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Is help really helping?

A case study on the Gender-Equality in Afghanistan during
the years of increased Humanitarian Aid

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Abstract

The need to save the women of Afghanistan has for years been the focus of multiple international organisations, and through humanitarian aid the world has attempted to achieve this goal. This paper aims to gain an understanding of what it actually has been like to live, as a woman, in Afghanistan during the years of increased humanitarian aid, after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. To achieve this, the paper is based on the feminist institutionalist theory combined with previous research. This paper will focus on gaining an understanding of the informal institutions surrounding gender, and also look at empirical data to assess the practical implementation of gender-equality on the ground. To understand if or how the gender-equality has changed in Afghanistan this paper uses both quantitative and qualitative data. The conclusion will show that, even though there is a difficulty in obtaining data from Afghanistan, there has been a positive development for gender-equality on the ground and that there, however, has been little to no change towards gender-equality within gender norms and informal rules.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Women, men, girls and boys are all affected differently by disasters (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency [SIDA], 2015). This is something that almost all big international aid organisations agree on and take account of today. However, differences in how women, men, girls and boys are affected by humanitarian aid is not as researched nor as agreed upon. On the 23-24th May 2016 the United Nations (UN) World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) was held and it marked a new prominence of gender in humanitarian aid (Agenda for Humanity, 2016). Prior to the summit the focus within the humanitarian sphere had been on the enabling of women's economic empowerment and on women as productive resources in aid implementation. After the summit, however, gender has become greatly discussed in the sphere of humanitarianism (Gordon et al, 2017:1-2). A gender perspective has been introduced to greater portion by international aid organisations. However, the actual result is not as greatly discussed.

One case that has created both big headlines in media and has been the subject of much attention at international summits is the rights of women in Afghanistan. During the Taliban years, women had essentially no rights. In 2001, the Taliban regime fell which opened up access for international aid. Since 2001, the world has embarked on the mission to "save" the Afghan women (Amnesty, 2014). When George W. Bush, the President of the United States of America at the time, in 2001 ordered the military intervention in Afghanistan, he stated that his intention was to free the oppressed Afghan women (Keneally, 2017). At the start of a large number of different types of interventions in Afghanistan the aim has been to free and empower the Afghan women. The interventions have led to formal changes, where the education law (Afghanistan Education law, 2008: 1-2,7) now includes women, and the Afghan government sign the Law of elimination of violence against women in 2009 (Afghanistan Law on Elimination of Violence against Women [EVAW], 2009). The changes made in the formal institutions are well known and talked about. Nonetheless, today there are still reports suggesting that Afghanistan is the worst country in the world in which to be a woman (Masood Sadat, 2017). This raises the question whether these changes within

formal institutions have, in fact, had the positive impact on women's wellbeing in Afghanistan that humanitarian aid organisations have thought. The informal institutions (norms and informal rules) are almost non existing when looking at previous research on Afghanistan. Seeing as the formal institutions have become more gender-equal since the fall 2001 they are off less interest to explore then the informal institutions. The country is still very closed off which creates difficulties with obtaining data on the empirical situation of the Afghan women other than women's inclusion in formal institutions (laws and policies). Hence this has led to more research being done on the formal institutions of Afghanistan rather than the informal institutions, meaning that we do not know if or how the norms and informal rules in Afghanistan have changed.

1.2 Purpose

Every year billions of dollars go to humanitarian assistance all over the world and this aid depends heavily on political decisions. This politicisation is to great extent criticised and considered not to have a place in humanitarian work. However, one part of the politicisation of humanitarian aid that is talked about in a positive way is gender-focused aid. Much research has been done on the effects of women's inclusion in development and aid distribution. In 2010 the UN General Assembly created "UN women", a branch within the United Nations with a sole focus on gender-equality and women's rights (UN women). With this change in priority, and this milestone towards a gender-equal world, more money has been put towards gender-focused humanitarian aid. Research shows that inclusion of women in implementation is creating better outcomes when evaluating the development goals (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017). This means that the effect of gender-focused humanitarian aid is measured in terms of the success of the implementation of the aid without regard to the impact it is having on gender equality. It can be suggested then that this leads to women becoming resources rather than empowered (Gordon et al, 2017:9).

An aspect which was made visible through writing this paper is that there is little to no research on development of informal institutions (norms and informal rules). The impact and effects of humanitarian aid is almost exclusively measured through formal institutions (laws and policies) and in numbers and regulations, not in social change, attitude or norms.

Moreover, this paper is contributing with a visualisation of what it is like to be a woman in Afghanistan today. This is done by taking a step away from the formal institutions and focusing on the informal institutions through examining the potential development on the ground in a country that has received humanitarian aid and gender-focused aid for several years.

The purpose of this paper is to descriptively look at the changes within gender-equality on the ground and within informal institutions in Afghanistan. This paper specifically looks at the years after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 which opened up the country to foreign help. Afghanistan received a lot of humanitarian aid during these years, and a lot of the aid has also been earmarked to help Afghan women. This paper subsequently, sets out to create an overview of how, and if, the situation for women in Afghanistan has changed during these years through examining informal institutions and empirical development. The purpose is to examine the living situation of women in Afghanistan and to see what has happened during these years with humanitarian aid.

1.3 Question

If and how has the situation for women changed on the ground and within informal institutions in Afghanistan since the country began receiving humanitarian aid after 2001?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 New Institutionalism and Feminist Institutionalism

New Institutionalism (NI) is a strain of political science, developed to deepen the understanding of institutions, how they work and how they are constructed (Bardach et al. 2011:159). However, scholars within NI do not all agree on the origin of the connections and constructions of institutions, which has resulted in the emerge of three strains; historical, rational choice and sociological institutionalism. The three strains are developed to be suitable for different political studies (Hall & Taylor, 1996:5).

