

The background image shows two young girls in white headscarves sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom. They are looking at books and smiling. The desk has several books on it, including one with a colorful illustration of a landscape. The wall behind them is light-colored with some faint markings and the word 'teacher' written in the top left corner.

# The Development of Education

## National Report Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Ministry of Education  
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Kabul, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008

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By

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# Introduction

Kabul and many of the cities of Afghanistan were centres of culture, knowledge and education for hundreds of years. The influence of Afghan art and culture stretched from the plains of Central Asia to the rivers of Bengal. The minaret and archaeological remains at Jam, and the cultural landscape and the archaeological remains of Bamiyan Valley are both on the UNESCO World Heritage list, while the City of Herat, the City of Balkh (ancient Bactria) and Band-E-Amir have been submitted on the tentative list.

The modern state of Afghanistan has a much shorter history, and in the less than hundred years since its creation it has been ravaged by war and civil strife. Afghanistan is landlocked. It is bordering Pakistan to the east and to the south, Iran to the west, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the north, and China to the northeast. The terrain of Afghanistan is characterised by high mountains, deserts, forests and fertile valleys. It is prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, flooding, drought, locusts, heat waves and damaging frosts.

There has not been a population census for more than 20 years. However, the population today is estimated at 32 million<sup>1</sup>. The ethnic diversity of Afghanistan is great. The main ethnic groups are the Pashtu, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek, but also Turkmen, Baloch, Nuristani, Kuchis and many others. Afghanistan has two official languages: Dari (Tajik or Persian) and Pashtu. However another 32 languages are spoken throughout the country.

This report has been compiled for the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the International Conference on Education organised by UNESCO International Bureau on Education (IBE) which will be held in Geneva in November 2008. The format of the report has been given to the Ministry by the UNESCO-IBE.

Foreign invasion, civil war and the rise of the Taliban in the 1980s and 1990s ruined most the education infrastructure in Afghanistan. Most of the school buildings in the country were damaged or destroyed and after the Taliban took over control of the country, all girls were prevented from participating in formal schooling, and female teachers (as well as most other female professionals) were prevented from working outside their homes. When the Taliban government fell in 2001 the enrolment rate of girls was 0%. In the years that has followed great progress has been made. Over 37% of the children that enrolled in primary education in 1387 (2008) were girls. Tens of thousands of female teachers are being educated and hired. Thousands of schools are built every year. While one million youth and adults are expected to take part in adult literacy programmes over the next three years. However, the challenges are still daunting.

The 2001 Bonn Agreement, officially the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan, is an initial series of agreements intended to re-create the State of Afghanistan after more than twenty years of civil war.<sup>2</sup>

A new constitution was drafted and put before the 500 member delegates of the Constitutional Loya Jirga. It was approved in late 1382 (early 2004).<sup>3</sup> The presidential election was held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2004 (1383). The transitional government was replaced by the democratically elected government of HE Mr. Hamid Karzai on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2004 (1383). National and provincial elections quickly followed the inauguration of the president.

The London Conference of 2006 and the signing of the Afghan Compact, created a clear and concise mandate for state building and the development of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) report. ANDS reflects the vision, principles and goals for the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, building on and in support of commitments to reach the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks and the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals.<sup>4</sup>

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan for the years 1385 to 1389 (2006 to 2010) was developed with support of UNESCO and its International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP). The NESP has been an invaluable tool in improving access to quality education for girls and boys throughout Afghanistan. The Education Law of 1387 (2008) further strengthen the efforts Afghanistan has been making towards Education for All (EFA).

At the Paris Conference of 2008 the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and representatives of the international community reaffirm their long-term partnership in support of the people of Afghanistan. Fresh resources were pledged by the international community for major rebuilding efforts, including education.

The Ministry of Education appreciates that *Inclusive Education* has been chosen as the theme for the 48<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Education (ICE). Without focusing on groups of children most vulnerable to exclusion from and within education we will never reach the goal of Education for All (EFA). We therefore realise that the development of an education system that is inclusive and child-friendly is essential in order to improve the quality of education offered in schools, as well as to remove barriers to learning, development and participation experienced by so many children throughout Afghanistan.

The groups of children most vulnerable to exclusion from and within education may vary from one country to another. In the case of Afghanistan we have therefore asked some of the key stakeholders working with inclusive and child-friendly education to answer this question on the Ministry's behalf. Girls were unanimously through to be most vulnerable, followed by; children with disabilities; working children; children living far away from school (in villages where there are no schools); children from ethnic, language, social and religious minorities; children from poor economic backgrounds; children affected by conflict and war; nomadic (Kuchi) children; children living on the street (or homeless children), and; children affected by drugs. This list indicates the enormous task the Ministry of Education face in the year to come. At the same time it is important to look back at the past 7 years and appreciate the tremendous progress that has been made in making sure that all the children of Afghanistan will be able to go to school, and get an education.

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# Part 1

## The Education System Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century: An Overview

### Item 1.1

#### Major Reforms and Innovations Introduced in the Education System

As the largest government employer and one of the most dependent on external financing for its physical and human capital and investment requirements, the Ministry of Education intends to work closely with the donor community building confidence in the Ministry's ability to manage change. The vision of the Ministry of Education for organisational change includes increasing the reliance on its own people and systems. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is currently working on finding sustainable solutions for how to finance and support the delivery of quality primary and secondary education (grades 1 to 14) for all children. Achieving this requires a further development of the Ministry's institutional, financial, human, physical and technological capacities, all in line with recognised public administration standards.

*"The vision of the Ministry of Education is to facilitate the development of vibrant human capital by providing equal access to quality education for all and enable our people to participate and contribute productively to the development, economic growth and stability of our country."*

*National Education Strategic Plan of 1385 to 1389 (2006 to 2010)*

#### a. Organisation and Structure of the Education System in Afghanistan

The current education system includes five levels that are organised in the following patterns with their own cycles and their own textbooks and teachers guides. It is an accepted principle that, if they fulfil requirements, students can shift from one type of education to the other, if more choices are offered at the end of each cycle.

**General Education** covers 12 years of schooling divided into 3 cycles;

- Primary education (grade 1 through 6)
- Lower secondary education (grade 7 through 9)
- Upper secondary education (grade 10 through 12)

**Islamic Education** covers 14 years of schooling divided into 2 cycles:

- Madrasas (grade 1 through 12)
- Dar-ul-Huffaz<sup>5</sup> (grade 1 through 12)
- Dar-ul-Ulums<sup>6</sup> (grade 13 through 14)

During the last three decades of war and political turmoil, the Islamic education system, its madrasas as well as prayer and Quran classes in community mosques have played a vital role in the education of Afghan children. There has been the occasional misuse of madrasas for political purposes. However, in spite of some of these educational and social shortcomings, madrasa education has retained a unique influence and control over the educational, political and social environment in Afghanistan.

**Technical and Vocational Education** is provided for grades 10 to 14. Technical education focuses on public administration, construction, information and communication technologies (ICTs), agriculture as well as industry.

**Literacy and Non-Formal Education** provides basic literacy programme (9 months) and a complementary programme (3 months). The programme provides education to the over-aged learners and adults.

**Teacher Education** includes professional development of instructors provided in Colleges (Grade 13-14) encompassing pre-service and In-service trainings, and a 5 year Teacher Education (Grade 10-14).

## Management of the Education System

The overall goal of the Education Administration and Reform and Development Programme is to develop the Ministry of Education into an effective, accountable, fully funded and well functioning public institution that facilitates education for all.

The principal targets of the programs are the following:

- Create a sustainable, transparent and accountable financial management system down to school level through major systems and capacity improvement with increased allocations through the national budget system.
- Continue to develop an Education Management Information System (EMIS) and expand Information Communication Technology (ICT) both in schools as well as at district, provincial and central level.
- Create professional Human Resource Units with clear policies, procedures, regulations and systems at central, provincial, district and school levels.
- Implement the Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) and Pay and Grading of all approved positions within the Ministry including teaching staff.
- Develop a comprehensive strategy and plan for training and capacity-building for all levels of staff at central, provincial, district, and school levels.
- Design an anti-corruption strategy and improve fiduciary standards at all levels.
- Establish a clear legislative framework for the delivery of quality education.

The new Tashkil (structure) of the Ministry of Education at district, province and central levels was developed based on best practices nationally and

internationally. It was approved by the Independent Administration Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) and endorsed by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Hamal 1387 (March/April 2008).

There are five Deputy Ministers:

- Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs
- Deputy Minister for Administration and Finance
- Deputy Minister for Curriculum Development and Teacher Education
- Deputy Minister for Technical and Vocational Education
- Deputy Minister for Literacy

The Ministry of Education has four independent departments working directly under the Minister of Education:

- Department of Planning and Evaluation
- Academic Council
- Office of the Minister
- Department for Internal Audit and Inspection

Programme Management Units (PMUs) have been established based on the eight thematic programmes of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). The aim of these units is to bridge the gap between the NESP and the implementation of education activities and programmes, and coordinate inter-program affairs.

The Programme Management Units (PMUs) will also help reinforce the capacity for the implementation of the strategic plan, and help monitor the programme level and strategic progress of Education.

### **The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan**

*“The centrality of education to the development, growth and thereby stability of Afghanistan cannot be overstressed. This plan outlines the Ministry’s intent to promote this vision and provides the basis for substantive discussions with our national and international development partners to better link, coordinate and finance interventions in the sector, and contribute to improved aid effectiveness. It takes account of the past and present but looks more to the future. It is a national plan that will guide implementation at all levels of the Ministry. This work represents the collective thinking of all stakeholders. It has been derived through an extensive consultative process involving Afghans at all levels within the Ministry, including the provinces, as well as our partners through the Education Consultative Group. Technical support has been provided by UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).”*

*Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Education (1386)*

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) was developed through a consultative process by the Ministry of Education. The consultations included provincial and district-level educational representatives, civil society and the international community (multi-lateral and bilateral development partners, UN agencies and NGOs). As such, the NESP incorporates the views of multiple



stakeholders with regard to the challenges that the education system faces and the goals and actions for addressing those challenges. The purpose of the plan is to lay out the educational needs of Afghanistan and to establish targets for achieving specific goals through a unified and coordinated approach. The plan also outlines the Ministry's strategy to achieving these targets through a set of eight priority programmes. This plan is developed based on the principles of the Constitution, the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals for education for the year 1399 (2020), and the mid-term benchmarks of the Afghanistan Compact set for 1389 (2010), which is a political agreement between the Afghan Government and the international community to work together towards the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Afghan Millennium Development Goals. NESP was launched in 1385 (January 2007) by HE Hamid Karzai, the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It was published in English, Dari and Pashto (the two official languages of Afghanistan).

In late 1386 (February 2008) the Ministry of Education organized the first Education Development Forum (EDF) to review the progress in the implementation of NESP, as well as to launch the 1386 (2007) National School Survey. The Forum had wide participation of key stakeholders within the education development community in Afghanistan. The participants of this first joint review meeting of NESP implementation unanimously referred to the NESP as the central education document in Afghanistan. The NESP is the basis for Ministry of Education fundraising, donor harmonisation and alignment, as well as yearly operational planning (on a central as well as provincial level). This joint review meeting also became the starting point for the establishment by the Ministry of Education and international community of the Education Development Board (EDB). The objectives of EDB are to support effective leadership and oversight of educational programming in Afghanistan; provide a platform for policy dialogue between the Ministry of Education and national and international development partners; support the establishment of effective policy frameworks; and strengthen the alignment and harmonisation of development partner initiatives towards the implementation of the NESP.

