AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

UNOPS

Afghanistan Water Emergency Relief Project

(P179311)

# Preliminary Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

May 2023

# Table of Contents

## Tables

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AKDN | Aga Khan Development Network |
| AKF | Aga Khan Foundation |
| AREU | Afghanistan Renewable Energy Union |
| AUWSSC | Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewage Corporation |
| CB | Capacity Building |
| CBI | Community-Based Institutions |
| CBNRM | Community-Based Natural Resource Management |
| CBSGs | Community-based Savings Groups |
| CCVA | Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment |
| CBCM | Community-based Complains Mechanism |
| CDC | Community Development Councils |
| CIGs | Common Interest Groups |
| DACCAR | Danish Committee for Aid to Afghanistan Refugees |
| DDA | District Development Assembly |
| DRC | Danish Refugee Council |
| E&S | Environmental and Social |
| ECA | Entry Criteria for Access |
| ESCP | Environmental and Social Commitment Plan |
| ESF | Environmental and Social Framework |
| ESMF | Environmental and Social Management Framework |
| ESS | Environmental and Social Standard |
| GRM | Grievance Redressal Mechanism |
| IDP | Internally Displaced Person |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| IP | Implementing Partners |
| IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| ITA | Interim Taliban Administration |
| LMP | Labor Management Procedures |
| MAIL | Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock |
| MEW | Ministry of Energy and Water |
| MRRD | Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development |
| MSMEs | Medium Small and Micro Enterprises |
| NEPA | National Environmental Protection Agency |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PAIL | Provincial Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| HH | House Holds |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| PME | Participatory and gender-sensitive monitoring |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| PPA | Participatory Poverty Assessment |
| PPI | Poverty Probability Index |
| PRA | Participatory Rural Appraisal |
| PSCE | Private Sector Company |
| PWD | Person with Disability |

| | |
|---|---|
| PWR | Participatory Wealth Ranking |
| SCA | Swedish Committee for Afghanistan |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SHG | Self-Help Groups |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SEP | Stakeholder Engagement Plan |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| UNCT | United Nations Country Team |
| UNOPS | United Nations Office for Project Services |
| WB | World Bank |
| WERP | Water Emergency Relief Project |
| WUA | Water User Association |

## 1. Introduction/Project Description

The Afghanistan Water Emergency Response Project (WERP) aims to restore access to vital water supply and surface water irrigation services in a selection of Afghanistan's extreme and severe drought-affected rural areas. The project will be undertaken against a backdrop of an ongoing drought and political instability, that has resulted in significant challenges in the provision of shelter, food, health care, as well as essential drinking water and sanitation services. Water supply and hygiene services are an essential part of human life and critical for preventing transmission of water-borne diseases, protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks, including the current COVID-19 pandemic, in particular amongst women. Restoring and maintaining water supplies and irrigation will also improve communities' climate resilience, including extreme weather events.

**Project Components:** The Project consists of five components that will be implemented across 16 drought affected provinces in the country which are facing problems in accessing safe water and sanitation facilities. WERP will be implemented by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) for component 1 and 3 and UNOPS for component 2, in a coordinated manner. **Component 1: Provision of emergency water supply services in identified rural areas.** This component will finance several emergency interventions in the identified rural regions of extreme and severe drought-affected provinces. This component will support short- to medium-term interventions for drinking water and hygiene provision, including the drilling of new wells and rehabilitation and replacement of priority drinking water supply infrastructure/equipment.
**Component 2: Improved Surface Water Irrigation Using Solar Technologies in Selected Rural Areas.** This component will finance the provision of off-grid solar systems, and where applicable energy efficient equipment to support installation and improved efficiency of surface water irrigation in the selected areas. This will include installation of solar pump systems, and battery systems in high priority areas.
At the completion of Component 2, the ownership of all assets provided as part of the Project including solar pumps (in cases where solar pumps are paid through the Project) will be retained by the private energy service companies (PESCs).

**Component 3: Technical Training and Public Awareness Campaigns**: This component will finance consultancy service to develop and deliver technical training modules for water-related entities. Potential training recipients might include technical departments of MEW, MRRD, AUWSSC, along with communities and water-related departments of the Afghanistan universities.

**Component 4: Implementation Support:** This component will support the costs of AKF and UNOPS, to manage and oversee the program, including technical support, training, monitoring, and reporting.

**Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response:** This zero-cost component is included in the Project to enable the rapid mobilization of funds in the event of an eligible crisis or emergency following an adverse natural or man-made event.

The project will involve and/or affect directly or indirectly, a vast and diverse number of stakeholders at the individual, community, provincial, regional, and national level in the context of a severe political, economic, social, and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard 10[1]

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[1] The World Bank, Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), 2018.

recognizes the importance of open and transparent engagement with all project stakeholders, based on the recognition that effective stakeholder engagement can improve E&S sustainability of project activities, enhance project acceptance, and implementation, and allow stakeholders to contribute to project design. This SEP outlines stakeholder engagements for the project activities in a systematic way. It defines legal and policy requirements in regard to stakeholder engagements, lists stakeholder engagements that have already been undertaken, provides a stakeholder analysis of all relevant project-affected parties, including members of vulnerable groups, and lays out the means of dissemination of information to different parties as well as means and ways to continue to consult different stakeholder groups throughout the project cycle. Furthermore, it contains a monitoring plan for the implementation of the SEP.

This Preliminary SEP will be updated based on the results of further consultation with consortium partners and other stakeholders, especially as exact subproject locations are identified.

The SEP will be implemented by AKF, UNOPS and all other implementers. Both, AKF and UNOPS will each implement Grievance Redressal Mechanism (GRM) and will be responsible for handling all project-related grievances, as described in this SEP.

This SEP will apply to all components of the project. It aims at facilitating stakeholder engagement throughout the Project's life cycle and across the various project components.

The objectives of this SEP are:
• To identify project stakeholders, including members of vulnerable groups, their priorities, and concerns.
• Identify strategies for information sharing and communication to stakeholders as well as consultation of stakeholders in ways that are meaningful and accessible throughout the project cycle.
• To specify procedures and methodologies for stakeholder consultations, documentation of the proceedings and strategies for feedback.
• To establish an effective, transparent, and responsive grievance mechanism for the project.
• To develop a strategy for inclusive and meaningful stakeholder participation in the monitoring of project impacts, documenting, reporting and dissemination of results among the different stakeholders.

## 2. Regulations and Requirements

Stakeholder engagement is an inclusive process conducted throughout the project life cycle to support the development of strong, constructive, and responsive relationships that are important for successfully managing a project's environmental and social risks. The World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) includes Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) 10, "Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure", which recognizes "the importance of open and transparent engagement with the project stakeholders as an essential element of good international practice". The ESS10 also provides that effective stakeholder engagement can significantly improve the environmental and social sustainability of projects, enhance project acceptance, and make a significant contribution to successful project design and implementation.

The application of these standards, by focusing on the identification and management of environmental and social risks, will support recipients in their goal to reduce poverty and increase prosperity in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the environment and their citizens. The standards will:

a.  support recipients in achieving good international practice relating to environmental and social sustainability.
b.  assist recipients in fulfilling their national and international environmental and social obligations.
c.  enhance non-discrimination, transparency, participation, accountability, and governance; and
d.  enhance the sustainable development outcomes of projects through ongoing stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement is also provided for in the various forms of national legislation including the constitutions and legislation on environmental and social impact assessments and audits. The instruments unanimously advocate for meaningful involvement of project stakeholders in decisions that affect them, participatory planning, and trans-parent grievance management mechanisms.

