

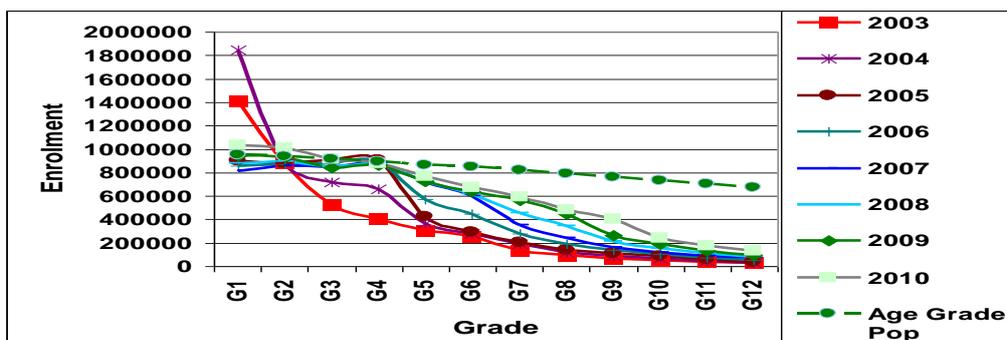
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Education
Country paper for UNGA Ministerial Meeting

Education in Afghanistan has made remarkable progress since 2001. In 2001 only one million children (almost all boys) were enrolled in schools. This year 9.7 million children are enrolled in schools, of whom 40% are girls. The number of schools has increased from 3,400 in 2001 to over 16,590, and the number of teachers has increased from 20,700 (almost all male) to over 207 thousands (34% female). Since 2001, over 6,500 schools have been constructed or rehabilitated, and today around 50% of schools have decent buildings. A decade ago many different curricula were used in schools with no common curriculum. Now there is a new national curriculum which promotes active learning methods. New textbooks and teacher guides have been developed, printed and distributed to all schools across the country.

Despite these achievements, the education sector continues to face significant constraints in achieving MDG and EFA goals. There is a journey to travel to deal with the challenges created by a backlog from the past thirty years of war and conflict which has degraded capacity, disrupted educational development, and discouraged educational reform. Poverty and lack of security remain major causes of low enrolment and poor attendance rates, and girls remain under enrolled. About 3.5 million school-age children are out of school of whom around 75% are girls. The uneven distribution of schools and other educational service delivery centers and related facilities exacerbates enrolment problems in many areas. Progress has been made on problems of physical access through establishing and building new facilities in underserved areas. However, the level and quality of students learning achievement remains low and unsatisfactory especially in the early grades. More work is needed to strengthen community support for school attendance and achievement, and to develop the quality and reach of systems of service delivery. High illiteracy rate among the rural adults remain an obstacle to improved access and progression and are often associated with misunderstandings about the value of education especially for girls. The quality and capacity of educational governance at sub-national level from region to school level needs to be transformed to be more efficient, effective and accountable.

Figure 1 shows how enrolments by grade have changed since 2003. Enrolments in grades 1- 4 are now similar to the number of children in the age group. Over and under age enrolment is likely to mean that significant numbers remain out of school and there are uncertainties that arise from the reliability of census data. Above grade 4 drop out is significant with only about 20% progressing above grade 10.

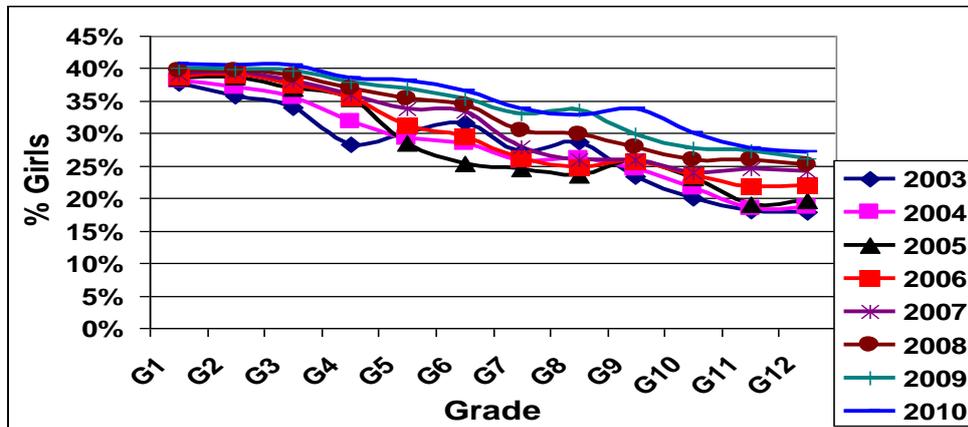
Figure 1 Enrolments 2003-2010



Source UIS

The proportion of girls enrolled in each grade since 2003 is shown in Figure 2. This shows that about 40% of the children in grade 1 are girls. This falls to a little over 25% in grade 12. This is about 40,000 girls who graduate from grade 12 each year. There are 207,000 teachers currently employed of whom about 70,300 are female. If one third of the female school graduates became teachers each year this would quickly reduce the under representation of girls in the teaching force.