### **New Administrative and Financial System**

To reinforce the administrative and financial system of the Ministry of Education, a well-managed computerised budget system has been established in Kabul. The system will improve the efficiency of transfers of funds to the provinces, management of the accounts, financial reporting, procurement procedures, as well as the transparency of financial processes within the Ministry of Education.

## b. The Overall Goals of Education at Each Level

**The Overall Goal of General Education** is to ensure that all school aged children have equal access to quality education, regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, ethnicity, socio-economic status and religious affiliation. Through general education children develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required to create for a better future for themselves, their families, communities, and for Afghanistan.

**The Overall Goal of Islamic Education** is to develop a modern and broad-based Islamic education system for all Afghan of Muslim faith.

**The Overall Goal of Technical and Vocational Education** is to provide quality technical and vocational educational opportunities for all Afghan youth, both male and female. It is important that the education is relevant in order to equip young Afghans with marketable skills that meet the needs of the labour market in Afghanistan as well as in other countries.

**The Overall Goal of Literacy and Non-Formal Education** is to develop a long-term literacy programme to empower individuals and communities to build a productive, secure and literate nation.

**The Overall Goal of Teacher Education** is to build a national cadre of qualified primary and secondary school teachers to improve the learning achievements of all primary and secondary school students.

## c. Curricular Policies, Educational Content, and Teaching and Learning Strategies

### Curriculum Development and Learning Materials Programmes

The Curriculum Development and Learning Material Development Programme is expected to result in a high quality, modern, national curriculum for primary and secondary schools based on Islamic principles and values that will meet national, regional and international standards.

The principal targets of the programme are the following:

- Develop a new curriculum and new textbooks for secondary education.
- Establish a National Institute for Curriculum Development. This institute will also comprise a National Standards Board for defining and evaluating teaching and learning standards and accreditation.
- Ensure that all school children have a complete set of new curriculum textbooks.
- Provide other pedagogical materials and equipment for schools.
- Develop and implement a national annual testing system for assessment of learning achievements for primary and secondary students.
- Strengthen institutional and staff capacities in curriculum development.

## The Overall Strategy behind the Development of a National Curriculum

The government has decided to pursue a national curriculum as a means of building unity as well as to lift educational standards throughout Afghanistan. In addition to the two national languages (Dari and Pashtu) the constitution also has a provision for promoting other local languages. If Dari is used as a language of instruction, Pashtu will be taught as a second language. If the child has a different mother tongue than Dari and Pashtu, and live in an area where a minority language is spoken, the child may be able to be taught her/his mother tongue as a third language, starting in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. However, this depends on the availability of teachers as well as teaching-learning materials.

The Ministry of Education is in the process of establishing a National Institute of Curriculum Development. This institute will be responsible for all school level curricular needs in Afghanistan, from pre-school through grade 12 (for pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools).

The Curriculum for technical and vocational education is developed separately from the work of the National Institute of Curriculum Development.

Islamic Curriculum development will be aligned to the national standards, with specialists in Islamic studies working together with specialists in other subject matters.

The new curriculum framework and syllabi for secondary grade is developed with support from international partners. The Afghan authors are exposed to new methods of textbook writing based on active learning principles. During the next year, special emphasis will be placed on completing a new Curriculum and textbooks for secondary school students. Awareness and/or education on cross-cutting issues related to human rights (human rights education), HIV and AIDS (HIV prevention and response education), narcotics (drug prevention education), and the environment (environmental education and education for sustainable development) is being mainstreamed in the new curriculum, and the new textbooks that will be distributed to schools country-wide in 2009 and 2010 onwards.

The Ministry is currently working to produce a secondary Curriculum of high quality. The quality of the new books is of high quality. The content is shaped and developed in ways that are relevant to the students, inviting students to learn independently, as well as in groups. It will, where possible, follow international standard. However it is of vital importance that the Curriculum is relevant to the reconstruction and development needs of Afghanistan. The Curriculum should help the country to build and develop its human capital and create economic opportunities for young Afghans both within the country, the region and on a global level.

Over the past four years, record numbers of students (female and male) have enrolled in schools. As these children progress through the educational system, a strong and relevant secondary education curriculum will play an important role in retaining their interest in learning. The processes of production and

distribution of learning materials will become more effective and efficient as a result of lessons learned from innovative field experiences. In addition, the Ministry is currently building capacity among its staff to design and produce textbooks and other learning materials while at the same time exploring options for increased collaboration with the private sector.

#### d. The Legal Framework of Education

##### The Constitution of 1382 (2004)

The Constitution was reviewed and approved by the 500 member delegates of the Constitutional Loya Jirga in early 2004.<sup>7</sup> The Constitution guarantees all children and youth equal right to access quality education.

The new Constitution has put special emphasis on Education. Education is underlined in articles 17, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 47.

Article 43 of the Constitution states that:

*“Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the B.A. level in the state educational institutes free of charge by the state. To expand balanced education as well as to provide mandatory intermediate education throughout Afghanistan, the state shall design and implement effective programs and prepare the ground for teaching mother tongues in areas where they are spoken.”*

For more information about the content of the Constitution please see item 2.1.c and Attachment No. 1 (the full text of the Constitution in English translation).

##### The Education Law of 1387 (2008)

The new Afghan Education Law was enacted in accordance with the provisions of articles 17, 43, 44, 45, 46, and 47 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, in order to regulate the country's educational affairs.

The Education Law has 11 chapters and 52 articles (see Attachment No. 2):

- Chapter 1 comprise of the foundation and objectives of the Law (Articles 1 and 2), the equal rights to education for all (Article 3), free and compulsory education (Article 4), enrollment age (Article 5), administration, management, duties and authorities of the Ministry of Education (Articles 6 and 7), the academic councils (Article 8), establishment of schools, Madrasas, educational institutions, dormitories, private domestic, combined and international institution (Articles 9, 10 and 11), educational standards (Article 12), unattended education and education by correspondence (Article 13), pre-school education (Article 14), education of persons with special needs (Article 15), educational and training programmes on radio and TV (Article 16),

- Chapter 2 comprise of the definition and objectives of intermediate or basic education (Articles 17 and 18).
- Chapter 3 comprise of the definition and objectives of secondary general education (Articles 19 and 20).
- Chapter 4 comprise of the definition and objectives of Islamic education (Articles 21 and 22).
- Chapter 5 comprise of the definition and objectives of technical-professional, vocational and art education (Articles 23 and 24).
- Chapter 6 comprise of the definition and objectives of teacher training and education, as well as programs for on the job training and pre-admission to the service (Articles 25, 26 and 27).
- Chapter 7 comprise of the establishment and objectives for the Center for Educational and Training Technology (Articles 28 and 29).
- Chapter 8 comprise of the foundation and objectives of the Curriculum, preparation, drafting and the development of the Curriculum, and language(s) of instruction (Articles 30, 31 and 32).
- Chapter 9 comprise of the guidelines for implementation of extra-curricular activities and establishment of boys scout (Articles 33 and 34).
- Chapter 10 comprise of the foundation and objectives of literacy and basic practical education, and compulsory learning, as well as administration and management of literacy and basic practical education (Articles 35, 36, 37 and 38).
- Chapter 11 comprise of miscellaneous provisions, including the prohibition of physical and psychological punishment (Article 39), prohibition of political activities (Article 40), uniforms (Article 41), incentive pay (Article 42), work schedule (Article 43), retirement (Article 44), national teaching skill examination (Article 45), assistance to teachers (Article 46), use of scholarships and fellowships (Article 47), family and community participation (Article 48), other administrative affairs (Article 49), graduation certificates (Article 50), enactment of rules and procedures (Article 51), and enforcement of the Education Law (Article 52).

## Other Strategic Documents for the Development of the Education Sector

### **Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)**

Following the London Conference of 2006 and the signing of the Afghan Compact, a clear and concise mandate was created calling for state building and the development of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) report. ANDS reflects the Government's vision, principles and goals for Afghanistan, building on and in support of commitments to reach the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks and the Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals.<sup>8</sup> Benchmarks were set to reach goals of governance, security, and socioeconomic development by the year 2013.

The ANDS is a five-year strategy to reduce poverty and promote economic and social development. It is an Afghan Millennium Development Goals-based plan that will serve as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

One section of the ANDS is dedicated to the role of education and the importance of literacy as the backbone of social, political and economic development in Afghanistan. Providing basic education and reducing illiteracy rates will remain the top priority for the Government throughout the duration of the ANDS as endorsed in the current as well as the updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan, which is due to be published soon.<sup>9</sup>

### Paris Conference 2008

The government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and representatives of the international community met in Paris on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 to reaffirm their long-term partnership in support of the people of Afghanistan, their security, prosperity and human rights.

The International Conference in Support of Afghanistan saw fresh pledges of resources (USD 21.4 billion) for the country's rebuilding efforts including education and health, as well as the launch of the Government's five-year plan to reduce poverty and promote economic and social development, known as the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS). As mentioned above, this five-year strategy will serve as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The Paris Conference represents the point of departure for a new partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, enabling them to work together more closely in implementing the ANDS.

The conference made particular mention of the role of education in attaining future endeavors of political stability, economic growth, and social cohesion.

### e. Objectives and Principal Characteristics of Current and Forthcoming Reforms

#### National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan 1385-1389 (2006-2010)

The current National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) is the direct response by the State, through the Ministry of Education, on how it will fulfil its obligations according to the Constitution and the Education Law. It was developed with technical support from the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

*"The Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education for the period of 1385 to 1389 is the first attempt to collate corporate thinking and assess the current situation and challenges that affects this Ministry's ability to meet the government's obligation towards education as stated in the 1382 Constitution, its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals for 1399 (2020) and the*

*intermediate targets set in the Afghanistan Compact benchmark for 1389 (2010). It is the foundation for rebuilding the education system of Afghanistan.”*

*Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Education (1386)*

The Strategy comprises of two categories of priority programmes. The first related to service delivery, and the second to quality assurance. Together, these programmes aim to provide *Equal Access to Quality Education for All*.

*Table 1: Priority Programmes of the National Education Strategic Plan*

	Service Delivery Programmes		Quality Assurance Programmes
1	General Education (Pre-Primary, Primary, Lower Secondary & Upper Secondary levels)	1	Teacher Education & Working Conditions
2	Islamic Education	2	Curriculum Development & Learning Materials
3	Technical & Vocational Education	3	Education Infrastructure Rehabilitation & Development
4	Literacy & Non-formal Education	4	Education Administration Reform & Management

Inclusive education is not specifically mention in the current NESP. However, a number of initiatives introduced through the current NESP specifically target groups vulnerable to exclusion from and within education:

- Girls
- Children in rural areas
- Kuchi (nomadic) children
- Children with disabilities
- Pre-school aged children
- Over aged children

#### **Updated National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan 1387-1391 (2008-2013)**

*“The Strategic Plan is supported at the highest levels of the government. It is a “work in progress” and will be reviewed regularly in the light of the impact of the fiscal and other enablers as well as our progress towards our goals. I encourage comments and discussion. I seek advice and support. I commit to our mutual agreement and achievement of the goals.”*

*Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Education (1386)*

The current NESP will be updated by the end of 2008 (1387) with technical support from the UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP). The concept of inclusive education will be introduced in the updated NESP. However,

it is important to reiterate that many of the initiatives under the current NESP has helped Afghanistan make important steps towards inclusion.

