

# Field Notes and Observations of Gender and Local Level Decision Making in Kabul City

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This set of observations is being released as a tool to provide researchers with information about gender and local level decision making processes in Kabul City. It is based on notes taken in two neighbourhoods in District Seven, and is not meant to present a comprehensive profile of gender relations in this area, or in Kabul City. The views and recommendations reflected herein do not necessarily represent the views of AREU.

## Section 1: Introduction

This paper is one of five case studies conducted by the gender and local level decision making research team of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), carried out between August and November 2004.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of these studies was to explore how decisions are made on priority issues at the household and community level, and how men and women participate in these. This study specifically examined these issues in the context of District Seven in Kabul City.

### Methodology

One of this project's aims was to improve the understanding of NGOs, the UN, donors and the Afghan government about household and community decision making, to ultimately increase women's participation in public life. As such, AREU worked with several partners in the field to implement the research.

The partner NGOs were asked to select the field sites for the research, as they had more access to and knowledge about the study communities, and their staff were more aware of the delicate issues facing those communities. Therefore, all field sites were places where the partner NGOs had been implementing projects. Particularly in Kabul, the research team is grateful for the cooperation of UN HABITAT and the Women's Centre. UN HABITAT has implemented community and women's projects in different provinces of Afghanistan, as well as in Kabul. As part of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), they have helped to establish community development councils (CDCs) and maintain direct association with male and female CDCs notably in District Seven, Kabul.

A team of three AREU staff members carried out this research: one female American researcher/team leader and two Afghan research assistants, one of whom was female. They jointly conducted all of the case studies; generally the male research assistant conducted interviews with men only, and the female assistant spoke with women. The Team Leader supervised the research and gave her valuable advice whenever needed. The following methods were used in this research:

- ***Semi-structured interviews:*** These were used to collect data from men and women of the community, and gather information in interviewees' own words, which afterwards were rewritten in detailed forms. The team conducted five focus groups, three focus groups among men (young married men, middle-aged married men, and old-aged married men) and two among women (middle-aged married women, and female headed households), as well as 21 and 27 individual interviews with men and women respectively, which made 48 individual interviews in total. The team also attended three CDC meetings, one of which was comprised of females. The participants described their roles and responsibilities at the household and community levels as well as their rights and participation in decision making at both of above mentioned levels. Most of these interviews were conducted in the people's houses, and some of the interviews were done at the worksite of the men and in the Women's Centre, because during the day the

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<sup>1</sup> The other case study sites were in Panjao District, Bamyan Province; Mazar-i Sharif, Balkh Province; Hazrat-e Sultan and Khoram in Samangan Province; and Robot-e Sangi, Herat Province. For more in-depth discussion of the study as well as findings from these areas, please consult the accompanying reports *Gender and Local Level Decision Making* by Shawna Wakefield, available on AREU's web site at: [www.areu.org.af](http://www.areu.org.af).

people often were busy at their work, so the assistants continued their discussions with the people at these places.

- **Observations:** Observations were conducted along with semi-structured interviews in order to have a better understanding of the condition of men's and women's lives, by comparing realities with what people reported in the interviews. By using this method it became apparent that there was often much difference between the interviews and the actual observations.
- **Data analysis:** The research team members took notes from every interview, meeting or observation, then would write them up at the end of every field day. The team shared their opinions and thoughts about each interview or observation to better analyze the data and make a more proper plan for the next day. Every case study and life story was coded according to the code book provided in every field site.

### **Area Profile from District Seven**

District Seven is located in the east of Kabul City, 4.5km from Kabul City's centre. The residents of this district are diverse in terms of ethnicity, with Tajiks, Pashtuns, and Hazaras making up the population; however, Tajiks comprise the major part of residents of this district. According to the information provided by the Women's Centre, there are 850 households and around 2000 families, most of whom are illiterate.

There are no clinics and hospitals to address people's essential health needs; however, organisations such as Community Habitat Finance International (CHF), the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and CARE International are busy helping people with finding construction materials for reconstructing their houses destroyed during war, solving sanitation problems and providing micro credit loans. ACTED and the Women's Centre also have other projects to assist the community.

The research team studied two different areas in District Seven; one was on the hill side and the other on the lower edge of the hill. Through interviews, focus groups and observations, the team found many differences in leadership and decision making between the two areas. These are shown briefly in the table below and discussed in more detail in later sections.

