



National Strategy on Women in Agriculture



(2015 – 2020)

Outline of Strategy on Women in Agriculture

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ACRONYMS

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AFSANA	Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda
ARD	Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster
AWED	Agricultural Women's Empowerment Directorate
CDP	Capacity Development Plan
DAIL	Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFL	Food for Life
FNS	Food and Nutrition Strategy
ILO	International Labour Organization
KILM	Key Indicators of the Labour Market
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
HED	Home Economics Department
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development
NADF	National Agriculture Development Framework
NPP	National Priority Programme
NAPWA	National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan
NRVA	National Risks and Vulnerability Assessment

Glossary

Gender: Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behavior of both women and men (femininity and masculinity).

Assessment of the role of women in agriculture: : an assessment of the degree to which an agricultural activity (project, programme, etc.) has integrated women sensitive considerations into the activities and management systems so that both men and women benefit from them.

Resources: means and goods, including those that are economic (household income) or productive (land, equipment, tools, work, credit); political (capability for leadership, information and organization); and time.

Women's empowerment: women taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance.

Gender Awareness: recognition of differences in the interests, needs and roles of women and men in society and how these result in differences in power, status and privilege.

Gender Blindness: inability to perceive the different gender roles and responsibilities; failure to realize that policies, programmes and projects may have different impact on women and men.

Gender Budget: a budgeting method that takes into account how a government or an organization's budget affects men and women, boys and girls, it also looks at how the budget affects different groups of women and men, boys and girls. A gender budget does not mean creating a separate budget or looking for additional resources for women.

Gender Concerns/Issues: gender inequality is recognized as unjust. The fact that women have a higher rate of illiteracy than men is a gender concern and needs to be taken into account in a project that requires literacy skills. Other examples are: violence against women, etc.

Sex Disaggregated Data: the collection of information and the analysis of results on the basis of women and men , e.g., data on the status and socio-economic roles of different groups of men and women or data based on the biological attributes of women and men.

Gender Discrimination: providing differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. This involves systemic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources, and participation in decision making.

Division of Labour based on women and men's roles in society: an overall societal pattern where women are allotted one set of gender roles and men another. This division is not based on skill, but on the basis of sex.

Gender Equality: equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Achieving gender equality requires changes in the institutional practices and social relations through which disparities are reinforced and sustained.

Gender Equity: a just distribution of benefits and rewards between men and women.

Gender Mainstreaming: the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

Needs specific to women and men: these needs arise out of the relative positioning of women (and men) in relation to the division of labour based on different roles and responsibilities of women and men.

Practical needs: are the needs of women arising from the traditional division of labour of women and men and which are unique to particular groups of women. Practical needs of women refer to immediate perceived necessity such as (food, shelter, income) and are context specific.

Strategic needs: these are long term and challenge the gender division of labour and the lack of gender equality. Projects that address these needs include legal rights, skills and leadership training. They involve women as active agents and have impact on the position of women relative to men.

Perspective as viewed by women and men: view of problems, constraints, needs and interests and their relative significance from the standpoint of either women or men.

Planning: the formulation of specific strategies to provide equal opportunities and benefits for both women and men.

Gender Roles: a social system of role classification, as opposed to a biological one. Example: if child rearing is classified as a female role, it is a female gender role, not a female sex role.

Use of stereotypes for women the constant portrayal (in the media, the press, or in education), of women and men occupying certain roles according to the socially constructed gender division of labour and expectations of behaviour.

Gender Sensitivity: the ability to recognize gender needs and constraints and the ability to recognize men's and women's different perceptions and interests arising from their different social positioning.

Gender Sensitive Indicator: a number, a fact or a perception whose purpose is to point out how far and in what way a development program or project is meeting its gender objectives and achieving results related to gender equity.

Gender Training: the provision of formal learning experiences and skills in order to increase gender analysis and awareness skills which serve to recognize and address gender issues in the programming process.

Politics: the distribution of power in terms of both resources and influence.

Productive Work: work carried out for the production of goods and services intended for the market.

Reproductive Work: concerns tasks surrounding reproduction and the maintenance of human resources. This includes maintaining the house, the family, the community - collecting wood, assuring water supply, food preparation, taking care of children (and perhaps the elderly), education, hygiene, and social obligations determined by the community (activities surrounding births, marriages, and burials). These activities are generally not remunerated and they are most often not taken into account in national employment statistics and revenues because these activities are considered non- economic.

Sex: defines the biological attributes (male, female).

Foreword

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is committed to engendering the agricultural sector as a pathway to poverty reduction, enhanced food security and inclusive growth. To achieve this efficiently it is vital to address the restrictions that prevent women from accessing productive resources and economic opportunities in the agricultural sector. Failure to do this will affect national agricultural productivity and undermine Afghanistan's development agendas. Ultimately the full cost of gender inequality harms every Afghan.

The message is clear: ignoring gender inequalities comes at a great cost to Afghanistan's ability to develop sustainably and govern effectively.

The Strategy for Women in Agriculture underpins the need to make women's empowerment an integral part of the Ministry's policy analysis, design and implementation process. These must be supported by actions that are context-specific to the Afghan situation as there is no one-size-fits-all formula for strengthening the role of women in agricultural development.

The inextricable link between gender equality, poverty alleviation, food security and inclusive growth rests on women's essential contribution to the agricultural production that needs to be recognized and given appropriate value. The time is opportune to take into account the key role of women in agricultural production and increase concerted efforts to enable women move beyond production for subsistence into higher-value, market-oriented production for the benefit of each and every one of us.

The activities mentioned in the Strategy cover different dimensions for strengthening the role of women as farmers, producers, managers of natural resources and environment and major contributors towards food security and nutrition. The litmus test of the Strategy will depend upon its effective implementation in the interest of Afghan women in order to make them real agents of change.

Assadullah Zamir
(Minister, Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock)

Executive Summary

Afghan women's role in the agricultural sector is a *paradox*. Despite being *major players* of the sector (accounting for nearly 43% of the sector's labour force) which is a key driver of economic growth, Afghan women still remain in the *periphery* with limited access to productive resources.

As a result, women are subjected to different types of *social and economic exclusions* even though they are an essential contributor towards the fight against food insecurity and poverty¹. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) "State of Food and Agriculture" (2010-2011)², the *yield gap* between farms run by men and women averages about 20-30% and this is largely due to the *gender inequalities or gender gaps* in accessing productive resources rather than *ability*. The World Bank's World Development Report 2012 advocates for gender equality as 'smart economics' that has high economic costs if not addressed in time. The National Risks and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) of 2011-2012 acknowledges farming as the *economic backbone* of Afghan society but expresses concern at the increasing *food insecurity* since the last NRVA of 2007-8 (from 28.2% to 30.1%) and 40% of female headed households are food insecure as against 27% male headed households. The message is clear: *the empowerment of women is fundamental to reduce poverty, hunger and improve food security*.

Against this context, the Strategy on Women in Agriculture has been prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) supported by FAO with the objective to identify and implement priority activities that are vital for *empowering women* and highlight the *inextricable link* between women's empowerment, increased food security and poverty alleviation. Therefore, the Strategy underpins the ways to ensure women's *easy access* to resources for developing their full potential as a *pillar of support* for increased food security, poverty reduction and inclusive growth. The **Introduction** launches the theme of the Strategy: in view of the 'feminization of agricultural work' and inadequate recognition of women's contribution towards agricultural production, the need of the hour is to end the *systemic undervaluation* of women's work. Thereafter, **Chapter 1, Situation Analysis** provides a detailed account on the role of women in the agricultural sector including the *gender gaps* in the areas of work and remuneration even though women are primarily responsible for their households' food security. The following sections provide the **Rationale, Vision, Mission Statement, Goals, Objectives, Guiding Principles and Theory of Change** which outline the major changes the Strategy proposes to introduce for an inclusive agricultural sector. **Chapter 2, Gender Analysis of the Afghan Agricultural Sector** analyses the key *strengths and weaknesses* of women's participation in different agricultural activities which is reinforced by the information gathered from **mapping** of the different projects of MAIL. **Chapter 3 traces, Linkages with other major policy documents** and the empowerment of women in the agricultural sector to emphasize this issue is broad-based and has been acknowledged as a key area for promoting food security and equitable growth that depends upon the collaborative efforts of decision-makers and major stakeholders. **Chapter 4, Framework of the Strategy** outlines the key three objectives which are followed by Outcome, Outputs and Activities for targeting changes at the *institutional, programmatic and impact levels*. **Chapter 5 on Implementation Strategy, Partnerships, Risks and Assumptions** dwells on the operational details of the Strategy and is followed by **Chapter 6** that outlines monitoring mechanism: **Monitoring of the Strategy in MAIL** for and *efficient and effective implementation* of the Strategy.

¹World Bank, FAO and IFAD (2009). "Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook", IFAD, Rome, Italy.

²FAO, (2010-2011), "State of Food and Agriculture," Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome, Italy.

The ultimate goal of the Strategy is to *empower Afghan women* who are already involved in different agricultural activities since a long time and acknowledge their valuable contribution by assisting them to become *agents of economic change*.

1. Introduction

“Enhancement of gender equality in the agriculture sector through active cooperation of both women and men for the opportunity to contribute and benefit equally from the activities of all sub-sectors in the agriculture sector” Policy Vision of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL)

Afghan women’s role in the agricultural sector is a *paradox*. While women play a critical role in agriculture and food security and are major players, accounting for nearly 43% of the sector’s labour force^{3,4}, they still remain in the periphery with limited access to productive resources. Despite their important contribution towards the fight against food insecurity and poverty and their significant role in natural resource management⁵, women are subjected to different types of *social and economic exclusions* that restrict their access to productive resources and economic opportunities to develop their full potential. Their participation is primarily *family-based, without remuneration* (not accorded a monetary value) and they are rarely compensated for their labor in terms of time allocated even though they make the *majority of labor contributions* to a wide range of marketed products.⁶

The *feminization of the agricultural workforce* in Afghanistan results in part from the coping strategies adopted by women to diversify their livelihoods which are *gendered*: men usually cultivate the lucrative crops, or migrate as seasonal or permanent workers; while women cultivate the family plot for *household consumption*, care for small livestock, and process and/or sell part of their production in local markets. Compared to Afghan men, Afghan women have little access to *decision-making* over agricultural inputs, outputs, and product markets.⁷ Women also lack *incentives* to invest due to their greater *vulnerability* and *exposure* to risks -once their niche in the value chain becomes commercially profitable, it is expropriated by men. Nevertheless, Afghan women continue to contribute significant amount of time to agriculture and livestock production as well as to a broad range of products in both areas.

According to the FAO’s “State of Food and Agriculture” (2010-2011)⁸, the yield gap between farms run by men and women averages about 20-30 per cent which is attributed to gender inequalities or *gender gaps* in accessing productive resources rather than *ability*. The World Bank’s Development Report of 2008 portrayed women as constrained by a lack of access to

³ FAO (2011), “**The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11, Women in Agriculture, Closing the gender gap for development**” Food and Agriculture Organization, Rome.

⁴ Asian Development Bank, (2002), “**Afghanistan Natural Resources and Agriculture Sector: Comprehensive Needs Assessment: Final Draft Report**,” Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines.

⁵ World Bank, FAO and IFAD, (2009), “**Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook**” IFAD, Rome.

⁶ World Bank, (2005), “**Afghanistan: National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction – the Role of Women in Afghanistan’s Future. Washington**,” World Bank, Washington, U.S.A.

⁷ Rojas & Aziz, (2004), “Recommendations for Integrating Gender into the Rebuilding Agricultural Markets in Afghanistan Program (RAMP)”, Report submitted to RAMP and USAID/Afghanistan(http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACY296.pdf).

⁸ FAO, (2010-2011), “**State of Food and Agriculture**,” Rome.

agricultural inputs and the failure to release their full potential in agriculture as a major contributing factor to low growth and food insecurity⁹

The message is clear: to end the *systemic underestimation of women's unpaid work* and *empower them for inclusive agricultural development and food secure growth*.

Situation Analysis

Afghanistan is primarily an *agrarian country* with nearly 76% of the population living in rural areas and 78% of them employed in agriculture. About 55% of the Afghan households are engaged in farming, and 68 % have some type of livestock. Agriculture represents a key productive sector (31.4% of GDP in 2009/2010) with the potential to become a major driver of the economy¹⁰. Despite the sustained growth in agriculture and livestock, the sector still needs to make up for the losses suffered during the long period of conflict (agricultural production decreased by 3.5% a year between 1978 and 2004 and livestock herds decreased radically between 1997 and 2004). Moreover, agriculture growth is volatile, largely depending on seasonal rains and snow precipitation, subject to weather fluctuations, coupled with the uncertainty and deterioration of security conditions.¹¹

The impact of these factors on women farmers is particularly dire. The Food for Life National Priority Programme(NPP2) of the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Cluster places “female headed households and war widows” as the most vulnerable groups and identifies one of its priority objectives: “*inclusive economic growth from agriculture production and related value chain development.*”¹²

The Afghanistan Food Security and Nutrition Agenda (AFSANA) of 2012 traces the linkages between women’s exposure to risks which impacts their efforts for maintaining food security based particularly on the following three main factors:

1. Severe *weather conditions, natural disasters and insecurity and violence* act as impediments to consumption and production.
2. The “*hungry season*” in the cropping calendar - spring and summer, when household food stocks from the previous harvest tend to dwindle with expectations of the new harvest.
3. *Food price hikes* which also threaten household food and nutrition levels that push many living at the borderline of poverty and food insecurity below minimum levels of subsistence.

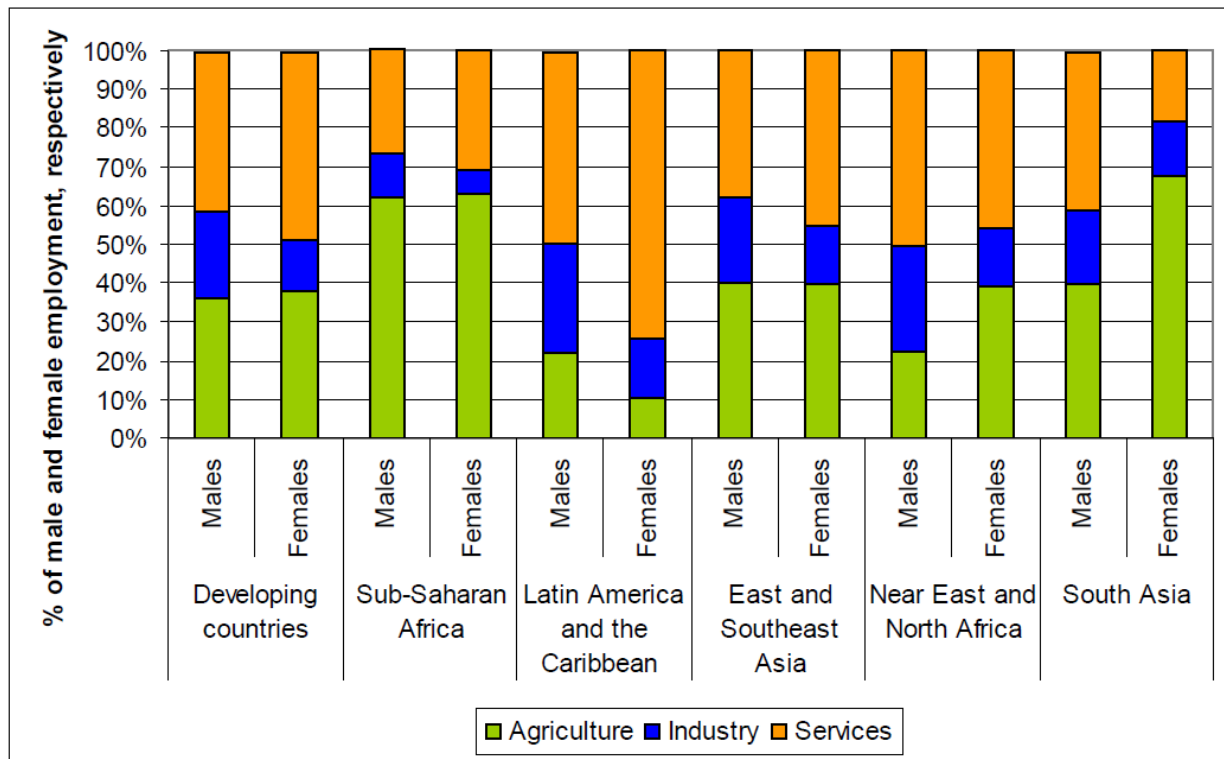
⁹World Bank, (2008),”**World Development Report** ,” World Bank, Washington, U.S.A.

