

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on December 8, 2020, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 5 donor partners¹, gender and safeguards teams of EZ-KAR, Citizen Charter Afghanistan Program (CCAP), and Afghanistan Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Institutional Support Project and Sanitation (A-WASH), MoWA representative and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the December meeting was the following: (i) Agreed actions from November GWG meeting; (ii) Dialogue with MOWA leadership – an introduction to DM of MOWA, Ms. Nazira Rahman and learning the ministry’s vision; (iii) CCAP follow-up discussion – led by Finland; (iv) 16 days of Activism a) Briefings from gender specialists of selected ARTF-funded projects and their participation in the awareness campaign, b) bilateral intersections with ARTF work / highlights of bilateral advocacy; (v) 2020 Afghanistan Conference – Gender Equality highlighted at the Geneva conference – bilateral updates and discussion among donors; (vi) Agreeing on Strategy Group Updates; and (vii) AOB on planning of the January 2021 GWG meeting.

Agreed actions from November GWG meeting: The Bank shared CCAP and CARE International presentations and PFFP comments’ matrix (for gender related comments) with the development partners. The updated version of the PFFP will be shared with the development partners shortly. Donor co-chair informed that a regular GWG update has been given to the Strategy Group in efforts to reengage the government in gender equality topics and to continue to highlight important gender agenda among the government and development partners for stronger ARTF program.

Dialogue with MOWA leadership – an introduction to DM of MOWA, Ms. Nazira Rahman and the ministry’s vision: Due to an unexpected last minutes request from the Parliament for DM Rahman to join another meeting, Mr. Ramazan Mehdiyar attended the GWG meeting in her place. Mr. Mehdiyar updated the new DM arrangement started October 2020 as a unit to develop the government’s gender policy and implement WEE related programs. The main role of this unit is women’s economic empowerment through sustainable development programs to improve the female-headed-households’ (FHHs) food security, nutrition, economic growth and livelihoods. Its vision is to create job opportunities and new initiatives targeted for women and involve women in decision making of the gender sector activities’ policies, strategies and monitoring and evaluation.

MOWA would like to form a committee and/or working group to (i) organize and advise women’s programs and projects in Afghanistan, (ii) analyze the investments in specific women programs and their implementation progress against objectives, and (iii) organize trainings and awareness programs on food security, nutrition and economic growth. MoWA is focused on supporting organizations and/or activities working to highlight and strengthen women’s economic empowerment.

¹ Australia, Canada, EU, Finland, Sweden, Britain,

In response to a question regarding the priority of activities planned by WEE DM, Mr. Mehdeyar stated that MOWA focuses on agriculture and livestock sectors because most of women in the rural areas are engaged in this sector, but it also considers industrial activities and other initiatives that give economic opportunities for women.

Another question was raised on collaboration between WEE MD and WEE-NPP. Mr. Mehdeyar said that the WEE DM is newly established, and it collaborates with all programs that work on the economic and social empowerment of women. He also mentioned that shifting the responsibility to implement WEE-RDP from MRRD and WEE-NPP from MOF to MOWA has been discussed and initial steps have been taken.

On supporting other gender units in ministries, MoWA mentioned that a separate unit within MoWA is working with Gender Units providing technical and political support to them.

CCAP follow-up discussion – led by Finland: Finland appreciated the studies and recommendations made on CCAP and acknowledged that the additional financing for the project has given more attention to women's participation at the community level. However, Finland raised concerns regarding the needs for: (i) more gender disaggregated data (based on the May 2020 reports and other documents); (ii) thorough gender analysis to inform gender policies and guidelines; and (iii) proper facilitation and monitoring mechanisms. In addition, lack of clarity on the level of women's engagement in the committees was raised as the reports do not show sufficient women's participation and involvement in the CDCs, attitudes and perceptions of men and community towards women in CDCs, and community attitude towards gender-balanced participation. Finland suggested that with NGO studies already provided enough recommendations and lessons, they should be captured through gender guidelines and strategy in the CCAP. Finland emphasized the important role the Bank could play in building the government counterpart's capacity by facilitating collaborations between the government and NGOs. The Bank's gender specialist responded that while the project design has already been finalized, the advice will be considered during the implementation. She also added that gender-disaggregated data can be found in the project's progress reports (called ISRs) or additional updates made by the project team. She also informed that a planned study on gender aspects of CCAP has been postponed due to some procurement issues, but it's still planned for the future. The Bank encouraged development partners to join donor briefings held during Implementation Support Missions (ISMs) scheduled every six months to hear comprehensive implementation updates. It was reminded that the gender inputs are also captured in the Aide Memoires that are shared with donors through weekly emails. The Bank's gender specialist added that the Bank provides technical support to the ARTF funded projects and conducts capacity building programs for the projects' gender specialists through workshops, coordination meetings and training sessions.

16 days of Activism

a) Briefings from gender specialists of selected ARTF-funded projects and their participation in the awareness campaign:

Eshteghal Zaiee-Karmondena (EZ-KAR) project (Ministry of Economy-MoE): there was an awareness raising campaign on the 16 days of activism against GBV within the project/the ministry by conducting events and making banners, informative brochures, posters and mugs. Furthermore, an exhibition for female handicrafts producers was held in the ministry for three days.

Afghanistan Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Institutional Support Project (A-WASH) Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation (AUWSSC) : an interactive workshop was held with the AUWSSC staff for brainstorming about ways to mitigate the GBV risks, and also renew their commitment to prevent all forms of violence against women. In addition, as part of the project

activities, there was an information campaign, during which, the uniform color of the project staff was changed to orange to spread the word and raise awareness about the 16 days of activism. As part of the campaign, a safe workplace environment workshop was held with all departments of the organization.

Citizen's Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP) (MRRD and IDLG): the 16 days of Activism against GBV campaign was inaugurated online this year and encouraged CCAP staff and others to share their stories on their experience of preventing and stopping GBV either at home or work-place. The best story was awarded at the end of the campaign. The closing event was attended by the senior leadership of the ministry. In addition, CCAP/IDLG also prepared a video to spread the word on social media and launched an exhibition of female handicrafts in four cities across the country with violence prevention slogans. Furthermore, CCAP/IDLG collaborated with the PROMOTE project of USAID to publish a booklet on laws/policies on women's rights and distributed it in communities.

b) Bilateral intersections with ARTF work / highlights of bilateral advocacy: Australia shared their campaign activity through which orange color masks were designed and distributed to 25 embassies with a request to share pictures through social media.

2020 Afghanistan Conference – Gender Equality highlighted at the Geneva conference – bilateral updates and discussion among donors: this agenda item was not covered due to the shortage of time.

Agreeing on Strategy Group Updates: it was agreed that the GWG donor co-chair will update the Strategy Group on the December GWG meeting discussions and the final comments on the PFFP.

AOB - January GWG planning: January GWG meeting will be held on Monday, Jan 11, 2021. GWG members were requested to propose topics to be covered for the GWG monthly meetings between Jan-Jun 2021. It was also agreed to invite WEE DM Ms. Nazira Rahman, MOWA, to the January GWG meeting.

Agreed actions:

- World Bank to share the final version of the PFFP with the development partners when finalized.
- GWG to share proposed topics and issues to be discussed at Jan-Jun 2021 GWG monthly meetings