

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, June 2, 2020

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on May 5, 2020, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 7 donor partners¹ and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting. No government representative joined this meeting.

The agenda for the June GWG meeting was the following: (i) status update of the actions agreed at the May GWG meeting; (ii) COVID-19 Development Policy Grant (DPG) discussion; (iii) COVID-19 Relief Effort for Afghan Communities and Households (REACH); (iv) PFFP 2021-2024 and gender considerations – consolidated donors' comments; (v) TOR of independent assessment of the previous third-party monitoring contractor's performance; and (vi) AOB

Status of the actions agreed at the May GWG meeting – The latest version of the Gender Equality and Inclusion Policy Note had been shared with the donor partners prior to the meeting and the Bank would share the Policy Notes Overview after the June GWG meeting (shared on June 3). A draft update of the ARTF GWG TOR was to be circulated to the GWG; however, since June meeting was already packed with many topics to be covered (and relevant key documents were shared in advance), this action was postponed until July GWG. Lastly, the one-pager on the gender considerations for the upcoming PFFP 2021-2024 was circulated and donor partners provided feedback on the recommendations and a matrix of response to the comments would be shared with donors in the coming week.

COVID-19 Development Policy Grant (DPG) – A brief overview of the emergency program (\$200 million IDA/ARTF) to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic was given by the Task Team Leader. A number of consultations have been held, primarily through the Incentive Program Working Group (IPWG) and the program is at the final stage of refining the design. There are six policy actions that have been identified under this program and the expected WB Board approval date is in mid-July. A gender policy action - Ministry of Education (MOE) approval of the Gender-based Violence (GBV) Action Plan and its Implementation Plan developed by the Inter-agency Technical Group (IATG) is included in the DPG. Additionally, a policy action on access to mobile wallets (e-money) promotes female access to e-money aiming to support women's financial inclusion. Four remaining policy actions include various mechanisms with positive impacts on women. Through the gender-tagging process, a gender analysis, identification of actions to fill gender gaps, and monitoring mechanism to support women's voice and agency and overall gender-mainstreaming have been strengthened.

The Bank team elaborated that the GBV Action Plan for MOE has been finalized through the IATG and approved by the ministry, which is already a major milestone achievement and the ministry is working on implementation arrangements for the planned actions. The World Bank will review the Action Plan against the comments provided by the partners to identify whether those comments have been incorporated to the Action Plan.

The Bank co-chair raised a question regarding how the GWG may be involved in the upstream of the preparation to provide feedback on DPGs to ensure gender impacts are carefully considered in the future

¹ Australia, EU, Norway, Denmark, Finland, US, and the Netherlands

programs. The Task Team Leader emphasized the importance and practicality of keeping the IPWG as the primary mechanism to seek donors' inputs for the future DPGs. The Bank and the donor co-chair also emphasized the importance of continued internal coordination between the IPWG and GWG members within donor agencies and proactively reaching across different working groups so that timely gender actions recommendations could be highlighted early in the preparation stage. For the next preparation of IP DPG (starting around Oct 2020), an increased effort will be made to involve the GWG at upstream.

Some concerns about not having sex-disaggregated data for some key indicators were raised. For example, SMEs should be disaggregated by SME owners' sex through reporting requirements set by the banks providing loans to SMEs. Another indicator, *number of GE (general education) schools provided with training on the school code of conduct*, should be disaggregated by boys' and girls' schools as based on the past experiences usually girls schools are excluded from various activities/operations, therefore there should be a way to ensure equal number of girls and boys schools are covered under this policy action. Lastly, for the indicator - *proportion of healthcare workers with access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* – it should be sex-disaggregated given the lower access of female healthcare workers to various benefits.

On the SMEs with access to loans, it was deemed impossible at this time for a couple of reasons, one being the project works with the Central Bank on this policy action and not directly with individual commercial banks that are the primary lenders of loans to the SMEs. In order to collect such data, banks have to change the loan forms which is unlikely to meet the timeline of this emergency response at this round. However, the team assured to look into it in the future. On the healthcare workers with access to PPE, it was clarified that the project recently changed the indicator to 'the number of provincial hospitals with access to PPE, rather than healthcare workers. On the education indicator, the team explained that the MOE initially intends to cover 50% of the entire schools and eventually aims for 100%. Additionally, since many schools operate in two shifts for boys and girls at different hours/days, it would be difficult to track this level of disaggregated data. However, the team agreed to consult the education team on this and see how the indicator could possibly capture sex-disaggregated achievements.

COVID-19 REACH – gender questions matrix – The task team leader for REACH briefed on the project preparation update especially how gender issues are addressed in its design.

REACH aims to provide cash or food packages especially those households living less than \$2 a day to address the household level COVID-19 shock. The project's design is to leverage the CDC platform under CCAP and directly put the money in the hands of community, which is different from the bread distribution initiative implemented during the Ramadan. Given the urgency, the project is considering using facilitating partners (FPs) with only 10% administrative cost and will apply exclusion criteria instead of inclusion criteria to ensure that majority of population benefit from it. Component-wise, rural areas will be implemented by MRRD, urban by IDLG, and the Kabul part by KM (Kabul Municipality).