The results of a *Needs & Rights Assessment Analysis* on inclusive education recently commissioned by the Ministry of Education and completed with technical support from UNESCO and the Coordination Working Group on Inclusive Education will be incorporated into the updated NESP.

## Item 1.2

### Policies, Achievements and Lessons Learned as regard to:

#### a. Access to Education - Focusing on Actions Taken to Reach Children, Youth and Adults that are Currently Excluded:

The main policy of the Ministry of Education is to promote social justice, provide equitable access to quality education for all children regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, social, economic, ethnic, religious and language backgrounds.

According to Article 43 of the Afghan Constitution and Article 4 of the Education Law, the Ministry of Education is obliged to provide free education for all the children and youth of Afghanistan. The constitution also stipulates compulsory primary and lower secondary education. According to the Afghan Millennium Development Goals, all Afghan children, boys and girls should complete primary education by 1399 (2020).

#### **Enrolment in Primary Education:**

To reach this goal, the Ministry of Education is determined to achieve the net enrolment rates of 75% for boys and 60% for girls by 1389 (2010). For this purpose, around 5,000 new schools will be established over the coming five years.

#### **Equity of Access:**

The Ministry of Education commits itself to providing equal access to education for girls, nomadic (Kuchi) children, children from ethnic, language and religious minorities, children with different disabilities and abilities (gifted children). It must also provide access to education of the under-aged and over-aged children deprived of schooling.

#### **Increasing Female Teachers:**

In order to improve girls' access to education, the Ministry will increase the number of female primary and secondary school teachers by 50% by 1389 (2010). Currently, 28% of teachers are females. In order to increase the



number of female teachers, the Ministry encourages and facilitates the enrolment of females in the teacher training centers.

#### **Private Sector Involvement:**

In order to improve access to education, the Ministry encourages and supports the contribution of the private sector to education. Provisions for private public partnership are made in the Education Law. In addition, the Ministry will evaluate, register and provide support to cross-border Afghan educational institutes.

#### **Distance education:**

This is another strategy of the Ministry to improve access to education. The development of education initiatives using radio and television as well as other multi-media tools, is one of the Ministry's priorities.

#### **Islamic Education:**

To provide and improve access to Islamic Education for boys and girls is an important part of the education policy. The Ministry believes that all students who choose Islamic Education should be provided access to quality Madrasas (grades 1 to 12), Dar-ul-Huffaz (grades 1 to 12) and Dar-ul-Ulums (grades 13 to 14). One modern Madrasa is under establishment in every district and one is Dar-ul-Ulum in every province. Pedagogical and vocational trainings will also be included in the curriculum of Islamic Education for particularly grades 13 and 14.

#### **Achievements:**

- Girls - In 1386 (2007) more than 800,000 new students enrolled in schools throughout Afghanistan. Approximately 40% of these were girls. According to data from 1386 (2007) 35% of the primary and secondary school population were girls, which is up from 0% just 5 years earlier (as girls were prohibited from attending school by the previous Taliban government). It is clear from the 1386 (2007) data that the percentage of girls enrolling in schools is continuing to rise. In 1386 (2007) 69,000 students graduated from upper secondary schools, 25% of these were girls. This is the largest number of graduates from upper secondary schools in the history of Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> More than 2.1 million girls are now enrolled in schools.
- School enrolment has grown from 900,000 in 2002 to around 6 million in 2007 from grade 1 to 12.
- There are nearly 11,264 schools across the country, more than 5,000 established since 2002. Nearly 3,500 school buildings have been constructed or rehabilitated and a further 1,300 are currently under construction. Community-Based Schools (158,482 students in 2007) have been an effective solution to provide educational access to children in the area without any school facility.
- The Ministry of Education has started initiatives to promote inclusive education, increase the number of female teachers, and establish a

platform - 'the Afghanistan Girls' Education Initiative (AGEI)' to promote girls' education.

- The number of teachers has grown 7-fold from 21,000 to 151,000 in 2007, of which 28% are females. A new teacher recruitment system has been devised in 2007 and is being piloted. Teacher educators' network has expanded to province and even to district levels through the Teachers Training Colleges at provincial level and the Teacher Trainers available at district level. 61,306 teachers were trained on In-set 1 package in 2006 and 2007 with the support of various partners. The Ministry of Education has also developed Curriculum framework and syllabi for 2-year pre-service and in-service teacher-education programme and development of instructional materials for teacher educators are in progress.
- New Curriculum and teacher guides have been developed for primary grades and 21.2 million textbooks printed and distributed since 2004. Over 60 million of primary and secondary textbooks are being printed and distributed. A new Curriculum framework and syllabi for secondary education have been developed, as well as for Islamic Education. Development of new secondary textbooks is in progress.
- The Ministry supports 336 schools, 91,000 students and 3500 teachers engaged in Islamic Education.
- There are 49 Technical and Vocational Institutes operating today with 10,000 students and 800 teachers.
- In 2007, 14,430 students have been enrolled in Higher Education Institutions
- 9,242 students graduated from Higher Education Institutions in 2007.
- Since 2002, 835,703 persons have been graduated from literacy classes. In 2007, another 305,000 learners were enrolled in literacy classes. Two-third of were girls and women. To accelerate literacy efforts, the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) was officially adopted in Afghanistan as a national literacy framework with the objective of contributing to the literacy goals set in the NESP.
- Nearly 6,000 Advisory and Support Councils have been established to manage and monitor the performance of school and school administration.

#### b. Early Childhood Intervention as a Means to Support Children's Development, Transition to Primary Education and Learning<sup>11</sup>:

Young children in Afghanistan are often the centre of attention in their families. Relatives and neighbours join their parents and siblings in caring for the little ones. However, decades of conflict and war, as well as the daily struggle against poverty has reduced the capacity of many families and communities to respond effectively to the needs of their young children.

More than 50% of Afghan families are thought to live on less than a dollar a day and 70% of households are considered to be food insecure. Government services (health and education) for young children and their families are recovering slowly from decades of neglect. Significant progress has been made. However, services remain fragmented and they are hampered by the lack of

security in large parts of the country, as well as poor physical infrastructure and lack of human capacity and resources.

Afghanistan has the third highest under-five mortality rate in the world (after Sierra Leone and Angola).<sup>12</sup> Preventable illnesses such as acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea are the biggest causes of illness and death among young children. 40% of children younger than three years old are underweight and 54% of children under the age of five are stunted.

Drop out rates are the highest in the early primary school grades often due to the lack of child-friendly learning environment in schools. Another reason is that many children are not ready for school often due to lack of nourishment, stimulation, and care. Physical punishment is also quite common in homes and schools throughout Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Education has recently drafted a policy of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in collaboration with national and international Development Partners.

A Division for Pre-School Education has been established under the Independent Department for Curriculum Development and Teacher Education.

### c. Learning Outcomes Particularly Concerning the Efforts to Improve Learning Achievements and Reduce Inequalities:

#### **Development of a new Curriculum**

Through a national consultative process in 1386 (2007) with participation from national and international experts, a new Curriculum and relevant syllabi for grades 1 through 12 were developed. The development was completed in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and best practice in Afghanistan and abroad.

#### **Development of Innovative Teaching and Learning Material**

- Development, printing and distribution of books for primary education: Based on the new Curriculum, 109 primary books were developed in 1386 (2007) and are printed and currently under distribution.
- Development, printing and distribution of books for lower secondary education: To provide quick access of the students to books and provide an opportunity for the development of new books according to the new Curriculum, more than 145 books were temporarily compiled.
- Development, printing and distribution of books for upper secondary education: According to the new curriculum, 330 books including religious texts, languages, science, mathematics and social science books for

secondary schools have been developed. Teacher guides have also been developed.

- Development, printing and distribution of religious books for primary education (grade 1 to 6): In line with the provisions of the constitution, 22 religious books of the two main Islamic schools (Sunny and Shia) have been developed for primary education in both national languages (Dari and Pashtu). These books are currently in print.
- Development, printing and distribution of books in third languages (local languages): In line with the provisions of the constitution and based on the new Curriculum, 12 books for teaching each six third national languages are expected to be developed, printed and distributed.
- Enhancing the academic capacity to develop good quality books: A process to attract the best professional and modern and religious experts was launched in 1386 (2007). Till date 113 experienced Afghan experts have been hired by the Ministry of Education.
- Teachers in all provinces are currently receiving orientation on how to use the new textbooks (grade 3 and grade 6).
- 61 million textbooks for grade 1 to 12 have been printed. 45 million books will be distributed during 1387 (2008). All children will have a full set of text books by the end of 1387 (2008).
- An additional 15 million text books for primary schools will be printed in 1387 (2007) for distribution in 1388 (2009).

#### **Establishments of Laboratories in Schools**

A 1386 (2007) survey showed that 178 schools have Laboratory equipments and materials. Teachers are encouraged to build on their awareness and ability to utilise laboratories. Schools are being supplied with laboratory equipment with support from multilateral donors in 1387 (2008). The development of laboratory guides is in progress and, till date, 25,000 lab experiment guidebooks have been printed and distributed.

#### **d. Pre-Service Teacher Training and Education, Recruitment, Deployment, Working Conditions and In-Service Professional Development:**

Teacher education and training (pre- and in-service), as well as improving working conditions for teachers is one of the main priority areas of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). As part of the implementation of the NESP, the foundation of a teacher education and training structure is being developed with pre-service teacher training facilities established in every province. The provincial training facilities will be linked to Teacher Resource Centres in every

district of Afghanistan, which will provide in-service teacher training to teachers in government and non-government schools.

#### **Incentives for Teachers:**

Distance education strategies will be explored in addition to upgrading and training in fixed facilities. The Ministry of Education is committed to provide upgrading opportunities for teachers, but also training and technical assistance for school principals, administrators and others whose role it is to support teachers. Housing schemes are being considered as part of an incentive package for teachers. This will attract more women to the teaching profession as well as increase the number of qualified male and female teachers in rural and other underserved areas of the country. These incentives will also encourage well-qualified Afghan teachers currently working in Iran and Pakistan to come back to Afghanistan and teach in schools in their home communities.

#### **Implementation of the Pay and Grading Scheme:**

The regulation was approved by the parliament in 1387 (2008). It will be implemented over the coming four years with assistance and cooperation of the Afghanistan Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission, and will cover teachers, teacher trainers and educators, as well as administrative staff in the Ministry.

#### **Implementation of Administrative Reforms and the Priority Reform and Restructuring:**

550 provincial officials including the heads of provincial education departments, district education managers, deputy heads of departments, and school managers of Kabul City, as well all the heads of the Teacher Training Centers (TTCs) have already been employed through a competitive and transparent process. Another 900 employees will be hired in this manner in 1387 (2007). 10,000 professional teachers were hired in 1386 (2007). Another 12,500 teachers were hired through competitive and transparent processes in 1387 (2008).

#### **Capacity Building:**

600 employees in the capital and provincial education departments were trained in 1386 (2007) on management, finance, information technology, English Language, and employment procedures. Another 900 educational officials will complete their training in 1387 (2008).

#### **Employment of New Technical Assistants on Contract Basis:**

Responding to the urgent need in the Ministry of Education to improve administrative capacities for the implementation of development programs, the Ministry employed more than 1,178 technical assistants in 1386 (2007). The technical assistants are not only responsible to perform tasks and duties, but also to build capacities of government civil servants.

## **Employment of New Teachers**

To reinforce existing schools and support the establishment of new schools and to increase the number of professional teachers, the Ministry of Education hired 12,500 new teachers in 1386 (2007).