Institutions are defined by NI as a “collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and

expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances” (Tilly et al. 2011). The key to institutionalism is that through the understanding of institutions, we can assume outcomes and detect patterns. Institutions are also the norms that bind people together, and are thereby a way of identifying and understanding what affects the system (Bardach et al. 2011:160).

With origins in NI and Feminist Political Science (FPS), a new strain of political science called Feminist Institutionalism (FI) has emerged. FI is an analytical tool used for understanding the dynamics of political stability and change which focuses on three main concepts; gender, power and institutions. There have been institutional changes all over the world, meaning that the demand for gender equality has become more apparent than before. In particular, this regards countries going through state building where formal institutions are rebuilt, as well as states going through both peaceful and violent transitions. A demand for a focus on gender, power and institutions that FI supplies has been created, seeing as FI contributes with a focal point on institutional processes tendencies to reproduce gender inequalities. Understanding the meaning behind how power relations are reproduced through institutions is the key to combating gender inequality. This makes it impossible to create a good overview of gender equality without looking at the power dynamics of institutions and states (Mackay & Krook, 2011:1-3). To then claim that an institution is gendered means that rather than existing in society the feminine and masculine constructions are imbedded in the institution itself (Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010:580).

Moreover, within all NI strains as well as in FI, scholars make a division between formal and informal institutions. The division that is made by FI is that these institutions are also gendered. Informal institutions are more complex than the formal, as they can be norms or informal rules, versus the formal institutions which are laws and policies. Informal institutions, such as cultural rules and norms, have informal repercussions that are not sanctioned through law but through society (Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010:576-581). The institutions can thereby be seen as gendered, on the account that there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to behave and differences in the application of rules and that both of these are gender dependant.

In addition, not following informal and/or formal institutions, results in sanctions that are also gender specific and thereby the authority of these rules whether enforced through laws or society is established. The informal institutions influence the makings of formal institutions and together they form the structures of public as well as

private life. If policymaking institutions are, in terms of norms and informal rules, in themselves gendered, this will colour the policies that they generate. This then creates a cycle that reproduces gender norms in formal institutions, and through that it also contributes to the upholding of the status quo (Mackay et al. 2010:582).

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Gender

When applying a feminist institutionalist perspective there are a few key concepts that need to be defined. This paper will be using Jowan W Scott's (1986:1067) renowned definition of the concept 'Gender'; "Gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power". Gender is a way of looking beyond the sexes and seeing the social constructions that are connected to the different sexes. Creating more than just women and men as biologically different, but rather as socially constructed norms creating 'woman' and 'man'.

2.2.2 Power

When talking about 'Gender' the concept of 'Power' is unavoidable. Hawkesworth (2005:146) defines gender-power as "a set of asymmetrical relations between men and women that permeates international regimes, state systems, financial and economic processes, development policies, institutional structures, symbol systems, and personal relations". Power is something that is generated differently through society depending on gender. When we speak of power and gender it is with a focus of women's lack of power based on their gender and the hindrance that comes with the societal norms intertwined with 'woman' (Hawkesworth, 2005:146).

2.2.3 Empowerment

'Empowerment' is achieved when the disempowered gain power, and when we look at a patriarchal society women have less power than men. In most cases, disempowerment and poverty, go hand in hand, meaning that people living in poverty are disempowered because

they lack the ability to make choices. The same can be said about the relationship between women and disempowerment. Whereas empowerment is defined by Kabeer (2005) as a process where some sort of change must be made. A change rendering people who before having been denied the ability to choose now acquire such an ability. Being empowered is, therefore, a person who was disempowered, restricted in their choices, being provided with the means and rights to choose for themselves (Kabeer, 2005). Gender-equality is reached when women have been empowered to the same degree as men. By looking at Hawkesworth's definition of power we can identify in which areas women lack the ability to choose, to the same degree as men (2005:146).

2.2.4 Gender inequality

The definition for gender inequality by the European Institute for Gender Equality (2018) is as follows; "Legal, social and cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to/or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles". Gender inequality differs between countries, however, gendered differences exist all over the world when measuring the material well-being of women and men. Today, the former narrow focus of inequality has broadened from economic and income equality to the inclusion of empowerment. To achieve gender equality there are three main focal points. The first is being included into the economic market, the second is allowing people to provide for themselves and the third is having the ability to choose freely in your own life. These focal-points are capable of affecting each other and can create a domino effect. For example, the ability for women to gain an education can later lead to an effect on women's ability to provide for themselves (Kabeer, 2005).

2.3 Previous research

A number of studies have shown that there are problems with the way 'gender' is treated when implemented through humanitarian aid. The first obstacle that seems to be in the way is the translation of the word. In many humanitarian aid programs gender is to be implemented by aid workers on the ground, they are supposed to apply a gender mainstreaming strategy when carrying out their jobs (Abirafeh, 2009:50). There are, however, many who do not

grasp the meaning of 'gender' seeing as the concept is fairly complicated and relatively new. This renders 'gender' to be observed as a foreign fabrication and thereby not seen as a helpful tool towards women's empowerment (Abirafeh, 2009:54; Allwood 2013:47). A key object to achieving development is the inclusion of gender in the process, the gender aspect is seen to have a worth of its own and to be a tool towards a more sustainable humanitarianism (Allwood, 2013:47). However, I regard this to be an unattainable goal if the concept is not understood throughout the whole process, thereby leaving humanitarian aid with a gap between what is set out as goals and what is achieved in the end. The problem in this matter is therefore that international aid organisations pat themselves on the back for using gender-focus in the first place, without evaluating its effectiveness.

Another problem that is shown through previous research is that women are particularly helpful to humanitarian operations when empowered as economic actors, with less weight being put on the social empowerment of women (Olivius, 2014:99). When focus is put on women, it is often done by creating a picture of a victim and as a consequence women are treated as victims first and foremost. The view of women as victims comes from disaster and crisis research, where it is shown that women are deemed more vulnerable, as a group, than men in times of crises, and that women are more likely to be victims of conflict-related sexual violence. However, this is still the view that many humanitarian organizations have regardless of the goal of the operation and the cause of intervention (Gordon et al. 2017:4).

When looking at previous research on gender and humanitarian aid there is little to be found when it comes to the outcomes. However, many studies show that the usage of 'gender' in development has, in cases, amplified existing gender segregation, and thereby achieved the opposite to what was intended (Abirafeh, 2009:50). When humanitarian aid organisations implement a gender-perspective using women as resources, it places a burden on women to support the household and facilitate humanitarian programming (Olivius, 2014:117). Women are targeted as the primary caregiver, not only in families but in whole villages. It is showed that by giving women access to healthcare, food aid, and microfinances, children and other vulnerable people also benefit from the aid (Gordon et al. 2017:4). When women are made to distribute food aid and health care aid gender is being used in a way that is supporting the standing relation of power, disconnecting 'gender' from its feminist origin. In a way, the assumption of women being the only caretakers in households is becoming a

self-fulfilling prophecy in the hands of humanitarianism. Thereby resulting in a de-politicisation of the phenomenon that is 'gender' in humanitarian aid and thereby upholding the status quo (Olivius, 2014:117).

This way of using women as resources lacks the initiative and follow through that contributes to gender-equality on a social level. However, it has been shown that women can gain power by mobilization and activism when legitimation of women's participation and leadership is established (Olivius, 2014:117). On that note, it is possible that economic empowerment can create openings for women, leading to empowerment on social levels. This could be said about humanitarian aid as a whole. The programs do have intentions of social gender equality, however, in practice they result in ramifications seeing as the culture and norms in countries are different (Gordon et al. 2017:12).

Women's social position is determined by the flexibility of the standing institutions, and how open a society is to women's growth on different arenas. It is, however, not tied to women's economic empowerment to as great an extent as it is to women's social empowerment. Hence, the necessity of shifting humanitarian aid from its long time focus on gender inequality in terms of economics to broader aspects of gender inequality. It has also been shown that the empowerment of women is determined by the way society allows women to have ownership of their own bodies (Gordon et al. 2017:9-10).

Another shown outcome is that gender, when enforced, runs the risk of becoming a way of optimizing efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid rather than a way of empowering women and promoting gender-equality. Women are often talked about as being the key to successful operations, a kind of secret weapon to a successful implementation. Women's participation has, on that note, become a way of implementing programs rather than a means for creating gender-equality. The mobilization of women can be helpful to the aid work in general but, in itself, it is not actually beneficial to the empowerment of women (Olivius, 2014:94).

Women's situations are determined by many different aspects of society, the cultural beliefs and religion to name a few. The limitations put on women affects their chances of obtaining an education and to own property, in the end rendering women dependent on others to survive. Women end up having less ability to influence, leaving women with less power. This is especially the case when it comes to developing countries. When disaster strikes, women are more vulnerable because they are not equipped with the resources to help

themselves, as was suggested by Roeder (2014:9) who showed the connection between lower education and lesser ability to protect yourself in disaster situations.

2.4 Theoretical argument

International aid organisations have for a long time had a focus on women in development, however, they have recently expanded the focal point to gender. The switch from ‘women’ to ‘gender’ has meant that humanitarian organisations, as well as donors, have a different outlook on the results (Olivius, 2014:117; Gordon et al. 2017:115). Women are now expected to become empowered and gender-equality is the new goal for international interventions (Allwood, 2013:47). With this said, as humanitarian aid organizations apply this new way of implementing aid it is not always done seamlessly. Gender is being included in the formal policies given out by the UN and big international aid organisations, as it is to be applied in fieldwork.

Nonetheless, former research shows that there is a gap between the changes that are accomplished on gender-equality when looking at laws and policies compared to when looking at the norms and cultural behaviours (Olivius, 2014:117). These aspects are what FI would categorise as formal and informal institutions in society (Mackay & Krook, 2011:1-3). Thereby, when an FI perspective is applied to humanitarian aid, existing gender-focused policies and laws are the formal institutions of interest. When it comes to informal institutions the gender norms and gender specific cultural restrains are the object of analysis (Mackay & Krook, 2011:2). Because formal and informal institutions are combined, by implementing a new law or policy the hope is that this will render change in norms as well.

A gender focus on empowering women on an economic level is implemented by many, giving women the ability to choose to work and thereby the ability to provide for themselves (Olivius, 2014:94). This is a formal policy that is aspiring to have informal effects on women’s status as ‘dependent’. There is a gap in research on the result of this type of gender focused policy implementation. It appears gender-equality is not intertwined in norms or being implemented in such a way that it makes changes in the everyday life. The intention of big humanitarian organisations are today to empower women, however, the intentions might fall short when gender is implemented in formal institutions and gender-equality is expected to directly translate from policies to norms.

3. Research Design

3.1 Choice of Case

Firstly, Afghanistan is chosen based on its history of violence against women and on the account that it is number one on the top ten list of recipients of aid targeting gender equality in the world (OECD, 2018). After the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 the country opened up for international aid organisations. The Taliban ruled from 1996-2001 with an iron fist, human rights and women's rights were extremely violated. The punishments for disobedience during these years were brutal and incorporated in laws and everyday life. Women were, during this time, deprived of their right to an education, to show their skin, to walk outside without a man, to be involved in politics and to work. Women ended up being deprived of healthcare on the accounts that they were not allowed to receive healthcare from a man, and seeing as women were not allowed to work, healthcare became unobtainable for women (Amnesty, 2014). This era did not just briefly change the laws of Afghanistan but the whole society's outlook on women was changed. This was also the reason why so many international aid organisations put focus on women's rights when intervening in Afghanistan.

Secondly, Afghanistan is chosen based on the positive development which has occurred within formal institutions towards gender-equal laws and policies, after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The Afghanistan's Ministry of Education established a new education law in 2008. In article three of the law it is stated that all Afghans have equal rights to education, and in article four the law says that the first nine years of education is both free and compulsory (Afghanistan Education law, 2008: 1-2,7). The constitution of Afghanistan states that women should hold 27% of the seats in parliament and there is a Ministry for Women's Affairs. Afghanistan also resigned the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003 (Wimpelmann, 2012). In the Afghan labour law from 2007 there are distinctions made to fit a mother's duties in a home with a part time job. Women are allowed to work and are also entitled to compensation and assistants during pregnancy and after the child is born (Afghanistan Labour Law, 2007). Hence, making it clear that this case is of interest when studying the potential impact on informal institutions a decade of aid can have.

3.2 Choice of Method

In order to create a clear picture of the increase in, or lack thereof, gender-equality in Afghanistan this paper has used both a qualitative and a quantitative method. When it comes to the informal institutions there is a lack of quantitative data to be found and this paper therefore uses a qualitative method to analyse the first part of the results. However, For the second part of the analysis, the empirical development, this paper uses a quantitative method. When analysing the empirical development quantitative data has been used in order to visualise the increase of e.g. girls who are attending school as a complement to the informal institution surrounding girls' education.

3.2.1 Quantitative Method

A quantitative method has been used to analyse the impact that has been made on gender equality on the ground in Afghanistan. Looking at the years after the fall of the Taliban regime, the same years that humanitarian aid with a gender focus grew. The indicators used are; "Expected years of schooling, female", "Maternal mortality rate, (deaths per 100 000 live births)", "Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)" and "Labour force participation rate (% women ages 15 and older)". These indicators are further described under headline 'Operationalisation'. This data is then used to identify if there has been an increase in gender-equality on the ground. This has also been analysed with simple scatter plots showing if there is a trend and whether that trend is positive or negative. The data that is used is from Humanitarian Development Reports dataset. The data is collected from the years between the fall of the Taliban regime and today and is then analysed.

3.2.2 Qualitative Method

This paper uses a qualitative text analysis method to identify and analyse the texts that are relevant to the question. In these texts, the way the indicators are described over time are used to gain an understanding of the outcome. The indicators for informal institutions are firstly "Girls' education", secondly "Violence against women" and thirdly "Child marriage", they are later in the paper described in more detail under headline 'Operationalisation'. This case study aims to descriptively show how gender-equality has changed within informal

institutions in Afghanistan. This method is used to identify the informal institutions in Afghanistan and what they mean for gender-equality. When using this method the focus is not on analysing whole studies, but rather on the parts that are relevant in accordance with the theory are looked at and analysed. Seeing as this paper has a question with a descriptive ambition it correlates well with text analysis. With this method, the analysis is not narrowed down to one type of material. This paper therefore analyses both academic and journalistic articles as well as some laws and policies. Since this method is open to bias by the scholar, effort has been made to be impartial so as to make the results and conclusion replicable (Esaiasson et al. 2017:211-216).

3.3 Operationalisation

In this part of the paper the concepts are defined and from here on out the indicators described here will be equivalent to the concepts. First the informal institutions will be operationalised into indicators that can be measured and secondly the empirical concepts will be operationalized into indicators that can be measured.

3.3.2 Informal Institutions

In societies there are a lot of informal rules and norms, and a lot of these institutions are gender specific, meaning that they apply only to one sex or create gender structures in society. The culture and religion in a country make it so that all countries have different informal institutions and structures. If by disobeying the norms and rules one risks informal sanctions, it is an informal institution. In the case of Afghanistan this paper will focus on three specific gendered informal institutions: Attitude towards girls' education, Attitude towards violence against women and Attitude towards child marriage.

By looking at the 'Attitude towards' the goal is to identify the gender norms and informal rules surrounding the formal institutions, namely the informal institutions. Attitude is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as "A feeling or opinion about something or someone" (Cambridge Dictionary "Attitude"), this is the definition that is used in this paper.

Concept		Indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Girls' education ● Violence against women ● Child marriage 	←→	Norms, informal rules, structures and informal sanctions surrounding the concepts

When it comes to the attitude towards girls' gaining an education this paper looks at the potential sanctions that a girl can face if she attends school, but also the institutions surrounding girls' education which might hinder girls from gaining access to education. This is used to identify the norms and structures surrounding education laws. Attitude towards domestic violence is used as a way of identifying the way Afghan people see women, and what the sanctions are if a woman is not complying with these norms. Then to look at the norms and rules surrounding a girls' right to be a child, the attitude towards child marriage is analysed by looking at the norms and sanctions surrounding marriage in Afghanistan.

3.3.3 Empirical findings

In order to gain an understanding of what it is like to live in Afghanistan as a woman/girl this paper also incorporates an empirical perspective. By looking at the way that women's and girls' situation on the ground has developed during the years of analysis. This paper uses the concepts; "women's education", "healthcare for women", "women's political participation" and "women in the labour force" to gain an understanding of how the involvement of women and situation for women has developed after 2001 in Afghanistan. This is used to complement to the prevailing informal institutions in Afghanistan to gain a more well rounded image of women's situation in Afghanistan.

Concept		Indicator
"Women's education"	→	"Expected years of schooling, female"
"Healthcare for women"	→	"Maternal mortality rate, (deaths per 100 000 live births)"

“Women’s political participation”	→	“Share of seats in parliament (% held by women)”
“Women in the labour force”	→	“Labour force participation rate (% women ages 15 and older)”

When looking at women’s education the validity of expected years in school as an indicator is strong. This is because the amount of years a person spends in school is a measurement of the level of education one has. However, Afghanistan is a special case where women for decades have been deprived the right of an education. No women were allowed an education during the Taliban era, meaning that the expected years of schooling for women at this time was 0 years. Thus, making years of schooling a good way of measuring how women’s education has developed over time in the case of Afghanistan.

Women in Afghanistan where also deprived of their right to healthcare during the Taliban years. Resulting in home births and a higher risk of maternal mortality. The correlation between healthcare and maternal mortality is not perfect, however there is limited data in this area. A high maternal mortality rate is partly a consequence of poor healthcare for women, meaning that the validation is in this case relatively good.

The correlation between women's political participation and women’s seats in parliament is to be questioned. There is a gap between the aim of the investigation and what is actually being looked at. Nonetheless, one could argue that the country of Afghanistan is a unique case where women had no participation at all and that a formal and empirical way of looking at the development of women's participation in politics is through shared seats in parliament. On the other hand an important aspect is the lack of data. There is a gaps in information collected from Afghanistan a specially when it comes to gender specific data.

The validity between the percentage of women participating on the labour market and women working is strong. However, there are a lot of people in Afghanistan who work but are not registered as working and hence are not measured in this method. For example, they could be making blankets, selling other things in the streets or other work that in fact contributes to the family's financial situation. There is, however, hardly any data on this unofficial labour market. Despite this inaccuracy, this is an operationalisation with a relative validity and it is measurable.

3.4 Material

This paper will now proceed to present the material which is used in the analysis. It is hard to obtain data from Afghanistan seeing as it is a country still not in peace, and even when data is obtained it should be recognised that this is a small sample of the total.

3.4.1 Quantitative Material

Humanitarian Development Reports

United nations development programs humanitarian development reports data is used in the quantitative part of the analysis, for education, healthcare, political participation and labour market participation (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017). The humanitarian development is about creating opportunities for people. The first report was made in 1990 and was an introduction to a new way of measuring human well-being. Their goal is to measure the development and provide people with choices.

3.4.2 Qualitative Material

Human Rights Watch

Human rights watch is a non-profit non-governmental organization (NGO) working for human rights in the world. A study carried out by this organization focusing on girls access to education has been used as a way of analysing informal institutions in this paper (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2017). This study by the human rights watch is primarily based on research conducted in Afghanistan 2016. This organization has the goal of shedding light on human rights violations. Seeing as they are non profit there is no reason to believe that they have made the situation sound better than it is.

Medica Mondiale

Medica Mondiale is an NGO based in Germany. The organization's purpose is to help women and girls that live in countries where there is war or some sort of crisis. The aim of this organization is to help women who have experienced gender-based violence of any kind. In this paper, a study carried out in 2004 titled “study on child marriage in Afghanistan” has been used (Bahgam, 2004). This is a paper where statistics from different humanitarian aid organisations have been put together to form all the statistics existing on child marriage in

Afghnaistan, and a contribution of reviews of existing files from hospitals and schools in Kabul.

The Asia Foundation

The article from The Asia Foundation which is used in this paper is published on their website however it is stated that the views and opinions are solely the authors (Masood Sadat, 2017). Because of this, the statistics that are stated to be the Asia Foundation's is what this paper uses, not the opinions and conclusions drawn from the survey. The Asia foundation is a non-profit international development organization that conducts research in 18 Asian countries.

UN Women

This paper uses one article and one general page from the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN women's main page is used to gain an understanding of the light that international organizations have begun to shine on gender. The article published by UN women (2013) is used to gain an understanding of the informal institutions surrounding girls education. Seeing as the UN is considered to be an impartial source with a mission to help this paper has treated it as such.

4. Analysis

In this part of the paper the main findings will be presented and analysed. First the international aid will be introduced followed by an analysis of the informal institutions and lastly an analysis of the empirical development.

4.1 Type of international aid

Afghanistan has received international aid in different ways and for different purposes before and after the Taliban years. Women's situation in Afghanistan, however, has become of major focus after the Taliban era (Abirafeh, 2009). Afghanistan is one of the top ten biggest recipients of humanitarian aid in the world and during the last ten years 5.5 billion dollars have been invested in Afghanistan for development and crisis management (Aid & international development forum, 2015).

Already in 2002 the ‘Afghan freedom support act’ put forth by the US government focused on the empowerment of women (U.S Government, 2002). Four years later a bill was put forth entitled, ‘To promote the empowerment of women in Afghanistan’ (U.S Government, 2006). This entire act was devoted to women’s status and situation and shifting even more focus on to gender and women, becoming a lift-off for gender-focused international aid in Afghanistan (Abirafeh, 2009). Seeing as almost 90% of women in Afghanistan have reportedly experienced some sort of domestic violence in their lives, almost all humanitarian aid organisations have applied ‘gender’ in some way to their work (World Health Organization, 2015:1). The type of international aid received by Afghanistan after the Taliban's fall has almost always had a gender aspect to it.

4.2 Informal Institutions

When Afghanistan began opening up for aid organisations in 2002 only 5% of women were literate, and over 50% of women were married before their 18th birthday. At this time 15 000 women were dying in childbirth each year (Khan, 2012). Afghanistan is still ranked as one of the worst countries in which to be a woman, based on gender based violence and norms rendering women weak (Masood Sadat, 2017).

These three informal areas are chosen based on previous resurgence on the field of humanitarian aid, and the Afghan women’s history. Roeder suggesting in his article that humanitarian aid in actuality might be hindering women from being seen as more than just a wife on a social level, and thereby not creating a change towards gender-equality within norms (Roeder, 2014). On that note, this paper will now analyse the potential changes within informal institutions that have occurred after 2001.

4.2.1 Attitude towards girls attending school

In 2013 ‘UN women’ wrote that attacks on girls’ schools in Afghanistan were still being carried out by insurgents. This comes from the fact that many people in Afghanistan are still opposed to the education of women. Claiming that it is not the Afghan way meaning that it is not socially accepted by all Afghan people to educate girls. Only 12% of women were literate in 2013, and an Afghan woman who is capable of supporting herself and her family is still described as a dream (UN Women, 2013). In 2017, 85% of the children who were still not

attending schools were girls. There are also less schools for girls than for boys, and even when a school is available, the problem of distance and lack of transport becomes an issue especially for girls.

The norm in Afghan households is to prioritise the education of their sons and not their daughters. This is due to the fact that boys are expected to provide for their future wife and girls are expected to be provided for by their future husband. Daughters are often put to work at an early age to help the family instead of going to school and gaining an education. Families prioritise an extra income instead of an education due to the norm which expects a wife to be a homemaker and the husband to be the breadwinner. The informal rule in Afghanistan thereby says that education is not a priority when it comes to girls. The standing norm of child marriage is also a factor which brings down the attendance of girls in schools. Girls who are married before the age of 18, which is the case for a third of all women in Afghanistan, often disrupts their education after becoming a wife (UN Women, 2013). This phenomenon will be further explored under heading '4.2.3 Attitude towards child marriage'.

The poverty rate is high in Afghanistan which is another reason that renders families to choose an extra income instead of sending their daughters to school. This is the case even though education in Afghanistan is free, however, in practice there are costs for school supplies as pens and paper that many families can not afford. This also being a prioritisation based on a strong gender norm suggesting that women will be provided for by their future husbands (UN Women, 2013). The education of girls is also seen as undesirable in some parts of Afghanistan because of religious stands and education is at best acceptable for girls a few years before puberty. This is also connected to the fact that girls who are still in school after their first menstruation have an extra hard time seeing as many schools lack toilets and clean water. Most schools in Afghanistan are outside in tents and if the schools have buildings they are reserved for boys. If they do have toilets they are often communal and located far from the girls' part of school. Rendering families to regard schools as unsafe for girls who have reached puberty, combined with the norm saying that a girl should be ashamed and stay at home during her time of menstruation (HRW, 2017:5-22).

Because of this outlook on girls' education there are other risks for families with sending daughters to school. As a result of decades of conflict there are many extremists and violent groups who target girls' schools due to the deemed connection between women's education and western politicisation of Afghanistan. Another obstacle standing in the way of

girls' education is the lack of teachers who are women. There are still a lot of families that do not want their daughters to be taught by male teachers leaving girls without education (HRW, 2017:5-22).

4.2.2 Attitude towards domestic violence

The situation for Afghan women after the fall of the Taliban was still bad. A study drawing on data from 2003, 2004 and 2005 showed that 82% of reported violent acts against women were committed by family members (UNIFEM Afghanistan & Julie Lafreniere, 2005:6). Many years later in 2012 it was reported that approximately 87% of all Afghan women have experienced some sort of gender based violence, not displaying evidence of any change in the informal institution (Khan, 2012:2). It was also shown that most commonly there was only one perpetrator and that women were expected to obey their family, especially their husbands. Violence against women can take several different forms, nonetheless, in many cases be as serious as ending in severe physical and mental injuries. Women lack knowledge and support to get themselves out of abusive situations, and the culture of Afghanistan renders women more vulnerable without a husband, leaving women without a choice. Divorce, rape and domestic abuse are all blamed on the women, and all result in the woman bringing shame over her family. The standing norm is thereby that women are owned by their families and risk severe informal sanctions if they disobey. Women's abuse in some cases end in suicide or self-immolation, seeing as women are dependent on a husband or their family to survive (UNIFEM Afghanistan & Julie Lafreniere, 2005:6).

These cultural practices prevent women from reporting violence, due to women's lack of awareness about their rights, and that when they do seek help they often are scrutinised. There is also a clear difference between the formal rights written in laws and the informal wrights enforced through norms (Amnesty, 2014). It has also been found that women are more likely, than men, to report that violence against women is justified when it comes to husbands beating their wives, parents beating their daughters or teachers hitting students. Showing how deeply rooted the historical gender norms are in Afghanistan. The same study showed that 75% of mothers found wife beating to be acceptable, and that 66% of adolescent girls agreed. This could be a sign of a cultural change, however, these numbers are extremely high even if younger girls in Afghanistan seem to be less allowing of domestic violence (Khan, 2012).

4.2.3 Attitude towards child marriage

As a child bride a continued education is almost impossible. The wife is often denied her right to schooling by the husband or her inlaws. If she is, however, permitted by her new family to continue her education the schools in themselves tend to deny married girls access to an education. This is due to the norm in Afghan society that does not allow married girls to attend school with unmarried girls. A joint school is thought to have a negative impact on unmarried girls and the girls are therefore separated (Bahgam, 2004:15).

The percentage of women between the ages 20-25 who were first married or in union before 18 years of age in Afghanistan 2018 was 36%. A third of women in Afghanistan were married before the age of 18, and in 2017 9% of women in Afghanistan were married before the age of 15. Showing that the norm in Afghanistan is clearly accepting towards marriage before the age of 18. Child marriage is especially common in the remote areas of the country, this being linked with Afghanistan consisting of tribes and villages where there are very different living situations and poverty rates. This also creates different norms and informal rules dependent on area. The fact that families marry off their daughters as children hinders girls' education in a way that boys do not have to worry about. The upholding of extreme views on girls' education, once written in law under the Taliban ruling, creates a standing threat to girls. This threat is, more or less, apparent depending on the region in Afghanistan one looks at (Khan, 2012).

A survey asking Afghan people what they considered to be the best age of marriage for women and men respectively, was carried out by The Asia Foundation in 2014. This survey shows a visible trend where women tend to answer a higher age of marriage than men for women's marriage, and that the Afghans who have never gone to school tend to answer a lower age of marriage in comparison to the ones who have gone to school. Hence giving even more evidence of the norm saying that women should get married at a young age (Masood Sadat, 2017). In Afghanistan there is a law saying that it is illegal to get married under the age of 16, with an exception for 15 year olds with permission from their father or a judge (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2017). This survey, however, showed that 4,6 % of respondents thought the best age for a woman to get married is under 16, an age that is formally illegal in Afghanistan (Masood Sadat, 2017).

Child marriage is in violation of human rights and has declined in Afghanistan over the last decade, however this decline has been very low and slow. There are negative impacts on girls who are married off as children that the Afghan people lack knowledge about, as a result of low levels of education. As a child bride one is not only deprived of a human right but is at higher risk of being a victim of domestic violence, she has a lower chance of gaining an education and she is at higher risk of mental illness resulting in suicide (HRW, 2017).

4.3 Empirical findings

In order to gain an understanding of the development on the ground in Afghanistan, data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'Humanitarian Development Reports' is used. Seeing as this paper is focusing on the years after the fall of the Taliban, the years where humanitarian aid and gender focus was introduced to the country. The data is collected from 2005 and forward, which is the first year after 2001 where data exists.

4.3.1 Expected years of schooling, female

In Figure 1 there is a clear trend saying that education for women has increased over the last two decades. In 2005, the expected years of schooling for a woman in Afghanistan was 4.9 years. In 2010 that number almost doubled, however the increase of years of schooling has not been so drastic during the 7 years after that. Every year from 2011-2017 there has been an increase of 0.1 years which, although slight, maintains the positive trend as shown in Figure 1 (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017).

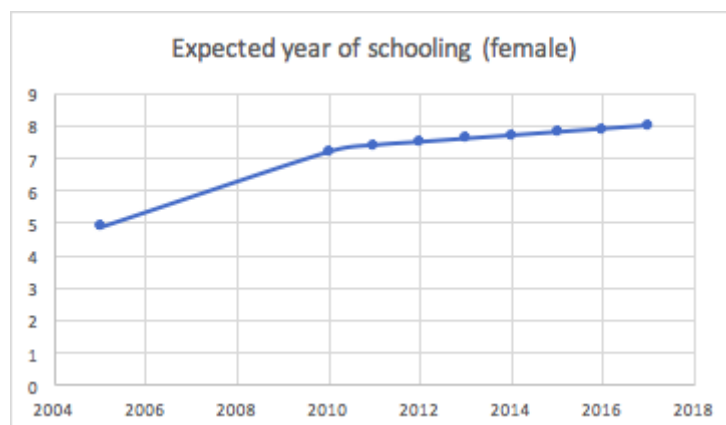


Figure 1. Simple scatterplot showing the increase in girls education

4.3.2 Maternal mortality rate

When it comes to maternal mortality rate a lower number mean less women die in childbirth and is thereby a signifier of a positive development. In 2005, 821 women out of 100 000, died during childbirth in Afghanistan, the same year the world average was 288 out of 100 000. Just as it did with education this number got better between the year 2005-2010. In 2010 the maternal mortality rate was down to 584 deaths, and in the five years to come the number decreased to 396 deaths. The world average was 216 maternal mortalities in 2015, which puts Afghanistan just slightly higher after this decrease of more than 50%. In the graph this is visualised and follows a negative trend seeing as the death rate goes down (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017).

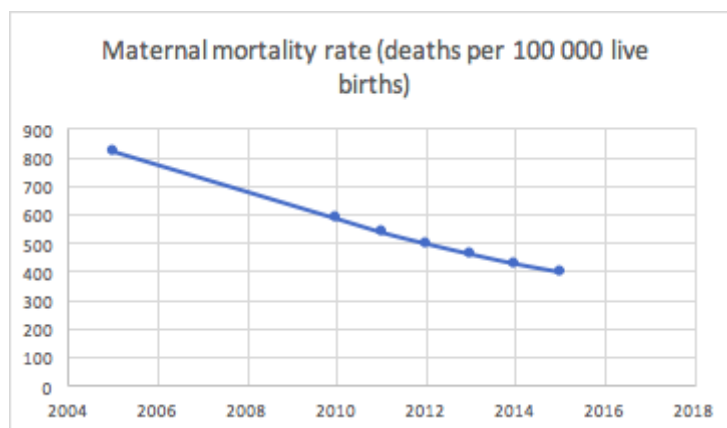


Figure 2. Simple scatterplot showing the decrease in maternal mortality

4.3.3 Share of seats in parliament

Looking at Humanitarian Development Reports dataset women's seats in parliament has increased but fallen again. There is, however, an increase between the year 2005 (25,9) and 2017 (27,4). Looking at the figures, it should be remembered that the percentage of seats in parliament held by women is not something that can increase every year due to elections not being held every year. With this said, Figure 3 shows that there has been a positive development from 2005 to 2017 (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017).

