



## AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

### Gender Working Group Meeting

Tuesday, November 6, 2018

#### Summary of Discussions

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The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting on November 6, 2018. Representatives of nine donor partners<sup>1</sup>, the Ministry of Finance, the Women's Economic Empowerment National Priority Program (WEE-NPP) Secretariat from MoLSAMD and the ARTF Administrator (the World Bank, or Bank) attended. The Bank and the UK co-chaired the meeting.

The agenda items were: (i) gender aspects of Placing Labor Abroad and Connecting to Employment Domestically (PLACED) pipeline project; (ii) Ministry of Finance update on gender-based budgeting; (iii) World Bank corporate and regional commitments on gender; (iv) update from members on the planning of gender-focused events for the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan.

**Summary:** Donors fed back ideas and points to consider in the ongoing design of PLACED, in relation to both the PLA and CED elements of the project. They look forward to the circulation of the first draft of the PAD in December. A Gender Responsive Budgeting update was provided where more details of the complementarity of the MoF's women's economic empowerment strategy and ARTF's resources under FSP was set out. An analysis exercise by the World Bank's regional gender and social inclusion team has noted that Afghanistan is the only country in the region with 100% gender tagging in its projects. Donors will be provided with a report on this gender portfolio review for Afghanistan when it is finalized.

#### 1. Placing Labor Abroad and Connecting to Employment Domestically (PLACED)

Task team leader Andras Bodor provided an overview of the pipeline Placing Labor Abroad and Connecting to Employment Domestically (PLACED) program. The program is currently under preparation, and is targeting approval for 2019. It will be co-financed from IDA and ARTF funds.

The Program Development Objective is to assist Afghan jobseekers to access and sustain jobs through managed international labor migration and labor market intermediation services domestically. The project design will aim to stimulate responsible innovation by employing outcome-based contracting, in which a framework for placements is established and contracted firms are compensated based on delivery of contract objectives (placement of applicants, and proof of sustained employment after three months). Expenditures will be limited if contract objectives are not achieved. The design explicitly aims to avoid pre-judging the marketplace by targeting specific types of employment, seeking rather to stimulate responsible innovation by private sector actors.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, Denmark, European Union, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States.



The Placing Labor Abroad component of the project will begin with a single test program to be contracted in Kabul (with 1-2 contractors over 16 months). The contracted program will aim to enroll 2,000 Afghan jobseekers for employment placement in the United Arab Emirates, and will aim to match 85 percent of enrollees with job placements. The process will involve supporting job seekers throughout the migration cycle, from preparation to departure and in-work support, continuing to 13 weeks of employment. By agreement with the Afghan government, the first round of placements will be limited to Afghan males. If the contract is successful, the program will enable successive rounds of expansion to new contracts and market destinations.

Alongside the contracting, the program will continue to work with government to develop systems, including: expanding legal channels for migration; development of a coherent policy framework on labor migration, establishing efficient and effective exit processes, and ensuring adequate protection measures for workers throughout the migration process. Key protection measures will include either an emergency travel insurance mechanism or, in the short term, a pre-paid return ticket made available to migrant workers to address emergency repatriation needs, and capacity building for the consular services of the Afghan Embassy in the UAE. The interventions aim to use the growing field of experienced job placement firms to help Afghanistan move gradually towards a managed migration system capable of absorbing more scale.

The Connecting to Employment Domestically component of the project will also employ outcome-based contracting, but will focus on domestic labor market placements, with the aim of supporting development of a national employment services system. As with the “PLA” component, the “CED” component will begin with a single test program to be contracted in Kabul (with two to four contractors delivering for 26 months) to provide intensive job search support and basic work experience for jobseekers who may be less ready for work. The program will target 2,400 young people aged 18 to 29 (up to high school graduation, or less) for enrollment, and will aim to place 60 percent of the enrollees in jobs. The CED component will target 50% male and 50% female enrollment and job placement.

