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WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT WORKPLACE OBSTACLES: ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID PROMOTE: WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

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ACRONYMS

ACSEN	Afghanistan Civil Society Election Network
ACSI	Afghanistan Civil Service Institute
AIHRC	Afghanistan In-depend Human Right Commission
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
APPF	Afghan Public Protection Force
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HDR	Human Development Report
HR	Human Resources
IARCSC	Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IP	Implementing Partner
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industries
MoCIT	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
MoCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MoIC	Ministry of Information and Culture
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled

MoMP	Ministry of Mines and Petroleum
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoPW	Ministry of Public Works
MoTCA	Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MUDA	Ministry of Urban Development
NAPWA	National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan
TWG	Technical Working Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WLD	Women's Leadership Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the international intervention in Afghanistan post-2001, efforts to improve the lives of women have produced mixed results. Although Afghan women have the right to participate in public life and have gained improved access to education and health care, various obstacles still limit women's advancement in society. Many women lack the concrete resources and education to obtain employment and face structural and sociocultural barriers to advance once inside the workplace. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Promote: Women in Government *Workplace Obstacles: Analysis and Recommendations* report analyzes the obstacles that limit women from working within the government, such as policy, regulations, culture, and adequate infrastructure.

Further, it provides recommendations for establishing equitable work environments for women by integrating the perspectives of female and male government employees, students, and representatives of civil society organizations (CSO). The data presented in this report are based on findings from three survey questionnaires completed by 178 government employees, including 113 women and key informants from a cross-section of institutions. The baseline data are a starting point for understanding the obstacles women currently face to enter government institutions and to advance within ministries. By analyzing these multiple constraints, this report seeks to identify solutions for a rising generation of young women in government.

The first part of the research paper presents a brief project overview followed by a synopsis of the status of women in government in Afghanistan since 2001. Section II outlines the methodology employed in designing and conducting this research and describes the data collection methods. Section III summarizes the findings and provides a detailed analysis of key informant interviews, the survey questionnaires, and focus group discussions (FGD). The last section presents recommendations based on the analysis and identifies potential solutions to eliminate workplace obstacles for women in government.

SECTION I.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Promote is a joint commitment by the U.S. and Afghan governments that will work to empower 75,000 women between the ages of 18 and 30, and help ensure these women are included among a new generation of Afghan political, business, and civil society leaders. USAID Promote: Women in Government, a task order under the Promote Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract, was designed to increase and advance the number of women in the Afghan Civil Service. In close coordination with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), USAID Promote: Women in Government aims to ensure women are always represented at the highest levels of policy and decision-making in Afghan society and government. This component of Promote facilitates women's entry into decision-making roles in government service and encourages policy reform within the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) at both the national and regional levels. By establishing an internship program for high school and college female students interested in working within government ministries, the project aims to increase support for women in government. Over the course of five years, Promote will provide young, educated Afghan women opportunities to improve their skills, experience, and knowledge, and to expand their networks to become leaders.

The USAID Promote: Women in Government program has three objectives:

- Facilitate women's entry into decision-making roles in government service
- Encourage a hospitable environment for female staff in government
- Increase local stakeholder support for women in government

To support the project's objectives, this research report was conducted to identify policy, culture, or infrastructure changes that need to be made in national and subnational government offices. The ultimate goal is to encourage a hospitable environment for female staff working in Afghan government ministries. To reach this goal, this research provides recommendations for safe workspaces for young women, specifically by identifying sexual harassment, discrimination, and policy gaps that affect women.

SITUATING WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

There are a number of obstacles associated with working in public institutions for Afghan women. Workplace cultures as well as broader cultural barriers play an important role in women's participation in public affairs. For example, all-male working environments are perceived as making female staff more vulnerable to harassment and discrimination because of the lack of infrastructure available to female staff. Workplace sexual harassment and inadequate infrastructure facilities (e.g. a lack of women's restrooms, prayer rooms, and separate dining halls) are a reality and the law offers no specific workplace protection. Many aspiring young women do not meet the education or experience criteria for a professional government position. In addition, prevailing insecurity, negative opinions from men, and routine street-harassment

contribute to women remaining in the private sphere of the home.¹ Women's participation in GIRoA institutions is in danger of declining due to obstacles that are interrelated with larger cultural, policy, and infrastructure barriers.²

Women's rights, development, and participation in society have been at the forefront of the Afghan government throughout the last decade. The GIRoA has made a series of critical commitments to women, and many international actors have made women's issues central to their aid objectives in Afghanistan.³ A growing body of literature highlights the role of Afghan women in the successful development of Afghan society as a whole.⁴ However, fewer studies have concentrated on specific workplace obstacles that hamper women's entry and growth in government institutions. Recognizing the importance of understanding these obstacles, there is an essential need to provide feasible recommendations to prevent such barriers to women's advancement and entry into Afghan government institutions.

PROGRESS SINCE 2001

Women and girls have been systematically discriminated against and marginalized in Afghan society. Prior to 1973, gender-based discrimination was commonplace; however, it considerably worsened during the Taliban's rise to power. The persistent violation of their human rights has resulted in the deteriorating economic and social conditions of women and girls across the country.

Since 2001, with the intervention of the international community, donors and Afghan civil society organizations (CSOs) have worked diligently to improve conditions for women. The establishment of gender and equality policies and procedures was laid out in late 2001 after the International Conference on Afghanistan to encourage a more democratic regime, held in Bonn, Germany, which entailed women's active progress and participation in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

The international community as well as Afghan CSOs have supported women in rebuilding the Afghan state and enhancing their civil rights and representation in the parliament, civil service, judiciary, and security sector. Women's participation in the civil service increased modestly from 22% in 2006 to 25% in 2011.⁵ According to USAID Promote: Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs, acceptance of women in the workforce is slowly growing in parts of Afghanistan, particularly in urban areas. Meanwhile, Afghan women's organizations lobbied diligently to improve women's participation in the following areas:

- 25% quota of reserved seats in the Wolesi Jirga, the lower house of parliament

¹ USAID: Promote Baseline Desk Research. A review of the existing literature.

² Ibid.

³ Women's Role in Afghanistan's Future. http://www.artf.af/images/uploads/ARTF_Gender_Stocktaking_2014-Summary_Leaflet.pdf

⁴ GIRoA Partnership Assessment, Women's Role in Afghanistan's Future, Afghan Women's Economic Participation, USAID: Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs.

⁵ Cortright, D., Persinger, S.S. (2010). Afghan Women Speak: Enhancing Security and Human Rights in Afghanistan. University of Notre Dame. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. p.11.

- 17% quota of reserved seats in the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house of parliament
- Creation of MoWA, gender units, focal points in other ministries, and of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in its women's rights units
- Creation of the Afghan Civil Service Commission Gender Directorate within the *tashkeel* (approved budgeted positions) in 2005

Since 2001, Afghanistan has made modest progress in pursuing gender equality in democratic institutions.⁶ The constitution of Afghanistan supports women's rights and equal opportunity, stating that: “The citizens of Afghanistan — whether woman or man — have equal rights and duties before the law.” (Article 22, Afghan Constitution)

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) confirms that by 2020, the Afghan government must meet the target of 30% of female government employees. This target was set in 2013 and its overall implementation responsibility has been given to different government entities at national and subnational levels.⁷

Public opinion on gender equality and, more generally, whether women should work outside of the home, is reflected in the 2014 Asia Foundation’s “Survey of the Afghan People.” The study concludes that 67.8% of the respondents believe women should be allowed to work outside the home. Notably, 77.3% of women respondents agreed compared to 57.1% of men.⁸ Indeed, resistance to women working outside the home persists. This is explained by a number of factors, including insecure and unsafe work environments and cultural traditions that pose formidable obstacles to a growing number of women working in government ministries.⁹ For example, workplace sexual harassment is a serious problem in offices in both the public and private sectors in Afghanistan.¹⁰

Despite notable progress and initiatives both from the Afghan government and the international community since 2001, the state of Afghan women's rights is generally regarded as one of the lowest in the world.¹¹ The Human Development Report (HDR) ranks Afghanistan 149 out of 152 — indicating that Afghanistan is one of the worst countries for gender inequalities. Although 27.6% of seats in parliament are held by women, which is higher than many countries with much better equality records, high political representation has not translated into higher scores in other

⁶ Oxfam 2011. A place at the Table: Safeguarding Women's Right in Afghanistan. 153 Oxfam Briefing Paper, p. 20. https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp153-womens-rights-afghanistan-03102011-en_4.pdf

⁷ Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2008-2013 Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Executive Summary. <http://mfa.gov.af/Content/files/EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY%20English%20A5.pdf>

⁸ The Asia Foundation. (2014). Afghanistan in 2014, A Survey of the Afghan People. <http://asiafoundation.org/publications/pdf/1425>

⁹ USAID: Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote).

¹⁰ How Afghanistan Is Beginning to Deal with Workplace Sexual Harassment. March 29, 2013. <http://world.time.com/2013/03/29/how-afghanistan-is-beginning-to-deal-with-workplace-sexual-harassment/>

¹¹ Source: Human Development Index 2012: Gender Equality and Development. Table 4, www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/library/hdr/human-development-report-2013/

areas, according to HDR. Among working age women (ages 15 to 64), just under half are active in the labor market in either formal or informal jobs.¹² It is also widely understood that positions for women are largely relegated to traditional and marginal positions. One of the major stumbling blocks towards promoting women into senior positions is the requirement for university degrees. Overall, the education level among women government employees is lower than their male counterparts. In Afghanistan, women generally are not able to pursue higher education due to financial constraints as well as family responsibilities, especially after marriage. In most parts of the country (mainly urban areas) girls usually marry around the age of 18. Thus, family responsibilities place a substantial burden on women and impede them from pursuing higher education. The FGD participants also noted that most families cannot afford to send their girls to institutions of higher education.¹³

High percentages of women working in most ministries have only attained a high school education.¹⁴ According to the Afghan merit-based appointment procedures, for grades 1, 2, and 3 (high-ranking) positions, a degree from an institute of higher education (college or university degree) is a minimum requirement, in addition to 2-4 years of relevant work experience. Considering women's lower levels of educational attainment, these requirements limit women government employees from advancing into higher positions.

Currently, Afghanistan lacks an enabling environment for women to participate equally in the labor force. In order for Afghanistan to meet the 30% quota of women in the workforce by 2020, policies must be enforced to encourage supportive work and family environments for women. Such policies should also seek to actively reduce the various cultural and infrastructure barriers preventing women from entering governmental organizations.

THE CIVIL SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN

As reflected in the USAID Promote: Women in Government GIRoA Partnership Assessment, the Afghan public sector is composed of 54 state agencies (26 ministries and 28 independent agencies). State agencies, including central government ministries, institutions, and independent agencies, are considered to be primary budgetary units with their own discrete budgets. Currently, no legal document exists to clarify the characteristics of such units and their differences between ministries and independent agencies. Independent agencies and commissions are established for specific purposes, sometimes on a temporary basis, and report directly to the President of GIRoA. The GIRoA Partnership Assessment shows that GIRoA is committed to building a modern and unified civil service that paves the way for the people of Afghanistan by making the best possible use of the government's available human and budgetary resources.

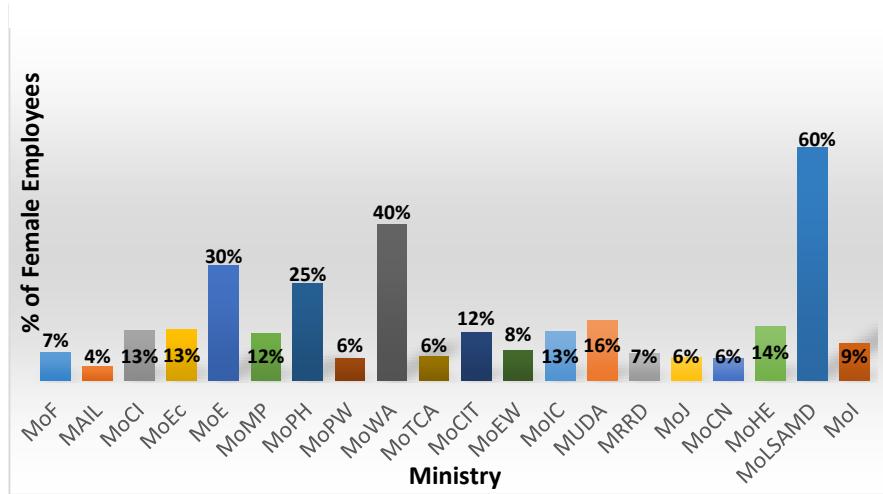
¹² ICON Institute (2008). National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8: A profile of Afghanistan, Köln: ICON Institute, page 105.

