





IX

EDUCATION

“Read in the name of thy Lord and cherish her” (Sura 96, Verse 1)

1. OVERVIEW

Education is a human right and duty. It is a means to fully realize human potentials. Women’s education is a cornerstone for building women’s human capital and a requirement for their meaningful participation, effective leadership, and equal enjoyment of rights in Afghanistan. As shown in East Asian experiences, female education also contributes to reduced fertility rates and a corresponding rise in the growth of per capita income. Afghan women have been long deprived of their right to education. Today, this right is legally protected under Article 44 of the Constitution but the participation of girls and women in various levels and fields of education continues to be limited and beset with numerous constraints.

Afghan women have one of the lowest literacy rates in the world and the worst disparity with men. The adult literacy rate in Afghanistan is estimated at 36 percent, while for adult women, it is estimated at being 21 percent⁶¹. The literacy rate of

GOAL

To increase the enrolment and retention of girls and women at all levels of education, including vocational and non-formal education, and to create an enabling environment where girls and women have equal access to all levels of education, equal treatment in the classroom and equal opportunity to complete the highest possible level and quality of education within the appropriate time period

Afghans between 15-24 years old is 34 percent, with 50 percent for men and only 18 percent for women. Furthermore, the gross enrolment rate for females at the primary school level was 54 percent in 2004, while the total gross enrolment rate was 94 percent⁶². These low literacy and primary school enrolment rates for women indicate that males are currently benefiting more from education than are females. Boys are twice as likely as girls to complete primary school, and this

⁶¹ *Afghanistan: National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction: The Role of Women in Afghanistan’s Future*; March 2005, The World Bank

⁶² “Ed Stats. 2006” World Bank Group Web site. <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/cd5.asp>, accessed September 2006



difference widens at the secondary school level, and widens further still in higher education⁶³.

Despite a marked improvement in recent years, women still face a number of obstacles to education such as early marriage; restricted movement; cultural, security, and transport constraints; shortage of female teachers (at only 27 percent of the total number of teachers) and facilities; competing demands on girls' and women's time; and the lower value attached to girls' and women's education.

Underage marriage inhibits girls' opportunity to complete their education due to early childbearing and household duties. It also affects the education of their offspring who are raised by uneducated children rather than educated women. Women's poor education has a negative impact on Afghanistan's economy, as "countries with poor literacy rates and gender gaps in literacy tend to be less competitive in terms

of attracting foreign direct investment"⁶⁴. Gender inequality in education is self-perpetuating with consequences of continued high fertility and low economic growth. Thus deliberate interventions to reduce the gender gap in literacy and education will contribute to elevating Afghanistan's extremely low GDP. Other studies confirm that gender discrimination in the non-agricultural economy has a significant adverse impact on per capita GDP⁶⁵.

Afghanistan has the highest proportion of primary school age children in the world with 19.6 percent of the population in the 7-12 age group. The development task for Afghanistan's education sector is daunting as education is crucial for the country's political and economic development. In order to bring about equitable socio-economic development, the Afghan government will make dramatic strides in strengthening education and improving women and girls' access to education.

⁶³ *Millennium Development Goals, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Country Report 2005: Summary Report*; 2005, UNDP

⁶⁴ *Afghanistan: Country Gender Assessment*; August 2004, The World Bank

⁶⁵ *Afghanistan: National Reconstruction and Poverty Reduction: The Role of Women in Afghanistan's Future*; March 2005, The World Bank



2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

GOAL	KEY INDICATORS
<p>To increase the enrolment and retention rates of girls and women at all levels of education, including vocational and non-formal education, and to create an enabling environment where girls and women have equal access to all levels of education, equal treatment in the classroom and equal opportunity to complete the highest possible level and quality of education within the appropriate time period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% increase in girls' enrolment share in primary, secondary and tertiary schools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 70% net enrolment in primary schools for girls
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% female net enrolment in universities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% increase in retention rate of females in education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% reduction in female illiteracy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 150,000 women trained in marketable skills through public and private means and approximately 40% of them utilizing the skills acquired
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% representation of women in teaching and non-teaching positions including policy and decision-making 	

In attaining this goal, the Government of Afghanistan will pursue the following objectives:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reducing the constraints to girls' and women's access to education, with special emphasis on early child marriages, sexual harassment, and physical access; b) Increasing girls' and women's access to quality education in rural and urban areas; c) Implementing a public outreach campaign to raise awareness in communities of the importance of female education to the well- | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Attaining equal participation of women in all positions and levels of the education system, from teaching to policy making; e) Adopting and implementing affirmative action policies for the recruitment of female teachers and for the entrance examination of girls and women in tertiary education; and f) Strengthening the quality and quantity of in-service training for teachers, especially female teachers. |
|---|--|



3. ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

3.1 Gender disparities in school enrollment and retention rates

Despite the success of Afghanistan's Back to School campaign, girls' education still lags behind that of boys, and this gap increases as children grow older. The tasks for the education sector remain daunting due to the country's combination of having both one of the world's lowest participation rates (especially for girls) and the highest proportion of school age children in the world. At the university level, only 6 out of 19 universities met the minimum threshold of 30% female students in 2005. Women pursuing higher education tend to specialize in traditionally female areas, and are barely represented in non-traditional fields such as computer science, journalism, and business.

3.2 Lack of access and poor educational infrastructure

Lack of access and insufficient facilities, including inadequate girls' schools, are some of the primary obstacles to school enrolment of girls. Of the existing schools in Afghanistan, far fewer admit girls than boys. Schools are officially designated as either boys' or girls' schools, and 29 percent of

Afghanistan's 415 educational districts have no designated girls' schools at all. Yet, data from the Ministry of Education indicates that 49 percent of Afghanistan's schools admitted girls at some level, compared with 86 percent that admitted boys⁶⁶. Furthermore, both urban and rural families refer to distance as the most common reason for not sending their daughters to school. Other factors impeding girls from attending school are lack of latrines and water in schools. Approximately one third of schools have no identifiable water source, and less than 15 percent have latrines for children's use.

3.3 Insufficient female teachers and discriminatory education curricula

Women's participation and leadership in the education sector remains weak. Women are under-represented as teachers at all levels, and this is compounded by a lack of educated and employable women to fill positions in various sectors. Given that girls are segregated from boys and there is social and cultural preference for girls to be taught by female teachers, there is a greater demand for female teachers than the available supply. Further, gender discrimination remains entrenched in curricula and teaching practices, with learning materials and school curricula reinforcing traditional female and male roles.

⁶⁶ Education Management Information System (draft); 2004-2005, Ministry of Education



3.4 Increasing safety and security concerns

Safety and security continues to be a concern for girls attending school, particularly in rural areas. School burnings and other forms of violence are increasing. Such attacks have a greater impact on girls and women, largely because there are fewer girls' schools. Parents are wary of sending daughters to school due to the distant location of many girls' schools and overall lack of security. Public violence, assaults, and verbal harassment – either specifically targeted to undermine women's advancement or due to lack of law enforcement – often deny girls and women the right to access education.

3.5 Social resistance to female education

Socio-cultural norms and biases discourage female education, as there is a pervasive belief that women's primary role is in the domestic sphere. On the other hand, society perceives that men have a greater need for education because they are the main breadwinners and are in charge of public affairs. As a result, girls are discriminated against in both formal education and vocational training. Family commitments, early marriage, and demands on girls' time also serve as obstacles. Generally, parents, families, and communities undervalue girls' education. Poverty is another major constraint to girl and women's education. Although education is free, for poor families, the cost of school uniforms and stationery is an impediment to sending girls to schools. Furthermore, girls' energy and time are normally appropriated for domestic chores or income generating activities.

3.6 Insufficient access to accelerated learning and vocational training programs

Other forms of education and training for women, such as non-formal or informal education and vocational training remain inadequate. Vocational training and livelihood initiatives are done on a project basis and are often piecemeal, not adapted to the local context or market demands and usually unsustainable. Vocational training programs for women often focus on traditional crafts for which there are no profitable markets. Furthermore, women are not provided training in economic management or marketing.

4. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

4.1 Adopting an affirmative action approach and an incentive structure for female education

The Government will intensify its efforts to promote female education. Affirmative action measures will be put in place to encourage women to pursue careers as teachers, particularly in remote areas. Moreover, women will be provided with added incentives, such as higher salaries and opportunities for training, to become and remain teachers. Such incentives will be provided until the representation of women in the teaching profession nationwide has reached 50%. Increasing the number of female teachers at all education levels will encourage girls and women to pursue education and remove one substantial obstacle to female education. Incentives designed to reduce the dropout rate for girls will also be provided. An affirmative action policy will



also be adopted to promote education of girls in traditionally male fields and vice versa. A policy of gender equity in allocation of scholarships and training opportunities will be adopted.

