

Helpdesk Report: Learning outcomes in Afghanistan

Date: 10 August 2011

Query: Evidence paper on accelerating learning outcomes and literacy programmes for DFID's two country programmes in Afghanistan.

Enquirer: DFID UK

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1. Overview

Currently only an average of 26% of the population aged 15 or over can read or write.

- Male: 39%
- Female: 12%

One of the first achievements of post-conflict Afghanistan was to bring almost 4 million children back to school. However, low primary enrolment especially for girls and in rural areas and very weak learning achievements remain.

A study of learning outcomes in 2010, devised a curricula-based test for a small sample of male and female students in Grades 3 and 6. The study found low levels of average achievement (an average score of 52% for Grade 3 students, and 53% for Grade 6 students), though girls seemed to do slightly better than boys, and students in community-based schools scored higher (an average score of 68%) than students in other schools.

Efforts to improve literacy rates have focused on improving inputs to teacher qualifications and training as well as the curriculum, texts books and school conditions. There is less on how these and other efforts translate into learning outcomes for students. There is a dearth of data on exam grades and school completion rates. What data does exist reveals that almost a fifth of primary students may be lost before the end of Grade 6 and only 64% of students passed exams at the end of Grade 4. This means that 65,000 Grade 4 children (36%) could not move on to Grade 5 plus the nearly quarter of a million children who were absent from the exam altogether.

Work on developing a national competency test for students started in 2008 and could provide a means to better assess learning outcomes. However, caution has been urged

regarding using tests as a sole measure of success due to the fact that teachers discriminate when issuing grades and that they can force reliance on rote learning.

Literacy programmes that have demonstrated successful outcomes and that have been either evaluated or recognised as working include:

- Community-based schools, by offering education at a reasonable distance to a child's home, have a dramatic effect on children's academic participation and performance and have tremendous potential for reducing existing gender disparities in rural areas.
- Efforts to promote active-learning pedagogy by INGOs in community- and home-based schools show some success. For example, the frequency of student behaviours such as narrating experiences or observations in a discussion, working in pairs, working in groups and solving problems were observed more amongst the CBE school children.
- International Rescue Committee (IRC) programme to support home-based schools has lead to better exam results and to less students dropping out than in the public school system.
- The COPE programme, developed by CARE Afghanistan, aims to reach underserved regions and populations with quality, community-managed education opportunities has also lead to better exam results and to less drop-outs than in the public school system.
- The Home-Based Girls' Schools (HBGS) project run by Save the Children USA in Balochistan have lead to a dramatic increase in education for girls.
- Save the Children US and Christian Children's Fund (CCF) provide education with a psychosocial focus which has enabled children affected by conflict to access educational opportunities as well as improve their confidence and maintain normalising routines.
- The Roqia Center for Women's Rights' adult literacy programme places men and women, as well as various ethnicities, together in the same classroom as couples. They learnt to support each other's learning and felt their newfound literacy skills had changed their daily lives, their view of themselves and their relationships with spouse, family and community, even nation.

A number of other studies are included in this review. However they were either unable to prove that the interventions lead to better learning outcomes or did not assess outcomes. Generally the studies assessed inputs (for example, teacher training, curricula, text books) aimed at improving the quality of education.

There is recognition by some of the authors that the affect on learning outcomes needs to be assessed and some programmes that do not currently include a focus on learning outcomes indicate (or recommend) plans to do so.

2. Overview texts

Defining the gaps: The case of Afghanistan (from education reforms to sustainable development)

Wardak and Hirth, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Ministry of Education, 2009

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/7A16B01A302421D64925758E00036099-Full_Report.pdf

Some achievements (and challenges) of the Afghan education system:

- Between 2001 and 2008, primary school enrolment rose from 0.9 million to over 6 million and the proportion of girls from virtually 0 to 35%. Yet half the population of school children is still thought to be out of school.

- The number of teachers has risen seven-fold but their qualifications are low and only 28% are women. In a 2005 survey in Afghanistan 200 teachers were asked to sit the same exam as their students; only ten passed.
- 22% of teachers meet the minimum qualifications of having passed Grade 14, the last grade of secondary school.
- Since 2003 about 4000 school buildings have been rehabilitated or newly constructed. But thousands of communities have no access to schools due to distance or security. The Taliban burnt down or closed 6% of schools between October 2005 and March 2007.

The government has committed to the following (by 2010):

- Net enrolment rate for boys and girls in primary grades will be at least 75% and 60%, respectively.
- Female teachers will be increased by 50%.
- A new curriculum will be operational in secondary schools.
- 70% of teachers will pass a national competency test.
- A national annual testing system for students will be in place.

After the floods of 2002, thousands of teachers were recruited, most of whom, were not qualified. To ensure that students had textbooks, hasty steps were taken that affected the quality of teaching and learning in all schools. The majority of the over 11,000 schools around the country still have insufficient textbooks.

Several reform efforts are underway to enhance quality of existing teachers and produce larger numbers of qualified teachers. Presently, a National Program on In-Service Teacher Training (NPITT) is underway to provide series of training and follow-on supports to teachers and school administrators; and establish professional development networks.

To increase production of more qualified teachers and expedite the improved training of existing teachers who have an education of Grade 12, the number of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) was increased from 9 in 2002 to 37 in 2008. As a result of this expansion, the number of student-teachers reached 32,800 in 2008 (41% female) which is four times more than 2006; and the annual graduation from In-service and Pre-Service programme from 80 (in 2001), jumped to 4,939 (in 2007) and 8,500 (58% women) in 2008.

Two schemes to provide incentives to girls who enrol in and complete their education at TTC and to faculty who teach at TTCs in more disadvantaged provinces, are being carried out in 25 and 18 provinces, respectively.

Following the Teachers Standards and new Pre-Service Teacher Education Framework, and supported by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), detailed syllabi and brand new textbooks and supplementary resource materials have been developed for the two-year TTC programme. Also, a special curriculum for female graduates of Grade 9 was developed to train them as teachers of the lower primary.

