

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Virtual Meeting

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on July 7, 2020, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and Australia. Representatives of 9 donor partners¹ and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the July meeting was the following: (i) status update of the actions agreed at the June GWG meeting; (ii) PFFP 2021-2024 and gender considerations – consolidated donors’ comments and matrix of responses; (iii) COVID-19 Emergency Response – Agriculture and Food Supply Project (EATS); (iv) TOR for GWG; (v) Update on WB GBV Response Initiatives/Efforts including Response to Logar GBV incident; and (vi) AOB

Status of the actions agreed at the June GWG meeting: The Policy Notes Overview was shared with donor partners on June 3rd. The Bank had shared the full matrix of PFFP gender consideration with donors’ comments and Bank’s response on July 7th. COVID-19 REACH project presentation and gender annex were shared with donor partners. Development partners provided comments on the ToR of GWG. IP-DPG team checked with Education team on prioritizing girls schools for the reform actions. It was reported that as there is a lack of clear data on the number of schools based on sex as a large number of schools are either co-ed, boys or girls only or both sex in different shifts. MOE will first target easy to reach and secure areas, therefore it will be challenging for the government to track this indicator, but it was mentioned that priority would be given to girls and co-ed schools and collecting disaggregated data based on boys’ or girls’ schools will be considered. The ultimate goal is to cover all schools.

PFFP 2021-2024 and gender considerations – consolidated donors’ comments and matrix of response
– In several previous meetings, the topic on the gender consideration in PFFP was discussed and donor partners provided comments in writing, coordinated by the Donor Co-Chair. The Bank shared responses to the comments just before the July meeting. To give GWG Members more time with the document, it was agreed that the process of commenting and inputs from the Bank be continued. The Donor Co-Chair offered to distil the matrix into a shorter product for presentation to the next Strategy Group meeting and seek further GWG input.

In response to a few comments/concerns on the way the Bank prepares and monitors projects to enhance gender inclusion (namely, “gender tagging” exercise), the Bank offered to organize a gender tagging briefing by its gender specialists based in Washington. The tagging process will be illustrated through a couple of projects recently designed. It was suggested the session should also include a discussion of the layers of gender policy dialogue the WB undertakes with government. Since 2018, all investment projects and budget support operations have been gender-tagged. Donors were requested to think about topics beside the gender tagging practice to be covered by the ARTF 101 orientation session for new donor representatives.

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

COVID-19 Emergency Response – Agriculture and Food Supply Project (EATS) – The project team presented the design and gender aspects of the emergency project. The Board date is expected for August 2020. With a budget of USD 115 million (it was later changed to \$100 million) and period of two years, the project aims to support rural communities including smallholder farmers and private SMEs with food production, access to productive assets such as irrigation and watershed infrastructures, employment, and market linkages.

The project aims to address four types of gender gaps identified through a gender analysis: helping the female-headed households and households without able-bodied men with income support and food and water services (FHHs access to services); supporting female farmers through kitchen gardening and agricultural inputs (employment gap in agriculture sector); raising awareness of the female beneficiaries on COVID-19, hygiene, nutrition, and safe usage of water (access to information); and finally helping female employees at Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation in their career development and enrolment in various technical trainings. The project will leverage various existing structures/women's groups such as CDCs and village women organizers under other projects including CCAP, OFWMP, and NHLP to identify female beneficiaries and ensure their constant engagement in various stages of the project implementation. The project is also planning to consider some elasticity in the seed distribution subsidy - beneficiary contribution for FHHs and HHs without able-bodied men (30% instead of 40%). A sizable village women organizers (VWOs) are planned to be hired to facilitate women's outreach and participation in the project activities. The team so far has been able to have some consultations with other development partners including FAO, WFP, USAID GRAIN, EU, and ADB to ensure there are no duplications and that the services are targeting those who are in need.

The project has one gender-specific indicator: a PDO level indicator of number of female farmers and agro-enterprises reached with agricultural assets or services provided by the project. Other gender-specific indicators are yet to be developed as part of the results framework.

