

# Gender Assessment and Action Plan

Afghanistan Rural Energy Market Transformation Initiative –  
Strengthening Resilience of Livelihoods Through Sustainable  
Energy Access

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II. Resilience of smallholder farmers in Afghanistan to climate variability and extreme events 3</b>	
<b>III. Existing Gender Inequality in Afghanistan.....</b>	<b>5</b>
a. Poverty, food-security and labor force .....	5
b. Health .....	8
c. Education.....	9
d. Political Participation .....	11
e. Gender-based violence .....	11
f. Gender Inequality Index .....	12
<b>IV. Legal and Administrative Framework Protecting Women and Protecting Gender Equality.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>V. Gender issues in response to the impact of climate change.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>VI. Recommendations.....</b>	<b>18</b>
a. Gender analysis .....	18
b. Project design and implementation .....	19
c. Stakeholder engagement .....	20
d. Monitoring and evaluation .....	22
<b>VII. Proposed Gender Action Plan.....</b>	<b>23</b>

## **I. Introduction**

This gender assessment aims to provide an overview of the gender situation in Afghanistan, with a specific focus on climate change resilience, and identify gender issues that are relevant to the proposed ‘Afghanistan rural energy market transformation initiative - Strengthening resilience of livelihoods through sustainable energy access’ project, and to examine potential gender mainstreaming opportunities. The assessment was based upon available data from studies conducted by the government of Afghanistan, donor agencies, and multilateral development banks; and includes:

- 1) Undertaking a desktop review and aligning approaches in this proposal with the national priorities of Afghanistan.
- 2) Incorporating information and lessons learned from past studies and assessments on gender in Afghanistan from the government, the United Nations, civil society organizations, and multilateral development banks.
- 3) Conducting stakeholder consultations and engaging women affected by the project and incorporating all points raised; and
- 4) Integrating gender considerations in the project indicators, targets and activities, identifying women as leaders and decision-makers.

## **II. Resilience of smallholder farmers in Afghanistan to climate variability and extreme events**

Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. A complex mix of social, political and ecological factors – low levels of development, high dependence on climate sensitive sectors, pervasive conflict and the fragility of dry mountain ecosystem- limit the adaptive capacities of communities to climate change impacts. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (CCSAP) for Afghanistan identified high levels of exposure and vulnerability, to climate change for most parts of Afghanistan. There are evidences of extreme events, with floods almost an annual occurrence in spring (every year between 2012 and 2015). There also were dry years in the country between 1996-2003, while the drought of 2008 was particularly severe. The CCSAP indicates that several key sectors are seriously vulnerable to climate change impacts including agriculture, water resources, forest and soil conservation, health and others.

Afghanistan is predominantly an agrarian society. Seven out of ten people rely on climate sensitive farming and herding for their livelihoods. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of rural economy, is primarily dependent on precipitation (rain and snow), as the climate is generally arid, and 40% of the rural households relying on agriculture do not receive any income during winter months. (With over 3000 HDDs/year the country experiences severe winter conditions). In terms of livelihood means, irrigated agriculture, livestock herders and dryland farmers are considered the most susceptible to the impacts of the various climatic hazards. The most likely adverse impacts of climate change in Afghanistan are drought related, including associated dynamics of

desertification and land degradation. Floods due to untimely rainfall and a general increase in temperature are of secondary importance. However, their impacts may be amplified due to more rapid spring snow melt as a result of higher temperatures, combined with the downstream effects of land degradation, loss of vegetative cover and land mismanagement.

In its Fourth Assessment Report, the IPCC indicated that the severity of climate change impacts depends not only on changes in temperature and precipitation patterns but on a host of other factors related to the various dimensions of poverty. Human development impacts are generally exaggerated where climate patterns interact with pre-existing social and economic vulnerabilities. The poor are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change in Afghanistan. According to the 2014 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA), 39.1% of population lives below the poverty line, with majority working in the agricultural sector. The Initial National Communications (INC) of the Afghanistan government to the UNFCCC mentions that climate change impacts could deepen hunger and poverty by reducing livelihood opportunities, agricultural production, and the availability of energy, water and other natural resources.

The distributional effects are more likely to fall upon women and children, and upon those involved in subsistence agriculture or pastoralism. Gender inequality is an important characteristic of poverty in Afghanistan. The vast majority of women do not participate in paid economic activities making them highly dependable on their husbands or families. Literacy rates are much lower than for men. During periods of drought, young women and children may be sold into marriage so that their families can afford to eat. Children are also highly vulnerable to climate change, given that they are responsible for small scale livestock herding and wood collection.

It is widely recognized that access to energy is a prerequisite for human development, overcome poverty, promote economic growth and employment opportunities, support the provision of social services, and essential for meeting basic and productive needs in households, enterprises and community institutions<sup>1</sup>. Access to energy improves people's general physical and economic well-being which in turn provides the prerequisites for resilience adaptation. Access to energy allows rural population for diversification of livelihoods away from vulnerable activities which is a key factor in building resilience to adverse events, including the impacts of climate change.

In Afghanistan, only around a third of the population has access to modern and clean energy while in the rural areas most communities are not connected to the electricity grid. The share of energy in the total spending of rural households is high, up to 30% of income<sup>2</sup> which is a heavy burden

---

<sup>1</sup> Energy and Adaptation: Exploring how energy access can enable climate change adaptation.  
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a19ed915d3cfd0005b8/Energy-Adaptation-Paper.pdf>  
Energy, Poverty, and Development.

[http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/Flagship-Projects/Global-Energy-Assessment/GEA\\_Chapter2\\_development\\_hires.pdf](http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/Flagship-Projects/Global-Energy-Assessment/GEA_Chapter2_development_hires.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Socio-Economic Impacts of Climate Change in Afghanistan: A Report to the Department for International Development

on the already tied budget of the rural population. The lack of access to energy, especially for agriculture and enterprise development, has considerably reduced rural livelihood options at the community level in Afghanistan. The Women Economic Empowerment- Rural Development Program (WEE-RDP) which supports rural enterprises, has identified specific instances where productivity and viability of rural industries such as agro-processing, food- processing and apiculture have been constrained due to lack of energy supply.