In terms of gender aspects, a draft gender annex has been prepared to be part of the project appraisal document (PAD). There are many elements in the project which address gender gaps such as an indicator to identify sex-disaggregated head of the HH (household), getting as much female staffing in the FPs as possible with minimum of 25%, involving female members of the CDCs, and ensuring project communication includes messaging on COVID-19 related health precautions, and women's entitlement under the project.

In response to a suggestion to have female staff in the M&E team, the task team informed that the project plans to have 3 layers of M&E; the first of which is community participatory monitoring where the project will ensure to have female representatives. The second layer is in the FPs where at least a quarter of the social organizers would be women, and the third layer is to conduct national level phone call surveys to the

beneficiaries (package recipients) within the 48 hours of the distribution to ensure the packages reach the intended recipients.

In response to a comment, the team clarified that it will be difficult to consider tailored packages for households with children/lactating/pregnant women. However, under the project, a community-based household registry will be developed, which will record information on the locations of widows, female-headed households (FHHs) which will be useful for future service deliveries and data analysis. In addition, the cash transfer mechanism in the urban areas will pave the way for other projects like PAISA and SAFI to undertake additional support to such groups in the future. On the concern related to women's mobility constraints in the rural areas (if they are required to come out to the collection centres), it was mentioned that where widows and FHHs have mobility issues, the project will consider a door-to-door distribution services as well. Also, the collection centres/distribution points will have gender sensitive arrangements like separate queues for women, assistance in carrying packages for elderly and female collectors, and at least one female staff for female safety and grievances recordings will be assigned.

WEE-NPP status update - The task team leader of the project **provided an update on the WEE-NPP**. In consultation with the government, the project is now scheduled to close one month earlier than originally planned (end June 2020) with some activities left incomplete including innovation grants while other activities will be completed as planned including provision of legal support to MoWA (Ministry of Women Affairs), gender statistics support to National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), and upgrading of the WEE-NPP website. Although the original plan for WEE-NPP was to close the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) and start a phase II of the project worth of \$30-40 million, based on lessons learned during the PPG implementation such as ensuring budget support and policy reform, tightening up indicators in the results framework, and working on a broader facility to support female entrepreneurs under the innovation grants component. Due to the World Bank's portfolio restructuring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original plan shifted to move some of the WEE-NPP activities under other projects such as IP-DPG – for policy reforms, Financial Performance Improvement Support Project – for coordination, and Strengthening Afghanistan's Financial Intermediation – for the innovation fund component.

PFFP 2021-2024 and gender considerations – It was agreed that the ARTF team will share a response matrix against the comments provided by donor partners on the PFFP 2021-2024 and gender considerations. The comments so far have been collected from five donor partners and others were encouraged to provide their recommendations as well. Regarding the comments on gender-tagging approach, the often used terminology “gender-tagging” does not justify a large volume of work undertaken during both the preparation and the implementation phases. WB's gender team offered to organize a dedicated briefing session on what it entails to “gender-tag” a project. Since the Bank-wide roll out, every single project has been prepared using the approach and 100 per cent of the projects since the rollout have been gender-tagged. On a separate topic, almost 90% of the ARTF funded projects have a gender specialist or a gender focal point. A separate Strategy Group focusing on the PFFP was proposed, especially to discuss on the cross-cutting themes to enhance effectiveness of the ARTF portfolio, including gender, anti-corruption, social and environmental safeguards, etc.

TOR of the Independent assessment of the previous third-party monitoring contractor's performance - A short presentation on the TPM contractor performance was provided by the ARTF team. It was explained that the WB third party monitoring was divided into two contracts, one on fiduciary issues (monitoring agent) and another on field level progress (supervisory agent) until December 2019. Since then, these two monitoring activities are consolidated under one contract. Based on the ARTF administration agreement, the Bank is required to conduct and provide findings of an independent assessment of the TPM performance to the ARTF donors upon completion of each contract. This same requirement was also raised

when the US Special Instructor General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) did its last performance audit of USAID's contributions to ARTF to which the Bank agreed and is planning to do so for the previous TPM agents' performance. The Bank shared a TOR for the independent assessment of the previous TPM and requested donor partners to share comments and observations by Tuesday, 9th June 2020 with the consideration that both the scope of the assessment and its timeline may have to be limited given COVID-19 challenges.

AOB – A Finnish representative highlighted the upcoming donors' pledging conference for Afghanistan and the on-going discussion regarding the next mutual accountability framework (MAF) and its monitoring approach. Since gender is a crosscutting theme, a greater synergy around the important agenda amongst the next Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, PFFP, and MAF is expected. It was proposed that the Finnish embassy's MAF facilitating team to make a MAF presentation especially on gender for a future GWG meeting for strategic alignment.

Agreed Actions:

- The Bank to share the Policy Notes Overview document with the donor partners. (Done on June 3)
- The Bank to share the full matrix of the PFFP gender considerations with the consolidated donor comments and Bank responses with the donor partners by the next GWG meeting.
- WB to share the COVID-19 REACH project presentation as well as updated gender annex. (Done on June 3)
- Development partners to review and share comments on the TOR of the independent assessment of the previous TPM by Tuesday, June 9th, 2020
- The Bank's IP-DPG team to discuss with the Bank's education team on the sex-disaggregation possibility of the indicator on GBV action plan policy reform under MoE and report back at the next GWG meeting.