

**Training and Capacity Building Program
Female Students & Researchers
March 15 -17 2015**

NARRATIVE REPORT

As an interdisciplinary research-oriented organization, DROPS' goal is to facilitate and support Afghanistan's transition to democratic governance by aiming to (1) produce policy-relevant research that provides information and makes available resources to decision-makers at the national and subnational levels, particularly the Upper and Lower Houses of the National Assembly; and (2) increase women's involvement in policy dialogue and research on a diversity of issues that are at play in building democratic governance. DROPS is working towards accomplishing the latter by holding a series of training and capacity building programs that aim to build and hone the capacity of female students, who are enrolled in a BA or MA program, in research methodology and gender-lens.

On 15 – 17 March 2015, DROPS held a 3-day training program on Research Methodology and Gender-Lens at the University of Afghanistan (UoA).

Training Program Participants



The key outcomes of the training program included:

- ✓ Developed and honed the participants understanding of research tools and methodology.
- ✓ Familiarized participants with the concept and scope of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).
- ✓ Explained, discussed and evaluated the meaning of ‘Gender-Lens’ and its importance to research, particularly in the context of Afghanistan.
- ✓ Invoked critical thinking and analysis through assigned readings and workshops.
- ✓ Provided a lesson on how to write an Op-Ed and Book Review.
- ✓ Attracted authors for DROPS Women and Public Policy Journal (WPPJ) from amongst the student participants.
- ✓ 7 participants received Training Completion Certificates.

Agenda for Training Program: Gender-Lens and Research Methodology Training

15th March 2015

4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Introduction	Objectives and Icebreakers
4:45 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Session One	What are the MDGs?
5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Session Two	Basic Vocabulary in Gender and Peace
6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Session Three	Group Work and Preparation for Assignment
Assignment: Please read the articles given and fill out the literature review sheet.		

16th March 2015

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Session Four	Group Work: Critical Analysis of Readings Assigned the Day Before
5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Session Five	15 Minutes Presentation of Research Question and Literature Review
5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Session Six	Book Review and Opinion Ed Format
Assignment: Write an Op-Ed or Book Review based on the readings given on day one.		

17th March 2015

3:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.	Session Seven	Peace and Violence
3:20 p.m. - 3:40 p.m.		State & Human Security
3:40 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.		Basic Vocabulary in Gender Lens
4:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.	Session Eight	Learning about DROPS Peer Review and Format
4:20 p.m. – 4:40 p.m.	Session Nine	Presentations
4:40 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	Closing Session	Feedback Form and Certificate Ceremony

Day 1

Introductions, Objectives and Icebreakers



DROPS training program opened with an introduction by Ms. Shreya Jani, expert trainer, on the work of the host organization in the field of research and peace building. She also highlighted the necessity for such trainings and laid down the goals of the training for the young female students who comprised of the participants for this program.

A series of icebreaker activities were conducted by Ms Jani to help participants get to know one another. In the first activity students were asked to introduce themselves by saying their names, their faculty, and what they wanted to gain from their participation in this training program.

Session One

What are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

The Silent Dialogue

Informed by the thematic areas that are being covered in DROPS Peer Review Journal, this session focused on understanding the nine MDGs that Afghanistan has committed to achieving by the year 2020. The session pushed the students to critically analyze each MDG and critique its content. Eight videos on the MDGs were shown to the students and they were asked to provide their feedback keeping in the mind:

- What points of views they felt were missing in each clip?
- How each clip related to the concept of peace?
- What the relevance does each clip have to the context in Afghanistan?

This exercise was called the 'silent dialogue' where instead of having a discussion after each video, the participants were asked to use the blank sheets of paper taped around the room to write their thoughts and responses to one another as means of a silent dialogue. This way the whole class would be able to get involved.

The 8 videos shown included:

- Good: The UN Millennium Declaration
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuv19vOZedE>
Time: 3 Min and 14 Sec.

- Aid Afghanistan for Education - Hassina Sherjan
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zwVSOFDu4M>
Time: 4:12

- Dealing with HIV-AIDS in Afghanistan
Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_T25rQd2h4
Time: 1:51

- Reducing Infant and Maternal Mortality in Afghanistan
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNCxGq3lBKs>
Time: 5:45

- Environmental Sustainability
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnYHFRq7-5s>
Time: 3:04

- Extreme Poverty
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xM7KozmQcSw>
Time: 2:12

- One Billion Rising- Gender Empowerment
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gl2AO-7Vlzk>
Time: 2:59

- UN Millennium Campaign Goal 8 Global Partnership
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXDDNFLDiFw>
Time: 5:00

Of these 8 video clips, two were overviews of the MDGs and they were intended to give the students a quick overview of why the MDGs were created and what the overall goal of the UN and the committed countries were by introducing the MDGs. The remaining 6 videos included a combination four videos that were on MDGs and they related to the context of specific (India and African Countries) and the remaining of three videos were on specific MDGs as they related to the context of Afghanistan. This exercise was designed to challenge the students to make links between the issue at hand and their own

context. It was intended to see if participants were able to extrapolate information from different sources and decontextualize it.

