorneys (at an average of 26% of their caseloads).

Community elders report most frequent cases in the last six months relating to land disputes (26%) and violence against women (19%). Among state justice actors, judges indicate that their highest frequency was for divorce cases (27%), followed by land issues (13%). They received very few cases of violence against women, early or forced marriage, and inheritance. For attorneys, the highest proportion of cases were murder cases (21%) and theft cases (18%), whilst all other types of cases were less than 10% of those which were handled by attorneys over the past six months. For prosecutors, the proportion of violence against women cases was reported as the most significant of any individual type of case (21%), which is slightly higher than the proportion reported by community elders. Prosecutors also cite the highest proportion of cases of zina (14%) and “running away” (11%) of all justice actors. While neither the household or user surveys captured actual zina or running away cases, the data from prosecutors demonstrates their relative prevalence. For hoqooq officials, land (27%) and divorce (18%) were most frequent cases, followed by violence against women (12%).

Among cases involving women as victims/plaintiffs, the highest proportion of cases for judges was divorce cases (29%), followed by zina (12%). Prosecutors report violence against women is the highest (37%). On the other hand, among cases where women were perpetrators/defendants, the proportion of women who are accused of "running away" or committing zina, is notable. For prosecutors, these two types of cases make up 72%, while for attorneys, they did 40% of cases. Since “running” away is not actually a crime, and since many zina cases are miscategorized sexual assault cases, it appears plausible that the majority of reported cases handled by prosecutors in which women were the accused party, were based on false charges.

The study also included questions about the knowledge justice providers have regarding key aspects of women's rights, and the responses they view as appropriate to various hypothetical violations of women's rights. For instance, on divorce, while there are at least four circumstances in which women have a right to divorce, only 1% of non-state justice actors acknowledged these circumstances. Among non-state justice actors, 60% of attorneys and 45% of hoqooq officials are aware of these four circumstances. On zina, justice providers were asked about an alleged case, where a husband found his wife in the company of another man. He accuses her of zina, but she denies

\footnote{Four cases include: (a) in case of domestic violence (harm); (b) if a husband has been absent for more than four years or imprisoned; (c) if a husband cannot pay alimony; and (d) if a husband is impotent.}
it, and a female relative corroborates her story. In this case, 76% of non-state actors said the case should be dismissed, but 15% still said they would convict the woman of zina anyway, despite the lack of proof and the corroboration of her testimony. Very few state justice actors said they would dismiss or convict right away, typically stating that they would open a case (38% of prosecutors) and send a woman for a medical check-up (40% of judges and 32% of prosecutors). However, medical check-ups intended to confirm or prove the absence of sex are famously problematic, including for reasons related to the unreliability of the tests (especially in Afghanistan), abuse during the exam, and the inability to prove whether sex is consensual or not using a medical exam. These demonstrate the ways in which women run the risk of conviction of zina based on unsubstantiated allegations.

References between state and non-state justice actors seem rather infrequent, besides hoqooq officials, whose primary functions are to work between state and non-state justice institutions. 84% of traditional leaders said they never or rarely refer cases to anyone else, while it was 68% among judges. However, those non-state actors who do refer cases to other actors were most likely to refer land cases and murder cases to other institutions, such as government courts, hoqooq officials, prosecutors, and the police. Judges said they had referred cases to hoqooq officials and prosecutors, and 10% said they had referred cases to community elders. Hoqooq officials were most likely to refer to government courts (55%), but 20% said they refer cases to traditional leaders. When asked what type of cases might get referred to shuras/jirgas, both judges and hoqooq officials were most likely to say land cases, although they named other cases as well such as mahr, inheritance, divorce, and child custody.

Women make up about 10% of the staff of the Supreme Court (both judges and administrative staff) and the Attorney General's Office (as prosecutors and administrative staff) at national level. There are variations at provincial level. For example, about 30% of lawyers are women in Herat, as opposed to about 20% in Kabul, 14% in Bamyan, and 11% in Nangarhar. This may explain the high level of satisfaction with state justice institutions among women in Herat.

6. Conclusions and Key Recommendations

The findings of this report can be grouped into five main categories. First, given the depth and complexity of legal and institutional pluralism in Afghanistan, and considering the large share of disputes handled in non-state institutions, recommendations for improving women's access to justice must seriously consider practical means for

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1 Whilst not in this particular case, medical exams of this type are often used to "prove virginity". This is a scientific impossibility, and can sadly lead to many wrongful convictions of zina.