¹³ In rural areas, girls usually marry under the age of 18, making it more difficult for them to pursue higher education. Because data on women's age at marriage are more widely available in urban areas, focus group discussions were focused in urban locations.

¹⁴ USAID: Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote).

The Afghan government strives to achieve a unified civil service. It has started to restructure civil service institutions by implementing a new pay and grading system. This new process affected 398,195 civil servants, including teachers and doctors, who were considered civil servants but were paid on a different scale. Among the 398,195 civil servants, 22% were women, and only a small percentage (9%) held leadership positions.¹⁵ The recent USAID Promote: GIRoA Partnership Assessment also revealed that women are underrepresented in ministries. Figure 1 shows the percentage of women working at each ministry.

Figure 1. Female Representation in GIRoA



These numbers suggest that at present, women are grossly under-represented in the Afghan civil service. Since they are marginalized, they are not able to effectively contribute to critical issues in the government. An environment with more employment opportunities for women could contribute to women's greater engagement in public affairs and decision-making. However, to increase women's participation and achieve the 30% quota set for 2020 in the public sector of the government, a supportive environment must be fostered within government ministries.

SECTION II.

METHODOLOGY

Four methods were employed to conduct this research, including a desk review, structured and semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires, and focus group discussions.

A. DESK REVIEW

The desk review took place during the initial phase of research to identify key barriers to women's participation in civil service jobs, as well as obstacles they faced within Afghan ministries. This review played a crucial role in the design and data collection methods of the survey forms. The desk review was based on a systematic analysis of a comprehensive range of research drawn from four primary sources of information:

1. Policies and related publications from key donors and development organizations about Afghan gender policies
2. Recent USAID research reports on women's progress in Afghanistan
3. A review of selected government policies and procedures related to gender and women
4. A body of publications from non-governmental organizations, examined to learn more about general sources about women's economic participation.

B. STRUCTURED AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH KEY INFORMANTS

Critical data was collected from interviews with 178 civil servants from 19 key ministries and one independent agency, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, (IDLG). Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used to gather data during the three-week data collection process. Semi-structured and structured in-depth, in-person interviews were conducted in each ministry. These interview formats were chosen to allow participants to respond freely to open-ended questions and to ask additional questions as they arose.

Based on the findings from the USAID Promote: Women in Government GIRoA Partnership Assessment, 20 ministries and independent agencies were selected. They were identified as potential government bodies that could accept interns. These ministries were prioritized to gauge their interest in situating female interns into full-time *tashkeel* positions at the end of the internship program. Project team researchers carefully identified and selected experienced and knowledgeable interviewees for this report. Key informants were selected after a thorough review of each individual's involvement in policy development, especially policies related to gender, and their support for women's empowerment at ministry workplaces.

The following interview methods were used to collect the data from each key informant:

- Structured interviews included senior employees in grades 2 and 3, including HR directors, gender unit heads, and operations policy and planning directors.
- Semi-structured interviews included lower and middle-ranked civil servants in grades 3 to 5 from selected ministries.

A complete list of interviewees, including ministry names, is documented in Annex II.

C. DEVELOPMENT OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The three-part survey questionnaire was designed to collect data about workplace obstacles for women in government. The first part of the survey questionnaire focused on policy-related workplace obstacles, the second part on cultural obstacles at government ministries, and the third part concentrated on infrastructure-related obstacles in selected ministries.

The survey, which consisted of 34 questions, was developed to ascertain specific workplace obstacles. The survey questions were piloted and mock interviews were given to find out how respondents would react to the questions. Two questions were added as a result of pilot tests with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) employees. The survey consisted of multiple choice and open-ended questions, which were designed to be engaging and relevant, especially for female participants. To ensure cooperation and trust, the survey questions were written in a neutral tone that avoided inferences and assumptions. Moreover, questions were written using clear and concise language to facilitate comprehension and were broken into several sections by topic to give participants time to think before continuing. Before distributing the survey forms, respondents were briefed in detail about the research protocols and were informed that their input was valuable for final recommendations.

Complete survey questions can be found in Annex III.

D. ANALYSIS AND ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The project team was comprised of eight Afghan researchers, including five women based in Kabul, who administered and coordinated the survey data collection. The survey questionnaire and the FGDs were administered in Dari and Pashto, depending on the language spoken by the participants. After the collection phase, data were entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for analysis, involving cross-checking between questions. Responses from each ministry were stored in an Excel spreadsheet database to organize and analyze data.

E. LIMITATIONS

The research schedule depended heavily on securing appointments with Afghan government officials, who provided the primary source of interview and survey data. In most cases, the research team experienced a lack of cooperation from senior Afghan government officials, who were reluctant to meet and share information. For example, the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior (MoI) refused to provide information related to culture and infrastructure. Additionally, security issues in Kabul often delayed the movements of the research team, preventing consistent and timely data collection. The research team adapted different strategies to complete data collection on time. For example, during the data collection period the research team visited each ministry directly from their homes – avoiding higher-security risk areas and saving time. Despite these limitations, the consistency of the findings suggests that a larger survey would have similar results.

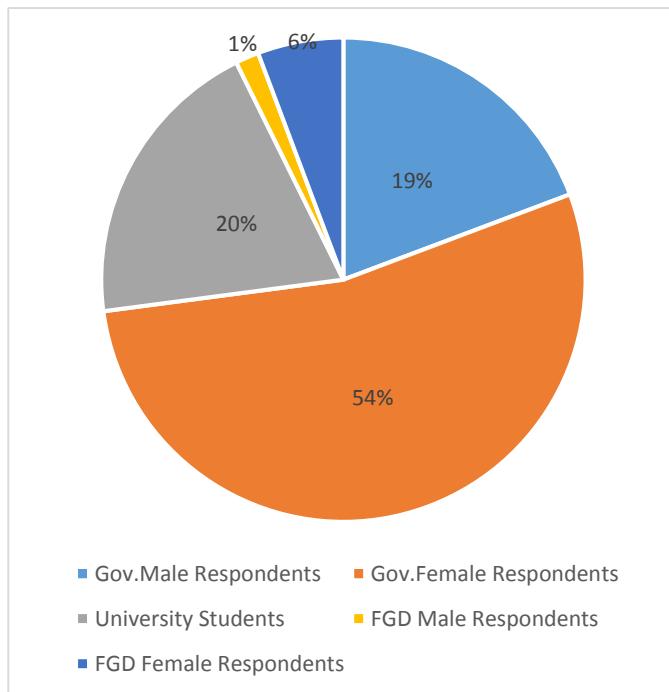
F. DEMOGRAPHICS

Adequate representation of women is often overlooked in surveys in Afghanistan; therefore, a conscious effort was made to include women's opinions. Indeed, among the 178 participants,

141 (79%) women participated. In addition, two FGDs were conducted with 16 participants, including 13 women. Interviews were primarily conducted with government employees, grades 2 to 5, including HR directors, gender unit heads, and planning and policy directors. Other women who participated in interviews and survey questionnaires were students from higher education institutes.

Figure 2 shows that 54% of interviews with government employees were conducted with women and 6% with female FGD participants.

Figure 2. Gender Disaggregation of Respondents



SECTION III.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings and analysis in this section illustrate the breakdown of the findings from the data collected from the desk study, key informant interviews, survey forms, and FGDs. A total of 20 Afghan government ministries and independent agencies were visited. At these ministries and agencies, 37 interviews were conducted and 141 survey forms were completed by government employees. In addition, two FGDs were held – one with CSO representatives and another with young female students from higher education institutes.

The survey questions sought to understand the overall workplace obstacles in terms of policy-related workplace obstacles, cultural workplace obstacles, and access to basic infrastructure, including separate facilities (i.e. restrooms, prayer rooms, dining rooms) and safety and security measures. To obtain external perspectives, in FGDs female university students who were not government employees were asked to identify factors and obstacles that discourage women from entering government jobs.

A. POLICY ENVIRONMENT OBSTACLES

ANDS positioned gender at the core of national development agenda by recognizing it as a cross-cutting theme and promoting gender equity based on three separate goals:

- a) Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women
- b) Developing women's human capital
- c) Ensuring women's full participation and leadership in all aspects of life in Afghanistan¹⁶

In addition, the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA 2007-2017) was established to develop gender policy aimed at protecting and empowering women. NAPWA prioritizes women's roles in peacemaking, development, and equality policies to improve women's economic and social opportunities. A joint commitment by the Afghan government and the international community, mainly USAID, has enacted strategies to reduce gender inequality so that women can fully achieve their rights and determine their life outcomes.¹⁷ Other substantial documents have been developed at the national and subnational levels to address gender equality in various policy fields.

However, the absence of crucial enforcement mechanisms to protect women in the workplace has deterred meaningful progress. Gender policies often lack political will from high-level government officials as well as the required capacity among government staff. Additionally, gender units are often poorly funded. Together, these factors compound women's poor chances of entering the civil service.

¹⁶ Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2008-2013 Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Executive Summary. <http://mfa.gov.af/Content/files/EXECUTIVE%20SUMMARY%20English%20A5.pdf>

¹⁷ USAID: Promote Baseline Desk Research. A review of the existing literature.

For the purpose of this report, government workplace policies which are designed to safeguard women in the workplace are defined as follows:

Anti-harassment policy or regulations, gender equality policies, merit-based appointment procedures,¹⁸ training and development policies, and other policies supporting women in the workplace.

Figure 3 shows the position of each policy in 20 ministries and IDLG.

Figure 3. List of Existing Policies and Procedures

S/N	Ministries	Anti Harassment Policy	Gender Equality Policy	Merit-based Appointment Procedure	Training & Development Policy	Positive Discrimination Policy	Leave Policy	Succession Planning Policy	Complain/ Grievance Procedure	Conflict Resolution Committee	Flexible Work hours
1	MAIL	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
2	MoE	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
3	MoI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
4	MoF	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
5	MoHE	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	MoJ	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7	MoCN	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	MoCIT	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
9	MoEW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
10	MoLSAMD	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	MoIC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
12	MUDA	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
13	MoD	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
14	MoCI	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
15	MRRD	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
16	MoWA	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
17	MoTCA	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
18	MoMP	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
19	MoPW	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	IDLG	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Figure 3 shows that workplace-supportive policies exist within the system, either as separate policies or as references in the Afghan civil service or the labor law. Rating the effectiveness and implementation of the existing policies in government ministries on a scale from “not at all effective” to “extremely effective,” 60% of the respondents agreed that the above-mentioned policies are “moderately effective” in terms of their implementation. FGD participants had a similar point of view. Their responses suggested that policies supporting women at government institutions need serious attention for effective results.

1. ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Sexual harassment is a hindrance to recruiting and retaining female staff, and unfortunately has become part of women’s daily lives in Afghanistan. Government offices are no exception to

¹⁸ Nepotism in recruitment, lack of positive discrimination, difficulty in rising through the ranks to more advanced positions, lack of opportunity for women in leadership positions, and succession planning policy are all related to merit-based appointment.

harassment.¹⁹ The absence of a mechanism to address complaints from women is one of the main impediments to female participation in the workforce. A report by Women for Afghan Women found that in Afghan government institutions, there are frequent accounts of verbal and physical harassment, blackmailing for sexual favors, and the use of authority to coerce sexual acts from female government employees.

The findings of our research found a complete lack of policies and procedures with respect to sexual harassment in government ministries. As demonstrated in the GIRoA Partnership Assessment, except for IDLG, none of the ministries, agencies, or provincial offices interviewed had anti-harassment policies or guidelines.

Figure 3 above indicates that respondents from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI), the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MoCN), and the Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) refer to some of the provisions of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) code of conduct and personal affairs regulations, which are vague, as anti-harassment instructions. Throughout the interviews, it was noticeable that cases of harassment were rarely reported. Measures to protect victims must follow the reporting of harassment, since female government staff members fear their reputations will be harmed if they file a complaint. The employee relations departments of each ministry confirmed there were very rare cases of complaints filed by women and processed through the system. Moreover, most of the cases that have been reported were not properly addressed. Of the ministries interviewed, all said that complainants did not trust the Conflict Resolution Committees headed by HR Directors and their cases were, therefore, referred to deputy ministers for mediation.

In August 2015, the government of Afghanistan approved the anti-harassment regulations initiated by MoWA. In an interview with the Policy and Planning Director of MoWA, Ms. Zarifa Rahimi, the research team found that MoWA will need technical support in order to develop clear anti-harassment implementation guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, a proper action plan, and an enforcement mechanism. Each government entity will need to communicate the regulations to its staff, provide trainings, develop prevention methods, and ensure enforcement is in place. Component 2 under the USAID Promote: Women in Government project, which deals with policy reforms, will engage and provide technical support to MoWA in developing the above anti-harassment implementation guidelines.

2. GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

The majority of respondents (15), including Human Resources (HR) directors and gender unit heads, agreed that gender policies introduced by Afghan government ministries are very general in nature and require specific additional provisions. The GIRoA Partnership Assessment found that 17 out of 23 government offices interviewed were following the IARCSC gender policy. Among the selected ministries, only five ministries (the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE)) had developed their own separate gender policies. However, all ministries lack implementing guidelines or have no procedures in place.

¹⁹ “How Afghanistan Is Beginning to Deal with Workplace Sexual Harassment,” Time Magazine, March 29, 2013. <http://world.time.com/2013/03/29/how-afghanistan-is-beginning-to-deal-with-workplace-sexual-harassment/>

During an interview with a gender unit head in one ministry, the respondent said that government gender units had no decision-making authority at the ministries. For example, gender units are not included in the annual budget hearing of the ministries. This is important since each gender unit must know the budget allocations for each department so that the gender units can suggest capacity-building programs for female employees. All of the gender unit heads are women in grade 3 positions. Their low-grade level and limited capacity prohibits them from being involved in decision-making and from carrying out their responsibilities to represent women's needs. The existing gender units in the ministries are marginalized within their institutions because they lack government support and political will.

The survey findings highlighted the following as main issues with the implementation of current gender policy:

- The gender policy lacks implementation guidelines and an action plan.
- Gender units lack the capacity to support and enforce the policy.
- Gender units are marginalized within government institutions with limited access to senior management, rare participation in senior management meetings, and no access to budget information.
- Gender units are placed under various departments with low job grades, usually grade 3, and lack unified and comprehensive terms of reference. This contributes to the inefficacy of gender units.
- Since grade 3 employees cannot participate in the recruitment of higher grades, they are not allowed to participate in recruitment panels of grade 1 or 2 positions.

The gender policy of IARCSC requires amendments to address the growing needs of women workers. It is recommended that technical assistance be provided to update and publicize the content of the gender policy of IARCSC.

3. MERIT-BASED APPOINTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

GIRoA ministries and independent agencies follow IARCSC's appointment procedures intended to "support the achievement of a competent, non-partisan, representative and inclusive civil service in which civil servants are drawn from across the country, reflect the diversity and are representative of the people they serve."²⁰

IARCSC merit-based appointment procedures apply to all ministries and independent agencies as follows:

- Grades 3 to 5 are recruited by ministries with oversight from the IARCSC.
- Previously, grades 1 and 2 were recruited by the IARCSC appointment board. However, per the new decree from President Ghani, grade 1 and 2 positions are now recruited by the ministries. Thus, IARCSC's role is limited to monitor the recruitment process to ensure compliance.

²⁰ IARCSC Appointment Procedure.

According to HR directors from all the ministries surveyed, it was clear that for this merit-based recruitment process, positions are publicly advertised by line ministries and the IARCSC nationwide (through media sources such as TV, radio, and provincial newspapers, as well as ministry websites and billboards). The terms of reference specify minimal educational and professional requirements, and a post grade that aligns with Afghanistan's civil service salary scale.

According to Afghan civil service law, appointments are no longer based on tribe, race, gender, social class, and economic privilege. However, more than 50% of survey and FGD respondents acknowledged that public sector jobs are highly competitive and often lack transparency. This situation leads the requirement procedures to be vulnerable to nepotism and bribery. One respondent stated that,

"Pressures and incentives to appoint people outside formal procedures have continually challenged the attempts to ensure merit-based appointments."

One major challenge often mentioned by the respondents was the issue of nepotism, defined as a civil servant being recruited on the basis of family ties and friendship networks. HR directors agreed that some ministries admitted that nepotism or patronage in recruitment is still common in their ministries. Without the necessary family connections, FGD participants were concerned that there are fewer opportunities for young women to work in the public sector.

Respondents (15 out of 20 HR directors) directly linked the issue of nepotism to both internal and external influences of senior staff at the ministries, such as the intervention of members of one's own ethnic or tribal community. According to respondents, nepotistic recruitment procedures result in the selection of unqualified and unsuitable candidates for different positions. Since Afghanistan is a male-dominated country, nepotism is more prevalent among men, which further excludes women.

Positive Discrimination Policy

Civil Service Commission efforts to support the increased representation of women in government departments have considered positive discriminatory procedures under the merit-based appointment procedure. During the recruitment process, female candidates are supposed to be given five additional points to their evaluation score to support their applications for public sector work.

Among the 20 government offices interviewed, 14 (70%) confirmed that this positive discrimination policy is applied in all GIRoA ministries. However, according to gender unit heads and members of the interview panel, it is difficult to confirm to what extent this policy has been successful. The overall concern is that there is no mechanism for monitoring if the extra five points are actually given to qualified female staff in the application process.

Succession Planning Policy

When asked if they have a succession planning policy in place or if succession is supported by merit-based appointment procedures, all of the 20 HR directors interviewed said they did not have a succession planning policy and that succession is not supported by a merit-based appointment procedure. They added that succession planning policy will not be feasible to

implement in government ministries, considering the vast number of *tashkeel* positions in each ministry.

4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The vast majority of respondents highlighted that it is essential for women to enhance their qualifications. Some of the respondents, mainly from the gender units, emphasized that in order for Afghan women to benefit from the 30% quota, they need to be educated to be able to make choices independently. Ministries stated that they have full-fledged training and development policies for improving women's education, but these policies only focus on short-term trainings in common functions (for example, financial, procurement, project, leadership and strategic management, and public policy formulation training), which is either provided by training and development departments internally or through the Afghanistan Civil Service Institute (ACSI). The effectiveness of these short-term courses for women in the government is limited to courses that provide a general overview of specific topics, as well as courses aimed at increasing women's self-confidence. However, the general consensus was that short-term courses do not help women move into higher or leadership positions. FGD participants acknowledged the importance of long-term, in-depth education as the only way for women to succeed in leadership positions in government ministries.

The lack of comprehensive, long-term education and career development and capacity development policies, combined with other obstacles at the workplace, prevent women from rising into leadership positions. The survey findings suggest that long-term fellowships and higher education are necessary for women to be qualified to assume leadership positions. Indeed, under the Civil Service Law of Afghanistan, the requirement for leadership positions (grade 2 and above) requires at a minimum a bachelor's degree and more than three years of work experience.

Informants were asked to evaluate whether women and men are equally treated in terms of capacity development and job trainings. The HR directors of all 20 ministries and independent agencies expressed their belief that both women and men are treated equally; however, they also acknowledged the fact that female employees are rarely able to take full advantage of such trainings. This is due to lower levels of education, insufficient knowledge of English, and cultural obstacles (i.e. limitations to travel alone or abroad). Survey findings highlighted that 75% of the HR directors stated that proper training and development policy should include specific trainings and long-term development programs for women, ranging from management to technical skills as well as degree courses.

Fifteen out of 20 HR directors acknowledged the limitations in training and development policies at the ministries which hamper long-term and effective capacity building programs for female employees. The same respondents agreed that ministries should require long-term training opportunities for their female staff to receive higher education and acquire necessary qualifications.

There was a general consensus among HR directors and gender unit heads that ministries should be required to develop a quota system in their training and development policy to support a scholarship program for women employees. Respondents recommended that each ministry should arrange pre-scholarship programs to prepare female employees for future higher

education opportunities. The donor agencies could support ministries' long-term training and development strategies to maintain the current representation and help to increase women in leadership positions.

5. OTHER BARRIERS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES

In the upper tiers of Afghan government ministries, women employees are scarce. As part of the survey, all respondents were asked to describe the difficulties for women to move to the next grade to more advanced positions. Among the respondents, 80% believed that the Civil Service Law itself poses a major stumbling block for female employees to be promoted into senior level positions. The law states that candidates for higher positions must hold a university degree. As previously stated, the majority of women cannot meet such educational requirements because they lack higher education.

Lack of Political Will

Eighty-five percent of the informants agreed that the implementation of the existing policies and procedures, shown in Figure 3, are not successful in providing adequate support or protecting women at the workplace. According to the Director of Policy and Planning at MoWA,

"A good number of policies are available to support women at the workplace, but unfortunately they are not implemented properly. The reason could be anything ranging from lack of political will at the senior level, weak communication, ingrained nepotism, lack of budget, technical capacity and public awareness."

HR and policy and planning directors reiterated similar responses when asked if the existing policies, procedures, and systems are properly implemented. Eighteen of the respondents agreed that current policies are only good on paper. However, they are not implemented because the process is largely manipulated by internal and external forces, which damages the legitimacy of the policy process in place. There is a common understanding between all of the informants that leadership support for the smooth implementation of these policies is very important.

Approximately 60% of the HR directors specifically emphasized that without strong leadership support from the minister and deputy minister, such policies shall remain merely words on paper.

The HR and policy and planning directors further stated that there are signs of political support for the implementation of these policies by the ministers and IARCSC leadership. Although, these policies should be institutionalized in each ministry, with the introduction of every new senior level employee, especially with newly-appointed ministers, these policies are affected negatively. Leadership changes within ministries can disrupt effective implementation and institutionalization of these policies. Specifically, new ministers may invoke gender equality as a political tool to benefit election campaigns without actually putting policy into practice. In other cases, new leadership may not prioritize gender equality in ministry operating guidelines, even if previous leaders had supported such reforms.

One of the HR directors, who wished to remain anonymous, stated:

"Whenever the leadership of a ministry changes, HR is forced to replace certain people, mostly at director level, without giving proper justification; this is clearly against the law. In addition, this leaves HR in a critical situation, saying no to the minister's orders"

or explaining it in the context of legal framework would mean confrontation with the minister.

Awareness within Ministries and Public

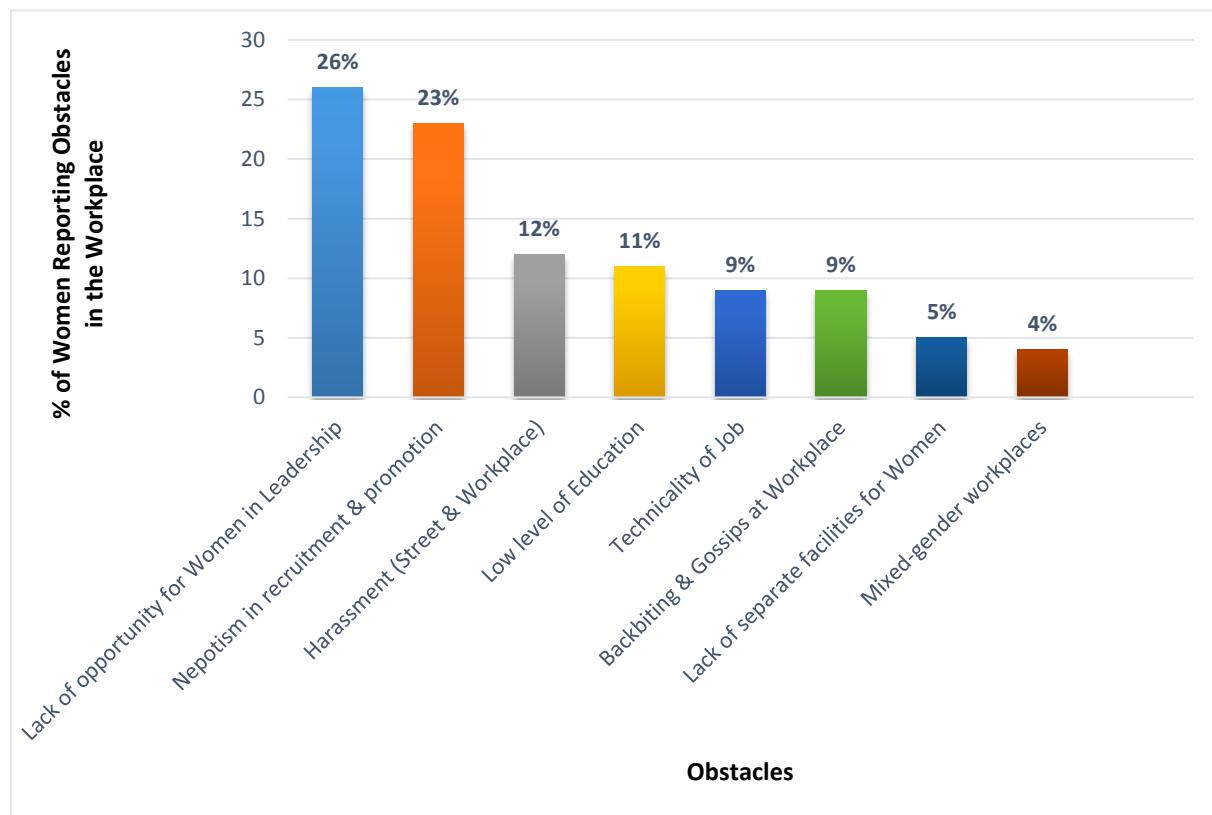
Twenty HR directors noted that there is a lack of awareness of the existing policies among government employees. Communicating policies within (employees) and outside the workplace (the public) was also considered an important step. The respondents and the FGD participants highlighted that awareness among employees about existing policies would provide female employees and their families with a positive view of ministry work environments. They agreed that assurances of safeguarding female workers at workplaces would create an environment of trust and confidence, and would increase women's participation in the public sector on both national and subnational levels.