The proposed ‘Afghanistan rural energy market transformation initiative - Strengthening resilience of livelihoods through sustainable energy access’ is aimed at building the adaptive capacity of rural population. Services derived from energy, including lighting, cooking, and water heating, would enable development and help rural poor to meet basic needs. Support to cooperatives will result in higher economic productivity and increase in income. Electrification of community institutions, such as schools, health clinics and mosques will help in attracting greater provision and efficiency of support, adding to the quality of life and livelihoods.

### **III. Existing Gender Inequality in Afghanistan**

Gender inequality is one of the main indicators of inequality and is played out along political, social and cultural dimensions. It is closely linked to poverty and other development challenges which is deeply-rooted in social norms and economic conditions with a greater impact on the poor, particularly women and young people.

#### **a. Root causes for inequality**

As a consequence of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the situation of women in Afghanistan is one of concern. During the Taliban regime, women had very little to no freedom, specifically in terms of civil liberties. The Taliban declared that women were forbidden to go to work and they were not to leave their homes unless accompanied by a male family member. When they did go out it was required that they had to wear an all-covering [burqa](#). Under these restrictions, women were denied formal education while women were usually forced to stay at home.

After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan faced daunting challenges in terms of gender equality after years of abuse and oppression that left very few or no girls in school, a deficit of women professionals such as teachers and doctors, limited women’s participation in the labor force, women missing from political activities and decision making at all levels, and a near complete removal of women from public life.

There have been a number of areas of progress as well as setbacks for women in Afghanistan and gender equality since 2001. While there are no areas where the government has failed, there are also no areas where women perceived that they have met their commitments, according to the countries’ Gender Equality Report Card<sup>3</sup>.

---

<https://www.weadapt.org/sites/weadapt.org/files/legacy-new/placemarks/files/5345354491559sei-dfid-afghanistan-report-1-.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GERC-English.pdf>

## **b. Poverty, food-security and labor force**

Afghanistan is a Least Developed Country (LDC). With a population of around 30 million plus, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was USD 19.36 billion in 2018. The GDP per capita is USD 521.

Agriculture is the main economic source for majority of the population. 40% of labor force is engaged in agricultural sector. However, the sector only accounts for 22% of GDP. Due to low agricultural production rate, 46.3% of households engaged in agricultural sector live below poverty line (National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment).

The Human Development Index (HDI) value for Afghanistan 2017 is 0.465 which put the country in the low human development category—positioning it at 168 out of 189 countries and territories. As per the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) developed by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), 66.2% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty where intensity of deprivation is 53.4%. Among the poor, 39.1% face severe multidimensional poverty. According to the OPHI, 72% of rural population lives in multidimensional poverty where intensity is 54.1%.<sup>4</sup>

Data on food security provides a better picture of poverty profile in Afghanistan. Based on the food consumption score and food-based coping strategies, food insecurity is estimated at 33% of total population, where 12% are severely food insecure, and 21% moderately food insecure. The proportion of the food insecure is significantly higher in rural areas, with 36 percent of the rural population being food insecure, compared to 30 percent of the urban population (ibid).

While poverty is a widespread phenomenon in Afghanistan, it has strong gender dimension too. Female headed household are much more vulnerable to food insecurity. According to the NRVA data, 67.1% of food-insecure households are headed by women while food-insecurity rate of male-headed household is 34.%. Low dietary diversity (consumption of non-diversified, unbalanced and unhealthy diet) is also much higher in female-headed households (63.2%) compare to male headed households (36.2%).

Women participation in labor force is significantly lower than men. While men's labor force participation rate is at 89%, the rate for women is low, at 29% of the working age population. Of total population of women that participate in the labor force, 73% are unpaid family workers while the rate of unpaid family workers among men is only 19%. Majority of the unpaid family female workers live in the rural area and are engaged in the agricultural sector. Women make up for 70%

---

<sup>4</sup> oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. "Afghanistan Country Briefing", Multidimensional Poverty Index Data Bank. OPHI, University of Oxford.

and 44% of the labor forces of homestead based craft industries and agricultural & livestock sectors respectively

In recent years' participation of women in the labor force has increased. In urban areas, women mainly work in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and a growing number of female entrepreneurs have established SMEs. Women businesses association is now an active body in the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI). According to the Afghanistan Women's Business Federation (AWBF), women's entrepreneurship and economic activity participation in the past decade has changed such that, for example, women who formerly traded individually have gradually started forming groups.

In rural areas too, women are becoming more economically active. Through number of government and donor agency development programs, there has been a surge in establishment of women cooperatives. These cooperatives work in different areas, such as horticulture, livestock, poultry and food processing. Research on women cooperatives shows significant increase in income of members of cooperatives which in turn has positive effect on empowerment of women including boosted role in household decision-making as well as having better social status. The final evaluation of the UNDP Afghanistan Gender Equality Program (GEP II) found that women's income on average has increased by 200% where cooperatives were supported by the program. Aliabad Cooperative- women owned- quadrupled its sell of processed food after receiving food processing machines and solar panels for operating them. The GEP intervention also created additional 40 jobs in the Aliabad area.

In sum, despite widespread poverty and lower female labor participation, the country has also witnessed number of success cases in the recent years. Afghan women entrepreneurs are slowly increasing their share of the local market and rural women are coming together in the form of cooperatives to reap higher benefits from working together. While economic participation of women is still at infancy, the potential for growth and maturity is enormous particularly if specific development intervention targets them.

Access to energy is one such intervention that has proven to contribute to economic empowerment of women. A study in South Africa found that electrification of rural communities resulted in a 9% increase in female employment (Dinkelman). Another study conducted in Guatemala also shows similar result where electrification increases women employment (Grogan & Sadanand 2009). Both studies attribute the increase in employment to the fact that electricity frees up women's time by increasing their efficiency of domestic chores, such as cooking, and reducing the time they spent on collecting woods, thus allowing them to spend more time on education and other skill building activities.



### c. Health

Over the past decade Afghanistan has made notable progress in increasing access to health services through construction of hospitals and health clinics, trainings of medical doctors and professionals and development of institutional framework governing the health sector. Life expectancy has increased from 44 to 60 years and maternal mortality has decreased from 1600 to 324 per 100,000 births. Despite recent progress, overall health condition of Afghanistan is still far from optimal. Per capita total expenditure on health is USD 55, one of the lowest in the world, and availability of physician per 10,000 people is only 2.7 (WHO). According to the estimates of the Ministry of Public Health, around 40% of population, all in rural areas, lives more than 2 hours of walking distance from nearest health facility.