¹⁰ Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2012), “**Food for Life National Priority Program**” DRAFT (AGR 18/02/12)

¹¹IFAD, (2014), “**The changing role of women in the economic transformation of family farming in Asia and the Pacific,**” IFAD, Rome.

¹²op cit.

According to ILO’s Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), *women’s contribution* in South Asia is one of the highest and this also confirms their major contribution in Afghanistan in some of the specific areas: livestock and subsistence farming as the chart below illustrates:



Source: ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM, 6th Edition) 2011.

The National Risks and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) of 2011-12 confirms that agriculture is the *backbone* of Afghanistan’s economy. It is the main source of income of close to one-third of households and 40% of the labor force is employed in the sector. According to its preliminary analysis, at least 40% of households headed by females are food insecure compared to only 27% of those headed by men. A major contributing factor to the susceptibility of women to food and nutrition insecurity is *socio-cultural barriers* to their educational advancement¹³. A high proportion of Afghanistan’s 27 million people face *chronic and transitory food insecurity*. Food insecurity based on calorie consumption is estimated at 30.1%, comparable to the 28.2% measured by NRVA 2007-08.¹⁴ These facts have profound influence on women’s efforts to sustain their households.

A recent impact assessment report of FAO’s project on “*Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture development for improved Household Food Security and Nutrition*” identified the

¹³NRVA(2012), “**The National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12 (Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey)**,” Implemented by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with technical assistance from ICON-Institute Public Sector GmbH.

¹⁴Op cit.

following needs of the women beneficiaries: access to *leadership* and practical *trainings* to enhance their capacity, *information* on dietary diversity to women for increasing the nutritional intake of their families and the need for appropriate *technology* and equipment for increasing their productivity¹⁵.

Some of the key observations on the situation of women in the agricultural sector were presented in two workshops: the first held in 2013 on “*National Workshop on Women in Agriculture in Afghanistan*” jointly organized by FAO, Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, Afghanistan and UNDP¹⁶ provided a *kaleidoscopic view* on the gender gaps (inadequate institutional capacity of concerned organizations, absence of mainstreaming gender in key policies and strategies, women’s lack of access to information, agricultural inputs and extension services which are compounded by their low levels of skill and education among others) of the sector. Thereafter, the workshop prioritized specific actions that are needed for overcoming this situation such as: *capacity development* at the policy making level on gender sensitive issues, investing in building the *self-confidence and esteem, knowledge and skills* (technical, leadership, managerial) of women and girls, promoting *gender-sensitive extension and business advisory services, vocational training* and other related interventions.

The second workshop held in May 2015 by FAO focused on the *four critical areas* that are necessary for strengthening the role of women in agriculture: *institutional strengthening and individual capacity development for different stakeholders, agriculture and livestock, food security and nutrition and monitoring and evaluation* from the perspective of women and men gender perspective. The aim was to collect information from the participants who came from diverse backgrounds on the best way forward for the preparation of the Strategy on Women in Agriculture. The reflections of the participants ranged over a wide selection of ideas: from *capacity development* of women farmers and producers as well as different stakeholders to the provision of *female extension agents* for addressing the specific needs of women farmers and producers, a *robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism* to assess the gender specific impact of the different interventions and improved access to markets.

Based on an extensive field research in Kabul, Parwan, Balkh, and Herat Provinces, a World Bank report¹⁷ noted that women are generally concentrated at the *lower levels* of agricultural high value chains such as grape/raisin, almond, and saffron. They perform irrigation, weeding, harvesting, and minimal processing, such as drying and packing raisins and almonds, at the household level. Men, on the other hand, link households with the *market to obtain input supply and sell the products*, in addition to their substantial engagement in production. Men also serve as the actors in the *upper levels* of the value chains, including middlemen or village-level traders and processors, wholesalers, retailers, or exporters. This gender division of labor is largely a reflection of *social and cultural norms*, which do not allow women to interact with men, travel

¹⁵MAIL and FAO, (2014), “**Monitoring Report of Strengthening the Role of Women for improved Household Food Security and Nutrition**,” UNFAO, Afghanistan.

¹⁶FAO (2013), “**National Workshop on Women in Agriculture, Afghanistan**,” jointly organized by FAO, Food and Security Cluster, Afghanistan and UNDP, Kabul, Afghanistan.

¹⁷World Bank, (2011), “**Understanding Gender in Agricultural Value Chains: The Cases of Grapes/Raisins, Almonds and Saffron in Afghanistan**,” Agriculture and Rural Development Unit, Sustainable Development Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank, Washington, U.S.A.

by themselves, or own land. As a result, women's *access to resources and services*, including credit, training, extension, inputs, and trading and marketing networks is severely curtailed.

Also, women do not have *collateral* to apply for credit or access to opportunities to participate in extension training because selection for these opportunities is often based on land ownership. There are fewer women service providers in extension, credit, input supply, or marketing. Despite the key roles that women play in harvesting and post-harvest processing activities, there is little or no *training* on quality control, including hygiene, sanitation, and information on growing higher-value varieties for women. Moreover, the *difference in wages* between women and men is wide: most of rural women's contributions are in harvesting and post-harvest processing of agricultural products which though *labour intensive*, are considered as part of *household chores* and therefore their work is unpaid.

Another survey of women's contribution to agricultural activities in Badakhshan, Bamyan and Kabul observed that women performed *as much agricultural work as men*¹⁸. However, they are concentrated in *labour intensive activities* such as: weeding, removing stones from the land, harvesting, gathering the crops into bundles, threshing, and cleaning the seed. Women are also the main *care providers for livestock* and carry out all activities from breeding, to milking to making dairy produce, spinning wool, raising small animals and selling them. Yet the survey found that women and men had *differentiated access to agricultural assets* based on gendered roles in agriculture. The survey observed that women work through out the entire *value chain* –in their own enterprises, in family activities and as employees, and undertake a wide range of activities, often utilizing their own knowledge systems. They engage in a *mix of non-farm activities*, as part of their strategy to *diversify* their livelihood options,¹⁹ and are responsible for the majority of household tasks.

Women also use the *natural environment* on a daily basis –for water and as a source of fuelwood –and make use of natural products for economic and medicinal purposes. Yet women have significantly *less access* than men to the assets and services that would enable them to increase their productivity, and are *underrepresented* in natural resource management committees and user groups. A recent study by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit and UN Women has analyzed that due to the lack of gendered equity in the availability and accessibility of opportunities, women in agriculture and related activities generally remain at the micro-scale of production²⁰.

The vulnerability of women's entitlements in the sector is directly linked to the fact that their rights are limited to *usufruct* rights (right to use only not ownership), while rights of management and ultimate control of resources are invested in men. As a result of the prevailing economic and social environment, women are increasingly being *excluded from access* to productive resources with a consequent *undermining* of their status in relation to both the household and wider society. Not only is their workload becoming *heavier* but their labour and the products of their

¹⁸ Ashrafi, H. (2009), "Gender Dimension of agriculture and rural employment: special focus on Afghan rural women's access to agriculture and rural development sector," paper presented at the FAO-IFAD-ILO Workshop on Gaps, trends and current research in gender dimensions of agriculture and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty, Rome, Italy.

¹⁹ Op cit.

²⁰ AREU, & UN Women (2013), "Women's Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan, 2002–2012. Information Mapping and Situational Analysis" Synthesis Paper, Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul, Afghanistan.

labour are increasingly being *controlled by men*. This has serious implications not only for the well-being of women but for their ability to meet the *welfare requirements* of their households.

Contrary to popular perception, women contribute *significant amounts of time* to agriculture and livestock production, and to a broad range of products in both areas. In Northeastern Afghanistan, such as in Badakhshan province, women's contribution to agricultural activities, in terms of time allocation, equals that of men.²¹ Even during the Livestock Census in 2002–2003, a detailed survey was conducted, entitled “*Women Livestock Survey*”, in order to ascertain the roles of women and men in livestock production which confirmed the same roles for women and girls in attending to livestock. IN parts of the Northeast, women even interact with veterinarians. Yet, household decisions about livestock are made primarily by men. Field exercises carried out in Herat during a FAO study on the dairy sector, a similar pattern of roles and responsibilities to those reported in the Livestock Census: while men, women and youth all participate in the care of livestock, women are responsible for milking and milk sales and there is clear division of labour in cattle management, based on sex and age²².

The following is the workforce contribution in the livestock sub-sector²³ which also underpins the disparity in wages and labour between women and men²⁴:

²¹ World Bank, (2005), “**Afghanistan: National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction – the Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future**”, World Bank, Washington DC, U.S.A

²² Boros, R. & Macleod, A, (2015), “**Empowering women in Afghanistan: Reducing gender gaps through Integrated Dairy Schemes**”, FAO, Rome, Italy.

²³ MAIL, (2015) presentation by the Directorate of Livestock.

²⁴ Slide provided by Livestock Directorate, MAIL.

Percentage of Families contribution in Animal Husbandry

Percentage of Contribution						Kind of responsibility
with wage	Women and child	Men/Women	Children	Men	Women	
2.94	0.21	0.12	9.37	23.14	64.23	Nutritio
12.94	0.12	0.03	49.72	27.26	9.95	Grazing
3.08	0.08	0.04	18.68	22.69	55.45	Watering
14.22	0.05	0.01	3.73	11.62	70.36	Take care of young animal
22.71	0.03	0.08	0.10	3.89	73.19	Milking
3.61	0.06	0.15	1.07	63.52	31.59	treatment
9.92	0.09	0.07	13.78	25.35	50.79	Average

Horticulture generally involves women more than grain production, and poor households require greater involvement of women in income-earning activities than do more wealthy households²⁵. However, women's work is limited to the early steps of product value chains. As a result, it tends to be less visible than men's and is accorded lesser value²⁶.

Cultural constraints, poverty, poor physical health, and low educational attainment are hindering factors that limit women's access to an agricultural paid economy. Women also have *limited access* to agricultural inputs such as capital, market information, and new farm technologies. Improving their opportunities in agricultural production must, therefore, involve increase in women's decision-making control, influence, and benefits derived from their contribution to the household economy.

In the urban and peri-urban areas, with the increase in urban poverty and hunger, women are increasingly engaged in cultivating kitchen and school gardens as a resilient measure to meet poor levels of nutrition by increasing the dietary diversity of the daily consumption needs of households. However, access to land and regular supply of water are major constraints to develop this source as a reliable base to address undernutrition, and malnutrition which are

²⁵MAIL, (2008), "MAIL Master Plan" Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, Kabul. .

²⁶World Bank, (2010), "Gender in Developing the Agricultural and Livestock Sectors," Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series, 2, World Bank South Asia.

prevalent in the urban and peri-urban with the increasing population of these areas. The burden of the critical food situation of the households rests on women who try their best to eke out a living from the land that is easily accessible.

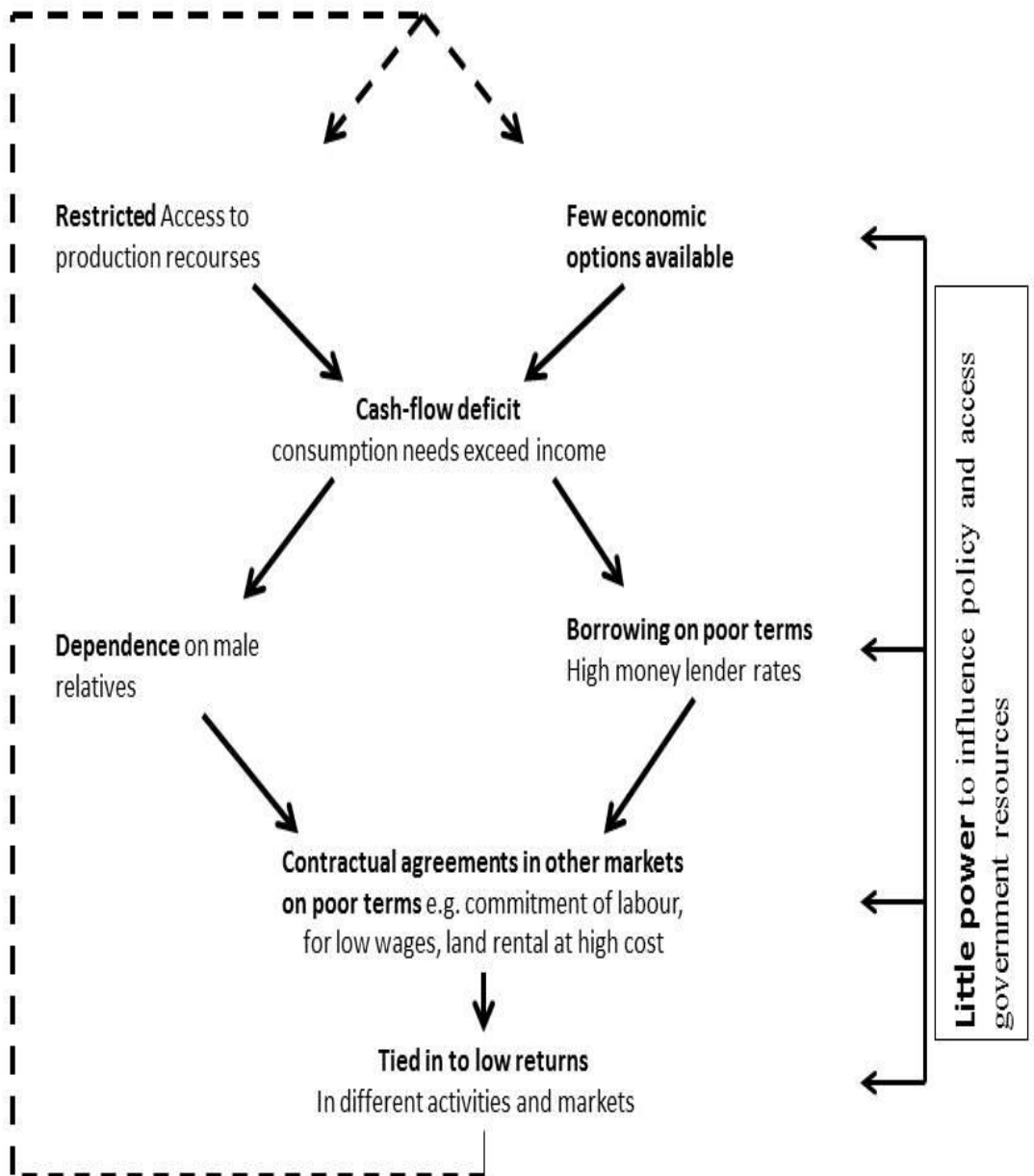
Based on the above facts, the two defining factors that need to be addressed for strengthening the role of women in the agricultural sector are:²⁷

1. *Systematic underestimation* of women's agricultural labour despite their essential contribution under restrictive conditions;
2. *Non-monetization of women's work* which is concentrated in the *lower levels of agricultural production* and considered an extension of household responsibilities (unpaid care economy).

These factors contribute to women getting *locked in interlocking markets* are presented in the diagram given below²⁸:

²⁷Elson.D. (2002), "**Macroeconomics and Macroeconomic Policy from a Gender Perspective**," Public Hearing of Study Commission 'Globalization of the World Economy-Challenges and Responses' Deutscher Bundestag.

²⁸Adapted from Ashley, et al, (2003), "**Understanding Rural Livelihoods in India: Diversity, change and exclusion**," "ODI Livelihoods Options Guidance Sheets, ODI, London.



Rationale:

The Strategy will reinforce MAIL’s position as a *leader* in promoting women’s empowerment in the agricultural development of Afghanistan. It will build on MAIL’s experience and achievements in the field of integrating a *sensitive approach* for addressing the needs of women engaged in different agricultural activities. It will also inform MAIL in scaling *unsuccessful approaches* and meeting the *new challenges* facing rural women.

Given the predominant influence of social *roles* on women’s engagement in the agricultural sector which are also continuously evolving over time, the Strategy will address the issues affecting women’s roles and contribution as they emerge with changing times for the following four reasons:

- a) Women's inequalities in access to and control over resources are *undermining* an inclusive development of the sector,
- b) *Differences* in outcomes based on women and men's different roles and status result in the perpetuation of women being trapped in low yields, low investment and low return,
- c) Secondary role of women and unequal relations between women and men relations affect *food security* and household welfare which are critical indicators of human development,
- d) Gender equality is a basic *human right*, one that has value in and of itself.