## 3.  Brief Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

AKF also conducted brief consultations with national and regional staff and communities in the target geographies to document water sources and potential challenges of implementing in those communities. Furthermore, AKF is in the process of exploring partnerships with various INGOs as potential implementing partners in the geographies where AKF does not implement (CARE, Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACCAR), ActionAid, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), International Rescue Committee (IRC), AKDN[2] agencies). At this stage, AKF has shared a summary of the technical components and geographies after providing detail on the budget and donor. Based on initial discussions, some of these partners have geographical presence and capacity in the target provinces mentioned under this project.

Given that engagement with the Interim Taliban Administration (ITA) is not possible, and that specific subproject locations are not identified yet, no further consultations have taken place. In-depth stakeholder consultations will be conducted after the Effectiveness Date, and the preliminary SEP will be updated accordingly by AKF and UNOPS and re-disclosed in country via IAs' website.

Details about the meetings and consultations held with stakeholders are presented below.

*Table 1. Previous Stakeholder Consultations*

| Place | Date | Participants | Key points raised |
|---|---|---|---|
| Online | 27/10/22 | Afghanistan Renewable Energy Union (AREU) | ● Pre-qualification criteria and selection process of private sector energy companies (PSCEs) needs to be transparent<br>● Concerns about cost-share requirement of PSCEs<br>● Critical importance of community buy-in |

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[2] AKF will engage INGOs, including the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) agencies, in the implementation of various components of this Project.

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|---|---|---|---|
| Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar, Bamyan, Parwan, Samangan, Balk | Week of October 8th | AKF National and Regional Staff | ● AKF conducted brief consultations with national and regional staff in the target geographies to document water sources and potential challenges of implementing in those communities |
| Online | 15/11/22 | Afghanistan Renewable Energy Union (AREU) | ● AREU generally confident in PSCEs capacity to contribute cost-share requirement; AKF requires more information<br>● Further discussion required on experience of PSECs with proposed modality |

## 4. Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

For this project stakeholders are defined as *individuals, formal or informal associations/ organizations, private and public entities whose interests or rights will be affected, directly or indirectly by the project, both positively and negatively, who may have an interest, and who have the potential to influence the project outcomes in any way.*

The following matrix and diagram illustrate different levels of stakeholder engagement and interest in the project.
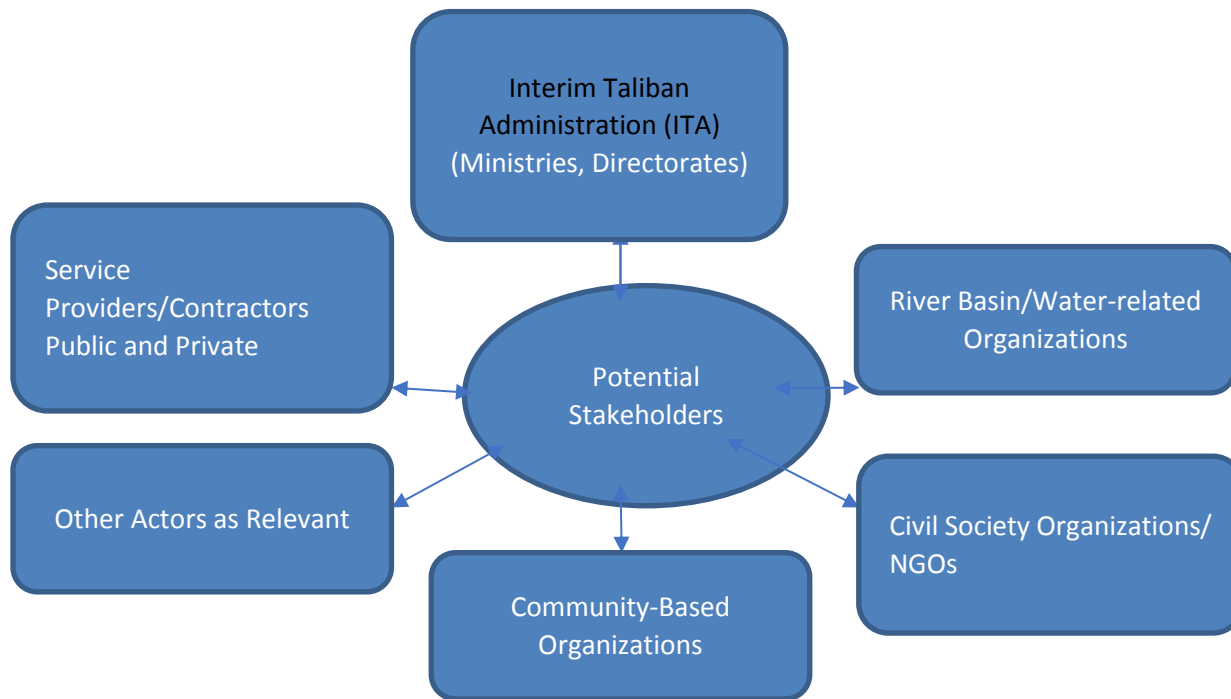
*Table 1 Levels of Stakeholder engagement*

| Stakeholder | Primary (1st) | Secondary (2nd) | Stakeholders interest in project | Potential Level of interest on proposed project (high/medium/low) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| NGOs/Civil Society Organizations | × | | NGOs with relevant experience and presence in project geographies will have great interest in participating in implementation, coordination, sharing of best practices/ experiences or being appraised of project outcomes. | High |
| Private Energy Service Companies (PESCs) | × | | For the provision of solar pumps and water services etc. | High |
| Interim Taliban Administration (ITA) (Ministries and Directorates)-national level | | X | Infrastructure is of great interest to the ITA; therefore, given the scale and scope of the project, the ITA will likely be interested in being frequently appraised of progress. | High |
| ITA provincial and district authorities | | | The ITA authorities at both provincial and district level are likely to have significant interest as subprojects start rolling out. | High |
| Community Development Councils (CDCs) | x | | Strong interest both in the management, implementation and monitoring of the project include ownership.  The elected member/s are of a rural community under the existing CDC, which is headed by a community leader. They are democratically elected by all village residents. | High |
| Community members and leaders | x | | Lacking the opportunity of interaction with the Interim Taliban Administration, community leaders, including clan and religious leaders play a vital role in community entry and the attainment and social license to operate. | High |
| Water Management Committees (Community-based institution) | x | | Strong interest in direct management, maintenance and implementation including ownership and monitoring aspects. | High |
| Irrigation Associations/Mirab | x | | Strong interest in direct management, maintenance and implementation including ownership and monitoring aspects. | High |
| Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) groups | | X | Strong interest in water for irrigation. | High |
| Non-Agriculture Cooperatives | | X | Strong interest in being consulted and or/engaging in the implementation of project activities. | Low |

| Stakeholder | | | Interest | Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health Committees | | X | Strong interest in being consulted and or/engaging in the implementation of project activities. Health committees are likely to play a vital role in promoting health and hygiene awareness among the communities. | Medium |
| Women's Groups (e.g., Community-Based Savings Groups) | | X | Strong interest in being Consulted and or/engaging in the implementation of project activities. | Medium |
| Women and Girls | x | | As collectors of water and frontline household workers women and girls will have great interest in the drinking water related projects, and finding employment through the project | High |
| Contractors/Local Partners and Suppliers | | X | Strong interest in the provision of services. | Low |
| Unemployed People | x | | Strong interest in seeking employment opportunities. | Low |
| Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) | x | | Strong interest in seeking employment opportunities and benefitting from project activities. Strong interest in accessing clean drinking water. | Medium |
| Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) | | x | Some interest in finding employment as laborers the projects. Strong interest in accessing clean drinking water. | Low |
| Population living in hard-to-reach places | | x | People living in peripheries and hard to reach places will demonstrate an interest to try and bring both irrigation and drinking water projects to their places. | Medium |
| Ethnic and Religious Minorities | | x | They may articulate their concerns and convey that they are being marginalized or they have not been properly represented etc. The project may receive grievances from ethnic and religious minorities. | Medium |
| Female-Headed Households | x | | They are often marginalized and sidelined from public services. They will have a positive interest in both drinking and irrigation water projects. | High |
| Academia/Researchers | x | | For water policy and dialogue. | Medium |
| Pastoral Nomadic Communities | x | | For labour work and access to drinking water. | Medium |
| Beneficiaries/ Communities in the vicinity of the project's planned activities. | x | | These will be directly affected parties and obviously will have significant interest in the success of the project. | High |
| Residents, business entities such as construction material suppliers, and individual entrepreneurs in the project that can be affected or can benefit from employment opportunities. | x | | These will be directly affected parties and obviously will have significant interest in the success of the project. | High |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Residents of the other rural settlements within the project area, who can benefit from employment and training opportunities stemming from the project. | | x | For reasons of employment and training opportunities that could come out of the project. | Medium |
| Direct workers and contract workers | x | | To find employment and short-term work. | High |



