

## **Introduction - 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

### **ACBAR 30 Years Anniversary, Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU)**

I would like to welcome all our guests today to this 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary – NGO friends and colleagues, students and teachers from the University. It is very fitting that we are holding this event in ACKU which was founded by Mrs. Nancy Hatch Dupree who sadly died just over one year ago. Nancy was responsible for setting up and directing the ACBAR Resource and Information Centre (ARIC) in our office in Peshawar in Pakistan. The Information Centre separated from ACBAR in 2005 and is now ACKU and has become this important research library and conference centre in the University of Kabul today.

Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) was created by a group of NGOs in Peshawar, Pakistan in August 1988 to provide better coordination among NGOs for the humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and in the refugee camps in Pakistan. By the end of 1989 we had 58 NGO members – international and national. Regular meetings were held to have better information on activities in each province in Afghanistan and also meetings by sector – to ensure there were similar standards of work.

ACBAR was set up as a membership organisation with a democratic structure – we have annual elections among the members to appoint a Chairperson and Steering Committee who advise and monitor the staff working in the secretariat and report to the General Assembly of all members held twice a year. NGOs can become members once they have completed the application process and are voted in by a majority of members in the General Assembly. We ask all our NGO members to sign a Code of Conduct which includes principles of accountability and transparency to donors and Government as well as our beneficiaries.

Today we have 146 NGO members (76 national and 70 international). Our members work in 350 out of 420 districts in all 34 provinces and in 13 different sectors including education, health, emergency relief, women and gender, livelihoods, disability, environment, wash, nutrition and rights, peace and governance. The total number of staff employed by ACBAR NGO members is 38,656 (71% men and 29% women).

ACBAR's website provides information on ACBAR and its members and related stakeholders as well as a job page which is very well known in Afghanistan.

The objective of our meeting today is to review some of the achievements of NGOs as party of civil society in the last 30 years – what have we done, what do we represent and what have been our challenges. This will be discussed by our first panel of guest speakers. The second panel will look to the future and give us their ideas of what can be the role of NGOs as Afghanistan moves forward in the next 30 years. Today we have many difficulties to face in Afghanistan – the war continues, poverty is increasing and climate change is affecting the country as in many parts of the world. On the positive side, however, we have a young and more educated population emerging; so we need to see as NGOs, how we can contribute to the future development of the country.

Thank you to all of our NGO members for their continued support over the years and of course to all our donors.

**Fiona Gall**