

Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention

2021 Intersessional Meeting- 22 June – 24 June 2021

Panel Discussion: Integrating the Diverse Needs of Affected Communities in Operational Planning and Prioritization (22 June 2021)

Talking points – Frozan Darwish, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Manager, DMAC-ANDMA

Timing: 10-12 minutes

Afghanistan as state member of APMBC, CCM, CRPD, CEDAW, UDHR and core Human Rights conventions has strong commitment to fulfill the principles and values of these conventions to national laws and regulations.

Since 2001, consequent to the joint efforts of the government of Afghanistan, the international community, and civil society, there has been progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality. The recent statistic shows that women now constitute 29.6 percent of the civil service, with a significant presence in leadership level of the government. Despite the improvements, there is still a long way to reduce gender disparity. In Afghanistan, like many other developing countries, women suffer from gender discrimination.

DMAC, G&D department as a leading authority, manages, coordinates and oversees the Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan from G&D perspective. A technical working group is established by membership of IP and UNMAS GFP and is led by DMAC G&D Manager. Regularly monthly meeting is organized for being an effective coordination mechanism.

Recently NMASP for 2021-2026 is developed by technical and financial support of GICHD. The strategy seeks to support Afghanistan in achieving its international convention obligations and national law. Furthermore, Afghanistan is compliant with the UNSCR 1325 and National Action Plan is developed on women, peace and security and taking into account the gender and diversity aspects of the Oslo Action Plan.

NMASP incorporates gender and diversity throughout this document. Vision, missions, strategic goals, objectives and indicators are gender and diversity sensitive. We are fortunate to be accompanied through the process of development of the strategy with national and international experts in this area of implementation.

To note Afghanistan's commitment to mainstreaming gender and diversity, a standalone goal has been set on inclusion and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups in mine action sector. By prioritizing and ensuring gender and diversity, supports the implementation of OAP and SDG. MAPA seeks to address both gender inequality and inequalities experienced by other marginalized groups along the lines of age, disability, ethnicity and displacement. We must

remember that our efforts are not only to ensure the strengthening of gender consideration but also of the more vulnerable populations that may not have a voice.

Currently the MAPA employs around 5023 Afghans across the country of which 220 are women and 71 are PWD. Based on first objective of Goal 4 which is on G&D, we aim to increase the employment of women by 15% and PWD by 3% in next five years. Half of the population cannot be excluded employment in this sector, which can have a significant effect on economic empowerment and sustainable development. Vacancy advertisements in mine action always encourage women and PWD to apply. In recruitments, five extra scores for female candidates is considered based on Afghanistan civil services law. DMAC and IPs HR Manuals and recruitment mechanisms are gender sensitive.

The ongoing conflict, political issues and uncertain peace process in Afghanistan has major implications for women's workforce participation in different areas of Afghanistan. PWD and Women's employment remains low, despite recent increases – around 1% PWD and only 4% women for the MAPA as a whole, against a global average of around 20% and national figure which is 29%. We request if donors can support us in attaining this aim by promoting G&D in proposals and they can choose to support programmes that: ensure the job opportunities are provided to all regardless of their gender, disability and ethnicity.

UNMAS-Afghanistan has deployed gender focal points who are working in national implementing partners to ensure women's opinion in different stages of mine action projects such as planning, implementation and monitoring. For sustainability, I would suggest IPs and donors to include G&D officers in organization's structure as core staff and to consider financial resource for this. This is extremely important and would allow certainty that the issue will be addressed and considered at every stage of implementation.

The Gender Marker as a tool for comprehensive G&D mainstreaming in project management cycle is in place at DMAC. Humanitarian projects are designed to ensure that women, men, boys and girls of all ages will benefit equally from it, and that it will contribute to increasing gender equality. I would kindly ask IPs and the donors that, GFPs should be part of project proposal review team as it is already experienced in DMAC. Gender and diversity is mainstreamed to other mechanisms and tools such as the BSC. The checklists on EORE, Clearance and VA are used in the BSC process, which is gender and diversity sensitive.

A comprehensive mine action related data management system is in place. All the data including causality data, beneficiaries from VA, EORE and workforce figure are collected systematically by using of SADD and from now on, disability factor is added in data management as well. Data is analyzed from a gender and diversity perspective and for promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and other marginalized groups in mine action.

This analysis of disaggregated data is the basis for the planning of DMAC activities.

Lack of financial resources to support mainstreaming costs such as mahram cost and no budget allocation on gender related matters, limits women's contribution to the project effectively. I would kindly ask the donors on implementation of the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) mechanism in MAPA.

The successful deployment of female deminers in Bamyan with the support of UNMAS is example of progress who released 51,520 square meters of mine/ERW. The deminers are an inspiration for women around the world. Based on a survey, which was conducted by UNMAS, perceptions of female deminers and their families, their contribution to resource management and decision making at family and community level is improved significantly.

Findings of Perception Study are very encouraging on the extent to which the recruitment of female deminers can influence perception changes in societies characterized by conservative gender norms. Positive changes were recorded among female deminers, their male colleagues, their family members and the community to which they belong. Once the clearance of this area is completed, these women will also be able to disseminate risk education in affected areas, and, if needed, respond to ERW spot clearance tasks. English language, computer and project management courses will be delivered to the team they will be encouraged to find the job opportunity to work as technical mine action staff at MAPA.

MAPA organizations have widely adopted mixed gender teams for clearance, EORE, community liaison, and victim assistance, improving access to women for delivery of activities and collection of data in many areas of the country. Deployment of couple deminers teams in Balk during 2021 is the example of progress. The expansion of such approaches will be considered for other provinces as well. EORE Couple teams provide context-specific EORE to all affected populations, including to refugees and displaced people.

Non-Technical Survey teams are currently all-male, and efforts will be made to deploy mixed gender NTS teams. Local gender norms meant that male staff cannot meet with local women from conservative communities and, at the same time, female staff cannot travel throughout the country without a male chaperone. These teams can travel in many parts of the country and are effective at, and necessary for reaching female beneficiaries.

DMAC is working to develop Safeguarding-anti-harassment, protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and grievance mechanism based on international instruments, national law and good practices. **This will support the success of this effort.**

DMAC continued to highlight the media campaigns, social events and radio dramas to bring change the community perception regarding gender equality and working of women/ PWD and Stigma/Discrimination that woman with disabilities are faced.

Based on core principle of Oslo Action Plan, G&D is integrated into mine action programming. And efforts have been made that different needs and perspectives of women, girls, boys and men and other diverse group of the community being considered and inform planning and prioritization in all areas of convention implementation.

It is clear that DMAC is committed to promoting an accessible and discrimination-free working environment for all diverse group and to promote gender and diversity inclusion overall the MAPA, but is not possible to stand-alone; this should be seen as a national issue where the changes should happen at a policy level to community level. Donor's emphasis is significantly important. We strongly follow these universal principles, "equality", "non- discrimination" and "no one left behind"!

Ladies and gentlemen, many of us understand the crucial importance of the mainstreaming of gender and diversity matters to the efficient and effective implementation of our mine action efforts.

However, not everyone understand the impact that mainstreaming gender and diversity in mine action has on strengthening the human rights of all.