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GENDER ALERT ON COVID-19 AFGHANISTAN

July 12, 2020

Issue XII: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women Affiliated with Opium Poppy Cultivation

Following the previous Gender Alerts,[1] UN Women issues this twelfth alert to continue to highlight the gender specific impacts of COVID-19 in Afghanistan. This alert focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on women in areas where opium poppy is cultivated, women in households engaging in opium poppy cultivation and the overall complex dynamics between the pandemic and opium poppy cultivation altogether. This alert provides a closer examination on an issue that receives little attention in Afghanistan – the gender dimensions of opium poppy cultivation and how gender and women's empowerment practices can inform how this challenge is addressed. It provides an overview of the limited data that is currently available, as well as emerging data on COVID-19 and opium poppy cultivation overall. It continues to underscore the ways in which women's agency in households and access or control over economic resources, pre-existing gender inequalities, such as the lack of access to essential services and basic needs, and now the economic and social disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic make effectively addressing opium poppy cultivation in a holistic manner remarkably challenging. It encompasses the overarching gendered impacts as described in previous alerts, but also outlines how the impact of COVID-19, including through broader impacts on Afghanistan's illicit drug production and trafficking may entrench inequalities in key areas and leave women further behind than where they were prior to COVID-19.

The alert concludes with a set of preliminary recommendations for consideration by national and international stakeholders to engage long-term strategies to promote women's economic empowerment, decision-making and access to essential services and essential prevention factors to curb opium poppy cultivation. The alert draws upon recent observations and recommendations highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on Gender and COVID-19. UN Women Afghanistan is committed to supporting the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, and international and national partners to recognize and invest in women's rights and will continue to facilitate discussions around this issue in partnership with UNODC.

[1] UN Women Afghanistan's Series of Gender Alerts for Afghanistan on the Impact of COVID-19 are available online. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-alerts-on-covid-19-in-afghanistan-series.

CONTEXT & EMERGING GENDER IMPACTS

Opium Poppy Cultivation & Peacebuilding in Afghanistan:

Opium poppy is a crucial and complex component of the Afghan economy, securing the livelihoods of people who engage directly and indirectly in opium poppy cultivation, production and its illicit trade.[2] A farmer's decision to cultivate opium poppy is often driven by socio-economic factors and strain, including lack of access to employment opportunities, education, healthcare, markets and financial services. Amidst the economic disruption of COVID-19, there is growing concern that the mounting negative economic consequences of COVID-19 in Afghanistan, including job loss, risks for increased insecurity, and increasing lack of access to essential services will devastate communities and result in increases in negative coping mechanisms, including a new rise in opium poppy cultivation. Previous periods of economic distress have demonstrated this risk. In 2017, Afghanistan held 75 per cent of the global total area under opium poppy cultivation and was responsible for 86 per cent of global opium production.[3] Despite a 20 per cent decrease of the area under opium poppy cultivation in 2018 that was mainly attributed to the severe drought, the area under cultivation in 2018 was the second largest since the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) began systematic monitoring in 1994.[4]

Within this devastation, it is expected that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in a "prolonged dip in women's incomes and labor force participation, with compounded impacts for women already living in poverty."[5] In addition, early reporting suggests growing concern that women may be at risk of increased drug misuse and dependency amidst increasing voluntary and involuntary returns to Afghanistan which peaked at about 14,000 people a day returning in April.[6] Most of the women, even children, have become dependent on drugs from their male family members as a result of economic challenges or returning home. Many had also started using drugs in Iran, with women turning to drugs to adjust to their new life in Afghanistan. Previous gender alerts[7] have already detailed the complex factors and dynamics that place women and their human rights at risk during and in the aftermath of COVID-19. At the same time, women living in areas with high opium poppy cultivation or women in households who are already engaging in opium poppy cultivation or turn to cultivation during this period will face distinct and gender specific challenges. Indeed, as the harvest is a very labor-intensive process, lack of extra-familial cheap labor and limited profitability often means that women and children are turned to as cheap labor within the family.[8]