Figure 2: Percentage of girls in each grade 2003-2010



Source UIS

In the medium term the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) plans to finance its education system from domestic revenue obtained from tax revenue levied on a rising profile of economic activities. Whilst economic reconstruction is taking place additional educational investment is needed to universalize access to basic education and provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to progress through the education system. The GoA plans to work in partnership with existing and new providers of educational services building on the strengths and comparative advantages of the public school system, other not-for-profit public organizations (i.e. educational NGOs and locally based CSOs) and for profit private providers located in Afghanistan. Of over-riding importance to the realization of the GoA plans will be the special measures needed to improve security and public safety in general, and to ensure the delivery of education services is protected from all forms of violence and intimidation, and that all learning environments are safe, sanitary, and fit for purpose.

Highlights of key constraints that hinder accelerated delivery of education

There are three key constraints that hinder the accelerated delivery of educational services. These are 1) insufficient access constrained by delivery capacity; 2) low educational quality and achievement; and 3) insufficient community support and effective educational governance.

Constraint 1) Access: Insufficient education service delivery centers/facilities

1.1 Insufficient schools, classrooms, water and sanitation facilities, and boundary walls and security:

Adequate, safe and local school facilities are a pre-requisite for enrollment and progression through school in Afghanistan. This is especially true for the education of girls whose parents place a high premium on their security and safety. Families will not allow the girls to enroll or continue education

beyond grade 4 or 5 if the schools do not have adequate classrooms, water and sanitation facilities, and secure boundary walls. School location is important. It determines both the distances to school and the risks associated with travel both of which are associated with drop out. Schools need to be local if there is to be a constructive and supportive relationship between the school and the community based on understanding of school based learning activities. Families want schools and outreach classes in close and convenient locations, and value opportunities to have a say in governance issues, especially the appointment of teachers. Local access can reduce over-age entry and repetition which results in a wide age range of children in the same class and the associated pedagogic and psycho-social challenges of mixed age groups.

1.2 Insufficient female teachers:

Females are underrepresented in the teaching profession especially in rural areas. Afghan parents indicate that qualified female teachers are a pre-condition for enrolment and progression of their girls through the education system. Female teachers provide role models for girls and may discourage gendered violence. Teacher training colleges and centers have been opened in most parts of the country since 2002. However, the number of girls graduating from secondary school who can become teachers has only recently reached 30% of the total enrolled. There is a vicious circle in many rural communities of Afghanistan whereby girls fail to continue schooling as there are no female teachers and as a result there are no qualified female school leavers who can be trained as teachers. Short term measures are needed to ameliorate this situation while enrolments and female graduation rates continue to rise. These can include inducements to encourage more girls who do graduate to become teachers, recruiting and supporting female teaching assistants with lower levels of qualification but with continuing professional development support and mentoring, and incentives to encourage some female teachers in urban areas to consider more rural postings,

Constraint 2) Quality and level of students learning achievement, particularly in early grade

2.1 Inadequate qualification of teachers and lack of strong commitment:

The enrollment of students has increased nearly 10 times since 2001. The pupil teacher ratio has remained on average at 47:1 resulting in the need to train and deploy ten times as many school teachers. The conflict and social unrest in Afghanistan has meant that very few teachers have been trained over the last thirty years by higher education institutes. There are few qualified teachers in rural areas and this results in classes being taught by teachers with educational attainment below grade 12 and minimal professional teaching qualifications. The MoE has now expanded teacher training colleges (TTCs) to all provincial centers and 50% of districts. The TTCs have been providing in-service teacher education but it remains the case that over half of the existing teachers do not meet minimum qualification standards for teachers. The economic conditions of the teachers affect their commitment. Although MoE has been implementing the new “Pay and Grade” system most of the teachers continue to have other part-time jobs to earn more income to meet their basic needs and this compromises their commitment to pupil’s learning and well being.