4.2 Improving women's access to education and educational infrastructure

The government will provide adequate educational infrastructure to girls by building girls' schools, developing relevant curriculum, and providing textbooks and adequate water and latrine facilities. The Ministries of Education, Transport and Interior will create a task force to explore how best to provide girls with adequate transportation to schools and will develop policies and programs accordingly. Possibilities for informal education will be explored to reach women in the most remote and sparsely populated provinces of Afghanistan and measures will be taken for official recognition of informal education, and linking informal education to the formal education system.

4.3 Improving the organization and structure of education

All schools will be enabled to collect sex-disaggregated administrative data on school enrolment, performance and retention rates, and recruitment of teachers. To combat gender discrimination, appropriate measures will be instituted to ensure a non-discriminatory classroom atmosphere and curricula. Further, gender-sensitive education models that include appropriate curricula and flexible scheduling to take women's and girls' time and obligations into account will be piloted. Teacher training models that instruct teachers on educating their female students about the opportunities available to them and

emphasize the importance of empowering their female students will also be piloted.

4.4 Addressing issues of safety and security

Concerted government efforts will be set in place to ensure safety and security of schools. The Ministry of Interior Affairs along with the Ministry of Education will be central to this effort. The Ministry of Transportation and Aviation will assist with transportation for girls and boys to schools. Female dormitories will be available in universities, and other necessary measures will be taken to ensure that girls and women can pursue their education. The Ministries of Education, Higher Education, and Interior Affairs will conduct an assessment and take appropriate actions on increasing security in female educational facilities. The Ministry of Transport and Aviation will work with educational institutions and MOWA to address the issue of safe and accessible transportation facilities for woman and girl students.

4.5 Addressing social factors impeding women's access to education

In line with the provision of the Constitution (Article 44) and principles of CEDAW (Articles 10 and 14), the Afghan government will work to increase adult and functional literacy programs, particularly those aimed at reducing gaps in education between women and men.

Overcoming socio-cultural obstacles to women and girls' education will require a major investment in time and a concerted effort by government, civil society and the



international community. The government will enforce the policy on compulsory education and monitor the status of married girls and young women's participation in schools. Schools and universities will be mandated to monitor sexual harassment and violence against girls and women in schools, including cases of early and forced marriages and violence committed by teachers against students. A vigorous campaign on the value of female education and training will be pursued. Parents and communities will be a particular focus along with mothers of school-age children, who will be encouraged to form support groups to ensure their involvement in girls' education. Information campaigns will make the public aware of Islamic principles that support female education and will advertise the protective measures of girls' schools to increase parents' comfort levels.

4.6 Reducing illiteracy

Women's literacy is a fundamental right and an essential component of promoting progress and development in Afghanistan. Increased literacy will improve women's participation in all aspects of life. Literacy campaigns are an even more pressing need in rural areas. In line with Article 44 of the Constitution and Articles 10 and 14 of CEDAW, the government will work to increase adult and functional literacy programs, particularly those aimed at reducing gaps in education between women and men. Distance learning programs, especially for functional and adult literacy, designed and administered by a national university will be considered. The use of media for such programs will also be promoted.

4.7 Promoting alternate education, accelerated learning, and vocational training

Alternate education, accelerated learning, and vocational training opportunities will be made available to women on a larger scale to ensure equal coverage of all women in education and to promote non-formal means of skills building and enriching knowledge. Accelerated learning classes and alternate education will be provided to ensure that women and girls are able to reach the level of education appropriate for their age in the most expeditious and efficient manner possible. The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with relevant partners including NGOs, will consider providing alternate education through informal education, distance learning, and educational broadcasting in radio and television. Interventions providing vocational training will be based on market research and gender analysis. A labour market study will be completed to assist in developing an effective skills development strategy that is responsive to market needs. This will entail a paradigm shift from 'quick fix' solutions that reinforce traditional skills for women and focus on low-paid gender stereotyped occupations such as tailoring, embroidery, and handicrafts. Instead, initiatives and corresponding trainings will focus on larger-scale, longer-term, profit-oriented ventures. The Government's National Skills Development Program will ensure that there is gender equity across the program and that women are given access to appropriate opportunities to strengthen their livelihood security. MOWA will ensure that this includes vocational institutes for women and the collection of data to determine how many women have benefited from non-formal education.



4.8 Utilizing education to promote the overall well-being of women

Human rights, including the rights of women and girls, will be included in the curriculum of schools and universities at all levels. Civic education will also be included in the curricula of schools at all levels and

universities to enable women and girls to be politically active and to better fulfill their civic duties. Information on basic health and hygiene will also be included in the curricula of schools and universities. Textbooks and educational materials will be revised accordingly.

5. PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Policies and Strategies	Programs, Projects and Activities	Time Frame	Cooperating Ministries and Partners
Improving women's access to education and educational infrastructure	• Improvement of infrastructure in girls' schools, with emphasis on building adequate water and latrine facilities	Year 1 onwards	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Tourism, Ministry of Economy and Labor, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
	• Reform of curricula, textbooks and educational materials to include women's rights and other relevant gender concerns	Year 1 onwards	
	• Conducting of a study on whether and how informal education can be utilized for women in remote areas	Year 2 onwards	
	• Accelerating the building and rehabilitation of girls' schools to ensure that women's needs are taken into account in the construction of such facilities and that they are adequate, accessible, and safe	Year 2 onwards	
	• Promoting the establishment of childcare and kindergarten facilities	Year 2 to 3	
	• Reducing female illiteracy for ages 7-33	Year 3 onwards	
	• Conducting literacy campaigns, especially in rural areas	Year 3 onwards	
	• Expanding non-formal education programs	Year 4 onwards	
	• Ensuring gender equity in the National Skills Development Program	Year 4 onwards	
	• Development of a database for tracking the number of women benefiting from informal education	Year 2 to 3	



Policies and Strategies	Programs, Projects and Activities	Time Frame	Cooperating Ministries and Partners
Addressing issues of safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting of a study on how best to assist girls to safely attend schools and how to improve security in educational facilities for women and girls • Increasing the number of female dormitories available at universities • Conducting of an assessment of how to improve security at educational facilities for women and girls 	Year 1 Year 1 onwards Year 1	Ministry of Transportation and Aviation, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior Affairs
Reducing illiteracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding of literacy campaigns and literacy courses, especially in rural areas 	Year 1 onwards	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education
Promoting alternative education, alternative learning and vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding informal education programs to provide accelerated learning classes and alternative education; tailoring some of these programs for women and girls who have not yet completed school • Conducting of labour market research and gender analysis of vocational training programs • Mainstreaming of gender in the National Skills Development Program • Collecting and analyzing data to determine how many women have benefited from non-formal education 	Year 1 onwards Year 1 to 2 Year 1 onwards Year 1 onwards	Ministry of Economy and Labor, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Women's Affairs
Addressing social factors impeding women's access to education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring married girls' participation in school • Monitoring sexual harassment and violence against women, especially early and forced marriages within schools and universities 	Year 1 onwards Year 1 onwards	Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Tourism,



Policies and Strategies	Programs, Projects and Activities	Time Frame	Cooperating Ministries and Partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting para-legal training for teachers regarding VAW cases • Enforcing compulsory education policy • Implementing public information campaign and community outreach to promote the importance of female education and vocational training to parents and communities • Disseminating information on Islamic principles on rights and the importance of education for women and girls in collaboration with religious groups • Formation of parents' associations that are linked to schools to ensure community and parents' interest and involvement in girls' education • Disseminating information on the availability of dormitories and other safety mechanisms in girls' schools • Building partnerships with community leaders to convince parents and men to accept female literacy programs 	<p>Year 1 to 5</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 to 5</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p>	<p>Ministry of Hajj, international and local organizations in the education sector, local media, religious groups</p>
<p>Improving the structure of education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated administrative data on school enrolment, performance and retention rates, and recruitment of teachers • Ensuring non-discriminatory classroom atmosphere and curricula • Piloting gender-sensitive education models including appropriate curricula and flexible scheduling 	<p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 2 onwards</p> <p>Year 4 onwards</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Women's Affairs</p>



Policies and Strategies	Programs, Projects and Activities	Time Frame	Cooperating Ministries and Partners
<p>Creating an affirmative action approach and an incentive structure for female education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and adopting an affirmative action policy to encourage women to pursue careers as teachers, particularly in remote areas • Developing and offering incentives to encourage women to become and remain teachers • Designing and offering incentives to encourage girls to go to school and university and to raise retention rates • Adopting an affirmative action policy to promote education of girls in traditionally male fields and vice versa • Ensuring gender equity in allocation of scholarships and training opportunities • Holding of classes to improve the skills and relevant knowledge of female teachers in order to prepare them for competency testing • Holding of refresher courses to former teachers to bring them back in service • Promoting scholarships and training programs for women teachers 	<p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 2 onwards</p> <p>Year 2 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p>	<p>Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Women's Affairs, academic institutions</p>
<p>Utilizing education to promote the overall well-being of women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of human rights, particularly women and girls' rights, civic education and basic health and education in the curricula of girls' schools • Amending of educational materials and textbooks 	<p>Year 1 onwards</p> <p>Year 1 onwards</p>	<p>Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Public Health</p>

