



## AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

### Gender Working Group Meeting

Tuesday, September 3, 2019

#### Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting on 3 September 2019. Representatives of 9 donor partners<sup>1</sup>, Ministry of Finance (MoF), and the ARTF Administrator (the World Bank/WB) attended the meeting that was co-chaired by the WB and the European Union.

Gender related updates were given on two ARTF projects: (i) Fiscal Performance Improvement Support Project (FSP); and (ii) Public-Private Partnership and Public Investment Advisory Project (PPIAP).

#### **FSP**

FSP aims to strengthen gender disaggregated statistical analysis and documentation as well as development of GRB cell under the budget department of MOF. 60 female interns have been recruited for a 9-month internship program with MOF and other ministries. The General Directorate of Internal Audit has conducted a number of audit trainings. The scholarship program has supported 8 female staff from MoF and MoE to obtain master's degrees and one female staff to receive a bachelor's degree. FSP and PFMR also supported 150 female students to take part in the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) programs.

Questions were raised on the job placement of the 60 interns supported by FSP, natures of scholarships, and gender equality challenges in the government.

The project team responded that 5 of the interns were recruited by the Internal Audit Department of the ministry, while some were recruited by the *Mustafiats* (provincial offices of MoF). The scholarship program for degrees collaborate with Dunya Univeristy (private university) and Kabul University (public university). Due to the absence of gender-responsive HR policies, harassment and gender-based discrimination issues remain. It is important for an anti-harassment procedure to be approved by the minister as soon as possible. The low capacity and high staff turnover in the Gender Unit of MoF add to the already complex gender issues. Donors requested to ensure that the Gender Units of ARTF-supported ministries should be fully functional and given closer attention by the government. One way to give more weight to GUs may be to link them to Policy Deputy Ministries (currently these units sit under Administrative and Finance DMs). It was agreed that donors collectively raise the concern at the NAP for UN resolution 1325 coordination meetings or other appropriate fora. It was also agreed to invite GU heads to the ARTF Gender Working Group meetings when their respective ministry's project teams are presenting.

#### **PPIAP**

The project is in the early stage of the implementation and a selected firm (EPTISA) has been conducting several feasibility studies. It ensures that feasibility studies include a dedicated chapter on gender to assess gender inequality, sexual harassment, facilities for female staff, etc.

<sup>1</sup> Australia, Canada, EU, UK, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, USAID



Two of the subprojects (the Barik Ab Industrial Park and Herat Industrial Park) are soon to be contracted to firms and one of the requirements is to hire a Gender Specialist as part of the core project team. In fact, multiple Gender Specialists may be needed to cover 10 sub-projects planned under PPIAP operation. GS should help enhance feasibility assessment as well as monitoring that gender-sensitive recommendations inform the project design and its implementation. The project is also making sure to have a functional GRM (Grievance Redress Mechanism) and at least one female member in the GRCs (Grievance Redress Committees). To date, PPP related trainings conducted under the project have trained 187 participants, of which 24 were women. Another round of trainings is planned targeting 135 participants in total, of which 23 are female participants. In order to accelerate the gender related project activities, it is critical to have a Gender Specialist position approved by the ministry as well as an approval of 20 female intern positions.

Questions were raised on the GRM process timeframe, gender specialist position and responsibility, monitoring system of the PPP projects and how the progress on gender activities are captured, etc.

The team confirmed that the GRM process has timeline for each step depending on the nature of the complaint. The Gender Specialist to be hired under the project will be dedicated to the project's gender issues. This position will also contribute to the proper design of gender related activities in the projects based on the feasibility studies findings and to ensure that all planned gender activities and targets are on track and achieved. The reason there is a low number of female participants in the previous trainings and the planned trainings under this project is due to i) existence of fewer female employees eligible for such technical trainings; ii) cultural norms not allowing women to go for overseas trainings, and national technical assistance (NTA) salary scale doesn't allow Mahram allowance (expenses for male family companion).

#### **Agreed Actions:**

- MoF to update the approval status of anti-harassment procedure.
- FSP Team to discuss with MoF issues on the gender experts e.g. recruitment of Gender Unit leadership.
- The World Bank, in coordination with project implementing teams, to write a one-page summary of the current status and challenges of Gender Units and how the units can be better supported to function well to narrow the gender gap.
- Relevant (i.e. presenting) ministries' Gender Unit representatives to be invited to the future ARTF GWG meetings.