

Afghanistan and the Principle of Equality – Evolution and perspectives

A Political Science Doctorate research conducted by Gaït Archambeaud (November 2005)

With equality for citizens a founding principle in their new institutions - as brought up from the 2001 Bonn agreement and through article 22 in the 2004 Constitution - the Afghan people have also to deal with concepts which are not obvious in their culture. The individual, democracy, citizenship, free will are values which proceed from the western system. The value system in Afghanistan leans on family, tribalism, islam, tradition. These two systems have to be scrutinized and weighed according to each other; a field survey ought to figure out what is expected by the Afghans themselves, and emphasize on critical points in this enforced confrontation. A change management scheme could then be designed.

A few quotes from preliminary survey:

“Islam stands for equality of men and women before the law... only ! In private matters, they have specific and separate roles, and the woman has to obey her husband.” (A professor of Islamic culture at Kabul University Sharia School)

“In a tribal society, where law is implicit and proceeds from tradition, everyone has a definite role. But when people from different backgrounds have to deal with one another, implicit is not enough. The law has to be explicit.” (A pachto teacher at French School of Eastern Languages)

“Formerly everybody had a gun, now people are handing them over: they accept the rule of law.” (Woman radio reporter in Mazar-e Sharif)

“Afghanistan has to be governed through symbols.” (An Afghan-French lawyer)

“Zan, zar, zamin...” (An Afghan saying concerning Afghan values, as opposed to a French constitution lawyer during Constitution drafting)

“The rights of women are to provide food and clothes for the family. We are blind people, we know nothing of the world. We would like to open up, but our husbands say we have everything and don't need to go out. We obey and fear our husbands who can impose their will by force.” (Ouzbek women in Samangan).

“When I speak my mind, my family considers me as asocial, selfish, reckless.” (An Afghan-French woman)

“You don't choose to be born, why should you have rights and duties depending on where and how you were born?” (A foreign doctor involved in humanitarian help to Afghanistan)

“If the Afghan guard complains that his 120 USD salary is not enough to support his family, he should try and get another job.” (A foreign worker)