	<b>Lower part of hill</b>	<b>Hill side</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<p>Both male and female representatives in the formal <i>shura</i> (CDC)</p> <p>Traditional <i>shura</i> for males only</p>	<p>No <i>shuras</i>; older community member takes leadership role</p>
<b>Household Issues</b>	<p>Job opportunities very limited; many residents do daily construction work but have less work in winter</p> <p>Many old and new refugees repatriating from Pakistan and Iran live in rental houses costing between 2000-2500 Afs/month (US\$40-50)</p> <p>Marriage remains a big cost and dilemma</p>	<p>Similar lack of job opportunities, especially in winter</p> <p>Many residents worry about heating their homes and having enough money for fire wood and fuel</p>
<b>Community Level Issues</b>	<p>Most urgent problems are lack of electricity, water and health care facilities</p>	<p>More problems than their neighbours at lower hill side. These include: difficulty bringing fire wood and water for drinking and cooking up the hill</p> <p>Disputes between water and sewage flowing from one house to another</p> <p>No schools: boys usually walk down the hill to school while most girls must stay home and do chores</p>

## Section II: Decision Making at the Household Level

In both the lower part of the hill and on the hill side of District Seven, women enjoy less influence where household decisions are made. Since they often are less educated, socially aware and engaged in outdoor activities than men, many of the interviewees felt that women are totally dependent upon men. A male member of a hill side family stated:

*“My wife always asks about my opinion. For example when I go out for work she asks me what to cook for dinner. She cooks whatever I say.”*

Widows or young married women often have no influence at all in household decision making. A hill side widowed female community member who still lives with her in-laws expressed her despair in this manner:

*“It is always my eldest brother-in-law who takes the decisions at home while his two brothers are taking part. Two months ago when my youngest brother-in-law got married, they (three brothers) sat together and decided that I should leave the house and go to my sister-in-law’s because there was no room left for me in the house. I did not agree but I had no other choice so finally I accepted.”*

However, women’s education played a vital role in women’s ability to influence the decisions at the household level. Educated women participated equally and sometimes more in making decisions at the household level. Saira, an educated woman in this community, said:

*“My father did not ask my mother’s opinion in making decisions because she was illiterate but my husband asks my opinion because I am educated and I have the wisdom of how to make decisions.”*

But in some cases, even illiterate women have the freedom to make decisions. However, these women often must undergo bitter experiences to gain such authority. One of the women on the hill side said:

*“I was divorced by my first husband who was chosen by my father and then I decided not to remarry for good. But when my father became old he advised me to remarry on my own choice. That I accepted. He said that his choice failed miserably and now I shall have the right to choose. He did not want me to live the same life I did with my ex-husband.”*

However, in household decision making about issues seen as less important, women do participate. A female community member in the lower part of the hill puts it this way:

*“My husband makes decisions such as buying/selling house and deciding the future of our children, but in some cases like shopping for clothes for the children, cooking and house chores I also have power.”*

## Section III: Community Level Decisions

As noted in Section I, the main problems of the District Seven study community are lack of electricity and drinking water as well unemployment. The majority of people in both the hill side and lower hill areas, due to lack of education, are labourers who work for daily wages; some of them are shopkeepers and a handful of them work for governmental or non-governmental organisations.

### Community Institutions: *Shuras* and CDCs

In District Seven there are two institutions functioning. One is the formal CDC, established by UN HABITAT, which has both female and male representatives. The other one is informal (traditional *shura*), established long ago by the people and the elder of the *shura*. According to interviews with the elders of the community as well as with the CDC representatives, the influence of both entities on community level decision making is clearly known.

The chart below clearly indicates the difference between formal and informal *shuras* in this district.

<b>Formal <i>Shura</i> (CDC)</b>	<b>Informal traditional <i>Shura</i></b>
Established by the NGO	Created by the elders
Men and women (members)	Men (members)
Newly established in the area (seven months ago)	Old system (long time ago)
Supported by the NGO	Supported by the people
Solving financial problems through developing projects, like skills training for women and construction work for the men of the community	Advisors only
Community development programs like making streams and asphaltting the roads	Solving household issues, much less community issues, like conflict in the house, dispute resolution, etc.

It should be noted, however, that the research team found several differences between the community residents who live on the hill side of District Seven, and the residents of the lower part of the hill. This is mainly because on the hill side, there is no formal and informal *shura* to make community level decisions as there is on the lower part of the hill. The problems associated with this lack of institutions on the hill side are discussed later.

