

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, October 13, 2020

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on October 13, 2020, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 10 donor partners¹, representative of Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the October meeting was the following: (i) update on the agreed actions from the August GWG; (ii) COVID-19 Discussion: a) UNWOMEN update on the impact, b) recap of World Bank response, and c) bilateral COVID responses; (iii) update on the new PFFP Preparation/Structure of input needed; and (iv) Strategy Group update

Update on the agreed actions of August GWG: A couple of donor partners did share some suggestions related to female friendly public works for the *Cash for Work* component of ENETAWF project. The second agreed action on updates to be made at the Strategy Group meeting was later discussed as agenda item of this meeting. On the donor co-chair position, Given donors' recommendations for Australia to take the second term and lack of any other nominations, Australia is taking the second term until Feb 2021. The action on donors to share their bilateral programs in response to COVID-19 was also later discussed as part of the agenda for this meeting. The last action was to encourage the participation of representatives of MOWA and MOF in GWG meeting. [REDACTED], Head of External Relations Department at the MOWA attended this meeting, while there was no representation by the MOF.

UNWOMEN update on the impact of COVID: UNWOMEN highlighted three areas women have been primarily impacted during the COVID-19 outbreak in Afghanistan, which are: increased rate of violence against women (pre-Covid-19 rate to post is from 87% to 97%), according to [REDACTED], burden of unpaid care and domestic work, and negative economic impacts show that out of the 8,000 respondents, 48% of women had reported reduced work hours and 60% reported loss of a job. UNWOMEN also shared about their responses to COVID-19 impacts on women. These include ensuring the 11 Women Protection Centers (WPCs) and five Family Guidance Centers (FGCs) funded by UNWOMEN in 12 provinces adapted to the needs of the COVID-19 and development of tailored operation protocols for all these centers in collaboration with MOWA, UNFPA, Columbo Plan, and others. PPEs were distributed to all the staff and residents of the centers, and UNWOMEN managed to work with MOPH to secure a space for women survivors of violence in the COVID treatment hospitals especially in remote provinces for quarantine purposes. As the need for expansion of WPC services arouse, UNWOMEN have started working on development of a women protection trust fund along with Australia to enable expanding these services to areas where there are none. The work on establishment of a Violence Against Women (VAW) hotline still continues and is waiting for MOWA for some processes. In terms of community-based communication related to COVID, UNWOMEN developed a campaign called Salam for Safety featuring Afghan women way of greeting while maintaining social distancing measures. UNWOMEN convened many digital panel discussions under the name Crises and Opportunity where prominent Afghan women gathered to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on women, peace process, gender in humanitarian action and more. They also set

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

up, together with other stakeholders, a gender in humanitarian action working group. The UNWOMEN published around 15 gender alerts so far, discussing the various impacts of COVID-19 on women in the areas of education, peace process, disability, gap in access to services, etc. (being translated in local languages as well). Small grants of around USD 2,000 have been given to community people who support initiatives that help women and girls during COVID. Finally, a research, on gender consequences of COVID-19 in Afghanistan with around 8,000 respondents, have been conducted and will soon be published. Given the very critical time with the ongoing peace process, development of a second Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), and the donor pledging conference in Geneva on Afghanistan, UNWOMEN urged all participants to keep firm advocacy and ensure gender is incorporated in every sphere as much as possible.

GWG members shared bilateral COVID responses:

