



## **GIZ Afghanistan, RCD Program Application Entry for GIZ Gender Competition 2016**

### **Great achievements since the dark times of the Taliban rule but challenges still lie ahead**

#### **Situation of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban and today**

Afghanistan has long suffered from chronic instability and conflict. The Taliban's oppression of women in Afghanistan during their rule from 1996 through 2001 is well documented and included restricting movement, the denial of the right to work, beatings and other physical abuse, arbitrary detention, a near ban on girls' access to education and restricted access to health services.

Following the fall of the Taliban, a new window of opportunity for women has opened. Thanks to the 2001 Bonn Agreement, a new constitution and increased emphasis on gender mainstreaming were established. The Bonn Agreement called for specific attention to the role of women and established a dedicated government structure for this purpose, the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

The legal system of Afghanistan combines Islamic, statutory and customary rules. The supreme law of the land is the Constitution of the Islamic Republic Afghanistan of 2004. Article 22 of the Constitution provides that the citizens of Afghanistan have equal rights and duties before the law. In 2003, Afghanistan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Is there any promotion of gender equality in Afghanistan after the collapse of Taliban and the presence of international communities here so far? It is mentionable that now gender mainstreaming is Afghan government's principal strategy for promoting gender equality and for sure, mainstreaming is a valuable tool and could be more effectively executed. It is the responsibility of the Government of Afghanistan and of its leaders in particular, to ensure that its written commitment to promote gender equality in the Government's Gender Mainstreaming Policy is supported by its activities and practices.

According to a study of (AREU), a research organization, "after the collapse of Taliban Regime and the beginning of the new government in Afghanistan, the members of the civil service saw gender mainstreaming as a policy imported from outside the country and did not feel they had ownership of its implementation. The word "gender" does not translate into Dari or Pashto and it was generally considered foreign terminology."

Luckily, that sort of views regarding gender in Afghanistan has been changing in Afghanistan over the last ten years, and this change process is the outcome of cooperation and the supports of international communities in the fields of educating girls, increasing literacy rates among women, increasing early childhood development interventions, increasing women's labor force participation and strengthening labor policies affecting women, improving women's access to credit, land and other resources, promoting women's political rights and participation and expanding reproductive health programs and family support policies in Afghanistan.

#### **How did RCD go with gender equality in Afghanistan?**

There are many afghan civil service institutions on national and subnational level implementing a lot of gender promoting projects with great enthusiasms with the supports of RCD that you can refer to GIZ-RCD projects databases for these measures on gender promotion (see the databases links bellow) which is enormously helpful to



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the gender equality improvement. To prove this claim, below are some of RCD's initiatives in this regard with the outcome results.

- Support Afghan partners to celebrate special occasions like Women's Day, Mother's Day, Elimination of Violence Against Women Day and etc. in order to make Afghan women and girls aware of their rights in regards to social, political, cultural and education affairs and as well to publicize these rights for the community and especially to men in order to accept the equality between themselves and women.
- Provide advisory and technical supports to the Afghan Partners on elaboration of capacity development plans and measures to build and develop the capacities of Afghan women and girls on sub-national (provincial and districts) level and as well as to conduct campaigns for raising the awareness of them in the fields of; literacy, human rights, attending in decisions making processes, disadvantages of early and forced marriages, awareness from predominant laws and having the rights to work outside home like men.
- Support the Afghan governmental institutions; ministry of public health, ministry of women affairs, ministry of information and culture and ministry of rural rehabilitation and development on the construction of schools, clinics, hospitals, women training centers and libraries in order to women and girls could access to health facilities, education, vocational skills and knowledge.
- Provide good advisory supports and upheld the ministry of women affairs provincial line departments to establish the Gender Working Groups (GWGs) on the provinces to conduct meetings and sessions to well coordinate among women, discuss on gender related activities, find resolutions for the challenges and problems ahead against the progress of women and girls.
- Give advisory support the Afghan ministry of women affairs' provincial line departments to elaborate business plans and to establish women markets for the purpose of women could have business progress and to achieve sustainable economy and as well find the abilities in the long invest and run their own businesses.

### **Impact of our work and the challenges ahead**

Fortunately, today we are witnessing that many Afghan women and girls in the provinces have learned about their rights in the societies and are becoming well aware of the legitimate laws about women rights, human rights, civil rights and others and this has been leading that today women are members of the parliament, provincial councils, ministries and judicial system. They are getting involved in the decision making processes however this has not reached to the target goal but it is visibly changing for better future for Afghan Women since we see, the capacities of many of Afghan women and girls have enhanced through many capacity development works and they are finding the abilities and opportunities to work in the governmental and private sectors beside men.

