For the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), addressing gender issues through supported projects is critical to the overall performance of the portfolio, and the development trajectory of Afghanistan as a whole. The World Bank has identified the low level of women participating in Afghanistan's workforce and generally low levels of female human capital as one of the greatest risks to the Afghan economy going forward, and one of the strongest underlying constraints to poverty reduction. In order to support women's human capital and ability to participate more actively in various sectors of the economy, a range of interventions are needed, including health and education services, as well and agricultural extension and value chain support, financial services, and support to women in the civil service, to name a few. From this perspective, gender is taken as a key cross-cutting focus for the ARTF.

The ARTF addresses gender issues both at the level of individual projects, and through a set of portfolio level interventions. Both aspects of this dual approach provide critical inputs to gender mainstreaming, the core principle of the ARTF approach to gender issues. Through individual projects, specific development targets are achieved, such as increases in female literacy or support to female farmers. Through portfolio level interventions, cross-cutting or multi-sectoral gender concerns are discussed and addressed, policy issues are defined, and gender issues are institutionalized in the processes and mechanisms of the Trust Fund.

The ARTF supports the gender reform agenda set out in the Government of Afghanistan’s National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), particularly contributing to its key strategies of the “development of women’s human capital” (4.2) and the “promotion of women’s leadership” (4.3), and to all aspects of Pillar III: Economic and Social Development.

The following pages outline the ARTF’s approach to gender mainstreaming at both the project and portfolio levels.

Structure of Gender Approach

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INTERVENTION I: Gender in Project Design

Gender concerns should be first taken into consideration during the design of new projects (or in the design of subsequent phases of existing projects). Gender issues can be addressed and incorporated in a number of ways, including targeted interventions, safeguard measures, and through inclusion in the results framework:

- Project teams should consider including targeted interventions designed to address gender gaps, or fully mainstreaming gender concerns into all aspects of project design. Projects can opt for a combination of these approaches, strongly privileging gender issues where gaps between service delivery to men and women are significant, whilst ensuring gender concerns are addressed in mainstreamed project processes and systems.
- Project teams should consider building into project design the requirement for the client to hire a dedicated gender focal point for the project, and to develop a project-specific gender strategy and workplan.
- Project teams should build gender issues into the project-specific Results Framework and social safeguards documentation at the design phase, planning for how female beneficiaries will be measured, how women will be consulted throughout implementation, and how the project’s impact on gender outcomes will be captured and understood.

Gender-related design issues will be reviewed during a rigorous peer review process, prior to the finalization of project design.
INTERVENTION II: Gender in Project Implementation Support
Throughout the implementation of an approved project, regular technical support should be provided to the implementing client (relevant Government ministry or agency). This support is aimed at the capacity-building of clients and the addressing of gender concerns throughout the implementation cycle. Project implementation support on gender issues should be primarily provided in two ways:

- Through regular visits to and interaction with client project teams in order to discuss gender strategies and workplans, to support on advancing gender-related project components, to identify gender concerns in the project, and to follow gender-related staffing issues.
- Through biannual Implementation Support Missions, during which gender issues will be formally assessed (along with other key issues in the project), and specific recommendations referred to the client through a formal Aide Memoire from World Bank management. This document will serve as a reference tool and action plan for the subsequent six months until the next review.

INTERVENTION III: Gender in Monitoring and Evaluation
- ARTF-supported projects will include gender-related objectives, targets, and indicators in their individual Results Frameworks, and build in explicit requirements for the collection of gender disaggregated data across indicators by client (Government) project teams. Collected data should be analyzed during Implementation Support Missions.
- Whilst many of these aggregated datasets are necessarily quantitative in nature, new tools are being developed and integrated into the monitoring systems of mature projects, which will allow for qualitative data collection at scale. These tools contain indicators which capture qualitative issues including gender-related concerns, as can be seen in the National Solidarity Program's Institutional Maturity Index (IMI) used with Community Development Councils (CDCs), or in the Balanced Scorecard used in the health sector, produced by a third party monitoring agent, and measuring a range of detailed indicators related to services, facilities, and staffing in SEHAT. These types of tools should be considered in newly-designed projects.

