

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Meeting

Tuesday, November 5, 2019

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting on 5 November 2019. Representatives of 9 donor partners¹, Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the ARTF Administrator (the World Bank, or the Bank) attended the meeting that was co-chaired by the Bank and the European Union (EU).

The agenda items were: (i) agreed actions from the Oct GWG meeting; (ii) the Women's Economic Empowerment NPP (WEE-NPP) management transition; and (iii) gender mainstreaming in ARTF Scorecards.

In continuation of the Gender Units related topics highlighted at the last couple of GWG meetings, a rich discussion continued, especially on GUs capacity and mandate. It was followed by a discussion on the transition and a likely restructuring of the WEE-NPP project to make it more dynamic to effectively advance the overall women's economic empowerment agenda beyond aggregating gender-related results. Due to the time constraints, it was agreed that any feedback on gender mainstreaming in ARTF Scorecards should be shared in writing before the next GWG meeting in early December.

Update on the Agreed Actions:

The Bank provided an update on two actions:

- 1) Sharing a note from an informal meeting with Gender Units (GUs) that was held in October:** The Bank shared a summary note with the GWG and a brief update was given at the ARTF Strategy Group in October.
- 2) Update from a meeting with IARCSC:** The Bank's Gender Specialist briefed development partners on her recent meeting with the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) Appeals Board Commissioner. The discussion covered strengthening GU's TOR, plans to build GUs capacity, and the Commission's work on the overall anti-harassment measures, including awareness raising programs, inclusion of code of conduct in the civil service orientation package for each ministry (a work in progress), and complaints registration mechanism. The IARCSC believes that the current mandate of the AIHRC (Afghanistan International Human Rights Commission) for receiving and handling GBV and harassment related complaints should be extended by the President/government and they should work closely with the IARCSC and Attorney General's office (AGO) on complaints they receive depending on required actions (disciplinary vs. legal). It was conveyed that the IARCSC requests technical and financial support for some of the planned activities (listed above) as well as the development of a GBV toolkit and case management mechanism, and inclusion of anti-harassment topic in the leadership program curriculum to build the capacity of targeted civil service staff, mostly for female staff. Currently, these activities are both technically and financially supported by *Promote* in the IARCSC Institute; however, sustainability beyond *Promote* is questionable. Participants shared concerns on lack of clarity within the government on GUs roles and reporting line and the roles of MoWA and IARCSC to strengthen GUs. The Bank also reminded that

¹ Australia, Canada, EU, Sweden, Netherlands, US, Norway, Denmark, and Germany (KfW Development Bank)

ARTF currently does not have a direct engagement in strengthening GUs, but GWG could play a role to facilitate dialogues on these important topics among key stakeholders.

MOF reiterated an importance of MOWA being represented in future GWG meetings. The Bank's Gender Specialist plans to brief DM MOWA in the next couple of weeks depending on DM's schedule on issues raised and opportunities highlighted during the informal meeting with GU representatives in October, and she noted to remind MOWA that they are encouraged to join future ARTF GWG meetings as they did earlier.

(ii) WEE-NPP Transition Discussion

WEE-NPP aims to advance Afghan women's independence and welfare by expanding their access to economic resources and markets, and to reform the various government policies to support these development goals. The update of WEE-NPP management transition from MoLSA to MOF was made by the Bank's task team and the MOF Director of NPPs Implementation and Coordination. As of Oct 30, 2019, WEE-NPP has been transitioned to MOF, but it was also noted that some administrative and procurement activities/packages have been pending due to the transition. Key leadership positions of the program, Program Director and Deputy Director, are currently vacant. An MoU will be officially signed between the ministers of MoLSA and MoF shortly to make the transition official. The transition decision was made during the ARTF portfolio review led by MOF in Feb/Mar 2019. Due to the recent establishment of NPP coordinating body (the Directorate) under MOF, and WEE-NPP being one of the national priority programs, it was recommended to shift WEE-NPP to MOF. MOF and the Bank are in discussion to reset/redesign WEE-NPP to make it more effective and realistic in achieving its objective. An implementation support mission (ISM) in Nov will focus on the future of WEE-NPP and the task team will report back to the GWG on the outcome of the ISM.

Donor partners appreciated the resetting idea, however they expressed concerns about sustainability of the program without government's political and financial commitment. The Bank's task team leader said that WEE-NPP, as an umbrella program, has made good progress through various projects in line ministries and that WEE-NPP's project preparation grant functioned well to aggregate the outcomes and results. However, the government has not taken full responsibility of this program and that there are overlaps between the 1325 NAP and WEE-NPP, which should be discussed with their implementing bodies, the MoFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and MoWA, in the future. If the program goes through a reset process, there will be an opportunity to revisit the potential for having MOWA more formally involved in the WEENPP, which could potentially help strengthen the ministry as well. The low disbursement of the WEE-NPP budget should not be a concern at this stage until a clearer future plan is set.

Gender Mainstreaming in Scorecard

This agenda item was not discussed as the time ran out. It was agreed that the donors will share comments and the Bank will consolidate them for discussion in December.

Agreed Actions:

- World Bank to invite MOWA to the future GWG meetings to re-engage them
- The Bank team to share with the donors a summary of the discussion on the future of WEE-NPP planned for mid-November
- Donors to provide written comments on the Scorecard focusing on gender aspects of it prior to the Dec GWG meeting.