Similar to poverty, health also has strong gender dimension. While majority of both Afghan men and women do not have access to high quality health services, women relatively suffer more. The current maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world. In 2011, Save the Children declared Afghanistan “the worst place in the world to be a mother.” According to UNICEF, around 41 per cent of deaths occur during pregnancy, 40 per cent during delivery, and 19 per cent in the two months after delivery. High fertility rate (5.3), poor antenatal care, low rates of skilled attendance at birth, adolescent pregnancies, maternal malnutrition, unequally distributed health care services and lack of obstetric care in rural areas are the major underlying causes of maternal deaths.

With 95% of rural households using traditional biomass fuels (dung, crop residues, wood, charcoal) for daily cooking, exposure (particularly for women and children) to indoor air pollutants is very high in Afghanistan. This has direct impact on health by increasing the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, worsening lung function and contributing to childhood pneumonia and lung cancer. Indoor air pollution is the biggest cause of premature deaths in Afghanistan estimated at 54,000 per year (WHO, 2009, country profile of environmental burden of disease in Afghanistan).

Climate change will have significant impact on health condition of majority of population. IPCC states that “climate change is projected to increase threats to human health”. Impacts of climate changes will have a negative effect on women’s health, if gender equality is not addressed in congruence with adaptation measures. Women are more vulnerable to effects of climate change in rural areas where they shoulder the major responsibility for household water supply, firewood fetching collection for cooking and heating. Women are more exposed to water borne diseases due to the nature of their roles in the community. During incidents of natural disaster, food prices increase and leads to a reduction in the quality or quantity of the food rural poor families are able to purchase. Afghan women that are already more food-insecure than men will have even less nutrient diet available to them.

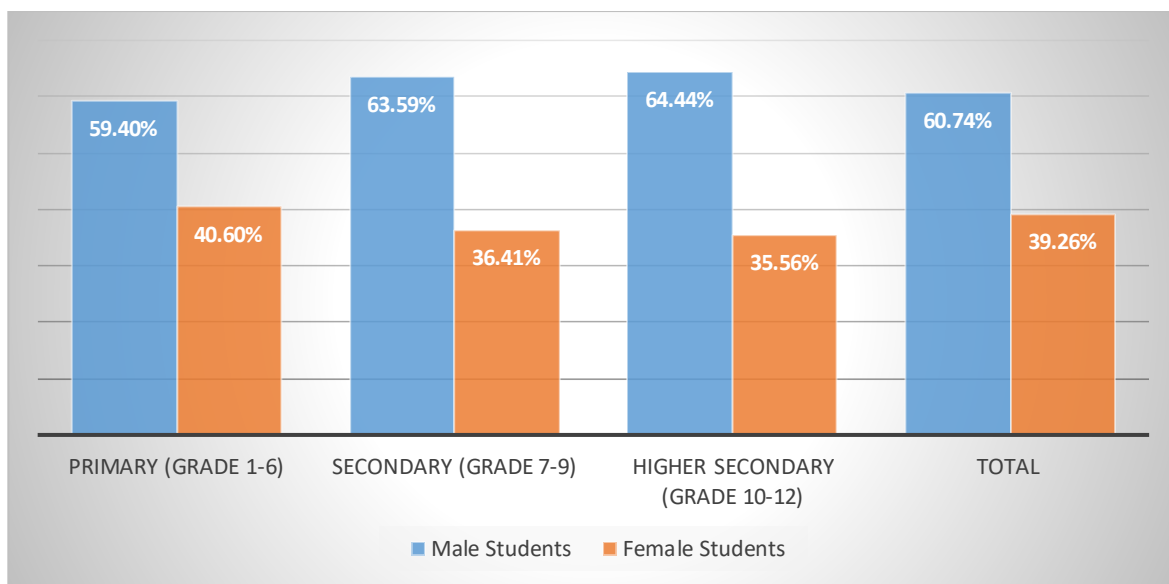


Introduction of cleaner energy sources provide alternatives to fuel wood for cooking and heating resulting in significantly reduction of exposure of women and children to indoor air pollution. The use of renewable energy also reduces the overall reliance of communities on timber which in turn slows down deforestation and landslides thus reducing damaging force of natural disasters. Access to modern and affordable forms of energy can also play an important role in improving access to safe water for domestic use. Electrification of health clinics allows the provision of medical services at night, greater use of more advanced medical equipment, helps retain qualified staff in rural health centers, and allows local clinics to keep needed medicines on hand among other benefits.

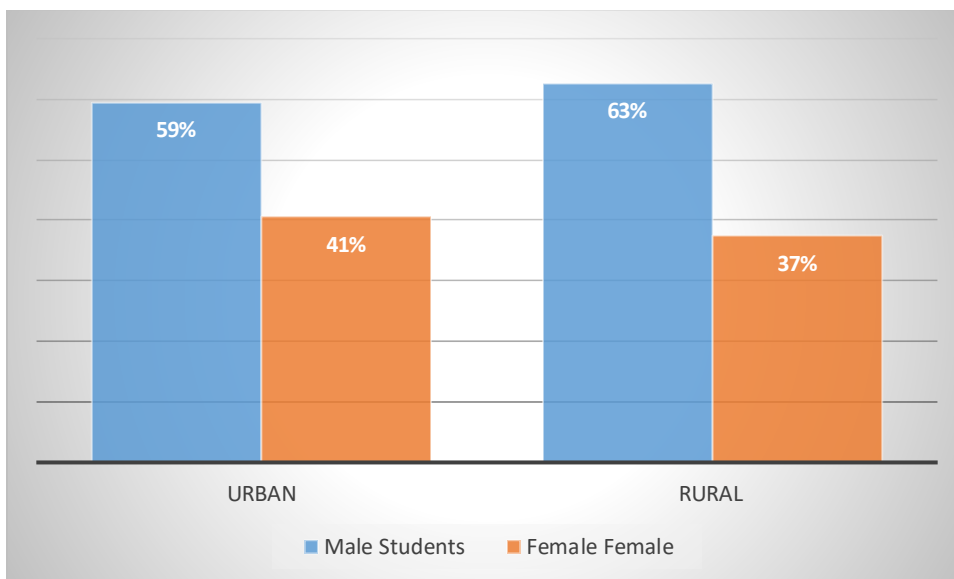
#### d. Education

Education has been the epicenter of development efforts since 2002. School enrollment has jumped from 0.8 million in 2001 to over 9 million in 2015, of which more than 3 million are female students. Number of schools has also tripled within on decade reaching to 15,510 school in 2012 from 6039 in 2002. Literacy rate has also increased but with significant gender and rural-urban gaps: 62 % of urban men and 33 % of urban women are literate, compared with only 35 % of rural men and 7 % of rural women.