After each video clip the students were given five minutes to go around the room and write their feedback on the blank posters. Each sheet of paper had the following titles:

- What is Peace?
- What is the relevance of the videos to Afghanistan?
- What is Missing in each video?
- Any other comments?

Below are the responses of the participants:

What is Peace?

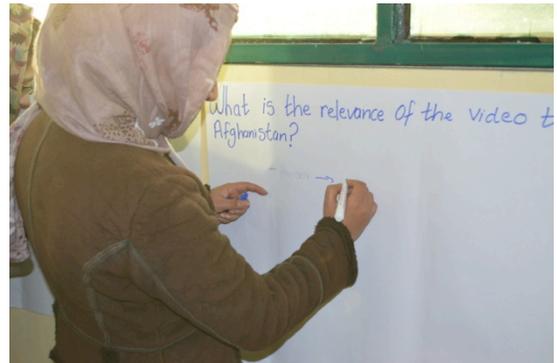
- Having access to good health
- Sustainability
- Harmony
- No one must be illiterate
- To enjoy every step and every moment of life.
- Well being
- Security and Well-Being
- Having equal rights for men and women
- No war, No tension!
- An environment to live without stress and anxiety
- Achieve our priorities
- Freedom and dignity
- Achievement of society
- To have your own desires fulfilled



What is the relevance of the video to Afghanistan?

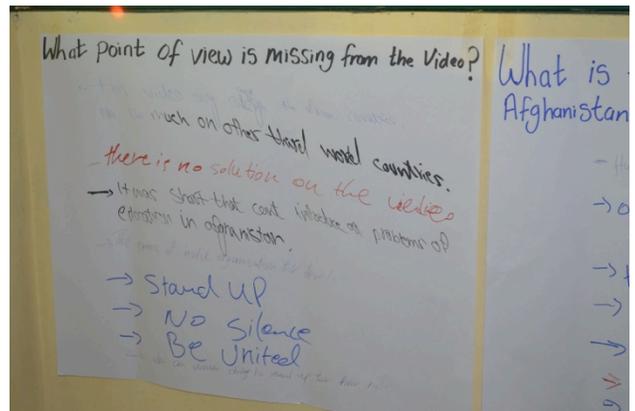
- Hunger, 53% living under poverty line
- Only 18% of women can read and write in Afghanistan.
- Women and girls rights
- Health care is poor
- The importance of education for boys who are often forgotten with all the focus on girl's education.
- Change the normal gender line
- Sexual abuse

- Natural disasters
- Child mortality
- Afghanistan must involve women more in decision-making.
- Starvation and malnutrition
- Mother and child mortality rates are not only subnational issues they continue to happen in the capital.
- Economic problems and closed society
- Clean drinking water
- The involvement of youth in drugs
- Women's movement
- No violence against women



What Point of View is Missing from the Video?

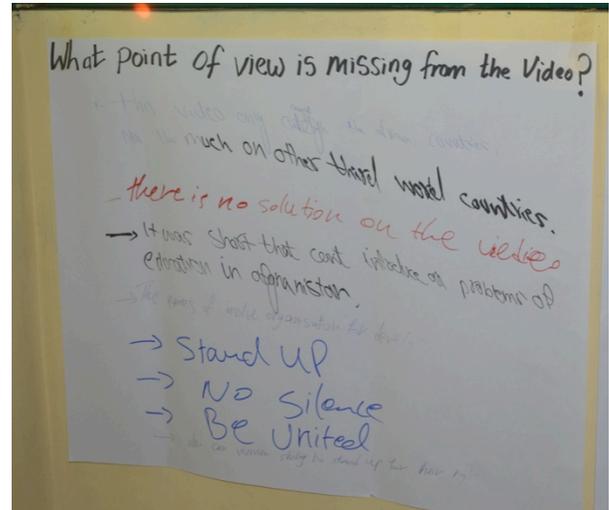
- The videos only show the context in African countries.
- There is no solution shown in the videos
- They don't mention names of organizations that working for development.
- Maternal mortality, HIV-AIDS, and severe hunger
- How to control population growth
- Qualitative principles of education
- Customs and religion should be differentiated and defined clearly.
- Cultural problems
- Lack of awareness amongst men
- Video did not discuss reason leading to drug addiction.
- How can we prevent young generation from drug addiction?
- Only drug addiction amongst men were mentioned not addiction among women.
- The process of human development is really important and needs to be focused on more.