6. OBSTACLES PREVENTING FEMALE GROWTH AND JOB EFFICIENCY

The survey findings indicate that obstacles to women's growth, advancement, and work performance are associated with some of the existing policies; addressing these policies can help overcome the obstacles and increase women's representation in government.

Figure 4 shows the obstacles that respondents believed were preventing women's advancement and work productivity at government institutions.

Figure 4. General Obstacles for Women at Workplaces



Respondents were provided with the list of options (as shown in Figure 4) and asked to select major obstacles that they believed prevent the advancement of women at the workplace. Respondents were given the choice to select more than one option and were also asked to identify obstacles they believed to be the most challenging to women's work at government ministries.

Figure 4 demonstrates that respondents rated the lack of opportunity in leadership²¹ as the greatest policy obstacle for women's advancement and growth at the workplace (26%). They noted that opportunities for women to pursue leadership roles are scarce. The general perception among male employees in the Afghan ministries is that the lack of women in leadership positions is more a reflection of cultural limitations placed on women than a reflection of their skills and abilities.

Respondents rated nepotism in recruitment and promotion as the second highest obstacle preventing the advancement of women in the government institutions (23%). Long-standing practices of nepotism and hiring on the basis of ethnicity are relatively common in Afghanistan.

The findings also indicate that sexual harassment was rated as the third highest obstacle by the respondents (12%). Other research indicates that sexual harassment is prevalent at Afghan government institutions. Since Afghanistan is a traditional society, governmental employees (mainly women) would prefer having their cases resolved through informal channels, such as mediation. Because of safety and job security reasons, these cases are usually not reported and are just shared with other colleagues.

According to respondents, technical ministry jobs also prevent women's advancement (9%),²² which is related to low levels of educational attainment among female employees (11%). For example, in the *tashkeel* of some of the ministries, such as the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) and Ministry of Energy and Water, only technical positions – like mining engineer or electrician – are offered. Respondents stressed that lack of capacity among female staff in these fields limits women's ability to fill technical positions.

Other obstacles, such as the lack of a professional attitude and a professional environment in an office — including gossip,²³ the lack of separate facilities, and mixed-gender workplace were ranked the lowest. These obstacles will be discussed in detail in the next section under cultural obstacles.

During the survey, as indicated in Figure 3, policies such as paid maternity leave and flexible work hours were addressed under the Afghan labor law and ministry representatives agreed there should be minor policy reforms to include gender considerations. The findings suggest there is a

²¹ Lack of opportunity to support women in leadership defined as: Access to higher education, awareness about generation gender bias, lack of creating safe “identity workspaces,” less support in transitions to bigger roles.

²² Technical jobs at Afghanistan government ministries: Engineer/site engineer, electrician agronomist, mining expert, etc.

²³ Gossip is casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details which are not confirmed as true. It is often designed to hurt and denigrate people and destroy reputations behind people's backs.

need for a complete and comprehensive leave policy that should address both paid maternity leave and flexible working hours in detail with reference to labor laws.

Institutionalizing Existing Policies

Over time, constant review and amendment of the existing women's support policies at workplaces is critical. Moreover, these reviews must be tailored to local needs. HR directors insisted that policies such as gender equality policy, because of its complex nature, would need closer attention during implementation compared to other policies. For example, the gender policy may be implemented easily in one province but the execution of the same policy might take longer in another province.

B. CULTURAL OBSTACLES (THE UNSEEN BARRIERS FOR WOMEN)

Cultural constraints remain a major factor for women's mobility and freedom of movement in Afghan society, thus shutting off their chances to actively participate in the workforce. The available research indicates that perceptions of women in the workplace have worsened by their perceived position in the society.²⁴ A recent Asia Foundation study of the Afghan people found that as more women seek employment, Afghanistan's labor supply also increases. However, in a traditional society like Afghanistan, the combination of the misinterpretation of Islam and cultural stereotypes has created obstacles for women to actively participate in the public sphere. A recent study by the Afghanistan Research Evaluation Unit on Women's Rights, Gender Equality, and Transition concluded that restrictions on women working outside the home are often justified within the framework of religious teaching.²⁵ According to Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghanistan In-depend Human Right Commission (AIHRC),

“Neither security nor development is possible without respect for human rights and the full participation of women.”

1. SAFE “IDENTITY WORKPLACE”

The government officially acknowledges that equal participation by women and men is required to enable institutions to effectively meet their obligations to all Afghan citizens. When asked whether their employer's mission, vision, values, and organizational structure supports women at the workplace, only 35% of respondents said “yes” and the remaining 65% said “no” or “Unsure.” This shows that organizations' mission, vision, and values are not properly communicated to employees, resulting in a lack of awareness of their employment rights and privileges.

Participants also expressed their belief that the government is largely supportive of women's participation at the workplace. However, the prevalent internal cultural issues and lack of awareness about policies prevent the full participation of women, and thus hinders their active contribution towards the overall mission, vision, and values of their organizations.

²⁴ Ganesh, Lena. 2013. Women's Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan – Creating Spaces and Enabling the Environment. Policy Note Series: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul. Afghanistan.

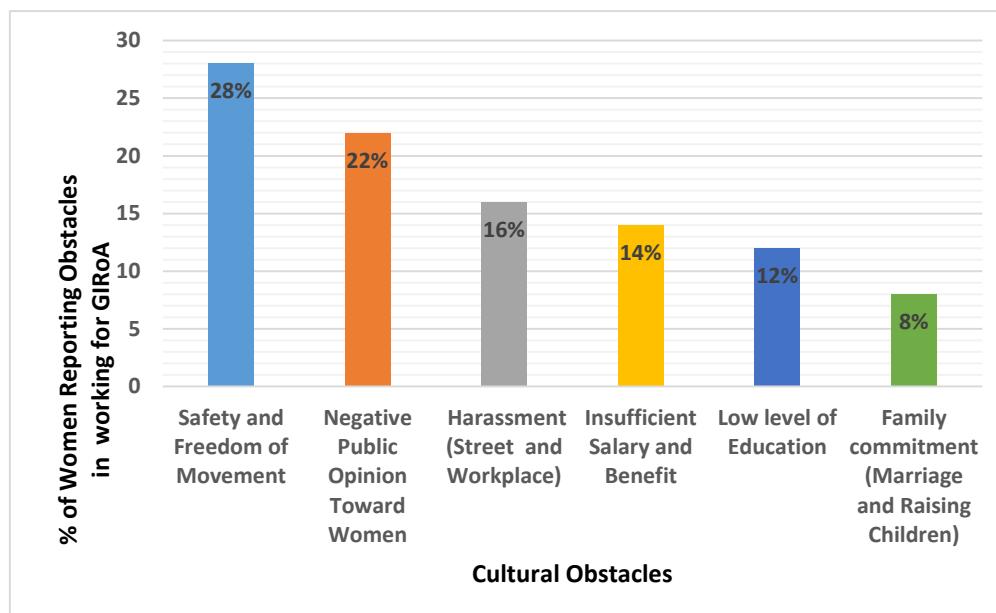
²⁵ Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit: 2013 Women's Rights, Gender Equality, and Transition: Securing gains, moving forward.

While government institutions' policy often formally supports women at the workplace, the survey sought to identify the cultural issues standing in the way of women's presence at the workplace.

2. SAFETY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

When women government workers were provided with multiple options to identify cultural obstacles that stand in the way of working in government, as shown in Figure 5, 28% of the 30 respondents highlighted that safety and freedom of movement are the main obstacles for women. As the security situation deteriorates, especially in the main cities such as Kabul, women's ability to safely and freely commute to work is severely impacted. The general consensus among female respondents as well as FGD participants was that insecurity is a general challenge for both women and men; however, women are more greatly impacted than men, as their outdoor movement is limited to daylight hours and particular places. Additionally, women's freedom of movement is strongly influenced by the attitudes of men in their families, since in Afghan society men are accepted as the head of the family and control women's overall movements.²⁶

Figure 5. Cultural Obstacles Limiting Women Working for the Government



3. NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS WOMEN

Figure 5 indicates that a key obstacle for women striving to work in the government is negative public opinion. Women who desire to work outside of the home are perceived as culturally inappropriate, bringing shame and disrespect to their families. Almost all female respondents acknowledged that while they are outside (commuting to work) — and in most cases, inside the

²⁶ USAID: Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote) Survey of Targeted Groups. June 2015.

workplace as well — men show lack of professional attitudes towards them. One female respondent reported,

“Negative opinion (lack of professional attitude and environment in the office) towards women can be very disruptive, not just to the individual women who is the target but also to the result of an organization or community as a whole.”

FGD participants all shared the same concern that while they have support from their families to work outside, the high level of negative public perception towards working women prevents them from entering the public sector.

4. STREET AND WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Afghans employed by the government have significant concerns while commuting to the office every day. However, for Afghan women employees, there is the additional threat of street harassment. According to one female FGD participant, women are constantly harassed by staring, obscene language, constant whistling, and unnecessary shouting as they make their way to work.

Harassment is a common threat for all women working outside their homes and moving around during their daily commutes. During the survey, respondents ranked harassment as the third obstacle in their way to work for government institutions, as shown in Figure 5. Many women often do not report harassment since they believe their reputation will be damaged. According to one female respondent,

“Women are faced with harassment every day. It has become a part of women’s lives. The society we live in believes in very conservative values that have not changed; unfortunately, men don’t know how to interact with women. If we share these issues with our families, then they will get worried and stop us to go to work or school.”

In a follow-up question, when asked if they or their colleagues have experienced any cases of sexual harassment at the workplace, 22% of respondents said “Yes,” 44% responded “No,” and 33% of them did not provide any answer at all. Although respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous, 33% of women workers were reluctant to provide answers to sensitive questions. These findings suggest that in Afghanistan, cultural barriers are so deeply rooted that they can prevent women from expressing their views at any level. Moreover, the 22% respondents who confirmed cases of harassment at the workplace also mentioned that the complainant was either fired or their cases were dealt with unjustly. Ministries admitted that there is a lack of initiative, awareness, and dialogue advocating for the elimination of harassment. Afghan women frequently face some sort of violence in the private and public spheres. According to the Partnership Assessment, 87.2% of Afghan women face at least one type of violence. One prevalent yet unspoken type of violence against women is sexual harassment in public places.

FGD participants agreed that religious leaders and elders play a pivotal role in addressing these obstacles, as religious leaders are considered as elders within a community. According to one respondent, *“Changing attitudes take time; however, you have to start somewhere, and engaging religious leaders and scholars is a foundational step in changing attitudes and behaviors of male*

community and government staff.” Respondents also believed public outreach at multiple levels, including individual family leaders as well as broad-based messaging to the public, is necessary in understanding the role of women in society. To address ongoing and prevalent harassment issues, in August 2015, the government of Afghanistan approved the anti-harassment regulation initiated by MoWA, which will be ratified by all government institutions.

5. BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

In response to multiple questions, 85 respondents indicated that they think the lack of opportunity for women in leadership is the main obstacle for women’s advancement and efficient job performance at government institutions. There was a general consensus among FGD participants that the cultural norms and attitudes towards women in leadership positions in societies like Afghanistan are mainly based on stereotypes and misconceptions of women’s roles and abilities. In addition, a continued lack of significant management experience, lack of mentoring, and low visibility of successful female role models within government institutions contribute to women’s limited participation. The survey findings also show that, for many women, access to higher education and lack of leadership capacity-building programs prevent women from accessing leadership positions. The survey findings identified low levels of education as the third highest obstacle for women’s advancement into government institutions. These results support other findings from this research indicating a close association between women’s education levels, their grade levels, and their advancement into leadership roles. It is a common perception among women in Afghan society that as women climb the ladder into leadership roles, not only *should* they address other women’s issues, but are morally obligated to do so.