2.2 Textbooks and teaching and learning material:

The MoE has developed a new curriculum framework and has designed, developed, printed and distributed textbooks for all grades of general education. The current policy assumes that same textbooks need to be reused by three generations of students before being replaced. This policy was introduced because of limited financial resources. Current experience is that many textbooks are not sufficiently durable to last for more than one year particularly in grade 1 and 2. Partly as a result many students, particularly in remote rural areas, do not have access to a full set of textbooks on time. There

are several challenges that stand in the way of providing all students with full sets of textbooks and additional reading material. These include insufficient financial budget allocations for printing and distributing textbooks, and limited logistical capacity to distribute textbooks on time. The MoE has not issued the right to print, publish, distribute or sell school textbooks to private printers and publishers though part of the problem of textbook supply is the limited capacity of the MoE. Furthermore, there are few additional reading materials available to students to enhance learning. This is a particular concern in relation to shortages of reading materials in primary grades 1-3. This needs to be addressed because of the importance of establishing secure reading skills by grade 4.

2.3 Learning assessment system:

There is no comprehensive system to assess learning either formatively or summatively. There is therefore no reliable source of evidence to provide the basis for decision making based on evidence at all levels including the classroom level. As a consequence some children are promoted to higher grades without acquiring minimum competencies necessary to progress further. Diagnostic data on learning difficulties is not available to inform interventions and improve achievement in language, science and mathematics.

Constraint 3) Community participation and education governance

3.1 High illiteracy rate and inadequate support from parents to children:

The majority of parents in some areas are illiterate and many others have low levels of literacy as a result of incomplete, interrupted and poor quality primary schooling. This greatly limits the support that households can give to children's learning since children quickly become more educated than their parents. Conditions in many poor homes are not conducive to study or practice where there are no services or suitable spaces to undertake school work. Few such parents can afford to buy learning material for their children and in many places it is simply not available. Parents in some social groups lack literacy and awareness, and have yet to understand the value of educating their children. They therefore may not invest much effort in ensuring that their children attend regularly and keep up with their school work tasks.

3.2 Social awareness and community misperception on child education particularly girls:

The success of education services delivery in both urban and rural areas depends on attitude and support given by communities towards the education of their children. This complements the efforts of parents and can compensate for household poverty and culturally based under valuing of the education of children, especially girls. Programs to raise awareness of rights of all children to a basic education have yet to reach all communities. In addition many such programs have been transient rather than sustained and have not been embedded in the specificities of different communities. Communities and households remains insufficiently engaged in the design and delivery of education services at the local level. There is scope to increase the extent to which communities are accountable for educational services and call to account those who provide educational services. This can increase collective responsibility for enhanced learning outcomes and mobilize more resources to improve access and quality. Social marginalizations and their causes can and should be identified at the community level. Inclusive community level action research and interventions can then address the causes of exclusion and monitor progress in delivering rights to education to all children

3.3 Enhanced quality and capabilities of educational governance at sub-national level with special attention to school management:

The MoE has introduced structural reforms designed to enhance educational administration and governance and respond to the demands of a rapidly expanding system. This has required the development of its human resources at provincial and district level and the introduction of merit based recruitment. Needs remain to strengthen systems of accountability, transparent decision making that involves different stakeholders, audit and financial tracking, and performance indicators linked to programs of work. Experience to date has indicated that it has been very difficult to find sufficient numbers of competent candidates to fill the management and administration posts available at the sub-national level. It appears that there is shortage of qualified job seekers and that in the short to medium term it is necessary to support new staff with on the job training and mentoring. Short-term training is conducted for a large number of staff to improve their basic skills. This has to be accompanied by more foundational training to improve the knowledge and skills of staff below the national level. These needs extend down to the level of school principals where targeted programs should be developed based on diagnosis of needs and profiles of effective CPD.

Key interventions for addressing the key constraints:

Additional targeted responses is required to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the MDG and EFA goals in Afghanistan.

Interventions related to constraint 1:

Goal: Provide additional targeted support to provide access to basic education to 0.7 million out of school children (dropouts and the never enrolled) through implementing the following interventions:

- Construct school facilities (classrooms, water and sanitation, boundary walls) to provide adequate and socially accepted learning space to children particularly girls. NGO partners, private construction companies and local communities will be engaged with appropriate procurement, supervision and audit conditions to construct structures with agreed specifications and costs.
- Establish new CBE and ALP facilities where children particularly girls cannot access formal schools. Undertake an analysis of needs with NGO partners who are implementing CBE and identify the magnitude and location of needs for expansion of CBE.
- Recruit more qualified female teachers from girls who graduate from secondary school; provide incentives to existing female teachers to be deployed to rural girls schools; recruit and support female teaching assistants from rural communities from the pool of girls with incomplete secondary schooling. MoE to pilot these schemes and build on the lessons that can be learned. NGO partners will be engaged to facilitate implementation.