A question was asked about the target areas of the project under water supply component and how the project will ensure to cover the very hard to reach and inaccessible areas. The team noted that the wheat distribution will be a national rollout covering people in dire need, but the water supply component will only cover certain provinces. Another comment asked if the project is intending to consider women-owned/run SMEs under its sub-component B, support to SMEs in the food supply chain impacted by COVID-19. The team highlighted that all SMEs and SME run by women would be given a preference. The upcoming pipeline project Strengthening Afghanistan's Financial Intermediation (SAFI), an IDA-funded project, will complement these efforts and would work more directly for the female-owned SMEs

In response to a comment requesting engaging the donor partners at the early design stages of the project, the Bank explained that there have been some challenges this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was explained that the Bank would normally seek endorsement of the list of pipelines on annual basis from the ARTF Steering Committee (SC). However due to the COVID situations, the list of the new pipelines emerging including EATS, has not yet been shared with the Steering Committee that is planned to convene in August this year. However, the Bank has kept the donor partners involved and updated on preparation of these pipeline projects as much as possible.

GWG ToR – Based on GWG discussions at the May meeting, suggested changes in the text of the TOR were summarized. On the decision-making method, it was discussed that since the ARTF governance procedure assigns the decision-making authority to the Strategy Group, the GWG could only make representations or recommendations through the SG. It was decided that any conclusions will be made based on no-objection, which was added in the ToR. All proposed changes were agreed by the GWG based

on a no-objection procedure. These changes will be reflected in the updated GWG ToR and circulated to the GWG members.

Update on WB GBV Response Initiatives/Efforts including Response to Logar GBV incident – the Bank's team comprised of the sustainable development (SD), education, and health representatives updated the GWG on the Bank's recent GBV response initiatives emerging from the Logar GBV allegations. Since the sexual abuse cases in Logar, the Bank initiated a process involving the government's ministries including Finance (MoF), education (MOE) and public health (MOPH) directed by the IATWG (Inter-agency Technical Working Group) targeting changes to the systemic barriers to GBV prevention and mitigation. The process first began with MOE and recently a similar one was initiated at MOPH. As the Policy DM who championed the initiatives is no longer in the MOF, the Bank is following up with MOF to identify a replacement staff. The Bank hired several short-term consultants to help both education and health teams in this process. The IATWG is set to meet in August where both ministries will provide an update of the developments so far to the group.

Progress at MOE – the investigations on Logar sexual abuse allegations is still ongoing by the Attorney General's Office and the lengthy process is due to school closures. Since the development of the GBV Action Plan, short-term activities have been undertaken (to be completed till August) including literature reviews, and reviews of the legal framework around GBV prevention and mitigation, and longer-term activities are planned to commence afterward. The short-term activities are supported under EQRA project which is undergoing a restructuring phase right now where a DLI (Disbursement-linked Indicator) will be added to support the implementation of GBV action plan. Under a DPG, a reform action/indicator to roll out the staff Code of Conduct across the education sector in the coming year.

Progress at MOPH – the GBV mitigation and prevention process only began two months ago at MOPH and that is because the ministry has been busy with COVID challenges and that the ministry's leadership saw many changes recently. The Bank has been able to brief the new minister on the plans and a focal point was introduced by the ministry in this regard (DM of policy and plan). SEHATMANDI project has just had an MTR (Mid-term review) and soon the team will start technical discussions at MOPH around topics including strengthening the capacity of the gender unit, collaboration with other MOPH partners such as UNFPA and WHO, health sector GBV stakeholder mapping, and the eventual development of a GBV Action Plan for MOPH. The plan is to also integrate GBV prevention measures in the context of COVID-19 circumstances.

A question was asked about any results/conclusions coming from the Logar incident, if any similar cases have been detected in other parts of the country, and what temporary measures have been taken to stop these incidents from happening. It was responded that the Bank has not been involved in the investigation process, however, Bank's efforts has been more on bringing systemic changes – more of a medium-term plan than an emergency response - to prevent the occurrence of such incidents in the future. And as the code of conduct will be rolled out in around 50% of the schools across the country in a period of 18 months, it is expected that awareness will be created among schools and parents on the situation and the mitigation measures and resources available.

Another query was at the nature of capacity building efforts at gender unit whether that will be more of trainings or mentorship and advisory role. The team responded that while technical assistance including hiring of one or two consultants for the Unit might be considered, more on what and how to help the gender unit in tackling GBV in health sector will emerge once there is further discussion with the unit as well as other development partners including UNFPA that is currently helping MoPH.

Agreed actions –

- The Co-chairs will share a clean (with new changes accepted) version of the GWG ToR with all.
- The WB to set up a separate deep dive session on the gender policy advocacy and gender tagging strategy of the Bank with inclusion of some detailed case studies on the already tagged operations (to be open to GWG members and others who are interested).
- GWG members to look at the matrix of the PFFP consolidated comments and response and provide any further comments – and Co-chairs to work on preparing a shorter version for presentation to the Strategy Group.