



Gender Working Group Meeting

Monday, June 14, 2021 3:00PM - 4:30PM (GMT + 4:30)
Virtual Format

Minutes of Meeting

The ARTF Gender Working Group (GWG) held its monthly meeting virtually on June 14, 2021, which was co-chaired by the World Bank (the Bank) and the USAID. Representatives of 7 donor partners¹, WEE-RDP team and the ARTF Administrator attended the meeting.

The agenda for the June meeting was the following: (i) Welcome and Pulse survey readout; (ii) Discussion on Draft Indicative Gender RF; (iii) WEE-RDP follow up discussion (operating in insecure areas); and (iv) Country Portfolio Performance Review on Gender/AOB

The Bank informed the donor partners that 2021-2024 PFFP for ARTF was endorsed by the ARTF Steering Committee on June 9th and thanked the development partners for their timely and valuable inputs to strengthen the gender section of the PFFP. Pulse survey responses were shared, WEE-RDP options to operate challenging environment were presented and discussed and draft gender results framework was discussed.

1. Welcome and Pulse survey readout

- A survey was sent to the donor partners by the USAID donor co-chair with the objective to ensure topics that are interesting to many donors are covered in the future GWG meetings. A summary of the responses was shared with the GWG members. CCAP and ALASP were listed among priority projects to be discussed at upcoming meetings. Other topics requested are technical briefings on the implementation of the Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), humanitarian-development coordination, gender tagging, and GBV preventions. More regular updates on the results of TPM were requested by donor partners. GWG members appreciated the recent involvement of the Bank's wider gender team. They requested that the discussion topics should be set in advance. Finally, for new GWG members, orientation materials would be useful.
- On the TPM, ARTF representative said that the reports are prepared on quarterly basis and briefings should be provided accordingly to go over the quarterly findings. For new GWG members, it was agreed that the ARTF GWG ToR and relevant key materials will be recirculated before the next GWG meeting.

2. WEE-RDP follow up discussion (operating in insecure areas)

- The donor co-chair shared GWG members' concerns regarding the WEE-RDP's draft strategy (working document) on operating in insecure areas where direct engagement with

¹ Australia, Canada, EU, Sweden, Denmark, UK, and Finland

women could cause serious challenges and security threats. Regarding an option to mobilize and engage men to indirectly reach out to women, the main concerns expressed by several donors were on the ability of the project to fulfill its objectives and potential negative effect on the achievement of the Afghanistan Partnership Framework's gender objectives since the approach is unlikely to help empower women in Afghanistan.

- The WEE-RDP task team thanked the donor partners for their thoughtful feedback so as not to compromise the integrity of the program. The task team explained that the design of the project is such that in each community, it targets to mobilize 20% men and 80% women. As such, the project design does allow mobilization of men. It was noted by the task team that the proposed plan does not follow a one-size-fits-all approach and is based on the recommendations made by the Facilitating Partners with years of local experiences in insecure areas. Currently, 20% of the 3,774 CDCs are in insecure areas, and the project is successfully mobilizing women in the rest of the areas as per the project plan. The proposed approach highlights that by mobilizing men, it will create an entry point to engaging women, in addition to mobilizing couples. It was highlighted that MRRD has experience in mobilizing FPs in insecure areas, and the current strategy is developed in consultation with the implementing agency, tapping into their long history of working in both secure and insecure areas. It was also added that the concept note is proposing time-based disbursement in tranches, where the installments may stop if the project does not continue with the mobilization of the communities or fails to adhere to the standard financial procedures. The task team sought GWG's views on whether the project should rather withdraw from the high-risk areas if operation becomes impossible due to the presence of armed groups and active conflicts.
- Regarding a GWG member's question on possibility of providing digital financial services, the task team noted that it has considered the option and been introducing a pilot in some areas, but it turned out it is not feasible to switch from cash handling distributions to the digital distributions due to two main constraints - access to ID and access to the digital network. Even in urban areas like Kabul, there are extremely limited digital financial services offered/received and much worse in rural areas. The team noted that the concept note is still in draft and all recommendations and suggestions of the development partners will be taken into account and the final design will facilitate the achievement of the PDO.
- The project's executive director provided updates including increasing number of CDCs and districts facing insecurity and disruptions. The project further informed a recent kidnap of four employees. The news from the CDCs and districts under the anti-government entity indicates that women cannot leave their houses without being accompanied by men. The project also suggested working with displaced women who have recently moved to the center of provinces due to the ongoing conflict, which could potentially contribute to their economic wellbeing as they don't have the financial means to support themselves after fleeing their homes. The project team agreed that it could be a viable alternative, but data need to be gathered on the displaced women disaggregated by districts before taking the approach. Another proposed alternative was increasing the number of activities in more secure areas while withdrawing the project's engagement in insecure areas. The project team recommended flexible and pragmatic approach as the ground situation is rapidly changing.
- The EU emphasized the importance of the project's being fully aligned with the principles of financial support to Afghanistan agreed at the 2020 Geneva Conference, which are spelled out in the Afghanistan Partnership Framework. Among the key principles are the empowerment of women and gender equality. Any solution/strategy should convey the message that the project is committed to gender equality and any compromise is not negotiable, specifically when it comes to financing development projects.
- Finnish development partner acknowledged the fact that the project has already achieved its target of female beneficiaries (83%) but encouraged the project to consider displaced

