

DCA appreciates gender equality!

Women in Afghanistan face many cultural constraints and women empowerment is at the forefront of the international agenda for development of this country.

Also for DCA, gender equality is an important issue that DCA takes into account in all its regional and provincial offices in Afghanistan. It is considered important in all the aspects of the organization: when hiring staff, in giving opportunities for capacity building, in management of staff, and in communication. Approximately 25% of DCA professional and support staff is female. Women are involved at all levels of the organization, have equal responsibilities, and receive equal pay as their male counterparts. DCA is eager to raise the knowledge and capacity of its staff, and especially female are offered many opportunities to participate in training. Also in project activities, DCA tries to involve women as much as possible. There is a special extension package on "The role of women in livestock health and production", and also extension on 'Veterinary public health' is focusing largely on women, as they are taking care of the household as well as the livestock around the house.



DCA always attends the Gender meetings that are organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL). In a recent meeting conducted by MAIL, and actively attended by DCA, several important issues were discussed. This meeting especially focused on the role of women in the organization, highlighting important issues such as involving more women in training, motivating women to participate in all activities, hiring more female staff, and giving them the same opportunities as males in the organization.

Below are some practical issues that were discussed in the meeting:

- ❖ The IFAD RMLSP/CLAP projects need to save a small amount of money for all its female staff for capacity building, and support for special women issues like pregnancy and child birth.
- ❖ In recruitment of new staff, priority should be given to female applicants.
- ❖ The number of women in the project staff should be increased.
- ❖ Women staff must have proper means of transportation and must be allowed to have a male member of the family accompanying her.
- ❖ Transportation cost and DSA must be paid to the female staff and to one member of her family who accompanies her.
- ❖ Female salary needs to be based on her qualification, experience, education, and expertise and there should be no gender-based discrimination.
- ❖ It is a good suggestion that each project starts a female employee support fund.
- ❖ Gender success stories, gender reports, and announcements of gender events must be shared with MAIL.
- ❖ Women participating in extension groups might join different trainings conducted by MAIL itself, so all accommodation and transportation costs will be paid by the ministry itself.
- ❖ MAIL invites each project to propose specific and useful trainings for women. Based on these suggestions, MAIL will start conducting trainings for all female employees or extension groups.
- ❖ Women's Day, Rural Women's Day, and Mother's Day need to be celebrated in the organization.

DCA is already implementing the majority of the above mentioned points, but it needs more support from donors and MAIL to maintain its gender activities continuously. In the near future, DCA will develop a comprehensive gender policy based on the requirements of its donors and the Afghan government. Even though DCA has given equal opportunities to all its staff and beneficiaries for a long time already, by developing a policy it will stabilize and enhance its efforts in gender equality.



Explaining hygienic kits