

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on January 19, 2021, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 9 donor partners¹, Incentive Program Development Policy Grant (IP DPG) technical team, and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the January meeting was the following: (i) Agreed actions from December GWG Meeting; (ii) Pipeline project discussion – Incentive Program DPG 2021; (iii) PFFP 2021-2024 scenario planning; (iv) 2021 GWG monthly meeting topics; (v) Updates to the strategy group; and (vi) AOB

Agreed actions from December GWG Meeting: One of the agreed actions was for the Bank to share the final version of the PFFP which has not been finalized yet, although the gender section has been updated, reflecting the comments received from donors. The gender section will be shared in the following week. Another agreed action was for the development partners to share and discuss agenda topics for Feb-June 2021 GWG meetings, which was later discussed during the meeting. Two December agenda items had been deferred to a later date: a presentation by MoWA Deputy Minister Rahman; and a group discussion of the outcomes of the 2020 Afghanistan (Geneva) Conference.

Pipeline project – Incentive Program DPG 2021: Lead Country Economist of the World Bank Afghanistan office briefed the GWG on the planned IPDPG 2021 and the incorporation of gender in the scenario planning presented in the PFFP. He explained that the IP is one of the major budget support operations in Afghanistan. The aim of the program is to incentivize the government to undertake policy reforms, by providing budget and technical support.

This year's IP program is structured around broader contextual environment including the ongoing political uncertainty, insecurity, difficult economic conditions due to the ongoing pandemic, and the major fiscal pressures. A few lessons learned from the previous years' implementation of the program have been that incentivization approach has proved working overall; however the large number of reforms burdened the MoF with coordination issues across ministries to track these reforms. Further, ownership by implementing agencies outside MoF was found weak. A currently ongoing evaluation of the program also provided key lessons such as the effectiveness of the reforms from policy to implementation and usefulness of technical support provision by the Bank along with incentivizing reforms through IP-DPGs. Also, private sector investment reforms have not been much effective due to security and political instability.

The IP-DPG 2021 is narrowed down to focus on 8–10 policy reforms to reduce compliance and coordination burden on the implementing agencies. The proposed structure mentioned was to align with ANPDF in areas of technical specializations, and focus on two of the three pillars: state building (ensuring government's ability to manage fiscal challenges and sustain service delivery) and market building (so to manage financial sector risks and facilitate medium term recovery from COVID-19 crisis).

¹ Australia, Canada, EU, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, US, Norway, Switzerland and Finland

The IP team encouraged donor partners to share any potential reform ideas to be included and further added that, as part of the design of this program, gender analysis to assess impacts of policy actions on women and will use gender disaggregated data for the results to mainstream gender in the program.

The project team added that the program considers the gender aspect as well for instance, sustaining the core functions of the government to provide healthcare and education services which has a gender element to it (ensuring women have access to these crucial services). The team further ensured that results framework will be developed to measure the impacts on women, such as the number of women owning businesses and/or benefiting from various services. In terms of market building, the project can make sure to track the number of women using electronic payments. Participants were reminded and encouraged to follow up on the above-mentioned interventions through their IPWG technical group member in their respective organizations and get engaged with them as early as possible.

The members reacted to the presentation by asking questions, providing comments and proposed policy actions, including:

- whether gender analysis of the ICP had been undertaken and the challenges impeding women in the economy have been identified
- what the barriers are in government and civil service and the gender implications
- again noting the need for sex-disaggregated data
- the need to do complementary work or further analysis to evaluate positive or negative implications for women (in tax reforms for example)
- civil service salary pays and the impact on education
- building in gender actions from the recently agreed APF, e.g. market-building gender assessment and APF action 2.4
- recalling the WB Policy Note on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and its policy action recommendations
- the inclusion of the APF target for 2021 on civil service recruitment/reform regarding women
- consideration of a disability inclusion target, also as part of civil service reform
- carrying out analytical work on the barriers to, for example, labor market, services and participation of people with disability; and taking stock of and evaluating policies and interventions aimed at people with disability
- more information on the barriers and challenges and how these reforms are received by government.