Since the spring of 2003, a new school curriculum has been developed for primary grades. A new curriculum for secondary is under development. Since 2004, around 61 million school textbooks have been printed.

Country profile prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008 Education for All by 2015: Will we make it? Afghanistan Non-formal education

Lisa Deyo, UNESCO, 2007

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001555/155521e.pdf>

This resource gives an extensive overview of non-formal education programmes in Afghanistan, including those focusing on literacy. Some examples are listed here:

Government:

- The Ministry of Education supports two programmes that offer both literacy and livelihoods education. The National Federation of UNESCO Clubs and Associations, with support from JICA, initiated a three-year “community-based NFE project on the development and management of Community Learning Centers (CLCs)”. These facilities are used for literacy and vocational education, training programmes, and materials development activities. To date, six community learning centres have been built in the Kabul area.
- The second programme is a follow up and expansion of the Literacy and Community Empowerment Programme (LCEP), a USAID-supported programme developed and implemented by the Education Development Center and UN-HABITAT. This programme integrates literacy, governance, and economic empowerment. LCEP developed participants' literacy and numeracy skills to support their engagement in the work of the Community Development Councils and overall community planning and development. The Literacy and Community Empowerment Program trained over 9,600 men and women across 190 communities in five provinces.
- Literacy and Community Empowerment Programme 2 is a USD \$40 million dollar programme to build the capacity of the Ministry of Education and expand literacy education programming that integrates literacy, numeracy, and governance along with training in business skills development and productive skills and the promotion of self help groups and community banks. The LCEP 2 is a five year programme, which began in 2007. The programme will serve 300,000 adults in 3,000 rural and urban communities over the five-year period.

NGO:

- ActionAid (2007) has provided education to child ex-combatants for their transition to the formal school system in Grade 4. The organisation reports that 900 children participated in life skills training and passed the tests required for entry to the formal schools in the fourth grade.
- Aga Khan has developed a literacy programme integrating use of the Ministry of Education adult literacy texts, REFLECT methods, and learner generated materials for mothers' groups. This programme is currently offered in Bamyan and Badakhshan.
- BRAC offers Basic Education for Older Children (BEOC) classes for youth from the ages of 11 to 15. The two-year BEOC classes cover the first three grades of the MOE curriculum. After completion of the programme, students are expected to enroll in Grade 4.
- Catholic Relief Services offers Accelerated Learning (AL) classes at the primary school level for youth and women who did not have the chance to attend the formal school system. Over 2,000 children and women have participated in this programme since 2003, and 22 village libraries have been established. Early childhood development classes have been established in some areas to promote the participation of women with young children in the AL programme.
- A consortium of NGOs set up the Learning for Life (LfL) adult literacy and learning initiative designed to create a pool of women and older girls in rural areas of 12 provinces qualified for Community Health Worker (CHW) and Community Midwifery training. The first tier of classes designed was a nine-month Foundations Programme - multi-grade classes covering reading, writing and numeracy skills at Grades 1 to 6, religion/social studies, and health-related topics. There was a slightly greater focus on the literacy and numeracy aspects of this programme. Altogether 8,000 women participated in 360 Foundation programmes. Foundations facilitators were paid around \$50 monthly.

Afghanistan Teacher Education Project (TEP) Situational Analysis: Teacher Education and Professional Development in Afghanistan

Spink, J., N.M. Karyar, and Z. Atmar, Kabul, Afghanistan: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), 2004

<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/431E-Teacher%20Education-Analysis-web.pdf>

The Afghanistan Teacher Education Programme (TEP) is the first concerted effort on behalf of all donors in the teacher training sector to develop a coordinated and integrated response to assist the MoE in achieving its goals for teacher development. TEP is an initiative to support a coordinated response to teacher development in Afghanistan. Collaborating agencies include the Academic Council on Education, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank, DANIDA, JICA and CAll. The programme aims to: produce a long-term plan for teacher education in Afghanistan; identify and initiate immediate term activities focusing on rapid, country-wide in-service teacher training programmes, setting up Teacher Resource Centres at a sub-district level; and enabling a coordination among diverse inputs and delivery systems through a commonly agreed upon approach.

To date, two strands of work have been agreed:

- 1) a country-wide in-service training programme covering all teachers presently in schools
- 2) an overall Teacher Education Programme (TEP) focusing on long-term teacher development.

This situational analysis is a part of the second activity of TEP. It aims to provide a short overview of teachers and teacher development programmes in Afghanistan to date (see agencies involved in this area of work below), which can then be incorporated into longer-term development objectives of teacher training.

Government Support to Teacher Education:

- Teacher Training Colleges
- In-service regional centres
- Institutes of Higher Education/Universities

International Organisations Support to Teacher Training include:

- UNICEF/Columbia University Teachers College
- TEP Rapid Teacher Training Programme
- World Bank
- ADB Rural Education Project
- Creative Associates APEP Accelerated Learning Programme
- Swedish Committee of Afghanistan
- CARE COPE Project
- AKDN Rural Education Support Programme
- IRC Teacher Training Programme
- BRAC Community Based Schools

Development of Education

National report of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Ministry of Education, 2008

http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/afghanistan_NR08.pdf

This report provides an overview of the education sector in Afghanistan and government plans for the sector. There is also a section on learning outcomes which gives an idea of how the government defines the term (concerning the efforts to improve learning achievements and reduce inequalities).

Through a national consultative process in 2007 with participation from international and national experts, a new curriculum was developed and relevant syllabi for Grades 1 through 12. Examples of development of innovative teaching and learning practices include:

- Based on the new curriculum, 109 primary books were developed in 2007, printed and are currently under distribution.
- Books for lower and upper secondary education and for third languages (local languages) were also developed, printed and distributed. Teacher guides have also been developed.
- With the aim of enhancing the academic capacity to develop good quality books, a process to attract the best modern and professional and religious experts was launched in 2007. To date, 113 Afghan experts have been hired by the Ministry of Education.
- Teachers in all provinces are receiving orientation on how to use the new textbooks.

