

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on May 5, 2020, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 8 donor partners¹ and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The meeting agenda for the May meeting was the following: (i) status update of the actions agreed at the April GWG meeting; (ii) reviewing the ARTF GWG terms of reference (ToR); (iii) continued discussion on Partnership Framework and Financing Program (PFFP) and gender; and (iv) AOB

Responding to some participants' request, the WB Afghanistan Sustainable Development Program Leader briefed the GWG on the overview of the Bank's COVID-19 response program and the status. She explained the Bank's three-phased response approach - Relief, Recovery, and Resilience. As the first relief response, COVID-19 Emergency Health Response Project is now in implementation to cope with the health crisis. Secondly, in mitigating fiscal shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Emergency Development Policy Grant (DPG) is currently being prepared. Thirdly, a relief-phase social protection project, Relief Effort For Afghan Communities and Households (REACH), is concurrently being prepared. It provides food and cash assistance to the poor by partly leveraging the social infrastructure established under the Citizen Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP). A resilience operation, Early Warning, Early Finance, Early Action (ENETAWF), is also under preparation. It puts in place the foundation of a safety net system targeting about 500,000 chronically food insecure households through provision of food security assistance via cash for work programs, which will be complemented with a risk management framework allowing the Bank to scale up the support either horizontally or vertically in the face of drought.

The donor Co-Chair noted the importance of GWG involvement in ARTF COVID-19 programming. GWG members are encouraged to connect with other WB working groups and briefings where these discussions were taking place to provide feedback from the gender perspectives.

Concerns about the potential mismanagement in the government-led bread distribution program through local bakeries were shared by a few development partners. The Bank clarified that the initiative is a government program and the Bank has not been involved in the project design nor the implementation; however, the Bank will apply important lessons from this program in designing its own relief projects with the government. For robust mechanism to deliver social protection programs, the Bank is exploring various modalities, including private sector, aid organizations, and leveraging the CDCs of CCAP, and EZ-KAR social infrastructure, to ensure that benefits get to the targeted households, social distancing is well-maintained during the distribution, and the appropriate monitoring system is in place.

Status of the actions agreed at the April GWG meeting – On sharing development partners' feedback on gender considerations/recommendations for the PFFP (2020-23) presentation made in April, the donor Co-Chair advised no further progress had been made out of session, however, noted there would be further discussion later in this meeting. The Bank did not share the revised gender and social inclusion policy note and the ARTF Program Manager agreed to share the latest version after the meeting. On sharing the full set

¹ Australia, EU, Norway, Denmark, Canada, Finland, UK and Sweden

of policy notes upon its finalization with the GWG members, the Bank updated that task teams leading respective policy notes had met with the ODI on April 24 and that the key recommendations received from them were: i) for policy notes to articulate a clear intervention logic, and ii) to have more selective recommendations rather than a large number of them. The work on policy notes have helped to develop the outline of the PFFP to date and will feed into the ANPDF II in the coming weeks. The Bank agreed to share the Overview of the Policy Notes, which is a more concise summary of all the policy notes, once consulted with the government.

Reviewing the ARTF GWG terms of reference (ToR): The TOR was last updated in February 2018 and it is time to review the document and make adjustments as needed. The five points under the Scope of Work in the TOR were discussed. The first item, which is ensuring the gender focus of PFFP, Incentive Program, and Investment Window projects, has been core discussions of GWG meetings in the past and it remains a core of the GWG work. The second item, advising gender aspects of ARTF financed operations at both design and implementation stages, has recently been impacted due to the on-going COVID-related portfolio adjustment process. Until the adjustments are finalized, it is difficult to have meaningful dialogues within the Gender Working Group. Regarding the third item, knowledge sharing on innovations in gender, previous discussions on roles/responsibilities and challenges of Gender Units housed in line ministries and on ways to strengthen them helped revive the dialogues with the government. As for the fourth item on how gender aspects of the ARTF support can be better captured in the ARTF results management framework, previous discussions on how to use the ARTF Scorecards remain helpful. The fifth item to provide support for gender mainstreaming in ARTF portfolio management, pipeline development and analytic studies, has been ongoing as well.

While the GWG meetings cannot possibly cover every single project, it was reminded to the participants that GWG feedback on the weekly ARTF announcements where project-related developments are shared is always welcomed to be shared directly with the task teams or the GWG Co-Chairs to ensure timely feedback.

The donor Co-Chair suggested that the GWG members maybe engaged beyond the GWG meetings and advocate for gender equality across the portfolio through different working group platforms, including the Strategy Group and Incentive Program Working Group. It was agreed that the GWG should agree concrete recommendations and clear expectations communicated to the Strategy Group in the future. It was recommended that the SG resumes the practice to have a standing agenda item in the ARTF SG meeting where the GWG will provide an update or table a specific topic, anything that needs to be raised/escalated to the SG attention.