Overall, opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan thrives in areas with limited government control and presence, political instability, and weak rule of law. Opium is converted to heroin locally, leading to an increase in the levels of drug addiction in rural areas where opium is harvested and heroin produced and sold at very cheap prices.[9] The destabilizing potential of opium poppy on peace and security, human rights, women's rights and sustainable development, as well as the need to address the nexus between drugs, crime and terrorism in the broader context of Afghanistan's peacebuilding process, continues to be raised by the United Nations Security Council.[10] Now, Afghanistan faces the additional challenge of addressing opium poppy cultivation in the face of increasing economic pressure and community level economic distress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There remains significant work to address the challenge of opium poppy cultivation through methods that integrate gender analysis and that invest in and promote gender equality. Despite this, there are opportunities for innovative interventions that address opium poppy cultivation and curb any risks for increases as "farm-gate prices hit all time low and the farm-gate value of opium decreased by 56% compared to 2017."[11]

Women's Role in Opium Poppy Cultivation and Production:

Women are involved in opium poppy cultivation and production, including through weeding and Women are involved in opium poppy cultivation and production, mainly helping the male family members with cheap labor available, often unpaid or working as day laborers: weeding and clearing fields, lancing, breaking opium poppy capsules, removing and cleaning seeds, preparing opium gum for sale, and processing by-products such as oil and soap.[12] Using income generated from opium poppy cultivation and production to resolve economic problems, including paying for household essentials and their children's education and

[2]UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey (2018).
[3]UNODC, World Drug Report (2018).
[4]UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey (2018).
[5]UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women (9 April 2020).
[6]"More Afghan women find solace in drugs as coronavirus, migration upends life," Stefanie Glinksi, available: https://www.reuters.com/article/afghanistan-women-drugs-idUSL8N2BM0Q6.
[7]Supra note 1.
[8]Reference: KII with experts and academics by AREU, June 2020.
[9]https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2019/10/29/771374889/women-and-children-are-the-emerging-face-of-drug-addiction-in-afghanistan?t=1594215356370
[10]S/PV.8354 (2018).
[11]UNODC, World Drug Report, 2018 (In response to the continuing high levels of supply, the farm-gate price of dry opium at harvest time fell the second consecutive year to an average of 94 US$/kg in 2018. It is at its lowest level since 2004 after adjusting for inflation. Prices below 100 US$/kg were observed the last time in 2009 (not adjusted for inflation). When compared to 2017, farm-gate prices decreased by about 39% at the national level. The low prices strongly affected the income earned from opium cultivation by farmers. At US$ 604 million (530 – 680 million), equivalent to roughly 3% of Afghanistan's estimated GDP,3 the farmgate value of opium production decreased by 56%4 when compared to past year (estimated at 1.4 billion US$)).
[12]UNODC, World Drug Report (2016).

health, has been identified as the main driver for women in the absence of economic opportunities or alternatives.[13]

Some of the only data available on women and opium poppy cultivation is the result of focus group meetings with women, hosted by UNODC in conjunction with their Afghanistan Poppy Survey 2015. These focus group discussions revealed that women were aware of the negative impact of opium consumption, including that opium could produce dependence, were concerned that the next generation could become dependent on opium, and that opium use for non-medicinal purposes is forbidden by their religion.[14] Health implications mentioned from using herbicides is the increased risk of "blue baby syndrome". [15]

In Afghanistan, opium poppy is cultivated in areas with a very strong culture of gender inequality and is more likely to occur in villages where girls have no access to schools.[16] Despite these findings, there remains a significant gap in the qualitative and quantitative understanding of the gender-specific aspects of all people involved in the drug supply chain, as well as the social norms that drive the decision to cultivate and produce opium poppy. Studies show that in southern provinces, due to cultural restrictions, especially when the land is far from the house or if the land doesn't have walls to cover them, women are not appearing on the land. However, they are indirectly involved in the production by preparing food for the farmers, taking care of the children and performing other house activities. Compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty. Unpaid care work has increased, with children out-of-school, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services. The impacts are further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies where social cohesion is already undermined and institutional capacity and services are limited.[17]

Female-headed households and illicit crop cultivation[18]

Information about the participation of women in illicit crop cultivation is scarce, and even more so on female-headed households. A baseline survey in 2017 covering 16,100 households in 15 provinces in Afghanistan indicated that female-headed households were less prone to be involved in opium poppy cultivation than male-headed households, as, in that country, the cultivation of cash crops in general is typically a male activity, whereas women are usually in charge of animal husbandry and poultry. Overall, female-headed households were in a critical condition, characterized by lower annual earnings (up to 40 per cent less) than male-headed households. Female headed households were also found to have lower food security, a lower degree of trust and confidence in national authorities, and a higher number of household members in search of employment. The survey findings suggested that, in general, female-headed households were more distressed by the conflict in Afghanistan than male-headed households.