Figure 6. Cultural Obstacles for Women Growth at Workplace

Cultural Obstacle	Rank	Percentage
Lack of opportunity for women in leadership	1	26%
Nepotism in recruitment and promotion	2	23%
Harassment (street & workplace)	3	12%
Low level of education	4	11%
Back-stabbing and gossiping at workplace	5	9%
Lack of separate facilities for women	6	5%
Mixed-gender workplaces	7	4%

6. MIXED-GENDER WORKPLACES

Mixed-gender refers to women and men working together in the same office, where they are involved in collective decision-making. In general, Afghans (mainly men) do not support mixed-gender workplaces. However, a mixed-gender workplace was not rated as the biggest obstacle by those working inside government institutions, including (female) FGD participants who were willing to work for the government. According to Figure 6, only 14 respondents rated mixed-gender workplaces as an obstacle for women in workplaces. Both male and female respondents suggested that for the comfort of female employees, ministries should provide separate workstations in crowded offices. While a mixed-gender workplace was not considered an important issue among the respondents, there was a significant and persistent focus from men for women to maintain the *hajib*²⁷ in the workplace. They further insisted that women wearing

²⁷ Islamic *hajib* is defined as covering of the entire body except for the face, hands, and feet.

hajib at the workplace not only gain respect from other colleagues, but can do their work without pressure from co-workers and supervisors.

As shown in Figure 7, rating the safety of female employees at different ministries, on a scale from “not at all safe to “extremely safe,” the majority of respondents (43%) felt that they are “moderately safe,” while 20% rated “very safe,” and 20% “extremely safe,” respectively. Less than 17% responded “slightly” or “not at all safe.” The same question was phrased differently to see how the cultural values of the organization helped to make women more comfortable at work, to which (36%) of the responses were “moderately comfortable” and 33% “very comfortable.”²⁸

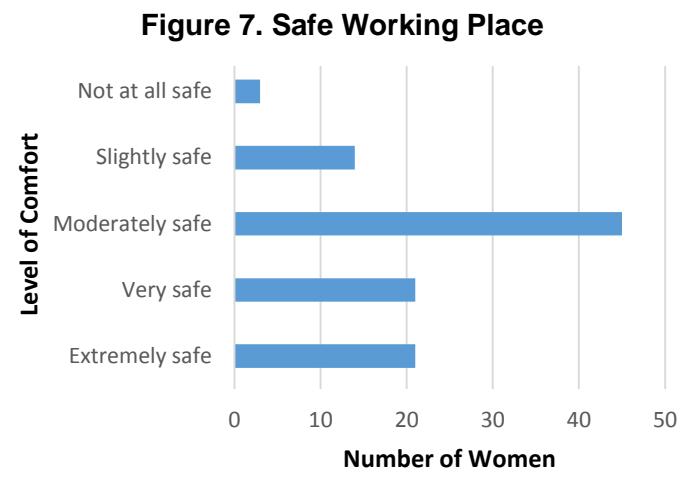
In order to further analyze whether mixed-gender workplaces were an obstacle for women employees at government institutions, female respondents were asked to rate other elements that make them comfortable in mixed-gender workplaces. When female respondents were asked if they were frequently involved in team work, 82% of respondents replied “yes.” Moreover, a majority (54%) of the respondents felt comfortable working with male colleagues, while 29% felt “moderately comfortable,” and 14% felt “slightly or not at all comfortable.”

In a follow-up question, respondents were asked if their supervisor asked for their opinions on a daily basis. The majority (77%) answered that they are frequently asked their opinions. The same respondents believed that when they shared their opinions with their supervisors, it was respected and valued. Women were rated for having the chance to voice their opinions on a scale from “not at all comfortable” to “extremely comfortable”. “Extremely comfortable” was rated by 16% of the respondents, “very comfortable” was rated by 45%, and “moderately comfortable” by 21%. Only 15% indicated that they were “slightly” or “not at all comfortable”.

In an answer to the overall rating for the work environment on a scale of positive to negative, 35% of the female respondents rated their work environment as “positive,” 49% “neither positive nor negative,” and the remaining 16% as “negative.”

7. WOMEN’S IDEAL WORKPLACE (STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE)

In addition to internal perspectives of workplace obstacles encountered by women, findings from interviewing female students from the Afghanistan Institute of Technology in Kabul revealed the complexity of cultural obstacles for women working outside of their homes. Participants were initially asked which organization they felt comfortable working with. Sixty-nine percent of respondents rated government institutions as their ideal future workplace. Respondents believed



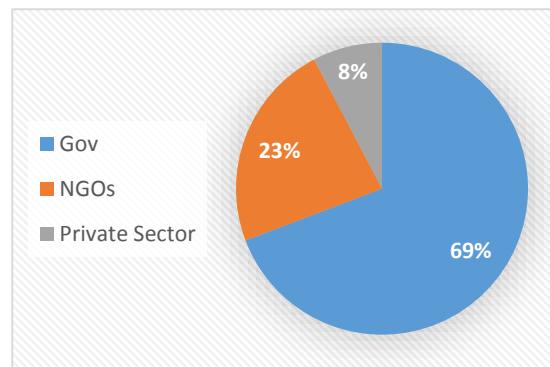
²⁸ Respondents were first asked, “How safe do you feel at your work mentally and culturally?” This question was later rephrased to, “How comfortable is your employer’s work environment considering your organizational cultural values?”

that government institutions provide job security and good pensions. They were more inclined to work for ministries.

When female students were asked if their families permitted them to work within the government, 92% stated that their families were supportive. Describing one of the main challenges women faced, students said that although there is an abundance of jobs, women often lack the necessary education and training. They added that even if there are jobs for women to apply to, unfortunately, these jobs are given to women who have personal relationships within the government.

When asked if participants were aware of government policies for women, 79% of the respondents said they were not aware of government policies. Students placed security at the top of their concerns. The second most common challenge to them was street harassment and the distance they had to travel to work. In addition, low wages at government institutions was identified as one of the problems that discouraged females to work for government institutions.

**Figure 8. Ideal Workplace for Women
(Students' Perspective)**



Box 1: High level of family support, less safe and secure environment

A women's focus group held in Kabul, identified corruption, nepotism, and sexual harassment as the main obstacles for women to work for the government. When comparing their current lives to their lives before 2002, they expressed deep gratitude about women's progress in society, mainly in the education sector. The general consensus was that both the Afghan government and international aid donors have created workforce opportunities for Afghan women. However, they added that important issues, such as deeply-rooted nepotism, are still very strong in Afghan government institutions. It is obvious that people (mainly men) with no education find their way into government jobs. "*The greatest fear is that this culture of nepotism will curtail the few opportunities that have been attained over the decade,*" said one member of the FGD.

Women's greatest obstacles to working outside their home or getting an education is insecurity and street harassment, as well as the general negative perception from men. The women interviewed all believed they had enough family support to work and study outside, but insecurity and street harassment often puts pressure on most girls to stay home. "*If there is safety in the streets, more girls will be out working,*" said one woman. The low level of education among people (referring to men) and mixing religion with cultural norms are big problems in Afghan society. "*But, it is also our responsibility to educate men on the importance of girls working in a family and changing the society.*" Women's vision for the future was clouded with mixed information they are getting from the unity government for a better future regarding women's access to leadership jobs.

They believed that there are politicians within the unity government who block the growth of women in the society. They noted that such attitudes discourage women, particularly those who are educated — who have been hopeful for a brighter future.

Participants wished for the increase of women in the government institutions in the next few years. They generally felt government policies that support women at workplaces are sufficient, but to make it effective some policies need more clarification. The general consensus was that such policies need to be implemented according to each ministry's needs. "*In the last 10 years, gender policies have been developed. In the next few years, it is the responsibility of government institutions to implement those policies then more women can be a part of government institutions.*"

—FGD with 8 women aged 25-40 years old, Institute of Technology, Kabul. October 2015

Box 2: Proper education is the only way to limit women's obstacles in society

Mixed representatives of CSOs (women and men) in a focus group at the Afghanistan Civil Society Election Network (ACSEN) in Kabul were asked similar questions as the first FGD (Box 1) to identify the obstacles for women working outside their homes. Participants mentioned negative attitudes of people (mainly men) towards women in the society as a main issue keeping women from working outside of their homes.

They noted that the weak economic situation in most families is the main reason for not being able to invest in their daughters' education. Daughters are left with no proper education, and as a result, they have lower chances of getting a government job. There is a growing awareness of the importance of education in order to get government jobs. The FGD noted that "*although nepotism is prevalent in most government institutions, for women to work in the government it is also critical to have higher education like men. Our greatest fear is lack of education for girls since they are forced to get married at a very young age. This prevents women's progress and empowerment in society and the government.*"

Workplace obstacles, such as lack of support for women working with men generally are not the main issues for women. Participants felt that despite all the challenges for women in government institutions, they believe there is great hope, value, and a future to work for the government. One said, "*This is a new government; working, supporting this government and being part of Afghan ministries will help our country in the long run for a better future. Once the number of women increases within the government institutions, they will also be able to become leaders.*"

They felt the lives of today's women in the government institutions have improved. "*Today, women are in the lower and upper house of parliament; their voices are heard,*" said one Participant. They believe that eliminating the existing obstacles at workplace requires the new generation of women to bring change to the gender equality policies that are implemented.

–FGD with 5 women, 3 men, aged 25-40 years old, all CSO representatives, Kabul. October 2015

C. INFRASTRUCTURE OBSTACLES

Two significant obstacles that make government employment inhospitable for female staff in Afghanistan are sexual harassment and lack of physical infrastructure built for women. This section of the report assesses the working environment that limits women from working in government, such as adequate facilities (e.g., female restrooms, prayer rooms, and changing rooms). Existing infrastructure within each ministry was physically inspected during this research. Recommendations will be provided in the next section that will enable GIRoA to independently identify gaps and develop Afghan-led solutions so that changes may occur.

Employers must provide "suitable and sufficient" welfare facilities for the well-being of their employees while at work. Welfare facilities cover areas such as washrooms, prayers rooms, dining areas, daycare, and rest facilities for pregnant and nursing mothers. The absence of these facilities is referred to as an "unfriendly workplace environment."

The absence of friendly workplace environments deters women from seeking employment and subjects them to conditions that are unsafe, undignified, or damaging to their reputations. Some

women fear that their families will not permit them to work in a place that is not suitable for women. Specifically, deteriorating and unhygienic office facilities are clear detriments to increasing the numbers of women in the workplace.

Twenty ministries were identified for the infrastructure assessment; however, MoD and MoI did not allow the assessment team to inspect their existing infrastructure facilities due to the sensitive nature of these ministries. The assessment for the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) was also not conducted since there was a leadership change within the HR and policy department during that time.

The data gathered show that almost all government facilities, with the exception of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in Kabul, lack appropriate welfare facilities for women. Moreover, larger ministries, such MoE and MAIL, had offices scattered in different areas of Kabul. As the majority of the interns will be placed and absorbed among the 17 ministries and IDLG in those offices, infrastructure changes are needed. The gender unit of MoE, stated:

“MoE’s main office has adequate welfare facilities but they are not in good condition (not hygienic or well equipped with amenities). The problem is more severe in site offices as women use lockable washrooms. There is no separate prayer area, daycare, and dining rooms. The situation might be discouraging for all those interns who will be placed in site offices.”

The problem is more visible in provincial offices outside Kabul. In a visit to the Parwan province, on August 19, 2015, the governor’s office and nearby buildings and the facilities were deemed unsuitable for women. Thus, basic infrastructure facilities (office space, separate bathroom, daycare and prayer rooms) for female employees have to be constructed.

Improvements to welfare facilities are a prerequisite for provincial offices and any decision to place interns there will require a thorough assessment of the infrastructure.

A complete infrastructure assessment of each ministry is provided in Annex IV.

This assessment has identified areas where infrastructure improvements are needed for all 17 ministries and IDLG, which will enable a safe environment that is more equitable for women. Increasing the likelihood of women working in government will help them continue their careers in government. In the short term, bringing improvements and changes to ministries’ infrastructures, will make the USAID Promote: Women in Government interns feel safer and more confident about entering careers in the civil service. In the long term, as policies and infrastructure improvements begin to change the culture of the civil service, improved infrastructure will create a better working environment for all women in government.

Figure 9 summarizes the status of facilities for each ministry:

Figure 9. Infrastructure Facilities

S/N	Facilities	Ministries																	IDLG
		MAIL	MoE	MoF	MoHE	MoJ	MoCN	MoCIT	MoEW	MOLSAMD	MoIC	MoUD	MoCI	MRRD	MoWA	MoTCA	MoMP	MoPW	
1	Separate Washroom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Separate prayers room	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
3	Separate dining rooms	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
4	Daycare & rest facilities for nursing mothers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
5	Transportation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Ventilation System	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
7	Work Temperature	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Room space & office workstations	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9	Maintenance of premises & work equipment	No	No	yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Floors, corridors & stairs free of obstructions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11	Risk Mitigation for rain, snow on outdoors routs	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	Fire safety & exit procedures	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Figure 9 shows the status of facilities and marks the presence of these facilities as “Yes” and “No.” A more detailed version for each ministry appears in Annex IV, which explains the current status, recommendations, and level of contribution from the relevant ministry and future donor assistance.