Any other comments?

- We will not reach our MDGs commitments
- In order for women's education to improve men's awareness needs to increase.
- Women bring prosperity to the society, without women's support men will make this planet hell.
- The clip on women's education should also focus on men's education.

- The video on poverty does not show the causes and effects of poverty in third world countries.
- Videos miss the issue of under-age marriages
- The video for women was a complete and great video. I felt strong after seeing it.



Discussion following the Silent Dialogue

After viewing 5 of the 8 videos, Ms Jani asked the participants if they had any feedback they wanted to voice at this juncture of the exercise.

Participant feedback: *In most third world countries the most important problem is economic poverty, if we had our own economic system we could give better opportunities to our people. For example, women who live in poor economic conditions, when they give birth they are bringing a child into an environment where that child will grow up and tomorrow he or she will make a decision and it won't be the right decision because they will have grown up with poverty around them and that will impact their decisions. Economy seems to be the most prevalent problem facing countries, and this is what I catch from the video. Poverty and hunger are key drivers of social challenges.*

Participant feedback: *All these eight MDGs should come together, if you take one and the other one is missing then it won't work. Economic poverty and reducing poverty is not enough. For example, Arab countries are rich but then there is still no gender equality or human rights. So all it shows reducing economic poverty is not enough and should be implemented together with the goal of economic empowerment. If we achieve economic development we should also ensure that the others MDGs are also met at the same time.*

Participant feedback: *I think there is a problem of culture and religion especially in Muslim countries, so the culture and religion of a country should be taken into consideration in each MDG. In Muslim countries, culture and religion go hand in hand and religion is man made so they take these religious values and incorporate it into culture and say women can't go to school or work. Now, when implementing these goals when in Afghanistan, we should take into consideration this aspect of how culture is manipulated by men and their religious values, so we do not end up like Arab countries that are economically stable but lack respect for basic human rights.*

Expert Trainers reflection on feedback above: *These MDGs should have a cultural nuance and should be culturally inclined. She mentioned to the participants that in 2015, the MDGs would come to an end, except for Afghanistan, which has till 2020. She highlighted that there the world too is starting to change the way it is looking at the MDGs and that with the rise in terrorism, there was a goal interfaith harmony goal which many countries have advocated to be included as an MDG.*

Participant feedback: *It is not possible for us to achieve all 9 MDGs, if countries achieve one set of MDGs they cant achieve the others, so we need to set more realistic goals.*

Expert Trainers reflection on feedback above: *The interesting part is that in 2015, you will be called again as young professional to voice your opinions and to tell what goals you want to set for your country. We as women have to find our voice, and through that set realistic goals. In the process of these 3 days, I hope we find a voice of a collective vision that we can say we cant get everything but if we take a step towards these priorities that we set, it opens up a gate for many more things.*

Participant feedback: *It seems with each of these goals the UN is just playing with numbers. In Afghanistan, we have the same problem, where we have for example figures for number of students going to school but there is no talk about the quality of schools or teachers. There is no talk on what real changes these figures are brining. We need to assess what has really changed for women in the society.*

Expert Trainers reflection on feedback above: Qualitative research has not come up with indicators which are strong enough to hold to monitoring and evaluation scrutiny. So qualitative research ends up being used as a voice but never as the basis for recommendations. Quantitative research is what people use and research, so far, I feel is very male driven and therefore number driven. The feminist movement gave legitimacy to qualitative research because they started using case study and personal narratives as the basis of saying something and giving it due legitimacy. For example, in the feminist paradigm, even if one women says she is getting violated it is enough for to take action upon. Therefore, for the feminist there need not be a hundred women getting raped for action to be taken. Thus, the feminist use the word 'the personal' as political; myself and everything, which happens to me, is an act of politics, states Ms Jani. Everything we experience as women is our personal journey is also a bigger political structure as well, that is where, it would be interesting to see how we can build qualitative research to get legitimacy when it comes to government policies, asserts Ms Jani. The feminist has been fighting for this for 20 years, which shows that this is still a young movement.

Following this discussion, Ms. Jani showed the remaining three videos and then reconvened a second round of discussion similar to one above.

Session Two:
Group Work

After showing the MDG video clips and the silent dialogue followed by group discussions, the participants were asked to form groups of two. They are asked to take what they learnt in the videos and select one of the MDG topics to formulate a research question, which they would use to develop a literature review.