UNESCO Country Programming Document (UCPD) Afghanistan: UNESCO Kabul 2010 – 2011

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001875/187584e.pdf>

An overview of UNESCO's work on education and literacy and future, For example:

- The LAND project (Literacy and Non-Formal Education Development in Afghanistan, 2003-2005), which aimed at developing technical and structural foundations for promoting literacy and non-formal education
- The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) - adopted as the national literacy framework for all the stakeholders, concerned ministries, local governments, UN, bi-laterals, NGOs and civil society to collectively work for more coordinated, harmonised and effective implementation of literacy work.
- Under the LIFE framework the Programme for Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA) is one of the largest literacy interventions to promote literacy in the country.
- Under the coordination of UNESCO, the UN country team, responding to the challenge of very high levels of female illiteracy, has developed an integrated programme platform called LEARN (Literacy & Education in Afghanistan, Right Now!) to complement the ongoing activities led by the Ministry of Education and other key players involved in the sector.
- UNESCO Kabul has started a process of piloting Literacy Assessment surveys in Afghanistan. The objectives of this study are to obtain high-quality and accurate literacy data in Afghanistan and to promote its effective use in formulating national policy, designing appropriate programme interventions to improve literacy levels and to monitor the progress.
- In addition, UNESCO is supporting the Ministry of Education to develop a Non-Formal Education Management Information System (NFEMIS).

3. Sector-wide analysis/studies

Do Children Learn in Afghan Schools? Assessment of Math and Language Achievements of Students at the End of Grades 3 and 6 in SCA Supported Schools

Amid Mohammad Mansory, Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA), February 2010

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/reliefweb_pdf/node-359290.pdf

A study of learning outcomes in 2010, devised a curricula-based test for a small sample of male and female students in Grades 3 and 6. The study found low levels of average achievement (an average score of 52% for Grade 3 students, and 53% for Grade 6 students), though girls seemed to do slightly better than boys, and students in community-based schools scored higher (an average score of 68%) than students in other schools.

Education Sector Analysis – Afghanistan

Packer et al, Adam Smith International, 2010

<http://www.ncg.no/index.asp?id=34891>

The quality of the teaching and learning process is critical but this too is often not well understood or assessed systematically in many school systems. In Afghanistan, a recent study on the state of teaching quality in 300 schools will be important in this regard (Referred to in the Teacher Education Department Report 1388 (2009).

Perhaps the most compelling and disturbing indicator of the quality of education in Afghanistan is its levels of literacy. There are no accurate data on this issue, and literacy is notoriously difficult to assess, but one estimate puts youth literacy (15-24 years of age) at around 34% (18% for women) and adult literacy at 28% (13% for women). Given that the education of mothers is an important factor in children attending school, these low literacy levels are themselves a barrier to schooling.

In the absence of other learning outcome related indicators, school completion data for the primary or basic cycles of education provide intermediate insights into the quality of general education, as do transition rates from one level of education to the next. But this data is not readily available over time. However, what data exists gives some insights into the inability of the system to retain students at all levels of the general education system for 1387. It is almost certain that these data underestimate drop out and poor retention, given that they include children absent from school, many of whom do not return.

For the first four years of primary school, numbers remain reasonably steady. Thereafter, almost a fifth of primary students may be lost before the end of Grade 6. The chances of acquiring and retaining literacy and numeracy are very limited without four to five years of good primary education, so many children will fail to reach even minimum standards.

Examination results serve as another imperfect marker of the quality of education, the most notable statistic being that many students who are nominally registered or enrolled in school do not sit or are not eligible to take school examinations. In 1388 (2009), 22% of general education students fell into this category. Of those who sat examinations from Grades 1-12, over 73% passed and 5.18% failed. The lowest pass rate is at the end of Grade 4, at 64%. This means that 65,000 Grade 4 children (36%) could not move on to Grade 5 plus the nearly quarter of a million children who were absent from the exam altogether.

Even accepting that Afghanistan has a six day school week, there is inadequate classroom learning time in general education schools. This is a weak foundation for learning.

This text also highlights some shortfalls in the quality of some of the more important inputs into general education schools that will impact the quality of education:

- teachers
- school infrastructure
- school security
- school health
- learning materials/equipment

The roll-out of the new primary curriculum is a considerable achievement. A framework for monitoring its implementation and revision is in place. The new secondary curriculum and the development of its attendant texts and guides are progressing even if the 1389 (2010) target will not be met completely. Work on learning assessment and examination revision has moved more slowly with new targets set in NESP II for 1393 (2014). The establishment of a National Education Standards Authority (NESPA), an independent body to be responsible for standards and accreditation, has not yet happened.

There is little or no financing available in MoE's own operational and development budgets to meet the scale and the complexity of improving the quality of learning in Afghanistan's schools. This represents a large measure of dependence on external aid for improving quality, a situation that is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future.

Two projects to improve the quality of general education are:

- The Education Quality Improvement Programme started in 1383 (2004), financed by ARTF, the World Bank (IDA) and the Government of Norway. In its first phase, 822 school buildings were rehabilitated or constructed, 30, 000 teachers received training and well over 8,000 School Shuras were established to help to manage and develop their own schools. Now, in its second phase, the focus remains on a multi-pronged approach to improving the quality of education through school grants, teacher and principal training and education and better monitoring and coordination. It moves money down to schools and their communities in support of the delivery of school improvement plans, for school rehabilitation and construction and to mobilise and strengthen school Shuras. The teacher training sub-programme operates at district level through local NGOs and District Emergency Organisations (DEOs). For 9,500 school principals, the focus is on administration and leadership. And part of the programme is designed to support the increased enrolment of women in teacher training.
- The Textbook Printing and Distribution Project is a grant from USAID to Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA) beginning in March 2007 and continuing annually through February 2011. DANIDA acts as the fiduciary agent for the printing of new curriculum textbooks for school Grades 1 - 6. DANIDA also works with MoE to ensure that textbooks are distributed appropriately. The tripartite collaboration between the U.S. Government, DANIDA, and MOE helps to ensure that all Afghan students in primary schools have better access to quality education.