- Interim Taliban Administration (ITA) (Ministries, Directorates)
- Service Providers/Contractors Public and Private
- River Basin/Water-related Organizations
- Potential Stakeholders
- Other Actors as Relevant
- Civil Society Organizations/ NGOs
- Community-Based Organizations

In accordance with the ESS10, this SEP categorizes the stakeholders into three groups:

- **Affected parties** - stakeholders that are affected or may be affected by the project.
- **other interested parties** - other parties who may have an interest in the project.
- **vulnerable/ disadvantaged groups** - individuals or groups who may require special engagement efforts due to their vulnerable status.

## 4.1. Affected Parties

The WERP will have multiple stakeholders ranging from the Interim Taliban Administration (ITA), which will be engaged indirectly, to the private sector, academia, civil society (including CDCs and women groups), and the public (including vulnerable and marginalized groups). AKF and UNOPS will ensure that consultations are held with all relevant stakeholders directly bearing upon project outcomes.

For the purposes of their engagement, stakeholders who are likely to be directly affected are classified as **Affected Parties.** The stakeholders below are classified under each component.

For Component 1, the following will be affected parties:
- Beneficiaries/ Communities in the vicinity of the project's planned activities.
- Residents, business entities such as construction material suppliers, and individual entrepreneurs in the area of the project that can be affected or can benefit from employment opportunities.
- Residents of the other rural settlements within the project area, who can benefit from employment and training opportunities stemming from the project.
- Direct workers
- Contracted workers

For project component 2, the following will be directly affected parties:
- Beneficiaries/ communities in the vicinity of the project's planned activities.
- Residents, business entities such as construction material suppliers, or solar pump sellers and individual entrepreneurs in the area of the project that can be affected or can benefit from the employment opportunities

For project component 3, the following will be directly affected parties:
- Community-based organizations, including Women Groups

## 4.2. Other Interested Parties

The complex community landscape dictates that there will be individuals, associations or even private companies with vested interests overshadowing or influencing the project in ways that may or may not impact project outcomes.

As such the project's stakeholders would include parties other than those directly affected. These include:
- Civil society groups and NGOs on the regional, national, and local levels, that pursue or are engaged in renewable energy interests and may become partners of the project.
- Business owners and providers of services, goods and materials within the project area that will be

involved in the project's wider supply chain or may be considered for the role of the project's suppliers in the future.

- Local conservation organizations and environmental activists
- Mass media and associated interest groups, including local, regional, and national print and broadcast media, digital/web-based entities, and their associations.
- Community-based organizations, including Community Development Councils (CDCs) and Women's Groups
- Private Energy Service Companies (PESC)
- Afghanistan Renewable Energy Union (AREU)
- Water Users Associations (WUA),
- Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) groups
- Ministry of Economy - for Project registration
- Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW)
- Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD),
- Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation (AUWSSC),
- Ministry of Economy -for Project registration
- Water-related department of the Universities.
- National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA)
- Government officials from Ministry of Energy and Water and Ministry of Economy (for project registration)
- Water-related department of the Universities.
- Academia/Researchers
- Women's Groups (e.g., Community-Based Savings Groups)
- Irrigation Associations/Mirab
- Community Development Councils (CDCs)
- Water Management Committees (Community-based institution

**Engagement with ITA**: Interactions with the ITA will be limited to coordination, accessing the beneficiaries and the training of managerial and technical ministry staff. Coordination entails participation in NGO coordination forums, sharing higher-level information about the project plan and intended outcomes, and consultation on technical matters that require input. Access to beneficiaries requires adherence to the local regulations, including registration of the project to the Ministry of Economy, provision of biannual progress reports, exchanging letters of approval with relevant line ministries, participating in the provincial development committee meetings, compliance with tax regulations, and working closely with the district authorities on the implementation. These measures are complemented by higher level interactions at the policy level by the AKF Regional Directors, CEO, and the AKDN's special envoy to Afghanistan. Managerial and technical ministry staff participating in project activities will be vetted and no form of compensation will be provided.

## 4.3.  Disadvantaged / Vulnerable Individuals or Groups

Given the diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups across Afghanistan there are always situations where various groups of people are excluded or in many instances represented disproportionately. Socially excluded groups often lack voice and the power to influence decisions and to express their concerns or understand the impacts of a project.

The Project will aim to include all stakeholders and ensure not only diverse representation but meaningful

participation/ engagement, particularly of disadvantaged/vulnerable individuals or groups. This value is articulated in the ESF, as well as in AKDN's Ethical Framework which binds AKF programs and provides an anchor for advancing social engagement agendas.

The following disadvantaged and vulnerable groups have been identified for this project.
- Persons living below the poverty line /ultra-poor households
- Female-headed households, families with 3 or more children, and single headed households
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees
- Persons with Disabilities (PWD)
- Population living in hard-to-reach places
- Elderly People
- Pastoral Nomadic Communities
- Ethnic and religious minorities or tribal groups
- Women and girls
- Disadvantaged/ vulnerable individuals or groups such as women, PWDs, children, unemployed persons, illiterate individuals

Vulnerability can be exacerbated by compounding intersecting factors, such as a person's origin, gender, age, health condition, economic deficiency and financial insecurity, disadvantaged status in the community (e.g., minorities or fringe groups), dependence on other individuals or natural resources, etc.

Women are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in Afghanistan. They often face multiple levels of discrimination – as rural women, widows, disabled women, internally displaced women, etc. Overall, vulnerability of different groups has exacerbated since the loss of livelihoods in the wake of the regime change in August 2021. The World Bank supported emergency projects have defined inequality and exclusion as key issues to be addressed and developed Entry Criteria for Access (ECA) which will be customized for this project. Through the ECA, the Project will promote social inclusion of these vulnerable and marginalized groups by developing transparent eligibility criteria and selection process. It is important to document the effectiveness of these inclusion measures and recommend ways to improve them further.

In the project locations, a vulnerability mapping exercises will be periodically implemented in collaboration with community groups/ CSOs to identify vulnerable households, namely through the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and Poverty Probability Index (PPI[3]). AKF has been implementing this exercise and is accordingly very familiar with who is vulnerable and how to reach different groups. Consortium partners will deploy similar methods. Furthermore, engagement and feedback mechanisms for disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups will be facilitated through the various engagement forums that will be established during the project (see section below). In addition, AKF often engages women groups, such as Community-Based Savings Groups, as a critical entry point to consult vulnerable women at various stages of a project e.g., project design, community management of water services to ensure sustainability, dissemination of key messaging/education, etc. AKF and UNOPS will conduct a gender analysis at the onset of the project including consultations with women, men, community/religious leaders, and CSOs, to ensure that the unique experiences and needs of women are amply considered and addressed in the project design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

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[3] The Poverty Probability Index (PPI) is a poverty measurement tool AKF has utilized to identify poor households. It has been proved not be quite effective and is statistically sound, yet simple to use. It answers to 10 questions about a household's characteristics and asset ownership which are then scored to compute the likelihood that the household is living below the poverty line. With the PPI, AKF proposes to identify the households who are most likely to be poor, integrating objective poverty data into our assessments.