The government of Afghanistan and donor agencies have made significant achievement in increasing female school enrollment. Currently more than 3 million girls go to school while the number in 2001 was almost zero. However still the ratio of male/female student is eschewed towards male students where for every two male students there is one female student. The male/female student ratio increases in higher grades; in other words, the number of female students decreases in secondary and higher secondary grades as shown in the following chart:



School enrollment gender gap is wider in rural areas. As the following charts illustrates, female students comprise 41% of students in urban areas while the figure for rural area is 37%. Lack of availability of secondary and higher secondary schools in a village is one of the reason that overall enrollment of girls is lower than boys as Afghan families not often allow their girls to walk a long distance to attend school.



School enrollment gender gap also varies among the provinces of Afghanistan. Female school enrollment is lower in Eastern and Southern provinces while it is relatively higher in Central, Northern and Western provinces. The following table shows school enrollment in provinces to be covered under the ‘Strengthening Resilience of Rural Livelihoods to Climate Risk through Sustainable Energy Access’ program. The male/female student enrollment ration is much higher in Bamiyan (Central), Herat (Western) and Sar-e-Pul (Northern) provinces while the gap significantly increases in Kandahar & Uruzgan (Southern) and Paktika (Eastern) provinces.

Province	Urban		Rural	
	Male Students	Female Students	Male Students	Female Students
Bamyan	61%	39%	53%	47%
Daikundi	53%	47%	55%	45%
Laghman	63%	37%	57%	43%
Parwan	61%	39%	65%	35%
Khost	67%	33%	66%	34%
Kandahar	69%	31%	79%	21%
Paktika	86%	14%	79%	21%
Uruzgan	87%	13%	85%	15%

#### e. Political Participation

Women have the same rights to vote and stand for electoral seats as men. The Constitution of Afghanistan ensures that for each province, there is at least one seat for a woman in the national Parliament. Due to this affirmative action, 25% of members of the parliament are women. Women participation has also been guaranteed at the provincial, district and community level. Similar to the parliament, women have reserved seats in the provincial councils which has the main responsibility of monitoring of government programs and projects and service delivery. Members of the parliament and the provincial councils are directly elected through votes where both men and women of age 18 and higher can vote.

In addition to the electoral bodies, international development organizations in a coordination with the government of Afghanistan have also established councils and committees at the district and community level to have direct decision making and oversight role in implementation of development programs. For example, Community Development Councils (CDCs) is elected rural institution actively involved in implementation and oversight of the Citizen Charter funded by the World Bank and implemented by the MRRD. CDCs play much wider role in decision making and conflict resolution at the community level than only being involved with the implementation of the mentioned development programmes. Recognized as representative bodies at the district and community level, CDCs are also involved in development of the provincial development plans and lobby for their communities at the provincial and national level.

The role of women in government leadership positions has also increased over the last decade. Women have been holding ministerial positions since 2001. Currently, four out of twenty-five ministers are women. Women are also appointed as deputy ministers, governors, mayors, and directors.

Although there has been progress in advancing women's political participation, more needs to be done in this direction. Overall political participation and involvement in decision-making and government leadership positions is still much lower compare to men. However, over the last decade a strong civil society advocating for women's right has emerged which constantly works towards greater representation of women in Afghanistan's policymaking. The country is in the right path of advancing women's rights and representation in political arena, but achieving complete equality will take much longer time.

#### f. Gender-based violence

Afghanistan is one of the worst countries in the world to be born female. It ranks 168 out of 185 on the UNDP's 2017 Gender Inequality Index. Often the news of brutal cases of violence against women in Afghanistan makes international headlines.

The report published by the Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission indicates that

the total number of incidences of violence against women obtained from the incidences registered by the complainants in 2017 amounts to 4873 incidences. The most widespread and common type of violence against women is physical violence, especially beating. Out of the registered figures of violence against women in 2017 almost 1468 incidences which make up 30.1 percent of the registered incidence of violence against women are related to physical violence. A total of 412 other incidences which cover 8.5 percent of all the incidences of violence against women occurred during this period are related to different types of sexual violence while 1482 incidences which make up 30.4 percent of all the registered incidences of violence against women are related to verbal and psychological violence. Similarly, 1024 incidences which make up 21 percent of all incidences of violence against women are related to economic violence against women. The remaining 487 incidences which included 10 percent of the registered incidences are related to other types of violence against women. (AIHRC Report on Violence Against Women).

The Government has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate prosecution of perpetrators. These measures include establishment of special courts for the cases of violence against women in 26 provinces and this is expected to increase to 34 provinces, national coverage. Also a decision has been made to establish a special branch within the Supreme Court to specifically rule on the cases of violence against women, juvenile and family disputes.

Child marriage, a form of gender-based violence (GBV), is illegal but widespread in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's minimum age of marriage for girls is 16 or 15 years old, which is well below the internationally recommended standard of 18. Child marriages mainly happen in rural areas, especially along the borders with Pakistan (UNFPA Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>).

Gender-based violence also intersects with issues around access to and control over natural resources. For example, research has shown that gender-differentiated roles related to land and resources can put women in a more vulnerable position to suffer GBV while carrying out daily responsibilities, such as fuel, firewood and water collection activities. When attempting to enter into agricultural markets, women can experience intimate partner violence as their partners seek to control finances and maintain economic dependencies (IUCN<sup>6</sup>).

#### **g. Gender Inequality Index**

Through the years, several indices have been developed to quantify the concept of gender inequality. The United Nations Development Programme uses the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and Gender Development Index (GDI). The GII is a composite measure that shows inequality in achievement between women and men in reproductive health, empowerment and the labor market while measuring achievement in human development in three areas: health, education, and command over economic resources. The GDI considers the gender gaps on human development between men and women.