## **Education of a New Generation of Teachers in the Teacher Training Centres**

The number of Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) has increased from 17 to 37 in the provinces during 1386 (2007). There is now at least one TTC in every province of Afghanistan. 300 professional lecturers were hired to teach in the TTCs in 1386 (2007) which is a 100% percent increase from the year before. The number of student teachers more than doubled in 1386 (2007), increasing from 11,000 to 23,000. More than 40% of the student teachers are now female.

## **Special Programmes for Female Teachers**

To increase the number of female teachers, a special programme was launched in 1387 (2008) to attract girls to the Teacher Training Centres. According to the programme, a financial incentive will be provided for 1,250 female student teachers, 50 students from each of Afghanistan's 25 provinces. The incentive will encourage girls to choose teaching as a profession.

## **Graduation of New Teachers**

More than 6,500 students, 54% females, graduated as professional teachers from the TTCs in 1386 (2007). The majority of them have been hired by government schools.

## **New Teacher Education and Training Curriculum:**

Based on best national, regional and international practices, the curriculum of the teacher training centres was developed by the Afghan and Indian experts. The development of learning material according to the new Curriculum has started. To date, 90 new books have been developed and the remaining 70 books will be developed by the end of 1387. With the development of the new books, the teaching system of the TTCs will be in line with best international practice.

## **Establishment of National Teacher Training Centres:**

The National Teacher Training Centre was established to train teacher educators and trainers for the (provincial) TTCs. The first round of trainings was launched in 1386 for 165 individuals, 27% were women.

The contracts for the construction of buildings for the 16 Teacher Training Centres have been signed. The construction work started in 1387 (2008). Once completed, the new buildings will accommodate 16,000 male and female

student teachers and will provide dormitories for 9,000 student teachers and teacher educators.

#### **Emergency In-Service Training:**

65,000 teachers, 36% of all current teachers, have gone through in-service trainings. These training have been aimed at improving pedagogical skills.

More than 4,000 professional male and female teacher trainers will be hired to be stationed in the district for school based, in-service teacher training and upgrading - at least one in every upper secondary school.

#### **Distance Education:**

To reinforce the in-service trainings and to address the needs of teachers who, for different reasons, have no access to direct education, a distance education programme was launched in 1386 (2007). TV and radio has been used extensively to educate teachers from remote areas. Teacher guides for the primary level have been developed and printed.

#### **Improve the Living Standards of Teachers:**

The salary of teachers will be increased in two phases, while 1100 plots for building of private homes were distributed to teachers in Kabul in 1386 (2007).

## **Item 1.3**

### **The Role of the Education System in Combating Poverty as well as Other Forms of Social Exclusion and Marginalisation**

*"It is the strong belief of our country's top leadership that a revitalised education system that is guided by the tenets of Islam is at the core of the State Building exercise. Therefore, one of the top priorities of government is to rebuild an education system that will act as a fundamental cornerstone in shaping the future of the country through peace and stability, democracy and good governance, poverty reduction and economic growth. The centrality of education to the development, growth and therefore stability of Afghanistan cannot be overstressed."*

*Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Education (1386)*

The role of the education system in combating poverty and social exclusion is pivotal. In the past education has often contributed to keep people in poverty and cement traditional forms of social exclusion. Quality schools were only available for boys, or only for the rich and well connected. However, the democratisation process of the education system has now taught us the importance of offering access to quality education for all, with no exception. We now know that children

thrive when their schools and classrooms are diverse, with children from different backgrounds, and with different abilities. It is also important that the diversity found in Afghan communities is reflected in Afghan schools.

The exclusion of children from and within education must therefore be combated by the Government, represented by the Ministry of Education, as well as by schools and communities. All schools in Afghanistan should therefore become inclusive and child-friendly. In inclusive schools children would be able to learn at their own pace and according to their own abilities to achieve optimal academic, social, emotional and physical development.

The Constitution, the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Afghan Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All (EFA) Goals, the Education Law and the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) all highlight the vital role of the education system (from pre-primary to tertiary) in shaping the future of Afghanistan. Developing and rebuilding the education system is one of the top priorities of the Afghan government, as education will bring peace, stability, democracy, good governance, as well as poverty reduction and economic growth to the country.



## Part 2

# Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future

## Item 2.1

### Approaches, Scopes and Contents

#### a. Conceptualisation and Vision of Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusive education is by many key government and non-government stakeholders still seen as education of children with disabilities in regular schools. However, a broader understanding of inclusive education, where inclusive and child-friendly education is seen as an effective tool to achieve quality education for all children, is beginning to develop within many government and non-government organisations working within the field of education.

*Inclusive and child-friendly education should be seen as:*

- *An approach to whole school improvement that will ensure that national strategies for Education for All are really for all;*
- *A mean of ensuring the all children receive quality care and education in their home communities as part of early child development, pre-school, primary and secondary education programmes particularly those who are currently excluded from mainstream education or vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion; and*
- *A contribution to the development of a society that respects and value the individual differences of all citizens.*<sup>13</sup>

A roundtable discussion on inclusive education is scheduled for November 2008 for key government stakeholders by the Ministry of Education. The discussion will be organised with technical support from UNESCO and the Coordination Working Group on Inclusive Education.

It is the vision of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that all primary and secondary schools in future will become more inclusive and child-friendly, and that all children, regardless of their gender, their abilities and disabilities, as well as their backgrounds and circumstances will have access to quality education in their home communities. Diversity will be embraced, not merely tolerated, as we realise that the wonderful diversity that is found in our communities must also be reflected in our schools and classrooms. This vision is embedded in the current as well as the updated version National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan which will be published soon.

The Afghan education system is not yet inclusive but a very promising beginning has been made. The percentage of girls of the school population has grown from 0% in 2001 to over 37% in 1386 (2007). The challenges faced by nomadic

(Kuchi) children are being addressed by the government as mobile schools units as well as dormitories have been established to increase enrolment of Kuchi children. Educational services for children with disabilities and access to education has improved over the past few years.

## b. Challenges for Inclusion and How These Have Changed in Recent Years

Poor infrastructure, lack of human resources (both quality and quantity), social and cultural barriers, gender disparity among students and teachers, linguistic diversity, poor quality of education in general, examination systems, as well as lack of relevance of the curriculum for large population groups are among the main challenges Afghanistan have been and are still facing for implementation education for all in an inclusive setting.

The enrolment rate of children in general, and of girls, children with disabilities as well as children from minority backgrounds in particular, is adversely affected by the difficult security situation in large parts of Afghanistan. The lack of security and the targeting of schools, teachers and pupils by insurgents and terrorists are some of the main barriers to education in general and education of children vulnerable to exclusion from and within education in particular. 254 teachers and pupils have been murdered in recent attacks of schools, hundreds more have been injured. It is estimated that the destruction of schools by terrorists are depriving more than 300,000 children from an education.

The lack of awareness among key stakeholders, as well as a lack of coordination of efforts and initiatives is a major barrier to the development of quality education in general and inclusive education in particular.

The Constitution and the Education Law guarantees **all** children the right to education. In spite of their constitutional right the Ministry of Education still needs to develop specific plans on how to enrol those children most vulnerable to exclusion within and from education, or preventing them dropping out.

### **Poor Infrastructure:**

Most of the schools in Afghanistan were destroyed or damaged as a result of decades of war, internal conflict and terror. In 1381 (2002), the government estimated that out of a total of approximately 6,000 schools in the country only 547 were suitable to be used for teaching children.

New schools are therefore being built at an increasing rate in communities throughout Afghanistan. School construction is one of the eight priority programmes in the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP). 1600 schools are currently under construction, however more schools are needed in the years to come, and the need for repair of many existing schools is dire. Unfortunately none of the existing schools, or any of the schools that are under construction,

are built fully according to universal design principles, even if ramps and accessible sanitation facilities have been constructed in some schools.

*“Universal design means the design of environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptations or specialised design. Universal design shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.”<sup>14</sup>*

A school constructed according to universal design principles will provide access for all, ramps will be used instead of stairs, doors will be wide enough that a wheelchair can pass through, sanitation facilities will be accessible with ramp and seated toilets, light and colour will be used to improve the learning environments as well as orientation and mobility, and insulation as well as heaters will be used to provide a proper learning environments also during the colder autumn and spring seasons. The additional costs of construction schools for all according to the principles of universal design are minimal.

Construction of boundary walls around school properties is also important in many parts of Afghanistan to ensure that girls will be able to come to school.

### Lack of Human Resources

The previous Taliban governments were closing down all the girl schools and waged war on the modern and progressive education system, as a result Afghanistan suffered from a severe shortage of teachers in general and female teachers in particular. In 1386 (2007), the number of the student teachers has more than doubled from previous years, increasing from 11,000 to 23,000 with 40% of the students being females. The shortage of female teachers is being specially addressed through a scholarship programme which was launched in the first quarter of 1387 (2008). The programme aims to attract female students to the Teacher Training Centres (TTC). An incentive will be provided for 1,250 female student teachers from 25 provinces, 50 students from each province. The incentive is expected to encourage young females to choose teaching as a profession.

There is an extreme shortage of teacher with special competences in teaching children with special educational needs. Afghanistan has some teachers with experience (but limited education) in teaching children with hearing impairment and visual impairment, but by far not sufficient to cover the need throughout the country. While there are virtually no teachers with competences in teaching children with ADHD/ADD, Autism, cerebral palsy, developmental impairment, or reading and writing difficulties. There is a Special Education Department at the Kabul Education University, however, their resources and competencies are very limited, and the Department would need comprehensive upgrading before they could effectively educate teachers to support children with special education needs (and their class teachers) in inclusive schools. There are no major government sponsored programmes to address these issues, merely a few isolated initiatives, mainly sponsored by UN

agencies, international and local non-governmental organisations as well as disabled persons organisations.

The Ministry of Education currently pilots child-friendly and/or inclusive education in more than 650 schools throughout Afghanistan<sup>15 16</sup> with support from UNICEF, UNESCO, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, Save the Children, Serve, the Afghan Association of the Blind (AAB), the Afghan National Association of the Deaf (ANAD), Afghan National Association of the Blind (ANAB), International Rescue Committee (IRC), National Association of the Blind (NAB), and War Child Holland, among others. Teachers in these schools have received some training on how to teach children with diverse abilities and from different backgrounds.

The experiences made in the pilot schools for inclusive and child-friendly education, as well as with the different teacher training programmes implemented by the different organisations should be incorporated into the curriculum of the general teacher training programmes run by the Teacher Training Centres (TCC).

### **Social and Cultural Barriers**

Many parents, teachers, education officials, legislators and other members of the society lack awareness of the rights all children have to education, care and protection.

After more than 30 years of war and conflict many Afghans have developed a certain level of apathy towards suffering. The traditional solidarity within families and tribal communities still exists, however it has been strained by the length and severity of the current crisis. The same solidarity and willingness to help and support, does not always exist between different communities and cultures. This results in discrimination against minorities and exclusion from schooling and other public services.

Early marriage prevents many young girls and boys from completing their education. Many girls in rural areas marry as early as 12, while boys sometimes marry at 16 or 17, and then forced to stop their education and start working to take care of their families.

Many parents of children with disabilities feel helpless and disappointed, as they worry about the future of their children, as opportunities for persons with disabilities are still limited in Afghanistan. While others may feel embarrassed about having children with disabilities, especially children with multiple impairment and developmental impairment, children with cerebral palsy, children with physical impairment who look, move and behave very different from most other children. Children with hearing impairment and visual impairment are less affected by stigma and discrimination, however many parents are embarrassed when their deaf children use signs. Parents (and teachers) therefore prefer for their children to speak, even if this is very difficult for many children who are profoundly deaf, especially if they have little or no access to support from speech therapists.