4. Programme evaluations – sector-wide

Evaluation of MoE/UNICEF's "Basic Education and Gender Equality [BEGE] Programme" for 2006-2008 Afghanistan

Anders Wirak and Janne Lexow, Sida, 2008

http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/1225711354_2008_11_02_eval_unicef_educ_afghanistan.pdf

The Swedish and Norwegian governments have provided substantial support to the Afghanistan's Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNICEF's Basic Education and Gender Equality (BEGE) since 2006. The main purpose of this evaluation is to assess if UNICEF's stated objectives has been accomplished during the evaluated program period (2006-mid 2008).

Fieldwork was carried out in Balkh, Faryab and Sar-e Pol Provinces, in addition to Kabul City from 10-27 August 2008. The team conducted interviews with MOE staff at central, provincial, district and school level, with UNICEF staff, representatives from NGOs, UN organisations and bilateral donors to the education sector. The team visited one teacher training course, literacy classes, remote community based schools and formal schools. Representatives from the community 'shuras', elders, religious leaders and women were interviewed.

The team concludes that UNICEF, through the MOE/BEGE programme, has successfully reached most of the targets set and implemented the programme according to plans, and most of the initially-planned activities are still in the programme.

Some results include:

UNICEF promotes its education activities through the concept 'child-friendly schools'. There are still more schools without buildings than schools with buildings; sanitation and water facilities are often non-existent; teachers have poor qualifications; and the pedagogical methods are traditionally based on rote learning. UNICEF has, through assisting the MOE/BEGE programme, contributed to creating a foundation for more child-friendly schools through teacher training, provision of materials and textbooks, construction of schools and to some extent, improved health, water and sanitation. However, there does not appear to be a focus on learning outcomes.

A main focus of BEGE has been to establish education opportunities for primary-school-age children in very remote areas where no other school exists. These community-based schools (CBSs) teach the regular primary school curriculum for Grade 1-3. MOE/UNICEF CBSs are now found in 28 provinces in the country, catering for nearly 150,000 children, with a fairly 50:50 % distribution between girls and boys.

Another focus of the programme has been to provide literacy training for women. So far, achievements of this component have by far exceeded the targets. By mid-2008, 194,124 women had participated in a 9-month course. More than 7,000 centres had been established, all with one facilitator who had received training. With a few exceptions, the majority of these facilitators were women.

UNICEF has assisted the MOE in decentralising the curriculum framework to the provinces, schools and teachers through training and production of textbooks. More than 50,000 teachers (of which nearly 40% women) have received orientation of new textbooks as a direct result of the programme. INSET I is based on a cascade model where core teachers have been trained in Kabul to train provincial staff who then give training to the teachers. The weak part in this component is that little has been done so far to investigate how teachers translate what they have learned into practical classroom behaviour.

So far, UNICEF has not been very involved in policies and curriculum to make the system inclusive for all children. There have been pilot schemes for both nomad and children with special needs, but these have not yet been institutionalised within the MOE.

More could be done for new staff to refine their understanding and knowledge of essential concepts such as child-friendly schools, improved teaching and learning outcomes

2005 AFG: Country Programme Evaluation Government of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan

http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_31122.html

The 2003-2005 Master Plan of Operations (MPO) signed by the Government of Afghanistan and UNICEF emphasised that the Country Programme of Cooperation (CPC) would support and strengthen Afghanistan's commitment and capacities towards the progressive realisation of the rights of children to survival, development, protection and participation, as set out under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The core of the Basic Education Programme has been the Back-to-School campaign with a strong focus on increasing access to education, especially for girls. The emphasis was on formal primary education, especially the initial grades, and relatively less attention to non-formal education for children above 10 years old who either dropped out of primary school or who had never been to school (accelerated/'second-chance' learning, as well as adult literacy). Attempts to improve the quality of education through teacher training and curriculum development have not stemmed drop-outs, whose numbers are high.

The design of the programme took into account human rights (especially those of girls and women), but the programme cannot be said to be fully compliant with guidance concerning rights-based and results-oriented programming.

The greatest achievement of the programme has been the enrolment of 4.4 million children, of which 400,000 are girls. This means a tenfold increase of enrolment rates for girls.

Significant achievements were also made with regards to the quality of education, e.g. through curriculum development and teacher training, and in the areas of information and policy systems.

Quantitative achievements remain fragile, as drop-out rates are high and underlying factors explaining abandonment and retention are as yet not well understood. Civil society still shows a relatively limited interest for education, especially for girls. School environments still have a long way to go to become child-friendly. There is also a need to include basic life-skills in curricula. While gender disparities have been addressed to the greatest possible extent, there has been less attention for other disparities (e.g. between regions, locations, social groups).

Audit of USAID/Afghanistan's Building Education Support Systems for Teachers Project

Department of State, Office of Inspector General, Audit Report No. 5-306-10-006-P, January 29, 2010

<http://www.usaid.gov/oig/public/fy10rpts/5-306-10-006-p.pdf>

USAID/Afghanistan designed the Building Education Support Systems for Teachers Project to be implemented in 11 Afghan provinces (2006-2011). To implement the project, the mission awarded a \$73 million contract to Creative Associates International, Inc. The project works directly with the MOE to improve the quality of education. The project's two main goals are to raise the educational quality of all teachers by (1) improving teaching through teacher training, and (2) institutionalising structures and systems in the MOE that support high-quality teaching. The project emphasises developing curricula and support programmes for teachers that promise not only to improve learning outcomes for Afghan children but also to provide the basis for evaluating teaching and learning.

The project is making progress in helping to improve the quality of education – 50,600 of the target of 54,000 teachers in the 11 provinces had received in-service training for teachers already working for the MOE. However the project has not attempted to measure the extent to which teaching and learning outcomes have been improved. The project has also not yet achieved its two main goals: improving teaching through teacher training and institutionalising MOE structures and systems that support high-quality teaching.