## 4.4.  Summary of Project Stakeholder Needs

*Table 2 Stakeholder needs*

| Community | Stakeholder Group | Key Characteristics | Language needs | Preferred notification means (email, radio, phone, letter) | Specific needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Provincial Level** | Beneficiaries/ Communities in the vicinity of the project's planned activities.<br><br>Disadvantaged/ vulnerable individuals or groups such as women, PWDs, and children<br><br>Residents, business entities such as construction material suppliers, and individual entrepreneurs in the area of the project that can be affected or can benefit from employment opportunities.<br><br>Direct workers<br>Contracted workers<br><br>ITA Provincial and District Authorities | PWD are particularly marginalized in Afghanistan. The PWD are more likely to be excluded from participation and benefit from public services. | Pashto/Dari and local languages as relevant in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Public meetings<br><br>Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media, and individual meetings | Ensure that the marginalized groups in the vicinity of subprojects from different backgrounds are considered for engagement |
| | Water Users Associations (WUA)<br><br>Irrigation Associations<br><br>Non-agricultural cooperatives<br><br>Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) groups<br><br>Community Development Councils (CDCs) | WUA, and CBNRMs are formed as and when needed to implement AKF's programs. As such they are representative bodies to advance particular goals and are usually familiar with AKF's social engagement practices.<br><br>CDCs are well capacitated community platforms with experience in prioritization exercised and consultations | | | |

| Community | Stakeholder Group | Key Characteristics | Language needs | Preferred notification means (email, radio, phone, letter) | Specific needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Health Committees | | | | |
| | Persons living below the poverty line.<br><br>IDP and returnees<br><br>Population living in hard-to-reach places<br><br>Elderly People<br>Pastoral Nomadic Communities<br><br>Women's Groups<br><br>Female-headed households<br><br>Unemployed persons<br><br>Ethnic and religious minorities<br><br>Persons with Disabilities (PWD)<br><br>Pastoral nomadic communities | Almost 70 percent of the rural population depends on agriculture. Crops are mainly rain-fed, which makes agriculture a vulnerable livelihood. Livestock levels have fluctuated due to droughts. Generally, droughts as well as flooding, and years of protracted conflict have resulted in high levels of poverty in rural households.<br>Urban growth has significantly increased in Afghanistan over the last couple of decades. In 2020, the WB recorded 3.4 percent of urban growth. The urban population accounted for over 10 million people in the country. This has come along with increased poverty, many urban poor households living in slums due to disorganized urban growth.<br><br>Afghanistan is made up of various ethnic and religious groups, with a number of ethnic and religious minorities living in precarious conditions post takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in August 2021. These groups usually comprise individuals with a low level of education who are reluctant to participate in consultations. | Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | |

| Community | Stakeholder Group | Key Characteristics | Language needs | Preferred notification means (email, radio, phone, letter) | Specific needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Vulnerable Communities | Vulnerable and little access to assistance | Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Community radio, community meetings, notice boards, and community mobilizers to reach out | May require special assistance to attend community meetings, may not have access to electronic means |
| | Community Development Councils (CDCs) | Experience in prioritization exercised and consultations | Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Community radio, telephone, community meetings, individual meetings, social media | They can also be used as a means to reach the broader smaller NGOs and CSOs, including support in stakeholder engagements and information dissemination. |
| | Community Leaders and Members | Their authority will depend on the presence and strength of community leaders of other groups; leaders can have a significant influence on the communities | Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | They can also be used as a means to reach the broader smaller NGOs and CSOs, including support in stakeholder engagements and information dissemination. |
| **Regional Level** | NGO Network – ACBAR Private Energy Companies | ● Use of existing network in mapping the NGOs and CSOs<br>● Experience in providing coordination support in other similar projects | Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | They can also be used as a means to reach the broader smaller NGOs and CSOs. Roles and responsibilities will include support in stakeholder engagements, information dissemination and grievance redress |
| **National Level** | UN agencies, international NGOs, bilateral donors | Established UN, NGO, and donor coordination mechanisms, including ACBAR | English | Internet/email, ACBAR, UNCT | Preparation and implementation support. |
| | National CSOs, NGOs, Academia and Researchers | Good capacity | English | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Preparation and implementation support. |
| | Other Agencies operating at national level | Good capacity | English | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Preparation and implementation support. |

| Community | Stakeholder Group | Key Characteristics | Language needs | Preferred notification means (email, radio, phone, letter) | Specific needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings etc.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private sector companies (AREU) | <ul><li>Qualified staff in carrying out capacity needs assessment</li><li>Experience in developing capacity- building plan</li><li>Proven track record of implementing capacity -building support to NGOs and CSOs</li></ul> | English: Pashto/Dari and/or the local languages in areas where the majority speaks to them. | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Preparation and implementation support as well as, training and capacity building |

## 5. Stakeholder Engagement Program

### 5.1. Purpose and Timing of Stakeholder Engagement Program

The overall objective is to define a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation, throughout the inception, construction, and operation phase of the proposed subprojects. The SEP outlines the ways in which the implementing agencies and contractors will communicate with stakeholders and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns and provide feedback about the Implementing Agencies. The SEP will facilitate communications and ensure fruitful interactions between the implementers or contractors of a sub-project e.g., drinking water, irrigation water via solar pumps, etc., and its stakeholders, including beneficiaries.

The detailed objectives of the SEP are summarized as follows:
- Outline the stakeholder engagement activities of the project in line with the World Bank ESF
- Define roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the SEP
- Identify key stakeholders that are affected, interested, and/or able to influence the project
- Guide implementing partners, and sub-project contractors to build mutually respectful, beneficial, and lasting relationships with stakeholders, particularly beneficiary communities
- Provide guidance for stakeholder engagement, including the timing and methods of engagement with stakeholders throughout the life cycle of the project.
- Describe the measures that will be used to remove obstacles to participation, and how the views of differently affected groups will be captured.
- Identify effective ways and methods to disseminate project information as per the needs of the stakeholders
- Establish project-level grievance redress mechanism(s)

The implementing partners will involve stakeholders as early as possible and will continue their engagement process throughout the life cycle of the project including planning, mobilization, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The dialogues and exchange of information will continue until each project is handed over to the relevant community or their representative institution – such as the CDC and the private sector. The engagement process will seek to promote local buy-in for the project activities and ensure that stakeholder concerns, feedback and suggestions are properly received and addressed, and community expectations are managed. Continuous dialogues with stakeholders will contribute to reducing conflict and minimize misinformation with regards to the project interventions.

### 5.2. Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

Implementing partners will build on their pre-existing knowledge of the communities, networks, and relationships to advance constructive engagements for the project. They will also draw upon various tools and approaches which are contextually relevant as part of our continuous interaction with the communities and other relevant stakeholders. Experience demonstrates that methods used for disseminating information to statutory officials may be different from a format of providing information to local communities (displays, and visuals with a lesser emphasis on technical aspects). Therefore, for the information dissemination process to be effective and meaningful, implementing partners will adapt techniques that are specifically tailored to the identified stakeholder groups.

Generally, the format of information dissemination seeks to meet basic requirements on accessibility, i.e. information  will be provided at venues that are easily reachable and do not require long commutes, entrance fee or preliminary access authorization, cultural appropriateness (i.e. with due respect to the local customs and current norms including gender segregation), and inclusiveness, i.e. engaging all segments of the local society, including women and girls, people with disabilities, the elderly, minorities, and other vulnerable individuals. Implementing partners will seek to raise the communities' and stakeholders' awareness about the planned and current activities of the project.