## **Gender Disparities**

Some of the main social and cultural barriers affect girls and their access to education, retention beyond the first years of primary education, as well as the transition to lower and upper secondary education. Girls have traditionally been educated at home, mainly in the responsibilities of taking care of children and the household. The Taliban government that ruled Afghanistan up until 2001 banned girls from formal education all together, a view they still hold and fight for in areas under their influence. As a result Taliban insurgents are still destroying girl schools, and they harass and threaten female students and their teachers, to prevent them from attending school.

Interventions by government and non-government sponsored programmes have resulted in a substantial increase in enrolment of girls in schools as well as the education and hiring of female teachers.

Currently more than 37% of the children who enrol in primary schools are girls. This is up from almost 0% in 2001. Before 2001 some girls received education through informal home based education programmes. However, the enrolment rates of girls are still behind the enrolment rate for boys, especially in secondary schools, as well as in many rural areas. Merely 10% of students enrolled in technical and vocational schools in 1386 (2007) were girls.<sup>17</sup>

## **Linguistic Diversity**

School books are produced in two national languages (Dari and Pashtu)<sup>18</sup> as well as in number of minority languages, including Baluchi, Nuristani, Pamiri, Pashae, Turkmeni and Uzbeki. However, there are more than 32 languages that are spoken in Afghanistan many children are therefore not able to receive education in their mother tongue. Many urban areas are ethnically and linguistically mixed. Schools do not have the capacity or the resources to teach several mother-tongues in the same school or in the same classrooms. Many minority children are therefore educated in another language than their mother-tongue.

Most children with hearing impairment who use (or should use) Sign language for communication do not have sufficient access to teachers and other resource persons who are proficient in their language. These children will therefore often grow up without a proper language, and with limited abilities to communicate with others. If their parents and siblings can hear, and the children themselves do not have contacts with other members of the Deaf community, their academic, social, emotional and physical development will be severely affected.

## **Poor Quality of Education**

Teachers, especially in rural areas are often poorly educated, with little more than a secondary school certificate. Their ability to make links between theory and practice, and thereby make education "alive" for the children is therefore limited. Their confidence in their own abilities and skills are low. They

therefore tend to escape into more traditional form of teaching and are mainly lecturing from the blackboard instead of interacting with their pupils. They are often afraid of allowing or encouraging the children to ask questions beyond what is in the school book because they themselves may not know the answer, and they are worried about how this would affect the respect (or fear) many children have for their teachers.

Most subject matters are taught separately without any attempts of project based learning or subject-integration. The connections between different subject matters, i.e. language, mathematics, and science are therefore not made visible to the learners. This affects the understanding of learners and limits their interest in education, and it reduces the willingness of parents to send or keep their children in school. The lack of quality and relevance of education results in large drop-out rates in primary and secondary schools, and it feeds the formal and non-formal labour market with cheap and child-labour.

*“Develop and improve the quality of education by applying modern experiences of the contemporary world, in accordance with the country’s needs, Islamic and national values.”*

*Article 2 Paragraph 13 - Education Law of 1387 (2008)*

## **Examination Systems**

The current exams are too difficult for many children, considering both the quality of education they have been offered, as well as their learning abilities. The current system is also inadequate in terms of assessing real learning. This often leads to “examination-driven” teaching. Most children are therefore learning merely to pass exams, not for life. The current examination system is one of the main contributing factors to the massive drop-out rates in Afghan primary schools. The examination system should encourage children to learn and develop. It should assess the progress of individual children (not just comparing children to each other), as well as the general competencies of children and teachers according to expected national norms. The examination system should facilitate the development of more inclusive and child-friendly methodologies in schools, and enable the enrolment of children who have been excluded from and within the school system.

## **Relevance of the Curriculum**

The current curriculum is relatively rigid and does not answer the needs of all children. However, even if the curriculum had been more flexible many teachers would not have been able to make individual adjustments and work effectively within broader curriculum frames. Another factor is that most teachers do not know the content of the curriculum but teach according to the school book.

Support material is not available and a merely a few teachers are able to develop support material from readily available waste or low cost material (i.e. bottle caps, beans and pebbles for mathematics).

Mathematics and science is often taught on a theoretical level without much linkage to practical mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. The world that surrounds us is full of mathematics and science, every time we fill a cup of tea we make a mathematical calculation, when the farmer water his fields he makes mathematical calculations, when a carpet weaver colour her/his thread with vegetable dye, they calculate the amount of dye and the length of time the tread is exposed to the dye to get the right colour, this is all part of basic science. The same when a carpet is woven or knotted force is being used, how hard, how loose and even this force is distributed will determine the quality of the carpet, this is practical physics. The same is the case when a child flies a kite. What is important is that children and teachers loose their fear of mathematic and science, and realise that they make these kind of calculations all time quite successfully, without knowing that this is the practical part of academic science.

There is little follow-up, monitoring and supervision of the capacity building programmes that have been implemented over the past few years, much of the training has therefore been less than optimal use.

The new Curriculum which is under development, as well as text books will promote active and independent learning by addressing most of the issues mentioned above. The new text books will be field tested in the first half of 1388 (2009), based on these filed tests they will be introduced country wide in 1389 (2010). The Curriculum of teacher education and training programmes is based on the latest versions of the school curriculum and on the latest version of the text books.

### c. Legal and Regulatory Frameworks Referring to Inclusive Education

#### The Constitution of 1383 (2004)

In the constitution it is clearly stated that all children, without exception, and without discrimination have the right to education:

Article 22 first paragraph states that:

*"Any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden."*

Article 22 second paragraph states that:

*"The citizens of Afghanistan, man and woman, shall have equal rights and duties before the law."*

Article 24 second and third paragraphs state that:

*"Liberty and human dignity are inviolable."*

*"The state shall protect liberty as well as human dignity."*

Article 34 first paragraph states that:

*"Freedom of expression shall be inviolable."*

Article 43 first paragraph states that:

*“Education is the right of all citizen of Afghanistan, which shall be offered up to the B.A. level in the state educational institutions free of charge by the state.”*

Article 43 second paragraph states that:

*“To expand balanced education as well as to provide mandatory intermediate education throughout Afghanistan, the state shall design and implement effective programs and prepare the ground for teaching mother tongues in areas where they are spoken.”*

Article 44 states that:

*“The state shall device and implement effective programmes to create and foster balanced education for women, improve education of nomads as well as eliminate illiteracy in the country.”*

It is important to reiterate that the constitution gives **all** children regardless of their gender, abilities, disabilities, as well as social, economical, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds equal right to free and comprehensive education from primary to tertiary education. This means that **all** children must be considered educible according to the law. It is therefore up to the Ministry of Education to provide educational opportunities that responds to the needs and abilities of **all** children, without discrimination, and in inclusive and child-friendly settings, as the constitution guarantees that the state shall protect the dignity and human rights of all its citizens.

### **The Education Law of 1387 (2008)**

The Education Law guarantee equal right for **all** children to education (Article 3). However in Article 15 on education for persons with special needs this is somewhat modified. The text of this article is somewhat ambiguous, as it can be interpreted in different ways. It can be interpreted as a sanctioning of a flexibility education system designed to accommodate children with different needs and abilities. However it can also be interpreted as a promotion of special education in more segregated settings.

It is important that the main focus of schools and other education institutions in Afghanistan should be on offering **all** children equal rights to education without any kind of discrimination in accordance with Article 43 of the Constitution and Article 3 of the newly approved Education Law.

### **Equal Rights in Education**

Article three:

*“The citizens of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan have equal rights to education without any kind of discrimination.”*



## Education of Persons with Special Needs

Article fifteen:

*“Education of children and adults who needs special educational and training, and due to different reasons are left behind from education and training, shall be provided in different educational levels, in accordance with its related rules.”*

## The Objectives of the Intermediate (basic) Education Level

Article Eighteen:

*“Objectives of the intermediate (basic) education are:*

- 1- Understand the basic principles and commandments of the sacred religion of Islam and strengthen Islamic belief and values. Non-Muslim students are exempt from this provision.*
- 2- Improve and strengthen Islamic sensation and spirit of patriotism and unity and national solidarity, justice, equality, peaceful coexistence, peace loving, tolerability and self-reliance.*
- 3- Improve and strengthen respecting to the human and woman rights.*
- 4- Aware the students to the importance of the protection of the environment and its proper use and strengthen the spirit of adduction.*
- 5- Improve and strengthen the spirit of social responsibility, law abiding, order and discipline, social behaviour, respecting parents, elder, teachers, lecturers, Modrasan and effective participation in the family, schools and societal affairs and spirit of mutual assistance, kindness, and cooperation.*
- 6- Develop and strengthen physical, spiritual, moral, mental, affection and social soundness of the students.*
- 7- Develop and expand training physical education, cultural and artistic programs in accordance with the Islamic values.*
- 8- Acquire functional literacy and develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening in the national and international languages.*
- 9- Develop and strengthen the habit and culture of reading.*
- 10- Acquire basic knowledge of social and natural sciences.*
- 11- Develop and strengthen the sense of initiation, intelligence and indentifying problems and seeking logical solution.*
- 12- Prepare the students for the secondary educational level”.*

## Prohibition of Physical and Psychological Punishment

Article Thirty-Nine:

*“Every kind of physical and psychological punishment of students is prohibited even for their correction and chastisement. Violators shall be prosecuted in accordance with the legal provisions.”*

## Groups Considered Vulnerable to Exclusion and Marginalisation within these Frameworks

The groups of children specifically mentioned in the constitution and/or in the education law in need of special attention and/or resources are (listed alphabetically):

- Children with different language backgrounds (Article 43 of the Constitution, as well as Article 32 in the Education Law)
- Children with Disabilities (Article 24 Paragraph 3 in the Education Law)
- Children with Special Needs (Article 7 Paragraph 3, and Article 15 in the Education Law)
- Gifted and Talented Students (Article 7 Paragraph 3 in the Education Law)
- Girls (Article 22 Paragraph, and Article 44 of the Constitution)
- Nomadic Children (Article 44 of the Constitution, as well as Article 9 Paragraph 2, and Article 25 in the Education Law)

There is no specific mentioning in the Constitution or the Education Law of other groups of children vulnerable to exclusion from and within education (i.e. children living on the street, children suffering from neglect, abandonment and abuse, children from ethnic and religious minorities, or working children) in the Constitution or in the Education Law.

## Item 2.2 Public Policies

### a. Current Scope and Dimension of Exclusion From, and Within Education:

A 2006 report<sup>19</sup> estimated that 37.5% of all children age 7 to 13 in Afghanistan are excluded from formal schooling. It was further estimated that only 32% of children with disabilities<sup>20</sup> age 7 to 13 were enrolled in formal schools. In the same report it was estimated that only 48% of girls were enrolled in schools. While EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2008<sup>21</sup> refers to a gross intake rate of 82%, 96% for boys and 67% for girls (data from 2005).

There is no system of birth registration in Afghanistan. The age of the children is therefore often difficult to determine. This lack of data affects the accuracy of statistics on school enrolment. There has not been a proper Census in Afghanistan for more than 20 years. All current statistics, whether these are published by the Statistic Bureau or from UN agencies, are therefore based on guesstimates.