Imperative of Comprehensive Gendered Analysis:

Further understanding the context by which Afghan women engage with opium poppy cultivation can support interventions that are gender equal benefitting men and women alike. This includes in the context of COVID-19 recovery. Not only does gender analysis provide a more complete view of the pressing issues facing a particular community, but such analysis can also uncover changes in women's experiences viewed as early warning signs of social and political insecurity, such as intimate partner violence, gender-based violence outside of the home, female-headed households, or school attendance by girls.[19] This underscores the importance of monitoring indicators of gender equality within broader systems to prevent violence.

In addition, anecdotal and recent reports detail the broader dynamics women face in households impacted by the drug dependency of their husbands and restrained by stigma, fear and inability to seek a divorce. In this context, women undertake remarkable economic initiatives to support their families and navigate complex gender dynamics in their homes and communities. An example recently documented in Herat and supported by the Rehabilitation Association and Agriculture Development for Afghanistan details one woman's turn to Saffron production, which she can bring to her home garden.[20] Not only does her practice allow her to undertake economic activities without needing to ask her husband to leave the compound, but it also allows her to save. This dynamic maps onto many stories among women who engage in informal economic activity in Afghanistan and provides a clear picture as to the imperative to integrate gender analysis into all post-COVID-19 stimulus and recovery packages.

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[13]Ibid.
[14]Ibid.
[15]Nicole Galan, "What is blue baby syndrome?" Medical News Today, 29 May 2018. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321955.php. See also, Mansfield, D. "The Helmand Food Zone: The Illusion of Success," AREU Case Study Series. (Kabul: AREU, 2019), page 56.
[16]UNODC, World Drug Report (2018).
[17]UNODC, World Drug Report (2020).
[18]Ibid, pp. 40.
[19]World Bank and United Nations, Pathways for Peace (2018).
[20]Divorce isn't an option': Afghan women find hope in saffron scheme, Stefanie Glinksi, the Guardian, available here: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jun/23/divorce-isnt-an-option-afghan-women-find-hope-in-saffron-scheme?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

Drugs & Violence Against Women & Girls:

There are strong links between drugs and violence against women and girls. Experience of violence, including during childhood, can lead to increased drug misuse, which is associated with perpetration of violence for men and being a victim of violence for women and girls.[21] The increase in opium poppy cultivation and consumption, driven by COVID-19, could aggravate the dramatic increase in violence against women and girls, COVID-19's shadow pandemic. Drug misuse is a key driver of violence against women and girls, and an increase in cultivation and drug use could lead to an increase in the levels and severity of violence experienced by Afghan women and girls, which is already higher in rural areas compared to the national average. This can also lead to an increase in economic violence including preventing or forcing women to work, taking away women's earnings and savings, or making her unfit for work through physical abuse. Furthermore, the impact on livelihoods of drug use, which can lead to debts and loss of livelihoods, is a key driver for child and forced marriage, as well as children dropping out of school to work, as a way to ease the economic burden on the household and to settle debts, which is in turn putting women and girls at high risk of experience domestic violence.[22] Some survivors of violence may also turn to drug use to cope with the negative impact on their physical and mental health.[23]

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

The socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis will hit women the hardest and exacerbate existing gender and socio-economic inequalities. The follow specific areas for attention raising emerging issues and questions surrounding those pre-existing gender inequalities that may be exacerbated within households and communities and links analysis of women's influence in decision-making, economic empowerment, access to essential service and more with the impact of COVID-19 and dynamics around opium poppy cultivation.

Pre-Existing Gender Inequality and Limited Decision-Making within Households and Communities:

Existing research shows that, although women are less empowered than men to influence the primary decision to cultivate opium poppy, their influence and consultation may be on the rise.[24] Understanding that women hold distinct views regarding the negative impact of opium consumption, empowering women to influence decisions regarding opium poppy cultivation can potentially transform wider social norms that make the decision to cultivate opium poppy permissible and support alternative livelihoods that are less harmful.

