

FACTSHEET



Education in Afghanistan

The people of Afghanistan have been living in a protracted state of conflict and instability for three decades. In addition to uncertain security, the extreme mountain terrain and harsh climate make it difficult to access education – especially for girls. Under the Taliban regime violence and intimidation were routinely used to prevent girls and women from attending school and gaining the education that is their right. In this setting, the education system floundered, and fewer than 1 million children were attending school: there are 8 million children in school today.

Actions and Impact

UNICEF provides technical support to the Ministry of Education (MoE) in the formation of policy and legislation, capacity development of teachers and administrators, building an information management system, promoting girls enrolment and conducting outreach to out-of-school and marginalized children.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, UNICEF assumed the role of the Government's leading partner in the reconstruction of the education sector. This included a successful back-to-school campaign, resulting in millions of children gaining access to both formal and non-formal education. Additionally, UNICEF's partnerships with the Ministry of Education, shuras (councils) and village leaders have supported school construction and other improvement programmes. More recently, these efforts with communities have resulted in the reopening of 400 schools in areas most affected by violence and intimidation against education.



Girls raise their hands in a tent classroom at Phool-e-Rangeena Government School in the north-western city of Herat. Some 7,000 children attend classes in three daily shifts.

Education in Afghanistan	
Adult literacy rate (15+ years)	39 %
Adult female literacy rate (15+ years)	13 %
Number of total schools, Grade 1-12	12,740
Number of community-based schools	3,843
Number of primary school teachers	170,000
Number of female teachers	51,000
Primary and secondary students	7.3 million
Girls in primary and secondary education	2.4 million
Boys in primary and secondary education	4.6 million

Source: Ministry of Education, Education Interim Plan, 2011

In 2011, Afghanistan became the 44th member of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a consortium of donor and developing countries working to enhance the quality of education systems. The MoE has subsequently developed a multi-year proposal to strengthen school enrolment, with a special emphasis on girls in some of the least served and insecure Provinces. UNICEF is performing the role of the Supervising Entity for the GPE, and in this capacity will be responsible for coordinating activities amongst multiple stakeholders and overseeing the dispersal of the three year grant, which is expected in early 2012.