---

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA Afghanistan: <https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15233>

<sup>6</sup> IUCN Gender-based violence and environment linkages: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/48969>

Afghanistan has a GII of 0.653 as of 2017. The GDI value as of 2017 is 0.625, which has ranked Afghanistan as 168 out 185. Afghans ranks lower in both GDI and GII compare to its neighboring countries as shown in the following table.

	Gender Development Index	Gender Inequality Index
Afghanistan	0.625	0.653
Pakistan	0.750	0.541
India	0.841	0.524
Iran	0.871	0.461
Tajikistan	0.933	0.317
Uzbekistan	0.945	0.274

#### **IV. Legal and Administrative Framework Protecting Women and Protecting Gender Equality**

With the UN-convened Bonn agreement of 2001 signaling a different phase in Afghan history, significant achievement for women's rights have been seen in Afghanistan. Nationally, the processes for these include:

- the 2001 Brussels Afghan Women's Summit for Democracy;
- the 2001 creation of the first Ministry of Women's Affairs;
- the 2002 Declaration of the Essential Rights of Afghan Women; the 2002 National Area Based Development Program;
- the establishment of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in 2002;
- the 2003 National Solidarity Program (NSP);
- Twenty percent female representation in the Constitutional Loya Jirga;
- the establishment of a 27 percent baseline quota for women's political representation in the Wolesi Jirga (House of People);
- a baseline 17 percent quota in the Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders);
- a statutory requirement of female representation in 25 percent of Provincial Council seats;
- the successful passage of the 2004 Afghan Constitution;
- the 2005 Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy;
- the 2005 Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals;
- the 2008 Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2008-13);
- the 2006 Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation, and Justice in Afghanistan;
- the 2007 National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (2007-17)
- The 2009 Law on the Elimination of Violence against women

- the 2010 National Priority Programs with Women empowerment being one of the national priority programs.

Article 22 of the constitution guarantees equal rights to man and women; it reads: “*Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, have equal rights and duties before the law.*” This article guarantees the application of the principles of equality in implementation of all articles of the constitution. Recognizing the fact that the women of Afghanistan do not benefit from the same means and opportunities to impact development and benefit from development in the country, the need for affirmative action, where necessary, is also justified in alignment with application of Article 22 of the constitution.

Article 54 of the Constitution also calls for abolishment of the harmful practices that inhibit the wellbeing of the Afghan women. Likewise, many other articles of the constitution make specific reference to women’s needs in education, health, political participation etc. Articles 83 and 84 of the Constitution guarantees election of at least two women from province to the Lower House of the Parliament and selection of 50% women members by the President for the Upper House of the Parliament.

In addition to the constitution, international laws also provide legal framework for protecting women. The government of Afghanistan ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), without any reservations, in March 2003, which obligates governments to:

- Incorporate the principle of equality of men and women and non-discrimination in its legal system and abolish all discriminatory laws;
- Take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination, systematic or otherwise, by persons, organizations or enterprises.
- Establish tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination;

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. Afghanistan submitted its combined periodic and interim report on CEDAW in 2011.

Another key national document is the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) with the timeframe of 2008-2018, a ten-year plan towards addressing gaps in gender equality and women’s rights and empowerment in Afghanistan. As the central instrument for women’s rights and empowerment, the plan envisions creation of “*a condition where women take*

*control and determine the direction of their lives, develop their full potential, make enlightened decisions, and exert positive influence over processes, mechanisms, and decisions that affect their well-being.”*

The broad strategy towards implementation of NAPWA focuses on the three following areas:

- Elimination of discrimination against women
- Development of women’s human capital
- Promotion of women’s leadership

In general, the three board areas above, will address the needs of women for conducive environments, their access to opportunities, resources and services as well as their share of power.

The government of Afghanistan also endorsed its National Action Plan on implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2015. The Resolution stresses the importance of women’s participation in conflict resolution and post recovery development, as well as their protection during and after conflicts. Strategic priorities and objectives of the NAP 1325, fall into the four categories of; participation of women at all levels of decision making in political and peace processes as well in civil service; protection of women from the vulnerabilities during and after conflict; prevention of sexual and other kinds of violence against women; relief and recovery of women by providing them with access to resources and opportunities and providing a space for their involvement in the post conflict development processes.

While above mentioned key regulatory documents provide the overall legal framework for protecting women’s right and guarantees gender equality, the government of Afghanistan has also put in place administrative system for working towards gender equality and protection of women’s rights. Established in 2002, the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) has policymaking role to promote women’s rights and monitoring and evaluation responsibility to monitor development and administrative work of other ministries in relation to women’s rights. In recent years all line ministries have also established designated gender units responsible for all gender related issues of the ministry. The gender units are part of the planning and budgeting committees of the ministry and have the right to formally push for gender considerations in planning and budgeting process. The current administration has also established the high level gender subcommittee of the cabinet chaired by the Second Vice President. All ministers are members of the gender subcommittee of the cabinet where they report on activities related to gender. Through technical support of UNDP and UN-Women, the Ministry of Finance has also introduced gender budgeting. The initiative is currently being piloted in 6 line ministries with plan to be rolled over to all budgetary units of the government.

## **V. Gender issues in response to the impact of climate change**

It is important to note that in order to create transformational change, women are not just seen as



climate change victims or beneficiaries. Women are imperative to climate change adaptation efforts. They practice adaptive measures as a part of daily life – through farming and in the face of increasing risks – through disaster recovery and preparation<sup>7</sup>. By utilizing these existing skills into project design and implementation and by providing a platform in which to empower women enables women's influence to rise from a household to a community and national level. Leadership and decision-making capacities and opportunities increase.

Women from the poorest households often pay the most, sacrifice the most, are the most disadvantaged and the least resilient.