The rationale of the Strategy seeks to:

- Provide clear objectives, comprehensive *policy guidance* complemented by a National Action Plan and a focus on outcomes (rather than processes) for enhancing women's empowerment in the agricultural sector,
- Increase the *capacity* of MAIL leadership and staff and other stakeholders to engage in, and be accountable for, the principles and practice of gender equality in the agricultural sector,
- Deepen the *impact* of MAIL's operations – in terms of sustainability – through the systematic consideration of gender issues at all stages of the programme and project cycle,
- Improve systems for more effective *learning and reporting*, both to inform decision-makers and also for effective advocacy and policy dialogue.

Vision

MAIL becomes the *center of professional excellence* in undertaking agricultural development initiatives from the perspective of women and men.

Mission Statement

MAIL is committed to *equality between women and men* in the agricultural sector which is defined as its primary responsibility by anchoring women and men's needs and interests equally across all programmes and projects as well as within MAIL.

Goal

The overarching goal of the strategy is to *promote inclusive agricultural development for women's empowerment*.

Strategic Objectives

The Strategic Objectives will *strengthen women's role and visibility* in the agricultural sector in the long-term in close alignment with the National Action Plan for Women in Afghanistan (NAPWA) and other policies of MAIL as well as other key sectoral policies of other social sector ministries: Women's Affairs, Health, Education and Higher Education, Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Commerce, Trade and Industries.

The three *Strategic Objectives* of the Strategy are as follows:

1. ***Institutional Level***: institutional strengthening and individual capacity development of MAIL and concerned stakeholders,

2. **Programmatic Level:** deepening technical support by MAIL through its different initiatives/programmes/projects for strengthening women's role in agriculture,
3. **Impact Level:** assessment of impact of the different interventions of MAIL for knowledge management & documentation of best practices & lessons learned.

Immediate Objectives

The three *Immediate objectives* are as follows:

1. Implement a wide range of activities for enhancing the *institutional and individual capacity* of MAIL (at national and sub-national levels) and development partners,
2. Provide cutting edge in *technical service delivery* for women's empowerment to reduce the gap between women and men's access to productive resources with focus on improving the status of food security & nutrition,
3. Institutionalize a *monitoring and evaluation* (M&E) mechanism that is sensitive to the needs of women and men for the promotion of knowledge management that addresses their needs and interests equally to ensure sustainability of the best practices.

Four Guiding Principles

The Strategy will be driven by the following four underlying issues:

- Women are not a *homogenous* whole but there are differences among women (age, ethnicity, location of activity, socio-economic category),
- Implementation of a combination of strategically *women-focused activities* (where gender gap is so large that women have no access to available opportunities) & *gender mainstreaming programmes*
- Application of *continuous learning and analysis* based on field experiences for evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue.

Theory of Change

The theory of change of the Strategy is based on an *outcome-based approach*: it addresses the present context of women's limited access to productive resources and economic opportunities by developing appropriate interventions to face the *challenges* ranging from gender-biased social norms to low levels of education and skills to reach the goal of gender inclusive agricultural development. The changes introduced in the Strategy focus at *three levels* of delivery: *institutional, programme and impact* to transform the situation for women to have easy access to a wide range of agricultural inputs for increased productivity and income.

The selected inputs and sequence of events will lead to a qualitative change in engendering the agricultural sector to achieve the desired outcome²⁹. However, the changes introduced by

²⁹Rick Davies, (April): Blog post on the criteria for assessing the evaluability of a theory of change <http://mandenews.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/criteria-for-assessing-evaluability-of.html>

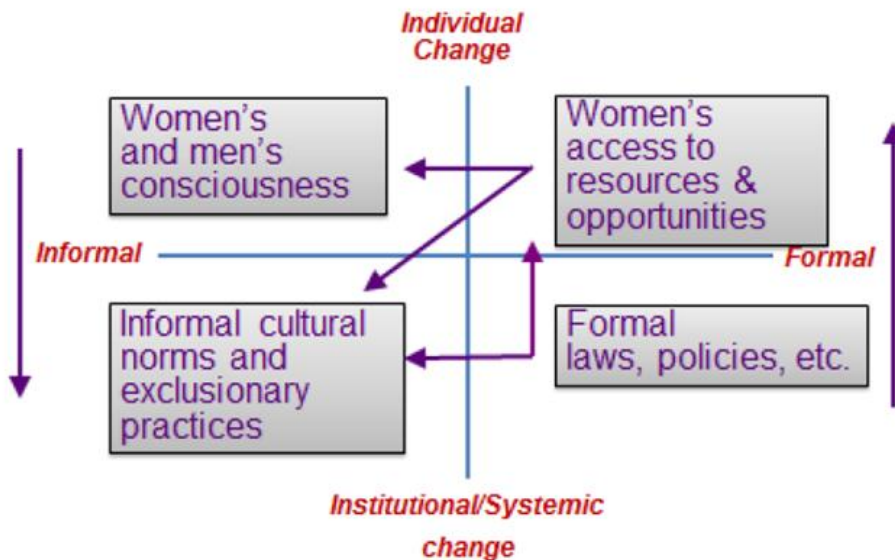
adopting the theory of change paradigm will not be a *linear* chain of progress. There are a few *issues* which need to be highlighted for an effective implementation of the relevant activities:

- It would require building *synergies* across and within sectors which is a challenge,
- There will be *spillover effects*– unintentional effects that cannot be influenced,
- There may be a possibility of a *backlash* against women which need to be carefully managed.

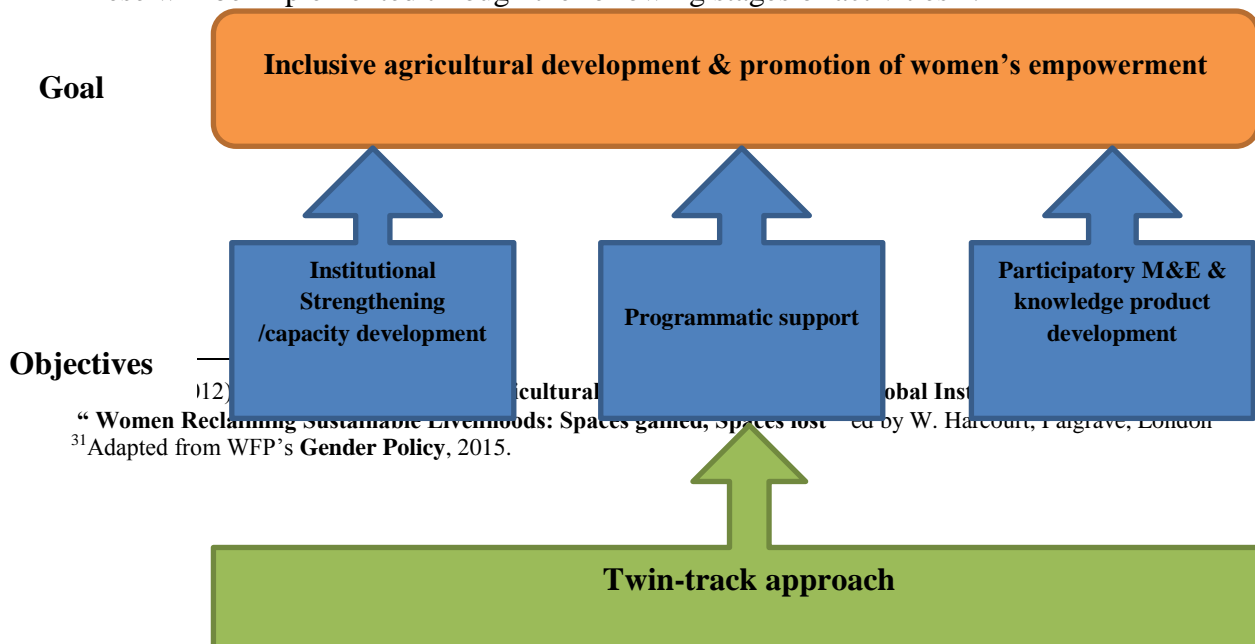
The Strategy’s theory of change involves a *fourfold strategy*:

- Institutional strengthening of MAIL and other stakeholders through policy review and reforms at the informal and formal levels,
- Addressing capacity deficit of the sector for different stakeholders,
- Improving the technical quality of service delivery,
- Institutionalizing a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The diagram given below illustrates the four key areas of change of the Strategy³⁰:



These will be implemented through the following stages of activities³¹:



³¹Adapted from WFP’s Gender Policy, 2015.

BOX 1: Myths about women's engagement in agricultural sector

Myth: Women's roles and responsibilities are rooted exclusively in household work.

Fact: Women contribute substantially to agricultural production and related household income.

Myth: Women, like children, are especially vulnerable in poorer households.

Fact: Women exercise substantial agency as farm producers and contributors to farm production and to household and personal income.

Myth: Women farmers who head households are the only ones who need development support.

Fact: The majority of women who farm live in male-headed households and they need development support too.

Source: Adapted from Doss, C., (2001), "Designing Agricultural Technology for African Women Farmers: Lessons from 25 Years of Experience," World Development, 29 (12)

2. Gender Analysis of the agricultural sector

SWOT Analysis from the perspective of women's needs and interests: Agricultural development, food security and poverty reduction are inextricably *inter-related* and women have a central role in this linkage. They play a critical role in boosting agricultural productivity and economic development in rural communities to address food insecurity and pervasive rural poverty. Some of the major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) facing women engaged in agricultural activities are as follows:

Strengths: women farmers have a sound base of *indigenous agricultural knowledge* which enables them to continue production despite external shocks (natural disaster, etc.). They have established their own informal self-help groups and cooperatives and manage them through an informal but effective system that provides the members with a sense of solidarity and a basic *social protection* in times of need. They are always eager to learn *new techniques* to improve their productivity and make substantial contributions to the lower-end of *value chains* which makes them aware of and familiar with the knowledge of different aspects of market access. These qualities of women farmers provide them with the necessary skills that enable them to progress and increase their productivity and income. The emergence of urban and peri-urban agricultural production through the cultivation of kitchen and school gardens has been an achievement of women living in these areas who with scarce resources including land have been able to have good yields to sustain their households and in some cases sold the surplus production to increase their incomes.

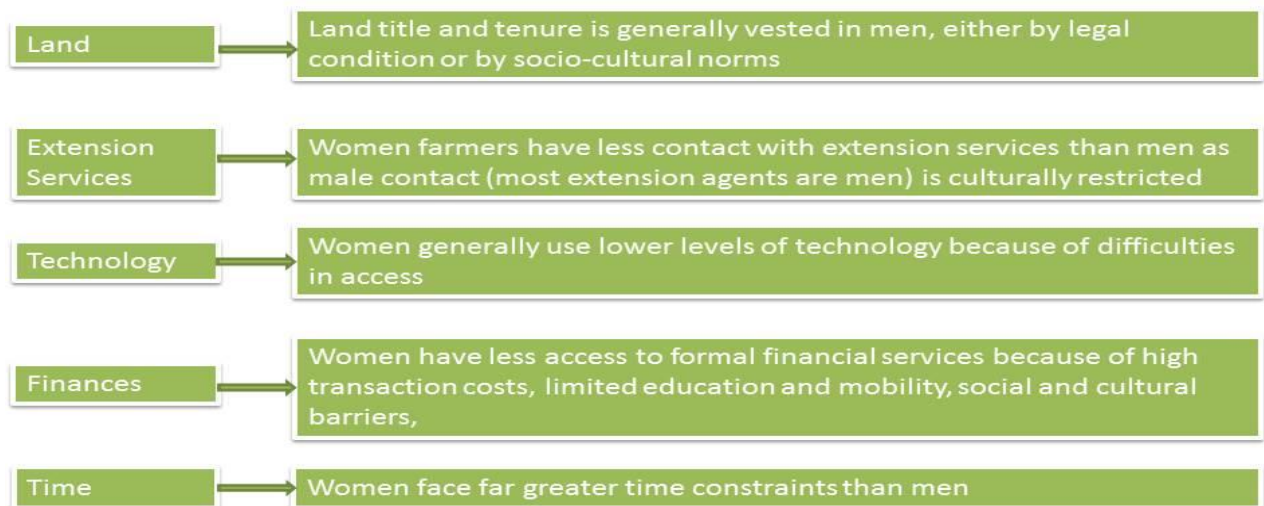
Weaknesses: However, *unequal rights and obligations* within households and societies impose restrictions on women's time use and availability, which undermine their *efficiency and productivity*. Women in smallholder family farms have greater overall workloads than men, combining household responsibilities (cooking, cleaning, collecting fuelwood and water), care of children and the elderly, farming activities, and often non-farm activities such as market trading, value addition or labouring. This situation leads to *time poverty and lost opportunities* for women to attend training, invest in other income-generating activities or participate in community-based organizations. The constraints that are common to all family farmers are often exacerbated for rural women because *restrictive customary norms* on women's role in households and public life limit their ability to make decisions and seize opportunities.

Women have *lower levels of education*, a factor that determines their adoption of new technology and assuming risk. Gender roles also mean that many women have *less influence* in household decision-making. These barriers account for food shortages, forego economic growth through lower crop yields, delayed adoption of new technology and plant varieties, and environmental degradation. Despite such constraints, substantial and growing evidence demonstrate that women farmers can produce on par with or better than men. With similar access to resources and inputs as men, women stand to achieve even higher results.

Women own *little agricultural land* in Afghanistan and most agricultural land are under customary authority which grants access rights to men. As well as being excluded from land rights, women also lack *access to other inputs* and services (quality seeds, technology, financial and extension services, etc.) that are crucial to increasing agricultural productivity.

Violence against women has a high incidence, restricting women's freedom to move and exploit new opportunities, as well as reducing their overall well-being. Women's participation in decision-making on land use and income expenditure depends on intra-household dynamics. Women are often excluded from decision-making processes related to natural resource management, especially in the forestry sector. Inexistent or poor sanitary conditions in public places such as markets – including lack of toilets for women – and lack of childcare services are additional barriers to women's engagement in agricultural training and commercial activities.

Constraints facing women in the agricultural sector³²:



Opportunities: rural women engage in farm and off-farm economic activities to ensure their families' food security and diversify income sources. They contribute to agricultural and rural economies with their *labour and valuable knowledge* of crop varieties, biodiversity and agricultural practices. Their off-farm work is often low-skilled and low-paid, but is particularly important in facing the adverse shocks that affect agriculture, such as droughts or floods. Women's share in the agricultural labour force ranges from about 35% to 50% in sub- regions of Asia and the Pacific.

Women's increasing role in family farming could be an opportunity for enhancing their economic and social empowerment as producers, traders, workers and entrepreneurs. If women have the *same access* as men to extension services, technologies and loans, they can contribute to improving the agricultural productivity of family farms, engage in processing and marketing activities, and increase their voice in household decisions. *Self-help groups* and other organizations have a major role in building women's *self-confidence*, providing access to financial opportunities and training, and engaging in collective processing and marketing of agricultural and other value-added products. Agribusiness women entrepreneurs can also benefit from well-organized family farming groups or cooperatives. When women control the additional income from their multiple activities, they usually spend it on their children (education, health, and clothing) and improved nutrition and well-being for their families.

³²Adapted from The World Bank, (2008), "Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook," Agriculture and Rural Development. Conference Edition, World Bank, Washington, DC, U.S.A

Supporting women farmers and producers' groups with *training and coaching* on building their self-confidence can have a positive impact in building their self-esteem which complemented by the provision of safe spaces to discuss their problems and success stories empower them further. Programmes for the *sensitization of men*, especially community elders and religious leaders can yield rich dividends in enabling women to have easy access to agricultural inputs. There is also considerable potential in reducing women's time constraints and drudgery: enabling women to expand their choices in family farming requires easing their workloads and reducing their time poverty. This can be achieved by *redistributing domestic chores* and promoting *labour- and time-saving* technologies. It is essential to keep in mind that the farm household model is not unitary and its different elements need to be examined to identify and exploit opportunities. Households do not act as a single unit when making decisions. It is important to understand the different roles and responsibilities of all family members (women/men, girls/boys) in the production and marketing process. The social and cultural contexts that affect *differential rights and access to and control over productive resources* require particular attention.

An emerging channel for developing the potential of women as farmers and contributors to food security is the *kitchen/school gardens* which if supported in a planned way can have good quality production of vegetables and other produce that would diversify the dietary intake of households and serve as a protection against food insecurity and low level of nutrition. A number of MAIL projects are engaged in the promotion of kitchen/school gardens with some very impressive results – not only on the food security and nutritional fronts but in equipping women with self-confidence and bargaining skills to sell their produce at the right market price.