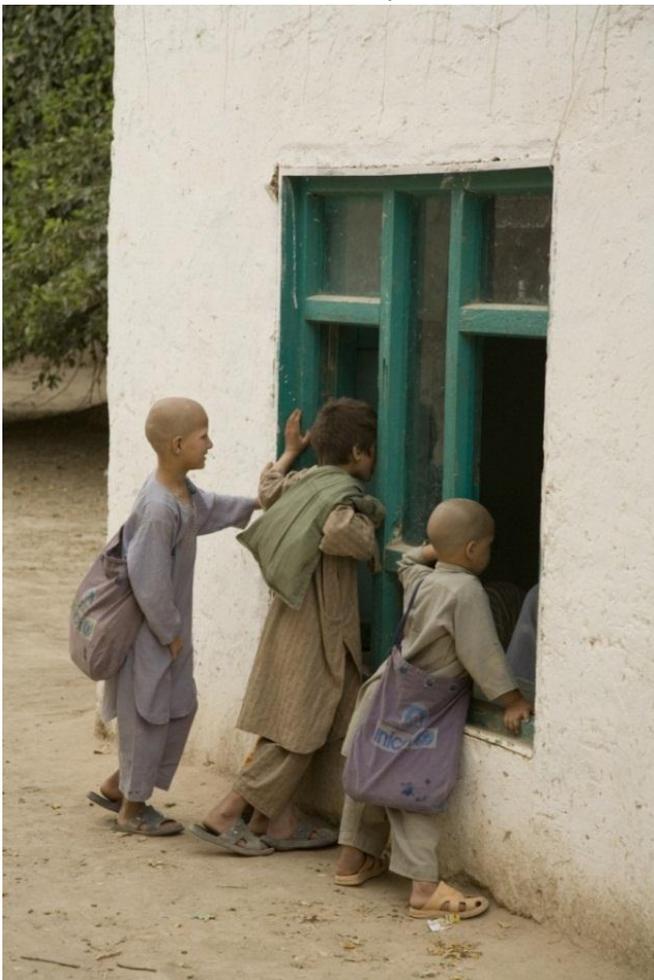
Key Challenges

Conflict and fragile security impede delivery of school supplies, enrolment, monitoring and school supervision. These challenges are exacerbated by entrenched cultural norms that oppose the education of girls. Early marriage also often interrupts the education of such girls as may have been fortunate enough to have entered school. A general shortage of teachers and acute need for female instructors, coupled with too few physical structures, makes attendance difficult – particularly in rural areas. Sixty percent of the 4.2 million out-of-school children are girls, and there are no female students enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 out of 412 urban and rural Districts throughout the country.

Strategic approaches and results

All UNICEF work related to education in Afghanistan is based on a commitment to ensure the most disadvantaged children have access to schools, with a particular emphasis on girls' enrolment. UNICEF expenditures of approximately \$40 million dollars per annum, are broadly spread over four areas to strengthen the formal education sector and provide alternative routes to learning that address the realities of the lives of women and children in Afghanistan.

Access and Retention: In 2010 and 2011, UNICEF built Cost Effective Schools in rural and urban areas, improving access to education for more than 148,000 children. In 2011, UNICEF provided 2.6 Million Teaching and Learning Materials to instructors and students from grades 1 to 3 throughout the country. UNICEF develops Community Based Schools (CBS) and Accelerated Learning Centres (ALC) to reach out-of-school children, especially girls and children from marginalized communities. In 2011, UNICEF is supporting 3,843 CBS and ALC classes, reaching 124,699 children, 65 per cent of whom are girls. Children emerging from CBS after grade 3 are able to transition into the formal school system.



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Boys peer through the window of the community-based school in the village of Khwaja Bhauddin in the northern Province of Balkh. Girls and boys from several villages will attend informal schools in shifts.

Quality Improvement: Country-wide initiatives ensure that once children are in school they receive education of enhanced quality. UNICEF's global Child Friendly School (CFS) strategy has been adopted by the Ministry of Education and involves a holistic approach of inclusiveness, child-centered learning, provision of a safe and healthy environment and partnership with the community. In Afghanistan, the CFS approach links with UNICEF's School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme to ensure children also receive information about hygiene and sanitation and that there are appropriate and separate latrine facilities for girls and boys. Additionally, UNICEF supports the MoE in improving the quality of teaching through field-testing of, and orientation on, Teachers' Guides and new textbooks, capacity development programmes for teachers, distribution of supplementary materials to all schools and the development of instructional tools for Teacher Training Colleges.

Female Literacy: Programmes provide women between the ages of 15-24 with basic reading, writing and numeracy skills, as well as vital information on health, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation that can benefit their wellbeing and that of their children and families. With one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, particularly among women, many people in Afghanistan lack access to critical information. Literacy courses empower women to actively participate in the social sphere, providing opportunities for them to gather together, share experiences and build self-confidence and esteem. This year, 72,500 women are acquiring literacy skills at 2900 literacy centres in 34 Provinces.

Education in Emergency: Activities are designed to ensure rapid responses to both manmade and natural disasters. UNICEF and Save the Children are co-leads of the Education Cluster, a consortium of government and non-governmental organizations that ensures both preparedness and response. Working with Cluster partners, UNICEF contributed to an education in emergencies strategy that identifies a range of contingency and preparedness plans that deliver timely and strategic interventions, including provision of supplies and support to affected communities. In 2010 and 2011, over 900 education actors in Afghanistan were trained on the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) minimum standards. Additionally, 4,000 school management shuras were supported to help protect schools against attacks.

For more information:

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