Donor Partner	Activities related to COVID-19 response and gender
Norway	most of its gender work has been through UNWOMEN as their core donor, and through ARTF
EU	currently it is in the process of contracting a couple of projects; projects to be implemented through WHO and UNICEF all include gender and GBV related indicators and two of them are focused on strengthening GBV referral system and prevention; some of them also address nutrition and social protection needs for pregnant women.
Sweden	has no particular support on COVID response, however they have been flexible with implementing partner when it comes to their spending in response to COVID; they partner with UNWOMEN and WAW.
Finland	Provides funding to UNWOMEN, UNICEF, and the ARTF and does not have any ongoing bilateral programs related to COVID-19
Denmark	while supporting UNWOMEN, it has had some bilateral programs on COVID-19 though not gender-focused; projects going on with UNDP where CSOs are provided with grants to do community-based monitoring (Integrity Watch) of health center resources and services, and social audits of public fund disbursements; these also include campaigns in the two northern provinces of the country, Balkh and Samangan enhancing mass awareness on COVID-19 and its precautions.
Canada	has had around 7 projects bilaterally focused on women and girls' rights empowerment; in response to COVID-19, they are funding some CSOs to conduct awareness raising campaigns
Australia	has been supporting UNWOMEN but also under its Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) program, it supports some bilateral programs; Australia reported of changes in the way of work on some of its partners adapting to COVID-19 consequences such as convening online platforms to raise awareness on COVID and VAWG, tracking and receiving related online complaints, conducting survey of the situation in some provinces in terms of VAWG and how to deal with it during the pandemic and more.; some trainings such as trainings of policewomen for Family Response Units (FRUs) that were halted before are now restarting while considering social distancing measures; early on during the outbreak, Australia supported 8 clinics in four provinces with reproductive health services as most of the health-related services were then redirected to COVID response; engaged in social media campaigning related to COVID; it also helped distribution of PPE and sanitation kits for community-based education beneficiaries.
Switzerland	does not have gender-specific projects but considers it a cross-cutting theme in all projects; a bilateral project with UNDP has specific gender indicators such as provision of legal aid for women who are in shelters and detention centers; supports EVAW courts and the gender units of the justice institutions; although it does not have any projects in

	response to COVID, as a donor of UNOCHA, it has increased its funding as a result of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in response to COVID.
USAID	considers gender as a universal theme but has also had a couple bilateral activities in response to COVID and gender; under its <i>Mosharekat</i> program, it has been working with CSO women activists who provide women in need with GBV and other kinds of services; it has recently finished the 5 year grant with WHO working on developing protocols for healthcare units across country in response to GBV, and it is also designing a new activity focused on trafficking in persons with a GBV focus; it has adapted its ongoing master's and bachelor's scholarship applications so that female students can easily apply amid COVID-19.

Update from the World Bank – the Bank has helped the government with a few projects worth USD 680 million including the Covid-19 emergency response and health system preparedness project, early emergency development policy grant that includes a tranche release condition to ensure 50% of schools have codes of conduct implemented for all staff and students; REACH project which is a relief project meeting the basic needs through provision of grants to CDCs, EATS which incorporates women's social and economic participation such as kitchen gardening and short-term employment opportunities as well as their access to information on COVID-19. Going forward, there are a few projects that will support women to cope with COVID-19, including ENETAWF, Afghanistan WASH project, additional financing for CCAP.

Update on the new PFFP Preparation/Structure of input needed – The ARTF co-chair briefed on the ARTF Steering Committee meeting held in early September, in which aside from the annual update on the implementation of PFFP, development of new PFFP 2021-2024 was also discussed. The annual discussion also highlighted the importance of stronger gender emphasis for the new PFFP. The SC members also expressed their appreciation for the GWG as a technical advisory platform supporting gender mainstreaming in the ARTF portfolio. A first draft of PFFP containing two-page information on gender mainstreaming and safeguarding of women, which was developed in consultations with the GWG members over the course of the past two months, was shared with the donor partners just ahead of the meeting and preliminary feedback by end of the second week of October was requested. There will be more opportunities for further feedback sharing in the coming weeks as it is still the first draft stage. A near final document will be presented in advance of the pledging conference (Geneva conference) scheduled in late November.

Updates to the Strategy Group – It was agreed that during the upcoming Strategy Group, the GWG representatives will brief the group about this meeting where donor partners and UNWOMEN shared their work on response to COVID-19 and gender, mention of the deep-dive sessions on the Bank's gender tagging strategy that took place in August and September, GWG's work on the gender priorities in the upcoming PFFP, and re-engagement of the government in the GWG will be included in the update.

Agreed Actions:

- Development partners are requested to share their preliminary feedback/recommendation on the gender section of the new PFFP by October 16.