Audit of USAID/Afghanistan's Primary Education Program

USAID, 2005

<http://www.usaid.gov/oig/public/fy05rpts/5-306-05-005-p.pdf>

As of 2004, 3 of 10 Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP) activities audited, despite making significant progress, had not achieved their planned outputs. Specifically:

- The printing and distribution of more than 15 million textbooks should have been completed in June 2004. However, 1.5 million textbooks were still stored in warehouses at December 31, 2004. Several factors impeded textbook distribution, including a 4-month delay in getting funding
- The APEP's accelerated learning classes were designed to quickly raise the educational levels of older students who had not attended school, and then move the students into Afghanistan's public school system at the appropriate grade level for their ages. Only 264,645 of the planned 340,000 achieved the grades.

- 119,000 (70%) of 170,000 students enrolled in accelerated learning classes were to be female. At December 31, 2004, however, female enrolment was only 94,494 or 56% of 170,000 students.

These three activities did not achieve their planned outputs for a number of reasons, including a delay in receiving funding for the APEP. Targets for student enrolment were achieved and the target number of provincial and village teachers were trained. Radio-based teacher training programmes were produced and broadcast.

Education Quality Improvement Program Mid Term Review Mission Aide Memoire

Latif et al, NORAD COLLECTED REVIEWS 8/2007

<http://www.lins.no/db/pdf/AfghanistanEQIP.pdf>

The EQUIP programme became effective in July 2004 in 10 provinces and in 2006, the programme was expanded to five more provinces. The expansion was done at the request of the MOE to address issues of access and quality in the most disadvantaged areas such as Nuristan, Uruzgan and Daikundi.

Implementation progress has been good except for the teacher training component and thus the IP rating remains a moderately satisfactory. The project disbursement reached US\$16 million, most of which was achieved over the past 10 months. The disbursement is likely to speed up considerably in the next few months due to the start of all-school construction activities in the spring.

Findings of the evaluation do not include any focus on learning outcomes. However,

- Progress has been made in increasing rates of female participation notably, the dramatic increase in girls' enrolments and in the number of female teachers.
- EQUIP has been very successful in mobilising communities for establishing School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations under the quality grants enhancement subcomponent. Refresher programmes will be needed to deepen community understanding of quality education.

An important literacy programme mentioned in other texts but for which there is currently no evaluation available:

Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-2): Fact sheet

USAID, 2011

http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/documents/document/Document/1353/LCEP_Fact_Sheet,

USAID's Learning for Community Empowerment Programme (LCEP-2) is a four-year project that teaches literacy in the context of lifelong learning and community economic empowerment in rural and urban settings. LCEP-2 instruction offers literacy and numeracy education, vocational and business development skills, and financial literacy through self-help savings and investment groups. LCEP-2 works in alignment with the self-help priorities of the MOE as stated in the NESP II. LCEP-2 supports capacity building at the MOE and the establishment of a National Literacy Programme (NLP). Also, technical assistance to help develop and scale up the community-based component of the NLP constitutes a key component of LCEP-2.

Activities include:

- providing five technical advisers to support the implementation of NLP
- developing an NLP framework and institutionalising systems for student assessment, literacy teacher accreditation, national teacher training and support, monitoring and evaluation, and general management and coordination

- developing learning materials on topics of general interest, such as microfinance management, entrepreneurship practices, and hygiene
- establishing learning centres that provide integrated vocational skills, literacy, numeracy education, and savings and investment programs for older youth and adults (with a target of 60% women)
- conducting training programmes for self-help savings and investment groups in how to invest their savings and improve livelihoods.

Accomplishments include:

- establishing 9,234 learning centres in 20 provinces, covering 2,495 communities in 103 districts, with approximately 223,000 students enrolled
- forming 10,290 self-help savings and investment groups with total savings of about \$1 million
- developing a set of integrated literacy and productive skills materials (34 chapters)
- providing training to 20 lead trainers, 40 provincial trainers, 250 district trainers, 40 productive skills assistants, and 5,000 village facilitators
- analysing the policies and resources of the MoE's Literacy Department in order to improve teacher and student certification systems.

5. Programme evaluations – community and home-based

The Effect of Village-Based Schools: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial in Afghanistan

Dana Burde and Leigh Linden, Innovations for Poverty Action, 2010

http://poverty-action.advomatic.com/sites/default/files/119_afghanistan_village_schools_nov_10.pdf

The Partnership for Advancing Community-based Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) is a five-year USAID-funded programme intended to expand educational opportunities to children, especially girls, in areas of Afghanistan that lack access to formal governmental schools. The PACE-A programme is designed to minimise the distance children must travel to go to school by starting schools directly in the children's villages.

Under PACE-A, the community provides the space for the school, while PACE-A provides educational materials (writing utensils, notebooks, books, and teacher materials) as well as training for teachers. Teachers receive Afghan MOE Teacher Education Program (TEP) training, in order to streamline the certification of community-based school teachers into the MOE system. Within the classrooms, students are exposed to the same government curriculum that students in public schools encounter.

The impact of school proximity on educational outcomes was evaluated by conducting a randomised evaluation of PACE-A. With a sample of 31 villages in two districts in northwest Afghanistan, 13 villages were randomly assigned to receive community-based schools a year before the schools were supplied to the entire sample. This phased-in approach allows for estimation of the one-year impacts of the community-based schools on children's school attendance and knowledge of mathematics and the local language, Dari. Test scores are evaluated using a short test covering maths and language skills, comprised of questions taken directly from Afghan government textbooks.

The presence of a community-based school increases overall enrolment in formal schools by 42 percentage points, and increases test scores by 0.5 standard deviations overall. Students attending community-based schools experience an increase in test scores of 1.2 standard deviations. Distance proves particularly important for school enrolment, with enrolment rates

falling by 15 percentage points and test scores by 0.19 standard deviations for every additional mile a child has to walk to school.

Benefits accrue disproportionately to girls. Their enrolment rates increase by 23 percentage points above those of boys and their overall average test scores increase by 0.25 standard deviations more. The test score effects on girls is the same as that for boys, implying that the larger impact on overall test scores is solely due to higher enrolment rates. Girls are also more sensitive than boys to distance. The enrolment rate for girls falls by 19 percentage points per additional mile while boys' enrolment only falls by 13 percentage points. Similarly, girls' test scores fall by 0.24 standard deviations per additional mile while boys fall by 0.15 standard deviations. The net effect of these disproportionate impacts is that in the treatment group the enrolment gap between boys and girls is almost eliminated, falling from 21 percent to 5 percent, and the test score gap is reduced by a third after only a single year.