Threats: There prevalence of *entrenched views* of women's labour in the agricultural sector as an extension of household work means most of the technical assistance to improved agricultural productivity is geared towards male farmers. This attitude will *deny* women farmers access to valuable knowledge and information that can increase their productivity and income and prevent them from up-scaling their economic activities. This will ultimately adversely affect the level of *food security* and *nutrition* of households with serious consequences for the children. Combined with this issue is the *absence of female extension agents* to interact with female farmers which also deprive them from accessing new and innovative techniques for improving their production. The requirement for *capital investment* to venture into high value crop production which has high returns is a barrier for women farmers in view of their *lack of access to credit and other resources*. The assumption that women farmers cannot cope with the demands of an *emerging domestic market* will always be a threat to their development despite their diligence, intelligence and practical knowledge of coping with shocks. These *embedded perceptions and social norms* restricting women in the agricultural sector from enhancing their production will remain formidable barriers.

Mapping of MAIL's major programmes / projects and key findings:

A total of 12 major programmes/projects of MAIL, supported by different donors: USAID, IFAD, World Bank, FAO and the Dutch and British Governments have been reviewed to assess the extent to which women's empowerment has been integrated into the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of their activities and identify the entry points for strengthening

them for future implementation. The mapping chart in details is provided in Annexure 7. A brief synthesis of the information obtained from the mapping exercise is summarized below:

Sl. No.	Challenges	Opportunities
1.	Women's empowerment is not integrated from the <i>design & planning</i> stage as a result it is not reflected during implementation, monitoring or evaluation	There is potential to <i>mainstream women's empowerment</i> from the very beginning of programme/project design as majority of these are engaged in promoting rural livelihoods through different means in which women have a central role.
2.	Lack of <i>proper understanding of the key concepts</i> about women's roles contributing to women's empowerment in the agricultural sector – pervasive feeling among programme/project staff that collection of information on gender issues is an <i>additional burden</i> requiring more resources/time	The organization of <i>capacity development trainings for programme/project staff and having regular non-training events</i> (seminars, workshops, dialogues, etc.) can ensure a smooth and efficient mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of programme/project related interventions. A strategic approach towards integrating women's empowerment is a sine qua non for the success of the Strategy.
3.	There are nearly four-five projects dealing with food security and nutrition in different ways but there is little or <i>no interface</i> between them – this results in a lack of coordination and collaboration which can deepen the impact of the different activities and provide a comprehensive package of support for the beneficiaries,	A strategic approach towards a <i>collaborative effort</i> among the different programmes/projects with a clear line of reporting and sharing of information and experiences can enrich the contribution towards women's empowerment and also enhance the impact on the target groups – it is a win-win situation
4.	Capacity development seems to be highly <i>overused term</i> without addressing the real meaning of the term- it is not assessed on the basis of the number of trainings organized but the actual transfer of know-how to national counterparts to empower them to take on the responsibility of managing the activities on their own, efficiently and effectively. This element is conspicuous by its absence.	The development of a <i>Capacity Development Framework</i> supported by a Plan and Calendar with non-training inputs like mentoring, coaching, study or exchange tours/visits within Afghanistan and abroad and the development of in-built mechanisms to assess the impact at regular intervals can go a long way in this direction.
5.	<i>Monitoring & Evaluation</i> (M&E) tools are centred on <i>process</i> rather than <i>outcomes</i> ; consequently the real long-term impact is not underpinned and the programmes/projects are geared to collection of information on process related outputs which fall short of highlighting the real impact on beneficiaries.	The development of <i>gender sensitive indicators and participatory M&E techniques</i> geared towards the collection of information for presenting a holistic picture of impact on the different categories of beneficiaries can provide a powerful channel to convince donors about the efficacy of the different interventions and in all probability facilitate the mobilization of resources.
6.	The development of <i>knowledge products</i> that address the needs and interests of women and men and wider dissemination is done on an ad hoc basis as a result no institutional memory is developed for sustainability of the interventions implemented during the programmes/project cycle.	A clear plan for <i>documenting</i> success stories and lessons learned and disseminating them through appropriate channels – publications, print and electronic media and others can extend the outreach and impact of the of the activities. It can form the base of an <i>institutional memory</i> system for sustaining the interventions after the duration of programmes/projects.

3. Linkages with key national policies

The role of women in Afghan society has been *debated* since the end of the 19th century and is not a new concept that has been introduced since 2001. Afghan women have participated in different walks of life within the *parameters of social norms* over the past century. As a result, women's status in society as well as their activities in different spheres of life have remained in the public domain for quite some time. This theme was resumed once different national-building initiatives were launched, post 2001. Beginning with the *Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS)* and followed by the *National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA)*, several national policies have focused on the empowerment of women and providing them with equal access to resources and opportunities to eliminate discrimination against them. Thereafter, the different *National Priority Programmes (NPP)* developed by Clusters after the Kabul Conference (2010) and in particular the National NPP2 of the *Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD)* Cluster emphasized the need for “inclusive economic growth” and the “eradication of malnutrition, particularly among women and children.” The implementation strategy of NPP2 has potential entry points for the integration of women's empowerment components in the three major areas identified: development of institutional and organization frameworks, provision of demand-driven-services and inputs at community level and the development of the private sector.

The *Master Plan* of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) had also confirmed MAIL's commitment to mainstreaming gender in its programmes. The *National Agricultural Development Framework (NADF)* focused on four key programmes of: Natural Resource Management, Agriculture Production and Productivity, Economic Regeneration and Programme Support and Change Management - all of which were closely linked to women's contribution to the agricultural sector.

The *Directorate of Home Economics' Strategy* of MAIL focuses on a comprehensive role for women in sustaining livelihoods, preventing malnutrition among children and strengthening their role for improved food security and nutrition. The *Gender Policy of MAIL* supports women to move beyond subsistence production and into higher-value and market-oriented production.

In addition, there are *gender guidelines* which have been developed by the different programmes and projects of MAIL to support the involvement of women in their activities. The *Afghanistan Food and Security Nutrition Agenda (AFSANA)* has included women's central role for improving food security and nutrition of households as one of its strategic objectives. The *Food and Nutrition Strategy (FNS) of MAIL* (under preparation) underpins the role of women and their contribution to family welfare, food and nutrition security while at the same time highlights their “disproportionate inferior access to adequate food” that calls for immediate action.

Most of the social sector ministries such as Education, Public Health, Rural Rehabilitation, Water and Energy and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled have developed their respective gender policy documents which have strong linkages with the activities of MAIL and this needs to be strengthened during the implementation of the Strategy.

4. Framework of Gender Strategy

The Strategy is driven by *three key strategic objectives* (details in the Introduction) which are anchored in the major national policies for developing the agricultural sector to create *responsive* institutions for an *inclusive* development of the sector. In particular, the Strategy is closely aligned with AFSANA which places gender as the top priority among the cross cutting issues and recommends “*strengthening the role of women in agriculture, livestock and horticulture through specific training, extension and support schemes*”. The HED’s Strategy of MAIL is committed to support women and youth to “*strengthen and promote their contribution to agricultural and household’s economic development*” complemented by the Gender Policy of MAIL which supports the “*need to create an informed and vocal constituency in MAIL that could demand change and hold public agencies and authorities accountable for addressing the interests of women as well as men*”³³. The Strategy focuses on a *twin-track approach*: mainstreaming gender in MAIL’s major interventions as well as identifying select *targeted interventions* focusing on the specific needs of women farmers to develop their capacity.

The Strategy, therefore, focuses on strengthening the *institutional and individual capacity* of the concerned stakeholders for facilitating the dividend that would accrue to agricultural development from women’s increased participation in the sector. The details on the three strategic objectives with corresponding outcomes, outputs and activities are as follows:

Strategic Objective 1: *Institutional strengthening and individual capacity development of MAIL and concerned stakeholders.*

Outcome: *Enhanced capacity of MAIL (institutionally and at the individual level) combined with that of its partners and supported by gender sensitive policies/strategies to promote women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector.*

Current situation: There are in MAIL at present MAIL are 4 General Directorates, 13 Directorates and 34 Directorates of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) at the provincial level covering a wide range of subjects: forestry, livestock, extension services and other. Of these, only 2 have female directors Home Economics and Horticulture. There are more than 10 donor-supported programmes/projects of MAIL which are under implementation and the activities range from support in irrigation to diversification of agro-based activities, proper storage for horticultural products and others. Moreover, there is a Gender Focal Point in MAIL with the mandate to coordinate within MAIL the mainstreaming of gender issues. While there is an overarching Gender Policy of MAIL and some of the Directorates as well as programmes/projects have developed their respective gender strategies or guidelines to inform their activities, there is an *absence of coordination* among the individual initiatives of each directorate or programmes/projects. There is very little *interface* between MAIL and the other social sector ministries or strategic development partners to undertake joint initiatives of common interest. A *well-planned approach* to coordinate the integration of gender in every intervention of MAIL is conspicuous by its absence. Consequently, the issue of mainstreaming gender equality and promoting women’s empowerment have been *not been clearly understood* in

³³MAIL, (2009), “Gender Policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock,” Kabul.

a uniform way by all concerned and secondly, the absence of coordination has prevented collaborative *efforts* from taking shape to deepen the impact on the target groups.

On the technical front, some of the areas which call for further strengthening are: the collection of *gender-disaggregated data* to compile the impact of interventions according to the different needs of women and men, development of *disaster management techniques* that address women's specific needs and also enhance their *resilience* through appropriate coping strategies, among others. During the round table discussions organized to brainstorm on the main issues for inclusion in the Strategy, the major issue highlighted was to bridge the *existing gender gaps* in addressing the needs of women engaged in the agricultural sector, centred around: providing *technical support* to meet women's needs in launching small-scale *agro-based enterprises*: bee-keeping, poultry, livestock, etc., enhancing women's skills development *training programmes* (of different durations) at the community level in view of women's restricted mobility, many suggestions focused on the *increased presence of HED* at the *provincial and district levels*, promoting *awareness about women's work* in the sector, arranging for *mentoring* of young women by successful women farmers as well as arranging for role models to build the *capacity* of young women farmers. Other suggestions included: improved coordination and communication among women to network among themselves for sharing information, establishment of call-centres to provide support to women, assistance to women in times of disaster and ensuring an effective implementation of the Strategy in the context of MAIL's Gender Policy and other policy documents.

There is also an emerging need to strengthen the *institutional capacity* of MAIL and consolidate its strategic alliances with other development partners at inter and intra levels. Simultaneously, there is a need to design, develop and undertake actual individual *capacity development programmes* for an efficient implementation of sector-specific activities. The rationale behind this suggestion is that enhanced capacity would facilitate *joint activities* between directorates and programmes/projects for an effective translation of policies/strategies into practical action that would ensure women's easy and equitable access to need-based agricultural services.

Outputs:

Output 1.1: *Strengthened institutional capacity of MAIL and partners to implement coordinated efforts for the integration of women's empowerment in agricultural development.*

In alignment with the National Priority Programme 2 (Food For Life) of the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Cluster which highlights the need for creating an 'enabling environment, policy frameworks and strategies (including advocacy and coordination)', the focus of the Strategy on Women in Agriculture will ensure MAIL as the *focal point* which is institutionally capable of undertaking this role combined with the support of capable officials. Moreover, since the mainstreaming of interventions to develop the potential of women engaged in agricultural activities rests on the twin pillars of *engendering national policies* and the *institutional strengthening* of MAIL, the Strategy proposes two key activities: a) review of existing policies, guidelines and strategies on mainstreaming gender in the agricultural sector within MAIL and among its partners to identify *gaps between the needs and interests of women and men* and prepare information briefs on the priority issues that need to be strengthened and b) institute a *coordination mechanism* within MAIL to streamline the implementation of key

gender-sensitive activities towards women and men at inter- and intra-levels and operationalize a mechanism to bridge the gap between its design and translation into practice.

This will entail a *review* of existing policies and strategies of MAIL and its partners especially the key social sector ministries: Women's Affairs, Education (including Higher Education), Public Health, Rural Reconstruction and Development, Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Commerce, Trade and Industries and Energy and Water. The underlying objective is to assess the *existing capacity* for mainstreaming the needs and interests of women in the concerned ministries and identify *commonalities* to develop *unified approach* for implementing a comprehensive inclusive gender mainstreaming strategy in the agricultural sector with inputs from partner ministries at the national level as well as at the provincial level. Once the blue print has been prepared for the implementation of a joint approach at the national level, the same can be replicated at the provincial level for a synchronised approach towards engendering agricultural service delivery.

The Strategy will, therefore, focus on *strengthening* the institutional capacity of MAIL (Directorates and programmes/projects) at the national and provincial levels for mainstreaming women's empowerment in thesectoral activities especially for those initiatives which are in the frontline of providing technical support to the communities, particularly women farmers. The Strategy, in particular, will *institutionalize women's empowerment components* in its key activities through an effective *interface* between the different institutions and location-specific measures for a long-term impact.

Activities:

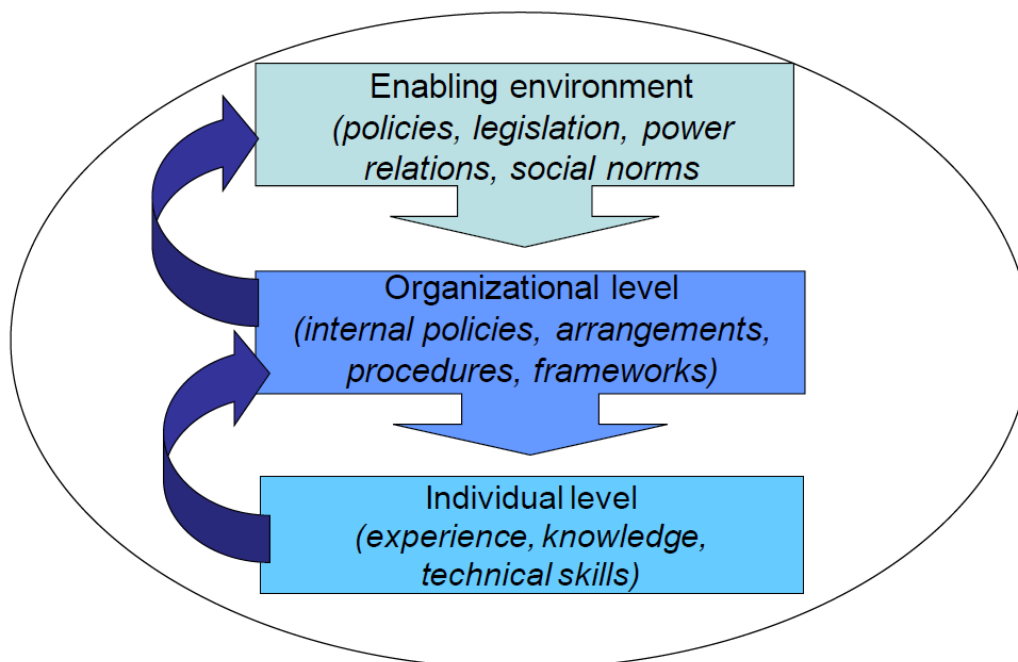
- *Review* present policies and strategies of MAIL and its partners including social sector ministries for identifying *gaps between the needs and interests of women and men*,
- *Establish working groups* to meet regularly to monitor the progress of women's role in agricultural development and food security,
- Assess the relevance of the *observations* documented in the two preparatory workshops to develop the Strategy held in 2013 and 2015 to select the key points related to institutional strengthening of MAIL – especially maintaining a balance between women and men in the staffing pattern and including women at the decision-making level (at present there are only 2 female Directors out of a total of 51),
- Focus on enhancing the *technical capacity of women* who are engaged in different agricultural activities – introduce a cadre of female agricultural agents by developing a modality that fits in with women's mobility limitations and social norms and the establishment of more technology transfer centres (As has been introduced by the FAO Project on “Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture Development for Improved Household Security and Nutrition”),
- Prepare new *policy briefs* to inform partners, ministries, directorates and programmes/projects for an unified approach to women's empowerment in agricultural development,
- Identify an *effective approach* for: i) a better coordination among the different directorates of MAIL which have a high potential to empower women engaged in agriculture at the community level ii) select an efficient way of linking the Gender Focal Point with the

other directorates to provide support on the needs and interests of women and men equally issues,

- Ensure there is *gender balance* in the personnel of MAIL, especially at the decision-making level,
- Introduce *accountability mechanisms* for mainstreaming components to the needs of women and men within MAIL to create a conducive work environment,
- Ensure that all *interviews and recruitment* panels have a balance of women and men among the members of the panel,
- Institutionalize a *coordination mechanism* within MAIL through the functioning of the Agricultural Women's Empowerment Group to ensure regular updates, meetings and information sharing,
- Strengthen the unit dealing with *disaster management* to provide women farmers and producers with the appropriate techniques and support to meet the external shocks,
- In *coordination* with the Directorates of Extension, Natural Resources and Forestry Directorates and other Directorates with strong linkages to support women in agriculture, develop targeted activities for integrating women's needs and interests in relevant activities,
- Prepare *knowledge development products* on food security, nutrition, urban and peri-urban agriculture, women's cooperatives, women's entrepreneurship development, marketing, processing, value chain, post harvest, etc. for dissemination within MAIL and among its partners.