Outcome 1: Around 0.7 million additional out of school children securely enrolled in school by 2015 as result of providing more physical facilities to underserved populations including new schools, additional classrooms and additional CBE and ALP, and increasing the proportion of female teachers in girls schools to ensure that all have at least 6 female teachers by 2015. All interventions should be gender fair and socially acceptable to beneficiary communities.

Interventions related to constraint 2: Improve students' learning achievements, especially in the early grades through implementing the following interventions:

- Improve existing in-service teacher education program with a focus on early grade reading through enhancement of continuing professional development support delivered to practicing

teachers, development of school based systems of mentoring and teacher development, evaluation and revision of teacher education curriculum using data from experienced and newly qualified teachers on practice, professional development of teacher training faculty, increase capacity and outputs from initial teacher training.

- Ensure that a full set of textbooks and additional teaching and learning material is available to all students in schools on time for the new school year. Review policy on textbook provision and decide the most efficient development, printing and distribution modalities and the mechanisms that can extend the life of textbooks. Provide primary grade textbooks and teacher guides well in advance of need taking in to account growth in enrolments. Additional reading material will be developed and printed for early grades. A pilot program will identify the strengths and weaknesses of allocating publication and distribution rights to private publishers and printers within clear financial agreements related to prices, costs and profits and the methods of distribution to schools and children.
- Invest in the development of systematic formative and summative systems of assessment which operate at school level and provide pedagogically useful data on levels of achievement. Test the efficacy of such systems by interventions that assess early grade learning in reading and mathematics.

Outcome 2: *Early grade reading and mathematics skills of students improve as result of improving existing in-service teacher education programs, upgrading under qualified teachers, expanding initial teacher education, printing and distributing sufficient additional textbooks and reading materials, enhanced availability of school books in the open market, and development of interventions to develop systematic assessments of learning, especially in the early grades.*

Interventions related to constraint 3: Enhance community participation and educational governance through implementing the following interventions:

- Reduce adult illiteracy rate through expanding literacy program linked to community initiatives to increase participation in schooling of the children of illiterates. Use existing schools and school teachers to conduct literacy course at the village level, encourage peer learning and child to adult learning
- Foster community mobilization and awareness raising to support enrolment of out of school children (drop outs and the never enrolled). Develop community awareness raising and mobilization strategies and material grounded in the cultural and socio economic contexts of different communities. MoE and development partners will build on experience from ongoing programs.
- Identify structural and procedural reforms needed to improve governance of education below national level in ways that improve efficiency, accountability, transparency and effectiveness. Develop diagnoses of knowledge and skill needs of principals and use these to design appropriate programs of induction for net head teachers and for CPD.

Outcome 3: *Improved community participation and education governance at sub-national level as indicated by participation of parents in school governance structures, community school development collaborations, school development plans, adequate school documentation on enrolments, learning achievement, attendance etc, public accountability for deployment of funds etc.*

Greater capacity of head teachers to manage schools effectively as indicated by school performance in key indicators e.g. attendance, achievement, drop out, repetition, teacher attendance and turnover, time on tasks etc.

Inputs Requirement:

Injecting additional 400 million US\$ will help to accelerate achievement of MDG/EFA goals (primary education) in Afghanistan over the next three years. This will be on the top of the existing programs/commitments. This will be linked to a national three year plan with itemized sub-projects linked to defined and costed inputs and outcomes which will be reviewed every six months by stakeholders..

Modality for utilization of additional inputs:

Three options are available for utilization of additional inputs:

1. On plan and on-budget funding modality. The resources will be utilized through Ministry of Finance to be directly spent by MoE or sub-contract implementing partners with appropriate TOR and cost and performance controls.
2. On-plan and off-budget funding modality. Donors will directly contract implementing partners for implementation of the program components with appropriate TOR and cost and performance controls.
3. Combination of the two above with defined projects allocated to one or the other modality.

Time line:

The proposed solutions will be implemented in three years starting in December 2013.

Mechanism and approach for development of country paper:

This country paper is developed through a working group of Education Coordination Committee through a consultative process with education stakeholders.