This study shows that geographic proximity has a dramatic effect on children's academic participation and performance and has tremendous potential for reducing existing gender disparities in rural areas.

Active-Learning Pedagogies: Policy, Professional Development and Classroom Practices- A case study of two post-conflict contexts: Afghanistan and Somaliland - Case Study 1: Afghanistan

Geeta Menon, USAID and Educational Quality Improvement Program, 2008

http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADM719.pdf

This study attempts to understand efforts made by Afghanistan and Somaliland, two post-conflict contexts, in advancing active-learning pedagogy. Three primary methods were used for data collection; a review of documents, interviews and interaction with stakeholders, and classroom observations.

In both cases, international NGOs, such as the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children Alliance Partners, CARE, the Norwegian Refugee Committee, the Aga Khan Foundation and UN agencies (UNESCO and UNICEF), played significant roles in providing education during the years of conflict and early reconstruction. Most of these agencies provided education through non-formal options such as community schools or home-based schools. Literature reviews show that active-learning or child-centered methods were often part of these learning options. The teacher training undertaken by these agencies varied in content, duration and approach in both contexts.

In context of active-learning methods, there is clear evidence of child-centered methods being used by teachers, albeit only occasionally. This was observed more often amongst the community-based education (CBE) teachers of Afghanistan. The frequency of student behaviors such as narrating experiences or observations in a discussion, working in pairs, working in groups, solving problems were observed more amongst the CBE school children.

Final Evaluation: ABEC Afghanistan

Frank McNerney, UMASS, 2005

<http://www.careevaluations.org/Evaluations/AFG%20-%20ABEC%20-%20Final%20-%20Sep%2005.doc>

In 2002, four NGOs based in the USA and an American higher education institution formed the Afghanistan Basic Education Consortium (ABEC) in response to a request from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Afghan MOE for a programme to pilot gender-sensitive, community-based basic education in Afghanistan. The focus of the two-year project was to increase access and quality for under-served groups, particularly girls, and to test innovative approaches to improving education access and quality. Project implementation began in January 2004 in Paktika, Panshir, Paktya, and Faryab provinces. At the beginning of July

2004, project implementation was extended to four more provinces: Ghazni, Kapisa, Nangarhar, and Saripul.

- Community participation in basic education was inferred by the establishment of a village education committee (VEC) and the number of meetings held. In three out of four provinces that the data collectors visited, almost every village had an active VEC.
- Overall, the respondents were very happy to have a new or refurbished school in their community, with almost no complaints concerning the quality or design of the buildings. There were no direct questions in the surveys about the significance of community-government partnership for school construction/rehabilitation regarding increased student (or girl) enrolment or community ownership of the schools.
- Teachers reported that they had attended some kind of workshops, such as those on teaching methodology, social development and gender issues, ranging from 5 to 40 days in length in the same time frame. The workshops boosted the teachers' morale, indicated by their expressed confidence in their students' interest in learning, and their belief that students were learning well.
- All the teachers reported that their students were more interested in learning than in the past and were doing well in reading and writing. The teachers attributed this to their upgraded professional practice in teaching. However, based on the data collectors' learning assessment of 126 out of 131 student participants, the results did not show a strong correlation between teacher-reported students' learning and the data collectors' assessment of the students' learning, although the descriptions for the scores and on what basis the data collectors' scored the participants are not known.
- The limitations of the procedure-oriented classroom observation checklist failed to provide information on the teachers' 'professional' expertise relevant to promoting students' learning. The student survey did not give space for students' comments on their teachers' teaching or their learning.
- Although the data did not explicitly show increased girl enrolment or attendance, there was a significant change in attitude in the communities towards education of girls over the age of twelve, with almost every community stating that girls over twelve should go to school.

Meeting EFA: Reaching the Underserved through Complementary Models of Effective Schooling. Working Paper

Destefano et al., USAID and Educational Quality Improvement Program, 2007

<http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-CompModelsEffectiveSchooling-Book.pdf>

This paper features two relevant case studies:

1. Meeting EFA: Afghanistan Home-Based Schools (EQUIP2 Case Study).

Kirk and Winthrop, Washington, D.C.: Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2), Academy for Educational Development (AED), 2006

This case study examines the model and outcomes of the home-based schooling programme developed and implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in four provinces: Kabul, Paktia, Logar, and Nangarhar. (The programme has subsequently expanded to cover certain districts in Herat province, western Afghanistan).

The home-based classrooms are either single-sex or mixed and are located in teachers' homes, compounds, or community spaces such as mosques. Classes last 3.25 hours a day, six days a week. Curriculum is determined by the students' level of learning—usually Grade 1—and the teacher and students graduate to the next level each year. If necessary, additional classes are started in subsequent years for new students. Materials and teacher training and supervision are provided by the IRC while the community members commit to supporting the teachers, sometimes with in-kind compensation such as food.