In response, the project team emphasized that there has been a lot of analysis on the economic empowerment of women prepared by the Bank and by other development partners. For example in 2018, the Bank worked on the civil service law and introduced positive discrimination measures to increase the number of female in the civil service and in the following year the Bank tried to implement it and set quota for female and collected data on that. The project team said it would like to pursue women in the civil service for 2021, pursuant to the law reform in recent years.

There were already proposed policy actions that captured women, including the implementation of the broader civil service pay reform. It was further added that for the Bank's engagement in the private sector, the focus will be on expansion and use of e-payments which expect to have positive impacts on women allowing them to engage in the private sector merely through their phones and the internet without having to face mobility issues. Lastly, on land, since 2017, the Bank worked on land management law, which allows for recognition of a broader range of documents as land entitlement, including marriage certificates which again helps women to access inheritance and gain ownership. Economic development and impact on

women, land access engagement and women in civil service are three critical constraints that will be dealt with this year.

On the inclusion of youth and disability, and how some of the reversed reforms could be sustained, the team highlighted the need for reducing the number of reforms to be more realistic as well as considering a mainstreaming approach.

Asked about cases where civil service reform might get ‘undone’ as a result of personality changes within Ministries, and how to ensure sustainability of reforms, the Bank responded there had not been much evidence for reform reversals and this issue is not considered alarming, however, the project focuses on avoiding situations in which the government cannot achieve the promised reforms. This had been a huge challenge – hence the Bank was aiming to avoid a long list of actions the government would struggle to achieve.

The US undertook to share the results and lessons learnt of their PROMOTE (women in economy) project which could be useful for IP-DPG as its preparation progresses. The US noted the report *Women, Business and the Law* was a useful reference.

PFFP 2021-2024 scenario planning: The Bank briefly mentioned three security scenarios and their impacts on women especially impact on women’s access to services in different security scenarios. It also suggested that GWG can bring perspectives from bilaterally financed projects that have regional point of view and plan some structured conversations that require inputs from other programs by the GWG members. It was then decided to have a separate session on the scenario planning and later discuss the finding of it at the subsequent GWG meeting. The Bank suggested members think about gendered aspects of service delivery under each potential security scenario.

2021 GWG monthly meeting topics: GWG members suggested the following topics to be discussed in the next few months:

- A briefing on the COVID vaccine support project, by the technical team to cover gender aspects of the project, a draft of which has already been circulated to development partners via a weekly email
- Preparing a possible annex for the PFFP that could reflect gender impact considerations in each security scenario.
- Discussions on the ARTF Scorecard and CPPR (the Bank encouraged GWG members to think about key common questions MoF could ask for each project – e.g. the number of women employed on project staff)
- Update from government on WEE-NPP’s future
- Sharing of advocacy plans for International Women’s Day (events, communications campaign),
- Peace talks and the current political situation
- OMAID project in pipeline (Agribusiness?)

Updates to the strategy group: Participants appreciated the presentation of the IPDPG, and it was agreed that during the upcoming Strategy Group, the GWG representatives will brief the group about this meeting, especially highlighting the challenge of engaging the government in GWG meetings. GWG representatives would also share the group’s plans to engage on the CPPR and future security scenarios. It was noted that consistent government representation was a challenge across all ARTF governance, not only for GWG.

AOB: The bank requested all donor partners to share information about any bilateral WEE programs (ongoing or pipeline) they may have. In addition, it was agreed to reach out to government, especially MoWA’s WEE-DM to join the future GWG meetings. Finally, the donor co-chair encouraged other GWG

members to nominate someone or themselves for the GWG co-chair role for a period of six months starting from March 2021.

Agreed Actions:

- Bank to resend the latest CPPR report by end Jan
- Bank to share the updated Gender section of the PFFP by end Jan
- Bank to share the first draft of the set of ICP policy actions by end Jan
- Donors to share information about bilateral WEE programs
- Donors to consider nominating for GWG Co-Chair
- Donor Co-Chair (Australia) to convene separate scenario session