If necessary, logistical assistance may be provided to enable participants from remote areas, persons with limited physical abilities, and those with insufficient financial or transportation means to attend public meetings scheduled by the project.
The preliminary SEP (English, Dari, and Pashtu versions) will be publicly disclosed on AKF, UNOPS websites and locally in a manner that is accessible and culturally appropriate. The updated SEP will be re-disclosed on local websites as per a timeline agreed in the ESCP.

*Table 3 Information Disclosure Strategy*

| Project Stage | List of information to be disclosed | Methods proposed | Timelines: locations / dates | Target Stakeholders | % of target population reached | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Design** | SEP (incl. GRM), ESMF (incl. LMP) | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Virtual / Kabul<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia) | 50% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | Regional capitals / Kabul<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media | At community level (once locations are decided)<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | At community level<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | Other relevant project documents and information | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Virtual / Kabul<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | Regional capitals / Kabul<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc)) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings | At community level (once locations are decided) | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |

| | | Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media | 3 weeks after Effective Date | groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc)) | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | At community level (once locations are decided)<br><br>3 weeks after Effective Date | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| **Project Implementation** | Activity – or site specific ESMPs or other site-specific E&S instruments | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Continuous | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia) | 50% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | Continuous | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc)) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc)) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | Any project-related information (on | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Continuous | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, | 50% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |

| | | activities, beneficiary selection etc…) | | bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia, etc)) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | Continuous | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc)) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | GRM | Internet/email, individual meetings, telephone | Continuous | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia, etc) | 50% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, notice boards, social media, community radio, TV | Continuous | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc) | 20% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings Email, internet, radio, mobile phone, social media | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |

| | | Community radio, telephone, women group meetings, notice boards | Continuous | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | 10% | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## 5.3.   Proposed Strategy for Consultation

Implementing partners will deploy a variety of engagement techniques to build relationships with stakeholders and to consult all relevant communities and stakeholders. The following set of consultation techniques will be utilized and adapted to broaden consultations of the stakeholders.

Efforts will be made to implore public feedback through pre-existing community structures, such as CDCs, where people have grown comfortable providing feedback.  This feedback can subsequently be used as input into the project's mitigation and enhancement measures. As discussed above, proper consideration will be given to the cultural suitability and inclusiveness of the consultation environments, as well as to gender and other sensitivities that may prevail in the local community.

In addition to stakeholder consultations that will accompany the project throughout all phases, the team will prepare a rapid gender analysis (RGA), which will include primary data collection consisting of consultations with women, men, community/religious leaders, and other key stakeholders to examine contextual needs of women and girls, men and boys, across intersecting factors, such as ability, marital status, ethnicity, geographies, and other identities. The findings of the RGA will identify key gender gaps, which will be used to inform the Gender Equality Strategy (GES). The GES will outline key gender equality principles, priorities, and gender-smart solutions to enhance equitable access and improve WASH services and practices, in turn, strengthen the project's overall objective of improving access to water supply and surface water irrigation services in rural areas.

Frequent consultations with the communities and other stakeholders will be organized throughout the course of the project. In particular, public consultations will be organized to consult stakeholders about their needs and the project activities, as well as potential environmental and social risks and impacts and planned mitigation measures – of the entire project and of specific subprojects. Moreover, public consultations will be held on an ongoing basis as part of the overall citizen engagement process during the project cycle.

All implementing partners will record and document minutes of these public meetings, both for the purposes of transparency and the accuracy of capturing public comments. These will be used as a record of consent or input.

The following methods of meeting documentation will be used:
- taking written minutes of the meeting by a specially assigned person
- taking attendance of participants and their signatures/thumbprint as a record and proof of the meeting and their consent on a certain agreement (disaggregated by gender, age, type).
- audio recording with consent (e.g., by means of voice recorders).
- Photographing with consent.

*Table 4 Stakeholder Consultation Strategy*

| Project stage | Topic of consultation | Suggested Method | Location and Date | Target stakeholders | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Project Design** | Overall Project activities and E&S risks and impacts<br><br>Beneficiary selection method | Email, individual meetings, telephone | Kabul<br><br>During Project inception phase | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media | Regional capitals<br><br>During Project inception phase | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media, FGDs | Selected communities for project implementation (not yet known)<br><br>During Project inception phase | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings, mobile phone, social media, and individual meetings, FGDs | Selected communities for project implementation (not yet known)<br><br>During Project inception phase | Provincial-level stakeholders (Water User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| **Project Implementation** | Community infrastructure workplans, prioritization exercises | Email, individual meetings, telephone | Kabul<br><br>Prior to commencement of subprojects | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media | Regional capitals<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media, FGDs | Selected communities for subproject implementation<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |

| | | | | communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children -residents, business entities, workers, etc) | |
| | | Public meetings, mobile phone, social media, and individual meetings, FGDs | Selected communities for subproject implementation<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | Sub-Project Specific ESMPs<br><br>Sub-project specific E&S risks and impacts and mitigation measures | Email, individual meetings, telephone | Kabul<br><br>Prior to commencement of subprojects | National-level stakeholders (UN agencies, int. NGOs, bilateral donors, private sector companies, academia) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media | Regional capitals<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | Regional-level stakeholders (NGO Network – ACBAR, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Community meetings, individual meetings, social media, FGDs | Selected communities for subproject implementation<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | Provincial-level stakeholders (beneficiary communities, disadvantaged/vulnerable groups – persons living below the poverty line, IDPs and returnees, elderly people, pastoral nomadic communities, ethnic and religious minorities, women, PWD, children - residents, business entities, workers, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |
| | | Public meetings, mobile phone, social media, and individual meetings, FGDs | Selected communities for subproject implementation<br><br>Prior to commencement of subproject | User Associations, Community-based Natural Resource Groups, CDCs, etc) | AKF and UNOPS PIUs |

## 5.4. Proposed Strategy to Incorporate the Views of Vulnerable Groups

Engagement with vulnerable groups and individuals often requires the application of specific measures and assistance aimed at the facilitation of their participation in the project-related decision-making so that their awareness of and input to the overall process are commensurate to those of the other stakeholders. This includes addressing barriers which prevent vulnerable groups from participating. For example, ensuring that activities are scheduled at a time of day in which all groups are available (ex. women who have domestic work in the early morning would likely be better able to attend in the afternoon, to be determined in consultations). The project team will ensure that disadvantaged/ vulnerable individuals or groups are appropriately identified, made aware of project activities, and have opportunities to provide propositions/suggestions.

Consultations using FGDs as an appropriate tool for the engagement of vulnerable groups will be carried out with representatives of people with disabilities, women, minorities, and marginalized ethnic groups. The FGDs will be documented where vulnerable groups will provide their views and put forward their concerns that may be integrated into the delivery of various sub-projects.

Implementing partners will carry out a beneficiary satisfaction survey during the 3rd and 4th quarters of the project which will also cover vulnerable groups and attention will be paid to ensure that all stakeholder' opinions and feedback is reflected in the data collection mechanisms. The survey results and the lessons learned from it will be incorporated and will be used to inform decisions on the subprojects as they are rolled out.

Annual reviews will be conducted on the Gender Equality Strategy, which will be adapted as required in light of changing circumstances or new learnings to ensure that the GES is continually improving, relevant, and effective to the needs of the communities.

As such the engagement mechanisms and frequencies will be designed and customized based on the contextual needs of the vulnerable people. This will continue throughout the project life cycle. Implementing partners will also build on its existing understanding of vulnerable people's needs and will integrate this in the inception phase as well.

In view of the current ban of female NGO staff, AKF and UNOPS will ensure that women are adequately informed and consulted. UNOPS will continue to inform and consult women directly. Where direct consultations are not possible, male CDC members will be trained in conducting consultations with women and will serve as proxies in gathering and understanding women's inputs and concerns.