The institutional changes expected as a result of the activities mentioned above are the first two phases of the three levels of reforms that will be targeted as the diagram given below indicates³⁴:

³⁴UNDP, (2008), "**Capacity Development: A Practical Note**," UNDP, New York, U.S.A



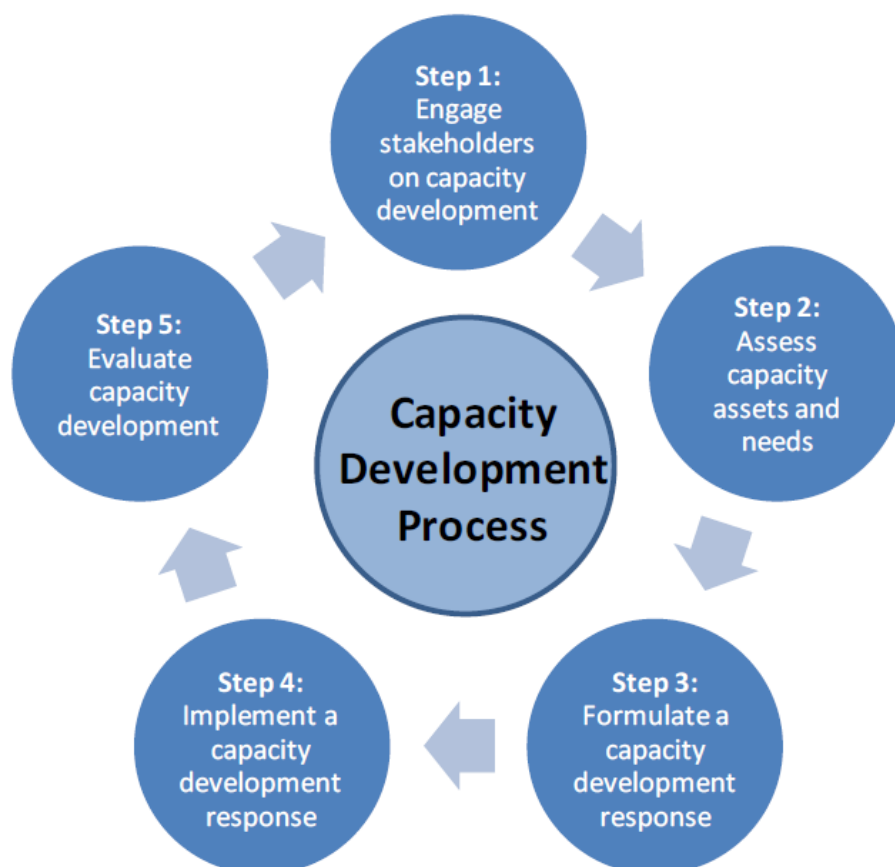
Output 1.2: *Enhanced capacity of MAIL officials with a clear understanding of women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector*

The *capacity deficit* of MAIL’s officials at different hierarchical levels on understanding the significance of integrating the needs and interests of women and men sensitive issues in the different interventions needs to be addressed through a carefully prepared *capacity development plan* (CDP). The misconception that gender refers only to the number of women being included in a particular programme or project needs to be replaced by a *sound grasp* of the issue and its relevance to strengthening rural livelihoods. The significance of mainstreaming gender and empowering women as an *investment* needs to be understood by the officials of MAIL before any significant actions can be taken. This necessitates the introduction of *capacity development measures* not only limited to training programmes but including proper mentoring/coaching of the officials at different levels for the formation of a *common understanding* of mainstreaming the needs and interests of women and men and promotion of *willingness* to take on the responsibility to implement equitable initiatives for sustainable growth. It would also require a *paradigm shift* in the mind-set of the officials to become aware of the essential nature of women’s contribution to the agricultural sector.

In keeping with UNDP’s standard description of capacity development as “the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time”³⁵, the Strategy has identified three levels for designing and implementing activities: enabling environment, organizational and individual. The key principle behind these interventions is: there are no *blue prints* for capacity

³⁵UNDP, (2008), “**Capacity Development: Practical Note**”, UNDP, New York, U.S.A.

development which is a *long term process* and must be *linked to the local conditions*. Based on this the stages of capacity development will follow the following process³⁶:



Activities:

- Undertake *rapid needs assessment/stock-taking* of MAIL’s officials on their understanding of women’s empowerment and gender equality to serve as a benchmark for later assessments,
- Develop a *capacity development plan* based on this assessment and prepare a calendar of annual activities (to be rolled over from year to year) and include training and non-training related programmes such as internship/on-the job learning, mentoring, coaching, introduction of refresher course, etc.,
- The Human Resources Directorate to be tasked with the *responsibility* of implementing the capacity development activities,

³⁶Op.cit.

- Take appropriate steps to identify the *priority actions* for the implementation of the CDP and provide oversight on the capacity development activities,
- Prepare *checklists, tools* and other methodologies to enhance the capacity of the different offices of MAIL in mainstreaming the needs and interests of women and men in their different activities and programmes/project that would also assist in evaluating the quality of performance of these interventions,
- Ensure all the *major programmes* of MAIL are included in all capacity development activities, both training and non-training, to ensure an n uniform enhancement of capacity across board within MAIL.

Output 1.3 *Strategic alliances established with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds for a cutting edge in service delivery for empowering women in the agricultural sector*

The *diversity* of agricultural activities and their geographical coverage necessitates the engagement with a variety of stakeholders with special expertise in different areas to address the emerging needs of the sector. MAIL's partnerships can be strengthened by adopting a *coordinated approach* with a wide range of partner organizations through the formalization of strategic alliances that would also enhance MAIL's capacity to provide an *integrated package* of support services. Some of these partnerships are in existence but the formalization of these alliances supported by a close networking mechanism for sharing information, *best practices and lessons learned* can add a different dimension and become a resource for further improving the quality of service delivery to the communities.

Activities:

- Prepare an inventory of the main *existing partners* of MAIL and categorize them as: partner ministries, NGO/CSOs, community-based organizations, donors and the private sector,
- In consultation with the partners, identify their *capacity gaps* and potential areas for collaborative to complement the strengths of each other and deepen the impact of joint initiatives,
- Prepare *training materials* and arrange for capacity development programmes and events,
- Organize *seminars, workshops, and other participatory events* to update target groups about the activities being implemented and obtain feedback for improving future service delivery,
- Develop *knowledge products* jointly to disseminate them widely,
- Arrange for successful women farmers from partner organizations to *mentor* other women within the sector and select *role models* for young women engaged in agricultural activities,
- Organize meetings at regular intervals to take stock of the progress of the alliance and make changes based on lessons learned and feedback from the communities.

Strategic Objective 2: *Programmatic support by MAIL to reduce the gap between women and men's access to productive resources with focus on women's increased resilience for improved food security and nutrition*

Outcome: *Empowered women in the agricultural sector with easy access to productive resources, increased resilience and improved food security*

Current Situation: Afghan women in the agricultural sector at present face *gender gaps* in accessing productive resources which have an impact on their *resilience* to external shocks and contribution to food security. The gender gaps are evident in women's access to land, productive resources including the income from sale of animals which they have reared^{37, 38}. The gender gaps also manifest in other ways. As gender relations are social phenomena, women's economic activities are difficult to be separated from their household ones. This results in their agricultural work being considered as *unpaid, household work* with little recognition of their economic significance. While there is *no blue print* for closing the gender gaps in the agricultural sector, the basic principle is clear: end the *discrimination against women* to access resources and promote their participation in decision-making level on issues relating to agricultural activities. The increase in opportunities for women can have a powerful impact on *productivity* and *agriculture-led growth*³⁹ which can be extended to improved food security and nutrition of households and communities. This is especially observed in the development of kitchen and schools gardens in the urban and peri-urban areas to meet the challenges of food insecurity and undernutrition which has become a success story for women farmers and producers to improve the quality of food intake of their households and also use the surplus produce for generating income.

The *three key issues* which influence women's participation in the agricultural sector are as follows:

- Afghan women's involvement in agricultural activities is governed by *cultural and social norms* that determine their mobility and is *class driven* (poorer women are concentrated in labour intensive agricultural activities and also work as wage labourers); there are also regional variations,
- Mostly women's labour is *non-monetized* although they make large labour contributions to a range of marketed products,
- *A gradual change* is taking place in the perception about women as a *productive agent* contributing both to the welfare of the household and the growth of the economy.

There are a total of *14* activities related to livestock production. Of these, *8* activities are carried out within the premises of the household and *women are heavily involved*: putting up the animal shelter, preparing feed, tethering, feeding, watering, cleaning the shelter and animal and waste disposal, while six activities—grazing/herding, gathering forage, buying animals and feeds, taking the animal to market and selling products such as eggs and meat -can be carried out only outside the house and performed by men⁴⁰.

³⁷FAO, SOFA, 2011.

³⁸*Op cit.*

³⁹www.USAID.gov or www.FeedtheFuture.gov

⁴⁰Tavva.S. et al. (2013), "Gender Roles in Agriculture: The Case of Afghanistan," Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 20(1) 111–134. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Of the 17 activities related to producing crops, five are off-farm activities (buying seeds, fertilizers and chemicals, marketing, selling products and other post-harvest activities) and 12 are on-farm activities (land and seed preparation, pulling, transplanting, broadcasting, weeding, fertilization, spraying, harvesting, threshing, hauling and cleaning) in which *women are engaged*.

Despite the essential contribution of women in agricultural activities, this does not automatically grant them control over resources or access to property rights. The aim of Strategic Objective 2 is, therefore, twofold:

1. Ensure *recognition* of the vital agricultural work that women actually do in a way that is acceptable to communities,
2. Raise the *production* and *productivity* of women for high returns for increasing their visibility and active participation in the sector. .

Output 2.1 Agricultural and livestock production (including group mobilization and support to cooperatives, extension services and improved access to value chain and market)

Agriculture and livestock related activities are the *major channels* of Afghan women's participation in the economy⁴¹. While their productive activities are dominated mainly by subsistence-oriented family holdings, with a gender-defined division of labour, the defining role of Afghan women in agricultural and livestock production is determined by the *life cycle* of the household, the location of household fields and other reproductive and productive tasks that women undertake during the agricultural year. There is also an *inverse relationship* between wealth and work, i.e. the frequency of work increases as wealth decreases. These factors are important to inform MAIL's design, planning and implementation of interventions for empowering women engaged in farm and off-farm activities.

However, women's *poor access* to markets, services, technologies, information and credit decreases their ability to improve productivity and benefit from an expanding agricultural sector. Women have a major responsibility for livestock management and the pastoral economy is a significant contributor to national growth. Women are also engaged in the early stages of *horticultural production* but as the products move down the value chain and closer to the market, women's involvement tends to diminish. Group production or self-help groups led by women are present but they need to be strengthened and linked to microfinance institutions to enhance their voice and decision making opportunities. The inadequate access of women to extension services also make them miss out on opportunities to increase their productivity and raise the awareness of men about their role in agriculture.

This Output focuses on *increasing the agricultural and livestock productivity* of women farmers by improving their access to resources and opportunities such as: formation of women's producers' groups/associations, building up a skills base for women to equip them with self-confidence to access market and negotiate as well as participation in group savings scheme to facilitate access to credit. These inputs will also remove the discrimination present in women's access to rural financial services and economically empower them that can spur wider social and

⁴¹World Bank, (2005), "Afghanistan National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction – The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future" World Bank, Washington D.C., U.S.A

economic changes.⁴² The positive effects of women’s confidence and skills—as well as increased access to knowledge, support networks, and markets can enhance the status of all women within a community.

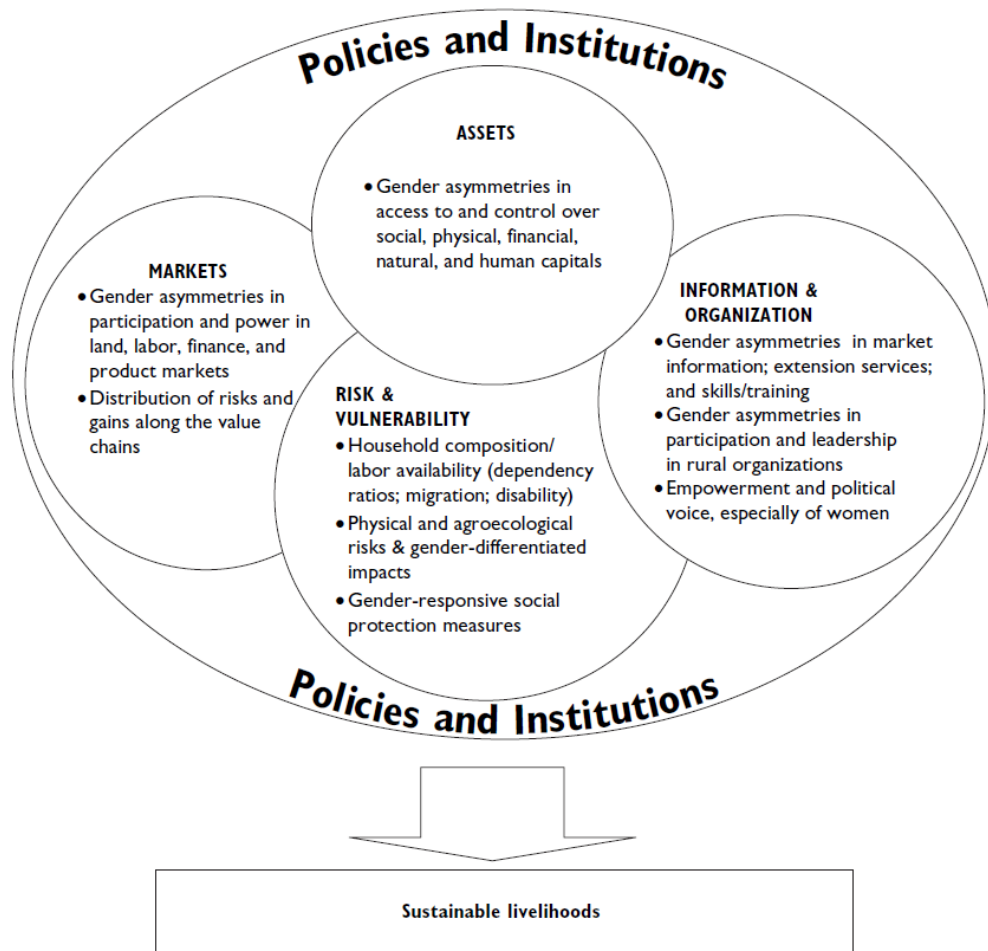
This Objective will use the *value chain concept* to strengthen business linkages between producer groups, service providers, and other actors and reduce the exclusion of women farmers by identifying niche areas which are women’s strength and in potential areas of high value products. The challenge is to ensure that women retain control over their production, processing, and marketing activities.

On the issue of agricultural value chain development, the interests of *women wage workers* (landless or land-poor women) who have limited access to other income-earning opportunities needs to be addressed. Much of the work of women employees is in high-value agriculture which is low-skilled and non-permanent with low and insecure wages and no benefits (social security, etc.) While working in the supply chains for export-oriented crops and agro-processing have created better-paying employment opportunities for Afghan women, their concentration in the lower levels of activities with poor wages and occupational hazards needs to be monitored to ensure their employment is a source of income to add to their household livelihoods and not become another problem.

The diagram below illustrates the integrated approach of strategic Objective 2.1 for strengthening women farmers’ sectoral contribution⁴³:

⁴²Relevant sections from FAO’s (2001), “**Socio-economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA), Field Level Handbook**” can be adapted as training materials.

