

GENDER SELF ASSESSMENT
OF
NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID – AFGHANISTAN

The new Constitution for Afghanistan provides equal rights for men and women. The Interim Afghan National Development Strategy, I-ANDS¹, has identified gender equity as one of the cross cutting themes to be mainstreamed in all policy frameworks

The above is in response to the huge deficit in gender equity in Afghanistan today. Women and girls were and are still excluded from many basic human rights due to cultural restrictions. Gender-based violence is widespread and the psychological effects of armed conflict and violence continue to affect especially women and children. Through the years of war and civil strife, both boys and girls were denied their right to education. In addition to the lack of facilities, depriving children in general of the right to learn, cultural restrictions have added to the deprivation for girls.

Norwegian Church Aid – Afghanistan Programme, NCA AP, partners with national and constituency based organizations, resource organization, strategic alliances and media. NCA AP also recognizes that it is important to work with the whole of local communities through an integrated, holistic approach. In the current Country Plan (2005-2009) NCA Afghanistan recognizes that Afghanistan has a strong faith-based culture. With this aim NCA is supporting processes where religion and religious leaders play the role of peace builders and perhaps become major stake holders in the development process which is focused on Justice for all.

NCA AP recognizes the differences in aspirations, needs, conditions and positions rights of women and men. This may require treatment that is different but may be considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits and opportunities.

To operationalize this recognition within NCA AP and its programmes, TARAA was contracted to conduct a gender audit or a self assessment. Based on the findings of the self assessment a strategy was prepared for NCA AP for Gender Integration and Responsiveness. The self assessment focused on the attitudes, behaviours, knowledge and skills and the organizational culture of NCA AP was conducted over a period of three weeks.

The self-assessment was designed to answer four main questions:

1. what condition has the organization created to realize gender equality, women's empowerment and a gender balance in the organization?
2. what is being done to achieve these goals?
3. what is the perception of achievement of those involved in the programs?

¹ Draft Gender Mainstreaming in MRRD Programmes: A preliminary review of the National Solidarity Programme, for MRRD, AIRD, 2006

4. what recommendations for improvement can be formulated on the basis of the self assessment?

The methodology was based on four principles:

- A. **Gender and development.**
- B. **Learning organization.**
- C. **Qualitative self-assessment.**
- D. **Adult learning cycle.**

The aim of the Methods that were used was to facilitate information sharing, reflection, inclusion, disclosure, in depth exploration and sharing.

The setting of the Gender Self Assessment was the NCA office in **Kabul**, the Field Office in **Maimana in Faryab** province and the project sites in **Bamiyan province**. **Five categories of respondents**, management, programme staff, office staff, support staff, representatives of partner organizations, answered questionnaires and participated in workshops. Community leaders and members and women Shura Leaders were also interviewed.

Two of the key conclusions are mentioned below.

- The organizational gender self assessment which was rather comprehensive clearly highlighted the need for a committed and planned movement **from awareness to action** in integrating gender responsiveness in all aspects of organization and programmes.

To meet this requirement each part of the organization, NCA in Afghanistan, will be required to revisit itself to make changes/fine tune/include in **policies, strategies and implementing mechanisms, structure, management style** so that the Gender policy which is stated below is upheld and implemented.

It will be pertinent to mention that the personnel manual is quite comprehensive and a good beginning point. The **job descriptions** need to factor in gender responsive competencies which are expected to contribute to the discharge of responsibilities by each level of staff. These competencies would also be reflected in the annual appraisal to ensure the accountability of the staff.

- NCA Afghanistan's **niche** in Gender Justice for Just Afghanistan: The assessment and the recommendations clearly indicate that NCA Afghanistan has a niche for making programmes and NCA itself more sensitive to gender relations as they exist and the potential for change in them. NCA Afghanistan has been exemplar in opening itself up to an assessment of the gender responsiveness of the internal policies and systems as also in its programme support. The Senior Management is also committed to ensuring more equal and respectful gender relations in the organization and in the programmes. In addition to its technical credibility NCA AP has to demonstrate its commitment by clearly stating its policy on zero tolerance to discrimination in practice. There was recognition, by all segments of NCA AP, of the fact that the participation of women and men in the social, economic, political, administrative life of a society **changes over a period of time** and so do the rules for accessing services like education, health and also

the expectation of justice and protection from the state. These are determined by prevailing dominant ideology(ies) and also the economic imperatives that the society faces.

Based on these conclusions a number of recommendations were made which are reflected in the strategy which was adopted by NCA AP.