## 5.5. Timelines

Information disclosure and consultations are especially relevant throughout the early stages of the project, but also throughout the project cycle. Project design has therefore been based on consultations. Activities under each Component will include further consultations prior to their commencement to ensure transparency and accountability on project modalities, and to allow stakeholder voices to form the basis of the concrete design of every intervention and consultations will continue throughout the project cycle.

This is an emergency response project with a fixed time frame spanning two and a half years. There may not be any future phases of the project. However, the implementing partners will communicate to stakeholders

when appropriate about the (i) subprojects preparation and development (ii) bidding; (iii) implementation; and (iv) handover to the community and operations mechanisms.  Accordingly, they will not provide any additional information or make commitments with the communities and stakeholders beyond the scope of the current project and its subcomponents. However, they will provide necessary and more detailed information about the operations and maintenance of each drinking water and sub-surface irrigation water subproject implemented.

## 6. Resources and Responsibilities for implementing stakeholder engagement activities

The following estimated resources will be required for the implementation of this SEP:

| Stakeholder Engagement Activities | Q-ty/per years (months) | Unit Cost, USD | # of years | Total cost (USD) for all components |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social and Environmental Safeguards Specialist (UNOPS PIU) | | | 2 | included in PIU staff costs |
| GRM Officer (UNOPS) | | | 1 | |
| AKF – please list staff | | | 2 | included in PIU staff costs |
| GRM Officer (AKF) | | | 1 | |
| Social and Environmental Safeguards Specialist (AKF PIU) | | | 2 | |
| GRM, M&E case management process, database (Including running of hotline, record keeping etc.) | | | 2 | 200,000.00 |
| Operational Costs (Travel, Logistic Support, Security, Transportation & Accommodation). | | | 2 | included in staff travel |
| Communication materials (leaflets, posters,) | 12 | 1,000.00 Per month | 2 | 30,000.00 |
| Radio broadcasts, social media (twice per year) | | 15,000.00 Per year | 2 | 30,000.00 |
| Connectivity cost | 12 | 2,000.00 Per month | 2 | 48,000.00 |
| Trainings (Social issues, outreach, GRM, etc.) for PIU, Ips | | 15,000 per year | 2 | 30,000.00 |
| **Total** | | | | **338,000.00** |

## 7.  Management Functions and Responsibilities

The Aga Khan Foundation USA  (AKF) will be implementing Components 1 and 3 . The AKF team wil comprise one environmental specialist and one social specialist, a GRM officer,  one security risk management specialist dedicated to the project to support AKF, and a Gender and SEAH Specialist.

UNOPS will set up an environmental and social unit which will comprise of one Environmental specialist and one Social Specialist, one security risk management specialist, a gender and SEAH specialist and a GRM officer, which will be working out of the UNOPS Project Implementation Unit (PIU). They will be reporting to the UNOPS Project Manager. The Environmental and Social unit will be responsible for the implementation of this SEP for Component 2 related activities. The GRM Officer will be dedicated to the implementation of the UNOPS GRM for Component 2.

The SEP implementation will be led by AKF's Community Development (CD) sector in close coordination with dedicated staff drawn from the MERL and Gender units. AKF is already a very experienced, highly knowledgeable and locally connected network of social mobilizers who invariably act as the primary interface between AKF and the communities at large and the assortment of stakeholders.

## 8.  Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

A grievance is an issue, concern, or claim (either perceived or actual) that an individual or community group wants addressed or resolved by the programme. These may include complaints of impacts, damages or harm caused by the project or related activities during construction, operation, or decommissioning phase.

A GRM will be established by the Project to provide a formal process for managing complaints from stakeholders (members of the public, employees, and partners) as provided under ESS10 of the ESF.

The objectives of the GRM shall include:
i.    Ensure prompt, consistent, and respectful receipt, investigation, and response to complaints.
ii.   Identify and manage stakeholder grievances and concerns and thus support effective risk management.
iii.  Ensure proper documentation of complaints and implementation of actions.
iv.   Contribute to continuous improvement in performance through lessons learned.
v.    Enhance trust and positive relationships with stakeholders; and
vi.   Ensure compliance with laws and regulations and reduce exposure to litigation.

Two different sets of GRM will be implemented for this project. AKF will set up and implement a three tier GRM system (with separate GRCs at national and regional levels) for Component 1 and Component 3 activities, and UNOPS will implement a three-tier GRM (with separate national and regional level GRCs) specifically for Component 2 activities. Both organizations have already functional GRMs in place in various projects in Afghanistan and will therefore continue with systems already in place. Given the exact location and scope of the sub-projects under all three components are not known at this stage, the compositions of GRCs will be detailed in the updated SEP. The local GRCs can be cross-cutting covering grievances linked to all three components- further details will be given in the updated SEP.

## 8.1.    AKF's Grievance Redress Mechanism

AKF is committed to safeguarding staff, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders and provides the needed support at all levels to create a safe environment for all. AKF has an established Country Safeguarding Unit (CSU)[4] which has the same functions as those of a grievance redressal mechanism. For the purposes of this project, AKF will henceforth use the term Grievance Redressal Unit (GRU). The GRU ensures that staff and partners prevent harm to beneficiaries, particularly affected communities, and vulnerable groups, including exposure to abuse or exploitation; protects staff from inappropriate behavior such as bullying and harassment; and strongly penalizes everyone involved in financial misconduct including bribery, money laundering, and fraud. The Country Social Development Expert (CSDE), Social Officer (SO), and Social Focal Persons (SFPs) within each regional office monitor GR processes and reporting. They regularly conduct orientations and training for staff and partners on the social safeguards policy to ensure that staff and beneficiaries fully understand their rights and responsibilities. The policy also makes sure an effort will be made that everyone involved understands social safeguard policies and reporting procedures. This is done through intermittent training, dissemination of information through leaflets, and consultation dialogues that

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[4] The functions of the Safeguarding Unit (SU) are the same as those of a grievance redressal mechanism. For the purposes of this project, AKF will henceforth use the Grievance Redressal Unit to refer to SU. While conceptually identical where appropriate AKF will use grievance redressal in place of safeguarding to align terminologies with World Bank requirements and for ease of understanding.

are held with the communities and beneficiary partners.

**Proposed Measures and Actions for GRM Strengthening**: AKF has active Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Awaaz Afghanistan, a toll-free, confidential humanitarian helpline in Afghanistan (signed in July 2019) for referring issues raised by callers on the ground and acting as a repository for information to stakeholders. Beneficiaries can call the Awaaz Afghanistan hotline number to report any concerns related to program implementation or social issues. AKF will distribute Awaaz Afghanistan cards to the individual beneficiaries and attach Awaaz Afghanistan posters in accessible and visible formats to encourage the beneficiaries to raise their voices and report any concerns.

AKF has also piloted a community-based complaint mechanism (CBCM) project through a community consultation process to develop reporting mechanisms based on how the community would prefer to report. This project was underpinned by a survivor-focused approach to mitigate risks to survivors and others in reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns. AKF will draw on this experience and adapt for different communities considering various contexts.

Socio-cultural norms have been taken into consideration in all safeguarding policies and procedures including reporting and responding mechanisms. There are male and female CBCM focal points in the regional offices who are responsible for reporting grievances from beneficiaries of both genders.

AKF's GR unit will be headed by a dedicated GR manager and a GR officer based in Kabul. In addition, dedicated staff across provinces, and at the regional, provincial, and at the district levels will be appointed. AKF will strengthen internal reporting and coordination mechanisms for the project.