- From 2000 to its peak in 2003, the programme enrolled over 14,000 students, 58% of whom were girls. Because students have been able to transfer into public schools starting in 2004, enrolment in home-based schools has dropped, especially among boys. As a result, in 2005, home-based schools enrolled 5,800 students, 70% of whom were girls.
- Home-based schools' capacity to absorb demand left unmet by public schools varies.
- Statistics from the IRC programme show that dropout is generally not an issue in home-based schools. Attendance is high, and students tend to persist with impressive levels of commitment and enthusiasm.
- Kabul and Logar have estimated survival rates above those of formal public schools, especially for girls. Paktia's survival rates are very low. However, low survival rates in the home-based schools were expected because this is the region where integration has been most successful. No data are currently available on student performance in public schools.
- The fact that home-based students transfer to and integrate into formal public schools is a positive outcome for the IRC programme. Unfortunately, statistics showing how many students continue through to sixth grade after integration are not available. 80% or more of the students in home-based schools in Nangarhar and Paktia provinces in 2004 integrated into public schools in 2005. The percentage of integrated students is much lower in Kabul and Logar provinces.
- Home-based schools follow MOE student assessment policies. All students in each grade are assessed every three months using tests developed, administered, and graded by their teachers. Home-based teachers receive guidance, training (and feedback) on how to design assessments in seminars provided by IRC.
- The data available indicate between 90 and 99% of students receive satisfactory grades in all provinces each year. For example, in December 2003, 98.5% of home-based school students passed year-end exams. Passing rates are difficult to compare across different regions because exams are not standardised. However, because teachers receive the same training and practice test questions, it can be assumed that most students who receive a passing grade in home-based schools adequately understand most grade-appropriate material.
- Qualitative evaluations of student performance in home-based schools support the high pass rates students are obtaining on the in-class assessments. Teachers in home-based schools report that their students are learning and performing to a standard they would expect for their grade levels. IRC staff report that graduates from home-based schools are able to pass the entrance exams to enter higher grades in public schools. Research finds that teachers in public schools that have integrated home-based students are also impressed with the abilities of those students.
- While home-based schools vary across provinces, average student-teacher ratios are always dramatically less than in public schools.
- Home-based schools make a significant contribution to student wellbeing and child protection.
- In December 2003, approximately 99% of home-based school students passed year-end exams. With such a high pass rate, the cost per learning outcome for a primary completer is \$134.

2. Meeting EFA: Afghanistan Community Schools (EQUIP2 Case Study)

Balwanz, David, Washington D.C.: Educational Quality Improvement Program 2 (EQUIP2), Academy for Educational Development (AED), 2006

Since the mid-1990s, a small number of NGOs have promoted community and home-based schools as approaches to expanding access to primary education. These schools are usually based in homes or mosques, hire local teachers, and receive supervision and financing from Village Education Committees (VECs) with the help of NGO partners. CARE Afghanistan

launched its first small pilot education access programme in Khost province in 1994. The initiative has evolved into the Community Organized Primary Education (COPE) programme and by 2003 was operating in 479 schools in nine provinces. The goal of the COPE programme is to reach underserved regions and populations with quality, community-managed education opportunities. Since the Afghan MOE has re-emerged as the dominant force in the education sector, CARE has shifted programme design to integrate COPE schools and students into the government-controlled public school system.

- In 1998, COPE schools enrolled 4,411 participants in three provinces. In 2003, COPE schools enrolled 45,514 participants in nine provinces.
- From 1998 to 2003, female enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment in COPE schools increased from 34 to 55%. In 2003, COPE schools in Khost and Logar accounted for 37 and 33%, respectively, of all girls in primary schools.
- Schools' locations are chosen specifically to reduce the impact of distance as a barrier to access. CARE requires that there be no other schools within three kilometres of a new school location.
- COPE schools have exhibited dramatically higher survival rates (50% to Grade 6) and lower drop-out rates (8%) than the public school system.
- Graduation rates were more difficult to calculate because of transfers to public schools. However, COPE records show that 531 of the 783 students graduating from COPE schools in 2003 (68%) continued on to secondary school.
- COPE schools follow the same curriculum and formal examination schedule as public schools. Students are tested in math and literacy using teacher-designed exams. COPE staff provide teachers with training in test administration and design in order to help teachers adequately measure student competency and comprehension. In recent years, COPE staff has started to provide in-service teacher training on the basic competencies framework. Even so, standards for the assessment of student proficiency in basic competencies were not a feature of government- or NGO-led primary schools in 2003.
- The range of pass rates between boys and girls and across grades over the period 2000-2003 is consistently above 91%. However, since exams vary from teacher to teacher, exam results alone do not provide sufficient data to assess student proficiency in numeracy and literacy.
- COPE schools' significant investment in teaching and learning materials likely supported the classroom learning environment. From 2000 to 2003, COPE provided 173,000 textbooks and teacher guides to COPE schools and provided 1.4 million pieces of stationery. Additionally, continuous assessment, high levels of student-teacher contact time, and the positive learning environment of COPE schools might have contributed to consistently strong test results.
- Phase-Out Strategy: The strategy laid out a plan for the incremental integration of COPE schools into the public school system. Over time, all COPE schools will be fully handed over to government management and integrated into the public system. No documentation definitively states whether the integrated schools include the features previously considered critical to COPE schools' success.
- In December 2003, 94% of COPE students passed their year-end exams, making the cost per learning outcome just over \$40.

SCF/US, Home-based Girls' Schools in Balochistan Refugee Villages: A Strategy Study, Pakistan

Andrea B. Rugh, Save the Children USA Pakistan / Afghanistan Field Office, 2000
<http://www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/inventory/pwg005/pwg005.pdf>

This report summarises the result of an internal evaluation conducted over a three week period of the Home-Based Girls' Schools (HBGS) project run by Save the Children USA in Balochistan (a province in Pakistan). The overall conclusion reached is that the HBGS

provides accessible and appropriate opportunities for Afghan girls who would not otherwise be able to obtain an education. The HBGS programme is an excellent programme overall. It provides accessible and appropriate opportunities for Afghan girls who would not otherwise be able to obtain an education. Girls are learning to read and write with comprehension, and are capable of doing many math problems to the level that should be expected. There is a uniformity of the positive learning environment that reflects well on the monitoring and supervision systems of Field Officers and on the direction of their Programme Managers, as well as the dedicated teachers and students who are most directly involved.

However, existing tests to select teachers and to assess student learning set low expectations and are poor instruments for improving programme quality. GTZ materials have been successful in supporting good learning results but are difficult for new teachers to use without considerable training. The University of Nebraska at Omaha materials are weak and force reliance on rote learning methods. Children depend too much on teacher direction. The weakest parts of the programme are those that require explanation of concepts, independent learning and application of skills. Supervision and training focus on teacher behaviours rather than learning outcomes. Because of the physical distances from Quetta and between refugee villages, SC/US staff can only be expected to provide minimal instructional support.