Two groups were formed and Group 1 selected the Promotion of Gender Equality and Empower Women and Group 2 selected the Reduce Child Mortality goal.

The instructions to the two groups was to think of a research question as a group and develop a research question and a ‘hook,’ which could highlight the most interesting facts about the research question.

Group 1 Research Question:

Topic: Reduce Child Mortality [MDG4]

Research Question: How does child brides impact child mortality rates in Afghanistan?

Group 2 Research Question:

Topic: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Research Question: How can the Afghan government empower women through education and skill building?



Session four:

Preparation for Assignment: Homework

After the groups finished developing their research question and hook, they were given a package of articles on their selected MDGs and were instructed to read the articles and write a literature review based on the assigned readings.

DROPS staff handed each student with a package of five Articles that included:

- One book review, titled ‘Millennium Development Goals: Looking Beyond 2015’ by Matthew Clarke and Simon Feeny, Routledge, Abdingdon, 2013, 109 pp.
- One Op-Ed titled, ‘What Next for the Millennium Development Goals?’ by Todd Moss, Centre for Global Development, Washington DC.
- Three articles on the specific MDG chosen, these articles included 1 qualitative paper [interview] and two quantitative papers [UN statistics].

The package also included a Literature Review Outline handout, titled ‘Research Paper Scaffold.’ The students were asked to read the five articles and then fill out the literature review outline. The literature review exercise was treated as an introduction lesson to research methodology and was not intended on showing students how to establish a theoretical framework but rather focused on enabling participants to list the relevant facts, define key terms, definitions and terminology from each article.

Day 2

The training program on day two had three sessions and included a lesson on gender-lens and gender-mainstreaming, book review and opinion editorial format, and group work critical analysis of readings assigned the day before.

The sessions were designed to dovetail the previous days group work on devising a research question and hook group and literature review assignment. However, DROPS discovered that most of the students had not completed the literature review assignment. As a result, the trainers had to alter a few of the sessions initially scheduled for day two. They replaced the Gender-Lens and Gender Mainstreaming session with a session dedicated to working with each group to complete their literature reviews. The Gender-Lens and Gender Mainstreaming session was thus postponed for day three.

Session One

Group Work

Each group was given 40 minutes to complete the literature review assignment from the previous day. Both Ms Jani and Ms Safi joined a group and helped guide them in the process of finishing their literature review.

While assisting the groups, both trainers, found that the students were not entirely familiar with what the concept of a literature review. So both trainers reviewed the articles with the groups and helped them first in identifying the author(s) of the articles,

the source, and date, followed by a description of what the subject and main idea(s) were in each article. Then the trainers helped the groups identify and list from the five article sources and facts that supported the main idea of each article followed by a conclusion.

Once the groups finished completing their literature reviews, they were asked to present them to the other group for feedback.

Session Two

Group Presentations

In this session each group was given 15 minutes to present their research question and literature review. Ms Jani asked the participants to listen carefully to each presentation and for each participant to prepare a question to ask the presenter- this was so the participant could be encouraged too question what they heard and read.

Group 1

Topic: Child Mortality

a. Research Question: How does child brides impact child mortality rates in Afghanistan?

The group arrived at this research question by linking child mortality and child brides; two common factors both are prevalent in Afghanistan. Thus, they set out to evaluate the correlation between these two factors to see if one of the causes of child mortality rates in Afghanistan could be under-age marriage.



b. Literature Review:

In order to assess their research question, Group A reviewed the relevant material given to them on day one. The articles they reviewed included a UNDP report, an article on how Guyana met its MDG goal of reducing child mortality rates and a book review that looked at the MDGs as a whole and the areas that needed more focus in the years ahead.

i. UNDP report:

- a. From this report, the group identified facts and figures related to child mortality figures in Afghanistan and their current status. They highlighted that since 2003 Afghanistan had been working on reducing child mortality rates. They found that in 2003 there were 257 child mortalities out of 1000. In 2012, they found that this figure dropped to 165 out of every 1000 deaths. This, Group A, stated shows that child mortality rates have reduced by 60% since 2003 in Afghanistan.

“This shows progress and advancement in child mortality rates in Afghanistan” asserted Lida Ahmad.

She stated, *“This also shows that Afghanistan is slowly achieving its MDG commitment to reducing child mortality rates.”*

ii. Interview: ‘Guyana soon to achieve MDG for reducing child mortality,’ By Svetlana Marshall, 1 Feb. 2015, Guyana Times.