**Grievance Redressal Steps:** Grievances through Awaaz Afghanistan are forwarded directly to AKF's Safeguarding Unit within 24 hours of complaint registration with Awaaz. The safeguarding unit will see the nature of the grievance if it's a safeguarding case so it will be responded to base on AKF safeguarding investigation guideline for allegations of misconduct towards beneficiaries. Other grievances e.g., the management or program-related issue will be referred to HR or program. And the safeguarding unit will have a follow-up on every grievance to make sure it's handled and responded back to the complainant properly.

According to AKF's Safeguarding Policy, anyone receiving safeguarding cases should notify the designated focal person within 24 hours. Within 72 hours of a formal allegation being made, AKF will convene a Strategy Meeting to agree on next steps. Any urgent attention required should be provided to parties involved in an incident (e.g., where a child or adult has been harmed) such as medical attention or immediate protection from further harm. Based on the severity of the allegation, it is decided in the Strategy Meeting the timeline of investigating and responding to a grievance.

AKF will communicate its grievance mechanism with stakeholders through regional safe programming and CBCM focal persons in the regional offices. In both cases where a grievance is upheld or not, AKF will provide a response/explanation to the complainant.

Stakeholders can submit their grievances regarding any element of the project without any restriction through a variety of means as listed below:

AKF will also explore grievance uptake channels already in existence to boost the grievance redress mechanism proposed, including the uptake channels at the regional and national levels.

While the existing mechanisms would be leveraged for this project, in order to address other requirements of ESS10, the system would be augmented for the purposes of this project in accordance with the objectives articulated above and the following steps:

- **Step 1**: **Uptake** – Project stakeholders will be able to provide feedback and report complaints through several channels. The aggrieved party must be able to select the most efficient institution, the most accessible means of filing a grievance, and must be able to circumvent partial stakeholders in the Project, who may be implicated in the complaint. He or she must further be able to bypass some grievance channels that are perceived as potentially not responsive or biased. The means to file a grievance would include the toll-free hotline Awaaz, SMS, email, filling up grievance forms, verbally, sending a letter, to implementing agencies via the implementing institutions' websites, help desks and collection boxes stipulated for walk-ins at the sites of project activities. Anonymous grievances can also be raised. All uptake channels should permit grievances in Dari and Pashto as well.
- A help desk will also be set up by AKF and implementing parties during the implementation of activities at the central and regional levels. At the help desk, aggrieved parties can inquire about project activities, or they can file a grievance directly with the person manning the desk. Grievances can be filed in writing or verbally at the Help Desk.
- The staff managing help desks and those operating the toll-free hotline number would be trained by the PIU for (a) the registration of a grievance; (b) the interaction with complainants; (c) appropriate responses to SEA/SH issues; (d) grievances of workers; and (e) Project components and Implementing Partners.
- **Step 2: Sorting and processing** – All grievances received will be transferred to the GRM Focal Point at the PIU by the Implementing Partner/AKF. The GRM focal point will categorize the complaint and forward it to the responsible unit. The GRM focal point will also record the grievance in the same format as would be used at the PIU.
- **Step 3: Acknowledgement and follow-up** – Within three (3) days of the date a grievance is submitted, the GRM focal point will communicate with the aggrieved and provide information on the likely course of action and the anticipated timeframe for resolution of the grievance. The information provided to the aggrieved would also include, if required, the likely procedure if the grievance had to be escalated outside the unit and the estimated timeline for each stage.
- **Step 4: Verification, investigation, action, and documentation** – This step would involve gathering information about the grievance to determine the facts surrounding the issue and verifying the validity of the grievance, and then developing a proposed resolution. It is expected that many or

most grievances will be resolved at this stage. All activities taken during this and the other steps will be fully documented, and any resolution logged in the register. In case the grievance is not resolved at this stage, it will be escalated to the next tier.

- **Step 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting** – Monitoring refers to the process of tracking grievances and assessing the progression toward resolution. Each implementing agency would develop and maintain a grievance register and record all steps taken to resolve grievances or otherwise respond to feedback and questions. GRM data would be collated and reported monthly at all levels.
- **Step 6: Providing Feedback** – This step involves informing those who have raised complaints, concerns, or grievances about the resolutions to the issues they have raised. Whenever possible, complainants should be informed of the proposed resolution in person, which gives them the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she will be informed of further options. The GRM would not prevent access to judicial and administrative remedies. Each complaint must be closed within thirty (30) days of receipt - either resolved, withdrawn, or escalated.

**Grievances related to SEA/SH**: Any grievance that surfaces to the Grievance Committee at the national level and if it is determined to relate to SEA/SH the Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) will establish a case management team comprising GR focal point, HR and other relevant personnel from senior staff to handle the case. The case management team will do the investigation and provide the report of the investigation to the GRC team. Once the report is reviewed by case management team/GRC, they will make the recommendations based on the findings.

Investigation findings may result in a range of outcomes. The matter may be resolved, dismissed, found to be false/malicious or upheld. Based on that, the disciplinary process would be initiated. All the investigation process will be survivor centered and AKF will ensure the protection of the complainant/victims.

**Training**: AKF will draw on its GRM ToT for GRM staff and focal points who are responsible for delivering GRM trainings to staff and onwards to the involved communities as relevant. AKF will organize a full-day training package for all new joiners and a half day refresher training package for existing staff. The main topic of the training package will encompass AKF GR (or safeguarding) principles for staff, beneficiaries and implementing partners. The ToT will also provide information and sensitization to staff and beneficiaries on Do no Harm approaches, safe and positive culture, PSEAH, Speak Up, reporting and responding mechanisms.

## 8.2. UNOPS GRM

The United Nations in Afghanistan has a well-established Grievance Mechanism in place, Awaaz Afghanistan (Awaaz), which is implemented by UNOPS on behalf of various UN and humanitarian response agencies. Awaaz is a collective accountability and community engagement initiative that functions as a toll-free, countrywide hotline number (410) that affected populations can dial to access information and register feedback on humanitarian assistance programmes. As a two-way communication channel, needs and priorities as reported on the ground are circulated to partners to help improve the quality of programming in Afghanistan. Awaaz is based on common principles, has processes and policies for receiving and handling complaints and feedback, as well as for data protection; and includes inter-agency referral mechanisms. It is designed to be accessible, collaborative, expeditious, and effective in resolving concerns. Awaaz has ten multilingual operators (50% of which are women) and has handled more than 201,412 calls since Awaaz took

its first call in May 2018. Awaaz agents speak Dari, Pashto, English and more. Establishing referral pathways with clusters and partners, cases requiring attention are shared (in agreement with the affected person) in a timely manner, helping the humanitarian response to swiftly align its delivery to actual needs. The Awaaz call center also utilizes a short code (specifically, 7575), which anyone can use to send a free SMS with feedback, a question, or a complaint. More information about Awaaz can be found at Awaaz Afghanistan (https://awaazaf.org).

Based on the consultations which will conducted for the project, two-tiered Grievance Redressal Committees will be established. The local level GRC will operate in the field. There will also be a national level GRC which will operate through UNOPS' mechanisms. There will be a provision for appeals and any aggrieved party would be able to directly approach the national level GRC as well. The formation of the GRCs will be done prior to the commencement of project activities based on consultations.

While the Awaaz and other existing mechanisms will be leveraged for this project, in order to address other requirements of ESS10, the system would be augmented for the purposes of this project in accordance with the principles given above and the following steps:

- **Step 1**: **Uptake** – Project stakeholders will be able to provide feedback and report complaints through several channels. The aggrieved party must be able to select the most efficient institution, the most accessible means of filing a grievance, and must be able to circumvent partial stakeholders in the Project, which may be implicated in the complaint. He or she must further be able to bypass some grievance channels that are perceived as potentially not responsive or biased. The means to file a grievance would include a toll-free hotline, SMS, email, filling up grievance forms, verbally, sending a letter, to implementing agencies, via the implementing institutions' websites, helpdesks and collection boxes stipulated for walk-ins at the sites of project activities. Anonymous grievances can also be raised. All uptake channels should permit for grievances in Dari and Pashto as well.
A help desk will also be set up by the respective implementing partners during the implementation of sub-project activities in an area manned proportionate to the nature of the activity. At the help desk, aggrieved parties can inquire about project activities, or they can file a grievance directly with the person manning the desk. Grievances can be filed in writing or verbally at the Help Desk.