What is safe to assume is that at least 40% of Afghan children, girls and boys, either never enrol in school or drop-out of school before they have successfully completed their primary education.

## b. Inclusive Education Issues Relevant for Education Policies in Afghanistan

### Assessment (Functional and Medical)

Technical resources within this field are very limited in Afghanistan. If the resources are available, they might not be accessible (financially or due to geographical distances) or an assessment is made and there is no follow-up. Therefore, if a child is identified as having low vision these are often no funds available for glasses, loupes, magnifiers and/or reading stands. Children who are blind or who have low vision, and are enrolled in the inclusive education programmes have often received some form of assessment through the international and local organisations that are supporting these efforts. There is only one government special schools for children with visual impairment in Afghanistan, with limited capacity. Most children with visual impairment who have access to education are therefore educated in integrated or inclusive schools. However, merely a small minority of children with visual impairment have been assessed by a special educator, optician, optometrist or paediatric ophthalmologist.

Children with Cerebral Palsy are often treated as if they have developmental impairment, and mostly left without further assessment. A small number of children with cerebral palsy are enrolled in special schools, while others are taught in home based education and rehabilitation programmes. However, the vast majority of children with cerebral palsy are out school and have no access to education. Communication boards which could ease communication for many children with cerebral palsy are not available.

There are four special schools in all of Afghanistan for children with hearing impairment. There is currently no policy related to Sign language or availability in Braille, even if the education law and in the current strategic plan. A dictionary for a national Sign language has been developed by organisations representing persons with hearing impairment, and presented to the Ministry of Education. However, reference to Sign language and availability of learning material in Braille will be included in the updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan which is due later this year.

There is no capacity or resources available for assessment of children with Autism, ADD, ADHD, reading and writing difficulties (including Dyslexia), and other groups of children experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation. Without proper assessment these children are stigmatised and often called names (idiot, stupid, moron, lazy, rude, naughty, etc.) and more often than not, excluded from further schooling.

## Conflict & Terror

As mentioned earlier in the report, the difficult security situation is one of the main barriers to education for all in Afghanistan. The armed conflict that rages in parts of Afghanistan prevents hundreds of thousands of children, especially girls, from attending school. Schools are specifically target by terrorists and insurgents. Armed groups have over the past years repeatedly attacked (and murdered) female students and their teachers. Female students and their parents are threatened with violence and death. Many parents are extremely worried about the safety of their daughters and will therefore keep them at home, especially when they reach the age of puberty. The level of gender based violence has unfortunately increased over the past two years as terrorists in many parts of Afghanistan increasingly target girls and girl schools.

Education is increasingly being used as a target of terrorism: 254 killed, 329 injured, 220 schools were destroyed in last 18 months. In total more than 700 schools are closed due to terrorism.

The high level of violence in Afghanistan due to decades of conflict, terror, war and civil strife has affected the tolerance level for violence among children and adults. Children observe how adults “solve” their conflicts and tend to copy. Physical violence is therefore common in schools, homes, playgrounds and on the way to and from school.

## Curriculum

The curriculum is not sufficiently flexible to ensure the optimal intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of all children. Children are taught many subject matters during the first schooling years. Many of these subjects are found to be quite difficult for the children to understand, and teachers are often not able to draw connections between one subject matter and another, as subject matter integration is not much practiced.

The process of teaching reading and writing is still based on older and more conventional methods. Children learn the names of letters rather than their sounds, which make reading and write quit difficult for many children. Furthermore, the difference between how a singular letter in Arabic is written and how the same letter is written when it is connected with other letters, either at the beginning, the middle and the end of a word ads to the difficulties many children face when learning to read and write.

Mathematics and science are often too theoretical and not sufficiently related to something Afghan children can relate to.

All the above issues will be attempted addressed in the updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan for Afghanistan which is due to be published soon.

The new Curriculum and text books, that currently under development, will also address these issues. As a result education will become more relevant to the needs of Afghan children, their families and communities.

### **Emergencies**

Afghanistan is often affected by earthquakes, freezing winters with heavy snow fall, avalanches, spring floods, locust infestations, failed crops, hunger, drought and a number of other natural and man made disasters. These adverse conditions severely affect the education of children in many part of the country. Thousands of Afghans died during last winter due to extreme cold and severe weather conditions. The psychological effects these emergencies have on children are not being addressed effectively by the education system.

### **Evaluation & Examination**

There is a need to assess the effectiveness of the current evaluation and examination regime, as this has become one of the main barriers for a quality improvement of the primary and secondary education system.

Possible changes to the current evaluation and examination system will be introduced in the updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan which will be published soon. How inclusive and child-friendly the evaluation and examination system will become will be determined by the outcome of a comprehensive *Needs and Rights Assessment Analysis*<sup>22</sup> which will be completed before end November 2008.

### **Human Resources**

Good headmasters and teachers, well educated and committed, and from diverse backgrounds are prerequisites for the development of quality education systems, and schools that are both inclusive and child-friendly.

The shortage of teachers in Afghanistan is being successfully addressed by a number of government sponsored programmes. However, few headmasters and teachers have been education and/or trained to successfully teach children with diverse abilities, disabilities and backgrounds in inclusive settings. It is therefore important that inclusive and child-friendly education becomes part of the curriculum for all pre- and in-service teacher education and training programmes.

### **Language of Instruction**

The large number of languages spoken in Afghanistan presents a major challenge to the education sector. The two national languages (Dari and Pashtu) are languages of instruction in schools. Some minority languages are taught as a second or third language.

There are unequivocal references to multi-lingual education with a strong focus on mother-tongues in the Education law as well as in the Constitution.

However, limited human resources, teaching and learning material and financial resources are major barriers to a successful implementation of these policies.

Sign language is not yet recognised as an official language in spite of efforts by the Afghan National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) and other key stakeholders.

### c. Groups of Children Considered Most Vulnerable to Exclusion in Afghanistan<sup>23</sup>

These are then groups of children considered most vulnerable to exclusion from and within education:

#### Girls

After the reintroduction of girl's education in 2001/2002<sup>24</sup> hundreds of thousands of girls have enrolled in schools throughout Afghanistan. Approximately 2 million girls are enrolled in primary and secondary schools. However due to lack a proper population Census (the last was conducted more than 20 years ago) there are unfortunately no reliable data on the number of school aged girls (or boys), and therefore also not of enrolment rate of girls in primary and lower secondary schools<sup>25</sup>. However, it is safe to estimate that at least 50% of school aged girls are currently in schools. In the past few years 38,000 female teachers have been hired by the government, and thousands of schools have been built.

In spite of these efforts girls remain the largest of the most vulnerable groups of children to exclusion from education in Afghanistan. Girls in certain parts of the country are still in danger of physical attacks if they dare to go to school. In extreme cases female students and their teachers have been killed or disfigured with acid for accessing their constitutional right to education.

Forty per cent of women in Afghanistan are married before the age of 18, and one third of these women have children before reaching adulthood.<sup>26</sup>

It is also important to note that as in most other countries girls with disabilities, girls who are working, girls who are living on the street, girls with minority backgrounds, girls who have suffered neglect, abandonment and abuse are often double or triple disadvantaged.

#### Children with Disabilities

If we define disabilities more broadly and include children with attention deficits and learning difficulties, children with disabilities constitutes between 15% and 20% of the total child population. Approximately 10% of children<sup>27</sup> experience reading and writing difficulties (including Dyslexia), approximately 4% of children have an attention deficit disorder (ADD) or an attention-deficit and hyperactive disorder (ADHD), while another 4% to 5% have physical

impairment (many as a result of land mines), hearing impairment, visual impairment, epilepsy, developmental impairment, autism and/or multiple impairment.

Merely 32% of children with disabilities<sup>28</sup> in Afghanistan go to school. Stigma and discrimination is rampant. Many children with disabilities are hidden away as their families are ashamed as well as worried about their children being teased and bullied by others. However, an increasing number of children with disabilities are enrolled in schools, either in one of the 8 special schools (in Herat, Jalalabad and Kabul), in one of the 26 integrated schools, or in one of the more than 610 pilot schools for child-friendly and/or inclusive education found throughout the country<sup>29 30</sup>.

In addition many children with disabilities received some form of education in community based rehabilitation programmes.

Children with disabilities are often more vulnerable to neglect, abandonment and abuse than other children. Furthermore, girls with disabilities, children with disabilities who are living and/or working on the street (often as beggars) and children with disabilities from minority or nomadic backgrounds are often double and triple "disabled".

### **Working Children**

A vast number of children in Afghanistan are working. Some children work before and after school, often to pay for school related expenses<sup>31</sup>, while other work instead of going to school. The majority (74%) of children who are working full time in Kabul, started working between the age of 5 and 11, and had little or no schooling experience<sup>32</sup>. 96% of children work because of poverty and poor economic conditions in their family<sup>33</sup>. The majority (75%) are working more than 6 hours day, while 34% of the children were working between 9 and 16 hours per day. These are gruelling conditions for any worker, but especially for children who are not fully physically, socially, and emotionally developed.

36% of child-workers in Kabul do not any form of schooling are unable to read and write<sup>34</sup>. Child-workers who are going to school are frequently absent from school and therefore more likely to fail their exams, and eventually drop out from school.

Most female child-workers in Kabul are working in home-based activities (carpet weaving and tailoring), while other are working on the street, in factories, bakeries and shops. Most male child-workers (75%) work on the street, or in industries like metal workshops and with brick making. According to a recent survey by the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission approximately 86% of the more than 18,000 child-workers they interviewed were male, while 14% were female. However male child-workers are more visible as they are predominantly working outside their homes, while it is more difficult to correctly assess the number of female child-workers as they are mainly working in home-based industries.

## **Children living far away from school (in villages where there are no schools)**

Afghanistan is a mountainous country with difficult topography. Many children live in small villages far away from the nearest school. Travelling is often made difficult or even impossible during the winter and spring seasons. Heavy snowfall during the winter and violent torrents during the spring thaw makes the journey to school hazardous for many children in the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan.

Gradually schools are being built even in the remote areas. However, many children are still living too far away from the nearest school to attend on a regular basis. Girls as well as children with disabilities are less likely to attend school if they have to walk far than non-disabled boys. Most parents are more protective towards their girls and more worried about their security than they are with their boys, and large distances on small mountain paths are hard to manage for many children with disabilities, especially if they depend on a wheelchair or white cane for mobility.

Since 2006, the Ministry of Education has supported the establishment of Community Based Education (CBE) programmes. Classes have been established in small villages throughout rural parts of Afghanistan in collaboration with national and international NGOs. In 2006, the Ministry of Education worked with partner organisations in developing CBE Policy Guidelines which outline the criteria for establishing CBE programmes in an attempt to standardise the many approaches used by various NGOs in their community based education programmes. CBE is considered an extension of the reach of the Ministry of Education in communities where formal school structures have not yet been established. Gradually as the Ministry of Education gains capacity and resources, the responsibility for these outreach classes will be taken on by the Ministry.

## **Children from ethnic, language, social and religious minorities**

The past 30 years of conflict and war has reignited many simmering ancient ethnic and religious conflicts in Afghanistan. Different ethnic and religious groups were often found on different sides in the civil war that ended with the late nineties. The current wave of terrorist and insurgent attacks is also to some extent fuelling ethnic and religious tension.

Children often bear the brunt of such conflict. They are prevented from going to school, they are physically attached or they are recruited for one warring faction or another.