The study recommends that teacher-training programmes should not only focus on teacher competencies, but also assess the learning achievements of students. This ideology promotes the idea that if a student is learning, then the teacher must be teaching in a way that suits the students. A clear set of guidelines for 'good' teachers is therefore not possible. A teacher should instead evaluate their performance on how well their students understand what they are being taught. Student learning achievements however cannot always be measured by how well they do in the exams the teacher sets. SC/US found that many teachers in fact always gave very good or good results for all students, rather than identifying where a student may be having difficulty and trying to overcome this.

Review of the former Soviet embassy compound IDP camp: psychosocial support activities, Kabul Afghanistan

L. Arnston / United Nations [UN] Children's Fund, 2001

<http://www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/inventory/pwg003/>

The psychosocial support activities were funded by UNICEF and implemented by Save the Children/US. This report is a retrospective review of approximately 14 months of psychosocial support activities that began in October 1999 in the Kabul camp for internally-displaced persons (IDPs) in the former Soviet Union embassy compound. In January and February of 2001, household survey and focus group data were collected, transcribed, and translated for this review.

The psychosocial support activities aimed to involve the IDP community in improving the sense of security, regularity, and order in the lives of children, youth, mothers/care-givers, and families housed in the camp, and in this way reinforce the psychosocial wellbeing of children to mitigate the effects of war and its aftermath. A significant part of this restoration of normality involved re-creating social networks, safe places to play, and the self-competency that comes with valued roles, skills, and choice. The educational opportunities and structured daily activities provided in the IDP camp aimed to promote a nurturing and stable environment for children and youth and encouraged healthy physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development of children.

Due to their displacement, subsequent absence of traditional agricultural activities, and the restrictions and close watch imposed by Taliban authorities, male youth in particular needed something to occupy their free time and build their sense of self-esteem and engagement in the community. Perhaps the most vulnerable population in the camp, when it comes to

feeling isolated and hopeless, would be pre-adolescent and adolescent girls because of restrictions to their mobility in addition to the new socio-political environment.

The activities initiated in response to these needs included:

- formal education in language, math, and religion for boys and girls of school age
- home-based vocational activities for older (pre-adolescent and adolescent) girls
- home visits aimed at providing knowledge about child health care for women with children under five years of age
- playgrounds for different age groups
- sports grounds for older boys
- facilitation of a youth sports committee

Overall, the psychosocial support programme was successful in that it provided opportunities for building resiliency, a sense of self-esteem and competency, and skills among IDP children, youth, mothers/care-givers, and families in the Kabul camp. This review of the psychosocial support programme was able to identify progress toward: building social support networks, especially for mothers and adolescent girls; increasing access to health information and services; increasing educational opportunities for primary school-age children; and encouraging a positive outlook toward the future.

Assessment of CCF's Emergency Entry Program into Afghanistan: It's Impact on Child Well-Being and Protection

Dr. Leslie Snider and Carl Triplehorn for Christian Children's Fund (CCF), April 2003

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AEE6B74580699E2B4925759400066977-Full_Report.pdf

The main focus of CCF's emergency response programme in Afghanistan was the rapid implementation and scale-up of child protection and psychosocial support. From CCF's entry into Afghanistan in December 2001, child-centred spaces (CCS) were initiated for more than 12,000 children over a wide geographic area within 3 months of programme operations. Permanent staff continued the scale up and refinement of programmes, so that within 6 months of operations, more than 21,000 children, youth and adults were benefiting from CCS and literacy activities. The programme promoted the children's psychosocial recovery by providing children with daily structured formal and non-formal educational activities and support in a physically safe environment.

Impacts:

- Both community members and CCS teachers underscored the importance of CCS activities in re-socialising children to the norms and values of peaceful Afghan society.
- Wide implementation of CCS activities in the north-eastern provinces improved access to education for children, providing many with their first opportunity to attend school. Incorporation of formal and informal education in CCSs provided a framework for educational approaches to children's development including art, sports, cultural values, health and hygiene, in addition to math, reading and writing. Literacy classes provided educational opportunities to youth, including young women, and to adults, providing them skills to improve their home life, livelihood and care of their children. CCSs prepared both children and teachers for re-entering the school environment.
- Training of teachers for CCS and literacy courses raised their capacity through new skills in teaching methodologies and lesson planning, gave them confidence to return to teaching and re-enter the workforce, and sensitised them to the holistic needs of children in fostering their healthy development. CCS teachers were able to carry knowledge about children's psychosocial, hygiene and recovery needs both to their own homes and to their work in formal schools when they re-opened.

- CCF programmes also significantly supported the building of the local, formal school system through material distribution, teacher training and ongoing supervision, school rehabilitation and cooperation with the MOE in primary school and adult literacy curricula development.
- CCF enabled the transition to formal schooling in their communities, ensuring that their programmes did not compete with the opening of government schools, and enhanced the formal school system.
- The CCS programmes engaged the communities around the needs of their children, and communities actively assisted the identification and preparation of CCS spaces for school activities.

Adult Literacy Education and Human Rights: A View from Afghanistan

Andersen, Susan M.; Kooij, Christina S., Globalisation, Societies and Education, v5 n3 p315-331 Nov 2007

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AEE6B74580699E2B4925759400066977-Full_Report.pdf

The organisation administering the programme, the Roqia Center for Women's Rights, Studies and Education, is an officially registered civil society organisation in Kabul, Afghanistan. It has no relation to the Afghan government and is partnered with a US non-profit organisation Kabultec (<http://www.Kabultec.org>). The joint mission of both is 'to assist the cause of women as an integral part of the country's democratization and reconstruction', through work in three divisions: women's rights, women's studies and women's education.

Their adult literacy programme places men and women, as well as various ethnicities, together in the same classroom as couples, using principles that social psychological research has shown can reduce inter-group tension and interpersonal discord. The study is based on interviews with the married couples taking part in this programme. They learnt to support each other's learning, and to treat each other with respect and kindness in spite of differences. They felt their newfound literacy skills had changed their daily lives, their view of themselves and their relationships with spouse, family and community, even nation.

6. Additional information

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