### **CDC *Shura***

Each CDC *shura* has a chairman, an assistant, a cashier, a clerk and six other members. It has regular meetings held on both a monthly and weekly basis attended by the representatives of each *guzar* (neighbourhood) as well as the males and females from each cluster. Females have separate meetings in the Women's Centre where they talk about the community issues. However, in the monthly meetings male and female representatives sit together.

The purpose of the establishment of the CDC *shura* is to pursue development programmes. Haji Jalil, a community member and street representative, told the team:

*“There are 250 houses in this area having eight representatives in the shura. All humanitarian aid provided by non-governmental organisations was [in the past] distributed by the wakil guzar [neighbourhood elder] but now it is done by the CDC shura.”*

The CDC *shura* is supported by the NGO, whereas the traditional *shura* is supported by the community people. People still believe in that traditional *shura*, despite having a *wakil guzar* who is not trusted. When he distributed aid provided by the NGOs, many people were not happy with that distribution, because they thought that the aid had all gone to certain families, relatives and friends of the *wakil guzar*. Now, however, aid is distributed through the CDC *shura*. The traditional *shura* is not involved in aid distribution anymore, and when the NGOs want to implement some projects to this area, they first they must go to the CDC *shura* and through it start their activities.

There is the perception that the CDC is stronger than the traditional *shura* because nowadays people are very poor and they need to have some work, money and aid rather than only advice, and the traditional *shura* only provides advice for the people. The CDC *shura*'s responsibilities include asphaltting the road and monitoring other construction projects. Likewise, whenever someone wants to come and buy/build a house in this area, the CDC *shura* members research that family and take a guarantee from them; the guarantee should be from a well-known person or in the form of money, and the family should promise that they will not do something wrong in the area.

People share only the community issues in the CDC meetings. Both the men and women in the community said that they do not share their household issues in the CDC *shura* because they feel shy if they share their personal issues. However, having women participate in the CDC *shura* means that if they have some problems at the community level, they take decisions about the issues which they have in their community in the CDC meetings with representatives of the *shura*.

#### ***(Informal) Traditional Shura***

The informal or traditional *shura* is made by the elder of the community and there is no specific leader or representative like in the formal *shura* (CDC). Only an elder of the community takes the responsibility for making decisions about the issue which people have at the community or household level. For example, if there are some disputes or conflicts between the husband and wife in the family, they come to the elder and ask him to solve that issue.

This *shura* does not have any female leaders to solve the women's problems at the community or household level. Therefore, if the women have some problems, they either come to the elder and share their problems with him or sometimes go through their husbands or through female family members of the elders to try to solve their issues. The traditional *shura* tries to solve the people's issues at the household level and at the community level. In the past, people trusted more in this *shura* than now, because there was not any other *shura* in their community or area to solve their problems, especially their family problems, but nowadays the situation has changed. Because the majority of the people in District Seven are returnees who migrated during the war, their children grew up abroad, and do not accept the traditional *shura*. This is because in their view, the traditional *shura* and elders only share ideas and experiences about issues which they

formed in the past (30, 40 years ago) and these views may not be acceptable now. Many people talked about technology and modern science, and mostly how the young generation does not accept the traditional *shura*. According to statement of one community member:

*“Elders of community, wakil guzar and the mullah of the mosque are solving the [older] people’s problems. We do not have any specific shura to solve the younger generation’s problems.”*

Likewise, in a focus group discussion with young married men, the team learned that the younger generation is often not content with the *shura*’s decisions. They think many of the decisions made by these representatives are not wise. As the group noted:

*“Though the decisions are made by our elders, we are not satisfied with all the decisions made at the community level, because they have old mentalities and we think much broader. For example, we wanted to remove a part of the mosque in order for the road to get wider and straighter but the elders refused arguing that the mosque should in no case get smaller and that the road is wide and straight enough.”*

But in some cases the people respect the elders and listen to their advice for community and household level problems. Sometimes they also come together in the mosque and first try to solve their problems through the elders of the community, and share their household’s problems and personal problems. In some cases, they do not share their issues in the CDC *shura*, because they do not have trust in that, as it is a new system for them.

There was a lady from the community who wanted to be divorced from her husband and her husband came to the *shura* and asked for help. The *shura* members went to his house to ask his wife about the problem. She said that her husband “does not give me and the children food; he wastes everything he earns on smoking hashish; therefore I want to be divorced from him.” The *shura* members punished that man, telling him that he should give money to his family as well: “If you fail to do so we will forcefully take your house and give it to your wife and throw you out of this area.” Now it is two months that they have a good life and her husband brings money to the home.

