

Statement by ACBAR on Suspension of Women Staff working in NGOs

The Steering Committee of ACBAR has met today, Monday 26th December, to discuss its deep concern about the letter addressed to ACBAR by the Ministry of Economy on 24th December, ordering all women staff in national and international NGOs to stop working. Greater clarity for such a drastic measure is needed and dialogue with the authorities will be pursued. Already, many of ACBAR's 183 national and international NGO members have suspended, stopped, or reduced their humanitarian activities and services for the communities. Women staff play an essential role in NGO activities in providing humanitarian services, in order to respect traditional and religious customs. This exclusion of women will impact on communities in emergency food distribution, health services, basic education, livelihood training, protection services, and disability services.

Under the NGO code of conduct in Afghanistan, NGOs should remain independent, neutral in any conflict, and as civil society actors, reject any discrimination based on faith, age, gender, or minority.

ACBAR members employ 55,249 Afghan nationals, of whom 28% are women. Many women employed provide support for women and girls, and this must be provided by women staff working in NGOs.

ACBAR urgently requests the Ministry of Economy to withdraw their suspension letter and engage in open discussions to find a constructive and durable way forward.

"This decision to ban women from going to work will prevent NGOs from being able to carry out our essential life-saving work in Afghanistan. Without women staff, we cannot reach all those in desperate need of our help". Vice-chair, ACBAR Steering Committee

Endorsed by Steering Committee

26 December 2022