

ACHIEVING RESULTS  
for Afghanistan's children

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# Education

Every child learns

**Country Programme of Cooperation**

UNICEF and the Government of the  
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

2015-2021

unicef 

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# EDUCATION

## Every child learns

UNICEF has worked continuously for Afghanistan's children for 70 years. The Country Programme guides UNICEF's partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, identifying key issues, activities, and outcomes to realize the rights of Afghan girls, boys and women within a volatile development and humanitarian context. In 2018, the Country Programme was extended to 2021 to align with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the UNICEF Strategic Plan.

### Context

Afghanistan's education system has been devastated by nearly 40 years of armed conflict. Although primary enrolment has improved dramatically, growing from 1 million children in school in 2002 to 8.5 million in 2015, education remains a distant dream for many. Systemic factors, inefficient resource management and socio-political and humanitarian crises negatively impact an already fragile system with limited access to and retention in school. Children who attend often receive low quality education. Girls are particularly affected as lack of female teachers, poor or insufficient school sanitation, early marriage, and traditional beliefs limit their educational opportunities.

Learn more: <https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/education>

### Key facts

- **3.7** million children are out of school, representing 42% of the school-age population (Afghanistan OOSC report 2018)
- Girls comprise 60% of out-of-school children (Afghanistan OOSC report 2018)
- **54%** of enrolled children complete primary school (HS 2015)

### Targets

- Primary retention rate to increase from **84.2%** in 2014 to **86%** in 2021
- Primary net attendance rate to increase from **57%** in 2016 to **72%** in 2021
- Primary gender parity index to improve from **0.74** in 2016 to **0.77** in 2021
- Number of out-of-school children to decrease from **3.7** million in 2017 to **3.2** million in 2021

## HOW UNICEF ACHIEVES RESULTS

A strong education system is key to getting girls and boys in school and keeping them there. UNICEF helps build education systems that create equitable opportunities for quality learning. Working at the national, provincial, and community levels with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and other partners, UNICEF focuses on the most vulnerable people in disadvantaged areas, particularly girls, to combat exclusion due to poverty, discrimination and conflict. One proven key strategy is community-based education (CBE) which brings learning to the community, making it more accessible for girls and children in remote areas.



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Under the One UN Mutual Accountability Framework, UNICEF co-chairs the Education Thematic Group with UNESCO working to develop system-wide actions for crosscutting issues related to equitable access, quality education, including gender equality, while ensuring coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development programming.

### Increasing girls' access to education

Girls comprise only 40 per cent of Afghanistan's children in school. Their education has therefore been identified as a national priority highlighted in the MoE's NESP III and Girls' Education Policy. The latter, launched in 2019, provides a framework for coordinated action to increase girls' school access, retention and completion. UNICEF is supporting the development of a strategy and costed action plan while building capacity towards gender-responsive budgeting.

UNICEF promotes a community-based approach to sustaining and enhancing education demand by building capacities of School Management Shuras to advocate effectively for girls' education and increase participation in school management.

Working with the MoE, UNICEF facilitates recruitment and training of female teachers, which is known to have a positive impact on girls' education. This collaboration includes the Girls' Access to Teacher Education (GATE) programme which offers two-year scholarships to female teaching candidates.

### Leadership and systems strengthening

As Lead of the Development Partners Group (DPG) for the education sector, UNICEF collaborates with the MoE to strengthen coordination mechanisms such as the Human Resource Development Board and the Steering Committee of the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) III. This collectively and efficiently supports government's interactions with partners, ensures complementarity of interventions and reduces transaction costs. UNICEF's success in this capacity led donors to request government to extend the agency's term until July 2020.



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## Building community-driven demand

UNICEF supports the provision of CBE, identified by the MoE as an alternative learning pathway to reduce the number of out-of-school children. Fully aligned with formal education, community-based classes provide children of appropriate age with opportunities to attend Grades 1–3, while accelerated learning centres condense six years of primary school into three, giving over-age out-of-school children a chance to learn.

CBE has been recognized as an effective strategy in addressing education barriers faced by girls, particularly by providing education within walking distance from home, with teachers trusted by communities.

UNICEF is now working with the MoE to institutionalize this provision and ensure its sustainability.

## Greater focus on second decade of life

UNICEF empowers youth and adolescents, especially girls, providing education, capacity-building and by developing life skills for advocacy, civic engagement and community mobilization. Robust evidence on successful interventions for children in their second decade is also collected for knowledge-sharing and replication.

## Improving quality of education

UNICEF is working with the MoE to facilitate the establishment of a National Assessment Framework for Afghanistan.

In collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF also supports curriculum reform through the development of competency-based and subject-specific syllabi, including modules on gender and peacebuilding. Downstream, this is supplemented by capacity building of teachers and academic supervisors on formative classroom assessments and measurement of student achievements.

## Education in Emergencies

As co-lead of the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EIEWG) with Save the Children, UNICEF strengthens coordination mechanisms for effective response at national and subnational levels through the development of a standardized response package, elaboration of a comprehensive school safety framework, and advocacy towards reduced attacks against education.

Education in Emergencies interventions include the establishment of temporary learning spaces with WASH facilities, provision of teaching and learning materials, teachers recruitment and training, and community mobilization on children's rights to education, particularly for girls, and the provision of psychosocial support.

