

AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND (ARTF)

Gender Working Group Meeting

Monday, October 7, 2019

Summary of Discussions

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting on 7 October, 2019. Representatives of 11 donor partners¹, Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Rural, Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the ARTF Administrator (the World Bank) attended the meeting that was co-chaired by the WB and the European Union (EU).

The agenda items were: (i) Gender Units (GUs) discussion update; (ii) Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP); and (iii) Women Economic Empowerment-Rural Development Program (WEE-RDP).

Following up on the September GWG meeting, WB held an informal meeting with Gender Units leaders from 12 ministries to identify challenges and opportunities. Presentations were made on gender-focused activities undertaken by WEE-RDP and CCAP. WEE-RDP has collaborated a number of rural programs to facilitate delivery of various services to rural beneficiaries, especially for women. Opportunities highlighted include using SHG platform to; i) engage rural women, ii) build capacity of rural women, iii) enable rural women to obtain Tazkira/ID and bank accounts, and iv) connect them to the market. CCAP conducts various community-wide exercises, including Women's Mobility Mapping (WMM), to make services more accessible to women.

Agreed Actions Update

The meeting started with the updates on the agreed actions at the September GWG meeting: (i) update on the recruitment of the GU Head at MOF, (ii) anti-harassment procedure approval by MOF, (iii) identification of challenges faced by GUs of various ministries, and (iv) relevant GU representatives' participation for future ARTF GWG meetings. Head of the Government Coordination Directorate of MOF reported that the recruitment of the Head of GU position for MOF is still in progress (she is acting as the Head of GU for MOF in the meantime). As for the approval of the anti-harassment procedure by MOF, the ministry is considering including anti-harassment as part of the Code of Conduct in the civil service employment contracts, rather than having a separate document. However, the approach was unclear for existing staff. WB's Gender Specialist reported back on an informal lunch meeting held with GU representatives from 12 ministries the day before (see Annex). Finally, Head of the GU at MRRD attended the September GWG meeting as CCAP and WEE-RDP projects were discussed.

Gender Units Discussion Update

The WB Gender Specialist reported back some of the challenges discussed during the informal meeting with the Gender Units representatives. Among the challenges raised were inconsistencies in ToRs of GUs across ministries, lack of/limited leadership support from respective ministries, lack of coordination, and harassment and negative perceptions toward GU staff. While MoWA does provide technical support to GUs through monthly meetings and giving advice on anti-harassment guidelines and implementations, further support is needed to make GUs more effective.

WEE-RDP

WEE-RDP is designed to empower women in selected rural communities socially and economically. As of today, 5,462 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been formed; 82% of them women and 85% of loans issued belongs

¹ Australia, Canada, EU, UK, Italy, Finland, Norway, Denmark, USAID, DFID, Germany

to female SHGs. Opportunities highlighted include using SHG platform to; i) engage rural women, ii) build capacity of rural women, iii) enable rural women to obtain Tazkira/ID and bank accounts, and iv) connect them to the market.

A question was raised on WEE-RDP's collaboration with development partners and other rural programs to further facilitate the services to its beneficiaries. The team confirmed some ongoing collaboration with other programs e.g. the project uses the well-being analysis delivered by CCAP for selecting beneficiaries; it signed MoU with ARTF funded National Horticulture and Livestock Project to train rural women entrepreneurs in livestock and kitchen gardening; it also worked with MOPH/Sehatmandi on providing nutrition training in selected districts; etc. Under WEE-RDP's financial inclusion component, the project recently signed an MoU with commercial bank to help create bank accounts for its female beneficiaries. The one big challenge for this project has been to find qualified female candidates for various positions in the provinces and to address this issue, the project team is in touch with MoWA, and other entities to attract more female applicants.

CCAP

The Citizen's Charter aims to improve the delivery of core infrastructure and social services to participating communities through strengthened Community Development Councils (CDCs). One of the most important features of this project is the 50% participation of women in almost all interventions under the project. Women are part of the CDCs' Lead positions, participants of the various activities such as developing Community Development Plan (CDP), conducting Women's Mobility Mapping (WMM), Leaking Pot Analysis (analysing incomes and expenses), well-being analysis among others. Additionally, female-headed households are one of the main beneficiaries of the Social Inclusion Grants (SIGs).

Questions were raised on the purpose of WMM, coordination between WEE-RDP and CCAP (see under WEE-RDP), M&E procedures, and the potential impact of women's participation in the CDCs.

The WMM is a tool to better understand women's mobility and to ensure services are accessible for women. Under WEE-NPP, with the support of CCAP, these maps are planned to be digitized and made accessible for other development programs. In the long run, CCAP is planning to conduct a study on how the women's mobility pattern has changed over the course of the project.

On project monitoring, there are a few layers of progress monitoring of activities, including women's participation. Firstly, there are monitoring committees formed in each CDC that oversee the progress of various aspects of the project. Then, social organizers monitor progress and civil society provides feedback to the project based on their observations. The Third Party Monitoring is another monitoring mechanism to identify good practices and areas of improvement. Finally, M&E department of MRRD also monitors the project activities.

With regards to the impact of the women's participation at the CDCs and the subsequent social change, it will take more time until a good number of CDC sub-projects are completed before an impact assessment may be considered to assess the impact of the project's interventions on women. Cultural and security challenges in women's participation remain in some CDCs.

Agreed Actions:

- WB to share a brief summary of the Oct 6 meeting with GUs.
- Development partners to seek support of ministries' leadership to strengthen GU functions through their bilateral dialogues.
- WB to briefly update GWG on the WEE-NPP transition progress at the next meeting.