Most of the members of the Hindu and Sikh minorities that had lived in Afghanistan for centuries have migrated to India, Europe and the Americas during and after the civil war.

Children from minority populations are therefore often among the most vulnerable to exclusion from and within education.



## **Children from Poor Economic Backgrounds**

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. The ongoing military conflict with Taliban forces and other armed gangs (these are mostly crime and drug related), the deteriorating security situation in parts of the country, and a lack of skilled labour (partly also due to a continued labour migration of skilled Afghans mainly to West Asia) are major barriers to attracting foreign investments, and the creation of sustainable economic growth.

Afghan families tend to have many children, which increases the financial burden on the breadwinner(s) of the family. As a result girls are often married away at very early age. According to government reports these girls are highly vulnerable to rape, abuse, divorce, and abandonment.<sup>35</sup> Boys from these families often have to work either at home, on the street, or in factories and workshops.

Schools are free in Afghanistan. However, there are always hidden costs for education. Stationary, additional reading material, clothing, shoes and transportation must in most cases be provided by the parents. This will often make it difficult for children from poor economic backgrounds to attend, or to succeed in school.

Many children go to school without eating breakfast. Some children may take some tea in the morning, and if the family can afford it they may sweeten the tea with sugar, while others may eat some leftover bread from the evening before, maybe accompanied with ghee or dried fruits and nuts. If a child eats little or nothing for breakfast, and has no money for food during the day, they will not be able to concentrate during classes. Their learning outcomes are bound to be effected. Many of these children will therefore drop-out or be forced out of school. Under- and malnourishment is common in Afghanistan. According to a 2004 survey this has resulted in stunted growth among 54% of children age 6 to 59 months, while 39% of children of the same age group are severely underweight.<sup>36</sup>

Poverty and the results of poverty is therefore one of the main causes for exclusion from and within education in Afghanistan.

## **Children Affected by Conflict and War**

Large parts of Afghanistan are still affected by conflict and war. Schools are often targeted by militants. Over the past eighteen months 254 teachers and pupils have been murdered by terrorists, another 329 were injured. 220 schools were destroyed or burned down and another in last 18 months. Threats from insurgents have resulted in the closing of more than 700 schools. This has deprived more than 300,000 students from access to schooling. In cooperation with local communities, the Ministry of Education launched anti-terrorism and anti-insurgency programmes in 1386 (2007). So far the Ministry managed to prevent 49 terrorist attacks on schools.

In addition the destruction and closure of schools which directly prevents children from attending school, parents often keep their children, especially girls away from school in fear for their safety.

Landmines and unexploded ordinances still litter large parts of Afghanistan. Every single day Afghan children are being killed or maimed on their way to school, or while they are playing or working in the fields.

Children have lost and are still losing parents and siblings to conflict and war. It is still too early to tell how these psychological scars that have been left on the minds and in the hearts of the children of Afghanistan will affect their development. However, there are few programmes that effectively address these issues.

### **Nomadic (Kuchi) Children**

Children from nomadic backgrounds are vulnerable to exclusion from and within education mainly due to their nomadic lifestyle. Other factors that influence their access to schooling, is a growing conflict over land, especially during the winter months when many nomads move to lower and often more populated areas to avoid the harsh winters in the mountains. Nomads are not always welcome in these communities, and schools are crowded and do not always welcome nomadic children. Languages and cultures are often different which results in stigma and discrimination of nomadic children.

### **Children Living on the Street / Homeless Children**

There are relatively few children living on the street in the cities of Afghanistan. Traditionally children who have lost one or both parents would be taken care of by more distant relatives. However, the poor economic situation in the country after year of civil war and strife, have left many families unable to care for their children. The large number of children in many families contributes to the difficulties some families have in taking properly care of their children. Another factor that forces children to live away from their families are abuse and neglect, often as a result of death of one or both parents, remarriage of one parent, drug abuse within the family, as well as the physical and sexual abuse many children suffer.

To ease the family "burden" of caring for a large number of children girls tends to be married away at a very young age. Some of these girls are also forced to flee their new homes as they often suffer by the hands of the husbands, elder wives and parents-in-laws.

Most of the children that are working on the street during the day go home in the evening. However for those children who are homeless, conditions are extremely severe, especially during the freezing winter months. In addition to suffering from whether conditions, lack of food, lack of sanitation, and lack of health care, these children are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse. There are few government shelters. In addition some non-government

organisations offer non-formal education programmes and shelters for children living on the street.

### **Children Affected by Drugs**

Drug abuse is quite common in many parts of Afghanistan. Many parents, mostly fathers, but also many mothers are using drugs, often to be able to endure long and gruelling work days, difficult living conditions, as well as distract from hunger and cold. Children are sometimes given drugs to sleep, stay quiet, quench their hunger, and distract from cold.

Drug abuse leads to economic hardship, neglect and abuse. Drug consumption affects the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of many children in Afghanistan.

Medical doctors, medical practitioners, nurses and traditional healers often encourage an over consumption of medicines, this is another problem that affects children and adults alike. Drugs that are out-of-date are still sold and consumed and many traditional remedies with often unknown effects are used throughout Afghanistan. In extreme cases this can lead to disabilities, serious health problems and even death.

### **Other issues that lead to exclusion from and within education:**

Corporal punishment is still rampant in homes and schools throughout Afghanistan. Parents and teachers are often unaware of alternative ways of discipline. Children are still called names and embarrassed by teachers in front of their classmates, as a part of their efforts to manage the class. Many children are sexually abused, especially boys, without much concern or attention from teachers, families and the society at large. Most Afghan families have many children, and when both parents have to struggle to feed their children, there is little time for nurture and care this is therefore often left to the older children in the family or to grand parents if these are still alive.

## **d. Ways Current Education Reforms Address Inclusive Education**

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) for Afghanistan addresses important issues related to the development of more inclusive- and child-friendly schools. The NESP specifically targets groups vulnerable to exclusion from and with education, among others girls; nomadic (Kuchi) children; children with disabilities; children living in rural areas; and children from different language backgrounds.

The NESP is currently being updated. In its updated form it will address inclusive education issues more specifically and in more detail. The results of a comprehensive *Needs and Rights Assessment Analysis*<sup>37</sup> which will be completed before end November 2008 will also influence the updated version the NESP.

## Item 2.3

### Systems, Links and Transitions

#### a. Main Barriers to Inclusive Education

The barriers listed below are often interconnected. Economic barriers can therefore not be seen separately from social and political barriers. To reduce and if possible remove these barriers efforts must be made in all sectors at the same time, as the successful implementation of policies depend on financial resources and community support.

##### **Economic Barriers**

Shortage of financial resources within the education sector, and the society at large is a major barrier to inclusive education in Afghanistan.

A vast number of schools must be build within the next few months and years to cover the need of a growing population. These schools are often built in a hurry without much consideration to universal design principles and are therefore inaccessible to many children with disabilities.

Extensive in-service re-orientation and training programmes are needed for all 165,717 teachers in Afghanistan. This is already in planning by the Ministry of Education, however, we need to make sure that these programmes incorporate practical skills in how to teach girls and boys, children with diverse abilities and disabilities, as well as children from different social, economic, ethnic, language and religious backgrounds. Financial resources must be spent in planning these programmes well to ensure that the training is as effective as possible. Through this massive training initiative Afghan teachers must be equipped to know how to effectively respond to the needs of children growing up in a 21<sup>st</sup> century Afghanistan, as well as to their families, communities and the nation.

The same is the case for pre-service teacher education and training. Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) have already been established or are under establishment in all provinces of Afghanistan. Teacher Resource Centres will be established in all 364 districts. This comprehensive institution building will enable resources (human and financial) to be spent more effectively in future. However, these institutions will only be effective if they are staffed with innovative, creative, flexible and knowledgeable teacher educators and trainers. Salary levels, for teacher educators, headmasters and teachers must therefore, over time, be made competitive with other sectors. The teaching profession on all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary) must become the profession of choice for the best and the brightest among the next generation of Afghans.

## Political Barriers

A new Education Law passed the Afghan parliament in early 1387 (April 2008). The updated version of the National Education Strategic plan (NESP) is under development and will be published soon. It is important that this plan incorporates key elements of inclusive and child-friendly education. Furthermore it must reiterate the strong guarantees of non-discrimination within education that are so clearly stated in both the Constitution and the Education Law. According to both all children, without exception, have the equal rights to access quality education.

It is vital that policies are put in place to support the goals of the articles in the Constitution and the Education Law, and these policies are implemented. Implementation can only be guaranteed if funding is made available.

Policies must be put in place to ensure that schools and other public building are designed and constructed according to universal design principles. This is currently not the case, as schools are still being build according to the patterns of the past, rather that being part of creating an education system for future, an education system open and welcome of **all** children.

The education system must through policy measures and effective implementation be made more flexible and responsive of the diverse needs of children, families and communities. To develop Afghanistan needs better medical doctors, better engineers, better and more effective farmers, better law enforcement officers, better judges, better herders and better scientists.

This massive task must be supported by policies as well as political oversight. An education system designed to help young men and women to make career decisions that will be bring Afghanistan into a more peaceful and prosperous future, depend on good policies, funding, and effective implementation in the field.

The current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms seem insufficient to ensure that the articles of the Constitution and the Education Law are implemented effectively, and to ensure that **all** children are given their right to education, care and protection.

## Social Barriers

The conditions for social change in Afghanistan are currently limited. This is mainly due to continued armed conflict that prevents social and economic development in large parts of the country.

For the past 30 years, due to conflict and war, Afghanistan has been prevented to take fully part of the development that has changed social and economic dynamics in many other parts of South, Central and West Asia. Many social barriers to inclusion in Afghanistan are therefore in a large part a result of the severe lack of security that disables vast parts of the country.

In spite of these barriers over the past five to six years millions of girls have enrolled in schools, children with diverse language backgrounds are able to learn their mother tongue in their community school, and thousands of children with disabilities have access to schooling through the many integrated and inclusive education pilot programmes.

## b. Facilitators of Inclusive Education

Teachers, headmasters and education activist are currently the main facilitators of inclusive education in Afghanistan.

However, it is of vital importance that legislators (on national, provincial and district level) as well as government officials become more active in the process of making the education system more inclusive and child-friendly. Effective policies and regulations promoting inclusive and child-friendly education, budget allocations, as well as political and administrative oversight are needed for inclusive and child-friendly education to gain momentum, be scaled up, and implemented in schools throughout Afghanistan.

## c. Specific Approaches and Measures Adopted to make the Education System more Inclusive

The Curriculum Development and Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education has recently established a Department for Pre-School Education, Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education. This division will work to improve the curriculum to ensure that the needs and expectations of **all** children are being addressed effectively.

Comprehensive efforts to enrol more girls in school have been implemented successfully over the past six years. These efforts are implemented based on the Constitution, the current National Education Strategic Plan (NESP), and the new Education Law passed earlier this year.

The Education Law seeks to establish mobile school units for nomadic children to ensure their increased participation in formal education. The rights of nomadic children are also guaranteed through the Constitution.

The establishment of integrated education programmes for groups of children with disabilities (mainly for children with hearing impairment and children with visual impairment) has created access for more children with disabilities than ever before.

The introduction of inclusive education programmes, with support and funding from the Ministry of Education, UN agencies as well as a number of national and international non-governmental organisations have started a process of change within the education system. Schools have begun to reduce and remove barriers to learning, development and participation. Headmasters and teachers

in the pilot schools now welcome children with diverse abilities, disabilities and background in their schools.