On the hill side the situation differs. There is not any formal *shura* and the people of the area do not have linkages with the CDC *shura* which is in the lower part of the hill, and only a few of the women who had relations with some members of the CDC at the lower part had access to the CDC and Women’s Centre. In this area, too, there was only one representative of the street who was also the elder of the community. This elder is aged around 100 years, and if there are some problems at the community level, the people go to this *wakil guzar*. However, in discussions with the community members of the hill side they mentioned that none of their problems are solved by the *wakil guzar*, and while he is supposed to solve the community’s issues and take decisions, he does not do this. People on the hill side also do not have enough social unity to make a gathering in order to take decisions about their community level issues. One of the main reasons cited for this was that this area was the centre of the violence during the *mujaheddin* years, when war broke out in Kabul. This area was victim to war, rockets and bombing. Many residents suffered great losses; some of them were killed and those with destroyed houses fled for the sake of their lives. They migrated to other parts of city or other countries, with the majority of migrating to

Pakistan. The original residents of the area were replaced by people from different areas of Afghanistan and from different ethnic groups; this is one explanation for why they have little social unity. They often do not want to accept each others' decisions.

Nevertheless, in some cases people continue to share the community's problems with the elder mentioned above. In the interview which the team had with him, he explained his decision making process:

*"I am a representative of the area, I do not have any salary and I do this for free. The people of this area came to me and they said that you are our Rish Safeed (age-stricken). You are like our father, so, please be our representative. I accepted. Now people come and tell me this winter promises a lot of problems, starting with the street mud to access to drinkable water. Then I listen to their issues, I go to the municipality but no one listens to me there. In such cases I can do nothing because those problems can only be solved by the government. Unfortunately the government pays no attention towards our area. I can solve some issues such as disputes between neighbors. For example, the day before yesterday there was a dispute between two houses in the top of the mountain. One of them complained that the toilet water from the upper house comes to my house, they had some harsh argument with each other and when I heard of this dispute I went to them and then I warned the upper house to be careful and I told to the lower house to excuse him and he will not repeat this action again."*

As the elder stated, solving certain issues is beyond the elders or community's authority. Likewise, the advice the elders give is usually only temporarily acceptable for the community, but does not have long-term effectiveness. There was not any *shura* or groups to help the women if they had some issues at the community or the household level.

Thus, a comparison of both *shuras* reveals that they have similar problems. In some cases the CDC *shura* is seen as being of greater importance, because the CDC *shura* implements development projects for the community and sometimes provides work for the people through these projects. But the traditional *shura* helps the people socially, and tries to give them some advice and solve their problems and disputes which they have at the household level.

## **Gender and Participation in the *Shuras***

### ***Participation of women in the CDC and traditional shura***

According to the interviews which the research team had with the men and women of the community, they explained that women have more freedom to go outside for social activities, like wedding parties, going to the bazaar for shopping, and visiting their friends and relatives. Likewise, women have permission to go to the CDC meeting which is in the Women's Centre.

But during some discussions which the team had with the community members, the residents added that women's participation is much less than that of men. One main reason they cited for not going to the meeting, or the CDC institution, was that most of the women are very busy with the household chores. But from the observations the team had of the community, it appeared that sometimes women were not interested to go the meetings, because in the meetings, the discussion is only about the community and most

women think that it is not their business to be involved in community issues. Some women felt these issues should be discussed by the men, for example, as this lady stated during an interview:

*“I only attended once the CDC meeting because I am very busy and my husband is old and he is a shoemaker and I work at other people’s houses (cleaning the house, laundry, baking the bread, etc.) so, I do not have time to go to the meeting; anyway they are discussing the community issues, not the household issues.”*

There were a lot of reasons given about the lack of interest for the women to participate in the CDC meeting. One of the reasons is that the head of the *shura* always discusses the community issues and there is no chance for the women to talk about their household problems. Mostly it is the educated people who come to attend this kind of meeting.

Also, through discussions with the community members about the participation of the women in the community institutions, it was said that people of that area are very poor and they are busy in their daily activities and they cannot leave their work and activities in order to attend the meeting. For instance, one lady stated:

*“I have attended the meeting a few times and I posed the electricity problem which we had in our community, but no one pays attention to that, and there are few women from the community, teachers and workers of the Women’s Centre. The women in the community do not have much time to participate in the meetings because they have a lot of work to do.”*

In some cases women in the community are very active and keen to attend the *shura* meeting. The men of the community also give them a chance to take decisions about the community issues. Women representatives of the CDC *shura* have influence over the community decisions, and both male representatives and the elders support them. As one of the male representatives of the CDC *shuras* said:

