**November 2018**

**Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

**Answers to the Questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/38/4 on human rights and climate change**

**Answer to question No.1**

It is about 30 years that Afghanistan has experienced several drought situations happened frequently. The recent information shows that the annual rainfall and precipitation has fallen down. In recent years, below average snowfall of 70% winter precipitation had adverse impact on 20 provinces out of 34 provinces.

On 28 April 2018 UNICEF reported that the lack of precipitation in late November 2017 and early this year is leading to food insecurity and water scarcity that could worsen the already high malnutrition rates among children. UNICEF adds that extremely dry winter has affected 22 provinces across Afghanistan and now threatens the lives of one million people and addition two million who feel negative impact in the next coming months. Food insecurity and reduced access to safe water that take their toll in the 10 worst provinces. Where 20-30 % of water sources are reportedly dry. According to UNICEF , some 1.6 million children and 443,000 pregnant and lactating women suffer from malnutrition.

Relevant organization has estimated that water table in Kabul has dropped down to 20 meter in the last 10 years which is reducing further. This is due to years of drought and extremely water consumption because of overpopulation of the city.

Traditionally, water collecting in all parts of rural areas and also mostly in urban areas is the job of women and children (8-18 Years old). In rural areas somewhere the source of water is 500 meter to 1.5 Km far from home. Since women and young girls are traditionally responsible for washing job at house, therefore, water scarcity increased their problems.

**Answer to question No.2**

There is no legislation in place to promote gender-based approach to the adverse impact of climate change on women and girls. However, the Ministry of Rural Development has implemented two huge rural development programs, “National Solidarity Program” and “ Civil Charter Program”. These two programs – one after another - are implemented since 2003 based on the priorities identified by village communities. Water supply for agriculture and dinking/washing is the most parts of these two programs. It is appreciating that gradually women are kept involved in decision making for setting village priority through village Shura (Councils).

There are more than one million IDPs live in camps that most of them displaced because of the adverse impact of climate change, particularly as a result of continuing years of drought. When the level of field crop and fruit production dropped down, automatically it reduces the number of livestock and dairy products. Traditionally all post-harvest activities (The process of farm products and fruit handling and preservation) and keeping livestock and handling and processing dairy products in rural areas are done by women. Therefore, in case of drought, in the first front, women lose their job and income. It also reduces the agriculture and animal husbandry related handicraft which are done mostly by women. In cases of migration from rural areas to urban areas due to drought situation, rural women lose their traditional job which negatively affects their lives and their children, particularly in Afghanistan that there is no job scarcity because of very poor industry and manufacturing in urban areas.

**Answer to question No. 3**

Traditional water distribution for agriculture has also been disrupted because of drought situation and also risen up of powerful people who use water pump on the high land areas to take water from the river deep basin to the highlands on hills, which farmers on the low land receive very less or no water for their crops, and are deprived of their right on water share.

There is no proper regulation in place to save water, neither in rural areas nor in cities. The government has done less work on water management through improving irrigation networks. Power and rich people had made very deep bar hole to irrigate their land, but it destroys the discharging water source of springs and under-ground water channels. While a part of the village land receive excess water and other big part of the villages’ land receive no water. And this is one of the reason of conflict at village level. There is no controlling system for water usage in urban areas. For example: in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, where water table has dropped down 20 meter during the last 17 years, householders are making deeper bar hole to take water. The situation in Kabul is alarming now. Many shallow water well in houses dried out in these recent months. The government cannot prevent anyone for making deep bare hole because there is no legislation and regulation to control on water. The government/public water supply system may cover only 10% of all households in Kabul and similarly in other big cities, and the remaining 90 % of households use their water well at houses or pay for the private water supply companies. The price per unit of water has not been regulated yet.

So, water shortage due to continuing drought situation, which has direct impact on climate change, has negatively impacted on all population particularly on women because women are more dealt with water collection and washing. Water shortage in realty is a big burden on women in all parts of Afghanistan.

The main source of energy for fueling in Afghanistan is imported oil and gas, fuel wood, charcoal, mine coal, bushes and animal dang. Because of excess cutting of forest and cutting deserts’ bushes, the rate of desertification is very high in Afghanistan. Women in rural areas have to collect fuel woods and bushes for fueling. Because of desertification, women have to walk far from the village areas to collect fuel which is very hard works. Women are traditionally responsible for cooking all the time and warming houses in wintertime. The air in cities is highly polluted particularly in wintertime because of using fossil based oil and gas, mine coal, charcoal and fuel wood which negatively impact the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan’s cities. There is no accurate data except estimation in Afghanistan on the negative impact of air pollution on the lives of all population and neither by gender.

As a general comment, climate change has caused prolonged drought in whole parts of Afghanistan. Vegetation cover has been reduced which cause heavy flood in some parts of Afghanistan. Both drought and desertification directly impacted on the lives of all population particularly on women who are to collect water from far distance in rural areas and pay money and spend more time for getting water for drinking and washing in cities. Increasing poverty and inevitable migration from villages to cities are the impact of climate change.

**Answer to question No.4**

The annual rate of water table drop down is a good indicator of adverse effect of climate change. The government of Afghanistan should publicly inform annually on the availability of water for drinking and washing in cities. The annual precipitation should be measured and its effect should be estimated on agriculture and environment. The proportion of carbon-based gases on the air should be measured regularly that proper national decisions should be taken, accordingly. The situation in IDP camps should be monitored regularly. Based on the outcome results of these steps, we can measure the extend of the adverse impact of climate change on all population, particularly on women and girls.

**Answer to question No.5 and 6**

Consultation with women on issues of adverse effect of climate change has been symbolically done by the Ministry of Rural Development through implementing the community-based priority projects under the Civil Charter program in secure areas, but such consultation at national level in the areas of designing big project is very rare. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission suggests that all development and humanitarian based projects should be consulted with women groups, including the women rights activists in the civil society organizations because now a number of CSOs are led by women in Afghanistan. All government projects and non-governmental project and industry must be analyzed during feasibility study in terms of protection and promotion of human rights, gender sensitiveness and environmental-based issues so as to reduces the adverse impact of climate change on all population including women and girls.