Women are impacted differently by climate change in the following ways:

- Women rely more on natural resources for their livelihoods, with staple crops providing up to 90 percent of food in farming districts of some countries and 60–80 percent of food in most developing countries. Women struggle to fulfill their key responsibility for the production of food, in spite of the detrimental impacts of climate change on agriculture.
- Women and children are often responsible for gathering water and fuel in traditional agrarian societies, tasks that are laborious, challenging and time consuming. These tasks become more time intensive due to the impact of climate change;
- Climate change is linked to increased incidences of tropical diseases such as cholera and malaria, which have severe impacts on women because of their limited access to medical services and their responsibility to care for the sick;
- In some societies more women are dying during natural disasters because men receive preferential treatment in rescue and relief efforts;
- Women are disproportionately affected due to vulnerability and the capacity to adapt to the process of climate change are affected by various factors, including age, education, social status, wealth, access to resources, sex, gender and many other social dimensions;
- In addition, at the time of crisis, women's needs are not considered priority in recovery programmes.

### Gender issues in relation to the project

The Afghanistan Gender Equality Report Card illustrates the level of gender inequality in Afghanistan in related to energy access<sup>8</sup>. While access to water and electricity has improved, in 2014, only 17% of Afghan women reported that their household always has access to electricity, compared to 18% who reported they only sometimes have access, 14% whom rarely have access, and 34% who never have access to electricity. 64% of women were somewhat or very dissatisfied with electricity in their area. Related to electricity access is connection to the

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://asiapacificadapt.net/gender-sourcebook/wp-content/themes/iges/pdf/integrating-gender-sourcebook.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Equality for Peace and Democracy, 2015, Gender Equality Report Card

internet. Only 2% of Afghan women are connected to the Internet for obtaining information, and though 88% of the population lives within the combined network of the four largest mobile network organizations and 80% have some access to a mobile phone, six out of ten Afghan women still do not use mobile phones for accessing information. Access to electricity is a crucial issue for gender equality. Access to electricity can dramatically cut the amount of time spent on household work, and access to electricity can considerably impact women's time use. This furthermore frees up time for women and girls to participate in things like education, which has long-term implications for gender equality.

Electricity may increase women's knowledge in important ways. In contexts where women became directly involved in electricity supply, they gained a new type of skills as well as higher status<sup>9</sup>. This exemplifies how the gendered organisation of supply may affect women's human resources and their wider empowerment. In Afghanistan, women's access to television and radio programmes provided them with information about women's rights, which they believed had enhanced their role in family decision-making (ibid.).

Studies on gender-sensitive electricity interventions have documented that women's direct involvement in supply increased their decision-making power and that this positively affected gender norms and women's social position in the communities<sup>10</sup>. This occurred through an expansion in the type of roles considered possible and appropriate for women. In Afghanistan, training women to install and maintain SHS was reported to change some men's perceptions of a woman's possible roles. As expressed by a man, himself being a mullah, in the aftermath of the project: 'I saw that women and men are equal in this and that women have capabilities'<sup>11</sup>. Also contributing to women's higher esteem was the trained women's ability to endure the hardship experienced when parting from their family during the 6 months' training period. Their 'sacrifice' of leaving behind what is seen as the most important institution in life; family and community, in order to help bring development, was often mentioned by both women and men as warranting much respect and reflecting the women's strength (ibid.).

Stakeholder consultations took place at the Gender Focal Team Meetings consisting of government agencies, NGOs, CSOs and UN agencies which resulted in several observations regarding gender related challenges as well as opportunities:

#### *Access to funding/lack of funding*

According to the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 85% of the private sector consists of Small and Medium Enterprises. SMEs, however, face challenges and obstacles with regard to access to finance while women-led businesses in particular have difficulties acquiring loans. Access to finance for women-led businesses is more complicated than for male-led businesses. While commercial banks and microfinance institutions offer loans, the insurance for those loans

---

<sup>9</sup> Winther et al, Women's empowerment through electricity access: scoping study and proposal for a framework of analysis, Journal of Development Effectiveness, Vol 9, no. 3, 389-417

<sup>10</sup> Winther et al, Women's empowerment through electricity access: scoping study and proposal for a framework of analysis, Journal of Development Effectiveness, Vol 9, no. 3, 389-417

<sup>11</sup> Standal, K. 2008. "Giving light and hope in Rural Afghanistan: Enlightening women's lives with solar energy." Master Thesis, University of Oslo, Norway

largely relies on property or land ownership, which is limited for Afghan women<sup>12</sup>. Historically, properties are registered by male household members. Involvement of women in capacity building activities targeting private sector (RESCO) development, should therefore ensure sufficient female participation (addressed in Activity 2.3).

*Female under-representation in senior level (decision-making) positions*

Current challenges in Afghanistan include high maternal mortality rates and unequal pay for women for similar work as compared to men. With fewer women elected to office, women have a weaker voice and influence than men in politics. Female representation in legislator, senior official and manager roles and Afghanistan's political atmosphere is still very low. Involvement of women in government targeted capacity building is therefore crucial (addressed in Activity 1.1, Activity 1.2, Activity 1.3, Activity 3.3 and Activity 3.4).

*Limitation in the technology field*

As described previously, the ratio of male/female student is still eschewed towards male students where for every two male students there is one female student. It also has been observed that the number of female professionals in the technology field is limited. Skills and access to technology of rural women and girls are also quite low. Skilled technicians for off-grid electrification still are in shortage. It is essential to build capacity in the energy sector with a limited quantity of female participants. Women participation and capacity building should be encouraged through various stages of the project life-cycle (addressed in Activity 2.1, Activity 2.2 and Activity 2.3).

## **VI. Recommendations**

### **a. Gender analysis**

The gender analysis undertaken at the onset and design of this project acts as an entry point for gender mainstreaming throughout implementation. Stakeholder consultations took place at the Gender Focal Team Meetings consist of government agencies, NGOs, CSOs and UN agencies. Results from the consultations are detailed below in the Stakeholder engagement section further below.

The gender analysis, through stakeholder engagement and consultation enabled:

- Assessment of the gender-related activities in responding to the expanding threat of climate change, including gender roles and responsibilities, resource use and management, and decision making raised by the project;
- Engagement, development and input into the design of responding to the expanding threat of climate change and building the resilience of the most vulnerable communities through sustainable energy access;
- Demonstration of the need for gender-disaggregated data and indicators to establish a

---

<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014, Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Regional Trade in Afghanistan

baseline in which to measure improvements and identify areas of focus; and

- Establishment of recommendations to incorporate into the Gender Assessment Action Plan.