Preliminary investigations mapping women's contributions to family and household income against opium poppy cultivating provinces shows that the leading opium poppy cultivating province in Afghanistan, Helmand Province, is also the province where women's contribution to family income is the lowest (2.6 per cent). [25]

Interventions, including those to respond to economic job loss and fiscal stimulus measures, aimed at increasing women's influence over decisions to cultivate poppy opium must be done in conjunction with support for women's economic empowerment and initiatives aiming at reducing violence against women and girls. It is critical to consider the relationships between violence against women and girls and women's economic empowerment as such programmes, if not carefully planned and implemented to consider these specific risks, can lead to an increase in violence against women and girls. Indeed, as women's economic empowerment challenges traditional gender norms, disruption to traditional gender roles can lead to a backlash from their partners or community. Enhancing women's economic empowerment and contribution to family and household income, will increase their ability to participate in household decision-making, could reduce domestic violence as well as give survivors of violence the economic means to leave violent relationships. Women's economic empowerment programming, coupled with violence against women and girls programming, can reduce the risk of violence by improving women's financial autonomy and bargaining power. Earning an income and owning assets can also reduce economic stress, which is a key factor in domestic violence. In addition, women's economic empowerment will support the diversification of a household's income and increase the sustainability of alternative livelihood programs. As women are likely to invest up to 90 per cent of their income back into households, particularly in health and children's education, women's contributions to income will also reduce overall poverty rates within communities. The Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People 2017 found that 80.9 per cent of Afghan women consider that they should have the right to work outside the home, compared to 63.9 per cent of Afghan men.[26] Survey respondents who stated that women should not be allowed to work outside the home

[21] WHO, Fact Sheet: Violence Against Women, available here: https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women
[22] Girls and women traded for opium debts, the New Humanitarian (January 2007), originally from IRIN News and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) available here: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/node/230617.
[23] Global Rights (2008). Living with violence: A national report on domestic abuse in Afghanistan.
[24] UNODC, World Drug Report (2018).
[25] UNODC Opium Survey (2018), "Main Opium Popp Cultivating Provinces in Afghanistan (2013-2018), cross reference with Asia Foundation Survey data on "households where women contribute to income by province."
[26] The Asia Foundation. Afghanistan in 2017: A Survey of the Afghan People (2017).

identified (1) uncertain conditions (24%); (2) against Islamic Law (19%); (3) they are not needed outside the home (12%); bad security (12%); the family does not allow it (9%); don't know (6%); it prevents moral corruption (4%); women should not work alongside men (2%); and more.[27]

Careful gender analysis is required to ensure that interventions to support women's influence over decisions to cultivate opium poppy and their economic empowerment do not exacerbate inequalities, place unfair and unpaid work burdens on women and increase violence against women. Thus, the initial research and analysis for this alert will not only contribute to building an evidence-base around the gender-specific norms that influence opium poppy cultivation, but is also designed to produce tailored and evidence-based responses to assist with transforming social norms driving opium poppy cultivation, and ensure women and men benefit equally from economic empowerment and alternative livelihoods interventions in opium poppy cultivation areas, including in response to COVID-19.

Women's Economic Empowerment & Access to Basic Services:

As noted in the fourth gender alert, most women who work in Afghanistan also do so in the informal sector, with nearly three quarters working in home-based craft industries. In addition to unrecognized unpaid care and domestic labor where women are dependent upon either the safety nets provided through the formal labor of either a family member or do not have any social safety net, women remain overrepresented in the informal economy. Here, there are little social and public safety protections as well. This is even more applicable to illicit economic activity such as opium poppy cultivation. These vulnerable forms of labor can increase women's risk for poverty in times of crisis, including the context of COVID-19,[28] as they may be left out of formal social protection measures that directly engage with workers in the formal and legal economy.[29] In the context of households that cultivate opium poppy, additional risks are presented, including risks of interacting with security forces and engaging in illicit activity, drug abuse, exposure of women and children to second-hand smoke and exposure with contaminated surfaces.