## Challenges & opportunities

There are continued challenges to operating in many districts across Afghanistan. These include difficulties in distribution of supplies, payment of teachers, identification of female teachers to accelerate girls' enrolment, security threats to schools, active conflict and natural disasters. These are addressed through improved monitoring supported by key assessments, provision of technical support, and response on the ground to partners and government counterparts.

UNICEF is working with partners and education authorities for immediate humanitarian needs to be met while longer-term structural barriers, including those related to the quality and continuity of education, are addressed. The Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Response Plan provides such opportunities by building on CBE to ensure that children remain in education beyond the emergency phase and are able to transition to formal schools.

## Budget

UNICEF Afghanistan's 2015–2021 budget for education is US\$ 246 million. This excludes the humanitarian response budget.



## Story

*“After school, I help teach 18 girls, who have missed out on education.”*

Basirya, from Kandahar province

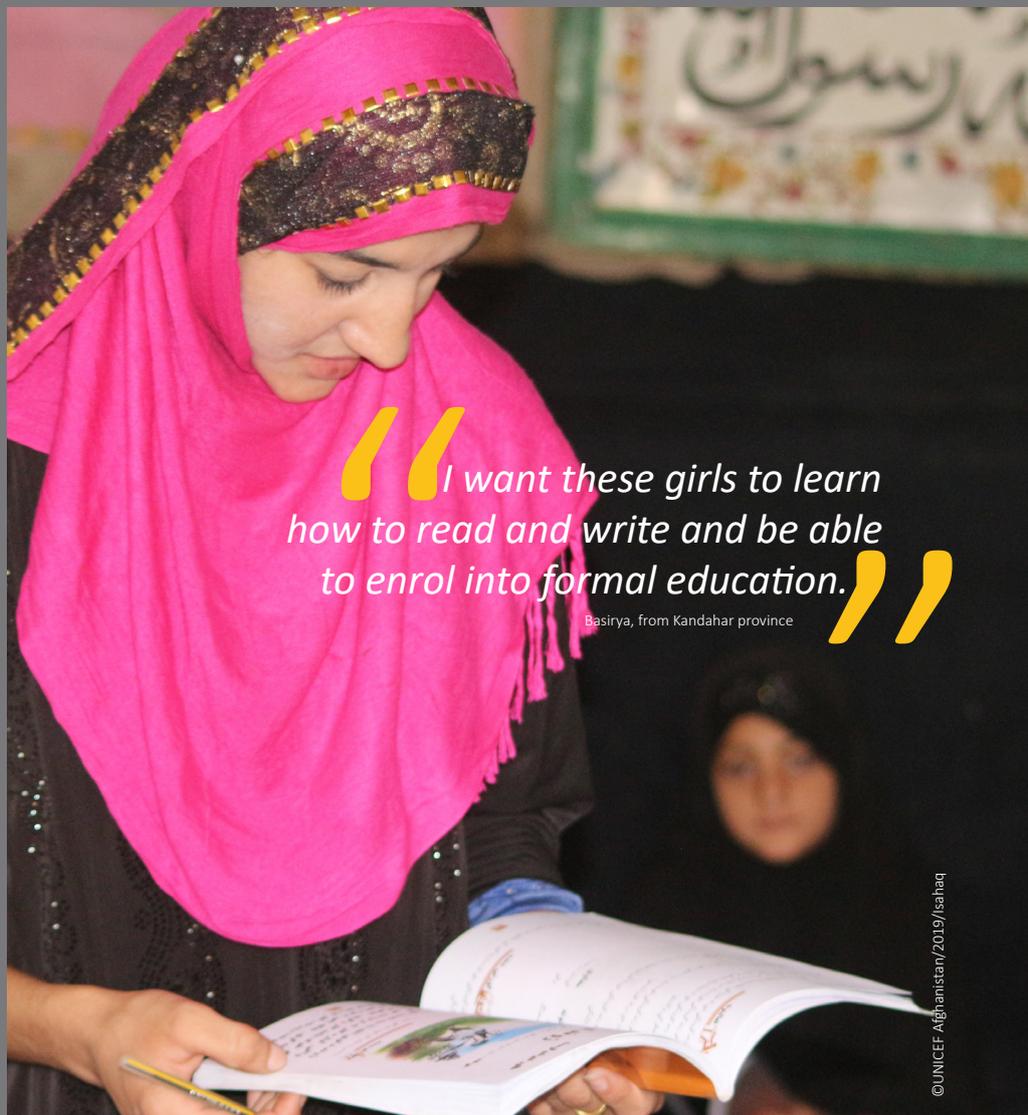
Basirya herself is only 17 years old. A grade 10 student, she attends school in the mornings. In the afternoons she teaches at a UNICEF-supported accelerating learning centre in Kandahar.

“Every morning, as I went to school, I saw girls playing in the street. This was something I wanted to change,” says Basirya. “I was thinking about their dark future: early marriage, early motherhood and family violence.”

Basirya approached the girls and asked why they were not in school. “Some said that their parents did not allow them to go to school, others felt they were too old to enrol. One thing they had in common—they all wanted to be back in school, learning.”

Basirya reaches girls who missed out on schooling due to insecurity, limited access or poverty. In community-based education, the community provides classes, students and teachers, while UNICEF provides learning materials and support.

“I love my class and I love my teacher. She is looking after each one of us,” says 12-year-old Mahoboba.



*“I want these girls to learn how to read and write and be able to enrol into formal education.”*

Basirya, from Kandahar province

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### Key alignments

Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework 2017–2021

National Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021

- SDG-4 Quality Education
- SDG-5 Gender Equality

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