Through the stakeholder engagement and consultations, the gender related activities resulting from the assessment and the recommendations for design of project activities, e.g. related to encouraging productive use aimed at higher agricultural productivity through decreased post-harvest losses and decreased loss of livestock due to extreme weather, have been included in the project design. Gender disaggregated data has been included in the Logical Framework for the project.

### **b. Project design and implementation**

Addressing gender dimensions within the project design and implementation, this proposal identifies and integrates interventions to provide gender responsive and transformative results.

The project design will take into consideration the following gender implications:

- Women's role in agricultural production; analysis of gender division of labor (e.g. gender-differentiated roles, responsibilities, and needs);
- Women's access to, and control over, natural resources and the goods and services that they provide (Increasing women's access to and control over resources, improves the effectiveness of such projects);
- Possibilities and potential of women participation in Rural Energy Service Companies (RESCOs);
- Identification of gaps in equality through the use of sex-disaggregated data enabling development of gender action plan to close those gaps, devoting resources and expertise for implementing such strategies, monitoring the results of implementation, and holding individuals and institutions accountable for outcomes that promote gender equality;
- Assess how gender is currently mainstreaming in the energy sector, to develop need assessments, enable planning, and be effective in monitoring and evaluation;
- Involve women and men both at macro and micro level in climate resilience process;
- Evaluation of women's work time, both as paid and unpaid;
- Gather data on the time women spent collecting biomass fuel;
- Identify specific strategies to include / target female-headed households; and
- Promote advocacy and awareness adjusted to most effectively reflect gender-specific differences. Strategies used in the project are tailored, taking into account such differences;

The project implementation will take into consideration the following gender implications:

- Division of labor on small farms, taking into consideration gender specific views on management;
- Inclusion of a Gender Specialist position within the project to implement gender related activities;
- Inclusion of all stakeholders involved in the project to develop awareness raising / training aimed at drawing attention to the implication of climate resilience adaptation and gender equality;
- Targeting women agricultural cooperatives; and
- Undertaking community discussions and dialogue in relation to gender and climate resilience and adaptation strategies with the inclusion of indigenous knowledge.

During project implementation, qualitative assessments will be conducted on the gender-specific benefits that can be directly associated to the project. This will be incorporated in the annual Project Implementation Report, Mid-Term Report, and Terminal Evaluation. Indicators to quantify the achievement of project objectives in relation to gender equality will include men and women who had access to affordable solutions, number of men and women employed from the jobs created by the project, training opportunities, knowledge management and information dissemination.

### c. Stakeholder engagement

The stakeholder consultations and engagement of women's organizations promote gender equality at the local as well as at national level. The involvement of women's organizations in the project design will assist in the identification of relevant gender issues within the country's social context, and implementation and monitoring of gender aspects of the project.

Number of consultations with the Gender Focal Team (GFT) took place during project design. The target populations were women and men as representatives of all stakeholder groups affected by this proposal.

The stakeholder engagement component of this annex, captures the specific issues and difficulties that women face in responding to the impacts of climate change and building the resilience of the most vulnerable communities through sustainable energy access.

The results captured as are follows:

- Overall knowledge about climate change issues is little;
- There is a gap in capacity (finance, human, knowledge and skill) to mainstream climate issues in relation to gender;
- There is a gap in capacity for women led business to access finance, which relates to RESCO development;
- There is underrepresentation of women in governmental decision making

positions;

- There is a limited number of female professionals in technology
- There is no work integration between the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Energy and Water and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development on issues related to gender and access to energy; and
- Lack of sex-disaggregated data in all sectors (e.g. livelihoods, disasters' preparedness, protection of environment, health and well-being) often leads to an underestimation of women's role and contribution.

The recommendations by the Gender Focal Team include:

- Community level awareness raising at all levels;
- (Government) staff capacity building on gender and climate change analysis, planning, budgeting and mainstreaming;
- Identification of the issues and challenges that hinder men, women in accessing all levels of policy and decision-making processes;
- Engagement of women in order to play a leadership role promoting access to sustainable energy, including in RESCOs;
- Engagement of civic associations;
- Identification and analysis of traditional versus modern community structure in relation to climate resilience and coping mechanisms. Here 'traditional structure' refers to indigenous institution and their auxiliary functions while modern community structure refers to Government and NGOs backed community organizations such as Community Development Councils (CDCs), and District Development Assemblies (DDAs); and
- Engagement of women in encouraging income generating activities in relation to productive use potential from energy access.

Stakeholder consultations at the sites of the 3 solar mini-grids to be constructed in the project also identified opportunities for productive use of energy whereby women can have an important role to play as women are usually interested to generate additional income for their households. The consultations indicated a high level of entrepreneurship among the communities in the sites. At the same time, power access seems to be the principal hurdle in the way of greater enterprise development. With a strong horticulture sector, a prominent ramp-up business model could include cold storages for agricultural products and fruits. Given the strong focus on animal husbandry, dairy and milk-product development is another significant area where the project can support enterprise development. Finally, electricity powered, mechanical shearing and slaughterhouses are promising activities with good returns on an investment. Productive use of energy with a strong focus on productive use potential that leads to higher agricultural productivity (decreased post-harvest losses and decreased loss of livestock due to extreme weather) should therefore be a prominent element in capacity building of community beneficiaries and should have a specific focus on women.

#### d. Monitoring and evaluation

Through onset analysis, data has been collated to establish a baseline. This data shall be monitored against throughout implementation and evaluation.

The analysis identified the differences between men and women within at-risk populations. In order to monitor and evaluate progress of the project, the following indicators can be measured:

##### Quantitative Outcomes:

- Women and men as beneficiaries of project activities related to workshops for policy development and setting-up and training of RESCOs;
- Female/male-headed households as beneficiaries in relation to development of investment design reports for mini-grids;

##### Qualitative outcomes:

- Opportunities to generate additional income as a result of energy access. Women are more likely to respond to incentives that address their family's basic needs, such as better health and nutrition, linking agriculture and food security improvements;
- Contribution to self-esteem raised and empowerment of women in the community, e.g. as a result of RESCO training;
- Effectiveness of awareness increasing; and
- Ability of women and men to identify their environmental changes and risks based on their different roles and access to resources.



## **VII. Proposed Gender Action Plan**

The project recognizes the importance of gender inclusion in the project interventions. Hence, the project not only incorporates renewable energy technologies that would benefit women by giving them access to cleaner energy, better health and education facilities; but also involves and benefits women enterprises on the supply side of renewable energy development by involving women agricultural cooperatives and tailoring shops at community level. Additionally, the project interventions will build capacity of women in the area of renewable energy at national level.