Economic Stress Deepening Disparity, Safety and Access to Alternative Livelihoods:

As it relates to access to essential services, the COVID-19 pandemic has added to the existing challenges of ongoing armed conflict and an already weakened health system and has now strained the full scope of essential services. In this environment, loss of informal work can lead to increased vulnerability to extreme poverty. The long-term and far reaching economic impacts, such as long-term job loss, soaring prices, and more are all warning signs that with an already struggling economy, many Afghans, particularly women are facing further worsening economic conditions. This reality is only exacerbated by the economic projections that demonstrate the links between ongoing conflict, including high levels of conflict, gender inequality and economic recovery and growth. It is imperative during this time that all economic recovery packages, including for immediate relief, and long-term economic growth work directly to address the needs of women and preserve principles of non-discrimination on the basis of drug use or engagement in illicit economic activity.

In addition, according to UNODC mid-term impact assessments in Afghanistan,[30] carried out in 2019, surveys of more than 4,000 households in 220 villages indicated that in comparison with the baseline in 2017, the number of households with female members who generated income had increased from 21 to 29 per cent, as had income earned by women, by as much as 10 per cent. This appears to be the direct results of investments from the Government in strengthening of dairy and poultry production, vegetable cultivation and orchard activities, with a view to primarily enhancing female income, which usually only constitutes 5 to 10 per cent of total household income.[31]

Lack of Dedicated Economic Recovery Program Access for those in the Informal or Illicit Economy:

Engaging women and women's rights and labor advocates is the only way to ensure that COVID-19 recovery programs adequately respond to the needs of women and are designed in ways that ensure they are accessible to them. Social protection and fiscal responses are more effective when the gender dimensions of the crisis itself, its long-term impacts, and the potential dynamics around the response are considered.[32] This is equally true in the context of assessing the risks for increased opium poppy cultivation and its impact on women's lives and the whole of communities. Not only is it essential to recognize the disparities of experiences, but to also recognize the realities that women face when trying to access economic recovery programs, either due to social, cultural, or functional limitations on movement, but also in terms of accessibility across a range of intersectional experiences, such as age, ability location, social status, and more. They must also incorporate sex disaggregated data.[33] This is

[27] Ibid.
[28] World Bank, Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic (16 April 2020).
[29] UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women (9 April 2020).
[30] UNODC, mid-term impact assessment of the Boost Alternative Development Interventions through Licit Livelihoods alternative development project in Afghanistan (2020).
[31] This reflects a project conducted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan with non-governmental organizations and supported by UNODC.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

particularly true in countries impacted by conflict. Post-conflict economic recovery programs may also be relevant and simultaneously under development. Both types of economic recovery work in countries affected by conflict, such as Afghanistan, are critical opportunities to ensure that women are equal beneficiaries in the reinvestment that comes along with efforts towards peace.

Special Attention to Women Living in Southwestern Desert Areas as Family Members of Opium Poppy Farmers

According to field research by AREU, as many as 1.5 million people have moved to north of Boghra area in Helmand province to settle in desert areas where they get access to land, using solar technology and extract ground water in large reservoirs for poppy field irrigations.[34] While this phenomenon has not been addressed by formal institutions, these are areas considered as 'non-existent' based on formal numbers and data. The life for women living as household members of poppy farmers is quite challenging due lack of access to their extended families and basic services, no schools or even health facilities are available to women if they require medical attention or get sick.[35] Their social life is also more limited as in the desert land they don't have markets or access to visit their extended families who live in canal irrigated areas. Such limitations to large population numbers in newly settled areas require specific attention to ensure more practical measures are taken to bring some basic facilities and access to essential services. Many of these women talk of not even being able to attend the funerals of their parents and siblings; they lament the sense of isolation they feel, the depression, and the report has also detailed instances of suicide.[36]

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following preliminary recommendations reflect an overall need for national and international stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the gender-specific dynamics of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and the role of women at the community level in curbing cultivation and adopting alternative livelihood options. In addition, the recommendations situate the challenge of reaching those populations most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 in the informal economy who may turn to opium poppy cultivation in times of crisis. All components of COVID-19 economic relief and recovery should consider the ways in which women in hard to reach, informal economic work or with little control over their economic situation or livelihoods can be supported. The following recommendations draw from specific needs and opportunities in Afghanistan identified throughout this alert, as well as global guidance from the United Nations. In follow up to this brief, UN Women and UNODC will continue to open dialogues and assess the situation to support international and national partners to ensure that responses to address the gender-specific challenges and women's empowerment issues surrounding opium poppy cultivation.

