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**How Have Women Been Empowered by Gender-Focussed  
Development Projects in Post-Taliban Afghanistan?  
Reviewing the Literature Which Incorporates the Critical  
Consideration of Two Gender Focussed Development  
Projects.**

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## ABSTRACT

This research report examines the empowerment approach within the Gender and Development (GAD) discussion, providing an emphasis on women's empowerment as an instrument of post-conflict reconstruction in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Utilising a comprehensive literature review, the report establishes the framework of Naila Kabeer as a consistent base for the comparing and contrasting of two gender-focussed development programmes in Afghanistan. The contextual background of empowerment programmes pursued over the past decade in Afghanistan are presented with an examination of the challenges and opportunities encountered pursuing women's political, economic, social and psychological empowerment. A specific consideration of the New Zealand-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan, and the Community Development Council initiative within the Afghanistan National Solidarity Programme is undertaken. The report concludes that while there have been enormous symbolic advances for women's political empowerment in the national sphere, the more private and local the sphere examined: the less decision-making agency Afghani women are empowered to exercise. While seeking to provide opportunities for women's economic empowerment the programmes have made little practical change to women's income or financial agency. The two gender-focussed programmes examined have made significant compromises to the extremities of the local context, and are considered 'gender accommodating' rather than 'gender transformative'. The large body of literature concerning Afghanistan substantiates that the road to gender equity will stretch across the generations and is necessarily gradual to remain sustainable. As Afghanistan enters further political turmoil, the empowerment attained by Afghani women in the past decade must be expressly guarded.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
AWE	Afghanistan Women's Empowerment Grants Programme
AWEC	Afghan Women's Education Centre
AWRC	Afghan Women's Resource Centre
AWN	Afghanistan Women's Network
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program (me)
CDC	Community Development Council
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
CSIS	Centre for Strategic & International Studies (United States of America)
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DFID	Department for International Development
FET	Female Engagement Team
FP	Facilitating Partner
FRU	Family Response Unit
GAD	Gender and Development
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IDLO	the International Development Law Organisation
INZ	Immigration New Zealand
IROA	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
MDG	Millennium Development Goal



MFAA	Markets for Afghani Artisans
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
MOE	Ministry of Education (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOWA	Ministry of Women’s Affairs (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)
MP	Member of Parliament
MSH	Management Services for Health (United States of America)
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NATOCC	The NATO Council of Canada
NOREF	The Norwegian Peace-building Resource Centre
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NZ	New Zealand
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development (now the NZAP within MFAT)
NZAP	New Zealand Aid Programme (previously NZAID)
NZD	New Zealand Dollar
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service (United States of America)
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
POPIN	United Nations Population Informative Network
RQB	Refugee Quota Branch (of Immigration New Zealand)
SDC	Swiss Development Co-operation
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TTC	Bamyan Teacher Training College
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAEK	United States of America Embassy Kabul
USAID	United States Agency (for) International Development
USD	United States (Of America) Dollar
WID	Women in Development
WPS	Women, Peace and Security
WTC	World Trade Centre