*“There is a very good understanding between the men and women of this community that whatever men decide women agree with, and whatever women decide men agree with. Before women did not have a shura but now that they have the shura and meetings, they have a major role in the community level decisions.”*

But according to the team’s observations of the CDC meetings, women’s participation and involvement was greater than the involvement of men in these meetings, especially regarding the decisions which were being discussed. For example, in discussions about a project of asphaltting the road which was funded by UN HABITAT, the male representatives were not much interested to take part, and then one of the female representatives said:

*“If the men are not willing to take part, we will dig the land and we will take part.”*

As mentioned before, only a men’s traditional *shura* is working in this community, and men only take part at that meeting which is arranged through the elders of the community in order to solve the community problems. If the women have some household

issues they come directly to the elder of the community or through their husband or male family member to discuss the issue with them. Men and women do not have any other resources to help solve their household problems except the elders of the community, and elders of their family.

### ***Men's participation in the CDC and traditional shuras***

Men take part in the both the CDC and traditional *shuras*. In a meeting that the research team had with the CDC representatives from the Chehelsatoon area, these people said that men are more involved (and more keen to participate) in the social work of the community than women. For example, one of the CDC representatives said:

*“Whenever we want to do some work in our community, for instance rebuilding the mosque, painting the mosque, and digging a stream, people will come together and participate in hashar.<sup>2</sup> In some new projects that we have from [UN] HABITAT, the people have shown a lot of interest and they are ready to participate in (Hashar).”*

Before the civil war in Afghanistan, participation of the men was greater than women's participation in the community institutions and social activities. For example, there was *hashar*, and on the first day of the new year (*Nowruz*) there was a picnic of farmers (*Mela Deqana*) where the government provided trees for the people and the people who grew those trees had *hashar* for cleaning the roads, digging the stream, and making the irrigation system. And all of these activities were done by the men.

But women take more part in the community institutions now than before (especially as now women representatives sit together with the men in the one room and women attend the meeting and discuss issues with them). Before there was no Women's Centre, but now women have the opportunity to share their ideas about community issues. Likewise, before only men took part in the *hashar* and took decisions about that, but now women also take part and they also decide about these issues.

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<sup>2</sup> *Hashar* is a social work which is performed by people without getting any benefit or income from that work. While there does not have to be a specific time to perform *hashar* (whenever it is needed the people will gather and do the work), in the past *hashar* was usually performed on the first day of the lunar year.

## Section IV: Gender and Leadership

In the past (20 to 30 years ago) there were male and female leaders in Afghan communities who provided financial aid for the people from their own pocket, and gave advice to the people if they had some problems. Nowadays there are similar leaders, but they cannot financially help the people; only the formal leaders solve the community problems, and informal leaders try to solve both household and community issues. Now, however, people's ideas have changed about leaders and leadership. They think that they can solve their own problems without the support of outsiders or their relatives; on the other hand, they are not the same people as in the past. There is a mixture of people living from different parts of Afghanistan in District Seven, therefore, they do not want to share their problems with the other people who are not from the same place. Thus the people may only listen to the advice which has some benefit for them, like if there is a project and the leaders have responsibility to run that project and provide some help for the people and offer them job opportunities through the project. But, by and large, the informal leaders only give advice and suggestions to the people, and the team noted that people often do not think to go to elders or to the informal *shura* to solve their personal problems, rather they try to solve their problems by themselves or in their own family.

### Kinds of leadership

There are two kinds of leadership in District Seven, one is formal leadership made up of those who are selected by the community people and the other one is informal leadership. The leaders selected in the informal *shura* are chosen because they are elders of the community, or they have a good economic background or power in the community, or they have good relations with people.

### *Male leaders*

The research team observed that in the two different areas in District Seven (the hill side and lower part of the hill), there were differences in leadership. At the hill side there are no formal leaders, but there are formal and informal leaders in the lower part. Through discussions with the elder of the hill side community, he mentioned that he is the leader of that community because he is the eldest man and people respect him and listen to his advice, and the decisions he makes about the community are accepted by the people. But in lower part of the hill, it is a different case, because there are two kinds of leaders and both of them have power in their own activities, and in decision making.