The Security Council has called upon Member States to strengthen efforts and cooperation to counter the threat posed by the opium production, trafficking, and consumption, which "significantly contribute to the financial resources of the Taliban and its associates and could also benefit Al-Qaida, ISIL (Da'esh) affiliates and other terrorist groups".[37] Moreover, the Security Council has encouraged the relevant Sanctions Committees[38] to "pay attention to the linkages between the proceeds of organized crime, the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and their chemical precursors and the financing, respectively, of the Taliban, including the Haqqani Network, and of ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities."[39] Within the scope of Security Council's resolutions on women, peace and security (WPS),[40] the Council has called for the integration of WPS concerns across all country-specific situations on its agenda, including Afghanistan.[41]

At the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, the General Assembly reiterated its commitment to respect, protect and promote all human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of all individuals and the rule of law in the development and implementation of drug policies, and recommended: (i) mainstreaming a gender perspective into and ensuring the involvement of women in all stages of drug policies and programmes; (ii) developing and disseminating gender-sensitive measures that take into account the specific needs and circumstances faced by women and girls with regard to the world drug problem; and, (iii) implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[42]

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[34] When the Water Runs Dry, AREU (2020) available here: https://areu.org.af/when-the-water-runs-dry/.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] S/RES/2405 (2018).
[38] Committees established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015).
[39] Security Council resolution 2405 (2018).
[40] Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000); 1820 (2009); 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011); 2106 (2013); 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015). Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on Sustaining Peace: A/72/707 (2016), S/2018/43 (2016).
[41] S/RES/2242 (2015).
[42] General Assembly resolution S-30/1 (2016).

National and international actors:

National and international actors can contribute to responses that integrate transformative approaches to women's economic empowerment, including in design and delivery of the pandemic response through the following actions:

1. Ensure women's equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making. Evidence across sectors, including economic planning and emergency response, demonstrates unquestioningly that policies that do not consult women or include them in decision-making are simply less effective, and can even do harm.
2. Provide short-term stimulus packages that support sales, cash flow and working capital and consider rapid grant, cash-transfers and loan programmes directed towards women-led initiatives at the community level that seek to protect and promote rural women's rights during COVID-19 to ensure continued and increased investment in rural women and girls' access to education, health care, clean water, sanitation and other basic services.[43]
3. Invest in long-term measures that can build the resilience and decision-making of women and vulnerable households so that they can withstand shocks in future and can positively impact women's ability to transition households away from opium poppy cultivation
4. Enhance access to finance by incentivizing the creation or extension of guarantee schemes for loans/grants to smallholder women producers, direct public lending and setting targets for financial institutions for lending to women smallholder producers. And ensure further measures are taken to ensure that producers have timely access to quality inputs for the next season.
5. Ensure that all economic recovery packages and social protection plans, including for immediate relief, and long-term economic growth work integrate gender analysis and are directly inclusive of women in informal economy, including those women affiliated with opium poppy cultivation as such packages not only provide critical aid, but can positively impact women's ability to transition households away from opium poppy cultivation.
6. Address the gender discriminatory laws, policies, and practices that prevent women's access to and control of financial services, land ownership, and other assets and consider the long-term investments across the life cycle of women and girls that need to be made to promote women's economic empowerment and access to entrepreneurship opportunities. This extends to access to education, work, health, essential services and more.
7. Analyze the gendered impacts of opium poppy cultivation and tailor programmes to increase women's economic empowerment to increase their household and community level influence.
8. Promote training, leadership and mentorship programmes for women, specifically women in areas where there is high opium poppy cultivation, to support holistic alternative livelihoods programming.
9. Undertake specific initiatives to "expand the scope and scale of rural women's entrepreneurship, the focus of which is mainly on traditional micro-level and home-based activities" and enhance involvement of rural women in decision-making. [44]
10. Analyze and mitigate the risks of increased violence against women and girls when designing and implementing women's empowerment economic policies, plans and programmes, including in addressing opium poppy cultivation and COVID-19.
11. Undertake practical measures, including mapping populations, specifically in unplanned settlement areas such as the Helmand Desert areas or similar new settlements, to ensure that as members of IDP communities individuals, families, and communities have equal protection for their rights and responses to COVID-19 are able to meet their needs, including for essential services.

[43] CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/3 (2020).
[44] CEDAW/C/AFG/CO/3 (2020).