**Discussion:** A question from USAID asked how the project will select skills for development/training aspects of the project. The outcome-based nature of the contracting modality aims to avoid this type of up-front restriction, with the objective of stimulating private sector innovation around job placement if possible, drawing from the growing field of experienced job placement firms. While the contract will avoid specifying up- specific sectors for engagement up-front, it will, however, set out very clear guidelines around safeguards and monitoring, with five layers of protection established for workers. The project team is currently anticipating that the most likely areas for placement of Afghans in the UAE market are in the construction industry and service sectors (Afghans have demonstrated substantial success in finding placements in the UAE bakery industry independently, for example). With respect to international placements, the EU asked how the Government will decide to open the international (PLA) component of the program to female job seekers. The team explained that it is not yet clear when the decision will be made; in part this will depend on the results of the first phase of contracting and the lessons learned through that process. Questions from Canada and Norway asked if the project team had considered specific impacts on dependants, particularly minor dependants, of international job seekers, and asked whether it would be possible for the project to target male relatives of female-headed households in the first phase of placements to provide an additional gender benefit to the PLA component. USAID observed that the international placements require attention to families to be successful. The project team concurred, and explained that the project design is intended



to promote learning, in particular through monitoring household-level impacts. A question from the UK asked if the project design contemplated pilot phases before expansion of the international placements to other countries, and the project team affirmed that it will. The PLACED team added that it hopes to circulate the PAD for donor inputs in December, and will look forward to receiving further comments then.

## 2. Update on Gender-Responsive Budgeting

Mr. Sayed Naseer Ahmad of the Ministry of Finance Budget Department presented an update on the Ministry of Finance's efforts to incorporate gender into the national budget process. He noted that MOF has been working closely with UN Women and the World Bank on gender-responsive budgeting initiatives, and has made good progress this year. The objective of the process is to help ensure that the Government meets its constitutional commitment to the equality of men and women, to help the Government meet its international obligations, to better address the gaps in well-being between men and women, and to build women's empowerment, which is fundamental to the achievement of Government objectives in poverty reduction and sustainable and equitable development.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting is being rolled out in six pilot ministries. MOF is taking both a top-down – raising awareness among Deputy Ministers in the pilot ministries– and a bottom-up approach by establishing an inter-ministerial working group with technical staff responsible for producing GRB materials to share knowledge and insights.

A GRB Policy has been prepared, as well as an action plan for the pilot ministries, and GRB requirements were integrated into budget preparation circulars during the recent budget cycle for the first time. The circular required pilot ministries to incorporate gender analysis into their budget planning materials.

Tobias Haque, Senior Economist, explained that the World Bank is supporting GRB initiatives through a dedicated element under the Fiscal Performance Improvement Support Project (FSP) Component 1 (Budget as a Tool for Development / Gender Responsive Budgeting), but also noted that a number of World Bank – MOF initiatives, through the FSP as well as through other lines of support, are designed to improve budget data and deliberations overall, which can support GRB priorities even if the activity itself is not considered to be gender-focused. In addition to working with MOF on the GRB budget circular (and analysis of responses), FSP Component 1 is supporting the MOF Budget gender cell with a legal advisor, and other World Bank resources are making technical expertise available.

**Discussion:** USAID observed that several initiatives discussed in the presentation appear similar to commitments line ministries made under the Women's Economic Empowerment NPP, and queried whether World Bank contractors are therefore performing work the ministries should be doing themselves. The World Bank explained that FSP is a recipient-executed program, and technical advice provided through Bank-executed windows is limited to targeted/specialized support. As a practical matter, at the moment the chart of accounts as structured does not fully allow for gender responsive budgeting. Part of the overall budget efforts are designed to enable better tracking of expenditures against programs, but this is a complex initiative that will take time. MOF is not waiting until those major changes are fully in place, but is taking interim measures to encourage line ministries to incorporate gender considerations in budget planning as a thinking



exercise that will enable some statistical analysis as capacity and structures are being created to enable more systematic collection over time.

A comment observed that line ministry gender units should be seated within policy and finance departments, rather than under administration, which would enable better technical level inputs into GRB initiatives. MOF concurred that this type of structural change is a priority from the perspective of the Budget department. In response to a question, MOF also explained that civil society coordinating bodies have been actively engaged in the budget processes through consultative outreach.