INTERVENTION IV: Gender in Analysis and Learning
In addition, the ARTF supports project-specific analytical work, in the form of targeted qualitative thematic studies, sector or issue-specific policy briefs, or larger statistically-representative Impact Evaluations. Gender related concerns may be the key focus (in targeted thematic studies or policy briefs), or are captured among other themes in larger analytical undertakings.

To date, these products have included the following:
- a study on value chains with high-potential entry points for women, prepared in support of the agriculture sector,
- a policy brief outlining challenges and recommendations for increasing women in the civil service,
- a qualitative study on women's access to justice determining useful findings for the justice sector, and
- the National Solidarity Program Impact Evaluation, containing gender-related indicators.

Projects should continue to plan to support relevant analytical work with gender-related results.
PORTFOLIO LEVEL

INTERVENTION I: Gender in Strategic Discussions and Portfolio Management
Gender issues should be included as part of the key ARTF and World Bank Afghanistan portfolio review mechanisms. These include:

- The World Bank’s global annual Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA);
- The Annual Country Portfolio Performance Assessment (CPPR);
- The ARTF Scorecard; and
- The ARTF Financing Strategy.

These mechanisms create opportunities to discuss and highlight gender issues within the portfolio. These include, for example, addressing gender issues at the strategic level, capturing gender in results monitoring and reporting, ensuring appropriate female human resources in project implementation teams, addressing workplace environment issues and benefits for female project staff, and assessing changes in the enabling policy environment.

Gender Working Group
In addition, the ARTF has a Gender Working Group, which functions as a sub-committee to the ARTF Strategy Group. The Gender Working Group will discuss gender issues in the ARTF portfolio on a quarterly basis or as needed, and also provides regular updates to the Strategy Group. A rotating Lead Donor in the Gender Working Group will support in synthesizing key messages among donors and referring them to counterparts in the Strategy Group.

INTERVENTION II: Gender in Monitoring and Evaluation
The ARTF portfolio is accountable for a set of portfolio-level gender results, in addition to individual project results. These will be presented in the ARTF Results Framework, which highlights key sectoral indicators. A gender review of the Results Matrix was undertaken in 2014, with recommendations made for strengthening gender issues in the tool. In addition, gender issues will be reflected at portfolio level annually in the ARTF Scorecard. The Scorecard will measure process-related gender issues, including assessing how the portfolio performs on building gender issues into project design across the portfolio, and the percentage of projects that include gender concerns in their analytical work.

INTERVENTION III: Gender in Analysis and Learning
Whilst individual projects and sectors take on thematic analytical work on gender issues, the ARTF will also facilitate portfolio-level analytical work, which provides cross-sectoral analysis, synthesizing and prioritizing among key messages. To date, this work includes key documents such as the recent Gender Stocktaking report which assesses national progress across critical women’s development issues since 2005, and the 2014 Gender Policy Note which puts forward critical recommendations on gender issues for the post-2014 election period.

INTERVENTION IV: Gender in Human Resources
The ARTF will employ a Gender Specialist in the Kabul World Bank office to lead on the above issues and processes. As mentioned above, individual project teams in client Government ministries will also staff gender focal points for ARTF-funded projects. The World Bank’s Gender Specialist will support these individuals, who will lead on gender issues in their respective projects. These Government project teams should also consider including gender focal points based in provinces where the projects are implemented, where they will work directly with female beneficiaries—to date, this model can be seen in:

- the National Solidarity Program (NSP),
- the Irrigation Restoration Development Program (IRDP), and
- the National Horticulture and Livestock Program (NHLP), among others.

In addition, the World Bank will utilize regional and headquarters-based staff to provide support on technical issues and share approaches. The Gender Specialist based in Kabul will be regularly in touch with headquarters and regional staff responsible for gender issues, engaging on research and methodologies, and will proactively exchange information with staff working on gender issues in other fragile and conflict-affected states.