The updated version of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) that is currently under development will address a number of key inclusive education issues and help schools and education authorities to adopt measures and approaches that will facilitate a transition from a predominantly segregated education system to a more inclusive and child-friendly system as part of the effort to reach the goal of education for all.

d. **Specific Approaches and Measures Adopted to make the Education System more Flexible to Offer Additional Educational Opportunities to Those who have Dropped Out or Not Attained Appropriate Level of Qualifications**

Two country wide literacy programmes; “Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan” and “Learning for Community Empowerment” are currently being implemented as part of the framework of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment. In the first two phases the initiative targets 1,000,000 youth and adults (age 15 years and above). It is estimated that there are approximately 11,000,000 youth and adults who are not able to read and write in Afghanistan. The initiative is supported by the Ministry of Education, UN agencies and bilateral donors.

A number of UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations organise non-formal educational programmes for street children and working children. These programmes focus on literacy, life skills and livelihood skill training. The literacy initiative uses untraditional methods to teach reading and writing skills, starting with sentences, words and then the alphabet rather than the traditional a, b, c that is still used to teach children in most primary schools.

A number of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and Afghan disabled person’s organisations (DPOs) organise education programmes for children, youth and adults with disabilities. These programmes are organised in inclusive or integrative settings, or in special schools, special classes in ordinary schools or part of community based or home based rehabilitation and training programmes. These programmes mainly focus on Braille literacy, Sign language education, orientation and mobility (O&M) training, activities of daily living (ADL), communication training and physiotherapy.

Some of the methodologies used in these programmes could without much effort be introduced in the formal education system to enable children with special educational needs to enrol and prevent children who are vulnerable to exclusion from and within education from dropping out (or be expelled) from school.

## Item 2.4

### Learners and Teachers

#### a. New Approaches to Teaching and Learning Increasing Educational Opportunities for All as well as Improving Student Learning Outcomes and Reduce Disparities

A few innovative teacher training programmes promote interactive learning. They have introduced games, play and physical activities as part of the teaching and learning process. Individual lesson plans (ILPs) have been introduced in many schools. Subject integration and project based learning will be introduced in 12 government pilot schools for inclusive education in early October. Children in these schools are encouraged to take a greater responsibility for their own learning by choosing between different alternative lessons to be completed as part of their home work. These alternatives require different levels of competencies so that all children can be challenged as well as be given the opportunity to succeed.

Other programmes work specifically to increase community participation as part of their child-friendly education initiatives.

Teachers in some schools are being introduced to approaches on how to teach children with disabilities in inclusive settings. Class teachers would among others learn about Braille, Sign language, as well as orientation and mobility (O&M) to enable children with hearing impairment and visual impairment to learn together with other their non-disabled peers in their schools.

Some of the organisations that in the past have been working mainly with children disabilities are now assisting organisations working on more general child-friendly education programmes to ensure that these add the dimension of inclusion so that these programmes become child-friendly for all the children in the community.

#### b. How is the Curriculum being Designed and Organised to Respond to the Diversity among Learners

Efforts to make the Curriculum more inclusive and responsive to the diverse abilities and backgrounds among learners started in 1387 (2008). The establishment of a Division for Inclusive Education within the Curriculum Department will help the Ministry of Education to ensure that future Curricula will be more inclusive and learning-friendly.

Plans are being made to develop a two-year pre-school education curriculum, as well as teaching and learning materials. This work will be completed by the new Division for Pre-School Education under the Department for Curriculum Development and Teacher Education Curriculum. This will facilitate the inclusion of more children into the formal education system. Children



experiencing barriers to learning, development and participation will especially benefit from access to pre-school education programmes.

### c. Instruction Hours per Week Dedicated to Learning to Read and Write in Early Primary Grades

In first four grade children have 8 hours education in one of the two national languages (Dari and Pashtu) per week, mainly dedicated to reading and writing.

The second national language (either Dari or Pashtu) will be taught from 4<sup>th</sup> grade with 3 hours per week.

Afghanistan has more than 30 languages. Six of these languages are taught as mother-tongue in schools where this is possible, depending on availability of human resources. These languages are; Balochi, Nuristani, Pamiri, Pashae, Turkmen and Uzbek as the six main minority languages. Mother-tongue is taught 3 hours per week in the first four grades as a third language in many schools.

English starts in grade 4. Reading and writing is also practiced as part of their religious studies and Calligraphy from grade 1.

### d. Training to Better Equip Teachers to Meet Learners' Diverse Expectations and Needs

The majority of teachers throughout the country do not meet the official requirements to be a teaching professional. This problem has resulted in poor teaching methods in the classrooms of Afghanistan. However, these challenges are currently being addressed successfully by the Ministry of Education by building on best practices made in many of the innovative teacher education and training programmes currently implemented throughout Afghanistan.

The positive experiences made in many of the pilot programmes on inclusive and child-friendly education, as well as programmes targeting single groups of children and youth vulnerable to exclusion from and within education must in future be more effectively incorporated into the general teacher education and training programmes. All student teachers must in future be sensitised to the diversity of needs and abilities among learners. This is essential in order for Afghanistan to fulfil the spirit and letters of articles of the Constitution and the Education Law, the targets of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), as well as to reach the Afghan Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals.

*"Embracing Diversity - UNESCO Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments"* has been translated into Dari and Pashtu. It has been approved by the Ministry of Education and will be printed and distributed to schools and Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) before the end of the year. The

Toolkit has already been used successfully in teacher training programmes in the 12 government pilot schools for inclusive education.

The Enabling Education Network (EENET) Asia newsletter will also be published in Dari and used in teacher education and training programmes. These newsletters (published twice a year) will also be tool for teachers, headmasters and teacher educators to share their experiences and learn from colleagues working with inclusive and child-friendly education in other part of Asia.

The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has recently developed a Task Team for Inclusive Education and Disabilities. This forum could become an important source of information as well as technical resources for the development of innovative teacher training and education programmes in Afghanistan.

#### e. More Effective Organisation of Formal and Non-Formal Learning Environments to Ensure the Inclusion of All Learners

Competencies related to school and classroom management have long been neglected in efforts to improve the quality of education. We need to re-evaluate the way we teach children, how we involve children more actively in the teaching-learning process, how we communicate with children, as well as how we listened to and respect their thoughts and opinions, as well as those of their parents. Children start learning in the womb, and will hopefully continue to learn throughout their lives until they expire at an old age. It is therefore important that schools and education authorities value the knowledge children have when they enrol in school. Indigenous and traditional knowledge is vital in creating links between the learning that takes place at home (practical knowledge), the learning that takes place in schools (practical and theoretical knowledge) as well as the learning that takes place in religious settings in Mosques and other houses of faith (theoretical and spiritual knowledge).

Children must learn to work in groups to solve problems in teams, just as they have to learn how to work alone or in peers. Children should be encouraged to share their knowledge with other children. Fact is that children learn the most if they are given the opportunity to teach other children as their knowledge goes from being passive to active. We also know the least effective way of teaching children is to lecture from the blackboard, which unfortunately is the most used methodology in schools throughout Afghanistan. Reorganising classrooms and changing the way we manage schools and education is therefore essential if the quality of education in Afghan schools is to improve.

We must remember that when children with different abilities and from different backgrounds learn together in our schools, they will also learn to live and work together in our communities for the common good of our nation.

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- <sup>1</sup> United Nations Statistics Division  
[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/Country%20Snapshots\\_apr2007/Afghanistan.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/Country%20Snapshots_apr2007/Afghanistan.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> Afghan Government. 2002. Bonn Agreement.  
<http://www.afghanistanembassy.no/Doc/About%20Afghanistan-Bonn%20Agreement.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Afghan Government. 2002. Bonn Agreement.  
<http://www.afghanistanembassy.no/Doc/About%20Afghanistan-Bonn%20Agreement.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2008. National Development Strategy.  
[http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final\\_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy_eng.pdf)
- <sup>5</sup> These schools primarily focus on Quranic studies, memorisation of the Holy Quran, and recitation
- <sup>6</sup> Islamic Education students can continue their studies after grade 12 in Centers of Excellence where they are provided further Islamic education, but in almost the same format and the same services as in Madrassas. Students at the district level attend Madrassas and they can go to Centers of Excellence that exist in provincial capitals.
- <sup>7</sup> Afghan Government. 2002. Bonn Agreement.  
<http://www.afghanistanembassy.no/Doc/About%20Afghanistan-Bonn%20Agreement.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2008. National Development Strategy.  
[http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final\\_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy_eng.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. 2008. National Development Strategy.  
[http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final\\_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/final_ands/src/final/Afghanistan%20National%20Development%20Strategy_eng.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> Ministry of Education, Department of Planning (2007). Progress Report for 1386 & Plans for 1387. p. 3
- <sup>11</sup> Ministry of Education (2008). Draft Policy on Early Childhood Education. P. 7
- <sup>12</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_31224.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_31224.html)
- <sup>13</sup> International Symposium on inclusion and the Removal of Barriers to Learning, Development and Participation (2005). "Recommendation."
- <sup>14</sup> North Carolina State University. The Centre for Universal Design.  
[www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about\\_ud/udprinciplestext.htm](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/udprinciplestext.htm) (16. November 2007)
- <sup>15</sup> These numbers are based on information from international and nation partner organisations
- <sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education, Department of Planning (2007). Progress Report for 1386 & Plans for 1387. p. X
- <sup>17</sup> Ministry of Education, Department of Planning (2008). Data from EMIS Unit
- <sup>18</sup> The Constitution of Afghanistan (2004). "Article 16"
- <sup>19</sup> NDSA Report
- <sup>20</sup> In the NDSA and the STEPS Report (2006) the term disabilities refers to developmental Impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and visual impairment only.
- <sup>21</sup> P. 280
- <sup>22</sup> Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, and completed in collaboration with UNESCO and the Working Group on Inclusive Education
- <sup>23</sup> The listing has been made based on input from teachers in pilot schools for inclusive education (under the Ministry of Education), education officials, as well as representatives from UN agencies, international organisations, Afghan non-governmental organisations and disabled persons organisations.
- <sup>24</sup> Girls were not permitted to go to school by previous the Taliban government that ruled most or all of Afghanistan in the years prior to 2001
- <sup>25</sup> The data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, government sponsored surveys and UN agencies vary from 50% to almost 70%. None of these data are therefore verifiable.
- <sup>26</sup> UNICEF (2008). "UNICEF and partners come together to help reduce maternal mortality in Afghanistan." [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan\\_39281.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/afghanistan_39281.html) (17. September 2008)
- <sup>27</sup> Based on international research and estimates
- <sup>28</sup> In the NDSA and the STEPS Report (2006) the term disabilities refers to developmental Impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and visual impairment only.
- <sup>29</sup>
- <sup>30</sup> These numbers are based on information from international and nation partner organisations
- <sup>31</sup> War Child Holland (2008). "Draft Report of Children Working in the Streets."
- <sup>32</sup> Altai Consulting (2008). "A Rapid Assessment on Child Labour in Kabul." p. 3.

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<sup>33</sup> Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. "An Overview on Situation of Child Labour in Afghanistan - research Report." p. 19

<sup>34</sup> Altai Consulting (2008). "A Rapid Assessment on Child Labour in Kabul." p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Women Affairs, UNDP and UNIFEM (2005). "Child and Forced Marriages." p.10

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF (2006). "Best Estimates of Social Indicators for Children in Afghanistan." p. 23

<sup>37</sup> Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, and completed in collaboration with UNESCO and the Working Group on Inclusive Education