- a. From this interview, the group identified that Guyana has been able to achieve its MDG goal of reducing child mortality rates. The Group was able to take away from this interview an idea or lesson learnt on how other countries have been able to achieve this MDGs and how this lesson can be applied in Afghanistan. Lida highlighted, that Guyana developed units in its hospitals that contained respiratory machines that assisted infants who were having trouble breathing. This has helped reduce infant mortality rates. Guyana also provided training to its nurses and doctors on how to use this equipment.

iii. Book Review: ‘Millennium Development Goals: Looking Beyond 2015,’ by Matthew Clarke and Simon Feeny.

- a. Group 1 noted that in the book review, they gathered a general understanding of the MDGs and though nothing was mentioned specifically on reducing child mortality, the book review presented a critical analysis, and correctly so, of the MDGs and argued that their benchmarks were primarily donor driven.

iv. Op-Ed: ‘What Next for the Millennium Development Goals?’ by Todd Moss, Centre for Global Development, Washington DC.

- a. Group 1 noted that the Op-Ed also presented a broad assessment of the

MDGs and similar to the book review offered a critical assessment of the MDGs and its benchmarks which the group found extremely useful.

Following the presentation, the second member of the group, took to the board to present the group's research outline.

b. Looking at the literature on child mortality rates in Afghanistan, the second member presented the factors her group believes have contributed as sources for high child mortality rates in Afghanistan.

These factors included:

1. Culture
2. Lack of Awareness
3. Patriarchy
4. Knowledge gaps
5. Poor adequate health facilities, particularly in rural areas.
6. Illiteracy



Maryam explained that by assessing and linking the factors to one another, her group was able to identify the factors have been a leading causing child mortality rates in Afghanistan.

'Culture and Patriarchy'

- Group 1 found: Women are treated as second citizens in Afghanistan and their opinions are only given some value within the household and not outside of the household. This prevents women from having awareness about their rights and freedoms, which leads to illiteracy and knowledge gaps amongst women.

'Illiteracy and poor health care facilities'

- Group 1 found: Illiteracy and capacity related issues are amongst the many reasons explaining the gaps in the health care system in Afghanistan. Health care professors are ill prepared, and thus ill informed leading to the development of poor health care facilities.

Group A found that Patriarchy and Illiteracy were the leading factors behind high child mortality rates in Afghanistan and decided that their research would focus on evaluating these two factors followed by an assessment of secondary factors being culture, lack of awareness, knowledge gaps, and poor health care facilities.

c. Research tools that will be used in research outline:

Group 1's research outline intends on using both qualitative and quantitative research tools. Secondary sources will be used to gather facts and figures while primary sources will include interviews with 30 health care professionals, including both doctors and nurses, in two districts of Kabul province (1 urban and 1 rural district), in two or three selected hospitals in each of the district.

d. Group 1 conclusion of presentation:

In conclusion, Group 1 showed that there was disconnect in how qualitative and quantitative articles treated the figures and facts on child mortality rates in Afghanistan. The group argued that quantitative data, as represented by the UNDP report, shows that child mortality rates have decreased by 60 percent while qualitative articles show that mortality rates have in fact increased in Afghanistan

If child mortality rates have decreased by 60 percent then that would mean that Afghanistan is likely to meet its MDG by 2020. However, people's perceptions show that Afghanistan is unlikely to meet its MDG as various challenges and gaps remain in the health care sector. Therefore, the research outline proposed by Group A, intends on evaluating the status of the factors, patriarchy and illiteracy, and then using those findings to assess how each, and will continue to, contribute to child mortality rates in Afghanistan.

c. Questions and feedback:

Question:

Participant asked: *"UNDP figures shows that child mortality rates have decreased, however based on what data have they based this on since in rural Afghanistan it is difficult to get access to women"?*

Feedback:

Trainer Mariam Safi asked: *"Conducting research on so many contributing factors to child mortality would take a lot of time, so do you suppose you could narrow your research lens to just 2 factors to ensure your research is more deceive?"*

Feedback:

Expert Trainer Shreya Jani asked: *"How will you choose which one of these factors makes the most sense for you and your research"?* To help Group A in selecting the most important factors to evaluate and thus narrowing their research scope, Ms Jani suggested the use of the 'But Why' method.

- Take any factor, for example culture, and ask if culture impacts child mortality but why? The answer could be patriarchy, so you ask again if patriarchy impacts child mortality, but why? If patriarchy leads to suppression and suppression leads to child mortality, but why?
- With any research, use the 'but why' method until you no longer can ask 'but

why.’ The factor at which you are unable to identify any other manifestation for that word will be the factor that makes most sense for you to evaluate in your research.

Group 2

Topic: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

a. Research Question: How can the Afghan government empower women through education and skill building?

Unlike Group 1, this group had not developed a research outline but had created their research question and were at the stage of completing their literature review and identifying the contributing factors that could help shed light on their research question.



b. Literature Review:

In order to assess their research question, Group A reviewed the relevant material given to them on day one. The articles they reviewed included a UNDP report, an article on how Guyana met its MDG goal of reducing child mortality rates and a book review that looked at the MDGs as a whole and the areas that needed more focus in the years ahead.

i. UN report:

a. From this report, the group realized that women have made great progress but also noted that certain gaps still existed which acted to prevent women from achieving equality in all sectors of society. Based on this article, the group was able to list several achievements such as access to education for boys and girls and the participation of women

in politics. They also listed several gaps such as domestic violence and lack of employment for women.

ii. UNDP report:

- a. From this report, the group highlighted that the key to ensuring gender equality was in empowering women through education and skill-building programs. Based on this report, they identified several factors that can assist in empowering women such as capacity building, primary education, including women in the private sector, and access to higher education.

Session 3

Book Review and Opinion Ed Format

In this session, Ms Safi, spoke to the participants about the fundamentals of writing an Op-Ed and Book Review. The purpose of this session was to provide the participants with the fundamentals of writing these two types of articles so to prepare them to carry out the assignment that would be given to them at the end of the day and which they would have to present on day-3 of the training program.

Using the Harvard Kennedy School Outline on how to write an Op-Ed, Ms Safi reviewed with the participants the distinguishing characteristics of an Op-Ed Questions, Topic and Theme, Research, Openings, Endings, and Voice.

❖ Distinguishing Characteristics of an Op-Ed or Column

Partly, an Op-Ed is defined by where it appears, but it shares some common characteristics:

- Typically, it is short, between 750 and 800 words.
- It has a clearly defined point. Get right into the topic.
- It represents clarity of thinking.
- It contains the strong, unique voice of the writer.

Ms Safi continued the session by asking the participants to think of a few relevant issues that are currently being discussed in Afghanistan. The intention here was to get the participants to identify relevant and interesting topics that they could use to write their Op-Eds on. The participants listed the following issues, Daesh (ISIS), the selection of Cabinet Members, and the abduction of 31 non-Pashtun bus passengers on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. Ms Safi congratulated the participant for identifying such relevant issues and explained that an Op-Ed on any one of these issues would garner great readership and interest in Afghanistan and a broad.

❖ How to select a topic for an Op-Ed:

Every successful Op-Ed piece must have a clearly defined topic and theme.

- **Topic:** The topic is usually stated in the first paragraph. It could be a person, place, issue, incident, or thing that is the primary focus of the Op-Ed.
- **Theme:** Is another level of meaning to the topic. The theme may appear early in the piece or it may appear later when it may also serve as a turning point into a deeper level of argument. What's the big, overarching idea of the column? What's your point? Why is your point important?

Ms. Safi explained that field research would include going to the scene, conducting interviews, and gathering primary materials, observations and knowledge. Secondary Research she explained would include library, academic or Internet research. She explained that in secondary research you should locate materials that contain graphs, charts, scholarly articles, and interviews. Both primary and secondary research are intended to support, or at times, oppose one another other while shedding light on the authors main research question.

❖ **Research**

While columns and op-ed pieces allow writers to include their own voice and express an opinion, to be successful the columns must be grounded in solid research. Research involves acquiring facts, quotations, citations, or data from sources and personal observation. Research also allows a reader to include sensory data (touch, taste, smell, sound, or sight) into a column. There are two basic methods of research: Field Research and Secondary Research.

When writing on any relevant topic, like the three mentioned earlier by the participants, Ms Safi said that it was vital for authors to present their own personal opinions but supported with facts, statistics and anecdotes, to ensure its effectiveness. 'These three factors will help give colour to your opinions in addition to giving your ideas legitimacy, stated Ms Safi.

❖ **Voice**

Having a strong voice is critical to a successful column or op-ed piece. Columns are most typically conversational in tone so you can imagine yourself have a conversation with your reader as you write (a short, focused conversation). But the range of voice used in columns can be wide: contemplative, conversational, descriptive, experienced, informative, informed, introspective, observant, plaintive, reportorial, self-effacing, sophisticated, and humorous, among many other possibilities. Sometimes what voice you use is driven by the publication for which you are writing. A good method of perfecting your voice is to get in the habit of reading your column or op-ed out loud.

Ms Safi handed the participants a 'Revision Checklist' which they should check after writing their Op-Eds to ensure they have meet all the criteria's set out.

