

# AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

## Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### Summary of Discussions

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The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on March 2, 2021, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and US. Representatives of 9 donor partners<sup>1</sup>, and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the March meeting was the following: (i) welcome new donor co-chair Vikki Stein (USAID); (ii) discussion on the gender comments on Risk and Resilience Assessment (RRA); (iii) Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPPR) – gender as cross-cutting topic; (iv) follow up discussion on scenario-based programming for future ARTF Program; (v) International Women’s Day proposal (vii) AOB

**Welcome new donor co-chair Vikki Stein (USAID):** The Bank and donor partners appreciated the efforts of Australia as the donor co-chair for over a year and welcomed the new co-chair. The co-chair emphasized on the importance of elevating the gender issues for Afghanistan and other vulnerable populations and commitment to provide support as co-chair of the GWG to strengthen the ARTF portfolio.

**Discussion on the gender comments on Risk and Resilience Assessment:** In response to the GWG feedback on the lack of visibility of women’s issues in the Risk and Resilience Assessment, the Task team discussed how gender is integrated in the Risk and Resilience Assessment under preparation. Tobias Haque, the Task Team Leader, gave an overview of the main drivers of fragility in Afghanistan, its impact on development outcomes, the Bank’s response in the past and its effectiveness, and the Bank’s approach to help mitigate drivers and consequences of fragility. Gender issues are expected to be reflected throughout the analysis. It was noted that political economy dynamics play a significant part in the current context and years of war have led to the formation of many political/power groups inside the country. Weakening of governmental institutions exacerbated exclusion of women from accessing political power, justice, and economic resources. It was noted that the Bank’s response has been to support the government in building the core systems and providing services such as health and education for women and girls. The future scenarios included possibility of increased conflict and elevated fragility, which potentially may result in reduced access of women to some services and opportunities. A set of recommendations were presented as part of the mitigation measures to support development outcomes including but not limited to maintenance of basic services for women’s outcomes, increasing conflict-sensitive programming in close coordination with humanitarian partners. The GWG emphasized the importance of ensuring that women’s issues as one of the key discussions in the Risk and Resilience Assessment as women make up 50% of the population and face some of the greatest risks in the various scenarios presented. In addition to some of the restrictions on women’s movements and women’s safety already being seen, gender-based violence is expected to increase in some of the scenarios. A more nuanced analysis of gender issues in the various scenarios would be helpful.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia, Canada, Denmark, EU, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, UK, US

Questions were raised about the involvement of women in the Community Development Councils (CDCs), especially under the areas controlled by Anti-government Elements, and how the analysis is going to assess the women's participation as the beneficiaries of the CDCs within the projects, and concerns were raised about inclusive service delivery and economic activities.

It has been reported that effective participation of women has brought about positive changes in increasing women's voice. On the concerns raised about the outcomes for women under any possible power-sharing scenario, it was explained that the RRA has tried to include possible impacts on women and other groups in any scenario, and the gender mainstreaming approach has been considered.

IPDPG 2021 was briefly discussed and it was reported that the GWG members' comments have helped prepare policy actions. There are three gender-disaggregated-data indicators and gender-targeted action regarding the amendments to the civil servant's code to explicitly define sexual harassment along with the relevant legal framework and new procedures to handle the harassment complaints.

**Follow up discussion on scenario-based programming for future ARTF Program:** it was discussed that the scenarios be presented with a gender-focused lens as the previous presentation did not capture the gender aspects of the scenarios at all. The meeting requested the Bank to present the gender considerations under each scenario in a future meeting.

**Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPPR) – gender as cross-cutting topic:** Every year the Bank conducts the portfolio review for both the ARTF and IDA funded projects to discuss major bottlenecks and recommended actions. Part of CPPR document has been shared with the donor partners by the Bank. The GWG members were encouraged to share their questions ahead of the portfolio review and reflect upon the cross-cutting portfolio issues relating to gender.

There are a few questions already part of the CPPR on the number of female staff in PIU and presence of the gender specialist in projects and could consider adding the status of the gender indicators of the project.

Donor partners proposed questions, including:

- What are the challenges in participation of women and how did the project overcome the challenges?
- What, if any, challenges have been experienced in implementing activities to address the gender and social inclusion gaps?
- What successes or lessons learned to address the gender and social inclusion gaps?
- Describe how the project's interventions have fostered a gender-inclusive approach and/or accomplished development outcomes relating to gender.
- Have interventions reduced gender gaps in access to and control over resources and gain opportunities?
- Has the project been able to generate any documents to support gender equality (reports, studies, policies)?

The Bank reminded the participants that questions related to the design and beneficiaries of interventions might not contribute to the CPPR discussions as the projects have passed the design stages and any changes will require restructure of the project.

**International Women's Day proposal:** As part of Bank's activities, a round table or focused group discussion was proposed for the ARTF GWG considering this year's "women in leadership" theme with some young Afghan women leaders to share their experience and challenges, if there were interest from

donors. Several donor partners reported that they plan to have similar events and some suggested that a joint event could be postponed to another time in the year. It was offered by the WB gender team that if donor partners would like to collaborate with the Bank to organize a roundtable, the team is ready to organize one.

**AOB:** A representative of the Danish Embassy briefed GWG on Women's High Council meeting led by MoWA, which was launched on 8<sup>th</sup> of February. During the meeting, it was discussed that a letter/recommendation from the Palace would be sent to World Bank to transfer all WEE projects to MoWA. The Bank clarified that no official letter has been issued by the Palace.

The donor co-chair summarized donor comments that future GWG discussions can include deeper dives into the Risk and Resilience Assessment, Third Party Monitoring reporting, and a presentation on the Scorecard.