2 Money or property given or agreed to, by the husband to the wife, upon marriage. Often mahr is not given at the time that it is agreed, but is seen instead as a debt that a wife can collect later, including in the event of divorce. Forgoing collection of mahr is often a condition imposed by a husband in return for his agreeing to grant a woman a divorce.
women to engage with non-state systems. Second, the justice issues that most strongly affect the lives of women and men tend to differ. Men's disputes are related largely to the economic sphere, whereas women's are related predominantly to the family and domestic spheres. These differences mean that women and men require varying kinds of support, and legal professionals need to target the different challenges involved in addressing women's and men's needs. Third, women and men tend to engage in different justice-seeking behaviors, based on their varying circumstances. It is critical that interventions take a closer look at these variations in behavior and develop specific policies to address the challenges that they pose. Fourth, women and men experience uneven levels of satisfaction with justice system outcomes. Fifth, there are substantial geographical variances in terms of most frequent disputes, justice seeking behaviors, and level of satisfaction. These are largely related to urban/rural differences, access and availability of justice services, including availability of female service providers, such as lawyers, and cultural and ethnic differences (conservative or relatively open) that influence behavior in acknowledging disputes and/or taking action. Based on these findings, the study recommends to (a) improve women's access and experiences in non-state justice institutions and (b) improve service provisions at state justice institutions.

**Improve women's access and experiences in non-state justice institutions.** Women continue to face enormous barriers to reporting crimes or seeking justice, whether through state or non-state institutions. Cultural norms of privacy and family honor, as well as issues of mobility, legal awareness, and rural access, all play a large role in sustaining those barriers. To circumvent them, women often choose non-state justice institutions. They may also choose non-state institutions simply because the consequences of approaching state institutions are too severe in terms of their alienation from family or physical risk.

**Develop women's support network at community level.** Women view greater activity by women within non-state justice institutions (in women's shuras, for example) as helpful, even if those women act only as liaisons or facilitators who help women gain a hearing from male-dominated shuras, mullahs, or other non-state institutions. Women's shuras could be given basic training in women's rights, state justice institutions, and their functions. Paralegals or community paralegals trained in women's rights could facilitate women's access to justice where multiple state and non-state systems are active. On a pilot basis, some women shura members could receive additional legal training related to state justice institutions and then act as community resource persons who can offer advice based on a good understanding of the local social and legal context and perhaps also act as a bridge between state and non-state systems.

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1 As suggested in the United Nations report on women and justice (UN Women 2011).
Provide outreach and legal awareness training to non-state justice providers and women’s community-based groups. Outreach training for non-state providers of justice services in the principles of good mediation could be useful as well, along with training in general legal awareness, given that the vast majority of cases involving women entail mediation in the non-state justice sector. Training in Shari'a law is also useful. Many Shari'a principles, if implemented correctly and consistently, would significantly improve women's options for justice within non-state institutions. Community-level rights training, provided to community elders, other non-state justice service providers, and women's shuras, would help them to understand and claim women's rights. Other community-based groups formed by various development projects could also be trained in women's rights and could facilitate the monitoring of decisions taken by non-state justice institutions.

Improve women's access to state justice institutions by developing legal service extension and outreach models. Where demand for state justice services is unmet, the situation is likely to get worse rather than to improve in the near term, given that state justice institutions are retreating from insecure areas. Developing extension and outreach models for legal services is an important strategy; indeed, other public services have also had to grapple seriously with extension models, understanding that it will be a long time before physical state institutions cover many areas. Extension based on mobile service models, with telecommunications and media components (such as radio or mobile phone-based information provision), is a critical means of bridging the gap between the average woman and the point of service delivery in the state justice sector, which largely reflects the rural/urban divide.

Improving experience in state justice institutions by coordinating key service providers. For women who do choose state justice institutions, the absence of female legal professionals and legal aid in general are large hindrances to pursuing justice in the system. Women are not often represented and run the risk of being exploited at the police station or manipulated throughout the legal process. Consistent representation can help women gain a more favorable experience in the legal system and improve the system's general reputation, reliability, and (conceivably) transparency. It is critical that the supply of legal aid not only increases but is distributed more equally, especially in rural areas. Support for organizations and providers who are specifically embedded in rural districts and provide legal aid is important. Finally, more systematic coordination between key actors (especially early in the judicial process for a given case) is critical to avoid many of the pitfalls experienced by women in state institutions.

Working through other sectors. Because poor access to all state justice institutions remains a serious problem, the justice sector should seek closer links with the health and education sectors for case referrals, especially in cases of
violence against women. These sectors have wider coverage in rural areas, are more socially acceptable for women to access, and have more female staff.

**Improve the supply of legal aid providers and female legal professionals.** Women’s satisfaction with state institutions seems to correlate especially strongly with the presence of female legal professionals. Herat has the highest number of female legal professionals of any surveyed province, and as this study demonstrates, it has the highest approval ratings from women who have relied on state justice institutions. While this correlation is indicative, it would be valuable to learn more from the experience in Herat and determine the extent to which different variables matter. More generally, it appears critical to improve the supply of legal aid providers and female legal professionals. Other service delivery sectors have tackled this issue through systematic recruitment practices and incentives that aim to address spatial inequality, affirmative action measures to place promising students from underserved areas into specific degree programs (with the requirement that they practice in their home region upon graduation), and the provision of shorter, paralegal-style training to help with common problems and challenges arising in the system (as opposed to focusing only on increasing the number of lawyers).
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