The project will also work with the religious leaders and Mullahs that are active in the three locations where solar mini-grids are being implemented, to raise awareness on women's rights and opportunities that energy access may offer in strengthening women's rights. Although not a direct topic in this project, the issue of gender-based violence may also be raised during such consultations.

The project is expected to achieve the following results in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Increased entrepreneurship opportunities for women among the communities in the three sites for solar mini-grid implementation, resulting from capacity building on productive use of energy
- Improved understanding and best practices in delivering gender responsive renewable energy services and rural mini-grid development in the target areas.
- Increased women's technical expertise in the area of renewable energy in general, and mini-grid development specifically, at national level as a result of capacity building activities

This Gender Action plan provides suggested entry points for gender-responsive actions to be taken under each of the Activity areas of the project. In addition, specific indicators are also proposed to measure and track progress on these actions at the activity level. This can be incorporated into the detailed M&E plan which will be developed at the start of implementation, and provides concrete recommendations on how to ensure gender (including disaggregated data) continues to be collected and measured throughout implementation.

Activities	Targets and Indicators	Timeline	Partner Institutions	Budget (USD)
<b>Output 1: Energy Market De-risking by policy, regulatory and institutional development for improved renewable energy (RE) services in rural areas</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure involvement of women in government targeted capacity building</li> <li>• Support women's professional development and decision-making roles in the renewable energy sector, including government and the private sector</li> <li>• Conduct training for MRRD, MEW and DABS government staff on gender sensitization of energy sector policies and strategies.</li> <li>• Ensure involvement of women in government targeted capacity building, including training technical standards for design &amp; operation of mini-grids to project beneficiaries including both men and women. If deemed necessary, organize separate training</li> <li>• Assess if the intervention has the potential to promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment or is likely to have an adverse gender impact or increases women's exposure to risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0</li> <li>• 160 female government and non- government officials trained with enhanced capacity in mini-grid policy, technical standards for design &amp; operation of mini-grids; at least 75% assesses applicability in daily work to be "useful" for assignment tasks</li> <li>• Indicator: nr of female staff trained; % of participants assessing training as "useful" for assignment tasks</li> <li>• Baseline: 0</li> <li>• Target: 500 Government and non- Government officials trained (of which 100 women): 80% indicate to have better understanding of gender impact and opportunities for gender inclusiveness of rural mini-grid development</li> <li>• Indicator: Government and non-Government officials (20% females) with enhanced understanding of gender impact and opportunities for gender inclusiveness of rural mini-grid development</li> </ul>	<p>Q4 2020 – Q3 2022</p> <p>Q4 2020 - Q4 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Management Office (PMO), Gender Specialist</li> <li>• PMO and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)</li> </ul>	<p>Included in training budget</p> <p>Included in training budget</p>
Activities	Targets and Indicators	Timeline	Partner Institutions	Budget (USD)
<b>Output 2: Social Acceptance Risk and Labour Risk de-risked by enhanced awareness and knowledge of government entities, beneficiaries and market actors on RE mini-grids</b>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical training to project beneficiaries including both men and women. If deemed necessary, organize separate training classes for male and female participants. Ensure that training and coaching program includes how to use mini-grids to increase family income benefit.</li> <li>• Work with the religious leaders and Mullahs to raise awareness on women's rights during the Friday prayers.</li> <li>• Ensure mini-grid implementation addresses productive use issues priorities by women</li> <li>• Ensure that training activities are gender inclusive and participatory</li> <li>• Increase awareness on the gender-related issues on RE productive use and demand-side issues, particularly those areas prioritized by women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0</li> <li>• Target: 400 women involved in capacity building on productive use potential trained in rural RE mini-grid systems planning</li> <li>• Indicator: # of women in communities trained</li> </ul>	Q1 2021 – Q1 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PMO, Gender Specialist and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)</li> <li>• PMO, Gender Specialist and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)</li> </ul>	Included in training budget
		Q3 2021 – Q3 2023		Included in training budget

Activities	Targets and Indicators	Timeline	Partner Institutions	Budget (USD)
<b>Output 3. Construction of three solar mini-grids and set-up of upscaling platform</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess if the construction of 3 solar mini-grids - mini-grid in Kandahar, Khost and Parwan has the potential to promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment or is likely to have an adverse gender impact or increases women's exposure to risk.</li> <li>• Develop gender responsive standards for social and environmental safeguards regulations for RE mini-grid development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 0</li> <li>• Target: Implementation Assessments of 3 Solar Mini-grids mini-grids in Kandahar, Khost and Parwan include substantive analysis of gender considerations, including women's priorities for productive use and demand side issues.</li> </ul>	Q1 2020 – Q4 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PMO, Gender Specialist and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)</li> </ul>	Included in budget development 3 solar mini-grids

<sup>13</sup> "Capable of identifying productive use opportunities" is based on a scale where 1 = limited to no knowledge on productive use; Level 2 = households and businesses aware of renewable energy and know how/where to get related information; Level 3 = households and businesses engaged with support activities and requesting additional information on productive use for their specific situation; Level 4 = households and business knowledgeable about productive energy use and identified concrete opportunities by means of expanding business or introducing new business

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect sex-disaggregated data and gender specific information related to the 5 mini-grid locations for which investment design reports will be developed.</li> <li>• Assess if the design packages of mini-grids have the potential to promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment or is likely to have an adverse gender impact or increases women's exposure to risk.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator: # of Implementation Assessments with substantive analysis of gender considerations</li> <li>• Baseline: 0</li> <li>• Target: 5 detailed investment design reports developed for RE mini-grids in pre-identified areas in line with gender responsive green procurement guidelines and social and environmental safeguards regulations, including women's priorities for productive use and demand side issues</li> <li>• Indicator: # of investment design reports with gender responsive green procurement guidelines and safeguards regulations including women's priorities for productive use and demand side issues</li> </ul>	<p>Q1 2020 – Q4 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PMO, Gender Specialist and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)</li> </ul>	<p>Included in budget development 5 mini-grid design reports</p>
---	---	------------------------------	--	--