❖ **Revision Checklist**

Some things to remember as you revise your op-ed or column before you submit it for publication:

- Check clarity
- Check coherence and unity
- Check simplicity
- Check voice and tone. (Most are conversational; some require an authoritative voice.)
- Check direct quotations and paraphrasing for accuracy.
- Check to make sure you properly credit all sources though formal citations are not necessary.
- Check the consistency of your opinion throughout your op-ed or column.

This session closed, with Ms Safi requesting the students to prepare either an Op-Ed or book review on a topic that is relevant to the context of Afghanistan and falls under one of the MDGs. Each student was then asked to prepare a short paragraph in the form of an op-ed or book review that they would present tomorrow to each other in a peer review session.

Day 3

On the day 3 of the training program marking the last day of the 3-day training session. The day was broken down into 5 sessions that included a one-hour session on Violence and Peace, State and Human Security, and Gender Lens and Research. Followed by a session where students presented their Op-Ed assignments given the day before and participated in a peer review workshop exercise. The day closed with students completing feedback forms and participating in recordings expressing their observations about the 3-day training program, followed by a certificate ceremony in which the training participants each received certificates of completion.

Session 1

Understanding Gender - Gender Definitions

Ms Jani commenced the last day of the training program with a session on the definition of direct [personal] and indirect [structural] violence. She defined to the participants direct violence as— war, murder, rape, assault, verbal attacks —the kind we physically perceive, but which manifests out of conditions created by the invisible form of violence, indirect violence. Thus, direct violence, she asserted cannot be eliminated without eliminating indirect violence first. She defined structural violence as any structure that stops one from being the best human being they can be. She explained that structural violence is injustice and exploitation built into a social system that generates wealth for the few and poverty for the many, stunting everyone's ability to develop their full humanity.

After providing the students with a working understanding of the differences and definitions of direct and indirect violence. Ms Jani, asked the students to give examples of each forms of violence.

To this the students listed:

Examples of direct violence:

- Domestic violence
- War
- Sexual violence
- Theft
- Murder

Example of indirect violence:

- Poverty
- Psychological violence emanating from conservative households dominated by male figures.
- Patriarchy which acts to prevent women from attaining empowerment.
- Gender Inequality
- Economic structures which lead to lack of authority and influence in the household and outside which in return lead to lack of freedom of speech.
- Lack of Education resulting from gender discrimination, ethnicity, and racialism.
- Lack of access to health care, in some communities men do not allow their women to go to a hospital because they associate shame with women who see male doctors and since in rural areas most hospital have only male doctors, men do not allow their wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers from seeking health care.
- No right to judicial review, lack of access to courts and justice.
- Lack of access to basic human needs; air, food, water and shelter- lack of any of these is an indirect violence.
- Social, economic and political structures can all be forms of indirect violence.

Session 2

What is Peace?

Peace was defined through the concepts of negative and positive peace and how they lead to direct or indirect violence. She defined negative peace as a 'limited idea of peace' that forms in the absence of personal and institutional violence. She defined positive peace as the presence of wellbeing, social justice, gender equity, and human rights.

Dovetailing the description of positive and negative peace, Ms Jani introduced the the Weberian notion of nation-states. The notion of nation-states she stated is what we are all aspiring to be now. She explained that Weber defined the state as 'as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical

force within a given territory. A modern nation-state according to Weber should have the following criteria; territory, a population, governance structures, and the most important of all the legitimacy of lethality. The legitimate use of force only belongs to the state and this is what separates the modern-state from other eras. Do you see how lethality is now in the hands of the state and according to the rule of law? Asked Ms Jani. Therefore, in modern western states anyone who uses forces against the state or anyone else is therefore tried before the law. Weberian theory reduces security to this, thus peace and security in this understanding is when no one is challenging the state from within or outside. Though, we are not here today to argue whether this notion is right or wrong, it is important to understand that the rule of law would be difficult to enforce in other systems.

Taking the definition of a nation-state and the Weberian notion of security, Ms Jani asked the participants, what would then constitute a failed state?

In 1992, after the cold war ended there were many failed states, so what constituted these states to be regarded as failed? A state that is no longer able to govern. For many decades, Afghanistan was considered a failed state, so what did this mean? Ms Jani explained to the participants that when Afghanistan was referred to as a failed state, this did not mean that society had failed, so what failed? Governance failed asserted a participant. Thus when governance went from legitimate and elected rulers to illegitimate and self-proclaimed leaders then Afghanistan started becoming a failed state. When the right of governance is not with the government and elected actors and is instead with powerful figures that wield authority through illegitimate means then this becomes a sign of a failed state.