### 3. Update on World Bank gender commitments

World Bank South Asia Lead Social Development specialist Maria Beatriz Orlando offered an overview of the World Bank corporate and regional commitments on gender, and of the ongoing gender review of the World Bank Afghanistan gender portfolio, which includes ARTF-financed initiatives.

Key World Bank institutional commitments can be found in the Gender Strategy: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/overview#2>, in the Regional Gender Action Plan for South Asia: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26206>, in the Afghanistan Country Partnership Framework <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/01/16/a-new-strategy-to-support-growth-and-stability-in-afghanistan>, and in the Afghanistan Country Gender Action Brief. ARTF partners have also prioritized addressing gender as a cross-cutting issue in the ARTF portfolio: [http://www.artf.af/images/uploads/home-slider/ARTF\\_Partnership\\_Framework\\_and\\_Financing\\_Strategy\\_FY1397-FY1399\\_\(2018-2020\)\\_FINAL\\_ENDORSED\\_JUNE\\_25\\_2018.pdf](http://www.artf.af/images/uploads/home-slider/ARTF_Partnership_Framework_and_Financing_Strategy_FY1397-FY1399_(2018-2020)_FINAL_ENDORSED_JUNE_25_2018.pdf). In the early 2000's, country partnership frameworks were required to address gender, but corporate requirements were more limited than they are today. Substantial analytical work has subsequently been undertaken at the country and regional levels, and the current focus is to move beyond compliance on gender policies towards more depth, quality, and impact in gender engagements, with particular focus on women's 1) access to accumulation of assets; 2) equality of access to human capital; 3) role/voice/agency in decision making, and 4) equality of jobs and work (a traditional area of engagement).

In Afghanistan specifically, the World Bank funds a task that makes expertise available to support projects on gender analyses, conduct trainings, and provide other gender-focused work and engagements, including in particular reviewing program designs to ensure "gender tagging", <https://worldbankgroup.sharepoint.com/sites/gsg/socialinclusion/Documents/Event%20Materials/A%20-%20WBG%20Gender%20Strategy%2C%20Caren%20Grown%20.pdf>, which has proven to be an effective tool in mainstreaming gender considerations into project design. The ongoing gender portfolio review is looking at all World Bank projects in Afghanistan, and will be shared with GWG members when it is completed. Currently, 100 percent of Afghanistan portfolio projects are gender tagged, which is a significant achievement.

**Discussion:** A question asked how donors and stakeholders can best access gender analyses supporting/related to project designs. There is no current mandate that requires task teams to prepare a separate gender analysis. Limitations on the lengths of Project Appraisal Documents can mean that the full scope of gender analyses are not easily accessed through project documents, which is one reason ongoing discussions in the GWG are beneficial both for task



teams and, it is hoped, for donor partners. Teams use a variety of resources, which can include original research, existing research materials, project and ministry data, among others, to inform gender planning.

#### **4. Update on Women's Economic Empowerment Side Event at Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan**

Lloyd Cameron of UK-DFID, offered an update on the WEE side event at the Geneva Ministerial Conference, which the UK is supporting. While some planning remains to be finished, the theme is expected focus on professional training for Afghan women, and how to transition women from training to work. H.E. Rula Ghani, First Lady of Afghanistan, is expected to offer the keynote address. Ms. Shabana Rasikh will moderate. Panellists will include Ms. Shireen Rahmani and Ms. Muqaddesa Yourish on the demand for professional training, Ms. Nadeema Sahar on programs to date and models of implementation, as well as Ms. Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, Baroness Fiona Hodgson, chair of the UK's parliamentary group on Women, Peace, and Security, and Mr. Martin Jaeger, State Secretary, Federal Republic of Germany. The UK will endeavour to share the event's concept note, once finalized, through the Gender Working Group email list,

#### **5. AOB**

- The next GWG meeting will be held on Tuesday December 4, 2018. A discussion of Agriculture and the National Horticulture and Livestock Program are tentatively planned, subject to team availability. GWG members are asked to come prepared to discuss possible agenda topics for January through June.
- The GWG co-chair has also suggested that group members might appreciate meeting project gender focal points, possibly over an informal lunch discussion.