Today as we can see, Afghan government also has accepted to provide job opportunities for women contrary to a decade ago. It is promising when we see many Afghan women are working in the governmental and non-governmental institutions on national and sub-national levels and the classical and traditional opinion of "women should not work outside home" is gradually and visibly changing and it is optimistically hoped for better change in this regard.

Since the fall of Taliban, many girls and women in the cities of Afghanistan have access to education, higher education, networking services, libraries and learning institutions. Compared to the time of the Taliban regime,



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there are great achievements and it has to be mentioned that RCD has had a remarkable role here by providing great technical and advisory supports to the respective directorates, ministries and their line departments in the provinces.

Since RCD has supported the Afghan Government, many Afghan women received business, management and marketing trainings in the provinces and as a result, today you can see there are some small women markets in the provinces that if this support continues, these markets will further improve. Through these markets, women can sell and purchase women handy crafts and women-producing goods. The women run their own businesses.

There are provinces that women have Shuras (women gatherings) and associations and they assess their needs, problems and other social and cultural requirements by themselves and through these associations, decisions are taken and then are forwarded to the line departments and the government agencies.

The most important thing is that, which local population and communities have been accepting and finding the confidence to women and girls' existence next to men as first class citizens like men which this in the long term will help the gender equality to be accepted in Afghan communities and the gender mainstreaming would be implemented in the governmental administrations.

But we should not also forget that there so many people, unpleasant costumes and traditions that are against gender equality and women progress in Afghanistan. These costumes and unpleasant traditions are the results of lack of knowledge, illiteracy, lack of education; state of being uninformed and old views. To change these people and remove these kinds of views against women and gender equality, the Afghan government and its national and international partners need to struggle fundamentally any how possible.

### **Quality feature of our gender work**

Since equality between men and women has been accepted as a fundamental principle in the government of Afghanistan, GIZ-RCD has always tried to stand beside this government and strongly supports it to provide equal opportunities for women and men in all aspects of life.

Today if you travel to the RCD working provinces and meet with people there, you will feel and see the impact RCD projects have made in regards to sustainable regional capacity development in different fields including gender equality promotion, however this is not enough.

Building Women Training Centers (WTC) to provide the ground for women and girls to attend capacity development trainings, computer and language courses, meetings and workshops and launching internship programs for women and girls to increase women participation in the government and politics, they all have been quality and sustainable supports which were provided by region capacity development (RCD) program for gender equality. These sustainable supports have been highly appreciated from the government of Afghanistan at national and sub-national level (provinces) through letters and meetings.

To show and demonstrate the efforts and contributions RCD/F has done for gender equality and reducing gender-based discrimination and since the results made in this ground, were an integral part of the M&E system, our gender officers and M&E officers recorded them in GIZ- Document Management System (DMS). By opening the following links, you can find documentation on gender works for RCD/F.



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<https://dms.giz.de/dms/llisapi.dll?func=ll&objId=91804119&objAction=browse&viewType=1>

<https://dms.giz.de/dms/llisapi.dll?func=ll&objId=84058037&objAction=browse&sort=name&viewType=1>

And these are the links to the RCD databases:

RCD Training Database: <https://dms.giz.de/dms/llisapi.dll?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=97743216>

RCD Project Database: <https://dms.giz.de/dms/llisapi.dll?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=97742232>

RCD Infrastructure Database: <https://dms.giz.de/dms/llisapi.dll?func=ll&objaction=overview&objid=97742772>

To be realistic it is not easy or possible to achieve gender equality by individuals alone. To make this big achievement successfully, there is need to partners, donors, co-workers, funds, coordination and cooperation from government side, people and international communities. Very fortunately, these resources have been existed in Afghanistan since the establishment of the new government over the last ten years and they have coordinated their struggles and efforts to promote gender equality in Afghanistan.

As RCD works in the provinces, it is a key member of the provincial Gender Working Groups (GWG). The GWGs are established in the provinces by the Afghan civil service department of women affairs by the support of international and national organizations, civil society institutions, the chamber of commerce and few other governmental agencies. The group is led by the provincial department of women affairs in the provinces and these groups have monthly and quarterly meetings to discuss any gender-related issues like; elimination of violence against women, women rights, women participation in the government and politics and other topics to support gender equality. And at the end the department of women affairs as the first afghan government representative for policy making, monitoring and leading capacity development for women in the provinces share and represents the GWG requests and results to the decision making bodies (e.g. Provincial development committees (PDC) meetings and sectoral meetings) in order to consider their proposals for implementation.

RCD has always been interested to be a key member of this group in all RCD working provinces and it has shared its operation plans with GWG in regards to gender-related activities and has implemented its gender-related projects in close coordination and partnership with department of women affairs and as well as the GWG . And it is to be mentioned that RCD provided them much support compared to many other national and international organizations. And hereby I would like to claim that our struggles and actions concerning gender equality promotion enhanced the success factors of cooperation, processes and strategy.

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