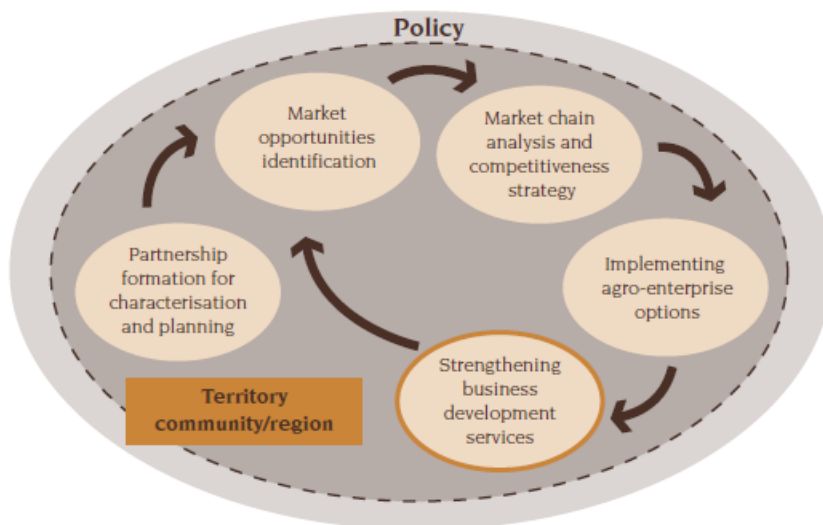
⁴³World Bank, FAO, IFAD, 2009.



Activities

- Promote women's empowerment *focused policies* and *applied research* in MAIL that target women as producers of agricultural and livestock products,
- Strengthen *women's involvement* in agricultural and livestock production in the form of access to and control of resources, extension and training and expanding marketing opportunities through targeted activities in *collaboration* with Directorates engaged in extending technical support to women farmers for increasing their productivity,
- Improve women's role as the *custodian of local knowledge* on agricultural production and management of animal husbandry,
- Familiarize women with effective *prevention and control of major animal diseases* (easily transmitted diseases) including to safeguard animal and public health.
- Form *producers' groups/associations* among women farmers and producers to improve their bargaining skills and market access (linkages with other on-going projects of MAIL,
- Integrate *skills enhancement training and vocational training* with provision of micro-credit, supported by market surveys and training in account keeping,
- Develop special targeted interventions for *female-headed households* to access resources for improved income,
- Identify a practical method for appointing *female agricultural agents*,

- Use culturally appropriate ways to increase female participation in *marketing and other latter stages of value chains*(use the resource and skills based developed by the Women’s Technology Training Transfer Centers (WTTTC) of the FAO Project on Strengthening the Role of Women in Agriculture Development in 3 provinces and replicate this in the other provinces),
- Expand the outreach of *kitchen and school gardens* to women in urban and peri-urban as well as rural areas to reduce food insecurity and low nutritional level in households,
- Collect *sex-disaggregated data* to reflect women’s contribution in agriculture and livestock production,
- Strengthen *female community-based organizations* to help women articulate their needs and identify solutions through linkages with women-owned cooperatives (MAIL) as well as with women’s sections of Community Development Councils (MRRD) and women’s *shuras*(MOWA),
- Increase the number of *female staff* of Implementation Partners especially in MAIL’s large-scale programmes/ projects,
- Inform women farmers and producers about updated *market information and knowledge*, Increase the *diversification* of products manufactured and increase *competitiveness* through entrepreneurship development skills (focusing on business plans, etc.) for improved quality and increased income,
- The different stages of value chain analysis for improved access to markets are illustrated in the diagram below which can be adapted for practical application⁴⁴:

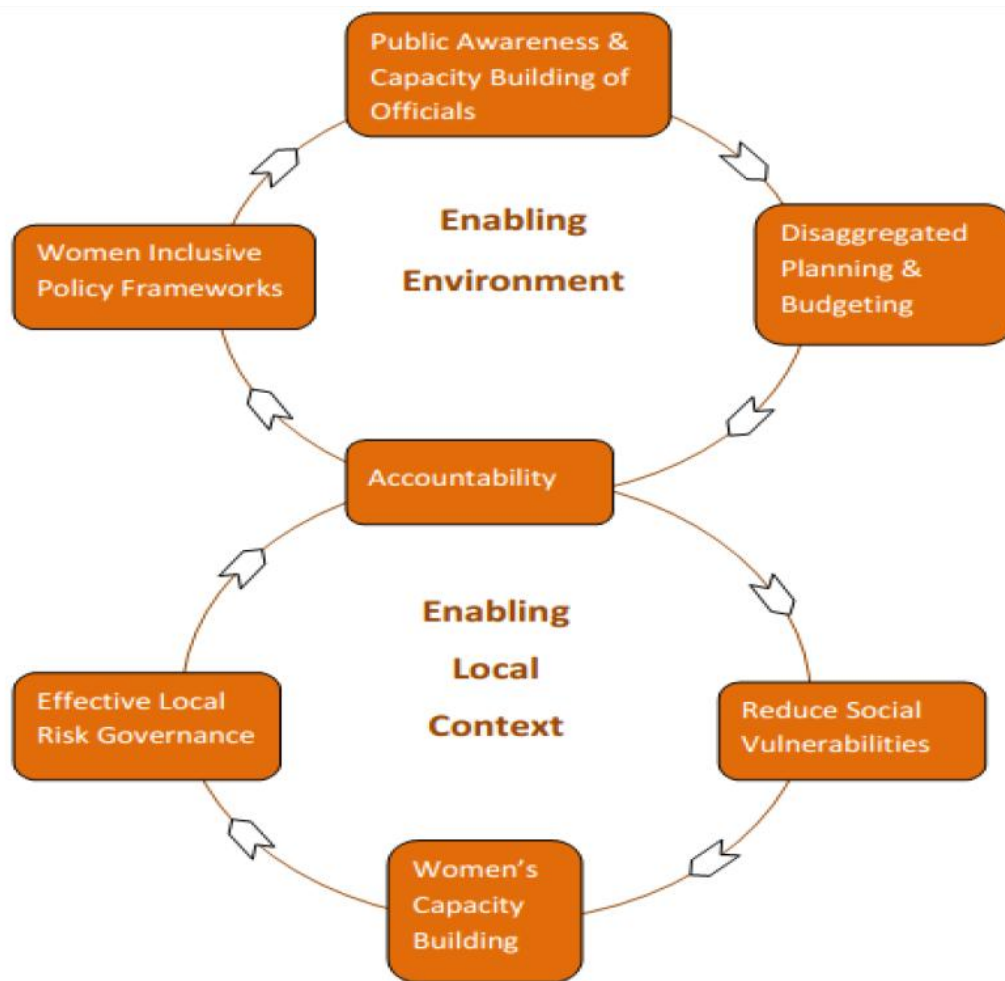


Output 2.2 Women’s empowerment to develop risk reduction techniques to counter environmental degradation and maintain natural resource balance

Afghanistan is exposed to multiple, predictable and recurrent *natural hazards* which are exacerbated by on-going *environmental degradation and climate change*. Afghan women are

especially vulnerable to fluctuations in livelihoods⁴⁵ due to the unequal power relations between women and men that make women more women more vulnerable to external shocks and the absence of women-aware and inclusive accountability mechanisms. Although women play an active role in managing disasters and resilience building, these roles are *mostly invisible*, rarely acknowledged and not included into formal systems. As a result, women’s vulnerability increases in the face of emergencies, such a sudden shortages in food supplies, loss of income, crop failures, natural disasters, etc. Moreover, the impact of over using of common natural property resources, threatens household food security and livelihoods which are vital for women.

The need for harnessing women’s energy and skills as protectors of natural resources and biodiversity to withstand environmental degradation is gradually being recognized.⁴⁶ The diagram below demonstrates the factors contributing towards women’s resilience and creating an enabling environment in the event of disasters:



⁴⁵Gilmore, E.S. (2007), “A Woman’s Work: Exploring Gender Roles and Agriculture in Charikar, Afghanistan,” Department of Geography and Environment Studies, Carleton University, U.S.A.

⁴⁶UNEP, (2009), “Women and Natural Resources in Afghanistan,” UNEP, Kabul, Afghanistan.

Source: DuryogNibarān, (2009), “**Women as a force in resilience building, gender equality**” in DRR Report of the consultations in Asia Pacific, <http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/HFA2%20Key%20Area%204%20paper-%20Women%20and%20Gender%20equality%20in%20DRR.pdf>

The activities of this Output identify ways to include women’s concerns in local decision-making and policy processes on disaster risk mitigation and other environmental hazards by mainstreaming them in relevant policies and plans and budgetary frameworks of key sectors – water, energy, agriculture, health and education and ensuring that they support women’s resilience to alternative livelihoods. Women-aware approaches to disaster reduction and increasing women’s resilience are happening at the local level that need to be strengthened to transform gender and social inequalities in these situations⁴⁷.

Two key issues that the Strategy targets are:

- As development actors, women as well as men are constrained in different and unequal ways, and that they may consequently have *differing and sometimes conflicting needs and priorities*.
- Women have *the right to* be included in decision-making level on the disaster, environment and climate change management committees.

A good understanding of these issues can assist women to play a *transformative* role by addressing the major challenges of biodiversity conservation, adaptation to climate change, natural disasters and land and water degradation.

Activities

Biodiversity:

- Organize *training programmes* for understanding rural women’s roles and their traditional knowledge of local biodiversity management in the development of innovative techniques to maintain the ecological balance for food security and sustainable development,
- Arrange for programmes to train women on sustainable ways of *harvesting forest produce* – Shirin Buyea, and others with medicinal qualities and inform them about their market value to receive fair price,
- Identify need-based efficient, cost-effective and relevant *natural resource management techniques* for women and prepare simple information briefs for a wider dissemination,
- Clarify the specific and different needs, vulnerabilities, and coping strategies of women and men to address them adequately in response to the impacts of disasters and environmental degradation and climate change,

Bioenergy:

⁴⁷Skinner.E., (2011), “**Gender and Climate Change, Overview Report,**” BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, U.K.

- Provide women with more *efficient technologies and modern energy sources* to reduce time burden of walking long distances, carrying heavy loads, and collecting fuel in dangerous areas and they have time for educational, social and economic opportunities,
- Involve women smallholder farmers in *bioenergy production* for improved incomes and livelihoods.

Natural disasters:

- Undertake gender analysis to clarify the *specific and different needs, vulnerabilities, and coping strategies (safety nets) of women and men* to better respond to the impacts of disasters.
- Promote disaster-specific *agricultural technologies* and ensure women understand and apply them when threatened with food insecurity,
- Recognize the *expertise and local knowledge* of women disaster survivors and empower them in the management of social and environmental hazards and prevention of disasters.
- Increase women's access to *risk management information* through women-sensitive early warning systems and target specific social groups for warning information to address their needs and circumstances.
- Collaborate for the creation of *networks* that promote community access to gender-sensitive information and communication technologies that support information exchange on environmental management and disaster risk reduction.
- Ensure women household heads receive benefits during disasters⁴⁸.

Land and water degradation:

- Promote the *participation* of women in restoring ecosystem for the reestablishment of soil and land productivity more effectively,
- Strengthening the *capacity* of rural women in dry land management techniques for improved management of local natural resources and protection of the environment,
- Increase women's *access* to information and extension services to strengthen their ability to cope with dryland degradation.

Building Women's resilience

- Invest in *sustainable technologies* to foster resilience of women and ensure that allocations for research include specific aspects of resilience building among women (technologies, analytical tools, documenting existing good practice etc.),
- Develop a set of *common targets and indicators* to achieve women's empowerment and facilitate women to become a force in resilience building,
- Ensure women's *capacity building* in disaster response and disaster mitigation programme extends beyond providing care and services to include decision-making,
- Strengthen *existing mechanisms* to make women become more visible and an active force of resilience,

⁴⁸ FAO/WFP, (2005), "**People-Centred Climate Change Adaptation: Integrating Gender Issues,**" FAO/WFP, Rome, Italy.

- Build *awareness* of professionals engaged in disaster management on women inclusive approach to planning and implementation,
- Tackle *ideological, attitudinal and cultural constraints* through participatory education and awareness-raising,
- Ensure access to knowledge and delivery of information is *women friendly and context specific*,
- Improve *existing local knowledge and capacities of women* in disaster management to protect, rebuild and sustain ecosystems and food security.

Output 2.3 Empowerment of women through improved food security and nutrition

Afghanistan faces a severe problem of *poor nutrition and food insecurity*⁴⁹. More than 69% of the poor are food insecure and with Afghan women as the key providers of food security of their households⁵⁰, there is a fundamental linkage between gender and food security, poverty and food insecurity. However, food security does not depend only on adequate supply of food but also on the *availability, accessibility, and utilization* of food by all in which women have a contribution⁵¹ through their triple roles: productive, reproductive, and social. They are often the farmers who cultivate food crops and produce commercial crops alongside the men in their households as a source of income that is spent on food and children's needs to improve their *calorie and protein intakes and dietary diversity*.

Women are, therefore, crucial in the *translation of products* of a vibrant agricultural sector into food and nutritional security for their households. However, *gender-based inequalities* along the food production chain “from farm to plate” impede the attainment of this goal⁵². They constrain women's roles in food production, and thereby undermine achievement of food and nutrition security⁵³. The two major channels affecting women's contribution to food security are: *weak economic autonomy* to make substantial contribution to household food security and secondly, *discriminatory access to resources* which makes it difficult for them to fulfill their vital roles in food production, preparation, processing, distribution, and marketing activities. But while gender inequalities are a significant part of the problem, reducing those inequalities can be a critical part of the solution. Estimates indicate substantial productivity gains if the gender gaps in land security and in access to credit, inputs, technology, extension and other services are bridged⁵⁴.

⁴⁹Ministry of Economy, (2012), “ **Poverty and Food Insecurity Analysis in Afghanistan**” , Analysis based on NRVA 2007- 8 in collaboration with the World Bank, Economic Policy and Poverty Sector, South Asia Region,

⁵⁰Quisumbing A.R., et al (1995), “**Women: The Key to Food Security**”, Food Policy Statement 21. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

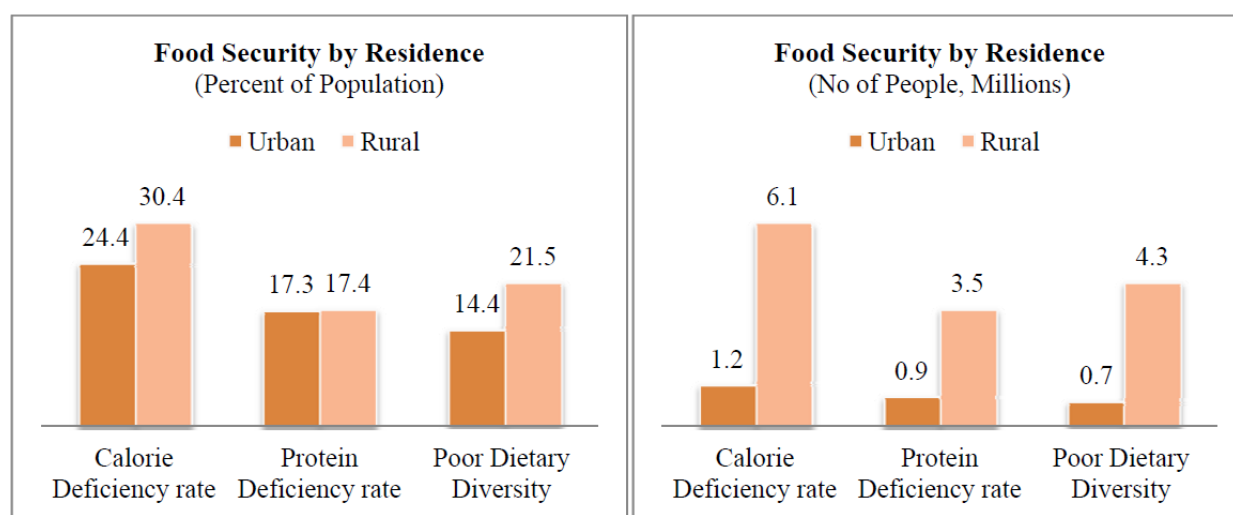
⁵¹BRIDGE, (2014), “**Gender and Food Security: Towards Gender-Just Food and Nutrition Security**,” Overview Report, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK.

⁵²World Bank, FAO & IFAD, 2009.

⁵³ADB & FAO, (2013), “**Gender Equality and Food Security Women's Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger**”, ADB, Manila, Philippines.

