

Access to Justice: Annual Huquq Coordination Meeting in Badakhshan

Shuhada district's Huquq Officer, Mr Serajuddin, emphasised that 'Huquqs deal with different cases that involve also police and court. There is no proper coordination and cooperation between the involved institutions. I hope that with such meetings, we can create an atmosphere of cooperation and that coordination will be strengthened. In doing so, citizens will be able to access justice and receive actual legal services.'

Huquqs are formal justice actors that represent the Afghan Ministry of Justice on district level and offer dispute resolution services to citizens. GFPs, on the other hand, are informal justice actors supported by provincial Departments of Women's Affairs. They are voluntary women who provide legal advice to other women in their communities. Even though cooperation between Huquqs and GFPs has great potential for improving legal services for citizens, they mostly work isolated from each other.

One reason for this lack of cooperation is their different standing in the Afghan legal system. Today's meeting served as a platform to overcome this institutional gap. GFPs and Huquqs had the opportunity to exchange and discuss how to establish strong linkages for facilitating cooperation and thereby improving legal services for citizens.

One of the participating Gender Focal Points, Ms Hasina Haidari, pointed out that 'the concept of Gender Focal Points is not well known to legal and judicial institutions as well as to women. The cooperation for example with the court and prosecution offices is not easy. Because GFPs are creating challenges advocating women rights and following up on cases that have been suspended or not been proceeded in time according to the law. The joint meetings will help us to make our work easier in supporting women in the districts.'

In addition, present district governors learned about challenges Huquq officers face in their daily work. The officers explained that relevant stakeholders on district level (e.g. other legal institutions, the police) were not always cooperative. Consequently, cases were processed insufficiently, decisions were delayed and legal services were subpar. The district governors listened carefully and promised to think about ways to facilitate cooperation between all actors involved.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH implements the programme Promotion of the Rule of Law in Afghanistan (RoL) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme aims at ensuring the rule of law, a well-functioning judicial system and legal security in Afghanistan. To ensure legal security for all citizens, RoL has been supporting so-called Huquq bureaus which handled more than 80,000 civil cases since 2013. To support higher legal education, RoL provided more than 31,500 books to law and sharia faculties organised more than 190 courses on legal topics for students and lecturers and awarded more than 60 students with scholarships at the same time. The programme also emphasises promoting women's rights and strengthening their access to justice as well as the job market.

Teaser text:

Yesterday, Huquq Officers, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and governors from ten districts of Badakhshan Province met in Feyzabad. 40 people, including ten women, attended the annual Huquq Coordination Meeting. The activity aimed at strengthening coordination and cooperation between Huquqs and relevant stakeholders on district level, such as GFPs and the police. Badakhshan's Department of Justice implemented the activity to improve citizens' access to justice. The Afghan-German Cooperation supported the event.

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