Ms Jani then moved onto explaining the feminist movement and how it facilitated the emergence of key concept we now hold important to all international interventions; the concept of human security. Feminism emerged when women started questioning the Weberian notion of security. According to some, state security was no longer enough to ensure women's security and more importantly human security. The feminist movement paved the way for the notion of human security, which gained legitimacy in the early 1990s through the UN peacekeeping efforts. This realization then helped in the transformation of peacekeeping into the idea of peace-building which offered a broad and encompassing set of frameworks and strategies that looked to addressing both physical and human security needs of failed states.

Session 3

Understanding Gender – Gender Definitions

Sex vs. Gender

In this session, the participants looked at the differences between the terms sex and gender and the importance of gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data. She gave a handout on 'Understanding Gender' along with a worksheet on 'Statements about Women and Men' to the participants. The handout provided the students with key

definitions while the worksheet gave the students an opportunity to revert back to the definitions they learned and assess whether each statement took a gender or sex lens. For example, the first statement read, “Little girls are gentle; boys are rough” and the participants had to write G for gender or S for sex next to the statement.

The session highlighted four concepts that were important to keep in mind when speaking of gender. First, there is the term ‘sex’, which is biological, what you are born with. Second, there is the term ‘gender,’ which refers to roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created by our families, our society and our cultures. So, “boys cant cry?” would this be gender or sex asked Ms. Jani? The participants replied, gender! She then posed another question, “Girls cannot run as fast as boys, is this gender or sex?” to which again the participants replied gender!

Gender Equality vs. Gender Equity

Once the participants had gathered a good understanding of the differences between sex and gender, the session can moved onto defining the remaining two concepts; gender equality and gender equity. Gender equality, means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights. On the other hand, Gender Equity means the process of being fair to men and women. By giving the example of quotas for women’s participation in the Parliament, as such is in Afghanistan and India, Ms Jani showed how “equity was creating the space for equality to take place” as it illustrates affirmative action to secure women’s presence in key decision-making forums. She went further to explain how in some countries like Australia the concept of equity had advanced a step further by giving not only women maternal leave but also father’s paternity leave.

Gender Analysis

Gender Analysis is the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated information. Men and women both perform different roles. This leads to women and men having different experience, knowledge, talents and needs. Gender analysis explores these differences so policies, programs and projects can identify and meet the different needs of men and women. Gender analysis also facilitates the strategic use of distinct knowledge and skills possessed by women and men.

Session 4

Peer Review Workshop

In this session students were asked to present their short Op-Ed or Book Reviews, which had been assigned to them the day before. This was followed by a Peer Review Workshop.

As the students read out their assignments, the rest of the participants were asked to note in their peer review checklist whether the Op-Ed had met all the set criteria. Thus

the participants used the checklist to identify whether the essay fulfilled the goals of the assignment? Did the essay provide sufficient development of key idea through presenting examples and analyzing significant details, scenes, and passages? Do the overall organization and the paragraph divisions make sense? What stylistic devices does the write use to enhance the paper? What were the major strengths of the essay? And lastly, Ms Safi asked the participants to offer suggestions to the authors, which they may use to improve their Op-Eds. At the end of this session, the participants learned how to identify the gaps in their Op-Eds and how to address them. They also learned about the process of peer review.

Session 5

Summary of Training Takeaways

At the conclusion of the 3-day training program, DROPS staff and all training facilitators, took this time to review the topics that were covered, provided the participants with a summary of key lessons learnt and asked the students to offer their opinions and suggestions on how DROPS could improve its training module for future trainings.

For the participants the takeaways from this 3-day training were imparting of critical thinking tools, strong understanding of research tools, and a deep understanding of key gender-related concepts.

For DROPS staff the key lesson learnt was that a 3-day training program was not adequate enough to equip participants with a strong 'practical' understanding of research methodology tools. Research Methodology is a complicated field that requires lengthier and at times repeated programs. Secondly, DROPS realized that the female students existing knowledge of research methodology was limited but their interest in learning more about this field was vast. Thus more research methodology oriented training for female MA student's is required to have a deeper impact and to encourage more women to join the research field, or apply these tools in their work. Thirdly, concepts related to peace-building, human security and gender required workshops dedicates solely to these concepts and should be held independent of the research methodology trainings. These concepts are vital to research in Afghanistan since they are largely the topics for research and with the existing knowledge gaps in research methodology it would prove challenging for the participants to grasp both in a single training module.

Certificates

At the end of the 3-day training program, DROPS Director Mariam Safi and expert trainer Ms Shreya Jani handed out completion certificates to all the attendees.