

Education in Afghanistan: Results in a Difficult Environment



Education in Afghanistan: Achieving Results in a Difficult Environment

Overview

Afghanistan has made remarkable progress in many areas. Important development results have been achieved in areas such as health, education, microfinance, irrigation and rural livelihoods, as well as in progressive improvements in public financial management. The results achieved to date reflect the massive support of the international community to help rebuild Afghanistan and the efforts and ingenuity of many enterprising Afghans who continue to deliver services in challenging circumstances.

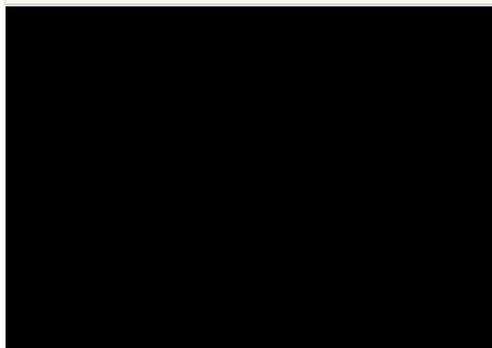
Challenge

Thirty years of conflict and political unrest destroyed the Afghan education system. In 2001, after the fall of the Taliban, net enrollment was estimated at 43 percent for boys and a dismal 3 percent for girls. The situation for females was especially dire: they had been forbidden to attend school or teach during Taliban rule. Moreover, there were only about 21,000 teachers (largely under-educated) for a school-age population estimated at more than 5 million—or about 240 students for every marginally trained teacher. In 2001, the international community responded, with the International Development Association (IDA) financing multiple initiatives. However, great risks have emerged because of the deteriorating security situation, particularly in the south. As a result, many schools have closed again, reversing nascent gains.

Approach

Recognizing that education would play a vital role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, since 2001, IDA supported a series of education programs aimed at providing access and quality education to Afghan students at all levels. To accommodate Afghanistan's fragile and fluid situation, these IDA-financed education programs had broad objectives underpinned by principles of participation, coordination among donors as well as with government agencies, and a focus on improving girls' access. Specifically, these programs aimed to reconstruct the

MULTIMEDIA



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More Results



100%

increase in the number of girls going to school(CDC)

110,000

teachers trained

education sector, by:

- Increasing access to education opportunities for under-served groups, especially women and girls;
- Supporting the development of a policy framework and the reform of education management at all levels, in partnership with civil society, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector;
- Improving the quality of education by training teachers in the system as well as providing incentives to new teachers, developing quality curriculum and textbooks, and encouraging communities to supervise the education of their children; and
- Introducing modern information technologies for communications in the ministries, including establishing distance-learning facilities for building the capacity of civil servants.

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Results

Since 2002, the achievements have been impressive:

- School enrollment has increased from 1 million to 7 million children.
- Girls' enrollment skyrocketed from 839,000 to more than 2.5 million. There was a 100 percent increase in girls' enrollment just in the past four years.
- Over 79,000 students graduated from Grade 12 in 2008 (of this 26 percent were female).
- Overall, around 110,000 teachers were trained; 65,544 teachers were trained in 2009-2010 alone (there were about 160,000 teachers in the system who needed to be trained).
- School shuras (school management committees) were established in all provinces. At present, 10,462 out of 11,724 Ministry of Education-supported schools have functioning school shuras.
- Over 3,000 new classrooms and over 540 schools were built by the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUP) program.

Since 2005, the IDA-financed Strengthening Higher Education Program (SHEP) has played a critical role in higher education. The program has financed 11 partnerships between Afghan and foreign universities that focused on curriculum development, teacher training, lab equipment, and establishment of laboratories and libraries. In 2010, due to additional funding from IDA and the Crisis Response Window (CRW), the SHEP program has been scaled up from six to twelve national universities. Some of the key achievements are:

- More than 150 teachers received their master's degrees from foreign universities.
- Curricula were revised, and in a few departments, the credit system was introduced.
- Tertiary/post-secondary education has increased from 23,000 students in 2002 to more than 70,000 in 2010, including over 12,000 females.
- The number of female university students has grown from zero to 19.3 percent and the percentage of female faculty members from zero to 14.8 percent.
- Technical and vocational training established. The Afghanistan Skills Development Program has promoted standard technical and vocational education by establishing a National Qualification Framework. In the related National Institute of Management and Administration in Kabul, there are currently 2,700 enrolled students.
- Government reform advanced. The five-year National Education Strategic Plan was developed, which highlights eight national priority programs. The government is now encouraging decentralized school management through provinces, districts, and communities.
- Information Technology (IT) capacity. The first Education Management Information System was developed to help the ministry in policy, monitoring, and evaluation.

Voices

“We now have a school in the village for both boys and girls. All

the children attend classes regularly, especially those who couldn't go to school earlier because of the distance.”

— *Mohammad Yousuf*

Partners

The Second Education Quality Improvement Program benefited from the partnership of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (US\$22 million) and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund (US\$134.7 million). Partners for the Afghanistan Skills Development Project include USAID (US\$6 million), Norway (US\$6 million), and the Afghanistan Government.

Toward the Future

Afghanistan's achievements in the last ten years have been impressive in many ways. The coming years will be critical to strengthening Afghan institutions' ability to deliver basic services nationally and consolidate and expand the economic development gains made to date. IDA's role during this period—beyond the provision of its own resources—must be to continue to make the case for these principles, and to help the government effectively prioritize and utilize its own resources.