  Relevant assigned CDC members will also be available in each sub-project site. They will be requested to accept formal grievances and ensure that avenues for lodging grievances are accessible to the public. The first point of contact for all potential grievances from community members may be the CDC member. The CDC member will be required to accept formal grievances; or they can guide aggrieved persons to the Hotline Operator's number, the Help Desk or Suggestion Box.

  The staff manning help desks, CDC members and those operating the toll-free hotline number would be trained by the PIU for (a) the registration of a grievance; (b) the interaction with complainants; (c) appropriate responses to SEA/SH issues; (d) grievances of workers; and (e) Project components and Implementing Partners.

- **Step 2: Sorting and processing** – All grievances received will be transferred to the GRM Focal Point at the respective implementation partner at local or national level and the PIU. The GRM focal point will categorize the complaint and forward it to the responsible unit. The GRM focal point will also record the grievance in the same format as would be used at the PIU.

- **Step 3: Acknowledgement and follow-up** – Within three (3) days of the date a grievance is submitted, the GRM focal point will communicate with the aggrieved and provide information on the likely course of action and the anticipated timeframe for resolution of the grievance. The information provided to aggrieved would also include, if required, the likely procedure if the grievance had to be escalated outside the unit and the estimated timeline for each stage.

- **Step 4: Verification, investigation, action and documentation** – This step involves gathering information about the grievance to determine the facts surrounding the issue and verifying the validity of the grievance, and then developing a proposed resolution. It is expected that many or most grievances would be resolved at this stage. All activities taken during this and the other steps will be fully documented, and any resolution logged in the register. In case the grievance is not resolved at this stage, it would be escalated to the next tier.

- **Step 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting** – Monitoring refers to the process of tracking grievances and assessing the progression toward resolution. Each implementing agency would develop and maintain a grievance register and record of all steps taken to resolve grievances or otherwise respond to feedback and questions. GRM data would be collated and reported monthly at all levels.

  The TPMA will provide independent operational review of overall project implementation and project results, including the implementation of the SEP and GRM. The PIU will synthesize all reporting by TPMA and IPs, as well as its own findings, and produce an overall environment and social progress report with a distinct section on stakeholder engagement in line with a template to be provided. The project provides for quarterly reporting.

- **Step 6: Providing Feedback** – This step involves informing those who have raised complaints, concerns or grievances the resolutions to the issues they have raised. Whenever possible, complainants should be informed of the proposed resolution in person, which gives them the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she will be informed of further options. The GRM would not prevent access to judicial and administrative remedies. Each complaint must be closed within thirty (30) days of receipt - either resolved, withdrawn or escalated.

**GRM for SEA/SH grievances:** SEA/SH related grievances are handled through a survivor-centered approach. All grievance uptake channels can be used to report on SEA/SH issues. No grievance uptake mechanism can reject such grievances, and all personnel directly receiving grievances will be trained in the handling and processing of SEA/SH-related grievances. The Awaaz call center also includes support for safe and confidential reporting for incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Any recipients of the grievance should, with the survivor's informed consent, report the case to one of the Project's formal grievance recipients. A survivor can ask someone else to act as a survivor advocate and report on her/his behalf.

Absolute confidentiality would be maintained for all grievances related to SEA/SH issues. This means that no information shall be disclosed at any time to any party without the informed consent of the person concerned. The survivor's consent would also be sought for undertaking any action on the grievance. Under no circumstances should the survivor be pressured to consent to any conversation, assessment, investigation or other intervention with which they do not feel comfortable. A survivor can withdraw such consent at any time as well. If a survivor does not consent to sharing information, then only non-identifying information can be released or reported on. In the case of children, informed consent is normally requested

from a parent or legal guardian and the children.

Data on GBV cases recorded will only include the nature of the complaint (what the complainant says in her/his own words), whether the complainant believes the perpetrator was related to the project and additional demographic data, such as age and gender, will be collected and reported, with informed consent from the survivor. The GRM provides the survivor referral to pre-identified GBV Service Providers in the area. Services can include health, psycho-social, security and protection, legal/justice, and economic reintegration support. This would be offered even if the survivor does not wish to file a formal complaint or if the complaint is not related to the project before closing the case. The SEA/SH Action Plan will list referral services in the different Project areas.

Where SEA/SH grievances have been allegedly committed by a Project worker, the grievance will also be reported to the respective employing agency. The PIU Social Specialist will follow up and determine jointly with the GRM Focal Point of the respective partner the likelihood that the allegation is related to the Project. The Social and Environmental Safeguards Specialist will follow up and ensure that the violation of the Code of Conduct is handled appropriately. The responsibility to implement any disciplinary action lies with the employer of the perpetrator, in accordance with local labor legislation, the employment contract, and the code of conduct The GRM focal point will report back to the survivor on any steps undertaken and the results.

All SEA/SH incidents would be reported to the World Bank in accordance with the informed agreement by the survivor within 48 hours.

# 9. Monitoring and Reporting

## 9.1 Involvement of Stakeholders in Monitoring Activities

The Project will involve project stakeholders in monitoring of project activities, including project performance as well as environmental and social risks and impacts. The CDCs, which have been established at the community level by previous projects will be the key stakeholder serving in a monitoring function. Representing the community, the CDC members will be able to represent the voices of the community on project performance and impacts from a local perspective through regular consultation meetings with the Project implementers (UNOPS and NGO/CSO partners) at the local level (using methods described above).

AKF's MERL team in Afghanistan will employ participatory and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (PME) methods and approaches to ensure that stakeholders are fully involved in projects' M&E activities to facilitate a bottom-up approach which supports people-centered decisions and observations. Such involvement is made right from the design to the implementation where various local techniques can be used in any situation, urban or rural, with people of different literacy levels. Furthermore, PME is a process of self-assessment, collective knowledge generation, and cooperative action in which stakeholders in a program or intervention substantively and collaboratively identify the monitoring and evaluation issues, collect and analyze data, and take-action as a result of what they learn through this process" (Research Gate, 2018). There are several tools to be used during the PME processes, such as, direct observations, semi-structured interviews, participatory mapping and modeling (social and natural map), transect walk including guided field walk, seasonal calendar, timelines and local histories, Venn diagrams, problem tree, direct-matrix pair-wise ranking and scoring and more. Every required tool will be fully administrated with the stakeholders through a participatory approach where stakeholders will be the owners of processes and the M&E team will be the facilitators. In addition, the PME also provides a more people-centered approach and methods of reporting to the various groups of stakeholders using more contextual and local participatory methods.

## 9.2 Reporting Back to Stakeholder Groups

The SEP will be periodically revised and updated as necessary during project implementation to ensure that the method of engagement remains appropriate and effective in relation to the project context and specific phases of the development. Any major changes to the project related activities and to its schedule will be duly reflected in the SEP.

Quarterly summaries and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries, and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions, will be collated by the designated GRM officer, and referred to the senior management of the project. The quarterly summaries will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and the nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner. Information on public engagement activities undertaken by the Project during the year will be conveyed to the stakeholders in the following manner:
- Publication of a standalone annual report on the project's interaction with the stakeholders.
- Monitoring of a beneficiary feedback indicator on a regular basis. The indicator used will be the number/percentage of public grievances received within a reporting period (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually) and number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline.