

# ORGANIZATION FOR POLICY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

## ‘Interact with a Policy Maker’ Sessions

Session 4: December 12, 2019, 02:30-03:30 PM

Discussion with H.E. Deputy Minister Syeda Mozghan  
Mostafavi

### Note:

This is a transcription of DROPS ‘Interact with a Policy Maker’ roundtable held on Thursday, December 12, 2019 with Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Syeda Mozghan Mostafavi.

‘Interact with a Policy Maker’ sessions are part of DROPS 7-Month Policy Study Workshop offered annually by DROPS. The workshop has been offered regularly since 2014.

Participants of this workshop are representatives of the Afghan government, local NGOs, academia, private sector, and media. In addition to the theoretical and conceptual trainings provided in these workshops on the basics of research, public policy, policy study and analysis, and decision-making models, the workshop also includes a practical element: the joint development of a Policy Brief or Policy Study by the workshop trainees on a timely policy topic that is published and widely circulated by DROPS.



## Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS)

*The Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS) has been working to strengthen democratic ideas and values by conducting research that provide policy-makers with sound solutions to national issues. Research, capacity building, and advocacy are the three pillars of DROPS activities.*

*To empower women and enable their political participation, DROPS created the ‘Women and Public Policy Journal’ (WPPJ) that enables women to use the medium of in-depth policy research to influence decision-making on national issues. WPPJ is also a unique platform for women to articulate their concerns regarding national issues, learn research skills, critical thinking and publish peer-reviewed journal papers that are disseminated to national, regional and international policymakers.*

## Opening of discussion by Wali Rasta, Head of Policy at DROPS:

Good afternoon everyone. We are extremely honored and privileged today to have with us, Deputy Minister of Culture and Information Syeda Mozghan Mostafavi, to engage with us in a very friendly and informal environment.

Syeda Mozghan Mostafavi is the Deputy Minister of Culture and Information. Previously she worked as Deputy Minister for Policy and Planning at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Prior to this she was the director of communications and information at the same Ministry. Beside working in key positions within the Afghan Government, she teaches at the faculty of Journalism at Kabul University and conducts research at the university's Center for Policy Studies. Her research on "ethics in journalism" with the Internews was published and well received by the Afghan Journalists.

As to our training session, this is the new 2019 cohort and we have 19 participants in this cohort. We will kindly ask Ms. Mostafavi a few questions to kick start our discussion and then we will open the floor for questions.

**1<sup>st</sup> Question: In your perspective as a Deputy Minister, could you please tell us about the challenges to policymaking in Afghanistan?**

### **Muzhgan Mostafavi:**

Thank you for the question. I am very pleased to be here with you all. Thank you for inviting me, and thank you all for participating in this session.

First of all, let me tell you that there are numerous of challenges in policymaking. Based on my understanding of policymaking spanning the last 10 to 15 years working in the public sector. Firstly, in the public sector there is a lack of commitment by the sectoral ministries in the implementation of policies. Secondly, most government employees have been accustomed to traditional ways of working without the use of modern technology. They rarely use modern technology for policy implementation and their mechanisms for policy development have also not evolved sufficiently enough. Policy development is more technical now then in the past and thus require civil servants to be attuned to these new developments. However, the low level of capacity in the use of modern technology in the public sector has become one of the main challenges to policymaking and policy implementation.

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Another challenge to policy implementation has been the lack of sufficient funds. The state tends to prioritizes spending in the security, health, and education sector when it comes to budget distribution. For instance in the allocation of state funds, the Ministry of Information and Culture only receives 0.9 percent from entire the government budget line.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Question: As a follow up to your earlier remarks, can you explain to us the challenges inherent in policy development and policy processes?**

**Muzhgan Mostafavi:**

Ten years ago our main challenge was that policies were being drafted by international actors, who were not very familiar with context of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the policies that will being drafted by these actors were based on frameworks that were external to the context of Afghanistan and thus not implementable. Therefore, while the development of national policies has now been transferred to locals, they are faced with the peculiar challenge of meeting the requirements of this external framework, which remains intact. Moreover, Afghans also have their own limitations as well when it comes to policy development.

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Weak infrastructure for policy implementation has often acted as a barrier for in policy development. Afghanistan needs sufficient offices and facilities to implement important policies successfully. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that the transformations that have taken place across Afghan society in the last 20 years denotes that everything Afghans do are in many ways a first time experience and thus determined to face some degree of challenges.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Question: How do you perceive the ways in which Policies are communicated with the people and other key stakeholders?**

**Muzhgan Mustafavi:**

A policy can be successful only when it is being successfully communicated with the people, media and all other relevant stakeholder. Governments alone cannot implement their policies alone. Public policies that connect to an implementing partner within civil society tends to be successful. For instance, how can the Afghan government implement its publication policy if it does not work with the media and civil society organizations, or implement its tourism policy without partnering with the 1300 tourism agencies exists in the country. In conclusion, if the public relations component of any policy is not active, that policy will be challenged in achieving its objectives as it will not be able to deliver the message of the policy across all relevant sectors and the public as whole.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Question: How do you evaluate the role of the political parties in policy development and implementation?

##### **Muzhgan Mostafavi:**

The role of the political parties in policy matters is weak in the context of Afghanistan. But there are other stakeholders who do share their perspectives and advocate to influence policies. For instance, when the Afghan government develops a particular policy, it tends to invite representatives from CSOs, private sector, media and others to discuss the policy and share their opinions and perspectives which are then incorporated into the policy before its published. It is essential to include the views of all key stakeholders during the process of policy formulation.

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#### 5<sup>th</sup> Question: How do you evaluate the role of women in policymaking and decision making processes?

##### **Muzhgan Mustafavi:**

Women remain absent or are at best symbolically present in key decision making platforms. Afghanistan faces a number of challenges in this area. First, is the social structure of the Afghan society. Second, while there have been improvements in how women are perceived within the government, the predominate perception towards women’s capacities remain largely negative. Third, women continue to face challenges in exercising their rights and freedoms. While Afghan women, similar to their male counterparts, hold the capacity, knowledge and experience to make key policy decisions, however they are not given the same opportunities or space to do so. Even in political parties in Afghanistan, women remain underrepresented or in some cases are not present at all. The existing laws in Afghanistan are adequate to help address these gaps, but there are serious challenges in the implementation of these laws which hinder them ineffective. part of the laws.

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##### **Closing remarks by Mariam Safi:**

Aziz Koshan, Senior Research Officer at DROPS thanked Deputy Minister Mozhgan Mustafavi for sharing her experiences and insights with the trainees of DROPS 2019-2020 cohort.