It was noted that GWG engagement with Government could be improved to have more active participations of the Government members in the GWG activities.

Given a various gender-related working groups exist in Afghanistan, it was suggested that the ARTF GWG should remain focused on issues related to strengthen gender within the ARTF portfolio (as reflected in the TOR). It was however suggested that the donor partners could share information on their bilateral programs when close coordination is beneficial between the donor's bilateral programs and the ARTF-funded projects and activities.

Regarding engaging UN agencies at GWG meetings, it was suggested that UNWOMEN and other major gender players may be invited to discussions relevant to broader gender discussions such as GBV, but that the main agenda should be the ARTF portfolio and therefore ARTF partners.

A question was raised on the decision-making process in the GWG for more pressing issues, to go beyond its useful role in sharing, discussing, advocating and influencing. It was acknowledged that the TOR is

largely silent on decision making (e.g. deciding on the issues to be escalated to SG, etc.) and that amendments may be considered to elaborate what constitutes the quorum of the GWG, whether decisions are taken by consensus, majority, etc.

Continued discussion on PFFP (Partnership Framework and Financing Program) and gender – The discussion began with sharing feedback/recommendations by the participants. Some emphasized on the importance of results framework and having a clear theory of change. The recent CPPR (Country Portfolio Performance Review) also indicated some poor performing indicators on gender equality and the need to tackle these issues from the start of the project by ensuring a proper monitoring and evaluation process throughout the project implementation was highlighted. The Bank acknowledged this issue as a large number of projects were prepared before the gender tagging requirements for all new projects, and another challenge being the government buy-in to include gender indicators. There was a possible need to think about what the ARTF could do differently in the next PFFP, beyond tagging.

A comment was made on the need for increased work with men and boys to better understand the gender dynamics and issues to provide better support with gender mainstreaming. The importance of hiring a gender specialist for each project was raised and it was recommended to spell it out in the PFFP to advance on this approach. Due to the varying nature of the projects, there is no generic TOR for gender specialists; however, the Bank is involved in reviewing the draft TORs shared by project teams.

A concern was raised on the gender analysis in Project Appraisal Documents (PADs). Donors requested if PADs could have a more project-specific gender gap analysis and a better reflection of unique challenges. The Bank clarified that the gender-tagging approach requires the government engagement to do the gender gap analysis as they are experts in their respective sector; however, due to limited capacity and long recruitment process, it is often done as part of the social impact assessments. Noting the difficulties with government take-up, the GWG should be on the look-out for proper analysis during the project approval process.

Accounting for the needs of persons with disability was also briefly discussed as a common challenge.

AOB – Some GWG members raised concerns over the fact that WEE-NPP is amongst the list of operations to be cancelled/closed by June 2020 due to the COVID-19 adjustments and sought the rationale behind the cancellation/closure of the project. It was clarified by the Bank that WEE-NPP was a 3-year Project Preparation Grant (PPG) with closing date of June 2020 with \$5m funding. Up to \$4m was unspent and would now go to COVID-19 spending. The PPG had aimed to establish a secretariat for WEE-NPP, develop results framework, etc which have been already achieved. The PPG is to close in June 2020 as originally planned. There was a vision in the government to prepare a full-fledged project on WEE with some preparation supported by the PPG, however due to focus on COVID response and more overall approach to consolidate the ARTF portfolio, the government and the Bank decided not to pursue it at this time. However, some of the envisaged activities of this project may be folded under other projects including Financial Performance Improvement Support Project (FSP) and Women's Economic Empowerment-Rural Development Program (WEE-RDP).

The Bank's Social Development Specialist briefly updated the GWG on her meeting with UNWOMEN, UNFPA, and WHO concerning the GBV hotline and shelters. Due to the urgency of the matter, as a good outcome of the meeting, UNWOMEN agreed to fund GBV hotline (6464) and reactivate it at least for 6 months.

On the agreed agenda item to be reported to the SG, it was decided that the Bank's and the GWG's recommendations/suggestions on the new PFFP will be circulated to the SG group with the aim to raise

attention to the importance of strengthening attention to gender in the new financing strategy. It was also agreed to raise some concerns of the WEE-NPP closure in June 2020 – including how government was planning to take forward WEE NPP agenda on its own.

Agreed actions –

- The Bank to share the most updated Gender Equality and Inclusion policy note.
- The Bank to share the Policy Notes Overview with the GWG after the Bank's sharing it with MOF.
- The Co-chairs to circulate the draft updates on the TOR to the GWG.
- The Co-chairs to circulate a one-pager on the set of recommendations to the PFFP made by the Bank for GWG to provide feedback and to later present the GWG recommendations to the SG meeting (in June?)