

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, February 2nd, 2021

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on February 2, 2021, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 8 donor partners¹, Women's Economic Empowerment Deputy Minister of MoWA, and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the January meeting was the following: (i) agreed actions from January GWG Meeting; (ii) MoWA presentation on future of WEE-NPP; (iii) GWG members' plans for International Women's Day advocacy; (iv) donor Co-Chair nominations; (v) WB briefing on vaccination program operation – AF to Covid-19 health project; (vi) updates to the strategy group; and (vii) AOB

Agreed actions from January GWG Meeting: 2020 CPPR (country program portfolio review) report was shared with the development partners to start thinking about the upcoming annual portfolio review and possible recommendations. DPs are welcome to join CPPR discussions as observers and provide their inputs. CPPR schedule is under discussion with the MOF aiming to hold it in late February/early March. It had been delayed this year due to competing priorities at the Ministry of Finance. The project teams (gov) will prepare a summary of the implementation/project preparation status in the template provided by the Bank to hold focused discussions. DPs were encouraged to share ideas of gender-related questions asked to the project teams e.g. whether a gender specialist is in place, impacts of COVID-19 on the project and their beneficiaries especially female. Questions/suggestions will be discussed at the March GWG meeting. In addition, Bank shared the gender section of the PFFP, and sought members for any final comments/feedback. Lastly the first draft of the set of IP-DPG policy reforms was shared and donor partners were encouraged to share their inputs through their IP working group representative.

MoWA presentation on future of WEE-NPP: Women Economic Empowerment Deputy Minister, Ms. Nazira Rahman, provided updates on the WEE deputy ministry's mandate and priorities under MoWA. She emphasized on the importance of having sustainable WEE initiatives that could generate job opportunities and contribute to the involvement of women as decision makers in policies, laws and reforms. The main focus of this deputy ministry will be to provide capacity building programs and initiatives for women, especially female-headed households (FHHs) and women with disability on food security, nutrition, economic growth, health and livelihoods through committees and working groups that will be created under MoWA's structure. The challenges mentioned by the DM were inadequate budget for MoWA's planned development programs, insufficient women teachers and mental health care centers across the country and unavailability of support centers for most vulnerable women, especially those without shelter and problems of female students in dormitories. In order to overcome the challenges, continued technical and financial support of the international donors was requested and it was proposed that the WEE-NPP and priority pillar interventions be revised and that WEE-NPP continue as the coordination body of WEE under the deputy ministry.

¹ Australia, Canada, Denmark, EU, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, US

There was a question on how WEE DM has coordinated so far with MoF on WEE-NPP. DM said that the coordination is made with the WEE-NPP head at MOF. It was further added that MoWA structure is under revision with the civil service commission, and the priority for WEE-NPP is its continuation of the program focusing on coordination with the government and non-government bodies on all WEE programs. WEE deputy ministry has planned to discuss the continuation of WEE-NPP with MoF and proposed the Bank's involvement. The Bank assured the DM that it stands ready to support in its efforts to plan the future of the program. GWG members asked DM to ensure permanent attendance of MoWA at the ARTF GWG.

GWG members' plans for International Women's Day advocacy:

Several embassies are planning joint events with their implementing partners and NGOs on GBV and/or ERAW. Australia will be coordinating a joint statement from the Friends of Afghan Women Ambassadors' Group, focusing on the important role of women in the peace process. In addition, Australia is planning for an activity under the theme of "Women in Leadership, Achieving Equal Future in COVID-19 World". Ahead of IWD, EU will launch a new US\$60 million 'Spotlight' initiative focused on fighting GBV. From the Bank's side, a couple of blogs will be published reflecting the gains made in terms of empowerment of women since 2001 and showing the commitments of the Bank towards women empowerment, in addition to panel discussions with prominent women at local and regional levels and conducting and publishing short interviews with project beneficiaries on the impact of development projects on their lives. The Bank offered to share some multi-media materials such as photos, short videos and postcards that could be jointly shared by the partners, e.g. on social media (similar to those used in the lead-up to the Geneva conference).

Donor Co-chair nominations: Noting Australia's double term as co-chair was ending, nominations from other DPs were sought. There was a nomination by the Director of Gender Affairs at USAID to take up the co-chair role for the next six months, which was unopposed during the meeting. It was proposed to give a week of opportunity for other GWG members to nominate as the donor co-chair or confirm the appointment of the US representative (note: the US nomination was subsequently confirmed, after no other nominations were received).

WB briefing on vaccination program operation – AF to Covid-19 health project: The project team could not attend the GWG February meeting due to another government meeting; however the presentation and the project paper were already shared with the donor partners, and it was proposed to have a Q&A session in the next few days and the DPs were encouraged to send their comments/suggestions to the team in the next few days as well.

Updates to the strategy group: Participants appreciated the presence of the WEE DM, and requested more regular participation from the government side – both MOWA and MOF. In addition, GWG's offer to strengthen the PFFP results framework under preparation, security and political scenarios, and introduction of the new GWG co-chair will be discussed in the upcoming Strategy Group.

AOB: It was requested to discuss the status of the ARTF-funded WEE-NPP (under MOF) in a future GWG meeting.

Agreed Actions:

- The Bank will hold a Q&A session for Afghanistan COVID-19 Vaccination Program.
- GWG donor co-chair will be announced at the next Strategy Group
- The Bank will hold a discussion on the WEE-NPP (ARTF funded program) status and the future plan

- March GWG meeting agenda will include preparation for CPPR, 2021-2024 PFFP results framework and scenario-based programming and gender as the time permits.
- DPs to reflect on last year's CPPR and share with GWG key questions for MoF to ask during upcoming CPPR