The infrastructure of all 17 ministries and the IDLG was assessed for the presence of welfare facilities, health, comfort, and safety issues, which will be discussed separately in sections below.

1. WELFARE FACILITIES

Washrooms

Among the 18 government offices visited, two ministries (Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MoCN) and Ministry of Public Works (MoPW)) lacked separate washroom facilities for women in their main offices; three ministries (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT), Ministry of Urban Development (MUDA), and MoEW) use shared/lockable washrooms. In both cases, separate and shared washrooms were not hygienic and were lacking staff amenities such as soap, toilet paper, towels, and soap. Although Figure 9 shows that the majority of ministries have washrooms, the inspection found that washrooms were either shared or in poor condition. All larger ministries (MAIL, MoE, MUDA, and MRRD) with site offices needed separate washrooms and the operations director of these ministries suggested that they would need a thorough assessment of site offices to assess their specific needs. Ministries

confirmed their ability to contribute in terms of location, labor, and equipment, but said they needed financial support from donors for renovation, installments of Connex,²⁹ and other infrastructure changes.



View of female washrooms at Ministry of Energy & Water

Prayer Rooms

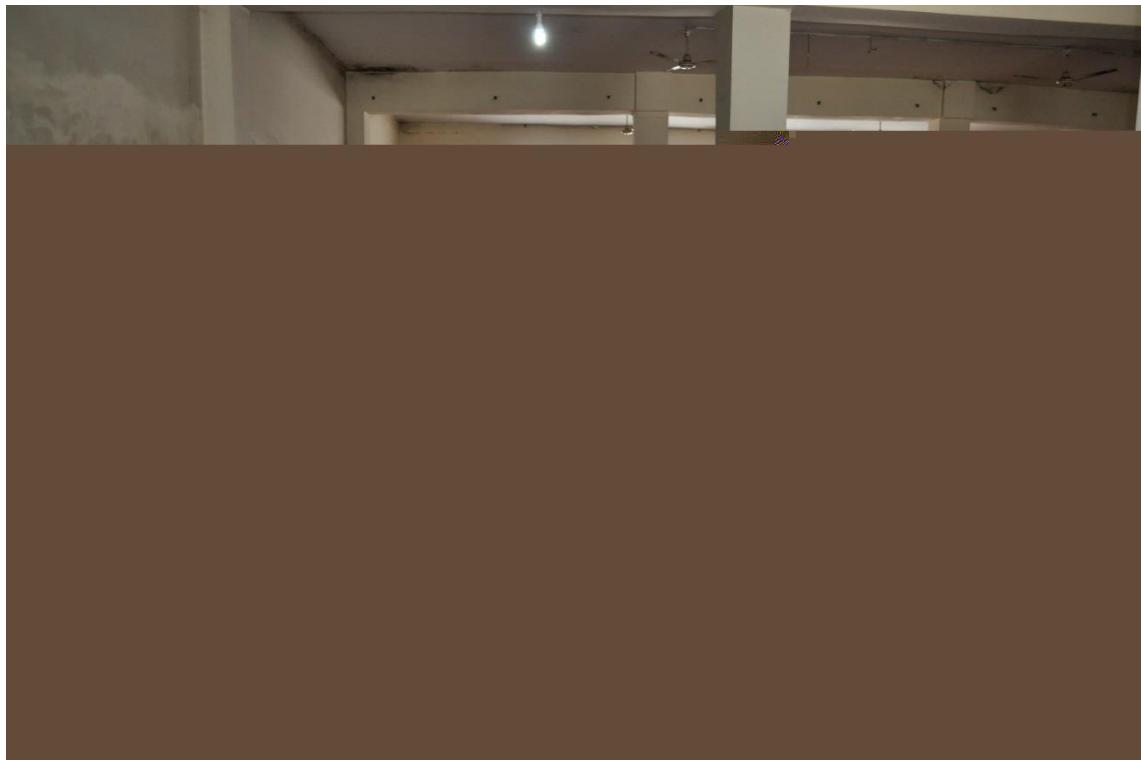
Thirteen out of 18 of the ministries and independent agencies interviewed lacked separate prayer rooms for women. The other five ministries (MoE, MoCIT, MoEW, Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), and Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA)) have allocated a room as a prayer room without proper facilities. Although ministry officials were aware of the fact that women are facing severe difficulties in saying their prayers, they also noted that the lack of space and budget is preventing them from creating such a facility. Eight ministries requested installments of Connex as a better option to respond to space problems and recommended that the prayer rooms be placed at a central location at the ministry where women from different buildings can have access.

Dining Facilities

Among the 18 government ministries and independent agencies interviewed, 11 did not have separate dining facilities for women. Some ministries have used plastic sheets to separate men and women in the dining room, but the majority were using shared dining rooms without any separator. When asked if they were comfortable with a single hall used for dining by both men

²⁹ Converted containers that are used as restrooms, otherwise known as Connexes, are used in some of the ministries since they do not have sufficient places.

and women, 70% of female employees responded that this was the sole reason why they were not using the dining facility and they welcomed the idea of installing a separator to allow them to use the facilities regularly. For example, female respondents acknowledged that they usually feel more comfortable sitting in separate dining facilities because they have experienced eye contact and unnecessary jokes from male colleagues.



A view of dining hall from Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation, and Livestock

Daycare Facilities

Among 17 ministries and IDLG, 15 ministries had day care facilities. However, these facilities were very small and uncomfortable for children. The facility did not provide a separate place for nursing mothers to feed their children. Some of the daycare facilities lacked basic provisions, such as bedding, toys, and food. The findings show that MoHE and IDLG currently do not have daycare facilities; however, representatives agreed to establish them.

Transportation

Transportation for all civil servants (male and female) is provided by all government ministries, but only in Kabul. At the provincial level, female employees have to arrange their own transportation, which is not ideal for women commuting to work daily. The findings suggest that all ministries in Kabul agree to provide transportation as part of their normal pick-up and drop-off facilities for female interns expected to join government ministries through the USAID Promote: Women in Government program. Transportation facilities for the expected interns at the provincial level remains pending with the line ministries. However, a thorough assessment is required to analyze this issue and to provide further recommendations.

2. HEALTH ISSUE/COMFORTABLE CONDITIONS

Clean Drinking Water

Clean drinking water is a problem for all government employees in the workplace. Tap water is not potable and government employees cannot afford to buy bottled water every day. The findings show that female employees bring their own water from home or boil water at work and consume it as tea. During the site visit in each ministry and IDLG, eight of their representatives suggested installing water filters to purify the water.

Ventilation System and Work Temperature

Fresh air is one of the most important preconditions for life. Every enclosed workplace (such as an office) should be ventilated by a sufficient quantity of fresh or purified air. All workplaces should be sufficiently well-ventilated so that stale air and air that is hot or humid in the workplace is replaced at a reasonable rate with fresh air. All employees become more effective and perform better at work when exposed to fresh air. Unfortunately, almost all ministries lacked a proper ventilation system.

Most ministry buildings are outmoded, but even the new buildings at some ministries, such as MRRD and MAIL, do not have a ventilation system. Fresh air is either drawn from outside through open windows or through air conditioning systems only available with some high ranking authorities. Ministries visited had mixed responses; some agreed it is necessary, but that it is also too expensive to install in old buildings.

The general consensus was that if donor organizations assist, the ministry will also contribute. But some said the opposite — it is not a major problem and there is no need for such a system. The administrative directors further added that a normal and reasonable working temperature is kept during summer and winter. Fans and air conditioners are used during the hot summers, and wood, oil, and gas heaters are used for the central heating system during winter to keep the rooms warm.

Office Workplace

All 17 ministries and IDLG visited lack space for working in their departments and this was also confirmed by employee relation section directors of HR directorates. Follow-up questions were asked to the HR and employee relation directors to find a solution to this matter. The suggestion was to create office workstations for highly populated offices in order to save space and provide comfortable seating to women at mix-gender workplaces. Larger ministries agreed to contribute office space, stationery, internet, and mentors while they expected the donor community to create office workstations to increase space and for a number of interns at their ministries.

3. SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety

Despite low operational and maintenance budgets, all ministries confirmed that they maintain the premises and work equipment to avoid incidents. Ministries confirmed that floors, corridors, and stairs are free of obstructions and measures are taken by service departments in cases of snow, rain, storms, and other natural occurrences to minimize risks and keep outdoor routes free from obstructions.

Sixteen of the ministries confirmed possessing fire extinguishers and exit procedures, but when a group was sent to physically check the fire extinguishers and fire exit procedures, only a few expired fire extinguishers were found. In most cases, there were no fire and security exit procedures to be found. Ministries requested full donor support in training people and equipping the ministries for better safety and security.

Security

Ministries suggested that for thorough security infrastructure, it is important to coordinate in advance with their security sections.

For more details of each individual ministry current infrastructure assessment that was conducted during this research, refer to Annex IV.

SECTION IV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested for enabling a conducive working environment for women to actively participate and progress within Afghan government ministries. Based on three categories (policy, culture, and infrastructure) of obstacles, we provide below detailed recommendations for the Afghan government and the international community.

A. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. ANTI-HARASSMENT REGULATION

The workplace obstacles analysis revealed that except for IDLG, none of the ministries interviewed had anti-harassment policies or regulation guidelines in place, even though the government of Afghanistan has approved the anti-harassment regulation in August 2015. MoWA, as the policy-maker, must make sure to establish a Technical Working Group (TWG) involving all relevant stakeholders (government and non-government) to:

- Develop clear anti-harassment implementation guidelines.
- Develop clear anti-harassment monitoring mechanisms, and a proper action plan to roll out the regulations at both the national and subnational levels.
- Simplify complaint procedures and increase oversight.
- Empower the role of the conflict resolution committee with line ministries and train them on how to deal with harassment cases.
- Establish a hotline and online suggestion boxes for sexual harassment complaints, both housed within MoWA.

MoWA would further require donor's assistance for the following:

- Public awareness campaigns through television and radio spots, training workshops, conferences, flyers, posters and messaging.
- Identifying influential public, political, and religious figures for anti-harassment campaigns.

2. GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Ministries currently use the IARCSC Gender Equality Policy, which requires revisions. The IARCSC Gender Directorate needs technical assistance to update and revise the Gender Equality Policy and needs to communicate these changes to all government institutions. The revision should include developing an implementation guideline and action plan. Moreover, for gender equality policy to be properly implemented, it is recommended to upgrade the gender units to director level position (grade 2) to give them easy access to the leadership of ministries and gain their political will. Another option could be to restructure the current *tashkeel* of gender units under the Policy and Planning Directorate to allow them to easily provide inputs in budget hearing, gender budgeting, and gender mainstreaming of policies. MoWA can further advocate the importance of these units in MoF to provide them with a budget during the annual budgetary hearings.

It is also recommended to introduce the current gender unit heads and their relevant staff to long-term training programs (scholarships and fellowships) to raise their educational level to meet the director-level position requirements and qualifications. Investing in current capacity or bringing new capacity with higher education will increase the work efficiency and performance of the units.

IARCSC can further reaffirm their support to the gender units and push the leadership of the ministry at all levels to gain political will and support for the units. The gender units can also lobby with the leadership of the ministries to involve them in the grade 1 and 2 recruitment process to strengthen their roles. The recent decree by the president allowing ministries to appoint grade 1 and 2 employees will also support these efforts.

3. MERIT BASED APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

The IARCSC merit-based appointment procedures are currently under revision. It is recommended that IARCSC take the following into consideration to support the entry of women into government positions:

- Retain or increase the five-point positive discrimination policy in recruitment and include other positive discrimination strategies. For example, women should compete with women candidates, and men with men candidates; afterwards, the top two female and male candidates should compete between each other. This will increase the chances of women finding their way to government positions.
- Include the gender unit in the grade 1 and 2 recruitment process.
- Include provisions to prevent external and internal pressures and interference to maintain transparency in the recruitment process.

Ministries can facilitate the quick entry of women to government institutions through the minister's approval outside *tashkeel* and introduce them to departments where vacant positions exist. After spending some time and gaining experience, they can compete for vacant position. The Ministry of Finance is currently doing so and finding success.

IARCSC and MoWA can push ministries to include the 30% recruitment quota for women in government ministries to the TORs of senior authorities. On a frequent basis they should be annually reminded and evaluated against it.

The following effective ways are recommended to increase women's participation, maintain transparency, and avoid nepotism:

- Recruit capable female leaders in political positions to promote them to high ranks as deputy ministers, governors, and ministers.
- Seek opportunities to involve an independent external body in the recruitment process.
- Add specific positions for women in the organizational structure and identify key positions for women in the existing structure.

4. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Seventy-five percent of the HR and Policy and Planning directors acknowledged that there are limitations in training and development government policies. They asked for technical assistance in revising their training and development policies. The same group recommended that the following be included in the Training and Development Policy:

- Allocate a quota of scholarship programs for women employees on an annual basis.
- Arrange pre-scholarship programs to prepare female employees for future higher education opportunities.
- Allocate 1% of the overall ministry budget for female training and development purposes. HR directors can lobby for the budget during the annual budget hearing process at MoF.

It was further recommended that donor agencies should support ministries' long-term training and development strategies in order to increase women in leadership positions. Moreover, donors can also invest in female-specific scholarships to better enable them to compete.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER POLICIES

Leave Policy

None of the 19 ministries and IDLG visited during the survey had an adequate leave policy in place. They all refer to Afghanistan labor law as reference for the government leave entitlements. Each ministry should have a complete and comprehensive policy to inform their staff members of their entitlement to annual, public, and privileged leave, and staff must be made aware of the process and procedures for applying for leave.

Health and Safety Policy

Currently, none of the government ministries have health and safety policies. Health and safety policies will ensure that the leadership of the ministry is committed to the health and safety of their staff members. They further remove or reduce the risks to health, safety, and welfare of all ministry workers.

B. CULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Key cultural obstacles (safety and freedom of movement, negative public opinions, street and workplace harassment, barriers for women in leadership and mixed-gender workplaces) were identified during this analysis. The following are recommendations to individual ministries to address cultural obstacles:

1. MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

As the policy maker and the advocate for women's rights, MoWA should play a key role in changing public opinion — overseeing the implementation of anti-harassment regulations and removing stumbling blocks for women. Hence, it is recommended that MoWA:

- Encourage public outreach at multiple levels, including family elders. Broad-based messaging using different media platforms (TV, radio, social media, and billboards) to the public is necessary in understanding the role of women in the society.

- Build a strong coordination mechanism among government and non-government organizations for the smooth implementation of anti-harassment policy. As a first step, establish a Technical Working Group comprised of ministries and non-government organizations and civil society representatives to develop anti-harassment implementation guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, and an action plan.
- At the ministerial level, develop a communication strategy to inform and change public opinions towards women at government workplaces. Use communication tools to encourage women in the workforce to report the behavior and prosecutors to enforce laws.
- Use different media platforms, conduct public awareness campaigns against street and workplace harassment, negative public opinion, and lack of professional attitude to make women feel safer when commuting to work.
- Conduct campaigns at schools, colleges, and university levels to publicize anti-harassment policies and procedures.
- Provide trainings on anti-harassment regulations to civil servants, police, and other law enforcement agencies.
- Involve religious leaders and elders who play a pivotal role in addressing cultural deterrents.

2. GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

Line ministries and independent agencies as implementers of government policies are required to put in practice the policies with honesty, impartiality, and integrity.

- Implement anti-harassment regulations for all employees and safeguard female employees to maintain a harassment free environment.
- Include anti-harassment as part of their values and code of conduct.
- Include anti-harassment as part of their induction training manual and regularly communicate to all government employees.
- Enhance the role of conflict resolution committees to strictly follow harassment cases.
- Provide adequate welfare facilities, suitable working conditions, and safe and secure environments free of any obstructions.
- Publish the regulation in official newspapers of all ministries and agencies.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

CSOs, as mediating bodies between the citizens and the state, can contribute empirically to oversee, monitor, and advocate the policy reform initiated within government. It is recommended that they:

- Monitor government's progress on anti-harassment commitments and hold them accountable.
- Regular advocate with the government to ensure the implementation of the policy.
- Advocate for having access to policy details and harassment cases according to the access to law and information.
- Provide technical expertise to the ministries and agencies while drafting the policies.

4. DONOR COMMUNITY

The donor community would follow through on part of their commitment at the London Conference by playing a key role in supporting GIRoA to fulfil its Reforms Agendas. It is recommended that they:

- Support the communications strategies government ministries have in relation to nationwide awareness of anti-harassment regulations.
- Provide technical support to MoWA for a full-fledged implementation of anti-harassment policy.
- Provide MoWA with capacity-building opportunities to increase their capacity level in understanding and proper implementation of the policy.
- Encourage government authorities in supporting the implementation of the anti-harassment regulation.
- Assist MoWA in developing strong anti-harassment messaging on the consequences of not complying with anti-harassment regulations and publicize them through TV, radio, and other media sources.
- Assist MoWA in establishing hotline and complaint boxes in MoWA and line ministries.
- Involve Musharikat to help MoWA in sending out anti-harassment related messages.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis in 17 ministries and IDLG has found that these government offices lack key physical infrastructure and welfare facilities that limit women from working in government. The absence of a friendly workplace deters women from seeking entry to government ministries. The infrastructure assessment of these ministries is completed separately and is reflected in Annex IV.

Welfare Facilities

Washrooms

- The washrooms of 14 ministries should be renovated. These washrooms require accessories and amenities. Ministries agreed on partial contribution, details of which is provided in their specific analysis in Annex 4.
- A separate assessment should be conducted for the site offices of all larger ministries such as MAIL, MoE, MUDA, and MRRD to determine their specific needs.

Prayer rooms

- Ministries should identify a separate prayer room for female staff. For example, MoEW has already installed a partition inside the mosque at their ministry.
- The eight ministries that lack office space can be provided with Connexes to be placed in central areas where female staff from different departments can convene for prayers. Ministries lack budget to buy these Connexes, but they have committed to the cost of labor to install the Connexes. See Annex IV.

Dining Facilities

- In smaller dining rooms where a partition is not possible, ministries should schedule a different lunch time for male and female staff members.
- For the other 11 ministries, it is recommended that they install partitions and separators to allow female employees to use the facility. Ministries agreed to contribute the cost of labor but they requested donor contributions for other expenses.

Daycare Facilities

- Daycare facilities that are operational in 15 ministries should be equipped with sleeping supplies, toys, and a play area, as well as a kitchen and cleaning equipment. The needs are identified separately under the infrastructure analysis of each ministry in Annex 4.
- MoHE and IDLG should be pushed to establish daycare in their workplace to encourage more women to work with the government offices.

Transportation

- It is recommended that interns who will be placed in different ministries should use the pick-up and drop-off transportation facilities of the ministry. All ministries agreed to allow interns to use their transportation in normal pick-up and drop-off routes.

Health Issue/Comfortable Conditions

Clean Drinking Water

- Eight ministries suggested installing water filters to purify water. Ministries also committed to partially contribute in purchasing the filters and requested for donor's financial support as well.

Office Workplace

- Eight ministries recommended creating office workstations for crowded offices in order to save space and to provide comfortable seating for women at mixed-gender workplaces. They have committed labor costs, office space, and stationery, and requested donor agencies to support them with creating office workstations.

Safety and Security

Safety

- All ministries were lacking fire exit procedures and asked for assistance in providing technical support in assessing the vulnerability of buildings and developing safety measures.
- Ministries also recommended technical assistance in hiring experts and equipping ministries with fire safety equipment.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX II. COMPLETE LIST OF INTERVIEWEES INCLUDING MINISTRIES NAMES

S/N	Ministry/ Independent Agencies	Contacts	Date
1	MoF	1. Musa Kamawi, HR Director, mkamawi@gmail.com , 0700458070 2. Fawzia Sadat, Training & Development Section Head 3. Nasir Ahmad Ahmadi, Employee Relation Section Head, 0700181318, Nasir Ahmad Ahmadi 4. Engineer Shukria Kazimi, 0778828675, kazimishukria@gmail.com 5. Dr. Shayeq, 0780340115, Capacity Building Officer 6. Hamid Hamdard, 0700497162, Hamid.hamdard5@gmail.com	Oct-01-15
2	MAIL	1. Dr. Yaqoub Hotak, 0744464941, HR Director, dr_yaqoub@yahoo.com 2. Ahmad Farid Aryan, 0797834277, Deputy HR, fareedaryan@gmail.com 3. Adela Yousufzai, 0744464048, Head of Gender Unit 4. Eng. Mohammad Ibrahim, 0795375871, Service Dept. Section Head	Sep-28-15
3	MoCI	1. Mirwais Ahmadzai, HR Director, 0700176070, mirwaisahmadzai2001@yahoo.com 2. Faeqa Javed, 0788918138, Head of Gender Unit	Oct-04-15
4	MoE	1. Qudratullah Andar Sultani, HR Director, 0799029996, qudratullahandar@gmail.com 2. Meerwais Khan, 0787377637, Capacity Building Advisor, meerwise_zarmal@yahoo.com 3. Najiba Nooristani, 0799343532, Head of Gender Unit, nooristani13@gmail.com 4. Ahmadshah Quraishi, 0786651205, HR Office, ahmadshah_quraishi@yahoo.com	Sep-29-15
5	MoMP	1. M. Shafiq Zamani, HR Director, td.hr.momp@gmail.com	Sep-29-15
6	MoPW	1. Mohammad Sharif Rasikh, HR Director, sharif.rasikh@gmail.com 2. Eng. Qudsia Kaker, Head of Gender Unit, 0700227759	Oct-17-15
7	MoWA	1. Rahimi Zafari, Director of Policy and Planning, rahima.zarifi@yahoo.com 2. Nazia Faizi, Director of Gender and Outreach Program, naziafaizi2014@gmail.com 3. Mr. Stanikzai, Head of Recruitment Unit, mowa.hrd@gmail.com	Oct-03-15
8	MoTCA	1. Eng. Abdul Wakeel Sediqi, HR Director, 0700071761, Sediqi.HRD@gmail.com 2. Abdul, Head of the budget section	Oct-05-15
9	MoCIT	1. Masoud Samim, masoodsamim@yahoo.com , 0700004898 2. Mallali Yousufzai Head of Gender Unit, 0744155570 3. Haji Janat Khan Fahim Administration Director	Sep-29-15

10	MoEW	1. Mr. Abdul Fattah Sayedkhaili/HR Director 2. Qudsiya, Head of Gender Unity	Sep-30-15
11	MoIC	1. Ahmad Zia Anwary, ahmedz66@yahoo.com , 700229595 2. Fawad Farand, Employee relation officer, 0700477318	Oct-04-15
12	MUDA	1. Zafar Ali Ranjbar, HR Director, 07811355704 2. Amanullah Tarin, Administration Director, 0799408347	Sep-28-15
13	MRRD	1. Tahir Ayubi, HR Director, tahir.ayub@mrrd.gov.af , 070778882 2. Ms. Nadira Maroof, Capacity Building Section Head	Oct-03-15
14	MoJ	1. Prof. Shah Wali Ataye Director of policy and planning, ataye_kakar@yahoo.com , 0774209505 2. Abdul Haleem Himat, Admin & Finance Director, haleem.himat@gmail.com , 0777304883 3. Najibullah Jami, HR Director, njami@moj.gov.af , 0794720209	Oct-04-15
15	MoCN	1. Ahamd Shoaib Mohammad, Employee Relation officer 0799 45 40 49 2. Dr. Sayed Shir Mohammad Ahadi, HR Director, 0792500026	Sep-28-15
16	MoHE	1. Dr.Najibullah Sahim, HR Director, 0799337123, sahin.najib@yahoo.com 2. Abdul Rafi Sahili, Employee Relation officer 0777673030	Oct-04-15
17	MoLSAMD	1. Dr. Sabir Pardis, Plan and Policy Director, 0799526070, saberperdes@gmail.com 2. Sayed Fahim Hashimi, Admin Director, 0799337733	Oct-05-15
18	MoI	1. Mr.Sayed Jamaluddin Sadat, HR Director, 0744141210, sjamal_79@yahoo.com	Oct-03-15
19	MoD	2. General Lutfullah Momini, HR Director,0700285215, g.lutsullah@mod.gov.af	Sep-29-15
20	IDLG	1. Rohullah Niazi HR Director, 0744454649 2. Amin Sahfi, Capacity Builiding Director, 078600597 3. Hamida Head of Gender Unit	Oct-14-15
21	Student Focus Group	Malina, Sahiba,Shabnam,Naweeda, Shikiba and Atifa	Oct-08-15
22	CSOs Focus Group	Suraya Palikan, Uor Zalla Stankzai, Maryam, Fozia, Hussian, Homira Saqeeb, Haroon and Hakim Yar	Oct-12-15

ANNEX III. COMPLETE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Women in Government Workplace Obstacle Survey Questionnaire— POLICY

Interviewee		Interviewer	
Full Name:		Full Name:	
Designation:		Designation:	
Department:		Email ID:	
Organization:			
Contact Details:		Interview Date:	

I. Policy Obstacles [HR Director or Policy and Planning Directors]

1. Do you have the following policies and systems for safeguarding women at workplace?

Policies and Procedures	Yes	No	If no, do you need one and what assistance do you need?
1. Anti-Harassment Policy or Regulation			
2. Gender Equality Policy			
3. Merit based Appointment Procedures			
4. Training and Development Policy			
5. Positive Discrimination Policy			
6. Leave Policy (Paid Maternity Leave)			
7. Succession Planning Policy			
8. Complain and Grievance Procedure			
9. Conflict Resolution Committee			
10. Flexible Work hours			

2. Are these policies supporting women in obtaining their entrance, performance, and advancement at your ministry or agency?