⁵⁴FSAC, (2013), “**Closing the gaps Gender Equality: Policies and Practices in Afghanistan With a focus on emergency cash transfer, food assistance and home gardening**”, A study conducted by the Food Security and Agriculture Cluster, Kabul, Afghanistan

According to a synthesis of the findings of food security and poverty based on the NRVA of 2007-8 by the World Bank⁵⁵ the first point that has been identified to address food insecurity to increase the *effectiveness* of food security programmes. Second, exclusive focus on changes in caloric intake could miss an important component of the big picture – it is important to consider the *dietary quality* (address micro-nutrient deficiency through fortification of staples) this can be best addressed by women. Based on the authors’ calculations of the NRVA findings of 2007-8, there is a high concentration of poor calorie and protein intakes and poor dietary diversity in the rural areas where women are concentrated as shown below:⁵⁶

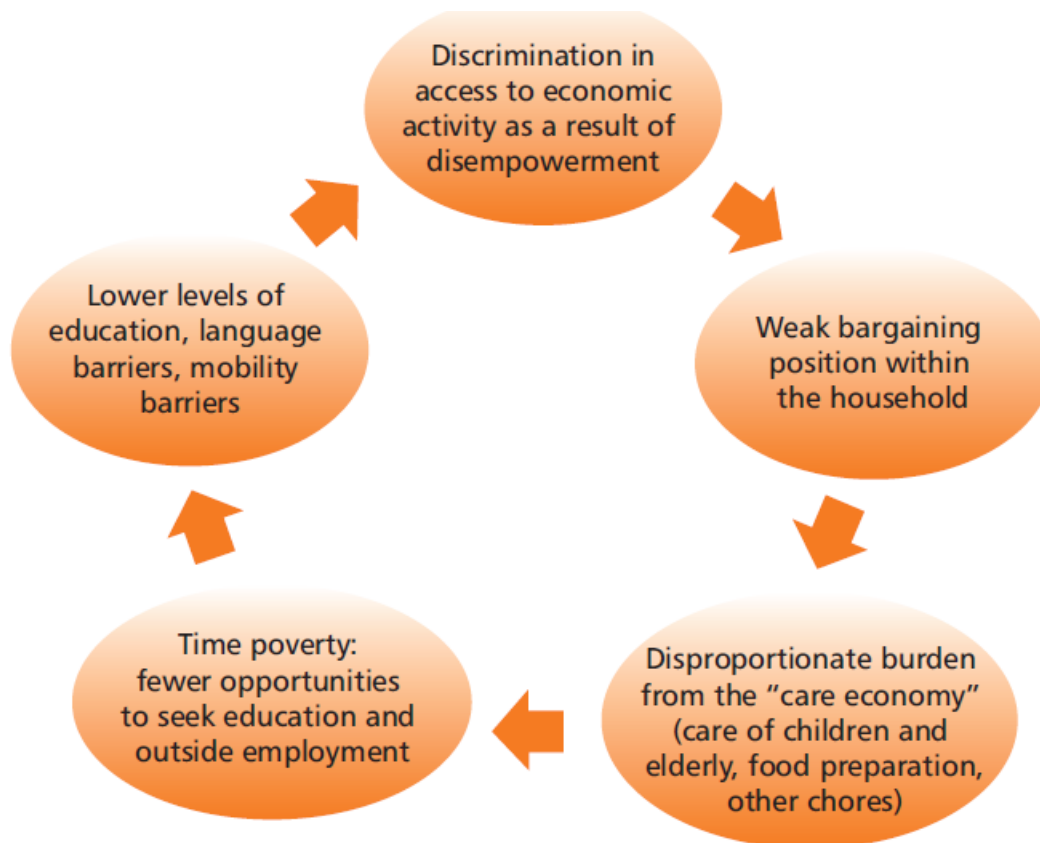


Food security is a complex issue and covers a range of gender dimensions such as: women’s increased vulnerability and exposure to risk, seasonality of food security during the ‘hungry’ seasons in spring and summer, adverse impact of climatic extremes (snow, recurrent natural disasters) and restricted access of women to knowledge on food security. Some of the factors contributing to women’s limited access to resources for increasing food security are reflected in the diagram given below⁵⁷:

⁵⁵Ministry of Economy, (2012), “ **Poverty and Food Insecurity Analysis in Afghanistan**”, Analysis based on NRVA 2007-8 in collaboration with the World Bank, Economic Policy and Poverty Sector, South Asia Region,

⁵⁶op cit.

⁵⁷ADB & FAO, (2013), “**Gender Equality and Food Security Women’s Empowerment as a Tool against Hunger**”, ADB, Manila, Philippines.



Source: Author

The aim of the strategic Objective 2 is to focus on the two main facets of empowering women in this regard:

- Increasing the *productivity* of women as farmers,
- Improving *women's access to food*.

Activities:

The recommended activities at 3 levels – production, storage and market access (including value addition) for improved food security are as follows:

Increasing productivity

- Strengthen the role of women in agriculture by recognizing women as *farmers* and not simply as farm labourers,
- *Collaborate* with the different Directorates of MAIL in mainstreaming women's empowerment in their different activities,
- Improve women's *direct access to land*, production credit, agricultural inputs, technology, technical information on new agricultural practices,

- Direct more agricultural *research and development* to crops that women cultivate and promoting a better understanding of women's farming systems through the appointment of female agricultural agents.
- Enhance women's membership in *credit and service cooperatives/women's producers groups, women's associations/ self-help groups*, where these exist, and creating all-women service cooperatives that provide inputs and help with marketing, where needed;
- Provide training directly to *women farmers* in new farm practices, rather than training their husbands on the assumption that the latter will convey the skills to their spouses,
- Include *women-specific monitoring and evaluation indicators* in food security programs.

Storage, preservation, processing (value chain) and packaging facilities:

- Select adequate *storage facilities* for women farmers' produce, using appropriate technology and mobilize women's groups to contribute towards their development with shares,
- Improve *local preservation techniques* for adding value with minimum chemical addition,
- Introduce cost effective *hygienic packaging facilities* to preserve the agricultural products,
- Establish *networks* among women farmers and producers to share information on products and costs for swift sales,
- Organize transfer of *technological innovations* from neighboring countries to improve the quality of preservation and packaging.

Market access for improved food security and nutrition:

- Provide rural women with *greater mobility and market information* by facilitating adequate transportation and access to market information,
- Achieve *greater market access and market development* for women in the agricultural sector by identifying the local bottlenecks and addressing them,
- Improve women's participation in local markets and where possible establish women's markets at different levels: district, province and national through targeted and location specific interventions.

Strategic Objective 3: *Institutionalization of monitoring system that is sensitive to the different impacts on women and men and is also participatory in MAIL (including programmes/projects) and development of knowledge-based products for wider dissemination*

Outcome: *Enhanced transparency and accountability of MAIL's delivery for women's empowerment in the agricultural sector and informed stakeholders*

Current Situation: Despite a growing recognition in MAIL about the contribution of Afghan in agricultural production, most of its interventions are not always able to capture the impact on women and men on key outputs and outcomes. Some of the frequent questions asked by the implementing officials in this regard are: *How do I know what to measure? What's a good*

*indicator to capture the different impacts on women and men ? How do I collect the data? What do I need to do at the outset of my project to make sure that I have good evidence at the end?*⁵⁸

At present there are over 10 programmes/projects in MAIL supported by the Government and other donor agencies. However, there are no *standard frameworks/templates* for monitoring the activities or evaluating them from a gender perspective. There are also obstacles arising from the absence of mainstreaming of women's empowerment in the design of specific activities such as: poorly conducted needs analyses, lack of baseline data on key gender differences relevant to the specific intervention and failure to address gender issues in the overall goal/objectives followed by gender-poor monitoring efforts⁵⁹.

Moreover, even when women's empowerment is emphasized at the programme/project design stage, it is sometimes *lost in the daily grind* of the implementation phase. The *continuous collection* of data reflecting the impact on women and men for monitoring suffers as a result of these difficulties: inadequate available time and funds ,insufficient follow-up and poor understanding by staff of the importance of monitoring with focus on women in the agricultural sector. As a result, day-to-day monitoring usually concentrates on *programme/project result areas* rather than cross-cutting-issues like gender.

One of the main reasons why the impact of interventions on women's empowerment is not considered as important in the M&E activities is because its usefulness is *not fully understood* by the implementing staff and often the collection of gender-disaggregated data is considered as an *additional burden*. In addition, the leadership of the programme/project is often *not convinced* about the significance of integrating gender for achieving the programme/project's overarching results. The general perception about M&E is that it is a *gender-neutral activity* and women's opinions are not recorded because they are often *not present* in meetings or are *not confident* to speak up. Consequently, *sex-disaggregated qualitative or quantitative data* are not easily available. Sometimes, by the time the attention is turned to mainstream gender in the M&E initiative, it is *too late* to undertake a baseline study to assess the impact on women's empowerment and this results in women-specific components from not being included during the implementation phase.

Some of the major reasons to overcome these obstacles and integrate the impact on women's empowerment in MAIL's intervention share⁶⁰:

- Economic productivity of the rural poor is largely about *enabling women* to realize their full potential and improve their own and their families' quality of life.
- Women represent the *majority of the rural poor* (up to 70%), especially where migration, marital instability, male mortality, and single parenthood have left them as heads of household.
- Although many times it goes *unrecognized*, women play a major role in the livelihood and survival strategies of poor rural households.

⁵⁸ICRW, (2013), "Capturing the Gender Effect: Guidance for Gender Measurement in Agriculture Programs" International Centre for Research on Women, Washington D.C. U.S.A

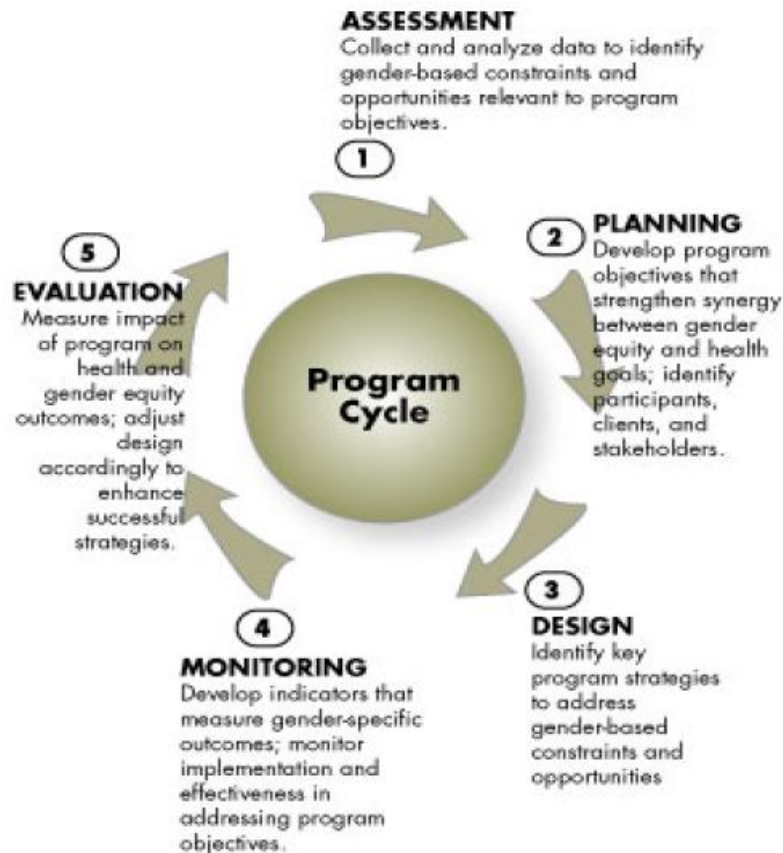
⁵⁹World Bank, FAO, IFAD, 2009.

⁶⁰World Bank, (2012), "Integrating Gender into Agricultural Development Projects" World Bank, Washington D.C. U.S.A.

The programmatic interventions of MAIL, therefore need to integrate a women’s empowerment component in its M&E exercises and reports to:

- Identify *gaps and assesses progress* in addressing them,
- Strengthen *programmatic interventions* to capture women’s empowerment inputs and contribute to the overall development goal.

These can be mainstreamed into the M&E system of each intervention through the following phases:



Source: Interagency Gender Working Group (IGWG), 2003

Output 3.1 *Strengthened gender sensitive tools and indicators to measure the impact of women’s empowerment in the agricultural sector*

It is important to assess the level of women’s empowerment as an outcome of an agricultural activity because it influences the *rural livelihoods* of women. However, in most cases the impact on women remains *invisible or marginalized*. The role of M&E is, therefore, vital in demonstrating an *inclusive impact* and highlighting the *contribution of women* in sustaining their households. Several attempts have been made to improve the availability of *gender-disaggregated data* to capture the link between women’s unequal access to resources,

agricultural development and food security. Also several *training materials*, toolkits, and guidelines have been developed for implementing gender-sensitive M&E to evaluate achievements of activities and understand the reasons for success or failure from a gender perspective. There is still a long way to go to integrate the impact on women's empowerment as an integral part of mainstream M&E.

In addition, as the focus on mainstreaming women's empowerment leads to *changes* in gender roles, adequate *awareness raising* needs to be done before the changes can take place. This will prevent a backlash against women since often men perceive women's increased empowerment as a threat to their position as men and heads of the household and community.

Another point to highlight is that gender mainstreaming aims to increase *gender equity*, not simply increasing women's involvement. Increasing women's participation in committees or in monitoring teams is not mainstreaming if women are not actively involved in improved gender outcomes and impacts. At every step, questions need to be asked as to *who will benefit* from proposed activities. If "*policy evaporation*" occurs- that is, good policy is not followed through in practice- then gender mainstreaming may not have a real impact on achieving *gender equity*.

An important ingredient of gender sensitive M&E is the application of *gender analysis* while assessing women's contribution to the agricultural sector as it helps to: (1) identify gender-based *differences* in access to resources to predict how different members of households, groups, and societies will participate in and be affected by planned development interventions;(2) permit planners to achieve the goals of *effectiveness, efficiency, equity, and empowerment* through designing policy reform and supportive program strategies; and (3)develop *training packages* to sensitize development staff on gender issues and training strategies for beneficiaries.

The *five major categories* of information required for a comprehensive gender analysis are: (1) needs assessment; (2) activity profile; (3) resources, access, and control profile; (4) benefits and incentives analysis; and(5) institutional constraints and opportunities⁶¹.

Other key components that can contribute towards a robust monitoring of women's empowerment are:

- *Improved information sharing*: most programmes/projects collect information regularly from staff and beneficiaries, but it is not always shared effectively.
- *Participatory tools and approaches*: this involves bringing the perspectives and insights of all stakeholders to identify issues, conduct research, analyze findings, make recommendations, and take responsibility for necessary action. This kind of participation is effective because stakeholders through their involvement in identifying problems and solutions, develop ownership of the activity and tend to be amenable if corrective actions are considered necessary. In other words, participation can be both a means and an end - because they live with the results of an activity, participants also have a greater incentive to make changes in the activities and base future interventions on the lessons they have learned.

⁶¹Jayanthi, G. et al, (1996), "A Handbook on Using Participatory Monitoring and Learning Tools" World Bank, Washington D.C. U.S.A

Participatory M&E can also be a useful tool to improve gender equity, if women are able to take an active role, meeting groups, and build solidarity and confidence. What may be more difficult is for communities to meet in mixed-sex groups to monitor outcomes and openly discuss how to improve activities. *Simple tools* may be used to facilitate discussion - for instance, using different-colored voting cards for men and women or for different age or ethnic groups, and then comparing different opinions on topics or holding separate meetings for different sexes, to prevent men from dominating.

Gender-sensitive M&E helps stakeholders, and beneficiaries to understand how the selected activities are really changing the lives of women and men. As a result, the M&E system enables *continuous feedback* on the status of implementation, identifying specific problems as they arise. If the full range of stakeholders has this important information, they can use it to alter the activity to ensure maximum benefits for the target groups and improve performance. The lessons learned by the end of the activity can be used to improve the design, change legislation if needed, or change local systems.

Activities:

- At the office level:
 - Ensure the perspectives of women and men are incorporated into the *Terms of Reference* for all staff, particularly M&E officers
 - Prepare *progress reports* on progress based on those of women and men for all official activities,
 - Encourage the recruitment process to have a *gender balanced staff position*, and if one group is particularly disadvantaged, consider recruiting a less-qualified person, but provide intensive training and support.
 - Create a *gender-friendly office environment* for all staff that is also safe and secure,
 - Arrange for *special arrangements* to make the female staff comfortable: separate toilets, resting places, etc.