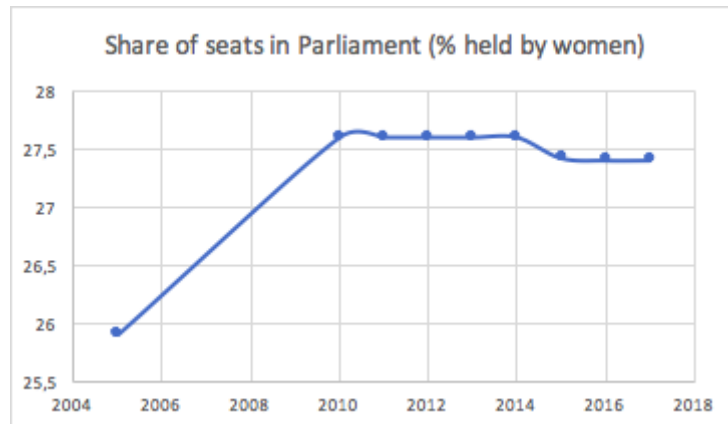


Figure 3. Simple scatterplot showing the increase in political influence

4.3.4 Labour force participation rate, women

The percentage of women over the age of 15 in Afghanistan who were working fell from 16,1% in 2005 to 14,7% in 2010 as shown in Figure 4. With that said there has been an increase every year after 2010 and in 2017 19,5% of women in Afghanistan were participating in the labour force. The trend is therefore possibly negative between 2005-2010, however, here is a lack of data in the interval from 2005 to 2010 hence the dip could be isolated to 2010. After 2010 there is a positive trend where there are more women every year who participate on the labour market. In Figure 4 it is visualized that there has been a positive regression from 2005 to 2017. Even though there was a dip there are more women on the labour market today than in 2005 (Humanitarian Development Report, 1990-2017).

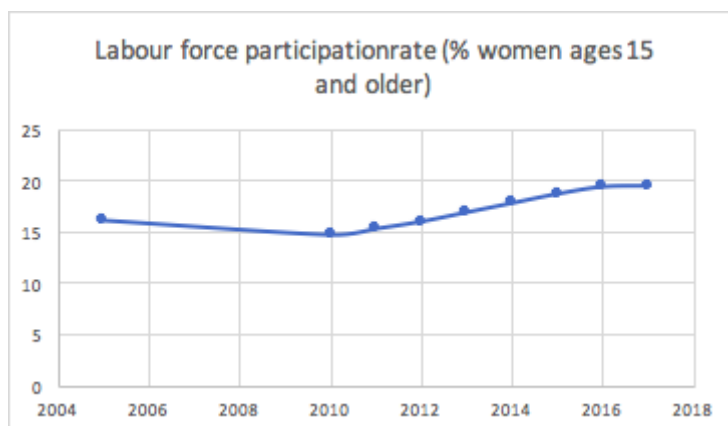


Figure 4. Simple scatterplot showing the increase in labour force participation

5. Conclusion

Education for women and men is equal according to the law, women are allowed to work, women have the right to vote and healthcare has a deeply rooted gender focus in Afghanistan. However, women are seen as properties to their family. Whether this is her parents or her husband she is not treated as an individual. This is why child marriages are still so common in Afghanistan. The aspiration of a girl should be to become a wife, and she thereby does not need an education. It is also shown here that a lack of education is what lies behind women advocating for domestic violence, saying that a husband should be allowed to hit his wife. Today a third of all women in Afghanistan are married off as children, putting an early end to their education, even though marriage under the age of 16 is illegal it clearly still occurs.

Afghanistan has signed multiple policies and have laws against domestic violence, and it is still something that almost all Afghan women live with. Healthcare is available for all, however there is a stigma around a woman being beaten, saying it is the woman's fault, still leaving a gap in healthcare for women. Education is equal in the law however there are a lot more schools for boys seeing as the society says that women do not need an education. All of these aspects put a stop to the efficiency of newly developed formal institutions that do incorporate gender-equality, rendering men to still hold the power in almost all aspects of a woman's life.

During these years of gender focus humanitarian aid in Afghanistan the Afghan women have, nonetheless, started to develop a greater awareness. Potentially it can be seen that young girls do not agree with domestic violence to the same degree as older women, and women tend to think that the optimal age for marriage is higher than what men think. There seems to be a change in attitude among young girls that could be on its way towards changing the norms in Afghanistan. However, this is only a speculation of the future and is not visible yet.

The informal institutions in Afghanistan are still unequal between the genders. The norms that were created during the taliban regime, saying that women should not work or gain an education, still exists but are not as widely spread. There also seems to be a great difference in gender norms and informal rules dependent on the part of Afghanistan one looks at. One norm that carries with it severe social sanctions is the norm insinuating that women

are supposed to obey her husband and her family. This norm renders an acceptance towards gender based violence from women as well as men. Seeing as there are still groups of fundamentalists spreading their views on girls education in order to preserve the norm created during the Taliban regime many women still lack knowledge about their formal rights. On that note, women as well as men conform to the informal institutions to greater extent than the laws and policies. For example it is clear when looking at the norm surrounding child marriage that the law is not as strong as the norm.

However the results show that there have been positive developments on the ground. The empirical findings show that women and girls are taking up more space in the labour force and within the political sphere. There is also a trend pointing towards an increase in girls attending school which on the long term can lead to a change in norms, seeing as women's education leads to women being aware of their rights. One conclusion is therefore that the informal institutions in Afghanistan are not gender-equal and have, in some parts of the country, not been changed at all since 2001. However, the empirical data shows that there has been a positive change on the ground towards gender-equality during the years of humanitarian aid.

The question then is, how should humanitarian aid tackle changing attitudes in informal institutions seeing as the current way is not reaching the results that are needed. When international help only focuses on the formal institutions a country can manipulate their progress in order to receive more aid. This would be much more difficult if outcomes were to be measured in informal institutions. This is of course a speculation based on what is shown in this paper, that gender-equality within norms and informal structures seem to be untouched during the years of gender focused humanitarian aid. The untouched informal institutions point towards an incoherence within humanitarian aid which would be an interesting question to explore in future research. If this is the case it is not only expensive for donors and ineffective for recipients, it can also be harmful for the possibility of reaching gender-equality at all. When the implementation of gender neglects the locals and makes them feel forced, the concept can come to be associated with a sort of oppression, leaving it even harder for women to become empowered. One could even say that the humanitarian aid organisations are in a way "bullying" the formal institutions into following "western" norms which then makes it so that the distance between the formal and informal institutions grows, which can lead to further internal friction.

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