women and/or engage with other CDCs to mobilize more women. It was also discussed that the project could pilot some of the concept note strategy in order to analyze the feasibility of the alternatives. Adding to this, US co-chair also emphasized on piloting some of the alternatives, including working with the recently displaced women from the districts and couples to better understand the power dynamics and the management of resources in the context of the insecure areas. And, lastly UK also supported that project should not take an approach that could compromise the values and principles of the Afghanistan Partnership Framework.

- The Bank team thanked all the guidance received from GWG members and stated that the team will continue to update ARTF GWG and seek its guidance from time to time to achieve the objectives of the project.

3. Discussion on Draft Indicative Gender RF

- WB M&E Specialist gave a brief update on the current status of the overall ARTF results framework, which was then used as a basis to develop a gender-specific results framework. She added that the Afghanistan Partnership Framework (APF) and its three pillars (peace building, state building and market building) were reviewed to determine how the project indicators directly contribute to the pillars at the outcome and output level. ARTF pillars were also reviewed and adjusted to align with the pillars of APF.
- A database was developed for all the indicators of all the ARTF active projects including gender disaggregated indicators. The results framework also shows how and to which SDGs a specific indicator is addressing. As there are many gender disaggregated indicators, it was decided to have a separate gender specific results framework.
- The WB Afghanistan's gender focal point explained the alignment amongst APF, ARTF WB Gender strategy with its four pillars (human endowments, jobs, assets and voice and agency) and SDGs. Strategic objectives are drawn from the overall results framework and the intermediate outcome indicators are directly drawn from project-level indicators. It was noted that the results framework is a draft and there is a plan to hold a series of donor partners consultations through which the final results framework will be developed. The aim of this presentation was to show how project-level indicators have synergy with the broader development goals, and to present the gender efforts in a more results-oriented method. The Bank team requested donors to provide any preliminary feedback before the planned structured consultation in July-August 2021.
- Development partners appreciated the information shared on the overall and gender-specific results frameworks, especially how broader development goals (APF, SDGs, etc) are related and connected. The results framework discussions to informally start Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group was also requested by Finland.

4. Country Portfolio Performance Review on Gender/AOB

- There was no time to discuss CPPR findings on gender. As part of AOB, the donor co-chair informed that SIGAR (Special Instructor General for Afghanistan Reconstruction) has done an in-depth study on lessons learned on gender equality and women's empowerment in past 20 years in Afghanistan and is offering to present its data to different stakeholders in Afghanistan. Development partners expressed interest in having a briefing as part of a GWG meeting or a separate session on the SIGAR's study. ARTF administrator suggested to hold the SIGAR briefing on gender study in the second week of July and hold the monthly GWG meeting in the third week of July.

Agreed Actions:

- Bank to share ARTF GWG TOR and any other useful materials for new GWG members before the July monthly meeting.

- GWG members to share any preliminary feedback on the draft results frameworks
- US co-chair to schedule a briefing by SIGAR on its gender study ideally in the second week of July.