- At the operational level:

Stage 1— Identification and preparation:⁶²

- Ensure that the *benchmark survey or baseline study* has covered the needs of women and men.
- Conduct an initial *stocktaking*: Who are the stakeholders? What are their *activities*? What is their *capacity*? What are their *roles and needs*?
- Undertake an initial *gender analysis* to identify the potential negative impacts of project intervention on women as well as men.
- Identify gender-related *goals and priorities* based on available information and consultation with stakeholders.
- Assess the *institutional capacity* for integrating women into development activities.

⁶² Adapted from World Bank, (2012).

Stage 2—Design and appraisal:

- Ensure that the different needs and interests of women and men are integrated into *goals and objectives*, and set clear targets.
- Plan for developing capacity to address women issues and to *monitor and evaluate* progress and outcomes.
- Set up an M&E system, adopt and “engender” the *results framework* as included in the project appraisal document, design gender-sensitive *indicators*, and develop or select the “best” *data collection methods*.
- Decide how to organize *reporting and feedback processes*.
- Clearly identify who will *collect and analyze information*, who will receive it, and how it will be used to guide implementation.

Stage- 3 Implementation:

- *Develop capacity to integrate, monitor, and evaluate the activities according to the different needs and interests of women and men* gender-related issues using gender-sensitive indicators.
- *Monitor progress* against outcome targets set for the period under evaluation, and feed results back into the system to allow for midterm corrections.
- Assess progress and *make corrections*, if needed, to obtain expected gender-related outcomes.

Stage 4—Completion:

- Assess the *outcomes and impact* of integrating the different needs and interests of women and men in the overall context of the project.
- Assess outcomes and impact of project interventions on *men and women*.
- Include *gender-differentiated results* in reporting lessons learned from implementation.

The following tools can assist in assessing the impact on women’s empowerment in agricultural activities:

- *Checklist highlighting the different needs and interests of women and men and also the different impact of interventions on them:* This checklist will support the planning, implementing, and M&E of projects and activities undertaken within a project or program to ensure that gender is mainstreamed and that the *outcome* benefits for women and men. Three checklists on: agricultural extension, research and education, livestock and sustainable agriculture and natural resource management are attached in Annexure II.III and IV. Annexes V and VI provide further details on M&E differences and techniques to integrate gender in M&E.
- *Indicators that will reflect the impact of activities on women:* indicators that will reflect the change in the situation of the women beneficiaries through the use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures⁶³.

⁶³OXFAM, (2014), “**OXFAM Guide to Gender-sensitive Indicators**,” OXFAM GB, Oxford, U.K.

- *Management information system (MIS)*: the MIS devised for the program or project should integrate information flows of activities and outputs. A MIS can provide gender disaggregated data on stakeholders involved in various aspects of an activity and on the indicators selected to monitor change and impact; this will mainstream women's empowerment in the major activities of MAIL,
- Promote the use **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Relevant and Time-bound) and **SPICED** (subjective, participatory, interpreted, communicable, empowering and dis-aggregated)⁶⁴,
- Prepare a *clear line of reporting* among the implementing partners with a smooth flow of information on achieving the targets of the activities and document the progress,
- Analyze the *data and information* gathered to prepare evidence-based information briefs for decision-makers to encourage women's empowerment in the agricultural sector,
- Focus on *qualitative as well as quantitative indicators* and data for analysis and emphasize on *outcome* level changes in women's empowerment.

Output 3.2 *Documentation of inclusive specific promising practices and lessons learned to develop knowledge-based products for dissemination to different stakeholders*

The Strategy places a strong focus on *the empowerment of women* in the agricultural sector which needs to be complemented by the *institutionalization of appropriate knowledge management techniques* to ensure sustainability of the initiatives undertaken. This can be best achieved in a strategic way – on the *supply side* by strengthening the capacity of the different stakeholders who are engaged in empowering women in the agricultural sector at four levels of their organizations: strategy, structure, systems and culture and on the *demand side*, by targeting interventions to meet the *practical and strategic needs* of women in the communities and establish a linkage between the two approaches.

To develop this mechanism requires continuous *knowledge management* and the development of knowledge products, research and analysis of different gender issues, organization of informal meetings and networking among different groups/associations to *share experiences and knowledge*. As a result of these initiatives the interface between the practical knowledge of women and targeted interventions of MAIL would deepen and improve the *quality and outreach* of the different activities of the Ministry.

As part of this initiative, *networking* with other centres of excellence in the region that are committed to women's empowerment in the agricultural sector can further enhance the quality of knowledge products that can be developed. The establishment of link with the Agricultural Knowledge and Information System (AKIS) of the World Bank from a gender perspective can improve information gathering related to women's empowerment and facilitate the establishment of a sound knowledge base⁶⁵. The flow of information can assist women farmers in improving their businesses and accessing markets as the diagram below indicates⁶⁶:

⁶⁴ Roche, C, (nd), " **Impact Assessment and Development Agencies: Learning How to Value Change,**" Oxfam, Oxford, U.K.

⁶⁵<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTARD/214578-1112681119394/20434014/AKISFactsheet.pdf>

⁶⁶<http://www.agriculturesnetwork.org/resources/learning/mod7>



Another resource base that can be developed under this Output is the preparation of a template and collection of information and data on *Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index* (WEAI) which is jointly developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHDI) which measures change in the following five areas⁶⁷:

- Women's role in *household decision-making* around agricultural production,
- Women's access to *productive capital*,
- Women's *income*,
- Women's *leadership roles* within the community,
- Women's *labour time* allocations,

⁶⁷USAID, (2011), "**Women and Agriculture, : Improving Global Food Security,**" USAID, Washington. D.C., U.S.A

The Index is an innovative and rigorous tool that will can be adapted to the Afghan environment and used to promote women's empowerment in the agriculture sector.

Learning from the experiences and lessons of the implementation process will also enable the major stakeholders to become more *open to change*. This will prepare them to *adapt strategies* to changing circumstances and avoid repeating past mistakes. The success of the Strategy will depend to a great extent on how well the *monitoring and evaluation systems* are put in place to measure and improve the impact of the MAIL's different initiatives and ensure their long term relevance as tools for empowering Afghan women.

Activities:

- Develop an inclusive *knowledge management strategy* to identify the key areas of focus,
- Prepare relevant activities based on the *focus areas*,
- Establish *networking* among the different stakeholders for sharing of experiences and knowledge,
- Encourage networking among *regional centres of excellence* for sharing information and experiences on women's successes and lessons learned in the agricultural sector,
- Document *promising practices and lessons learned* and publish,
- Organize *events* at regular intervals for motivating women about the significance of their role in the agricultural sector,
- Launch a *simple newsletter* in Dari for circulation among DAIL offices and onward dissemination to the communities,
- Follow-up this initiative with the organization of *village-level events* for women and men farmers to share their opportunities and challenges.

5. Implementation Strategy, Partnerships, Impact Analysis, Risks and Assumptions

MAIL will put in place the necessary *arrangements* to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of the Strategy, including the establishment of mechanisms for a five-year plan with provisions of *reporting* on an annual, biennial and quarterly basis.

These arrangements will provide for a *planned and orderly flow of information and feedback* on the implementation of the Strategy as well as allow for *corrective interventions* when and wherever necessary. The specific implementation arrangements will include the following:

- *Coordination by the Human Resources (HR) Directorate*

With the primary focus on *capacity development*, the HR Directorate will work closely with the relevant directorates for developing the *capacity development calendar* and undertake necessary training and non-training programmes at regular intervals. The Director, HR Directorate will coordinate with the Director, HED for an efficient working schedule that will take care of the capacity development and technical support initiatives of the Strategy.

- *Coordination by the HED*

To ensure an effective compliance and quality assurance of the Strategy, the HED under its recommended name: Directorate of Agricultural Women's Empowerment (AWED) will be held accountable. It will be responsibility of AWED for *coordinating the implementation of the technical support related activities* of the Strategy with the concerned directorates and partners for increasing the participation in and contribution of women in the agricultural sector under the direct supervision of the Deputy Minister (Technical) and the Minister, MAIL. Its functions shall be guided by the Director, AWED and it will function as the Secretariat of the Working Group and the Task Force and arrange for regular meetings and other coordination events.

The line of reporting, coordination and monitoring are provided in the next section on Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Strategy will be implemented by MAIL in close *coordination* with the major stakeholders and in partnership with provincial authorities to ensure for an effective translation into practice of the major recommendations. The selection of operational areas (counties, districts, towns, etc.) and other service providers (CSOs/NGOs) as well as the women and women's associations will be done in consultation with the implementing partners through a participatory approach. Also

partnership with the private sector will be established to obtain their commitment for the delivery of local services. It will be necessary to carry out a capacity assessment (comparative experience and outreach) of local service providers to prequalify them before engagement.

Other important partners will be the *private sector, research and academic institutions* at the national and provincial levels to provide support to the activities selected from the Strategy by MAIL. The implementation of the Strategy is, therefore, premised on the lead taken by MAIL and its partner ministries long with major stakeholders at the national level and at the sub-national levels. To facilitate management, monitoring and reporting of the Strategy, the implementation arrangements will consist of the following key components:

- *Task Force to be set up for overseeing implementation of Strategy*: chaired by the Deputy Minister (Technical), MAIL and will include representatives from the concerned Directorates, programmes and project of MAIL. The Task Force will provide overall direction and strategic guidance to the implementation of the Strategy by MAIL and take necessary actions to address specific risks experienced by the implementing partners. The Task Force will meet monthly and brief will forwarded to the Minister, MAIL for information.
- *Working Group to be set up*: this will comprise of the concerned Directors of those directorates that are directly involved in the implementation of the different activities highlighted in the Strategy and this Group will have a similar arrangement at the provincial level. The Working Group will meet fortnightly and review the progress of specific activities related to the empowerment of women in agriculture. The Director, AWED as the focal point of this Group will coordinate the fortnightly meetings, ensure the documentation of the progress achieved and challenges faced during the implementation process are reflected in the reports to be placed before the Task Force every month.
- *Responsibility at the operational level*: each respective heads of directorates and heads of programme/project will be responsible for the implementation of their individual interventions. They will liaise with the Directorate of Agricultural Women's Empowerment for sharing information on their activities including promising practices and lessons learned.
- *Capacity development activities*: Activities related to capacity development will be coordinated by the Director, HR and he will organize capacity development programmes in consultation with other Directors and stakeholders. The progress of activities in this field will be compiled and presented in the Core Working Group meeting.
- *Documentation Centre*: in partnership with different directorates, programmes and projects as well as the major stakeholders, the Deputy Minister (Technical) will select an appropriate platform for the functioning of this centre - the present Management Information System's Office can be charged with this responsibility and Directorate, AWED can be responsible for coordinating this initiative. The primary responsibility of the center will be to develop gender sensitive knowledge products for a wider dissemination at the national, provincial and community levels. In addition, the centre will establish networking with regional centres of excellence to enrich its knowledge base and also launch research into new techniques of empowering women in agricultural activities such as the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI).

Partnerships

The implementation of the Strategy will be based on a *close partnership* with a wide range of stakeholders from different backgrounds to draw on their rich *technical expertise and experiences*. This will enrich the delivery of a well-coordinated agricultural women's empowerment initiative.

While there are a number of on-going activities for strengthening women's contribution to the agricultural sector, for the most part these have been *individual inputs* without any strategic planning for a long-term approach. The Strategy will, therefore, focus on a structural arrangement for involving a wide range of stakeholders in decision-making for forging a strong partnership to ensure an optimum impact on the target group. This would be a change from past practices of not involving partners in formulating a cohesive and targeted approach for assisting rural women.

As such, this Strategy cannot be achieved by MAIL alone. It requires a partnership strategy to work in close alliance with different stakeholders and build on the synergies for a wider outreach and deeper impact. The Strategy will tap into the comparative advantage of each partner for an effective and efficient delivery of support services. Some of the partners who will play a key role in the implementation of the Strategy are as follows:

- **Government:** Ministries of Women's Affairs, Public Health, Education (including Higher Education), Rehabilitation and Rural Development, Energy and Water, Commerce, Trade and Industries and Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled and at the provincial level: concerned provincial government offices, Community Development Centres (CDC).
- **Donors:** French Cooperation and other concerned donors.
- **International agencies:** UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and others.
- **Bilateral partners:** USAID, DFID and others.
- **Micro credit institutions:**
- **CSOs/NGOSs/community-based organizations:** international and national NGOs, CSOs, women-led networks and women's producers and business associations.
- **Private sector:** those involved in agro-processing, packaging and marketing activities for the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Impact Analysis

The three key areas which will determine the impact of the Strategy's activities are:

- *Institutional and individual development:* The primary emphasis of the Strategy will be on *institutional strengthening* of MAIL and different partner organizations and *capacity development* of MAIL's officials and concerned stakeholders from different backgrounds at the national and sub-national levels. In view of the key goal of the Strategy to increase

women's visibility and participation in the agricultural sector, the specific areas of institutional and individual capacity strengthening would comprise of: improved understanding about women's contribution to agricultural development and the necessary tools required to translate this into practice.

- *Technical Support to women:* The delivery of cutting-edge technical support services spanning a wide range of issues: group mobilization, improved production, processing, value chain addition and market access as well as efficient natural resources management are some of the targeted inputs the Strategy has identified. The quality of performance and impact on the beneficiaries will determine its successful implementation.
- *A robust M&E system:* There is a rich existing literature of gender-sensitive M&E for ensuring an effective supervision and impact for empowering women engaged in the agricultural sector. However, these need to be adapted to the needs of Afghan women and the Strategy provides a step-by-step guide to operationalize these guidelines to sustain the empowerment of women in agriculture. This will be key focus area to determine the effective implementation of the Strategy's various activities.

Two important factors guiding the Strategy's implementation are:

- a) Afghan women have been and are *active* in the agricultural sector despite the heavy odds against them in terms of accessing opportunities and resources,
- b) There are *large economic costs* in excluding women from the agricultural sector which need to be addressed.

Risks

While the integration of women's empowerment initiatives in the agricultural sector will provide an inclusive, efficient and accountable delivery of services by MAIL, it can also encounter the possibility of resistance and dissent arising from entrenched views about gender from different quarters including the male community members. The three major risks are as follows:

- The *bias* against women rooted in the national political decision-making level that is hesitant to provide the necessary support,
- Those stemming from *bureaucratic resistance* to mainstream the needs and interests of women in the agricultural sector at the national and local levels,
- Those related to operational activities at the programme/project level which include: *lack of proper understanding of women's role* in the agricultural sector by the implementing officials, *hesitation* in integrating key gender sensitive tools for a sustained mainstreaming of women's empowerment issues and the *lack of knowledge* about the significance of a robust M&E mechanism for a long term impact and others.

Assumptions

Some of the prevalent assumptions that will influence the quality of the Strategy's activities are as follows:

- Afghanistan will remain *stable and peaceful* and continue on its present trajectory of development,
- The Government is committed to strengthening women's contribution to agricultural development and food security,
- The *capacity* of MAIL and others will be adequately developed and sustained,
- Adequate financing will be available for the implementation of the key activities of the Strategy,
- There will be a willing acceptance of the specific interventions on women's empowerment by the bureaucrats, village elders and religious leaders.

6. Monitoring of the Strategy in MAIL

In keeping with the focus of Objective on M&E, the management of MAIL will ensure there is an *aligned system* of supervision to complement it. The *support from the decision-making level* of MAIL will be reflected in the chain of supervision of the different interventions and the efficiency with which actions are taken on the feedback of evaluations. For this, a mechanism of monitoring and evaluation needs to be instituted at strategic levels of MAIL's hierarchy.

At the *operational level* all heads of directorates and programmes/projects will take responsibility for the design, planning and implementation of the specific activities promoting women's empowerment. This will lead to the next level of submitting relevant information on the progress and challenges of the implementation process to the *Working Group* which will meet every fortnight to review and take remedial actions, where necessary. The *Task Force* chaired by the Deputy Minister (Technical), MAIL will meet every month to take stock of the progress of the gender-specific activities and provide guidance for future course of action.

In addition, the Directors of Human Resources and the newly named Agricultural Women's Empowerment Directorates will coordinate and monitor the progress of the capacity development and technical support activities and provide feedback to the Core Working Group for review.

The Task Force will prepare *monthly briefs* for informing the Minister, MAIL on the latest developments of the Strategy's implementation. In this way a cycle of information and feedback will be maintained for a *free flow of information* on the progress of the Strategy's implementation. The figure below indicates the channel of command and flow of information in MAIL:

Reporting & Monitoring Chain in MAIL