Formal leaders have the responsibility to solve the community's problems, for instance, if there is some dispute between the community people, the male leader tries to solve that issue. If there is some conflict between families, or husbands and wives, they come to the informal or traditional leader who is the elder of the community and he personally tries to solve the problem, and people respect his decisions about particular issues. But in some cases it is different, according to the discussions which the team had in the focus group with middle-aged married men. These men mentioned that they are not satisfied with the decisions which are made by the elders of the community, as one of the participants in said:

*"The elders have old ways of thinking and they make decisions according to their old experiences, but we are young and we have new ways of thinking"*

*about the community development programs and if the elders give us a chance, we can make good decisions at the community level.”*

According to the young men, there are two reasons why they are dissatisfied with the situation and want change. First, they believe that the elders were more respected by the people in the past (before the civil war), because people thought that whatever elders say is good for the people and the community because the elders have more experience. But due to the civil war, people migrated to different countries and were exposed to diverse cultures and customs, so, they too gained a range of knowledge and experience. As one of the community members said:

*“Before the people were blind because they did not migrate to the other countries, but when they saw the people of the other countries, now they know about their rights and they are making decisions by their own self.”*

The second reason is that as the people became more educated, they want to bring what they have learned from other countries into an advanced system for community development. As one of the participants said in one of the focus groups:

*“The elders do not give a chance to the young generation to give their ideas about the community issues, the elders think that they have more experience than the young generation we know that elders have lots of experience but they do not know the new system and the new technology; for example we want to move the mosque which is on the road, because we the road to became wider and straighter; but the elders are saying that the mosque should be here and it is no need to make the road wider and straighter. Personally I want the elders to give the chance for the young generation and they should come to the mosque for offering prayers.”*

On the hill side there is only one leader, who is the oldest man of that community; he makes all the decisions such as regarding electricity, water and roads. He is also the representative of the street, as he mentioned, *“I do not have education but since I am the oldest man of the community people respect me and share the community problems with me.”* There is also one *mullah* in the mosque who also makes some rules for community level decisions and people come to him and he gives advice and suggestions about their problems, but these two leaders do not have any relations between each other and they do not share the people’s issue with each other.

### ***Female leaders***

In the lower part of the hill, there is a female representative who is also the head of the female CDC. She has more influence at the community level, because she is educated, active, and has more confidence to talk with men, and she has the support of her husband—one of the big reasons for her activeness.

If women receive the permission of their husbands or other male members in the household, they can be representatives or leaders. In the past, for instance, there was a woman who solved people’s problems and provided financial help for the community people; the main reason was that her father, brother and her husband were representatives and *malik* of the area. She also had good economy and was respected by the people because of these reasons, and because of this, she had more confidence to

take decisions about the community problems. According to an interview which the team had with granddaughter of that woman:

*“My grandmother was very active, though she was not educated but she had the ability to take good decisions, like if there were some weddings or funerals she would go there and give money for that family. My grandfather would also support her and he also contributed money in some cases.”*

There is no woman leader at the hill side and through the interviews and discussions which the team had with women of that area, they mentioned that in the past also there was no woman leader to solve the women’s issues or give them advice about their household or community problems. Thus, it is clear that the leadership system is much weaker on the hill side than in the lower part.

Likewise on the hill side, the women were not allowed to take part in the community level decision making. If they had some problems, they would discuss these with their husbands and through their husbands with the representative of the street. As one of the men on the hill side said:

*“The women tell their problems to their husbands, and then their husbands will tell them to the wakil guzar.”*

Sometimes if the women are widows or they do not have male members in their household, they go directly to the *wakil guzar* and tell him their problems. As the representative of the street in the hill side said:

*“There is no one to solve the women’s problems at the community level, so the women come to me when they have some problems.”*

These examples show how the role and influence of the women in community level decision making is very low when they do not have any access to *shuras* or other groups who can solve their issues or can make decisions with them, especially when there is no active, educated, and confident woman to assist with this.

## Section V: Recommendations

These recommendations are being offered for the organisations which are involved in the community development and have direct linkages with the community members and with the women of District Seven. While more recommendations around increasing women's participation in household and community decision making can be found in the accompanying papers to this study, the following are recommendations that the people of this Kabul community specifically mentioned to the research team:

- **There should be literacy courses for women**, so that they can improve their knowledge skills, in order to know about their rights and their roles in the household and the community level.
- **Skills training programmes**, like carpet weaving, tailoring, and embroidery, in order to improve the women participation in the social activities and support their families through these skills.
- **Marketing for products which are produced in the Women's Centre**. There are some projects which are handled by women in the Women's Centre like candle making, pottery and carpentry but there are no markets for their products. Because of this, there is little participation of women in these projects. If the organisations provide the opportunity for the women to have access to local, national and international markets, it gives a good incentive for women to participate in these projects.