Yes No

If No,

a) Why and what changes do you recommend?

.....

3. Do you think the existing policies, procedures and systems are properly implemented?

Yes No

If no, why and what does ministry need to properly implement these policies?

.....

4. Do you have leadership's support and political will for the implementation of these policies?

Yes No

If no, why and how do you gain that support?

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.....

5. Do you think that the policies would require amendments to respond to women's needs?

Yes No

If yes, please name the specific policy that you want to change and why?

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6. Are there any obstacles for the implementation of these policies?

Yes No

If yes, what are the obstacles?

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.....

And what do you recommend to overcome these obstacles?

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.....

7. Are women and men equally treated in terms of work and trainings?

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.....

8. Overall, how effective are these policies?

Extremely Effective
 Very Effective
 Moderately Effective
 Slightly Effective
 Not at all Effective

9. Which of the following stands in the way of women working with government? In case there is more than one answer then please prioritize.

Insufficient Security (Safety and Freedom of Movement)
 Negative Public Opinion and conservative cultural norms
 Street Harassment
 Family commitment (Marriage and Raising Children)

- Low level of Education
- Insufficient Salary and Benefits

10. Which of the following stands in the way of female growth, advancement and doing the job efficiently? In case there is more than one answer then please prioritize.

- Lack of opportunity for Women in Leadership
- Nepotism in recruitment and promotion
- Sexual Harassment
- Backbiting and gossips at workplace (Men vs Men, Women vs Women)
- Lack of separate, bathrooms, day care, dining facilities, transportation
- Mixed-gender workplaces

Women in Government Workplace Obstacle Survey Questionnaire— CULTURE

Interviewee	Interviewer
Full Name (optional):	Full Name:
Designation:	Designation:
Dept/Ministry:	Email ID:

II. Cultural Obstacles: [Female Staff Grade 1, 2, 3 and 4]

A. General Cultural Obstacles

1. Which of the following stands in your way of working with government? In case there is more than one answer then please prioritize.

- Insufficient Security (Safety and Freedom of Movement)
- Negative Public Opinion and conservative cultural norms
- Street Harassment
- Family commitment (Marriage and Raising Children)
- Low level of Education
- Insufficient Salary and Benefits

2. Which of the following stands in your way of growth, advancement and doing the job efficiently?

- Lack of opportunity for Women in Leadership
- Nepotism in recruitment and promotion
- Sexual Harassment
- Backbiting and gossips at workplace (Men vs Men, Women vs Women)
- Lack of separate, bathrooms, day care, dining facilities, transportation
- Mixed-gender workplaces

B. Workplace Cultural Obstacles

3. Do you see your workplace culturally appropriate?

- Yes
- No

If No, Why?

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.....
.....

And how can the mentioned issues be resolved?

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.....
.....

4. Does your employer mission, vision, and values support women at workplace?

- Yes
- No

5. How safe do you feel at your work?

- Extremely safe
- Very safe
- Moderately safe
- Slightly safe
- Not at all safe

If the answer is “*slightly safe or not at all safe*,” why?

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.....

What should be done to make the workplace safe?

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6. How comfortable is your employer’s work environment?

- Extremely Comfortable
- Very Comfortable
- Moderately Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Not at all Comfortable

If the answer is “*slightly comfortable or not at all comfortable*,” why? What is recommended?

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.....

7. How helpful is your current position in stimulating your professional growth?

- Extremely helpful
- Very helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Not at all helpful

If the answer is “*not at all helpful*”, ask Why?

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What shall be done?

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8. How comfortable do you feel voicing your opinion?

- Extremely Comfortable
- Very Comfortable
- Moderately Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Not at all Comfortable

If the answer is “*not at all comfortable*”, ask Why?

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.....

What do you recommend to solve the problem?

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9. Does your supervisor ask you for your opinion or suggestions?

- Yes
- No

If No, Why?

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10. Does your supervisor involve you in team works?

- Yes
- No

If No, Why?

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.....

11. How often does the senior management involve you in decision making?

- Very Often
- Often
- Rarely
- Not at all

If the answer is not at all, ask why?

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.....

What do you recommend to solve the problem?

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.....

12. How comfortable do you feel to work with your male colleague?

- Extremely Comfortable
- Very Comfortable
- Moderately Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Not at all Comfortable

If the answer is “not at all comfortable”, ask why?

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What is solution do you recommend?

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.....
13. How supportive are male colleagues in team work?

- Extremely Supportive
- Very Supportive
- Moderately Supportive
- Slightly Supportive
- Not at all Supportive

If the answer is “*not at all supportive*”, why?
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What do you recommend for a supportive environment?
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14. Does your employer sponsors or assist with:

- Employee assistance program (Fellowship, scholarships)
- Transportation (pick and drop)
- “flexible” work schedules
- Maternity leave and Child care
- Special events (Mother’s day, Women’s day and etc.)

15. Is there support for advancement and career development with in your organization?

- Yes
- No

If yes please describe
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

16. Have you been offered a chance to gain a qualification in your current job?

- Yes

No

Please

Specify.....

.....

**17. Do you think it is important to have opportunities for training/development at work?
(Why / why not?)**

Yes

No

(Why / why not?)

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.....
.....

18. Would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) I want to develop my knowledge and skills at work. | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> |
| (b) Having the chance to learn at work makes the job more rewarding. | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> |
| (c) My employer actively supports me to learn at work. | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> |
| (d) Developing my knowledge and skills is a realistic way for me to get a higher position or a better job in this organization. | Agree <input type="radio"/> | Disagree <input type="radio"/> |

19. Overall, did you feel that your work environment was positive, neither positive nor negative, or negative?

Extremely Positive

Very Positive

Somewhat Positive

Neither Positive nor Negative

Somewhat negative

Very Negative

Extremely Negative

If the answer is “extremely negative” ask for the reasons:

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Women in Government Workplace Obstacle Survey Questionnaire— INFRASTRUCTURE

Interviewee	Interviewer
Full Name (optional):	Full Name:
Designation:	Designation:
Ministry:	Email ID:
Contact:	

III. Infrastructure Obstacle [Admin Director]

A. Welfare Facilities:

20. Does your Ministry have separate washrooms/Toilets with (Non slip flooring, sufficient lighting, blind on windows [frosted glass, curtains, and color], hand basins, and towels or a hand dryer)?

- Yes
 No

If No, Why

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.....

If yes but the facility is not in a good condition, then ask what support is needed or what is recommended to solve the problem. Please ask for ministry's contribution (material, labor) as well?

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.....
.....

21. Does your Ministry/Agency have separate prayers room for female?

- Yes
 No

If No, Why

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.....

If yes, but not a proper place for prayers, then ask what support is needed or what is recommended to solve the problem. Please ask for ministry's contribution (material, labor) as well?

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.....
22. Does your Ministry/Agency have separate area for eating meal and drinking?

- Yes
 No

If No, Why

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.....

If yes, but not a proper place for prayers, then ask what support is needed or what is recommended to solve the problem. Please ask for ministry's contribution (material, labor) as well?

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23. Does your Ministry/Agency have day care and rest facilities for pregnant and nursing mothers?

- Yes
 No

If No, Why

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If yes, but not in a good condition, then ask what support is needed or what is recommended to solve the problem. Please ask for ministry's contribution (material, labor) as well?

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.....

24. Which of the following method does the ministry use for providing clean drinking water for its employees?

- Tap Water
- Water Dispenser
- Bottle Water
- No Source

If there is “**No Source**” then ask what could be the solution?

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.....

25. Does your Ministry/Agency have transportation to and work for female staff?

- Yes
- No

B. Health issues/ Comfortable conditions:

26. Does your organ have good ventilation – a supply of fresh, clean air drawn from outside or a ventilation system?

- Yes
- No

If No, Why and what solution is recommended?

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.....

27. Does your Ministry have reasonable working temperature (usually at least 16°C to 22°C) during summer?

- Yes
- No

28. Does your Ministry/Agency have lighting suitable for the work being carried out?

- Yes
- No

29. Does your Ministry/Agency have enough room space and suitable workstations and seating for women?

- Yes
- No

If No, then ask what support is needed or what is recommended to solve the problem. Please ask for ministry’s contribution (material, labor) as well?

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.....
30. Which of the following is used as heating system at your Ministry?

- Central Heating System
- Air Conditioning Heater
- Gas, Wood and Oil Heating System

C. Safety Issues:

31. Does your Ministry properly maintain premises and work equipment?

- Yes
- No

32. Does Ministry's floors, corridors and stairs etc. are free of obstructions?

- Yes
- No

If no, what support is needed to make it work friendly?
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.....

33. Has the Ministry taken measures to minimize the risks caused by snow and ice on outdoor routes, e.g. use salt or sand and sweep them?

- Yes
- No

If no, what support is needed?
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34. Does the Ministry have Fire Safety and Exit procedures?

- Yes
- No

If no, what support is needed and what would be ministry's contribution?
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ANNEX IV. COMPLETE INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT OF EACH MINISTRY

As an example below sheet indicates infrastructure assessment of MAIL. 17 Similar sheets will be inserted as Annex.

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock					
MAIL	Yes/No	Current Condition	Recommendation	Contribution	
				Ministry	USAID Promote: Women in Gov.
1. Welfare Facilities					
1.1 Separate Washroom	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Enough washroom available in each building * Not in a good condition (lacks amnities) * Maintenance Required * Site offices lacks Separate Washrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No need for new washrooms in HQ * Renovation and maintenance required in HQ * Washrooms needed for site offices 	Ministry will provide labor during renovation (30%)	* Provide other requirements
1.2 Separate Prayers room	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No prayers room for women * Women face a lot of problems and difficulties offering prayers * Ministry lack space for prayers room in HQ * Ministry lack prayers room in site offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify a proper space for female prayers room * MAIL requested placement of a Connex in a center area of the ministry to help all female from different sections in offering prayers 	* Will try at first place to identify a room for prayers (50%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Option1: Equip Prayers room first (100%) * Option 2: Provide Connex for Prayers (100%)
1.3 Separate Dinning room	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * There is a big Dinning hall with poor condition * Female section is separated with big plastic sheets (photo available) * Female staff is not using it due of poor condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Full renovation required * Install proper Separators for female section * Chairs and Tables should be replaced 	Provide Labor (50%)	50%
1.4 Daycare & rest facilities for pregnant & nursing mothers	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry has daycare and rest facilities * Daycare was in good condition (Picture Available) 	N/A	100%	0%
1.5 Transportation	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry provide pick and drop to Female Staff * Ministry agreed on providing Pick&drop to Interns 	N/A	100%	0%
2. Health issues/Comfortable Conditions					
2.1 Drinking Water	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Use Tap, water dispensers and bottled water * Mostly consumes tea to avoid water diseases 	N/A	100%	0%
2.2 Ventilation System (Supply of Fresh Air)	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No proper Ventilation System * Air Conditioning and use of open windows for drawing clean air in new buildings 	N/A	100%	0%
2.3 Work Temperature (Cooling and Heating System)	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Central Heating System, Air heater/heating Systems are used during Winder and Summer to maintain workable temperature 	N/A	100%	0%
2.4 Room Space and Office Workstations	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry had enough room space and suitable workstations for both male and female 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Placing additional staff (interns) required proper space management * Creating workstation was proposed for saving space and bring new staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify and place Interns in Depts. * Identify offices for workstations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Assist MAIL with establishing proper Office Workstations(100%)
3. Safety Issues					
3.1 Proper maintained of premises and work equipment	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAIL faces problems in maintaining the premises and work equipment due to: * Cuts in O&M budget and * Lengthy admin and procurement 	N/A	100%	0%
3.2 Floors, corridors, elevators and stairs free of obstruction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry is free of obstructions * Elevators not available 	N/A	0%	0%
3.3 Measures for minimizing risk cause by rain, snow on outdoor routs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry use their existing tractors to minimize slippery routs during winter * The service dept. act quickly to avoided incidents 	N/A	100%	0%
3.4 Fire safety and exit procedures		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ministry has fire extinguishers and two fire trucks * but they severally lacks fire exits and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Requires assistance in assessing the vulnerability of buildings and develop safety measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identify staff for training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Requires assistance in hiring expert and equipping ministry with fire safety equipment
Any other issues:					

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20523
Tel: (202) 712-0000
Fax: (202) 216-3524
www.usaid.gov