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UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

AFGHANISTAN

Assessment for learning

18 August 2021

Afghanistan is a war-torn country that has suffered from ongoing conflict and natural disasters for almost four decades. These conditions have adversely affected the country's education system which lacks the human and financial resources to provide quality basic education services. Children face many barriers to learning, including insecurity, poverty, a shortage of qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials and gender norms. Another is the traditional approach to teaching in which teachers provide little ongoing feedback to learners to guide the learning process.

Tracking and supporting learning more effectively is a key strategy to improve lagging learning outcomes. For this reason, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a National Assessment Framework for Afghanistan in 2018, the first pillar of which is classroom-based formative assessment, as shown below.



UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education to develop a comprehensive training package on formative assessment. The training package targets teachers, academic supervisors and school administrators,

aiming to improve learning by empowering teachers to provide constructive feedback on an ongoing basis in the classroom. Trained teachers check children's understanding as the lesson unfolds through hand signals to see whether learners are able to identify the correct answer.

The formative assessment model, Assessment for Learning (AFL), covers six domains as shown below:

Shared Learning Expectations and Assessments	Evidence of Learning
Feedback Provision	Peer-Assessment
Self-Assessment	Parental Engagement

RESULTS

UNICEF's commitment to promoting greater formative assessment to support children's learning in Afghanistan is reflected in the following key results:

- UNICEF provided technical and financial inputs to the National Assessment Framework for Afghanistan, launched in 2018. The Framework applies to over 17,000 schools, including those based in the community, serving 9.2 million learners, 40 *per cent* of whom are girls.
- UNICEF supported the training of over 18,000 teachers and academic supervisors (20 *per cent* women) on classroom-based formative assessment, including an orientation regarding school management committees to ensure that parents receive feedback on their children's learning. Parental engagement has been especially critical in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

Cost effectiveness: UNICEF invested approximately US \$80,000 in the development of the formative assessment package, benefitting all 9.2 million learners, over 4,000 academic supervisors and over 220,000 teachers in Afghanistan.

- A 2019 report of the General Directorate of Academic Supervision and Learning Assessment concluded that "teachers and academic supervisors who participated in formative assessment trainings [between 2016 and 2018] were satisfied with the content presented and found the training materials and training packages useful and practical." One of the recommendations was that AFL be scaled up gradually to all existing teachers.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Formative assessment is an inexpensive way to support learning.** The experience of AFL shows that formative assessment is an inexpensive process that teachers can use in their classrooms, even in resource-constrained and remote settings, to obtain real time information on student learning.
- **Parental engagement is more important than ever.** The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education around the world and spurred greater parental engagement in children's home-based learning, especially during periods of school closure. The AFL model of formative assessment, which is premised on ensuring constructive feedback flows to families, was used during the COVID-19 emergency as a strategy to promote parental engagement.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is continuing to support the Ministry of Education to have a comprehensive and functional learning assessment system in Afghanistan. Next steps include the rollout of formative assessment to all 34 provinces, a baseline survey on learning achievement, as well as the development of test items and standardisation of national examinations.

For more information, please contact:

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